RUSSOPHOBIC NEUTRALITY: TURKISH DIPLOMACY, 1936-1945

A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in History

By

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Washington, DC
February 27, 2014
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation tells the story of Soviet-Turkish rivalry during the crucible of World War II. By 1939, Turkey began fast reverting to its old imperial attitude, when Istanbul’s foreign policy had been dictated largely by the Sultan’s fear of Russia. The state of wartime affairs between Ankara and Moscow gradually fell in sharp contrast with the cordial atmosphere of the 1920s and 1930s. As opposed to previous historians who have dismissed Turkey’s wartime neutrality as a wily strategy of capitalizing on war, I argue that the underlying factor, guiding the Turkish state in its quest to remain neutral was the revival of Russophobia amongst the ruling circles in Ankara. There had never been a moment during the war for neither the Allies nor the Axis to depart Turkey from its neutrality unless some form of guarantee had soothed its Russian complex.

A closer examination of the Turkish archives and the parliamentary minutes reveals that Turkey desired a German victory over Russia provided that this was followed by a British victory over Germany. In other words, Turks very much hoped to see another Brest-Litovsk status quo: two separate wars involving Germany, conducted independently by Britain and the USSR without cooperation. But, through unleashing Operation Barbarossa, Hitler presented to Churchill one ally as the hereditary enemy of another. By the same token, for both Nazi Germany and Great Britain, Turkey once again became the linchpin in their policy of containing the Soviet Union in the Middle Eastern theatre.
Overall, my conclusions point to a common fallacy in historical scholarship that construes Turkey’s peculiar neutrality as an attempt to cash in on both warring blocs. On the contrary, I argue that Turkey’s neutrality was precarious, rather than active or cunning, and that, in the face of growing pressure from Moscow between 1939 and 1945, Ankara admitted the need for stronger allies in Western Europe. As the war came to an end, Turkish leadership ultimately stumbled back into the Middle East while seeking to deter Russian encroachment in the region.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support and assistance of the following people.

Firstly, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my current and former advisors. I should start by thanking the late Professor Richard Stites, whose “revolutionary dreams” and “utopian visions” shaped my sense of direction in Russian and Soviet history. You are truly and greatly missed. I am equally thankful to my mentor at Georgetown, Professor David Goldfrank. You have been a tremendous advisor for me after Richard’s untimely death. Your guidance in historical scholarship and dazzling perception of life in general has shaped my understanding of our world in academia and beyond. I would also like to thank my dissertation advisor, Professor Mustafa Aksakal, for welcoming my belated quest in Turkish scholarship. Your meticulous feedback and inspiring books encouraged me to look for more transnational connections in studying Turkey’s past. In addition, I thank Professor Gábor Ágoston, who continuously conveyed a spirit of adventure in regards to linguistics and archives, and an excitement in regards to teaching. You have supported me in every stage of my journey in Washington DC, which I shall not forget.

I also owe a huge debt of appreciation to my former advisor at Bilkent University in Ankara, Professor Norman Stone, who has been the foremost influential figure in my academic career since 1997. I thank you for encouraging my work, and for allowing me to grow as a young scholar. I am also grateful to Professors Steve Norris of Miami University and Catherine Evtuhov and James Shedel of Georgetown University, who have influenced me greatly in Russian and Habsburg histories and helped me become a passionate historian. I am forever indebted to you and Georgetown’s History Department for their financial support granted through numerous teaching opportunities and an extended overseas research fellowship.
Many friends deserve special thanks for helping me shape the present work. Anita Kondoyanidi and Anton Fedyashin; I am blessed to have found your camaraderie. I thank you for teaching me all things good and Russian in life. Sean McMeekin; you have been a great friend and tutor. I will always admire your multi-tasking abilities between parenthood and writing exceptional history books. Amongst my hilltop fellowship, I am particularly indebted to Binio Binev, John Bowlus, and Emrah Safa Gurkan. At the University of Virginia, I thank my long-time friend and colleague, Barin Kayaoglu, who has contributed to my work greatly through our extended telephone conversations.

A big hello goes to my dearest friends and family in Turkey and France. I am truly grateful to each one of you for your compassion and presence in my life. In Petersburg and Istanbul, I thank Sam Hirst and Marc Hoffman for their heartfelt friendship. I am grateful for your ideas and thoughts that inspire mine, and I will always look forward to our next reunion – hopefully with anise-flavored laughter and a table by the Golden Horn. Like brothers you have been to me closer than friends.

Last but never the least, I would like to thank my mother, Prof. Gunseli Sonmez-Isci, and my father, Prof. Sedat Isci. Words cannot express my gratitude to you and to all of the sacrifices that you have made on my behalf. Your encouragement and guidance (both academic and otherwise) was what sustained me thus far. Likewise, I am indebted to my grandfather, Prof. Resit Sonmez, who has always inspired me with his devotion to knowledge, and cemented my sense of belonging to university halls.

Most of all, I thank my beloved wife, Gamze Ergur Isci, to whom this work is dedicated. You walked me through sleepless nights and lit up those moments when there was no one to answer my queries. It has been a better life than I could ever ask for, and to you I will forever be grateful.

ONUR ISCI
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCA  Bağbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (Prime Ministerial Republican Archive, Ankara, Turkey).


IUK  Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi (Istanbul University Library, Turkey).

IAK  Istanbul Atatürk Kütüphanesi (Istanbul Atatürk Library, Turkey).

DKVP  Dokumenty vneshni politiki SSSR (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970).

GPT  Dokumenty Ministerstva inostrannykh del. Germanii, vyp II: Germanskaia politika v Turtsii (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1946).

PRO FO  Public Record Office – Foreign Office (London, United Kingdom).

DGFP  Documents on German Foreign Policy (Berlin: Auswärtiges Amt, 1949).


A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

For all Russian names and words I have used the Library of Congress transliteration system, except in the case of a very few names for which different transliterations are seen recurrently in English-language sources (e.g. Trotsky instead of Trotskii). Likewise, for all Turkish names and words I have followed the modern Turkish spelling, with the exception of a few words that can be found commonly in English dictionaries (e.g. pasha not paşa). When writing about Turks in contexts before 1934, I have given their later surnames in parentheses only at the first instance.
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INTRODUCTION

On a bright Sunday morning on October 29, 1933, Turks celebrated the tenth anniversary of their young republic in Ankara. Hours before the opening of festivities, people from all segments of society – from shop-keepers to students, bureaucrats, and peasants – flooded the narrow streets on the periphery of the recently adorned Red Crescent Square (Kızılay Meydani). The accomplishments of the new Kemalist regime were displayed in an extravaganza of parades, dances and national hymns, as the students of Ankara University and the Naval Academy passed with their marching bands, accompanied by schoolchildren carrying banners inscribed in Turkey’s new Latin alphabet. When the long-awaited moment arrived, Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha (later, Atatürk) crossed the district’s vivacious square in his 1931 Lincoln Dietrich to deliver the annual presidential address. He concluded his speech not with the sort of galvanizing slogans everyone expected to hear, but with the words “Peace at Home, Peace in the World” (Yurta Sulh, Cihanda Sulh), which would determine Turkey’s foreign policy agenda in the years to follow. This phrase was later adopted by the constitution as “the core principle on which Turkish diplomacy shall operate,” and was carved in bold letters on the façade of the Foreign Ministry.

Although Republic Day celebrations of the next few years saw the same alacrity and joy, Atatürk’s closest aides did not fail to notice the ailing leader’s increasing stress. Industrial and agricultural development plans had stalled with the constant increase in the country’s budget deficit after the Great Depression of 1929. The annual payment plan to clear off the remaining portion of the Ottoman debt was putting even more pressure on an

1 Cumhuriyet (October 30, 1933), 1-3; Akşam (October 30, 1933), 1-4.
2 Rona Aybay, Karşılaştırmalı 1961 Anayasası (İstanbul: Fakülte Matbaası, 1963), 199.
already fragile economy. Still, what disturbed Atatürk most was the recent surge of revisionism in Europe. In one of the regular cabinet meetings of 1934, he turned to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü and asked his opinion about Turkey’s position vis-à-vis the political developments in Germany and Italy. He then added, “it is now clear that the Treaty of Versailles has not removed any of the causes that led to the Great War… on the contrary it has deepened the rift between the former belligerents.” Four years after this meeting, as the ‘Turks’ father’ lay on his death bed on the presidential yacht Savarona, he advised the Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras: “A second world war is near. In the course of this war the existing international equilibrium would be completely destroyed. If during this period we lose sight of rationality and make the slightest mistake, we will face an even greater disaster than the [Mudros] Armistice years.” The dedicated Kemalist cadres remained faithful to Ghazi’s advice and strove to maintain peace both at home and abroad during the dark years of the Second World War.

The Young Turks who survived the Great War saw many of their dreams fulfilled in the new Kemalist republic. The architects of Turkey’s foreign policy between 1939 and 1945 – President İsmet İnönü, Premier Refik Saydam (later Saraçoğlu) and Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu (later Menemencioğlu) – steered the country between one power bloc to another after 1939, trying to keep as much a distance as possible from the battlefield. Witnessing the catastrophic fall of their empire in 1918, the leaders of the new republic knew only too well that the truncated country they inherited was extremely

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3 Articles 46–63 of the Lausanne Treaty concerned the liquidation of the debts of the Ottoman State. The Republic of Turkey accepted to pay all the Ottoman debts, while signatories to the treaty reciprocally renounced their claims for the loss and damage suffered after 1914 as a result of acts of war. “Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923,” The Treaties of Peace 1919-1923, Vol. II (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1924), 48-68.
4 Mustafa Kemal quoted in Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, İkinci Adam, II (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1976), 84.
5 Ibid, 87.
poor and needed a much longer period of peace to heal its wounds. Britain’s Ambassador Percy Loraine seems to have acknowledged this fact in one of his messages: “Turkey has not a second empire to lose, nor has she today any wish to create one….she has enough to keep her busy for a century, and in [her] settled policies there is no room for adventure, nor for Pan-Islamism, nor for Pan-Turanism”6

The outbreak of the Second World War once again turned Turkey into a desirable ally for policy makers in Berlin and London, who subsequently sought to impose their will and keep Turkey in line with their strategic interests. Wedged between two warring blocs, Turkish diplomats desperately tried to ward off the foreign pressure. At times during this period, the future seemed far from clear. Nevertheless, Turkey managed to secure a special place in the annals of the Second World War by concurrently negotiating non-aggression and mutual assistance agreements with both the Anglo-French bloc and Nazi Germany. Once this intricate web of diplomatic treaties was established, it was used as a shield to contain each party’s attempt to coerce Turkey into the Middle East theatre.

Ultimately, Turks managed to stay out of the war, and even beyond that, they kept each belligerent power bloc busy with their continued resistance to the demands of others. In the words of the late Annette B. Fox, “small power diplomacy in the midst of a world conflict could hope to achieve no greater success.”7 Turkey’s symbolic declaration of war against the Axis powers came only in the final days, on February 23, 1945, when the German threat had already dissipated. This was little more than a formality and a step taken simply to comply with the conclusions of the Yalta Conference, which conditioned

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the declaration of war as a prerequisite for joining the United Nations. Hence, scholars have long held the view that Turkey’s foreign policy during the Second World War was one of “active neutrality,” following Selim Deringil’s phraseology.⁸

In previous historical scholarship, aside from sporadic essays and a handful of articles, there had hardly been any real interest on the subject until Türkkaya Ataöv’s *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1939-1945*, published in 1964.⁹ In his book, Ataöv set out to define why Turkey’s leaders acted the way they did and how they managed to keep their country intact and out of the war. As the Turkish archives were closed to him, Ataöv, like many of his successors, utilized a broad range of newspapers and memoirs to construct his narrative. The problem is that wartime Turkish popular press by and large followed a state-sponsored editorial line, or otherwise faced İnönü’s harsh censorship laws.¹⁰ The *dramatis personae* of Turkish politics, on the other hand, published their memoirs during the postwar period, which were embedded in a flamboyant Cold War rhetoric. By the same token, Ataöv’s book amounted to little more than a nationalist account of Turkey’s diplomatic success story.

Building on Ataöv’s monograph, Frank G. Weber’s *The Evasive Neutral* became a pioneering study and an instrumental source, which reflected on numerous published diplomatic papers of Nazi Germany and a plethora of monographs and articles published in German.¹¹ While Weber’s account offered intriguing vignettes on the Third Reich’s policy towards Turkey, due to his excessive reliance on German documents, even when

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better information was available elsewhere (such as the Public Record Office), he fell back on such mono-causal conclusions as Turkey’s “cunning diplomacy of non-alignment,” rather than providing a convincing account of Turkish Foreign Policy goals in the Second World War.\(^{12}\)

What remains to be the only historical account in Western scholarship with some substance is Selim Deringil’s *An Active Neutrality*. Deringil investigates the historical, psychological and personality factors that conditioned Turkish policy of neutrality throughout the war. The principal reason for neutrality, according to Deringil, was the view held by Turkish statesmen that the war was primarily a European imperialist conflict, unrelated to Turkey’s basic security and vital interests. Moreover, Deringil accurately suggests that the key historical lesson behind Turkey’s policy of non-belligerence was the experience of the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire was dragged into conflict on the side of Germany by a handful of Young Turk leaders eager to please their European ally.\(^{13}\)

The main problem with Deringil’s monograph is that such definitions as “active neutrality” obscure rather than explain the emergence of a shared pacifism in the Turkish ruling circles between 1939 and 1945. Nor would Deringil’s theses on Turkey’s Janus-faced agenda (implying a policy to capitalize on war) do justice to the Kemalist security doctrine of curtailing adventurism from within – a notion to which the author himself adheres strongly. Among the crumbled empires of 1918, Turkey became the only successor to adopt a nationalist ideology while curbing its own irredentist factions at the


\(^{13}\) Whether or not the Ottoman Empire was dragged into conflict by a handful of Young Turks is a subject of debate. See, Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
same time. In other words, anti-imperialism and non-adventurism continued to be the body and soul of Turkey’s survivalist agenda throughout the war. What remains a mystery is how the rigidly cautious and rather timid Turkish leadership at the outbreak of war, miraculously turns into a self-confident body, capable of blackmail, and practicing various obstreperousness.

Just like Weber with his over-reliance on German documents, Deringil exclusively looks at records of British diplomatic correspondence. Therefore, it is possible to trace Deringil’s incongruous conclusion in his overwhelmingly British bibliography. English observers of the time often smacked of rank amateurism in their assessments of Turkish diplomacy by ambiguously contending that a strong resemblance existed between Turkey’s wartime strategy and that of the late 19th century, while at the same time pointing out to the radically different nature of republican Turkish diplomacy. Ambassador Percy Loraine, who had mentioned new Turkey’s “timidity” and awareness of its limitations in 1939, later added, quite confusingly; “The Sick Man is dead, but he has left behind a number of lusty children.”\(^\text{14}\) It should come as no coincidence that both Deringil and Weber, when speaking of the Turkish policy makers during World War II, had in mind “heirs of the wily traditions of the Sublime Porte,” and, “methods of the old viziers, who brought the pluck and nerve of the modern gambler.”\(^\text{15}\)

A more recent publication on the subject, Nicholas Tamkin’s *Britain, Turkey and the Soviet Union 1940-1945*, finally brought in the missing Soviet piece into the puzzle.\(^\text{16}\) But, this time, the author’s reliance on Russian secondary sources, merely rekindled the Soviet prosecutorial narrative of the postwar period, which, in turn, cemented the “Janus-

\(^\text{14}\) FO 424/282, E2170/135/44 (Loraine to Halifax, April 14, 1939).
faced Turkish gambit” perspective even further.\textsuperscript{17} For Tamkin, Westerners have tended to forget Ankara’s ambiguous foreign policy during the Second World War, and, as if by international agreement, the true story of Turkey’s wartime diplomacy has been left deliberately obscure. This is a common fallacy in existing literature and mainly results from dismissing Turkish sources altogether. Nicholas Tamkin admits that a comprehensive study of Turkish foreign policy should ideally include Turkish sources. This is true, not only for the reasons he comes up with, but also for understanding Turkey’s staunchly anti-Soviet stance during and after the war, and its subsequent integration into the North Atlantic Alliance in 1952, which was essentially taken as a precaution against the exacerbation of Russo-Turkish animosity.

A fascination with Turkey’s neutrality is at least the one thing that historians have hitherto shared in common. Each has come up with a different label – evasive, active, benevolent, cunning etc. – to define the nature of, rather than the reasons behind, Turkey’s peculiar non-belligerence. Generally speaking, these labels simply mirror the wartime foreign observers’ perceptions rather than those of Turkey’s own historical actors. A closer examination of the Turkish Prime Ministerial Archives (BCA) and the parliamentary minutes of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) reveals Turkey’s fundamental policy consideration throughout the war that has been completely ignored.

The underlying factor that guided the Turkish state in its quest to remain neutral was the revival of Russophobia amongst the ruling circles in Ankara, rather than an attempt to cash in on both warring factions. There had never been a moment during the

\textsuperscript{17} S. Belinkov and I. Vasil'ev, O Turetskom “Neutralitete” vo vremia Vtoroi Mirovoi Voiny (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1952), 7.
war for either the Allies or the Axis to dislodge Turkey from its neutrality unless some form of guarantee had soothed its Russian complex. While both power blocs certainly wished to see Turkey on their side, keeping that country as a belligerent ally required arms and ammunition, which neither could deliver in sufficient quantities. Consequently, the attitude of Turkey, particularly after the outbreak of the Russo-German War, was such that they preferred a German victory over Russia provided that this was followed by a British victory over Germany. In other words, Turks very much desired to see another Brest-Litovsk status quo: two separate wars involving Germany, conducted independently by Britain and the USSR without cooperation. But, through unleashing Operation Barbarossa, Hitler presented to Churchill one ally as the hereditary enemy of another.

It did not take too long before Germany realized that the very idea of a prolonged war was a nightmare for the Turks. Therefore it seemed quite possible that Turkey would appeal to Germany to defend itself against a Russian attack, just as it did in the previous World War. Predictably, Germany would have had every reason to respond to this appeal. Diametrically opposed to the established notions of Turkish neutrality in contemporary scholarship, Ambassador Franz von Papen knew that Turkey was not “wavering between Germany and England like a shopper in the bazaars in order to see with whom she can make a better deal.”

It was clear to von Papen that Turkey was a silent ally of Great Britain and ultimately desired to see that country emerge triumphant. But the mere prospect of an Anglo-Russian alliance was distinctly displeasing to Turkey. From that point onwards, Germany did everything in its capacity to orchestrate anti-

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18 Documents on German Foreign Policy [hereafter DGFP], series D, vol. XII, no. 566, p. 913 (Papen to Ribbentrop, May 29, 1941).
Soviet propaganda in Turkey. Rekindling Turkey’s fear of Russia through ‘the fog and filthy air’ of 1941, von Papen masterfully tried to steer Turkish diplomacy into a pro-German neutrality. In his conversations with Saraçoğlu and Menemencioğlu, he repeatedly underlined Turkey’s self-evident interest in the elimination of the Bolshevik system, which required a sincere diplomatic partnership with Germany, “if not on the battlefield.”\textsuperscript{19} The result was the ill-reputed Turco-German Non-Aggression Treaty of June 18, 1941.

The state of wartime affairs between Ankara and Moscow gradually fell in sharp contrast with the cordial atmosphere of the 1920s and 30s, when the first principle of Turkish foreign policy had been the alliance with Russia. After almost four centuries of periodic warfare, good neighborly relations with the Soviets, in the context of friendship rather than subordination, safeguarded Turkey’s continued security on its long eastern border and in the Black Sea. Throughout the 1930s, the Soviet Union was a reliable source of necessary manufactured goods for industrialization as well as war materials.\textsuperscript{20} All other alliances were perceived as complementary to Turkey’s relationship with Russia rather than replacements for it. Both Atatürk and İnönü were leading advocates of the Soviet connection and followed an identical anti-imperialist policy both at home and abroad.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 193 (Weizsacker to Ribbentrop, August 11, 1941); 304.
\textsuperscript{20} Unlike the exponentially growing literature on Russo-Turkish imperial relations, the diplomatic, cultural and economic convergence between the two countries during the early republican period remains to be terra incognita. Two important works on the subject, which appeared only very recently are: Bülent Gökay, \textit{Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920-1991} (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Samuel J. Hirst, “Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet-Turkish Convergence in the 1930s,” in \textit{Slavic Review}, 72, 1 (Spring 2013); 32-53.
\textsuperscript{21} İsmet İnönü, \textit{Söylev ve Demeçleri, TBMM’nde ve CHP Kurultaylarında} (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1946), 280-321.
This underlying motive is crucial for understanding İnönü’s priorities in the early years of war, roughly between 1939 and 1941. Although Turkish foreign policy makers gradually positioned themselves against Soviet provocations by leaning towards a pro-German neutrality in 1941, they remained faithful to the Soviet-Turkish Pact of 1935 until the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in August 1941. Throughout the heated days of 1939 and 1940 they sought to refrain from even remotely collaborating in a revived Drang Nach Osten Geist. When changing dynamics of Turkey’s immediate environment required the conclusion of a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1941, most Soviet observers assumed a moral tone and criticized Turkey for selfishly sparing herself and abandoning its friends in a situation when they most needed manpower.

The peculiar nature of wartime Turkish neutrality was severely condemned by Stalin, who blamed İsmet İnönü of “immorally pursuing a two-faced agenda, somewhat reminiscent of the Ottoman diplomatic tactics.”

Soviet newspapers, on the other hand, accused “the Turkish ruling classes [of] profiting on the War [and of] serving both warring factions – the German and the English.” Even after the victory was won, similar criticisms were raised in the Soviet press. In 1946, a retrospective analysis contended that the Soviet Union’s “Great Patriotic War against the fascist German occupiers showed that Turkey, using as a pretext the pact signed at Montreux, explicitly aided both Hitler’s Germany and Western imperialists.” From the Soviet perspective, Turks were cashing in on both sides throughout the war; and they deliberately pursued this policy at a time when their northern ally was in dire straits and desperate need of Turkish assistance.

22 Pravda (January 12, 1944), 6.
23 Pravda (October 18, 1939), 4.
24 Izvestiia (March 22, 1946), 7.
In reality, however, the course of events after the outbreak of war until 1941 demonstrated that a major axiom of Stalin's policy was to avoid getting bogged down in the Anglo-German conflict as a belligerent on one side or the other, while at the same time doing everything short of that to favor Germany. Germany would naturally be only too willing to detach Turkey from its existing connection with the Soviet Union and set itself up once again as the protector of Turkey and the Near East against Anglo-Soviet domination. Therefore, İnönü was acutely aware that Stalin did not want to have Hitler established across its path in the Bosphorus. By July 1940, as the possibility of a Soviet occupation of the Straits emerged, Turkey began fast reverting to its old imperial attitude, when the Porte’s foreign policy had been dictated chiefly by the Sultan’s fear of Russia. This was so much the case that the British Ambassador noted: “once again, Turkey's foreign policy [was] governed by that of Russia — the hereditary enemy, whose age-long ambition is to wrest the Straits from Turkey…whatever country is opposed to Russia is, ipso facto, favored by Turkey.”

* * *

This dissertation, then, investigates the crucible of Russo-Turkish rivalry during the Second World War. It is the story of Turkey’s ordeal at a critical conjuncture, when fear of Russia clearly returned to the forefront of the Turkish mind. Seen from this perspective, Ankara’s struggle to find for itself a secure place in the West does not appear as a post-revolutionary addendum, but as a defining moment in Turkish history when fundamental principles of republican diplomacy were reversed and a new course for the postwar period was established.

25 FO 424/285 R6703 G (Halifax to Hugessen, July 5, 1940).
The organization of chapters is largely chronological, although each has a thematic focus as well. Chapter 1 outlines the historical background of events that eventually pulled Ankara apart from its alliance with Moscow during the last days of peace. It is a probe into the changing international equilibrium surrounding Turkey after the Montreux Straits Convention of 1936 until the outbreak of war in 1939. Here, I argue that two interrelated policy considerations, which involved Turkey’s problematic relations with Italy and Syria, ultimately led to its abandonment of the Lausanne status quo and shift from a position of non-alignment to one where it reluctantly clung to the Anglo-French power bloc and ended its short-lived honeymoon with the Soviet Union.

Chapter 2 deals with Turkey at the outbreak of war and looks at the period from the conclusion of the Anglo-Turkish declaration in May 1939 until the failed Saraçoğlu-Molotov talks in late October. I investigate the consequences of Turkey’s precarious tripartite alliance with Great Britain and France, which was secured at the expense of a predictable apprehension in the Soviet Union. From the Soviet point of view, among Turkey’s ruling classes, supporters of the Anglo-French bloc held the upper hand, “advocating the well-known Munich policy of appeasement… pushing Hitlerite aggression and fascism to the East.”26 Conversely, İnönü contended that negotiations with Moscow broke down because the Soviet Government had made demands which ran counter to the two fundamental rules which the Turkish Government had laid down; (1) that Turkey should not in any way interfere with the normal working of the Montreux Convention, and (2) that Turkey should agree to nothing which would weaken the

26 Dokumenty vneshei politiki SSSR [hereafter DVPSSSR]. XXII, vol.2 (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1993), 619; Voyna i politka, 1939-1941 (Moscow, 1999), 16.
operation of the treaty which she contemplated with Great Britain and France. I demonstrate that there was hardly a moment in the second half of 1939, when serious hope of a permanent improvement in Soviet-Turkish affairs could have been entertained.

In Chapter 3, I explain how deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union compelled policy makers in Turkey to devise a new strategy from scratch. After the capitulation of France in June 1940, Turkey slowly began to change its position from “active” to passive neutrality, though still favorably disposed to Britain. İnönü came to the conclusion that he could not expect from Britain the help that he had hoped for under the 1939 treaty if they were attacked, especially now that France had collapsed. The pretext for İnönü’s fear, however, was in effect based on changing circumstances with the Soviet Union rather than Germany. In this chapter, I look at major events that exacerbated the Soviet-Turkish conflict in 1941, such as the ‘German White Book Crisis.’ But I also show how Stalin’s policy in the Balkans brought back bitter memories of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, which in turn, aggravated Turkey’s suspicions about the revival of imperial visions in Kremlin.

Chapters 4 and 5 tie together and explore the Nazi orchestration of Anti-Soviet propaganda in Turkey between 1941 and 1943. The fourth chapter covers one of the largest sources of friction in wartime Soviet-Turkish relations and explores the impact of Turco-German Non Aggression Pact, signed only days before the Wehrmacht’s march on Russia. It would be safe to suggest that Germany’s anti-Soviet propaganda met with considerable approval in Ankara, particularly after the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran. Operation Countenance created the impression among Ankara’s ruling elite that Great Britain was returning to the Anglo-Russian partition policy of 1907. It was inevitable

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that the Turks were to become nervous when they saw Britain and the Soviet Union putting pressure on Iran in these conditions. It is equally fair to argue that in the aftermath of the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan, Germany probably did everything in its capacity to revive and propagate the evil-Russia image in Turkey. But Stalin’s own blunders, which aggravated Turkey’s Russophobia, played an equally important role. The two main incidents that marred Soviet-Turkish affairs during this period were the failed assassination attempt on Franz von Papen by Soviet agents in Ankara, and the sinking of SS Struma on the same day. Merely a fortnight before the von Papen Affair, a Soviet Submarine (Shch 213) attacked the SS Struma in Turkish territorial waters, which was chartered to carry Jewish refugees from Axis-allied Romania to British-controlled Palestine. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the ominous incidents of February 24 left Turkish-Soviet relations irreparably damaged.

Chapter 5 looks at an entirely overlooked aspect of wartime Soviet-Turkish relations and explains the role of Pan-Turkists in Turkey, who found a reinvigorated zeal in the Crimean Tatar cause and facilitated the Tatar-Nazi collaboration. Here, I examine the extent of Nazi collaboration in Crimea and whether it was the Turkish government (as the Soviets claimed) or independent Pan Turkist groups in Turkey who collaborated with the Tatars in a vehemently anti-Soviet campaign. Secondly, I seek answers to the role of the Nazi Germany in bolstering Turks’ and Tatars’ hopes for the so-called grand scheme of Soviet encirclement. Ultimately, I demonstrate the public consequences of Nazi Germany’s efforts to orchestrate nationalist and fascist circles in Turkey. I admit that providing accurate answers to all of these is difficult, but it is vital for our understanding

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28 Başkanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri [hereafter, BCA] 30.10.0.0/124.881.6 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, February 24, 1942).
of not only Stalin’s policy in Crimea but also the post-war Soviet attitude towards Turkey and Stalin’s prosecutorial rhetoric towards Ankara with regards to the Crimean problem.

Chapter 6 takes the narrative firmly into the latter part of World War II and looks at the events that transpired after the Soviet triumph in Stalingrad. This is a probe into an intense period of negotiations between the Anglo-Soviet bloc and Turkey, which ultimately determined the latter’s fate in the immediate postwar years. Analyzing the conferences held in Adana, Tehran, Cairo, and Yalta, I seek to demonstrate the reasons behind Turkey’s quixotic neutrality in the face of growing pressure from Moscow and London to drag Ankara into the battlefield. As such, the epilogue of my dissertation deals with the immediate aftermath of World War II.

For all belligerent powers, the end of the war seemed to produce the illusion of absolute security, the susceptibility to which the Soviet Union showed with its drive for hegemony in Europe between 1945 and 1953. Regardless of what the root cause of the East-West tension was, plans for a sustainable, if not cordial, relationship failed in Europe following the Second World War. Yet, in places like Turkey post-war euphoria made Stalin even less resistant to imperial designs. In August 1946, the USSR sent a threatening note to Turkey, demanding concessions on the Black Sea Straits and three major concessions in Eastern Anatolia. Furthermore, by delaying the evacuation of Soviet troops from Iran, Stalin sought to establish a client regime to gain dominant influence in this other historic area of Russian expansion.

Confronting an aggressive Soviet Russia, Turkey could not maintain its precarious neutrality while negotiating alliances with the West. From the post-war conferences among the Allies, two factors stood out as sources of apprehension for the
Turks: the exigencies of war against the Axis and the historic rivalry between Britain and Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this rivalry between the two imperialisms, it was the Soviet Union that the Turkish ruling elite most feared. Therefore nothing would have relieved the Ankara government more than President Truman’s proclamation of “American determination to uphold by whatever means necessary the integrity of states endangered by communist subversion.”

I have drawn upon a number of archives and published sources to construct my narrative. I was fortunate enough to gain good access to the Prime Ministry Archives of the Turkish Republic (BCA), which this dissertation is mainly based. I also utilized, wherever possible, the minutes of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) with hopes of unearthing the voices of Turkish policy makers in their parliamentary discussions. Together with a critical reading of contemporary periodicals and published memoirs, I believe I found balanced and convincing evidence that suggest the emergence of Russophobia in Turkey during World War II.

The question of how Soviet perception was shaped led me to include a second set of published sources, namely Dokumenty Ministerstva inostrannykh del. Germanii, vyp II: Germanskaia politika v Turtsii (GPT); and Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR (DVPSSSR). The published archival documents of Germany hint at another side of this narrative. To pinpoint the Nazi orchestration of anti-Soviet efforts in Turkey, I investigated Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945 (DGFP). I also sought echoes of British and American policy makers the National Archives of the United States, College Park (NA-CP); the British Foreign Office Archives (FO); and Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS). For clarity, each citation to an archival source identifies

location according to the system used by the archive itself. I have also, however,
provided a loose but descriptive translation of the item’s title, along with the date written,
if known.
I. REBUS SIC STANTIBUS

Scholars have long held the belief that, under the veneer of Mustafa Kemal’s pacifist rhetoric throughout the latter half of the 1930s, what guided the Turkish state and diplomacy was a quest to maintain domestic and regional status quo. It is often argued that through curbing adventurism and revisionism – a common public psyche in most successor states to the Great War’s crumbled empires – Atatürk sought to eliminate any military or diplomatic undertaking that could easily destabilize the nascent state he was trying to build. As a corollary to this argument, scholars frequently looked at the conflict-prone European periphery, where revisionist powers were establishing their own spheres of influence, and suggested that Turks successfully isolated themselves from their past, thereby anchoring their state firmly in the Western order. Consequently, status quo has become the defining framework for the Kemalist period, both in foreign and domestic affairs, and the term has been almost exclusively misused interchangeably with a peaceful agenda.

The imagining of Turkey as the guardian of status quo in the region has occurred more often in the work of historians than in the words of the historical actors. Yet, beginning with 1936, there were two interrelated policy considerations for Turkey, which ultimately led to its abandonment of the Lausanne status quo and swing from a position of non-alignment to one where she reluctantly clung to the Anglo-French power bloc and ended its short-lived honeymoon with the Soviet Union. These considerations involved

relations with Italy and Syria. The heavy Italian fortifications on the Dodecanese islands just miles off the Aegean coast were a direct and visible threat to Turkish territorial waters. Mindful of the Italian claims on South-Western Anatolia during World War I, which had subsequently been disclosed at Brest-Litovsk, Turkey became even more convinced that Rome would eventually seek to expand its sphere of influence towards the Aegean Sea, where no substantial Turkish naval defense structure was allowed due to the demilitarization of the Straits under the existing Lausanne regime.31

A second development in the latter half of the 1930s, which paved the way for a rapprochement between Turkey and the Anglo-French Bloc was the recent surge in Syria’s support of Kurdo-Armenian provocations in Alexandretta, bordering Turkey’s southernmost frontier. The provisional French mandate, which had been governing Alexandretta since the 1921 Franco-Turkish Armistice Treaty, expired in 1935.32 Between 1936 and 1939, the Syrian administration in Alexandretta failed to check, and at times directly sponsored, regional Kurdish tribes who had their strong disagreements with Turkey – some lingering from past imperial conflicts, some pertaining to the new regime’s strong centralism. Kurdish chieftains, along with local Armenian community leaders, stirred up incipient rebellions in Turkey’s southern provinces through Syria during the course of 1920s and 1930s.

31 A central question in European international relations before the First World War concerned the ownership, control, and fate of the Turkish Straits. The Bosphorus and the Dardanelles connect the Mediterranean with the Black Sea and serve as a crucial route for commercial and naval traffic to and from the southern Russian coast. The Straits Question was inseparable from a larger set of problems known as the Eastern Question. In that context, the European powers—especially Russia, Great Britain, and Germany, followed by Italy and France—struggled for influence in the Ottoman Empire. The Straits served as a center around which the wider challenges of the Eastern Question revolved, until the conclusion of the Lausanne Convention in 1923. See “The Lausanne Convention Relating to the Regime of the Straits, July 24, 1923,” League of Nations Treaty Series (hereafter LNTS), vol. XXVIII, 117-137.

32 Syria under the French mandate was subdivided into six states, one of which was the Sanjak of Alexandretta that established its capital in Hatay near Antakya (Antioch). See “The Accord of Ankara,” LNTS, vol. LIV, 178-193.
By 1936, Turkey’s growing concerns over the status of Alexandretta and that of the Straits demonstrated the need to revise the relevant clauses of the Lausanne regime, which had become more detrimental to Turkish national security. Between 1936 until the breakout of war in Europe in 1939, Turkish policy makers concentrated their efforts in resolving these two problems. Mindful of the intricate balance in Europe at the time, Turkey changed its own conceptions of the English and the French, establishing closer relations with the former to remilitarize the Straits in 1936 and with the latter to annex Alexandretta in 1939. From this perspective, Mustafa Kemal’s frequently cited dictum – Peace at Home, Peace Abroad – should not be taken as a pacifist policy but as a guarantee extended by the Turkish state to its newfound partners in the West, signaling a phase of revisionism that would run parallel to British and French interests.

The one obvious caveat with this strategy was that Turkey’s revisionism could have easily been misinterpreted by the Soviet Union, given all pressing political exigencies in Europe that were left up in the air after Locarno. It was no coincidence that during the course of 1936-1939 Turkish leaders often made one last stop in Moscow before ending their diplomatic tours in Europe, because they knew only too well that their Soviet friends would be somewhat irked by this radical shift in their foreign policy. In spite of the sour Soviet reaction to their actions, Turkish diplomats thought that they could still keep things in perspective by assuming the role of arbitrator between Europe and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, beginning with 1936, the Soviet Union would find for itself a much less important place in Turkey’s recalibrated foreign policy.

The short-lived period of friendly relations between Turks and the Soviets thus began to decline after 1936 over irreconcilable differences regarding the new status of the
Straits. For both parties, this was excruciatingly reminiscent of the late imperial Russo-Ottoman conflict. Some Turkish scholars have argued that Turkey’s intention was not to antagonize Stalin, and that, in fact, it still regarded the Soviet Union as its closest ally since the Lenin-Atatürk rapprochement of 1921. Others questioned the historic Turco-Russian rivalry notion and suggested that Turkey’s new modernizers were very well aware of the recent political progress, which had been intrinsically linked to the recent period of friendship with the Soviets. Yet, the absence of a functioning collective security system made it unacceptable for Turkey to remain aloof to the Mediterranean turmoil and “let the fate of her Straits be determined by an outdated Lausanne regime.”

The Emerging Italian Threat

Behind Turkey’s changing motives and attempts to reformulate its regional diplomacy anew, the Italian threat played the greatest role. Alarm bells really began to toll when the Turkish ambassador in Rome sent home a comprehensive report on “The Role of Dodecanese in Italy’s Naval Policy.” Citing Benito Mussolini’s official statements published in the Italian popular press as well as the ambassador’s personal interviews with Italian authorities, the report indicated a serious increase in Italian fortifications in Leros and Kastelorizo – the two main naval bases of the Regia Marina in the Aegean Sea. According to the ambassador’s report, Mussolini seemed to have a

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33 The long-term goal for late imperial Russia was acquisition of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. Until it was capable of capturing them, Russia based its policy on maintaining the status quo and to ensure that no other state would take its control from the Ottoman Empire while Russia rebuilt and expanded its armed forces. A recent monograph on Imperial Russian foreign policy concerning the Straits is Ronald P. Bobroff’s Late Imperial Russia and the Turkish Straits: Roads to Glory (Tauris: New York, 2006).


36 BCA 030.10.0.0/238.608 (Turkish Embassy in Rome to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 7, 1935).
different scheme in mind – one that aimed at containing the French dominance in the Mediterranean from the east, through the Aegean islands – which fell in sharp contrast with his earlier assurances on using the Dodecanese mainly as a trading hub.

The ongoing animosity was further exacerbated by Mussolini’s anti-Turkish statements, which were intermittently publicized in the Turkish press. In September 1935, the pro-Soviet Turkish journalist Zekeriya Sertel wrote: “Why would the Bari radio stations broadcast Il Duce’s propaganda on Turkey in Turkish? We have never been Italy’s colony nor participated in any hostility against the Fascist Italian government. For any normal country these broadcasts alone would have been sufficient grounds for declaring casus belli.” Only four weeks after the publication of Sertel’s article in Tan, Italy began with its Bersaglieri battalions the invasion of Ethiopia. When the Turkish government passed their concerns to Italian authorities, Mussolini assured the Turkish ambassador that the invasion should by no means trouble Turkey, which he regarded as a “European state.” Yet, this was hardly a relief for Ankara. The main reason behind the Turks’ anxiety was Benito Mussolini’s expansionist strategy towards what he liked to call Mare Nostrum.

The role of public opinion in escalating the Italo-Turkish crisis was indubitably significant. The dissemination of people’s voices through newspaper columns signaled the coming of larger waves of press wars between Italy and Turkey. Both Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal tried to stifle the emerging aggressive discourse in their respective national presses, while simultaneously attempting to co-opt it to maintain a common public spirit. In the face of exacerbated hostilities during the fall of 1935, Italy’s

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38 BCA 030.10.0.0/111.745.9 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, October 1, 1935).
ambassador in Ankara visited the Turkish Directorate of Printing and Press, offering a mutual state intervention to attune a list of columnists from Cumhuriyet and Il-Giornale d’Italia daily papers, “who obsessively made inflammatory remarks, hindering the friendly relations between Italy and Turkey.”

While Prime Minister İsmet İnönü later expressed the Turks’ shared discomfort on this matter, he also added that what disturbed them more was “the exponential rise in the number of radio shows, broadcasted by Turkish speaking Italian anchormen in Rome, who now attracted a substantial audience in the tea houses of Izmir by entertaining them with this or that Turkish song during public hours.” Mussolini’s verbal assurances on the Dodecanese islands proved to be futile and failed to pacify the Turkish authorities. Bilateral relations rapidly deteriorated after the appointment of Italy’s new Consul General to Izmir, Paolo Alberto Rossi, who organized the Fascist Club upon arrival and threw out lavish receptions for the city’s prominent businessmen, accompanied by recitals and plays by the Italian Collegiate Institute for Girls in Izmir.

In December 1935, the French media leaked the infamous Hoare-Laval secret deal, which aimed at ending the Second Italo-Abyssinian war by simply allowing Italy to swallow large areas of Ethiopia. What credibility the Italian government hitherto had in the eyes of the Turkish state, or the League of Nations for that matter, ceased abruptly

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39 BCA 030.10.0.0/85.558.22 (Directorate of Printing and Press to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 10, 1935).
40 BCA 030.10.0.0/239.611.15 (Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 8, 1935). Located on the westernmost tip of Western Anatolia, Izmir was Turkey’s second largest city by the 1930s and home to the country’s biggest Levantine community of Venetian descent, with a population around 10,000 in the early twentieth century. Source: Rauf Beyru, Levantenler ve Levantizm (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2000), 51-54.
41 BCA 030.10.0.0/239.610.27 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, January 17, 1935); and BCA 490.01.5.1/605.96.5 (RPP Izmir Office to RPP General Secretariat, June 24, 1939).
42 British Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare and French Prime Minister Pierre Laval proposed a secret deal to Italy, which placed large areas of Ethiopia under Italian control. Once the plan was leaked to the media, however, Hoare and Laval were accused of selling out the Abyssinians, and forced to resign. See: A.J. Barker, Rape of Ethiopia, 1936 (London: Ballantine Books, 1971).
after the Hoare-Laval plan became public. In January 1936, the Turkish Chief of General Staff, Fevzi Çakmak, carried out a discreet inspection tour of the entire Aegean regiments along the coast and met with the commander in chief of the 4th Army Corps in Izmir. “Within the scheme of things,” Çakmak suggested during this meeting, “if it so happens that we witness an Anglo-Italian naval battle in the Mediterranean, the English would lack the resources to engage with the Regia Marina on the Dodecanese and would focus on Egypt instead.” Consequently, Turkey decided to reinforce its land forces in the Aegean, dispatched the majority of new conscripts to the region, and purchased modern anti-aircraft guns from Great Britain.

By March 1936, a few days after the German reoccupation of the Rhineland, Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras proposed a motion for the resolution of the Straits problem at the League of Nations. Yet, after meeting in London with the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, Aras had postponed to pursue the motion for the time being. During the Anglo-Turkish talks – first time since the Mosul Crisis of 1924-25 – he made the Turkish government’s position clear; that Italy had strongly fortified the islands in the Dodecanese and that these were in essence “the Helgoland of the Eastern Mediterranean.” Aras stressed that such an undertaking could only serve for two purposes: to control the Suez Canal and to dominate the Dardanelles. “From the Turkish perception,” Aras claimed, it was unacceptable that Italy should have “these highly fortified islands within a few hours' sail of the Dardanelles and Turkey be forbidden the

43 BCA 030.10.0.0/219.476.4 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Turkish Embassy in Rome, January 2, 1936).
44 BCA 030.10.0.0/256.720.20 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, January 23, 1936).
45 BCA 030.10.0.0/221.491.27 (Chief of General Staff to the Prime Ministry, March 8, 1936).
46 BCA 030.10.0.0/231.557.7 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, March 16, 1936).
47 29 miles off the German coastline, the Helgoland was one of the major naval bases of the German Empire, and later the Third Reich. Source: BCA 030.10.0.0/219.476.7 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Turkish Embassy in London, March 16, 1936).
right to fortify in their defense.” Yet he also added that the Turkish Government would not take any action, except in conjunction with the British Government and the League.

The Turkish case, which Tevfik Aras sought to establish, was that conditions had substantially changed – and to the detriment of the security of Turkish territory – since the Straits Convention was signed in 1923. Aras claimed; (1) That the feeling of general insecurity was deepening, as a natural result of the issues raised by the Italo-Abyssinian conflict; by Germany's repudiation of the Treaty of Locarno and her unilateral action in reoccupying the Rhineland; by Austria's practical and unilateral denunciation of the military clauses of Saint-Germaine; by the general process of rearmament; and by the development of events in the Far East. (2) That there was a perceptible danger of European war. (3) That the Italians had altered the position in the Mediterranean by fortifying the islands of the Dodecanese. (4) That the guarantee afforded to Turkey by Article 18 of the 1923 Straits Convention was seriously vitiated by the facts that (a) Japan, who had been one of the signatories, left the League of Nations, and (b) that Italy refused to regard herself as bound by international law. (5) That the habit of unilateral repudiation of international obligations was spreading.

While Turkey managed to attract Britain’s attention, it was yet unclear if the Turkish government intended to raise this issue formally (i.e. before the League of Nations on the basis of Article 19 ‘the Covenant of the League) or by an approach to all the signatories of the Straits Convention in 1923. In Eden’s opinion, the latter seemed like a better idea, bearing in mind the many other complicated and dangerous issues hitherto pending before the League. Eden also thought that, while the whole issue was of

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48 FO 424/280 E 1634/26/44 (Eden to Loraine, March 24, 1936).
49 BCA 030.10.0.0/63.424.14 (Draft Report on the Current Status of the Straits, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 26, 1936).
no small urgency, a rushed Turkish occupation of the internationally controlled Straits would make a most unfortunate impression on the public opinions of all signatory states, given the series of recent convention breaches in Europe.\footnote{FO 424/280 E 2024/26/44 (Loraine to Eden, April 10, 1936).} In response, Aras pleaded that the step he proposed was the only way of forestalling a possible Italian \textit{coup de main} on the Straits; that the interests of friendly signatories would clearly be compromised if Turkish action was taken too late; that if the guarantee provided by article 18 of the Straits Convention was, as he feared, actually inoperative, there remained nothing but the Turkish forces on which to rely.\footnote{BCA 030.11.1.0/106.28.11 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, April 19, 1936).}

\textbf{The Montreux Convention}

Using as a pretext Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1936, the Turkish delegation to the League of Nations finally made a motion for the annulment of the 1923 Lausanne Convention on the Turkish Straits, based on the principle \textit{rebus sic stantibus (things thus standing)}.\footnote{BCA 030.18.1.2/65.48.14 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, June 10, 1936).} After long hours of heated debates at the international conference summoned in Montreux, the new convention replaced the Lausanne regime and reinstated “Turkey’s full sovereignty over the Straits in times of war and when she feels an imminent possibility of war.”\footnote{“Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi ve Ekleri,” \textit{Resmi Gazete} (August 5, 1936): 37.} This was particularly disturbing for the Soviet Union since the sovereignty clause included Turkey’s freedom to remilitarize the Dardanelles and to close or open the Straits to the free-passage of warships of all sizes whenever and to whomever it thought necessary.\footnote{“Soviet Note on the Turkish Proposal for a Revision of the Lausanne Straits Convention, 22 June 1936” \textit{Dokumenty vneshei politiki SSSR} (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1974), XIX, 231-232.}
In the early days of the conference, the Soviet government was, in general, anxious to close the Straits to the passage of any warships from non-littoral countries.\textsuperscript{55} Great Britain, naturally, wished to secure the maximum liberty of passage.\textsuperscript{56} The Turkish government, on the other hand, hoped to combine the principle of liberty of passage with the principle of security by finding a solution, which would grant full Turkish control over regulating the passage of warships from the Mediterranean into the Black Sea, and from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{57} By doing so, while free passage would be assured in all ordinary circumstances, the security of Turkey over the Sea of Marmara (through the Aegean and the Black Sea) would be assured, and any sudden and undue accretion of the naval forces of any power be prevented.

The difficulty, which the United Kingdom delegation faced in the latter period of talks, was the uncertainty regarding the attitude of the Turks themselves. When Turkey first proposed that a conference should be held for the purpose of revising the Straits Convention of Lausanne, the Ankara government made it clear that their only object was to secure the right to refortify the Straits – in other words, the abrogation of those clauses of the old convention, which provided for their demilitarization.\textsuperscript{58} Yet, it was not until a month later, when Tevfik Aras put forward his proposals in greater detail at Montreux, that the question was raised of doing more than providing for the simple abrogation of the demilitarization clauses.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 233.
\textsuperscript{56} FO 424/280 E 2928/26/44 (Clive to Eden, April 27, 1936).
\textsuperscript{58} FO 424/280 R 4323/294/67 (Eden to Drummond, June 11, 1936).
\textsuperscript{59} FO 424/280 E 4633/26/44 (Stanley to Eden, June 12, 1936).
On June 11, Aras indicated that the Turkish Government regarded it essential, not only that the demilitarization clauses should be abrogated, but also that the clauses regulating the passage of warships through the Straits should be drastically revised. He explained that the Turkish Government regarded warships as “floating fortresses” which might, by penetrating into the Straits in considerable numbers, so seriously threaten Turkish security as to render the rectification of the Straits practically valueless. The Turkish Government therefore intended to propose new regulations for the passage of ships to provide (1) for the security of Turkey herself within the Straits zone, and (2) for the security of the Black Sea Powers. This distinction between the two objects in view proved important and, at the time, Britain refused it on the grounds that this went considerably beyond the original Turkish proposals.60

A second, and much more serious, difficulty arose from the fact that it became apparent almost at the outset of the conference that the Soviet attitude was likely to play a far more important part in the negotiations than had at first been anticipated. When Aras had discussed his plans for the Montreux conference in Geneva in May 1936, he had repeatedly insisted that the Soviet Government was in complete agreement with the Turkish Government, and that the Turkish proposals would meet with no difficulty from that quarter. When the Turkish draft was eventually presented at Montreux on June 22, however, it appeared that the Lausanne principles of equality and reciprocity were abandoned in the revised draft, causing a serious concern for the Soviet delegation.61

In his letter to Turkey’s ambassador in Moscow Zekai Apaydin, Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs M. Litvinov stated that the Soviet government

60 BCA 030.18.1.2/65.48.15 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, June 11, 1936).
61 “Soviet Note on the Turkish Proposal for a Revision of the Lausanne Straits Convention, 22 June 1936” Dokumenty vneshei politiki SSSR (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1974), XIX, 232.
acknowledged and appreciated Turkey’s concern regarding “the insecurity of peace at the present time and the grave danger of the outbreak of war,” and therefore thought it to be natural as to why the Turks “were so anxious to ensure the security of its territory by means of appropriate changes to the Straits regime.”62 Yet Litvinov added that the Soviets expected these potential changes to be “harmonious with the interests of all littoral powers and with the existing tranquility in that zone.”63 With regards to transit clauses through the Straits, a special exception had been provided for existing Russian capital ships; hence, they did not lead to any insuperable difficulties.64 But regarding the more heated question of passage into and out of the Black Sea, while it was proposed that the tonnage of non-Black Sea Powers into the Black Sea should be subjected to severe and rigid limitations, no compensatory restrictions whatsoever were imposed on Black Sea tonnage coming into the Mediterranean.65

Regarding merchant vessels, from littoral states or otherwise, the Soviets agreed in principle that they should have complete freedom of transit through the Straits. Warships, on the other hand, constituted a problem. “Strictly from a practical viewpoint,” argued Litvinov, “warships from non-littoral states should not be allowed into the Black Sea – except for courtesy visits – where they would have no outlet or naval bases.”66 The Soviet Union believed that the more the tonnage and number of vessels

63 Ibid.
64 “Litvinov’s Statement at the Montreux Conference on the Turkish Draft for Revision of the Lausanne Straits Convention, 23 June 1936” Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1974), XIX, 314-316.
66 “Litvinov’s Statement at the Montreux Conference on the Turkish Draft for Revision of the Lausanne Straits Convention, 23 June 1936” Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1974), XIX, 314-316.
entering the Black Sea was limited, the greater would be the security of this part of Europe and Asia. Nevertheless, for Litvinov, “there was no reason why the Black Sea countries should not have complete freedom of passage for their warships to the great international routes and oceans.”

Historically the Russians always thought themselves to be in a special position with regards to the Black Sea, “in that it was washed by seas which were not connected to one another,” and that “it seemed indispensable for their naval forces to communicate freely between their various ports and naval bases around the world.” In his statement at the League of Nations, Litvinov concluded by arguing that there was absolutely no reason why the Soviet military vessels, which were built by Soviet engineers in Soviet ports elsewhere, should not be allowed to join the Black Sea fleet freely. “We should not forget that the League of Nations has not died,” said Litvinov and added: “We should therefore protect the rights of littoral warships entering and exiting the Black Sea in order to give aid and assistance to the victims of aggression when the League of Nations deems necessary.”

Despite the Soviet Union’s strong reservations, however, the question of the passage of warships through the Straits, and into or out of the Black Sea, “in time of war when Turkey is a belligerent” was resolved in the Turks’ favor. It had been recognized from the onset that, once Turkey secured the right to refortify the Straits, it would in fact be able to control such passage absolutely, so that no fleet would be able to pass through the Straits except by her permission. In short, the Montreux Convention turned out to be a great success for Turkey alone, and produced results that were now less

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67 Ibid, 315.
68 Ibid, 316.
69 Ibid.
advantageous for both Britain and the USSR. Although Secretary Eden argued that the convention “set a precedent for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Europe and beyond,” behind closed doors during a heated debate at the House of Commons, Premier Stanley Baldwin revealed Britain’s reservations and said that “by allowing the Turks to re-militarize the Straits, in less than two decades after the Great War, our interests in the region now depended entirely on the Turks’ good will.”\textsuperscript{71} Likewise, the Soviet Union thought that the amount of liberties granted to the Turkish government was too much and considered the Straits too valuable an exception bearing in mind all other internationalized waterways in the world.\textsuperscript{72}

The signing of the Montreux Convention found substantial coverage in world news. Even before the signatories gathered in Montreux, German newspapers began entertaining scenarios that would capitulate the “pragmatic friendship [maksada matuf dostluk] between the two irreconcilable enemies – Turkey and the Soviet Union.”\textsuperscript{73} Turkey’s ambassador in Berlin compiled an extensive report on Germany’s official and public perception during the Montreux meetings and argued that the Germans were delighted to see the Turks get back what was rightfully theirs from two decades of Anglo-Soviet custody. The Istanbul correspondent of the\textit{ Deutsche Nachrichtenbüro GmbH} (DNB) wrote; “Turks’ relentless efforts in bringing the Soviets and the British to the diplomacy table also fell in sharp contrast with the quintessentially Oriental ways of their Ottoman forefathers.”\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{71} For Eden, see: BCA 030.10.0.0/234.580.17 (Turkish Embassy in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 10, 1936); and for Baldwin, see: BCA 030.10.0.0/234.581.5 (Turkish Embassy in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 12, 1937).
\textsuperscript{72} B.M. Potskhveria, \textit{Turtsiia mezhdu dvumia mirovymi voinami: ocherki vneshnei politiki} (Moscow: Nauka, 1992), 112-128.
\textsuperscript{73} BCA 030.10.0.0/248.681.7 (Turkish Embassy in Berlin to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 8, 1936).
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
On the other hand, the affirmative nature of Soviets’ initial response to the new Straits regime seemed rather suspicious to Americans, who declined to send an observer to Montreux. The US State Department was less convinced that changing circumstances in the international equilibrium since 1923 required a full resumption of Turkish military control over the Straits and suspected that the Montreux Treaty had “too much in common with the Treaty of Hünkar İskeseli,” which was signed almost exactly a century earlier between Tsar Nicholas I and Sultan Mahmud II, advancing Russian interests in the region. Although empowering the anti-Italian bloc in the Mediterranean was probably a good idea, Roosevelt was dubious as to how advantageous the new convention would be for the British and American interests in the case of Turkey’s accession to the Franco-Soviet Pact. In fact, they argued that the Montreux Convention was a reversion to the pre-war status of the Straits, and was not in a fundamental sense a genuine solution to the problem.

Commensurate with the interests of historical actors in Europe at the time, historians have a tendency to overstate the centrality of the Straits question with regards to Turkish-Soviet relations after 1936, underplaying the vital Russian component of Turkey’s Kurdish policy in the eastern provinces. There is an element of truth in this prevailing argument insofar as reinstating Turkish sovereignty over the Straits began to show signs of distress in bilateral relations when, for instance, the Soviets ordered their

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75 BCA 030.10.0.0/63.424 (Turkish Embassy in Washington DC to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 28, 1936).
77 See, for instance, Yücel Güçlü, “The Uneasy Relationship: Turkish Foreign Policy Towards the Soviet Union at the Outbreak of the Second World War,” The Turkish Yearbook, XXVIII, 106-138; and Frank Marzari, “Western-Soviet Rivalry in Turkey,” Middle Eastern Studies, 7, 1 (January 1971), 63-79. Both scholars emphasize the Straits problem as the only reason behind growing animosity between the two nations.
two submarines (Tashkent and Dimitiev) in 1937 not to leave the Dardanelles until further notice, galling the Turkish naval command. But there were other problems that deepened the rift between the two allies, drawing them further apart in areas besides the Straits.

The deterioration of interstate relations had serious and hitherto overlooked consequences for both the Soviets and the Turks in the Middle East. Throughout the 1920s, Moscow became Turkey’s main oil supplier and built new pipelines to transit Russian oil through Anatolia. As new drilling rigs were planted in the Caspian Basin in the early 1930s, the Soviet petroleum industry gradually expanded its monopoly over the Turkish market. At the time, this did not seem to pose a serious concern for the Turks so long as they maintained amicable relations with the Soviet Union. By the late 1930s, however, Turkey began searching for alternative providers in the Middle East, and, in 1937, signed an agreement with Standard Oil (later Mobil), which had recently found new oil reserves through earlier concessions granted by Saudi Arabia. Turkey informed the Soviet ambassador, Lev Karakhan, that all existing oil agreements with the Soviet Union would be unilaterally annulled by the end of that year.

Following the Straits Convention, this latest incident was not only a second blow to the Soviets in the region, causing tremendous harm to their economic interests, but was also regarded as an embarrassing diplomatic defeat, for which ambassador Karakhan was held responsible. One of the chief architects of Soviet-Turkish alliance in the 1920s and

78 BCA 030.10.0.0/249.683.2 (Ministry of Defense to the Prime Ministry, September 23, 1937).
79 When referring to Russo-Turkish relations in the early republican period, the term “alliance” would not be an overstatement. Turkish leaders deliberately and repeatedly referred to big northern neighbor as mütefık (ally).
81 BCA 030.10.0.0/248.682.13 (Prime Ministry to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 6, 1937).
1930s, Karakhan was immediately called back to Moscow for a debrief, following a series of newspaper columns that appeared in *Pravda*, accusing him of “pursuing an over-ambitious policy, typical of his Caucasian fervor, which obviously yielded to catastrophic results.” In fact, Karakhan had already foreseen Turkey’s shifting strategy to resolve its energy dependency on the Soviet Union. He even sought to establish a Soviet-Iranian-Turkish partnership network in the Middle East, mostly for appeasing Turkey with access to cheaper and more sustainable oil. But Karakhan’s plans, which would have preempted the British oriented Sa’dabad Pact of the same year, failed at the onset of negotiations.83

Perhaps a bigger problem that occurred between the Soviet Union and Turkey after the Montreux Convention was Stalin’s unilateral renunciation of the mutual Border Security Assistance Agreement in 1937, which had been in effect since 1928.84 The agreement’s whole *raison d’être* was to prevent cross-border smuggling of material goods and trafficking of arms through joint patrolling of the Turkish-Soviet border in southern Caucasia. Its annulment after the oil crisis probably did not come as a surprise but, nonetheless, caused great apprehension in Ankara since the absence of Soviet assistance required additional reinforcements on the permeable eastern frontier – a burden now Turkey had to shoulder on its own against Kurdish infiltration.

Even without a foreseeable Soviet threat in the making, termination of the 1928 Border Treaty became a central question for policy makers in Ankara, signaling a reversal of earlier Bolshevik support with regards to Turkey’s sensitive Kurdish problem.

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82 *Pravda*, April 22, 1937.
83 What *Pravda* obviously did not mention in that article was the long-list of accusations that had already been lined up against Karakhan at home, as a ploy to include him in Stalin’s Great Purges. He committed suicide three months later, in September 1937. Chaim Potok, *The Gates of November* (New York: Random House, 1996), 56.
84 BCA 030.10.0.0/230.546.10 (Turkish Embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (June 3, 1938).
For all their well-deserved confidence after the Straits convention, by 1937 Turkish policy-makers became increasingly wary of deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union at a critical conjuncture, when another Kurdish revolt broke out in the eastern province of Dersim. If this period was one of enthusiasm, accomplishments and great expectations, it was also one of transition, uncertainty and anxiety over the Kurdish question, of which the Soviets played a critical role.

**Collateral Damage: Turkey’s ‘Eastern Question’**

Awakening to a sense of nationhood rather belatedly, the Kurds have been separated by the impassable mountainous terrains of greater Mesopotamia, constituting the largest ethnic group in the region next to the Turks, Arabs and the Persians.\(^{85}\) Inspired by the earlier successes of Turkish nationalists and driven into desperation by its own failure, Kurdish nationalism has steadily grown radical and doctrinaire throughout the early 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^{86}\) In fact, the Turks themselves, fearful of losing their eastern provinces to the Armenians before and during the Great War, had done much to bolster

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\(^{85}\) While demographic studies on the size of the early to mid 20\(^{th}\) century Kurdish population vary greatly, in 1937, when the Dersim rebellion broke out in Turkey, approximately 1,500,000 Kurds were living in Turkey – “Kurdy,” *Bol’shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 2\(^{nd}\) ed., Moscow, 1953.

\(^{86}\) The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 played a profound role in the destinies of the peoples that comprised the Ottoman Empire, including the Kurds, whose incipient nationalism was cemented during this second constitutional experiment of the late Ottoman state. In the early phase of the revolution, local Kurdish leaders – like many other ethno-religious groups – greeted the constitution with jubilation, and actively engaged in parliamentary affairs, reforming the empire form within. Until recently, the established view was such that, in the aftermath of the counterrevolution of 1909, the Young Turks’ brief honeymoon with the Kurds came to an abrupt end, triggering a period of highly centralized program in the Kurdish occupied provinces. Recent scholarship, however, suggests that the Kurdish leaders in fact remained loyal to the Ottoman state, and only after it became certain that the empire would not recover did Kurdish nationalism emerge and clash with the Kemalist brand of Turkish nationalism. See: Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State* (New York: SUNY, 2004). A similar argument with regards to the Young Turks’ relations with the Arabs could be found here: Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
Kurdish nationalist aspirations. Once the triumphant Kemalist regime proclaimed the republic in 1923, however, the Turks first discouraged and later restricted Kurdish nationalism.

Throughout the second half of the 1920s, two major Kurdish rebellions broke out – Shaykh Sa’id and Ararat (Ağrı Dağı İsyanı) in 1925 and 1930, respectively – marking as a reminder of Turkey’s overambitious nationalist objectives in the Eastern provinces. Within less than a year after the republic’s proclamation, Kurds began to express their bitterness against Ankara’s vigorous attempts to homogenize Asia Minor through exiling Kurdish notables to Western provinces and prohibiting the usage of Kurdish language. In 1925, the Turkish government sought to resettle the Kurdish population, which constituted the second largest ethnicity in the country, based on a comprehensive Reform Plan for the East (Şark Islahat Planı). The Kurds denounced the plan, and, in the spring of 1925, Shaykh Sa’id of Piran, a leader of the Naqshibandı order of Dervishes, rose against the Turkish government.

Having acquired almost the entire Kurdish popular support behind his movement through matrimonial alliances with the neighboring chieftains, particularly the Zaza of Dersim highlands, Shaykh Sa’id’s army quickly advanced towards Diyarbakır, briefly capturing a few important towns including Harput. Sa’id was ultimately defeated by a

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89 BCA 30.18.1.2/12.76.17, (*Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu*, February 23, 1925).
Turkish counteroffensive that was unleashed against the insurgents on several locations, but it took the Turkish army almost three weeks to capture him.\textsuperscript{92} The suppression of the rebellion, accompanied by summary trials, mass deportations and punitive measures, failed to break the spirit of Kurdish resistance or to extirpate the last vestiges of opposition to Turkish rule.

The Turkish government held the Kurdish problem under close scrutiny in 1925, and commissioned two parliamentary research groups under Abdülhalık Renda, who was Speaker of the Turkish National Assembly, and Cemil Ubaydın, who was serving as Minister of Interior.\textsuperscript{93} Looking at both reports, which clearly summarized the Turkish government’s perspective, three factors stand out as important considerations behind the Shaykh Sa’id uprising. First, the mutineers were almost exclusively portrayed as retrograde counterrevolutionaries led by obscurantist and primitive tribal leaders, rather than nationalist reactionaries.\textsuperscript{94} Secondly, it seemed “hardly spontaneous and peculiarly coincidental” that the revolution broke out when the British government was putting pressure on the League of Nations to pass a resolution that would award the Kingdom of Iraq with the strategic oil-rich province of Mosul, where the Kurds were headquartered in their attacks against Turkey.\textsuperscript{95} Finally, strategic and logistical findings of all military reports pointed out to the necessity to finding an access to rebel territory, which was

\textsuperscript{92} BCA 30.18.1.2/13.24.17, (The court-martialing of Shaikh Sa’id [Istiklal Mahkemeleri], 29 April 1925).
\textsuperscript{93} Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi [henceforth TBMM] (Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 1983), d. 7, c. 16, b. 82, s. 33 (1 September 1925).
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Relations between Great Britain and Turkey gradually became tense over the status of the British occupied Mosul province, which had been left unresolved at the diplomacy table in Lausanne. When the League of Nations awarded the British mandate in Iraq with Mosul – a crucial wilayat that Turkey regarded its own under the National Oath (Misak-i Millî) – Mustafa Kemal sought to challenge the decision by sending military forces to the region. The Sheikh Said rebellion, which broke out in the spring of 1925, forced him to abandon his original plan of annexation.
blocked by a mountainous terrain. The only possible entry to the region was through the Baghdad Railway, which now lay in the Syrian portion under French administration stationed in Alexandretta. Although France granted permission to transit Turkish troops and supplies in accordance with Article 10 of the 1921 Franco-Turkish Agreement, Syrian authorities were making it difficult to utilize the station as a Turkish military garrison, which ultimately hindered the Turks’ original plan of mass encirclement and provided the Kurds opportunity to disperse easily, ultimately turning the operation into a prolonged guerilla warfare.

In 1927, a Kurdish National Congress was summoned with the initiative of Kurdish nationalists in Syria. At this conference, which was properly entitled Khoybun (Independence), representatives of various Kurdish tribes decided to put an end to all Kurdish-Armenian or Kurdish-Persian differences and designate Ararat as the provisional capital of the Khoybun, dissolving all existing other Kurdish nationalist organizations into one. Through subsequent conferences in Beirut and Alexandretta within the next two years, the Khoybun grew from a miniature provisional government to a well-organized state structure with a substantial army. Mindful of the perilous and costly suppression of the previous Shaykh Sa’id rebellion, the Turks initially sought to negotiate with the Khoybun, declaring general amnesty for those who laid their arms within three months, and allowed all deportees to return to their homes. To reach an amicable settlement, the governor of Doğu Beyazid was authorized to open up an even larger window for negotiations with local Kurdish chieftains, while the Ankara government

\[96\] BCA 30.18.1.2/14.33.15, (Chief of General Staff to the Ministry of Interior, November 11, 1925).
\[97\] BCA 30.18.1.2/12.68.8, (Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 13, 1925).
\[98\] BCA 30.10.0.0/113.771.1, (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, April 4, 1927).
\[99\] BCA 30.10.0.0/113.771.4, (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, April 12, 1929).
\[100\] BCA 30.10.0.0/112.758.13, (Prime Ministry to the Chief of General Staff, March 12, 1929).
approached İhsan Nuri Pasha, a former sergeant in the Turkish army and the new leader of the Khoybun.  

Ultimately, the Turks failed to reach a peaceful settlement of the dispute with Kurdish leaders, whose demands for regional autonomy had simply not been tolerated, and resorted once again to arms for settling the dispute, which in return culminated in the form of another rebellion in Ararat. The Fourth and Sixth Army Corps under General Salih Pasha’s command unleashed an offensive in May 1930 against Kurdish insurgents in Ararat, but failed to contain the uprising, which quickly spread into neighboring provinces of Van, Bitlis, Iğdır, and Diyarbakır. Throughout the summer of 1930, a state of war existed between the Turkish army and Kurdish rebels with intermittent fighting in Mardin, Siirt, and Urfa. On September 2, 1930, having exhausted their local remedies and initial impetus, the Kurdish forces surrendered and İhsan Nuri took refuge in Iranian Azerbaijan. Witnessing the pyrrhic outcome of the Shaikh Sa’id and Ararat rebellions, Ankara saw the solution in further centralization, and enacted on May 5, 1932 the Public Inspectorships Law (Umum Müfettişlik Kanunu), followed by the Resettlement Law (İskan Kanunu) in 1934.

101 BCA 30.10.0.0/113.771.9, (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, September 16, 1929).
102 Some studies consider the time span of the Ararat Rebellion to be much larger, from 1926 to 1930, and the Rebellion itself as a series of smaller uprisings, the major ones being: The First Ararat Rebellion (May-June 1926); Koçuğaşı Rebellion (October-November 1927); Mutki Rebellion (May-August 1927); Second Ararat Rebellion (September 1927); Bicar Tenkil Rebellion (October-November 1927); Resul Rebellion (May-June 1929); Tendürek Rebellion (September 1929); Zilan Rebellion (June 1930); and the Third Ararat Rebellion (September 1930). See Huseyin Yayman, Türkiye’nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası (İstanbul: DK, 2011), 52. While smaller uprisings did occur intermittently, archival evidence suggests that the Turkish state was forced to mobilize an organized counteroffensive only in 1930, and managed to suppress the previous ones without much effort.
103 BCA 30.10.0.0/83.549.18, (Directorate of Public Security to the Chief of General Staff, June 22, 1930).
104 BCA 30.10.0.0/83.550.1, (Directorate of Public Security to the Chief of General Staff, September 13, 1930).
105 Cemil Koçak, Umumi Müfettişlikler (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 294.
Since the very onset of the republic’s proclamation, Kurdish insurgency constituted the most significant concern in Turkey’s eastern policy. A retrospective analysis of both Shaikh Sa’id and Ararat rebellions reveals that the underlying reason behind Turkey’s success in consolidating central authority in its eastern provinces was the absence of a Russian threat. Although historians have recently begun to explore different aspects of the Soviet-Turkish alliance on Europe’s margins in the 1920s and early 1930s, the changing Soviet factor in Turkey’s Kurdish problem after 1936 remains to be terra incognita. A brief survey of the Dersim rebellion in 1937-38 yields to many benefits in understanding the side affect of the Montreux Convention with regards to Soviet-Turkish relations in the east.

With its snowcapped mountains and narrow valleys at the heart of Eastern Anatolia, Dersim remained to be the last autonomous enclave that the Turkish state failed to consolidate into central government control by the mid-1930s. Inhabited by a large number of small tribes, which had always enjoyed quasi-independence since the Sultanate of Rum, Dersim was a culturally distinct part of Kurdistan with its ethno-religious and linguistic peculiarities. An estimated number of 65,000 people lived in Dersim by 1935, all adhering to the heterodox Alevi sect of Anatolian shi’ism (as opposed to Sunni Kurds), speaking in a different vernacular known as Zaza. Despite the perpetual conflicts among the tribesmen, which often turned into protracted feuds,

\[106\text{ TGNA prepared yet another detailed report “On the Kurdish Question in Dersim” in 1934, drawing attention to possible scenarios of assimilation. BCA 030.10.0.0/110.741.9 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, April 26 1934).} \]
\[107\text{ So much so that the Turks, with a fair amount of comedic effort, considered them as “racially Turanian.” BCA 030.10.0.0/115.797.16 (Dersim Military Inspectorship, December 27, 1931).} \]
\[108\text{ A classical anatomy of the Dersim rebellion is İsmail Beşikçi’s once censored Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1990).} \]
established norms of Zaza customary law provided fertile ground for commoners to form an ostensible polity that refused to pay taxes and evaded compulsory conscription.

In 1936, a state of martial law was proclaimed (1936 Dersim Kanunu) with an explicit goal to “pacify and civilize” the Zaza.\(^{109}\) Within less than a year, Turkish authorities launched a military campaign to preempt an imminent rebellion in Dersim, the chief conspirator of which was an 82-year-old religious leader, Seyit Riza.\(^{110}\) Military operations to subdue the rebellion, despite a more resolved and better-equipped Turkish army, continued throughout the summer of 1937.\(^{111}\) Even after Seyit Riza’s surrender, summary trial and execution accompanied by that of several other conspirators, the insurgency resumed on a greater scale prolonging the war into the spring of 1938 with the arrival of new reinforcements from Syria.\(^{112}\) While the Turkish army once again emerged triumphant out of its third ordeal with Kurdish insurgency, in terms of both civilian casualties, military tactics employed, excessive use of force and new weaponry tested during 1937-1938, Dersim irrefutably became Turkey’s Guernica.\(^{113}\)

A significant consequence of the previous Kurdish rebellions had been the emergence of Turco-Persian and Turco-Syrian conflicts in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with mutual recriminations over the Kurdish question. The Turks had accused the Persian and Syrian governments of explicitly aiding the Kurdish rebels and allowing them to use their territories as bases for attacks against Turkey. With regards to Iran, in the early 1930s, the Soviet Union had offered its services as a mediator between Ankara

\(^{109}\) BCA 030.10.0.0/111.743.16 (Tunceli Military Inspectorship to the Prime Ministry, July 27, 1936).
\(^{110}\) While recent Turkish scholars have begun to write extensively on the Dersim Rebellion, the only English language narrative with some substance is Martin van Bruinessen’s outdated “The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937-38),” in George J. Andereopulos (ed.), Conceptual and Historical Dimensions of Genocide (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); 141-170.
\(^{111}\) BCA 030.10.0.0/47.302.5 (Prime Ministry to the Office of National Security, December 27, 1931).
\(^{112}\) BCA 030.10.0.0/111.744.2 (Public Inspectorship in Dersim to the Prime Ministry, April 8, 1937).
\(^{113}\) BCA 030.10.0.0/111.745.10 (Public Inspectorship in Dersim to the Prime Ministry, March 16, 1937).
and Tehran, successfully resolving the dispute between the two, which would later be cemented by the Sa’dabad Pact in 1937.\textsuperscript{114} The irreconcilable differences between Ankara and Damascus, however, lingered on throughout the latter half of 1930s, and the Kurdish encampments in Syria became the backbone of contention between the two nations in the Dersim Rebellion of 1937-1938. The state of crisis that emerged during the Dersim Rebellion culminated in the form of mutual hostility on the eve of the Second World War, and led to Turkey’s Annexation of Hatay in 1939.

What began in the early 1930s as low intensity conflicts across the Syrian border between Turks and the Kurdish-Armenian bands of several hundred insurgents gradually became larger skirmishes.\textsuperscript{115} In 1933, Turkish intelligence reports indicated that several of the defeated Kurdish rebels’ sons and relatives defected to Syria in pursuit of running the resistance movement from Aleppo, Beirut, and Alexandretta. Among them were men of certain reputation, such as Kürt Cemil Paşa’s sons Mehmet Ferit, Bedri and Kadri, who reportedly offered their services to the French Deuxième Bureau.\textsuperscript{116} Meanwhile, having cleansed themselves of humiliation after the Ararat catastrophe, the Kurds seemed to have found a rejuvenated vigor in Syria, working in closer tandem with Armenians – old foes now neighbors, whose recovery from the 1915 trauma had taken a bit longer.

In November 1935, a series of joint Kurdo-Armenian conferences were held in Aleppo and Alexandretta under the aegis of the Italian embassy. Co-chaired by Mustafa Şahin, the Kurdish member of the Syrian Parliament, and Balyan Papazyan, editor-in-chief of the Armenian newspaper Astane, the conference reached important decisions with regards to the future of anti-Turkish resistance in Syria and laid out the blueprints of

\textsuperscript{114} BCA 030.10.0.0/128.920.12, (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, November 11, 1930).
\textsuperscript{115} BCA 030.10.0.0/112.760.14 (Gendarmerie Command South to the Prime Ministry, August 10, 1931).
\textsuperscript{116} BCA 030.18.1.2/40.80.015 (Gazi Mustafa Kemal to İsmet İnönü, November 12, 1933).
a new assistance network for Dersim.\textsuperscript{117} Both Kurdish and Armenian representatives were convinced that England and France, having secured their interests in Iraq and Syria throughout the past decade, would not be of much help for their cause against Turkey. The Russians, however, could be a better fit, bearing in mind their historical animosity against the Turks.\textsuperscript{118} Kurdish nationalist agitation in Dersim in 1937-1938 therefore added a new dimension to the conflict between Moscow and Ankara.

As early as 1936, a Turkish intelligence operative in Syria began attending the Kurdish conferences disguised as an Armenian doctor, and reported back with the minutes of his meetings.\textsuperscript{119} The Turkish Prime Ministerial Archives recently opened a voluminous folder on the subject, which defines the goals of the Kurdish resistance movement before the Dersim uprising as well as a detailed account of the supplies – including guns, bullets, bombs, poems and propaganda materials – sent from Syria to Dersim, which were later apprehended by Turkish authorities before reaching Dersim.\textsuperscript{120} The Turkish Ministry of Interior’s report indicates an element of doubt regarding Moscow’s involvement in their arms supply, “which required further investigation.”\textsuperscript{121}

Looking at Turkish archival folders, it would be fair to suggest that the Turks did not consider the Soviet Union as one of the instigators during the Dersim affair and thought that Stalin most likely continued to perceive Kurdish nationalism in the Turkish-Iraqi-Syrian triangle as a feudal movement open to Anglo-French imperialist

\textsuperscript{117} BCA 030.10.0.0/115.799.15 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, November 16, 1935).
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} BCA 030.10.0.0/113.773.19 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, November 5, 1936).
\textsuperscript{120} BCA 030.10.0.0/216.775.18 (Turkish Consulate in Beirut to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 13, 1937).
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
exploitation.122 Most Soviet newspapers barely even covered the events in Dersim since the rise of fascism in Europe dominated the headlines.123 Yet, the Kemalist cadres became acutely aware that Stalin abstained from aiding Turkey in its struggle, signaling a reversion in Soviet policy, which would gradually turn into a full-fledged support of the Kurdish cause in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.124

In June of 1937, during the heated days of the first phase of the rebellion, the Turkish Consulate in Beirut reported that several hundred Kurdish insurgents, who had sought asylum in the Soviet Union after the Ararat uprising, returned to frontier towns in northern Alexandretta, closer to the Turkish frontier, to cause public disturbance and obstruction of security forces to divert attention.125 Similar warnings were reported throughout the summer of 1937, alerting the Turkish government of incoming waves of insurgents. The straw that broke the camel’s back came on August 30, 1937; After receiving another such consular telegram from Damascus, the Turkish government raided a convoy in Alexandretta and captured the new Khoybun leader and youngest son of Shayk Sa’id – Haco Mehmed – whose car was driven by a Syrian MP of Armenian descent.126 The Turkish government delivered seven diplomatic notes to Syrian

122 BCA 030.10.0.0/115.803.36 (Turkish Consulate in Beirut to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 30, 1937).
123 Mehmet Perinçek recently published a collection of Soviet archival documents on the Kurdish Question. Although Perinçek’s monograph mostly deals with the first two Kurdish uprisings, he cites a number of newspapers that reflects on the Soviet public perception of the Dersim uprising. Mehmet Perinçek, Sovyet Devlet Kaynaklarında Kürt İsyenleri (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2011).
124 See Epilogue.
125 BCA 030.10.0.0/216.775.18 (Turkish Consulate in Beirut to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 13, 1937).
126 BCA 030.10.0.0/115.803.36 (Turkish Consulate in Beirut to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 30, 1937).
authorities during the course of 1937-1938, accusing the Syrians for openly abetting Kurdish separatists in Turkey.\textsuperscript{127}

\textbf{Turkey’s Annexation of Alexandretta}

As Turkey’s relations with Syria gradually exacerbated into the late-1930s, France began negotiating with the Syrians on their independence, including a change in the status of Alexandretta. Turkey immediately put pressure on the French government to implement the 1921 Ankara Treaty clause concerning the inclusion of the sanjak within Turkish borders. The gulf of Alexandretta located on the easternmost tip of the Mediterranean had a vital geostrategic value, but aside from that, the sanjak also took on a symbolic meaning after the loss of Mosul in 1925. Both places were included in the National Pact (\textit{Misak-ı Milli}) of 1920, which emphasized the indivisibility of Anatolia against imperial designs, but left unresolved at the diplomacy table in Lausanne. With an independent Syria in the offing, and bitter memories of the Mosul dispute not quite forgotten, the ailing Mustafa Kemal made it his last mission not to forgo this one.

Turkey’s annexation of Alexandretta, which occurred in stages between 1936 and 1939, was a peculiar episode in international relations. Generally speaking, what triggered the dispute over the status of the Sanjak, or district, was the signing of the Franco-Syrian Treaty of Alliance on September 9, 1936, which guaranteed the independence of Syria within three years. The Sanjak, however, had been governed by a different administrative regime based on the Ankara agreement of October 20, 1921, where signatories agreed that Turkey would also be a guarantor state within a broader

\textsuperscript{127} BCA 030.10.0.0/115.801.10 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Turkish Consulate in Beirut, April 5, 1938). This last diplomatic note clearly signaled Turkey’s intention of annexing Alexandretta.
French mandated Syrian territory. The Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936 made little mention to the Sanjak’s status, but simply indicated that the safeguarding mechanisms of the Ankara agreement would be preserved under independent Syria. When the draft Treaty was published on September 10, the Turkish representative at the League expressed his government’s apprehension with regards to Alexandretta’s Turkish population and stated that while the safeguarding clauses had been adequate in 1921, France must now sign a separate agreement with Turkey based on “changing circumstances” (rebus sic stantibus) and transform the Sanjak into a separate demilitarized zone with its own Statue and internal autonomy.

Initially, France rejected this proposal on grounds that this would be an unjustifiable dismemberment of Syria and left it to the League to resolve the problem. During the course of the next few months, Turkish and French authorities intermittently discussed this matter, while the League agreed to send a special rapporteur to Alexandretta for conducting research on the Turkish claims, particularly on those pertaining to demographics. In January 1937 a second round of Franco-Turkish talks opened in Geneva and produced a draft resolution that granted Turkey special rights in the Gulf of Alexandretta; changed the Sanjak’s official language from Arabic to Turkish; established a tripartite Franco-Turkish-Syrian Treaty mechanism to safeguard tranquility; accepted existing demarcation lines as the Sanjak’s official frontiers; and determined a provisional Statute that would engineer Alexandretta’s internal autonomy on issues such

128 BCA 030.10.0.0/263.774.16 (Draft Treaty Franco-Syrian Alliance, September 14, 1936).
129 BCA 030.10.0.0/263.772.6 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Turkish Embassy in Geneva, December 12, 1936).
130 For a detailed account of Franco-Turkish talks in 1936 see; Yücel Güçlü, The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta: A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001); 93-176.
as local currency, constitution, and parliament. Amidst heated Arab demonstrations, preparations for the establishment of a Provisional Government were taking place in Alexandretta, which became a distinct but not separate entity from Syria. The new regime was finally announced in November 1937.

In December 1937, Ankara made a further move, after docking a steamer in the Gulf, opening up a bank, and repudiating the former Syrian constitution, replacing it with a Turkish draft. The Turkish Foreign Minister, who was visiting Geneva, protested the Syrian government’s refusal of accepting the electors’ own expressed choice of community in voter registrations. Turkey demanded new demographic studies to be conducted (existing ones still fell short of showing the Turks as a majority) and during the spring of 1938 an ethnicity-based voter registration system was put in place by Turkish and French Authorities. On July 4, 1938, the Franco-Turkish Friendship Treaty was signed, signaling the coming into being of the final interbellum state. The new Hatay State replaced the Sanjak of Alexandretta on September 7, 1938, marking the final achievement of Mustafa Kemal before his death two months later. During a parliamentary session on June 29, 1939, the short-lived independent Hatay State reached a unanimous decision to become a part of the Turkish Republic.

In Western scholarship, the whole incident was generally portrayed as a “crude example of power politics by Turkey, a regrettable yielding by France of Syria’s rights in her own interest, and a resented blow to Syria,” whose claims were overridden and

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131 BCA 030.10.0.0/222.501.15 (Draft Resolution Regarding the Sanjak of Alexandretta, January 28, 1937).
132 BCA 030.10.0.0/222.501.24 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, December 16, 1937).
133 BCA 030.10.0.0/223.502.5 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prime Ministry, December 5, 1937).
134 BCA 030.10.0.0/224.510.13 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, April 7, 1938).
135 BCA 030.10.0.0/224.511.2 (Joint Communiqué signed by the Governments of France and Turkey, July 10, 1938).
weakness abused. Yet for Western historical actors involved in the affair at the time, such were the grim exigencies of the period and that Turkey’s friendship for France had been too valuable to risk in return for gaining Syrians’ respect by defending their territorial integrity. Hence, Western public opinion was divided as newspapers debated whether the Sanjak affair meant an unnecessary dismemberment of Syria, or a justifiable act by Turkey to protect the Turks of Alexandretta, which constituted an ethnic majority. What led to this confusion was perhaps Turkey’s precautious diplomacy of resolving the dispute by strictly following the legal procedures and devices provided by the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Admittedly, relations between the Turkish Republic and Syria during the French mandate had never been friendly and still bore the scars of the Great War. But the Alexandretta dispute dominated Syrian political thinking and emotion throughout the Second World War, agitated the Youth movements and the League for National Action, and gave cause for bitter disputes from within Damascus politics with mutual accusations of half-heartedness. The League for National Action propagated rumors through party newspapers that Turkey would eventually attempt to invade the entire Syrian state, either through an alliance with Germany or simply by the Anglo-French bloc’s ineptitude and disregard, as witnessed in the case of Czechoslovakia.

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137 The 1933 census in Syria gave (in thousands) the following numbers. By religion: Sunni Muslims (94.2); Alevi and Isma’ilis (54.8); Christians (34.9); Jews (.5). By race: Arabs (20.4); Alevi and Isma’ilis (54.8, Turkish Speaking); Turks (89.5), Armenians (23.5, Turkish Speaking); Circassians (1.1) and Kurds (1.8).
138 BCA 030.10.0.0/85.558.13 (Turkish Consulate in Beirut to the Prime Ministry, September 9, 1939).
there was a growing sense of sympathy for *fasci di combattimento* among the young Arabs, as Mussolini reached out to Syria with a rhetoric indulgent of Arab nationalism.\(^{139}\)

**The Oriental Entente**

Wedged between two security considerations – with Italy on the one hand and Syria on the other – Turkey adopted a strategy of revisionism, effectively changing the status of the Straits and Alexandretta to its advantage after 1936. Yet, as Great Power rivalry intensified in Europe and beyond after Germany’s repudiation of its Locarno liabilities, Turkey’s disputes with Italy and Syria became two merging tectonic plates, creating a fault line stretching out from the Middle East looming over the Mediterranean. Establishing a proper defense structure of such magnitude was a bigger undertaking than what Turkey could manage on its own and required the need for a regional security agreement. In pursuit of materializing a sustainable defense structure in the area, Turkey turned to Iran and Iraq as potential partners, and to Great Britain as a potential sponsor.\(^{140}\) Ultimately came into being the Sa’dabad Pact of 1937, otherwise known as the Oriental Entente, which deepened the rift between Ankara and Moscow.\(^{141}\) What facilitated the

\(^{139}\) BCA 030.10.0.0/225.515.17 (Turkish Consulate in Beirut to the Prime Ministry, May 31, 1939). The Armenians, on the other hand, constituted the second largest minority of Alexandretta next to Arabs. Under the influence of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Dashnaksutyun*) after the annexation, the Armenian population migrated en masse to Aleppo and Beirut. The newly appointed Turkish mayor of Hatay prepared a report on this issue, indicating that at least one fourth of the people who migrated to Syrian provinces belonged to the upper middle class, “therefore, affecting the local economy quite badly.” As for the rest of the people, *Dashnaksutyun* secured from the French government a guarantee of “health services for the resettled, as well as 4 francs per day for living expenses.” BCA 030.10.0.0/225.515.26 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, October 1, 1939).

\(^{140}\) Aside from security considerations, some scholars also suggested that there were other political reasons at play for Turkey behind its promotion of the Sa’dabad Pact. In the pursuit of becoming an important regional power, Turkey wished to have a semi-permanent seat on the League Council. See, Mustafa Bilgin, *Britain and Turkey in the Middle East* (New York: Tauris, 2007), 27-30.

Pact’s consummation was the gradual improvement in Turkey’s diplomatic relations with the Middle East, particularly with Iran and Iraq in the early 1930s.

Apart from their diplomatic alignments during the interwar period, there was much in common between the centralizing governments of Turkey and Iran. Scholars have long held the view that both Mustafa Kemal and Reza Shah’s modernizing policies, as well as their means of implementation, were in a sense a reaction to a widely felt need for authoritarian reform. The process of political and cultural centralization, which was flavored with secularism, Westernism and meritocratism, generally enjoyed the support of many members of the Turkish and Persian intelligentsia, especially those with progressive and left wing leanings. The ideological overlap between Iran and Turkey certainly had a positive impact on their diplomatic exchange, which became closer throughout the 1930s.

As far as Iraq is concerned, having cleansed itself from the Mosul trauma, Turkey also enjoyed good relations since June 1926, when King Faisal visited Mustafa Kemal to sign the Iraqi border treaty and gave assurances for curbing Kurdish insurgency in Iraq. Turkey continued to expand its network around the Iraqi perimeter through official visits by Imam Yahya of Yemen and Ibn Saud of Nejd and Hejaz in 1927 and 1928.

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143 We should still note their obvious differences. Despite the personality cult developing around Atatürk in the 1930s, he left enough room for Turkish political institutions to develop a solid identity on their own. Accordingly, the Turkish state apparatus became increasingly institutionalized and continued functioning without major setbacks after Atatürk’s death. By contrast, it was the development of arbitrary rule that gradually alienated Reza Shah from his earlier urban social bases. Leaving aside technological aspects of Reza Shah’s modernization campaign, he left little room for practical rationalism, critical reasoning and individualism to flourish in society (or even the government).

respectively. In February 1929, representatives of Ibn Saud visited Turkey and agreed to sign a treaty of good neighborly relations. Turkey also exercised a strong influence in Afghanistan, sending teachers and a military mission there and receiving Afghan students.

A turning point in Turkish-Iraqi relations came in 1930, when Iraq signed a treaty with Great Britain, which would end the British Mandate within two years. The wording of the agreement was drafted with caution, securing the latter’s rights in Iraq by keeping the RAF bases intact. Britain was also bound to come to Iraq’s aid in case of war, and Iraq pledged to consult with Britain on foreign policy issues. In 1932, when Iraq gained formal independence and was admitted to the League of Nations, these diplomatic and military privileges granted to Britain became a problem and flared up nationalist opposition in Iraq. Consequently, Prime Minister, Nuri al-Said, and King Feisal sought to reduce Iraq’s dependency on Britain by improving their diplomatic ties with Turkey and Iran. Under such circumstances the King and his Prime Minister visited Turkey in July 1932, which opened up an extended round of foreign ministerial talks that would take place at the League of Nations in Geneva between 1932 and 1936.

Nevertheless, there were three problems that deterred the signing of a tripartite security alliance between Turkey, Iraq, and Iran during this time. First, the border dispute between Iran and Iraq over Shatt al-Arab became a protracted headache that Turkish diplomats found too exhausting to mediate. Secondly, the Turks were acutely aware that the absence of British involvement would render the treaty practically ineffective, which

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146 Ibid, 248.
148 Ibid, 58.
was something diametrically opposed to what the Iraqi government had in mind. Third, the Turkish diplomats frequently consulted with their Soviet counterparts to preempt their possible objections and, at times, even encouraged their participation, which seemed unacceptable for Iran.

Regarding this third obstacle, Turks were more eager and more involved for reasons that ran parallel to their alliance with the Soviets. The Soviet ambassador to Turkey, Yakov Suritz, remarked during a conversation with his successor Lev Karakhan in Moscow that the Turks regretted the difficulties between the USSR and Iran. It was such a pity that relations could not be as close as they were with the Turkish nation.\(^{149}\) In reply, Karakhan observed that “the Persians, I’m afraid have a much more harder time dealing with us than the independent Turks…You see, Mr. Minister, the English carry much more weight in Iran than you think.”\(^{150}\) The Soviet leadership had gone to all lengths in seeking support of Ankara, to nudge Tehran closer to the USSR. At one point, Foreign Minister Tevfik Aras himself coaxed the Persian leaders into concluding the same sort of political protocol with Moscow, which the Kemalist government had signed.\(^{151}\) “Relations between Iran and the Soviet Union,” Aras argued in Tehran, “ought to be as those existing between Turkey and the Soviet Union. Iran should relate to the USSR with more trust.”\(^{152}\) Much to Aras’s dismay, however, relations between the Soviet Union and Iran deteriorated, if anything, with armed conflicts in the Soviet-Iranian border.

\(^{150}\) Ibid.
\(^{151}\) “Aras and Karakhan, 7 February 1932,” Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1974), XV, 94.
\(^{152}\) Ibid.
As the conclusion of a security alliance in the Middle East became a matter more of necessity than of prestige after 1936, the Turkish Foreign Minister set out to mediate the border disputes between Iraq and Iran as well as those between Iran and the USSR more vigorously. He knew only too well that the answer for both of these third party disputes was to force the Shah’s hand for concessions. Subsequently, Tehran became his frequent destination in 1936. Reflecting on the Arab world’s perception of his recent diplomatic negotiations in Tehran, Foreign Minister Aras drafted a long addendum, entitled “Turkey and the Near East.” Aras particularly emphasized the positive response he received from his Arab counterparts in Iraq and Egypt regarding “Turkey’s return to its conventional policy of bridging the East with the West.”

Indeed, such influential Arab newspapers, as the Egyptian *Al-Ahram* gave substantial coverage to Aras’s latest tour de force, arguing that the Turks, “despite their new secular identity, once again reasserted themselves as the leaders of the Orient.”

In the aftermath of Aras’ successful mediation of the Iran-Iraq border dispute, the three countries decided to invite both the Soviets and the British to join the pact, hoping that their conflicting threat perceptions would balance out. While the Soviet government indicated its willingness to enter into the pact, Britain was reluctant to go forward with it. Ultimately, it was decided that neither of the two Great Powers would be invited to take part in the pact, with a last minute inclusion of Afghanistan on Turkey’s request. Yet, Turkey was careful to show that the pact was not directed against the interests of Great Powers. This concern was reflected in Aras’s speech at the Parliament in June 1938, as he made it clear that the draft treaty for the Oriental Entente had in fact been concluded

153 BCA 030.10.0.0/13.74.6 (Tevfik Rüştü Aras to İsmet İnönü, June 18, 1936).
154 *Al-Ahram* (June 13, 1936), 4-6.
“with the assent and support of both Soviet Russia and the British Empire.” On July 8, 1937, the Foreign Ministers of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey signed the alliance treaty at the palace of Sa’dabad, in Tehran.

In geopolitical terms, the four states that made up the Oriental Entente all lay on a thin gray line that separated the respective spheres of influence projected by the Soviet Union, a continental power, and Great Britain, a naval power. As a chunk of earlier Soviet security designs against Britain, which broke away from its origins and launched out on its own, the Pact became a precursor to the Northern Trier of the Cold War. Strictly from the signatories’ perspective, however, the main motivation behind the Pact was to set up a collective security mechanism devoid of any Great Power intervention. In theory, the Pact would therefore be governed by ideas of non-interventionism. In practice, however, this proved to be too quixotic a goal to achieve collectively since all four of the signatories had different policy considerations that separated them. A second problem, which became clear at the onset of World War II, was that members of the Pact lacked the necessary military power, even with their forces combined, to undertake commitments to each another in the case of an attack, for instance, by a Great Power. While the Oriental Entente possessed little credibility in practice, it nevertheless had such merits as freezing border disputes among the member states and providing breathing space within the Middle East by successfully concealing wartime troubles in each member state from spreading out. Leaving aside minor customs violations and smuggling, the Pact helped the Turkish state maintain friendly relations with Iraq and Iran during the Second World War.

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155 FO 371/21836 (James Morgan to Viscount Halifax, June 25, 1938).
From the Soviet perspective, however, the consummation of the Oriental Entente without its consent indeed became a forebear of the ill-fated Baghdad Pact of 1955. The stark realization of a drifting Turkey further apart from the USSR darkened the already pessimist picture in Moscow. Although the Sa’dabad Pact did not really amount to an imminent threat against the Soviet Union, Stalin was acutely aware of Great Britain’s underlying desire to contain Soviet sphere of influence on their southern frontier.\footnote{A.F. Miller, *Otcherki noveishei istorii turtsii* (Moscow, 1948), 184-185} Stalin saw Turkey’s new role and active diplomacy in the Middle East as a direct extension of Mustafa Kemal’s revisionism that had surfaced in Montreux.

While the Soviet printed press initially sought to put a good face on Turkey’s position during the Sa’dabad negotiations and emphasized “Mustafa Kemal’s respect for the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928,” Stalin was perplexed by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü’s resignation barely two months after the signing of the Oriental Entente.\footnote{Dzhamil Gasanly, *SSSR – Turtsiya: Ot neytraliteta k holodnoy voyne* (Moscow: TP, 2008), 32.} In October 1937, following a heated exchange between Kemal and İnönü, the latter resigned from his post as Premier and was replaced by Celal Bayar, who had served as Minister of Finance twice before and who was known to be much-less sympathetic to the Soviet Union.\footnote{The Soviets were correct in their prognosis; Celal Bayar was a staunch supporter of liberal economic policies and applied a rigorous capitalist program when he succeeded İsmet İnönü as third president in 1950. Celal Bayar’s anti-Soviet attitude was a significant reason that aggravated Cold War tension between Turkey and Russia.} Turkish newspapers began circulating rumors of a dispute over Turkey’s foreign policy orientation as the main reason behind their quarrel. Apparently, İnönü had strong reservations about Turkey’s new security agreement with Great Britain in the Middle East and abandonment of their benevolent partnership with the USSR.\footnote{Mustafa Yılmaz, *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası, 1919-1938* (Ankara, 2003), 586.} Ever since the 1932 Soviet-Turkish exchange, İnönü was regarded as a closer friend of the
Bolsheviks; therefore Stalin considered his resignation as a bad omen for bilateral affairs.

In reality, however, it was İnönü, who would pursue a much cautious policy towards the USSR during the Second World War, once he resumed power as President following Atatürk’s death on November 10, 1938.\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{160} İnönü was re-elected to a second term of office by the unanimous vote of the Grand National Assembly on the April 3, 1939. The death of the founder of Turkey’s new regime had naturally been a time of anxiety. Yet, it soon became clear that the political edifice constructed by Kemal Atatürk rested on solid foundations and the nation as a whole was very much alive to its merits. It should be safe to suggest that the transition had been smooth, but not without changes to Atatürk’s cabinet. Refik Saydam succeeded Celal Bayar as Prime Minister; Tevfik Rüştü Aras (later ambassador in London) was succeeded at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs by Şükrü Saraçoğlu, who had previously served as Minister of Justice; not long afterwards Fethi Okyar, formerly ambassador in London, became Minister of Justice. These changes can adequately be explained by İnönü’s natural desire to surround himself with his own men; and this desire becomes even more intelligible bearing in mind the estrangement between Atatürk and İnönü during the former’s latter years.
II. EYES ON MOSCOW

After the Munich Agreement between Britain, France, and Germany in September 1938, it became clear that Western Europe remained hesitant to take action against German aggression. Their silence after Germany's occupation of what remained of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 indicated their unwillingness to devise a collective security policy against the Anti-Comintern Pact. Soviet foreign policy was therefore adjusted to face the new realities – such as the Jewish diplomat Litvinov’s replacement as foreign minister in early May 1939 to facilitate the German-Soviet negotiations.\textsuperscript{161} The transition in Turkey’s foreign relations between 1936 and 1939 was equally remarkable. The wheel had gone full circle, and Turkey established a close partnership with Great Britain and France, which would later be cemented by a trilateral treaty in October 1939. Yet, Turkey’s rapprochement with Western powers had been secured at the expense of a predictable apprehension in Moscow. The period from the conclusion of the Anglo-Turkish declaration in May 1939 up until the breakout of war in September 1939 saw Turkey swing further away from its anti-imperialist coalition with the Soviet Union to a position where policy makers in Ankara admitted the need for Britain’s naval power against Italy.\textsuperscript{162}

The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by Germany, disturbing as it was for Turkey, was still more or less remote, and the alarm in regard to a German ultimatum to


\textsuperscript{162} Secondary literature on Turkish foreign policy between the last days of peace and first days of war is quite limited. Existing publications rely exclusively on the British archives and are inconclusive. See: Frank Marzari, “Western-Soviet Rivalry in Turkey, 1939,” \textit{Middle Eastern Studies}, 7, 2 (May 1971), 201-220; and Brock Millman, “Credit and Supply in Turkish Foreign Policy and the Tripartite Alliance of October 1939,” \textit{The International History Review}, 16, 1 (February 1994), 70-80.
Romania, which followed almost immediately afterwards, proved to be false.\textsuperscript{163} But the Italian occupation of Albania in April 1939 touched a more delicate spot. Since 1911, Italy had already been the chief enemy in Turkish eyes. Yet, by seizing Albania Rome became a Balkan power, thereby constituting a direct threat to the inter bellum status quo in the Balkans, and posing an equally alarming situation for Turks themselves as well as to those Balkan Allies to whom they had treaty obligations. Turkey’s annexation of the short-lived Hatay Republic during the same period bore a disturbing resemblance to Italy’s occupation of Albania, and raised question marks in the West, of which the Turks were fully aware.\textsuperscript{164} Curbing Italian expansion in the Balkans and cleansing Turkey’s blemished reputation after the Hatay incident became an excruciatingly boring dilemma for İnönü, and the immediate result was Turkey’s accession to the Anglo-French bloc.

\textbf{Anglo-Turkish Declaration of May 1939}

Italy’s invasion of Albania was a first step in a wider movement for the achievement of the expansionist aims of the Axis Powers who were acting in collusion.\textsuperscript{165} By April 1939, the Turks were not able to predict exactly where the next point of attack would take place; but whenever and wherever it was going to be made – inland Greece, Bulgaria or Poland – the ultimate aim would be the joint domination of Europe by Germany and Italy. Whichever of these two powers launched the attack, it seemed certain that the other would also be involved. This meant that the next act of aggression by either of the Axis Powers – regardless of the point of first assault – was likely to involve

\textsuperscript{163} BCA 30.10.0.0/200.370.3 (Conversation with Romanian Foreign Minister Grigore Gafencu, June 8, 1939). Also see, Grigore Gafencu, \textit{Last Days of Europe: A Diplomatic Journey in 1939} (Ulan Press, 2012).
\textsuperscript{164} BCA 30.10.0.0/132.855.1 (\textit{Le Petit Parisien’s} Interview with President İnönü, May 31, 1939).
\textsuperscript{165} BCA 30.10.0.0/222.495.13 (Report on Mussolini’s Early Diplomacy, November 11, 1939).
directly or indirectly all the powers bordering on the Mediterranean. In a heated cabinet meeting on April 15, 1939, Prime Minister Refik Saydam turned to Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu and said that in 1911, Kaiser Wilhelm II, who had proclaimed himself the protector of all Muslims, had in that capacity allowed his Italian allies to dismember his Turkish friends. “We have not forgotten this,” argued Saydam and added, “the present situation is analogous: Germany and Italy stand together and constitute a threat to the entire Eastern Mediterranean including Turkey.”

Mindful of Turkey’s growing distrust of Mussolini, British policy makers sought to bring Turkey into a regional alliance that included Romania and Greece, constantly reminding Saraçoğlu of his commitments to the Balkan Entente of 1934. Perhaps even more valuable than its naval bases or airfields, was Turkey’s manpower, which could easily be deployed in neighboring regions, particularly in the Balkans. In his dispatch to British Ambassador Knatchbull-Hugessen in Ankara on April 12, Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax wrote: “His Majesty’s Government consider of first importance that the Turkish Government collaborate in any project of common defense [and that] Turkey was much the most important country to us of the countries of south-east Europe, and it was imperative that we should do nothing to queer the pitch with her.” Yet, the Turkish Foreign Ministry insisted on a separate Anglo-Turkish mutual assistance agreement against Italy, since the conclusion of a treaty amongst all member states of the Balkan

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166 Baskın Oran, Türk Dış Politikası, 1919-1980 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 414.
167 BCA 30.10.0.0/239.611.8 (Report on Italy’s Invasion of Albania, April 28, 1939). Saydam was particularly furious upon receiving news that the Italian Consulate in İzmir raised the new fascist banner of Regno Albanese.
168 FO 424/283, R2688/G (Halifax to Hugessen, April 12, 1939).
Entente would have strictly binding military obligations against a possible German attack.\textsuperscript{169}

Turkey’s commitment to the Balkan Entente had become a recurring problem during the course of Anglo-Turkish negotiations in late April and early May of 1939. Britain was expecting solid assurances from Turkey in case of a German attack on Greece; yet Turkey was wary of openly antagonizing Hitler. During his intermittent meetings with Neville Chamberlain, Turkish Prime Minister Refik Saydam repeatedly said that Turkish policy had thus far been one of complete neutrality designed to keep the country as far as possible apart from international complications.\textsuperscript{170} When, however, trouble had spread to the Balkan and Mediterranean regions, Turkey had no longer been able to remain aloof without jeopardizing its own security. It was vital for Turkey that all States in the Mediterranean should have freely exercised their rights without any encouragement being given to ideas of hegemony. Under these circumstances, the government thought that the safest course for saving Turkey from war would be through associating themselves with those countries, which were united together for peace but which would not shrink from war if necessary. For that reason Refik Saydam asked the National Assembly to approve association of Turkey and Great Britain in defense of peace and security – an association “directed against none and nourishing no aims of encirclement,” but designed rather “to ward off catastrophe of war.”\textsuperscript{171}

On May 12, 1939, the Anglo-Turkish talks were concluded with a joint declaration, in which both parties agreed to oppose any aggression in the

\textsuperscript{169} BCA 30.10.0.0/235.582.14 (Anglo-Turkish Negotiations, April 20, 1939).
\textsuperscript{170} FO 424/283, E 2627/297/44 (Hugessen to Halifax, April 11, 1939).
\textsuperscript{171} BCA 30.10.0/222.495.1 (Report on the Public Perception of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration, June 6, 1939).
Mediterranean. In addressing the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Prime Minister Saydam described how consultations between the two Governments, undertaken as a result of recent disquieting happenings in Europe, had led to declaration, which he then proceeded to read. After emphasizing the close and cordial nature of Anglo-Turkish relations, Saydam expressed his conviction that the Anglo-Turkish declaration, together with subsequent agreements foreshadowed in it, would help notably to weigh down the scales on the side of peace. Policy of Turkey and its British ally was to keep peace and to attack the rights of no one: “In pursuit of peace, the Turkish Government would continue to exert every effort; but they would not hesitate firmly to oppose by force of arms any threat to the common rights and interests of Great Britain and Turkey.” Saydam concluded his speech by arguing that equally friendly conversations were proceeding with France, which would lead to the conclusion of an agreement similar to that with Great Britain. He also added that the closest diplomatic touch was being maintained with USSR and that Turkish and Soviet views were in complete harmony.

A crowded Assembly listened with close attention to the Prime Minister's words, and was manifestly conscious of the importance of the step that was being taken by the Government. British, Soviet, and French ambassadors, along with representatives of all Balkan states – except Bulgaria – who were invited to observe the parliamentary talks and proceedings. Following the prime minister's speech, Saffet Arıkan, former minister of education, rose and emphasized that the joint declaration was not directed against any nation, and that Anglo-Turkish policy aimed at the establishment of peace. Arıkan’s

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172 BCA 30.18.1.2/89.11.13 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prime Ministry, May 12, 1939).
173 TBMM, d. 6, c. 13, b. 1, s. 118 (May 12, 1939).
174 Ibid.
175 TBMM, d. 6, c. 2 b. 2, s. 20 (May 13, 1939).
speech was followed by Fethi Okyar’s – former Turkish Ambassador in London – who posited that Turkey's policy had hitherto been friendly with all nations, and especially with its neighbors, in order to create an atmosphere of peace, in which Turks could devote themselves to internal reconstruction. But events in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Albania had disturbed that atmosphere, and obliged all nations to take measures for their security and the defense of their frontiers. It was at this juncture that England, with whom Turkey had long been on friendly terms, proposed joint action against any attempt to disturb peace in the Mediterranean. “In face of this proposal, and in view of the insecurity everywhere prevailing,” argued Okyar in a rather overzealously pro-British tone, “the Turkish Government could no longer maintain its attitude of neutrality.” By accepting this proposal, Okyar continued, Turkey had ensured peace and security in the Mediterranean: “Turkey's geographical position, its heroic army and fleet, joined with England's strength, could make perpetual peace in the Mediterranean certain.” For Okyar, Turkey's action should not be regarded hostile to any Power since it was taken in order to protect its frontiers. Because Italy had landed in a small Balkan country that ought to belong only to a Balkan people and fortified those islands close to the Turkish coasts, Okyar concluded, “Turkey would no longer remain neutral; its interests and England's interests were now the same, namely, to preserve peace, and to prevent Europe and the Mediterranean from passing under the hegemony of one or two States.

Refik Saydam and Fethi Okyar’s speeches at the parliament hinted out something beyond the emergence of a common spirit between Turkey and Great Britain – a message

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176 TBMM, d. 6, c. 2 b. 3, s. 45 (May 13, 1939).
177 Ibid, 46.
178 Ibid, 48.
179 In his dispatch to Halifax, Ambassador Hugessen quotes Okyar making a similar statement, See FO 424/283, E 2812/294/44 (Hugessen to Halifax, March 28, 1939).
that could easily be misread as a pledge for a full-fledged alliance. Nevertheless, İnönü was all the more cautious and when the Anglo-Turkish declaration was made public the next day, İnönü requested Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu to strongly emphasize that Turkey was still “free of any binding obligations.”\(^\text{180}\) A commitment to England for Greece might have antagonized Germany, while a similar promise for Romania could have made the Soviet Union very unhappy.\(^\text{181}\) While Turkey hoped to pursue cordial relations with its allies in the Balkan Entente, in which Turkey's role would remain unchanged, Britain pushed for a further enlargement of the Entente with Turkey fulfilling a more useful function as its leader. The lack of consensus between British and Turkish representatives thus postponed a binding agreement of any real substance. There was a prevailing feeling that the Anglo-Turkish declaration should be followed by a strengthening of relations with Russia and with such unfriendly Balkan Powers as Bulgaria, which should be induced to give up its territorial aspirations and to enter the circle of peace.\(^\text{182}\)

**Potemkin-Saraçoğlu Talks**

By the late spring of 1939, although the Soviets were no longer the only pebble on the Turkish beach, İnönü desperately sought to ensure that the Soviet Government still regarded Turks as their allies. From the onset of Anglo-Turkish negotiations, Saraçoğlu kept the Soviet authorities in loop, informing them about Turkey’s position and the course of bilateral talks with Great Britain. During this critical period that tested

\(^\text{180}\) TBMM, d. 7, c. 3, b. 7, s. 118 (May 13, 1939).
\(^\text{182}\) BCA 30.18.1.2/243.642.25 (Note on Bulgaria, June 28, 1939).
allegiances, Saraçoğlu’s primary objective was to transform Turkey into a diplomatic bridge between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-French bloc. At the time, this seemed like the only viable option for Turkey to avoid an armed conflict and get the others to recognize its quixotic neutrality. On April 28, two weeks before the Anglo-Turkish Declaration, Maxim Litvinov (soon to be replaced by Vyacheslav Molotov on May 3) sent V.P. Potemkin, the vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs, to negotiate the terms of a non-aggression treaty with Şükrü Saraçoğlu. In fact, the Turkish-Soviet Non Aggression Pact of 1921 was still in effect. It had been renewed twice – in 1925 and 1935 – and further complemented with a bilateral trade agreement in 1927. Therefore, Potemkin’s visit was more about repairing the friendly relations, which had turned sour after the Montreux negotiations in 1936.

As the Anglo-Turkish talks were being conducted, Potemkin and Saraçoğlu exchanged information with regards to their prospective negotiations, and each expressed the full satisfaction with the correctness and loyalty of the other's government. Potemkin said: “the Soviet Government applauded Turkish understanding with Britain with regards to the Mediterranean turmoil.” About the Balkans, they equally approved the Turkish attitude, though they thought it to be unduly weak where Romania was concerned. Potemkin emphasized the importance of doing everything possible to solve the Bulgarian and Romanian difficulty, and had promised Soviet support for this. Soviet Government would use its influence with Bulgaria and should Turkey decide to declare its support for Romania it would be delightful for Stalin, Potemkin argued. Both had agreed as to the need for disposing of this question in order to strengthen the position in the Balkans and

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183 BCA 30.10.0.0/249.684.1 (Saraçoğlu to İnönü, April 29, 1939).
184 BCA 30.1.0.0/42.248.6 (Report on Saraçoğlu-Potemkin Talks, June 17, 1939).
185 Ibid, 18.
make it easier to clarify the position of Yugoslavia. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had expressed agreement with Soviet's point of view (1) as regards the possible interpretation of the British guarantee to Poland as applying to attack by Russia, and (2) application of the Polish-Rumanian Treaty to all aggressors' and not to the Soviet only.  

Meanwhile İsmet İnönü emphasized that the Turkish and Soviet governments should find a way of bringing the British government in, and had pointed out the disadvantage of remaining isolated in case of a general war. Potemkin agreed in principle the advantages of a threefold pact (Britain-Turkey-USSR) but said that he would not like to be approached to join such a pact after the first two had concluded it amongst themselves. Potemkin also assured the Minister for Foreign Affairs that Turkey could always count on material aid from the Soviet Union. He asked the minister for foreign affairs whether the Soviets could rely on Turkey's assistance if they joined Romania in a war against Germany. The Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that this would be impossible unless Turkish Government could be quite sure of the attitude of Bulgaria.  

From the Turkish perspective, the concurrent negotiations with the Soviet Union and Great Britain were exhausting but fruitful. Following the Potemkin-Saraçoğlu talks, the Soviet newspaper Izvestiia wrote: “The declaration between Turkey and Great Britain is a valuable investment in the cause of world peace. [Potemkin] listened with pleasure and approval the negotiations undertaken with France and England, and with hopes of strengthening the security dialogue between Turkey and the West in Moscow by directly

\[\text{BCA 30.18.1.2/88.91.16 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prime Ministry, June 3, 1939).}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
getting involved.” It was agreed that Turkey and the Soviet Union, despite their differences over the current Straits regime, “shall continue their friendly relations and renew the 1921 bilateral treaty in line with the changing circumstances.” Behind his diplomatic jargon, however, Potemkin’s position in Ankara simply reaffirmed the Soviet Union’s wait-and-see policy.

At this point, it is crucial to note that unlike the Turks, who had been acquiescently informing Molotov about their negotiations with Great Britain, Stalin brought to naught the chances of a Turco-Soviet Pact (which Potemkin had said the Russians “greatly desired”) by not disclosing anything about his ongoing talks with Hitler. While it was no secret that the Soviets had been negotiating with Nazi Germany for some time, the replacement of Litvinov with Molotov as Soviet Commissar for Foreign Relations on May 3 – a fortnight after the Potemkin-Saracoğlu talks – should have signaled to the Turks a reversal in Soviet foreign policy and the coming into being of a Nazi-Soviet pact. On April 29, 1939, when Potemkin met with Saracoğlu in Ankara, the Soviet representative had spoken about “necessary steps to strengthen Soviet-Turkish cooperation” with regards to the crisis in the Balkans “in the face of growing fascist movements and Axis pressure.” In less than two weeks after this meeting, however, the Soviet ambassador in Ankara, Alexei Terentiev, prepared a comprehensive report for Molotov on Soviet-German talks in Ankara, describing his “fruitful dialogue” with the new German ambassador Franz von Papen. According to this report,

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188 Izvestiia (May 1, 1939), 2.
190 Dzhamil Gasanly, SSSR – Turtsiya: Ot neytraliteta k holodnoy voyne (Moscow: TP, 2008), 37.
191 V.N. Koptevskii, Rossiia-Turtsiia: Etapy torgovo-ekonomicheskogo sorrudinichestva (Moscow: 2003), 96.
192 A.F. Miller, Otcherki noveishei istorii Turtsii (Moscow, 1948), 20.
Terentiev had intermittently met with Papen beginning with the conclusion Potemkin-Saraçoğlu talks on May 1 until the Anglo-Turkish Declaration of May 12. Terentiev argued that, in spite of his initial predisposition about Herr Papen, he now agreed with him, who apparently revealed that “the Nazis and Soviets should put ideology aside and revive the Bismarckian Russo-German friendship period.”

**Relations with Nazi Germany**

The Soviet Union and Great Britain were not the only states to get involved in Ankara’s diplomatic intrigues in the spring of 1939, and certainly not the only ones trying to win Turkey to their side. The signing of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration proved an undoubted setback to Germany. Hitler was acutely aware that İnönü saw a potential enemy in Italy and had been ordering his policy accordingly. The Balkan question therefore posed a tiresome conundrum. On the one hand, Germany had to maintain the gradual penetration of Axis Powers in the Balkans through Italy, but they also needed to come up with solid assurances that this penetration was not a threat directed against Turks, who had already entered into conversations with the British Government and reached a further stage than İnönü would care to tell Hitler.

At this critical conjunction, on April 28, 1939, Franz von Papen was appointed German Ambassador to Turkey with an immediate mission of ending the Italo-Turkish conflict. Serving briefly as Chancellor of the German Reich in 1932 during Hindenburg’s presidency and one of Germany’s leading political figures, Von Papen knew Turkey.

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193 On September 19, 1940, the Soviet Ambassador in Ankara, M. Terentiev, was succeeded by M. Vinogradov. BCA 30.01.0.0/131.939.27 (Foreign Ministry to PM Refik Saydam, September 10, 1940).
Amongst the representatives of all belligerent powers in the crucible of wartime diplomacy in Ankara, few people matched Franz von Papen’s astute understanding of Turkish politics. This was so much the case that at times he even fell at odds with Hitler and Ribbentrop, failing to break Germany’s preconceptions about old Turkey and new. Despite his deep knowledge of Turkey, however, it would have been difficult for the German Government to hit upon a more unpopular nominee for their embassy in Turkey.\(^{196}\)

Herr von Papen's suspicious affairs during his previous service in Turkey in 1917 as Chief of the General Staff of the 4th Turkish Army under General Liman von Sanders had never been forgotten and, at least initially, he was heartily distrusted and disliked.\(^{197}\) Observing the somewhat dull welcoming reception given in Papen’s honor upon his arrival, British Ambassador Hugessen wrote: “It can safely be conjectured that his reception here was something of a shock to him.”\(^{198}\) As early as 1934 onwards, when Papen somewhat reluctantly resumed his diplomatic duties in the service of the Third Reich, the Turkish Foreign Ministry continued to receive several reports from its

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\(^{196}\) Prior to his diplomatic mission in Constantinople during World War I, Papen had served as German ambassador in Washington DC but was declared persona non grata in 1915 and ultimately expelled from the United States for alleged complicity in the planning of sabotage such as blowing up US rail lines. See: William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), 164.

\(^{197}\) Upon his arrival, the Turkish intelligence held Papen’s Istanbul residence in Therapia under close surveillance and reported that, while away from Ankara’s eyes, the German Ambassador met frequently with his colleagues from the Trebizond (Trabzon) Consulate along with the Italian Consul Generals in Izmir and Istanbul, hosting them over prolonged dinner receptions. [BCA 30.10.0.0/131.939.11 (Intelligence report on Franz von Papen, June 7, 1939)]. Some of the intelligence reports go into such detail as defining Papen’s daily mood, when, for instance he was feeling angry, irritated, relaxed or happy. See: BCA 030.10/231.560.8 (Intelligence Report on Franz von Papen, July 22, 1939).

\(^{198}\) Hugessen’s notes on Papen’s personal details are intriguing: In his annual report on important actors in Ankara at the time, Hugessen wrote; “Herr von Papen is extremely pleasant to meet and almost exaggeratedly friendly in manner. I should not be inclined to describe him as a heavyweight: there is a suggestion of dilettantism and superficiality about him, accompanied, however, by a certain artfulness, which may constitute his chief claim to efficiency. He is always ready to discuss present international problems and puts his country's case with remarkable glibness and more dispassionately than some.” FO 424/283, E 5006/111/44 (Halifax to Hugessen, July 13, 1939).
diplomatic missions in Europe about Papen’s whereabouts and dealings. On July 21, 1939, İnönü’s fears about the new ambassador was confirmed when the Turkish Ambassador in Switzerland reported Papen’s trip to Geneva and receipt of “one million British pounds from a bank account for sponsoring anti-British propaganda in Ankara.” Leaving aside Hitler’s rationale behind choosing Papen, from the Turkish perspective, it also seemed incredible that the German Government should not have guessed that Anglo-Turkish negotiations were in an advanced stage. The Anglo-Turkish declaration was made a fortnight after the arrival of their new ambassador and he and his embassy seemed to have been largely taken by surprise. Herr von Papen was known to have remarked on more than one occasion that he had come too late.

Upon visiting President İnönü and having a thorough discussion of the general situation in the Balkans, Papen apposed Ribbentrop that relations with Italy were decisive in determining Turkey’s course of action towards a potentially stronger alliance with Britain. İnönü told Papen that the mobilization of the Turkish armed forces as a result of Il Duce’s speeches in 1935 and before the Abyssinian campaign had cost more than 30 million Turkish pounds. “Turkey could not go on affording this,” İnönü frankly added. The occupation of Albania, which had started with 20,000 men, reached 72,000 men by May 1939, including heavy artillery, which, according to İnönü, “was certainly not needed against the Albanians.” Some 100,000 men had been concentrated between Bari and Brindisi. Furthermore, the Italian press continued to describe the Balkan Pact as

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199 Turkish chiefs of missions in both Vienna and Budapest referred to Papen’s activities in those countries as “suspicious.” BCA 030.10/221.491.2 (Turkish Embassy in Vienna to the Foreign Ministry, October 21, 1934).

200 BCA 030.10/231.560.12 (Turkish Embassy in Geneva to the Foreign Ministry, July 21, 1939).

201 The Turkish Prime Ministry was fully aware of this sentiment and reported it to the Prime Minister: BCA 030.10/231.560.6 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, June 17, 1939).

dead, further convincing Turks of a potential move against Turkey next. Under these circumstances, Papen stressed the futility of Italy’s half-hearted assurances and advised Ribbentrop to convince Count Ciano – Mussolini’s son-in-law who had just stepped foot in Tirana – for a substantial reduction of Italian troops in Albania, which was a waste of manpower anyway. Papen also asked further consideration to be given as to whether Germany’s attitude towards the Balkan Pact could be clearly defined, since Turkey was “well aware that the Dardanelles [could] only be attacked from the landward side and therefore [looked] on the Balkan Pact as a buffer zone, which [needed] to be safeguarded.”

Soon after the signing of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration of May 12, Papen sent home another report: “If the position we occupy in Turkey is taken over by Britain or France and we lose our privileges here, our relations with the countries that lie beyond Turkey, including Persia, Iraq, and the whole Arabian world will be greatly jeopardized.” In von Papen’s view, Germany should have preempted the British attempts to win Turkey to its side. He suggested that the German foreign minister Ribbentrop take the following precautions: (1) The reduction of Italian forces in Albania to relieve Turkey of its concerns over the Italian presence in the Balkans; (2) a mutual treaty of non-aggression with Ankara; and (3) the return by of the Meis Island (Castellorize in the Aegean Sea) from Greece to Turkey, including a number of small islets that remain in the Turkish territorial waters. The German Foreign Ministry did not take von Papen’s report seriously and noted that they counted on (1) the Turks’ historical friendship with Germany; (2) Turkey’s reluctance in endorsing a binding

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203 Ibid, 409.
204 DGFP, series D, vol. VI, no. 413, p. 116 (Papen to Ribbentrop, May 12, 1939).
agreement with either Britain or the Soviets; and (3) Germany’s lucrative trade relations
with Turkey.206

This last point is important since historians paid little attention to the dynamic
import-export traffic between Nazi Germany and Turkey during this period, which had a
considerable affect on the latter’s course of wartime diplomacy between 1939 and 1941.
Until 1933 the volume of trade between Turkey and Germany had barely amounted to
£3,500,000 per annum.207 When Hitler came to power, he began implementing a policy
of spreading German economic influence in the Balkans. What sparked booming
business numbers with Turkey and ultimately turned the Third Reich into Ankara’s main
trading partner was a series of bilateral talks held in Berlin. The first round of
negotiations began on 31 July 1933, two days before Paul von Hindenburg’s death, when
Turkey’s ambassador in Berlin, Kemalettin Sami Pasha, paid a goodbye visit to Adolf
Hitler and Konstantin von Neurath – the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs. While there
seemed to be mutual differences over Turkey’s alliance with the Soviet Union, and
Germany’s relations with Mussolini, Hitler emphasized the importance of “ameliorating
bilateral ties between the two brothers-in-arms on economic grounds.”208 Upon
Neurath’s request during this meeting, the Turkish minister of finance and future
president Celal Bayar visited Berlin several times between 1933 and 1939 for trade
negotiations.

208 Minutes of this meeting reveal intriguing details about how the two countries viewed one another after
fifteen years since their imperial alliance. Turkey’s ambassador, Kemalettin Sami Pasha, was well known
to German circles through his acquaintance with Wilhelm II during the Great War and later with Hitler.
Thanks to his pro-German reputation, Sami Pasha was able to “converse in a friendly manner with Hitler,”
who greeted him with a “reception more flamboyant than that of Wilhelm II in 1914.” See, BCA
30.10.0.0/231.556.2 (Interview with Adolf Hitler, July 31, 1933).
By 1939, despite the slight decrease in Turkey’s volume of trade with countries that fell under Nazi occupation, the value of all imports from Germany rose to an astounding £20,946,837 (55.3 percent of all imports into Turkey for that year).\textsuperscript{209} Likewise, the level of exports to Germany rose to an unprecedented £11,860,968 (43.75 percent of Turkey’s entire export market).\textsuperscript{210} In his report to Viscount Halifax, Ambassador Knatchbull-Hugessen stressed that while the United Kingdom's share of the import trade showed a slight increase as fourth chief supplying country, “Germany improved her usual predominant share even further.”\textsuperscript{211} With regard to the export trade,

\textsuperscript{209} Table 1—Exports from Turkey by Principal Countries (Value and percentage of total.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April-June 1939</th>
<th>April-June 1938</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value in £</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11,860,968</td>
<td>43.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3,921,844</td>
<td>14.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>1,413,732</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>954,890</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,034,165</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>961,814</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1,369,107</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>673,518</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1,105,670</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumania</td>
<td>392,529</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>168,742</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TBMM, d. 6, c. 13, b. 1, s. 106-128 (August 7, 1940).

\textsuperscript{210} Table 2—Imports into Turkey by Principal Countries (Value and percentage of total.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April-June 1939</th>
<th>April-June 1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value in £</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>20,946,837</td>
<td>55.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>3,355,307</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3,095,246</td>
<td>8.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2,395,455</td>
<td>6.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>988,519</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>806,773</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>597,711</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>654,060</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>341,848</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the 1939 quarter under review, Turkey bought mostly iron and steel products at £7,107,270 and sold mainly tobacco in return at £5,534,659. Source: TBMM, d. 6, c. 13, b. 1, s. 106-128 (August 7, 1940).

\textsuperscript{211} FO 424/282, R 1867/18/44 (Hugessen to Halifax, February 9, 1940).
Hugessen wrote, while the United Kingdom registered a slight increase, Germany was again the largest buyer.

Even before approaching to the Anglo-French bloc, İnönü surely realized that Turkey was giving a dubious impression by having two allegiances – political to Great Britain and commercial to Germany. The message İnönü tried to convey during his intermittent meetings with the British ambassador is interesting to note. From his perspective, despite the impressive trade volume between Turkey and Germany, the reality was much different than what the numbers indicate; such that Turkey was caught in the meshes of a trade system, which placed her largely in the power of Germany. Time and again, İnönü argued “if Turkey was essential to France and Great Britain, they must free her from this economic slavery.” The difficulty, according to İnönü, was that by way of Turkey’s economic dependency on Germany in unfavorable terms, “Turkey’s outside markets had been lost and her former customers looked elsewhere.” As to her chief exports – such as tobacco, mohair, raisins, figs, sultanas and hazelnuts – they were far from capping the growing budget deficit since Turkey’s dependency on war materials was exponentially growing and becoming ever more costly to be paid off by selling agricultural products. Looking at the minutes of İnönü’s prewar negotiations with Great Britain and his appeal to secure a trade agreement that would counterbalance Germany’s

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212 After receiving a preliminary report from the General Staff on available food supplies and mass mobilization, on September 8, Prime Minister Refik Saydam passed a resolution restricting over consumption of “essential goods and medicine” in the country. The General Staff’s report indicated a justifiable fear of inflation and a jump in imports “since certain citizens [were] buying fifty bottles of the same medicine instead of one…and forty packages of coffee for only a single month’s worth,” and warned the government that, with the existing consumption level, national supplies would be dried out in four months, necessitating further concessions to Germany in return for a trade agreement. Source: BCA 030.0.001/34.204.1 (Prime Ministry, Memorandum on Mobilization and Conscription, September 8, 1939).
213 BCA 30.10.0.0/231.561.10 (Note on Turco-German Relations, July 21, 1939).
214 Ibid.
share, it becomes clear that Republican Turkey had changed a great deal since the previous World War and much preferred a British to German alliance.215

**Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**

In the early hours of August 24, 1939, the news of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact dropped like a bomb in Turkey and turned İnönü’s entire national defense strategy upside down. Since most Turkish newspapers by and large employed a government-oriented editorial line, they first tried to put a good face on the pact. Falih Rifki Altay of the official gazette *Ulus* wrote: “The Non-Aggression Pact between Soviet Russia and Germany led everyone to profound amazement. While the ultimate result of all military and political negotiations between Great Democracies and the Soviets turned out to be a doubtful combination, it is not yet time to express conclusive views on this subject.”216 Yet, once the news soaked into the public psyche with all its details, disillusionment became the predominant sentiment amplified through newspaper columns. Asım Us of the *Vakit* daily wrote: “The past decade of European history has taught us that ideological promises and principles come handy in deceiving naïve nations; in practice, there is no belief, principle or ideology that cannot be sacrificed for material advantages. Bearing in mind Stalin’s recent alliance with the fascists, Soviet intentions and insincerity becomes

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215 Existing monographs on Turkey during World War II argue that, despite the ruling circles’ policy of neutrality, underneath the surface they still belonged to the previous generation that fought in World War I alongside Germany, and therefore had pro-German leanings. (See for instance, Deringil, *An Active Neutrality*; Tamkin, *Britain, Turkey and the Soviet Union*) This is simply not true. One explanation for this misperception could be the authors’ over reliance on the Public Office files – and the British perception thereof. A closer look into Turkey’s own national archives reveals a different story; that İnönü was smart enough to appoint those “pro-German men of the old order” to negotiate with the Nazis (such as Ambassador Hüsvrev Gerede in Berlin) but remained very much alive to containing that spirit at home and, in fact, desperately sought to reverse Turkey’s economic reliance on Germany. This also constitutes further proof to İnönü’s dislike of Ambassador von Papen.

The few newspapers that managed to remain aloof from the government line used a much stronger language. Yunus Nadi of socialist-nationalist Cumhuriyet, for instance, argued: “The statement of these non-aggressive obligations without any condition or regulation, so openly and unconditionally, is beyond comprehension. Under these circumstances, one is forced to believe that there are hidden motives behind this move. To accept that the Soviets, who split hairs over the little Baltic States, should give the Third Reich freedom of action all along the western and southern frontiers, is not just difficult, but inconceivable.”

With Germany’s execution of Operation Tannenberg, on September 1, 1939, Turkey watched with great apprehension the Wehrmacht’s annexation of Western Poland and collected detailed reports on the Einsatzgruppen’s violent march. Yet, as far as their own fate was concerned, the Turkish government was more wary of incurring the active displeasure of Russia by maintaining their pro-British position after the Anglo-Turkish Declaration in May. Soon after Britain’s subsequent declaration of war on Germany on September 3, İnönü and Saraçoğlu received the British Ambassador for a prolonged meeting to understand Britain’s new strategy against the Soviet Union. İnönü expressed strong condemnation of Germany’s actions and the folly of it from the Turkish point of view. He seemed quite anxious with regards to Poland’s future, but more concerned about the next point of attack and the likelihood of that point being the Balkans. İnönü asked Hugessen’s opinion whether Stalin would remain neutral if, for instance, Italy became a belligerent and, if so, would Stalin’s attitude be different towards

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219 BCA 30.10.0.0/235.582.14 (Minutes of İnönü’s meeting with Ambassador Hugessen, September 3, 1939).
Hugessen replied that Stalin policy would certainly be different if the war had spread to the Balkans, but that it was in the Soviet Union’s best interest to remain neutral, at least in the foreseeable future.\(^\text{221}\)

İnönü made it clear that although keeping Turkey out of war was his priority, he was quite confident that “the new Turkey, in alliance with Great Britain and France, would be able to deal with Russian hostility, if it arose, even more effectively than the old Turkey dealt with it repeatedly in the past.”\(^\text{222}\) With regards to Germany, on the other hand, war seemed more unlikely due to “the historical conditioning of the two nations.” Yet, if Hitler somehow decided to provoke Turkey into hostilities, even with the qualified assistance of the Soviets, “it would result in the collapse of the two colossi with feet of clay after not too long a period of bloodshed and horror.”\(^\text{223}\) For this to come about, however, it was essential that “the vigorous, intelligent nations composing the present Peace Front should stand firm in their intention of resisting force by force.” To this end, İnönü added, “the entire strength of the British Empire should be placed behind the Turkish Republic.”\(^\text{224}\)

After providing İnönü with solid assurances that Great Britain understood Turkey’s desire to remain neutral and would provide Turkey with the war materials it needed, Hugessen went on to outline British perception of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Hugessen was convinced that Germany's stocks of certain raw materials essential for war purposes – such as copper and chrome ore – were insufficient and its oil supply was

\(^{220}\) Ibid, 5.  
\(^{221}\) Ibid, 7.  
\(^{222}\) Ibid, 16.  
\(^{223}\) Ibid.  
\(^{224}\) Ibid, 18.
unlikely to last more than five months under war conditions in Poland. While Hugessen reluctantly admitted that the conclusion of the Russo-German Pact of Non-Aggression had radically changed the political situation and rendered the position of Poland more difficult, he was very much persuaded by their intelligence, which suggested that the Germans would be forced to maintain an increasingly large number of troops on the Siegfried Line (defense system of forts and tank defenses with more than 18,000 bunkers and tunnels built in 1938) making it impossible for Hitler to bring his Blitzkrieg to a successful completion.

“As for the Russian output,” Hugessen argued, “it [was] difficult to see how Stalin could possibly obtain any material supplies from Baku under war conditions given the poor state of Soviet communications.” Unless, therefore, the Soviet Union was prepared “to reduce the standard of living of its own people and to sacrifice its own industry to Germany's benefit,” the raw materials Moscow can supply to Berlin were strictly limited both in quantity and in kind. Hugessen underlined the fact that there was also the question of transport, “which had always been one of the principal limiting factors in Russian industrial development and trade.” Since most sea routes from Russia to Germany, other than those in the Baltic, were shut, much of the material Germany needed from the Soviet Union in its war efforts had to be shipped by rail from the distant south-eastern districts of the USSR. Hugessen assured İnönü that, as long as the British sea blockade was maintained, neither the Germans nor the Soviets would be

225 FO 424/284 E6246/297/44 (Hugessen to Halifax, September 1, 1939).
226 For the intelligence report Hugessen mentioned see: FO 424/284 C12134/15/18 (Halifax to Hugessen, August 26, 1939).
227 Ibid.
228 Ibid.
able to continue their plans of partitioning Poland.

As for the possibility of Germany receiving direct military assistance from Russia, the British policy makers were certain that the Soviet Government's policy would be strictly dictated by balance of power; firstly, because Stalin could possibly not desire to help Germany increase its field of domination on the Russian frontiers; secondly, because Hugessen had reason to believe that Stalin’s military and naval forces were not capable of any effective offensive; and thirdly, because Stalin no doubt wished to see himself on the winning side.\(^\text{229}\) Looking at the minutes of Hugessen’s meeting with İnönü and Saraçoğlu, it becomes evident how gravely Britain underestimated the German-Soviet scheme in Poland. Chamberlain also miscalculated the repercussions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on small state diplomacies, particularly that of Turkey. İnönü had a much more pessimistic – and perhaps more realistic – picture of the course of war in Europe. As the Einsatzgruppen marched further into the outskirts of Warsaw, İnönü sought to maintain a policy that was still favorably disposed to Britain behind closed doors, but refrained from giving that impression too openly.

At the eruption of hostilities, the Germans were particularly eager to draw Turkey away from its earlier agreements with Britain. Minutes after the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Franz von Papen called on the Turkish Foreign Minister in order to clarify Germany’s position with regards to the changing circumstances. Reverting to his earlier warnings, Papen expressed his “profound regret that Turkey was on the wrong side.”\(^\text{230}\) The most significant implication of the latest Russian Pact was the fact that in

\(^{229}\) FO 424/284 C12134/15/18 (Halifax to Hugessen, August 26, 1939).

future a blockade of the Axis Powers by Britain was now almost impossible and that the balance of power in the European situation was tilted in favor of the Axis powers.

In view of this state of affairs, von Papen asked Saraçoğlu to consider whether Turkey would now wish to return to its proven policy of strict neutrality. The Foreign Minister, taken aback by the latest developments, let Papen’s observations pass unanswered. The German ambassador then asked whether Turkey would consider the settlement of all economic agreements in Germany’s favor.\textsuperscript{231} With a fair amount of contempt, the foreign minister replied: “Turkey might be a hundred times weaker than Germany, but it would have to reject a proposal of this kind.”\textsuperscript{232} Saraçoğlu explained to Papen that his government could not simply cancel existing trade contracts with other belligerent parties. “If Turks no longer had the opportunity of buying in Germany, then they naturally could not supply either,” added Saraçoğlu.\textsuperscript{233} The Turkish Trade Ministry had therefore decided to arrange for the export of that year’s harvest to other countries by paying premiums.\textsuperscript{234}

Hoping that a change in Turkish policy was still probable, three days after his intense meeting with Saraçoğlu, Franz von Papen met with President İnönü to present to him Hitler’s “sincere” view of the situation, which now became entirely to Turkey’s

\textsuperscript{231} According to a communication from Colonel General Keitel, Hitler decided that new contracts for deliveries of war material might also be concluded with Turkey. Arms that could potentially be used against Germany were obviously not included. The OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht) therefore agreed to certain deliveries of powder and anti-aircraft predictor equipment. For the war materials to be delivered, however, Turkey had to comply with Hitler’s requests regarding the supply of raw materials for Germany’s war machine such as copper and chrome ore. This meant that Turkey had to terminate its existing contracts with Great Britain and France since the majority of Turkey’s output had already been purchased through earlier trade agreements. See: DGFP, series D, vol. VII, no. 219, p. 233 (Ribbentrop to Papen, August 24, 1939).

\textsuperscript{232} BCA 30.10.0.0/231.560.6 (Minutes of Saraçoğlu’s meeting with Ambassador Papen, August 24, 1939).

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid, 5.

\textsuperscript{234} The price Turkey paid after the breakup of economic relations with Germany proved to be considerable. See Chapter 6.
İnönü, who was very greatly stressed by the Russian Pact, said that Turkey would only act in accordance with what it considered to be its own vital interests. If the Balkans and the Mediterranean were unaffected, İnönü hoped to be able to remain neutral, but he saw no possibility of preventing the conflict from spreading to the Mediterranean, “since in the impending war by Britain and France against Germany, Italy could not possibly remain neutral.” In that case Turkey could not withdraw from its obligations to the Balkan Entente.

Immediately after his meeting with İnönü and Saraçoğlu, Papen assembled the entire German community in Ankara for a social gathering. Over 800 people accepted the invitation, making a remarkable impression on the Turkish press that, in contrast to the departure of all other foreign nationals, the German Reich citizens appeared “obviously inspired with a strong and unshakable confidence in the future.” In the meantime, Papen also took measures in case of an unexpected Turco-German war and made arrangements to have sufficient time to evacuate “at least all women and children and some of the Reich nationals by steamer via Bulgaria.”

On September 1, Papen requested a third meeting, this time with İnönü and Saraçoğlu together. Referring to the situation which had arisen, Papen explained how greatly the recently concluded Soviet Pact had changed the balance of power in Europe, and “into what a regrettable position he had maneuvered Turkey by participating in the policy of British encirclement.” İnönü and Saraçoğlu both seemed very resigned and made no comments on Papen’s detailed statements as to why Turkey should revise its

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236 BCA 30.10.0.0/231.560.12 (Report on Ambassador Papen, August 29, 1939).
237 Ibid, 8.
238 Ibid.
foreign policy so soon. İnönü merely broached the question of Turco-German trade relations and the problems arising from Germany’s non-delivery of war materials. According to Papen, the purpose of his latest discussion was to convince them that “a revision of Turkey’s political course had become urgently necessary in Turkey’s own interests.”

The gist of İnönü’s remarks remained the same; that he most earnestly desired to keep Turkey out of any war; that if Italy were forced to enter the war, Mussolini would not be fighting for Germany’s war aims but only for his own; that Italy’s entrance would result in Turkey’s vital interests in the Mediterranean being affected; and, consequently, he had little hope that Turkey would be able to avoid fulfilling its obligations in this respect. Papen tried to ease İnönü anxiety by suggesting that “if Turkey chose to revert back to its strict neutrality, it would be possible for Hitler to dissuade Mussolini regarding an attack on Turkey.” In conclusion, Papen asked İnönü to “at least serve the interest of general peace and those of Turkey at the eleventh hour by using his influence for the final settlement of all problems resulting from Versailles.” Papen added that neither the Führer nor the Reich would tolerate a further postponement of this long delayed settlement and that in such a general settlement Turkey’s position might be greatly improved.

**Saraçoğlu-Molotov Talks**

The Nazi-Soviet Pact profoundly disturbed Turkish policy makers, who, upon hearing Hitler’s blunt requests from Papen, were compelled to redesign a new strategy

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240 Ibid, 391.
241 Ibid.
242 Ibid, 392.
from scratch. Yet, İnönü still had hopes of cutting a deal with the Soviets. On September 21, Saraçoğlu announced his decision to go to Moscow and open up a second round of negotiations with Molotov in order to “resolve all issues that remained on the table” since the Potemkin Talks.243 During the course of the next several weeks, Saraçoğlu embarked on a futile odyssey to rejuvenate Soviet-Turkish relations, while also attempting to arbitrate exacerbating Anglo-Soviet tensions. Conversely, however, what Molotov sought to accomplish was simply to turn the disturbing clauses of the Montreux Convention to USSR’s advantage.244

On September 22, four days before the opening of Soviet-Turkish talks, the Turkish Foreign Ministry received Moscow’s annual report concerning the size of USSR’s Black Sea Fleet (Chernomorskiy Flot). Article 18 of the Montreux Convention required all Black Sea littoral states to provide non-littoral signatories with an accurate profile of their naval power in the region. Soviet Ambassador Alexei Terentiev’s report indicated an alarming increase in tonnage, from 62,678 to 73,290.245 Until Terentiev’s report, Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu seemed to have an optimistic view of his mission as an intermediary between Halifax and Litvinov. Yet, Halifax was deeply susceptible to a possible British-Soviet contention over the Straits, perhaps even more so than a Turco-Soviet dispute, which to him seemed “rather less complicated.”246 Halifax conveyed Britain’s firm position in a meeting with Saraçoğlu – that all parties to the

243 Saraçoğlu quoted in “Adım Adım İkinci Dünya Savaşı’na Gidiş, Görünmeyen Yöneriyle Ribbentrop-Molotov Anlaşması,” Belgelerle Türk Tarih Dergisi, Dün/Bugün/Yarın, 52 (Mayıs 2001); 104-105.
244 B.M. Potskhveria, “Sovetsko-Turetskie otnoshenya i problema prolivov nakanune, v gody vtoroi mirovoi voiny i poslevoennyie desyatletiya,” in L.N. Nezhinsky and A.V. Ignatev, eds. Rossiia i chernomorskie prolivy, XVIII-XX stoletiia (Moscow, 1999), 437.
245 BCA 30.10.0.0/219.476.9 (Saraçoğlu to İnönü, May 19, 1939).
246 FO 424/283, R 8880/661/67 (Halifax to Hugessen, September 22, 1939).
Montreux Convention, including non-littoral ones, were now obliged to dispatch fleets to the Black Sea commensurate with the existing increase in Soviet tonnage.

The alarm bells that began to toll in the Black Sea was an unexpected surprise and an encouraging development for the Axis powers, which finally got a chance to draw Turkey’s attention away from the Mediterranean – hence from the Anglo-French bloc. As early as September 22, in his letter to Mussolini, Hitler wrote: “under these circumstances, Turkey would envisage a revision of her previous position,” upon which Mussolini replied, “a new strategy on the part of Turkey would upset all strategic plans of the French and English in the Eastern Mediterranean.” 247 Reading German Ambassador von Schulenberg’s notes, Ribbentrop got the impression that the Soviet Union tried to exert power on Turkey “to dissuade her from the final conclusion of assistance pacts with the Western powers.” 248

Britain, on the other hand, saw the Saraçoğlu-Molotov talks as an emergency brake that might prevent Poland getting further bogged down in its debacle with the Wehrmacht. Despite Britain’s earlier prophecies of a potential Nazi-Soviet collaboration in Poland (which Hugessen had explained to İnönü on September 1) Stalin’s decision to delay the Polish campaign for two weeks until the Nomohan victory against Japan in Mongolia, misled the British policy makers into thinking that the Soviets might remain neutral to the German-Polish war after all. 249 With a fair amount of comedic effort (at least in historical retrospect) six days before the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland,

249 What began as a prolonged series of border skirmishes between the Soviet Union and Japanese Empire in Mongolia turned into decisive battles in Khalkhyn Gol during May-September 1939. Although Nazi Germany began invading Western Poland on September 1, the Soviet Union decided to postpone the operation and consolidate its forces on the eastern theatre until Gregory Zhukov’s successful offensive in Nomohan on September 16. See, Otto Preston Chaney, Zhukov (University of Oklahoma Press, 1971).
Halifax asked whether Saraçoğlu could possibly approach the Soviet Government and try to persuade them to send a certain quantity of light and heavy machine guns and ammunition to Poland. Halifax’s message read: “There was no limit to the quantity made available by the Soviets…and any quantity, however small, would be welcome.”

Although Halifax probably realized that the Turkish Government might have legitimate hesitations to undertake this invidious task, he nonetheless made it clear that it was to Turkey’s best interest that Poland should not be overwhelmed. He thought that Turkey was the only country at the time that could make a friendly enquiry with the Soviet Government. Evidently Halifax was also concerned about how the Turks could approach the Soviets without revealing the fact that Polish forces were in desperate need of arms (as if the Soviets were unaware). At the very least least, Halifax suggested, if the Turkish Government themselves felt disposed to sending some light and heavy machine guns and ammunition to Poland through Rumania, their deficiencies would be compensated by Britain “through some other sources.” He regretfully confessed, however, that he was yet to approach the Prime Minister with a proposition of this sort. If one were to be blunt à la AJP Taylor about Halifax’s grasp at straws during those two weeks between German and Russian operations in Poland, he smacked of rank amateurism.

Upon his arrival, Saraçoğlu at first thought he was given a very warm welcome in Moscow and had positive feelings about the upcoming talks. Soviet newspapers published hailing columns about the Foreign Minister’s arrival, highlighting the fruitful cultural exchange between the two countries. Praising the new generation of Turkish artists, “which produced works that fell in sharp contrast with their Ottoman

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251 Ibid.
predecessors’ naïve romanticism,” Pravda translated and published a series of selected short stories and poems of such young leftists as Sabahattin Ali, Sadri Ertem, and Resat Nuri, “whose realism reflected the virtuous soul of the Turkish peasantry and proletariat and posed a vigorous challenge to the religious retrogressive strand in that country.”

In spite of Turkey’s eagerness to sign a pact with the Soviets, however, the Saraçoğlu-Molotov talks broke down in mid October. On paper, the Soviet–Turkish communiqué signed on October 17 highlighted “the positive change that had taken place in bilateral relations, which once again confirmed the strong friendship that existed between the Soviet Union and Turkey, and the shared desire of each government for the maintenance of peace.” But in reality, the Turks were utterly frustrated by Stalin’s treatment of Saraçoğlu, who was deliberately ignored, shunted from opera to ballet to football match, until he refused to go anywhere unless Stalin saw him. The Turks were very angry at the way they had been treated, and the Turkish Ambassador at the first available opportunity made manifest their resentment at the insolence of his Russian counterparts. The coldness on the part of the Soviets became even more apparent with Stalin’s extremely frigid reply to Saraçoğlu’s telegram on October 2, which read: “Turkey has only the greatest affection and love for brotherly relations with the Soviet Union.”

Some scholars suggest that Turkey gradually drifted away from the Soviet Union, as İnönü realized the impossibility of bridging Western powers with the Soviets, leading

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252 Pravda, September 27, 1939.
255 Pravda (October 2, 1939), 4; Salim, Moskova Görüşmeleri, 87.
him to a state of distrust prevailing after the unexpected Nazi-Soviet Pact. Others favor what Kemal Karpat calls the worn-out Western view of Turkey and Russia as two archrivals. According to the latter, Turkey’s intrinsic Russophobia was so great that “she was ready to undertake any sacrifice to guarantee her survival.” In fact, the two states had other, more technical and fundamental problems that ultimately interrupted the talks.

There are competing narratives in Turkish and Soviet accounts as to why the negotiations failed. Predictably, most Soviet accounts blamed Turkey for the failure, while the Turks accused Stalin. The difference in interpretation regarding the events of October 1939 represents the extension of their irreconcilable policy differences. From the Soviet point of view, the struggle among the ruling circles of Turkey that took place over the course of 1939 was mostly about foreign policy orientation. Soviet historians would later argue that the supporters of the Anglo-French bloc held the upper hand, “advocating the well-known Munich policy of appeasement” and concentrated all their efforts towards pushing Hitlerite aggression and fascism to the East against the USSR.

Conversely, İnönü contended that the Moscow negotiations broke down because the Soviet Government had made demands which ran counter to the two fundamental rules which the Turkish Government had laid down; (1) that Turkey should not in any way interfere with the normal working of the Montreux Convention, and (2) that Turkey should agree to nothing which would weaken the operation of the treaty which she contemplated with Great Britain and France. The Turkish Government, he added, would continue to keep up the appearance of negotiations with Russia, and although he

257 *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR, XXII, vol.2* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1993), 619; *Voyna i politka, 1939-1941* (Moscow, 1999), 16.
evidently did not hope for any results, he declared that he was not in the least disturbed by the breakdown. Moreover, he was certain that this breakdown would not affect relations between the two countries, since it was not the result of any fundamental disagreement between Russia and Turkey, but was due to the pressure exercised on the Soviet Government by the German Government. The Soviet Government “having felt themselves obliged in the interests of Germany,” put forward demands, which the Turkish Government was in no condition to accept. Like İnönü, Refik Saydam failed to hide his disappointment about the Moscow talks and indicated that the main reason behind Turkey’s negotiations with Russia was the latter’s imposition of “a completely new set of demands, which would jeopardize Turkish national security in the face of growing war pressure.”

Upon his return from Moscow, Saraçoğlu confided in Hugessen what he really thought went wrong and conveyed İnönü’s message on possible outlets to contain the emerging Soviet-Turkish conflict, of which the Balkans now played an important role. Saraçoğlu thought that the Soviet Government had hitherto gained “cheap triumphs in Poland and the Baltic,” but were severely rebuffed by Finns and Turks. After the breakup of Moscow talks, Stalin might well try to wipe out these two rebuffs by seeking yet another cheap success in Bessarabia. Saraçoğlu suggested that the Turks were inclined to tell the Romanians that, if they resist, “Turks will render all possible support.”

259 FO 424/284 R9046/661/67 (Halifax to Hugessen, October 18, 1939).  
260 BCA 030.01/42.248.6 (RPP Parliamentary Group Discussions, October 17, 1939).  
261 The conflict between the Soviet Union and Finland that arose in November of 1939 called into action (for good reason) what the USSR called the reactionary Turkish press. From the Soviet perspective, “more time was devoted to figuring out how to strike a blow against Russia – either through aid to Finland, the bombing of Baku, or the landing of British troops in Istanbul – than the question of how to deal with Germany.” (Moiseev, “SSSR i Turtsiia,” 160.) Even though such scenarios indeed appeared frequently in Turkish columns, the government itself certainly refused to entertain any one of these military provocations against the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, in the face of strong pressure and temptation, such plans contributed to a noticeable deterioration in Soviet-Turkish relations.
Yet he also added that Turkey’s support could not be effective without British and French cooperation. He therefore asked Hugessen whether the Britain was not prepared to cooperate with the Turks in resisting a Russian advance. Saraçoğlu finally said: “Do not forget that it is highly probable that if the Russians enter Bessarabia, Germans might decide to participate via Hungary. If you refuse to help us resist the Russians, we must obviously reexamine the whole position.”

Molotov gave a speech at the Supreme Soviet on October 31, which encapsulates the Soviet perception of the reasons behind the failure of Saraçoğlu-Molotov talks. Molotov argued: “For the negotiations to succeed, Turkey had to comply with two Soviet requests…First, in the case of war, no belligerent ships are to be allowed into the Black Sea. Secondly, the pact between the Soviet Union and Turkey could not in any way jeopardize Soviet Union’s relations with Germany. Turkey declined to comply with these two conditions of the Soviet Union and thus made impossible the conclusion of any Pact.”

Looking at these two conditions, it becomes clear that the terms on which Turks sought to negotiate with the Soviets fundamentally opposed those that their own national security relied upon.

Molotov’s second condition demonstrates his genuine attempt to dissuade Turkey from joining the Anglo-French Bloc. Hitler and Mussolini had indeed hoped to utilize a potential Soviet-Turkish Pact as a hook to pull Ankara away from the Allies. Much to Hitler’s dismay, however, soon after the opening of Soviet-Turkish negotiations, Molotov revealed to the German ambassador that “in all likelihood a mutual assistance pact with Turkey would not be concluded,” for the simple reason that Saraçoğlu strongly objected

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262 FO 424/284 R 8954/328/37 (Sir R. Hoare to Viscount Halifax, October 18, 1939).
to any bilateral revision of the treaty signed in Montreux. For Molotov, the signing of a non-aggression pact with Germany on the eve of the war, “although taken as a necessary precaution,” provoked a pointless threat perception in Turkey and was “blown out of proportion” by the “reactionary press” in that country. Molotov further suggested “only a few Turkish newspapers soberly appreciated the efforts of the Soviet Government to bring their country out of political isolation – an isolation that had been created by the Anglo-French imperialists.” Official Soviet narrative therefore claimed that England and France, even after the beginning of war, did not lose their hopes of directing fascist German aggression towards the Soviet Union.

From the Soviet point of view, aside from Turkey’s demagogic popular press, Turkish diplomats also acted as agent provocateurs, disrupting the emerging normalization in Soviet-German relations. For Stalin, this tendency became self-evident particularly in the latter period of Soviet Turkish negotiations: “By October 1939,” Stalin remarked, “the Turkish diplomats radically steered their country towards a Western oriented policy of sabotaging their friendly relations with the Soviet Union.” Soviet newspapers observing the Saraçoğlu-Molotov talks also accused Turkish diplomats of stalling their Soviet counterparts for a treaty of mutual aid. Pravda, for instance, claimed that it was only after the conclusion of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact that the Turkish Foreign Ministry responded to Soviet Union’s friendly offer to complete the negotiations initiated by V.P. Potemkin in April and decided to send a delegation under

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266 Stalin quoted in Iuri N. Roza'ev, K Istorii Sovetsko-Turetskikh otmoshenii (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1958), 231.
Saraçoğlu to Moscow.\textsuperscript{267} A similar article from \textit{Izvestiia} read: “what the Turkish diplomats merely hoped to achieve at the Moscow negotiations was to gain time for the Anglo-French coalition, which was at war with Germany. They failed to meet the one condition our government asked of Turkey - stopping any belligerent power from entering the Black Sea through the Straits, which the Turks declined, thereby showing us their real intentions and return to old tactics.”\textsuperscript{268}

Soviet officials seemed to acknowledge the fact that “in the conditions of war, a pact of mutual aid between the two non-warring governments would have undoubtedly strengthened their security and alleviated the danger of military crisis in the Black Sea Region.”\textsuperscript{269} Yet, they further claimed that such a course of events “was not at all desirable for England and France whose diplomacy had as its goal the sabotage of the Soviet-German pact.”\textsuperscript{270} For this reason, Stalin argued, when the Turkish government began negotiations about an alliance, they were “less interested in bettering relations with the Soviet Union and more interested in drawing the Soviet Union into that alliance with England and France, whose schemes of Soviet encirclement in the Middle East are well-known.”\textsuperscript{271}

Indeed, the effects of exacerbating Russo-Turkish relations on the Sa’dabad Pact were profoundly upsetting for both Turkey and Great Britain. After Saraçoğlu’s return from Moscow, Turkey immediately proposed a meeting of the Sadabad Powers – the Middle East defense organization established in 1937. Iran cried off, being seriously alarmed as to the effect of such a meeting with Britain upon Moscow. There was a certain

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{267} \textit{Pravda} (October 31, 1939), 2.
\item\textsuperscript{268} \textit{Izvestiia} (November 9, 1939), 4.
\item\textsuperscript{269} Belinkov and Vasil'ev, \textit{O Turetskom "Neitralitete,"} 32.
\item\textsuperscript{270} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
degree of confusion in Afghanistan and Iraq as well – the latter particularly seemed apprehensive of Russian intentions. The Iraqi Prime Minister advocated an alliance with Turkey to deal with “an imminent Russian threat.” İnönü hoped that these conflicting points of view amongst the member states “would not in any measure weaken the Saadabad Pact, which, in the eyes of Turkey, “formed the best combination under present circumstances and the best foundation on which to build some more solid structure should need arise.”

After the breakup of war in Europe, Turkey began looking at the Sa’dabad Pact with a fair amount of pragmatism and sought to use its leadership in the Pact as a bargaining chip during the Anglo-Turkish negotiations. Looking at the correspondence between Halifax and Hugessen, it is remarkable to see how İnönü’s strategy actually proved to be fruitful. In his annual report on Turkey, Hugessen argued that “Turkey [was] the deciding factor” among the Pact members, and that, “in spite of her laicism and treatment of the Caliphate, Turkey still [held] so central and so influential a position among the Moslem countries of the Middle East, both great and small.”

On the domestic level, the worsening of Turkish-Soviet relations over the course of autumn 1939 had a commensurate negative impact on Turkey’s perception of socialism and Turkish communists. On December 12, 1939, the Minister of Education, Hasan Ali Yücel, prepared a detailed report on communist activities among Turkish high school teachers. The report indicated “a radical increase in communist propaganda” in

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273 Ibid, 18.
274 FO 424/284 R241/17/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, January 5, 1940). Hugessen further suggests that “the abolition of Islam as a State religion has by no means entailed its disappearance as a practiced faith. The mosques are full as ever, and it is safe to say that, below the intellectual stratum, Islam retains its hold on the people of Turkey.
most Turkish schools since the outbreak of war, and urged the Prime Minister “to take radical measures before the situation gets out of hand.”

In response to the accusations of Soviet sponsored communist propaganda in Ankara, an anonymous Russian embassy staff spoke to the Anatolian News Agency and claimed that Stalin and the Soviet government were consciously abstaining from such propaganda abroad. The official argued: “Mongolia, for instance, despite receiving Soviet financial aid for some time (just like Turkey had in the 1920s) had never been encouraged to adopt state socialism…If [the Soviet Union] had entertained such designs, it would have been an overnight business.” By contrast, the Soviet official claimed, Nazi Germany was doing everything in its capacity to spread fascist ideas in Turkey and elsewhere.

Indeed, the Turkish Customs Authority had recently discovered German propaganda pamphlets and Hitler’s orations hidden in medicine containers shipped from Germany. The Turkish press was giving substantial coverage to these sorts of news, and the Soviet official had every reason to exonerate Moscow in the face of such blatant agitations as the Third Reich’s. But the Turkish Ambassador in Kabul reported that “the Russians irrefutably reverted back to their imperial policy of anti-British propaganda in Afghanistan,” and in collaboration with the Nazi leader Rudolph Hess, the Soviet diplomatic mission sought to turn tribal allegiances in that country against England, by supporting the former Afghan Foreign Minister Gulam Siddikhan.

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275 BCA 030.0.010/209.425.19 (Ministry of Education to the Prime Ministry, December 12, 1939).
276 BCA 490.01/609.111.9 (Directorate of Public Security to the RPP General Secretariat, October 24, 1939).
277 BCA 490.01/609.112.5 (Ministry of Interior to the RPP General Secretariat, 11 July 1939).
278 BCA 030.0.010/222.495.10 (Turkish Embassy in Kabul to the Prime Ministry, October 12, 1939).
Anglo-French-Turkish Treaty

After the Red Army had crossed the Curzon line, British policy towards Soviet-Turkish relations rapidly changed. The occupation of Kresy marked the beginning of a period, in which Great Britain reverted to its traditional policy of keeping Turkey in fear of Russian aggression in order to preempt the likelihood of a pact between the two – a policy that lasted until the breakout of the Nazi-Soviet war in June 1941. To achieve this, Halifax sought to expedite the conclusion of the long-delayed Anglo-French-Turkish treaty. This was probably the best time for Turkey to use its bargaining chips against Great Britain. Before leaving for Moscow, Saraçoğlu requested from Halifax a credit of £35,000,000 for war materials, a gold loan of £15,000,000 for improving the country’s dire economic situation, and £2,000,000 for clearing off the past year’s deficit. Turkey’s request was widely criticized in Britain at the time. While the British Cabinet attributed utmost importance to finalizing the terms of the May 12 Declaration in an official mutual-assistance treaty with Turkey, they found Saraçoğlu’s request unreasonably high in return for a treaty, which would be rendered inoperable by a suspensive clause for the Balkans. Turkey had been meticulous about the wording of the draft treaty, abstained from any binding obligations for the Balkans’ defense, and requesting revisions from Britain ad nauseum.

None of the preliminary meetings that took place between Britain and Turkey since May 12, 1939, produced a reliable draft due to the latter’s continued insistence on an addendum, which would free them of any commitments to Greece and Romania. Ambassador Hugessen had a difficult time in explaining Halifax what exactly Turkey was offering in return for the bullion. Another problem that bothered the British Cabinet

\[279\] Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, [hereafter, DBFP]. series 3, volume vii, no.635, 34.
was the amount of war materials that Turkey had requested. At a time when the British soldiers themselves urgently needed war supplies, it became practically unacceptable to give them to Turkey so unconditionally.

Nonetheless, there was the belief prevalent in the Cabinet that it had been more urgent than ever to have Turkey on Britain’s side even if only in name, rather than on Germany’s side. The loan Turkey requested was quite a heavy price, but not heavy enough for preempting a potential accession of Ankara to the Moscow-Berlin alliance. Besides, the British clearly understood that with the invasion of Poland there was enormous pressure on the Turkish General Staff, who feared that the defense of Thrace – Turkey’s European territory – would not be possible. Thus came into being the Anglo-Franco-Turkish Mutual Assistance Treaty of October 18, 1939, which marked the beginning of a new era when Turkey found itself in the midst of war and solidly placed closer to the Allied encampment - albeit still neutral on paper.

The trilateral treaty was regarded as a major diplomatic victory in Turkey. The prominent journalist Yunus Nadi wrote: “During the [ongoing negotiations with the Soviet Union and Great Britain since April] Turkey’s entire energy has been directed to avoid doing something that would harm others, especially her neighbors. She has done nothing more than to look to her security.”280 It is also likely that the failure of the concurrent negotiations with the Soviets compelled the Turks to join the Anglo-French Bloc as soon as possible and at any cost. Receiving both war materials and a substantial gold loan, the Turks secured a treaty very much aligned with their security interests and foreign policy goals. They would be actively involved only if attacked and if their allies were attacked they simply promised benevolent neutrality.

280 Yunus Nadi, Cumhuriyet (October 19, 1939), 5.
Ankara’s concurrent negotiations with the Soviet Union and Great Britain during the course of April-October 1939 gave a confusing message to not only the rival bidders but also to contemporary historians as well. Most historical accounts of this period portrayed Turkish diplomats as war profiteers, who were willing to negotiate their price, knowing that all belligerent powers fully appreciated the value of Turkey’s strategic position. Selim Deringil, for instance, makes a strong argument that “the Turks, in their best bargaining tradition, knew they were needed desperately by Britain and thus exploited their position of strength between the two sides.” Deringil further suggests that Turkey “counted on the possibility of a further deterioration in world affairs” and hoped that “things would be even more disadvantageous for Britain” on Saraçoğlu’s return from Moscow, so that could get her financial terms accepted by the British Cabinet.

There is an element of truth in these observations insofar as Turkey indeed managed to capitalize on the contest among warring blocs for its allegiance and emerged fairly jubilant from the gravest world crisis since July 1914. Yet, war profiteering is too strong of a metaphor to explain Turkey’s motivations in 1939 and overshadows Turkey’s genuine struggle to mediate the growing gap between the West and the Soviet Union.

The conclusion of the tripartite treaty became a source of great apprehension in Germany. Ribbentrop immediately requested a meeting with Ambassador Hüsrev Gerede, warning him that, from the German perspective, the entry into force of mutual-assistance pacts with England and France thereby placed Turkey in the anti-German

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283 Ibid, 84.
front. Disturbed by Ribbentrop’s bullying, the Turkish Ambassador vehemently denied this and declared that the treaty was in no way directed against Germany. Ribbentrop replied that it was “difficult for him to follow this reasoning.”\textsuperscript{284} On the contrary, Ribbentrop reiterated, “[he] had the impression that Turkey’s policy was chiefly directed against Germany.” In addition, Ribbentrop added, he received reports almost every day to the effect that Turkish policy had taken a predominantly anti-German line and seemed moreover to be very active. It might almost be said that Turkish policy considered itself as an extension of the Foreign Office, “it seemed at times even more British than Downing Street policy.”\textsuperscript{285} The Turkish Ambassador had little to say in reply.

In a subsequent meeting with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Franz von Papen raised similar criticisms and suggested that the Reich Government was always prepared to conclude a reasonable trade agreement with Turkey, particularly with regards to chrome transactions. Papen added that Germany “could not but consider it an unneutral and therefore unfriendly act should Turkey gave in to British pressure not to deliver any chromium to Germany.”\textsuperscript{286} Papen further suggested that the Fuhrer could understand that Turkey might want to exchange this valuable material for foreign exchange, if possible. Therefore Germany was even prepared to deliver war material in payment. Saraçoğlu said that he did not intend to cut the Germans off from the chromium supplies but was only awaiting the result of an investigation of the extent to which the chromium output could be increased in order to make me an offer.\textsuperscript{287}

\textsuperscript{284} DGFP, series D, vol. VIII, no. 347 (Memorandum by Ribbentrop, November 11, 1939), 398-405.
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid, 403.
\textsuperscript{286} DGFP, series D, vol. VIII, no. 390 (Memorandum by Ribbentrop, November 27, 1939), 451-456.
\textsuperscript{287} Ibid, 455.
Ribbentrop knew very well that Saraçoğlu was simply trying to gain time and found his counterpart’s statements on commercial policy very disappointing. The fact that Saraçoğlu wanted to make a chromium offer to Germany contingent upon the result of investigation of the possibility of increasing the output confirmed the reports that the available supplies and the present output had been or would be sold to the Anglo-American camp. Therefore, Ribbentrop asked Papen to insist on a clear answer as to the truth of these reports or this intention; “if they [were] true, further negotiations [were] pointless.”

The Anti-Soviet Mind

In the early days of 1940, a dreadful uncertainty haunted Russo-Turkish relations; the problem owed more to Stalin’s erratic treatment of Turkey’s policy of sitting on the fence than anything. There was hardly a moment in 1940, when serious hope of a permanent improvement in bilateral affairs could be entertained. On January 4, Halifax drafted a general memorandum on Soviet-Turkish conflict, in which he argued that “Soviet ambitions [had] always been Asiatic rather than European,” and that the past six months showed more logic and continuity in the eastern policy of Stalin than in that of Hitler, therefore, he added, “with respect to Turkey, the influence of tradition on foreign policy may be said to guide the former to a greater extent than the latter.”

By the winter of 1940, British foreign policy makers clearly thought that the real Soviet threat against British interests lay in the Middle East – Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, with India as the prize – and possibly even further eastwards. From the

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288 DGFP, series D, vol. VIII, no. 408 (Ribbentrop to Papen, December 1, 1939), 475-476.
289 Ibid, 476.
290 FO 424/284 N103/30/38 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, January 4, 1940).
Turkish perspective, however, it appeared more likely that the next Soviet step would be taken in the Balkans. İnönü was convinced that a Soviet move into Bessarabia, with or in spite of Germany, would lead to dire consequences in Bulgaria, drawing the conflict into the mouth of the Danube, thereby bringing the Bosphorus on the brink of war. Within less than six months, a vast area of Poland had been seized; the Baltic States had been brought under Moscow’s shadow; Stalin had proceeded further and made it clear that Finland was next. İnönü thought that these moves suggested a logical sequence and that if successfully carried out, they could ultimately be expected to reach saturation point in the west, after the recovery of the territories under the former Russian Empire. After all, he added, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, “which was born out of pure opportunism,” illustrated the tendency of revolutionary governments “to revert to the traditional foreign policy of their predecessors.”291

Insofar as a potential Soviet incursion through Southern Caucasus is concerned, the Turkish General Staff created two new array corps in Eastern Turkey and increased their defenses on the Soviet frontier. For some time, the General Staff denied that they had moved “even so much as one man to the eastern front,” although the British military attaché in Ankara had good reason to believe from “other sources” that “unostentatious precautions” were being taken.292 This silence on the part of Turkish military authorities was simply due to the firm policy of avoiding the smallest action likely to offend the Soviet Government. By January 1940, however, the Minister for Foreign Affairs informed the British ambassador that Turkish forces in the northeast were being gradually

291 BCA 490.01/609.111.29 (İnönü to the RPP General Secretariat, October 24, 1939).
292 FO 424/284 N103/30/38 (Enclosure in No. 4, Minute by Brigadier A.C. Arnold, Military Attaché, December 20, 1939).
and unobtrusively increased. Even so, it was not until February 1940 that the Turkish General Staff admitted this.

In his dispatch to Halifax, Ambassador Knatchbull-Hugessen noted that the Turkish confession was extremely important, as it constituted proof that things now reached a different stage, whereby the Turkish Government realized that the danger of a Soviet move in the spring was sufficiently concrete to render it necessary for them to subordinate their anxiety to avoid offending Moscow. During his private meetings with the British ambassador, Saraçoğlu time and again admitted that “in the eyes of the Turkish Government and of the General Staff, Germany [was] regarded as a remoter enemy and their attention was certainly directed towards the Soviet Union.”

In January 1940, İsmet İnönü carried out a number of extensive tours in the northeastern districts, accompanied by General Rauf Orbay – the commanding officer in the Black Sea region.

British policy makers were acutely aware that wherever the Soviet drive would eventually be made – whether in South-Eastern Europe, through North-Western Iran into Iraq, or through Afghanistan in the direction of India – the strategic and geographical position of Turkey was such that it was impossible for the Soviet Union to execute any of these moves without devoting serious consideration to Ankara’s reaction. Therefore it seemed quite clear, both from past experience and from present circumstances that the most effective safeguard against Soviet designs, wherever aimed, would consist in the development of the utmost strength possible in Turkey. Whether the Soviet threat came from the Balkans or against Turkey herself, Halifax thought that the advantage of a strong bulwark in Turkey was self-evident both for its own sake and as a center of attraction for neighboring countries. “If the threat came from further east, the stronger

293 BCA 490.01/609.112.7 (Saraçoğlu to the RPP General Secretariat, December 11, 1939).
Turkey could be made, the greater would be the hope of putting spirit into the other members of the Sa’dabad Pact, and the greater the Soviet need for caution,” Halifax claimed.294

Whatever the state of Turkish mentality had been in the fall of 1939, when Saraçoğlu-Molotov talks in Moscow ended abruptly, by the early spring of 1940 there was no doubt that Turkey would react most vigorously against a Russian fait accompli to establish itself as a mistress of the oil-fields in Iran and Iraq. If the French and British had been able to secure the Turks a reasonable scale of rearmament, or if Turkey had been able to trust British naval and air support in the Black Sea and Trans-Caucasus, İnönü would have easily regarded a move against Iran and Iraq – its copartners in the Sadabad Pact—as a hostile act and would have taken steps accordingly. It was, in fact, in view of this very contingency that Turkey substantially increased its forces on the eastern frontier; and it was the officially expressed opinion of the Turkish General Staff that the Soviet Union could not dare to undertake a movement against Iran without taking steps at the same time to neutralize the Turkish eastern frontier with powerful forces. The Turkish gambit seemed to have worked out well, since the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow reported in March 1940 that Russia intended to lie low and recuperate for the time being, and to abstain from further adventure. Saraçoğlu's own opinion was that Russia would not be capable of carrying on any outside adventure until the late summer and even then he was doubtful whether she would be fit to do so.295 He shared this view with

294 FO 424/284 N103/30/38 (Enclosure in No. 4, Minute by Brigadier A.C. Arnold, Military Attaché, December 20, 1939).
295 BCA 030.0.010/222.495.320 (Saraçoğlu to the Prime Ministry, December 12, 1939).
Ambassador Hugessen and reiterated Turkey’s confidence in his subsequent meetings during April-May 1940.296

Hugessen got an even more confident impression from President İnönü, who described his attitude towards the Soviets quite candidly. He said: "We don't want to go to war with the Soviets if it can be avoided." He then went on to point out that, as the summer nears, the military plans in regard to the Caucasus were in a very embryonic stage. If Turkey were engaged in war with the Soviets now she would be practically alone, as there was no arrangement for Allied help. He referred to the Aleppo conversations, saying that the British had only been prepared to discuss hypotheses. He fully understood this and realized that the British government had in the end been prepared to discuss all possible scenarios. The President then went on to indicate that in his opinion Russia was now standing off from the close contact with Germany, which had been maintained earlier. He thought, therefore, that Turkey might be of service in drawing Russia further away from Germany and bringing her more into line with the Allies. This clearly indicated a return to the policy followed at the time of Saraçoğlu's visit to Moscow in 1939.297 Nevertheless, Ambassador Hugessen was not quite convinced that it would be easy to get the Turks to undertake anything beyond defensive action against Russia, at all events, until they considered themselves fully equipped and prepared. When Hugessen returned to what he had previously said about Turkey being at present inadequately prepared and still without organized plans for the Caucasian front. İsmet Paşa made Saraçoğlu translate this remark into Turkish, and immediately replied: "We must make ourselves strong on land and in the air." Given all pressing exigencies in

296 FO 424/284 R3126/242/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, March 1, 1940); and FO 424/284 R4236/316/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, April 1, 1940).
297 FO 424/284 R4337/4156/67 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, April 3, 1940).
France, Ambassador Hugessen ruefully admitted in his letter to Halifax “what a pity it [was] that Britain could not commit [itself] to strengthening Turkey’s defenses.”

298 FO 424/284 R4337/4156/67 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, April 3, 1940).
III. IMPERIAL VISIONS

After the capitulation of France in June 1940, Turkey slowly began to change its position from “active” to passive neutrality, though still favorably disposed to Britain. İnönü came to the conclusion that he could not expect from Britain the help that he had hoped for under the 1939 treaty if Turks were attacked, especially now that France had collapsed. The pretext for İnönü’s fear, however, was in effect based on changing circumstances with the Soviet Union rather than France. In other words, by 1939 Turkey could not have risked coming into the war on Britain’s side unless Ankara was certain that London could come to its defense in the case of an attack either by Italy in the Aegean or by Germany through Bulgaria. By July 1940, however, as the possibility of a Soviet invasion through the Straits or the Caucasus emerged, Turkey began fast reverting to its old imperial attitude, when Istanbul’s foreign policy had been dictated solely by the Sultan’s fear of Russia. This was so much the case that the British Ambassador noted: “once again, Turkey's foreign policy [was] governed by that of Russia — the hereditary enemy, whose age-long ambition is to wrest the Straits from Turkey…whatever country is opposed to Russia is, ipso facto, favored by Turkey.”

Therefore it seemed quite possible that Turkey would appeal to Germany to defend itself against a Russian attack, just as it did in the First World War. Germany would have had every reason to respond to this appeal. In the first place, as long as the idea of the Drang nach Osten persisted in the German mind, Germany naturally did not want to have Russia established across its path in the Bosphorus; and, secondly, Germany would naturally be only too willing to detach Turkey from its existing connection with

299 FO 424/285 R6703 G (Halifax to Hugessen, July 5, 1940).
Great Britain and pose again as the protector of Turkey and the Near East against not merely Soviet but also British domination. Halifax also knew that if İnönü’s fear of the Soviets at any moment turned to panic, “Turkey [could] very well perform a complete volte-face and enter into as close relations with Germany as she entered into with [Britain] last autumn.”

The British ambassador in Moscow, Stafford Cripps, was given instructions to secure reassurances from Stalin vis-à-vis friendly relations with Turkey with an attempt to preempt a German-Turkish dialogue. But at a time when the Soviet Government were clearly maneuvering for defensive positions against Germany on all fronts, the question of the Straits was bound to overshadow all other aspects of Soviet-Turkish relations since Stalin had long been known to regard the Montreux Convention with dissatisfaction. Therefore Ambassador Cripps warned Halifax that “a further approach to Soviet Government on lines suggested [would] almost certainly be interpreted by them as a blank cheque, and [would] encourage them to increase their demands and will create most dangerous dead-lock.”

Far from improving relations, Cripps thought that approaching the Soviet Government would under these circumstances have had precisely opposite effect and precipitated war in the Black Sea.

From the Turkish perspective, on the other hand, a mere platonic reaffirmation of traditional Soviet-Turkish friendship was not going to be enough. In the face of rapid Soviet mobilization, İnönü knew that Turks could not hold the Straits singlehandedly, and he was equally doubtful of Britain’s ability to afford adequate help. Therefore, the possibility of a German-Turkish rapprochement arose as early as April 1940. At the

300 Ibid.
301 FO 424/285, R 6676/203/44 (Halifax to Scripps, July 13, 1940).
302 FO 424/285, R 6773/316/44 (Scripps to Halifax, July 18, 1940).
same time, the Turks were fearful of giving the impression that if the ongoing talks with Germany should result in a non-aggression treaty, this would be taken as their full integration into the Axis. Mindful of İnönü’s stipulations, in his meetings with Saraçoğlu, Franz von Papen often acknowledged that Germany fully recognized Turkey’s loyalty to the Anglo-French-Turkish Treaty of 1939, and that Hitler had no desire to oppose this, easing Turkey’s anxiety for giving the wrong message. 303

With Italy’s entrance into the war in June 1940, the question Germany had to resolve was whether there was still a chance to keep Turkey out of the war and the necessary means to secure Turkey’s neutrality. While some quarters of the German foreign ministry suggested possible scenarios to paralyze Turkey’s powers in order to preempt a possible accession to the British alliance, Franz von Papen favored a different, diplomatic scheme to achieve this. In his dispatch to Ribbentrop on May 17, Papen argued that the Turkish question was of decisive importance for Germany’s fate and course of war in the Mediterranean and the Near East. For Papen, carrying on war in this sphere of British hegemony without coordination with Turkey “could rob the German army of final victory despite its heroic efforts.” 304 Papen got the impression that within Ankara’s leading political circles, the desire to keep out of the conflict had grown considerably with the increase in German successes within the first half of 1940. Hence Papen suggested: “This chance should be exploited under any circumstances.” 305 Yet the problem was concentrated around a single question: would Italy be able to conduct its war against the hegemonic position of England and France in the Mediterranean without bringing the Balkans and Turkey into its field of operations and without in this way

303 BCA 30.18.1.2/94.26.11 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prime Ministry, April 2, 1940).
305 Ibid, 365.
giving up important advantages for the achievement of victory? In Papen’s view, the answer was “Yes.”

Not everyone agreed with Papen in Berlin. August von Mackensen – the 95-year-old prominent German monarchist who later became a symbol of the Wehrmacht – thought differently. In Mackensen’s view, the Italian government was not in a position to give to Turkey reassuring declarations to that effect. Mackensen regarded it as much more likely that Italy would attempt, together with the German government to exercise strong and intimidating pressure on Turkey, rather than have its hands tied with assurances. Papen concurred with Mackensen’s observation but added that Turkish-Italian relations were such that any attempt at intimidation by the Italians “would only achieve the opposite of the desired result.” “As is known,” Papen added, “Turkey regards Italy as her traditional enemy, and in spite of her unfavorable position would not hesitate to for one moment to go to war against Italy if her interests demanded it.”

In conclusion, Papen claimed that there remained two options: (1) Italy’s smashing of Anglo-French dominance in the Mediterranean singlehandedly and without directly intimidating Turkey; (2) using an imminent Russian military action as a threat against a possible Anglo-Turkish alliance.

For Papen, the latter seemed like a more viable option. But there was one essential obstacle in achieving the desired scenario: Turkey’s professedly Anglophile Foreign Minister Saraçoğlu, who still held considerable contempt for the way he had been treated by Stalin in Moscow last October, and, yet, still pursued an extremely

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306 Ibid, 367.
307 DGFP, series D, vol. X, no. 197 (Memorandum by Papen, July 20, 1940), 257.
cautious policy towards the Soviets in order not to antagonize them. Papen was convinced that Saraçoğlu had to go.

Papen also thought that another essential thing the Germans could do was to offer Turkey on Italy’s behalf similar assurances that Britain and France had offered in 1939 as the price for its accession to the Mutual Assistance Treaty. “While one might not accord too high evaluation of her military forces,” Papen argued, “Turkey still remains an extremely unpleasant threat to the flank of any operation against the British Empire in the Near East.” As a former comrade-in-arms of the Turkish Army, Papen evaluated the psychological situation in Ankara most accurately. Nazi orchestration of Russophobia in Turkey and harmonization of Italy’s interests with those of Germany already had steered Turkey into a more passive and more anti-Soviet neutral position by June 1940. Papen had an intricate scheme to isolate the Turks even further by undermining their already skewed partnership with the Soviet Union. Hence came into existence the so-called German White Book plot in the summer of 1940.

The German White Book Crisis

On July 5, the Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro published two telegrams allegedly sent by the French Ambassador in Ankara to the French Foreign Ministry, which was later intercepted by the Germans. The first telegram (the so-called “Document No.4”) was described by Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro as the French Ambassador Massigli's report of a conversation with the Turkish Foreign Minister on March 14, about a projected

DGFP, series D, vol. X, no. 197 (Memorandum by Papen, July 20, 1940), 257.
309 BCA 30.10.0.0/232.561.10 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prime Ministry, July 5, 1940). British Ambassador Hugessen’s report (dated July 7) raises question marks about the authenticity of these two telegrams: FO 424/285 R6670/203/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, July 7, 1940).
bombardment of Baku and Batumi. In his telegram, the French Ambassador suggested that the Turks would certainly be unwilling to create obstacles. On the contrary, Massigli argued, Saraçoğlu himself shared with him another telegram from the Turkish ambassador in Moscow to the effect that the Soviet Government were anxious regarding the Baku oil region, and that in the event of an air bombardment it would take months to extinguish the fire due to the hazardous Soviet methods of oil extraction.\footnote{310}{BCA 30.10.0.0/232.561.10 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, July 5, 1940).} The critical bit of Massigli’s telegram, which compromised Turkey’s neutrality, was a question Saraçoğlu reportedly posed regarding the radius of modern French aircraft, to which the Ambassador replied that their air force had a sufficient radius of action to reach Baku from Northern Iraq, but that to do this Turkish and Iranian territory would have to be flown over. The Turkish minister's reply was “do you then fear a protest from Iranians?” which seemed to the French ambassador sufficiently clear hint that the Turkish Government would raise no difficulty in bombarding Soviet territory.\footnote{311}{Ibid.}

The second telegram (the so-called “Document No.6”) dated March 28, indicated that in the event of military action against Baku and Batumi, it should be arranged not to compromise Turkey.\footnote{312}{BCA 30.10.0.0/85.559.6 (Directorate of Press to the Prime Ministry, July 7, 1940).} This second telegram was more detailed compared to the first, and dealt with Soviet-Turkish relations; the possibility of aerial bombardment of Baku from Jezireh in Syria; and the possibility of cutting German-Soviet communications in the Black Sea. In his second telegram, the French ambassador reported that it would be difficult to induce Turkey to attack Russia, but that it might be possible to get her to follow the Allies in taking up position vis-à-vis Russia.\footnote{313}{Ibid.} Massigli concluded that
Turkish Government was not fully convinced that the Allies could defeat Germany and would maintain a very cautious attitude lest they should provoke Soviet hostility. In the event of an aerial bombardment by the Allies of Baku, passage of airplanes would take place over a sparsely populated country and for that reason might even pass unnoticed and that therefore the Turkish Government might profess ignorance of the matter in reply to a possible Russian protest. In the event of a hostile Soviet reaction to these telegrams through military action against Turkey, Massigli allegedly concluded that it would be imperative to help the Turkish Government most rapidly.

The publication of these alleged documents received a comprehensive *dementi* in the form of a letter addressed by the French Ambassador to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which Massigli denied that he had ever, in any conversation either with Saraçoğlu or with other members of the Ministry, requested permission for French airplanes to fly across Turkish territory for the purpose of bombing Baku, nor had the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs ever consented to such an operation.\(^{314}\) Massigli later announced that he might have summarized in a report, on which the German publications were apparently based, some information casually collected and made certain personal conjectures; but that he could never have informed the French Government that the Turkish Government had agreed to permit any operation against Baku nor had he been authorized to seek such agreement.

Since the publication of the German White Book (Massigli’s alleged telegrams) by the *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro*, the Turkish press had been at great pains to point out the loyalty of the Turkish Government to the Soviets, and their steadfast desire for

\(^{314}\) BCA 30.10.0.0/85.559.4 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prime Ministry, July 15, 1940).
friendship. İnönü coopted his party newspaper’s editorial line to actively support the correctness of his foreign minister’s attitude in refusing to take any part in the alleged proposals for attack on Baku. Naturally, Massigli’s counter-statement was much appreciated by the press, and the Anatolian (News) Agency published a manifesto, which contended that the Turks were indubitably inclined to think that this recent German intrigue represented a hostile plot against Foreign Minister Saraçoğlu personally, rather than an attempt to embroil Turkey with the Soviets.

In response to Saraçoğlu’s vigorous denial of collaborating in any anti-Soviet undertaking, on July 7, the Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro published a communiqué describing Massigli’s counter-statement as a futile attempt to reverse his previous blunders and Saraçoğlu’s remark as a deceitful maneuver to extricate himself and his Turkish colleagues from a difficult position. In view of Germany’s perseverance in proving the authenticity of Saraçoğlu’s compromising revelations, İnönü became convinced that this was a scheme to discredit Foreign Minister Saraçoğlu personally, whose pro-British sentiments were well known. It was quite clear that Germany sought to get rid of Saraçoğlu by implicating him in an anti-Soviet conspiracy, thereby forcing İnönü’s hand to remove him from office. Much to Ribbentrop’s dismay, Papen’s plan backfired and the publication of the German White Book in Turkish (verbatim without comments) rallied most Turks of all opinions solidly around their foreign minister.

On July 12, Prime Minister Refik Saydam made an official statement in the Parliament, demonstrating Turkey’s desire to preempt and contain a possible problem.

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315 Ibid.
316 BCA 30.10.0.0/85.560.2 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, July 17, 1940).
317 The British Ambassador in Ankara, who had been watching the unfolding plot closely, expressed his apprehension in his dispatch: FO 424/285 R6670/203/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, July 8, 1940).
with the Soviets.  

The most salient points of Saydam’s address were raised in the form of a long rant against the circulation of the alleged German documents. He stressed that Massigli’s alleged remarks should in no way cause anxiety to the Soviet Government or people. Saydam contended that his government ardently desired that the German White Book be published without alteration in Russia because such publication could only afford irrefutable proof of correctness of policy of the Turkish Government. Saydam argued that Turkey would have nothing but contempt for those who tried to base on these documents accusations of lack of sincerity or to use them as an occasion for compromising Turkish statesmen. “New and vigorous Turkey [should] not be compared with the old Ottoman Empire,” Saydam said, and therefore “maintenance, departure or replacement of Turkish statesmen could only take place by the decision of the National Assembly and could only be accomplished with its approval, not through foreign conspiracy.”

The prime minister described Turkey’s attitude as one of “faithfulness to its friends determined to defend its independence and liberty,” claiming that Turkey simply awaited events and did not seek to provoke or attack its neighbors. Saydam’s declaration went on to affirm the determination of the Turkish Government to continue its present policy, which only aimed at defending the country. In spite of the world situation, Turkey did not seem in imminent danger and continued to be animated by the desire to maintain good relations with neighbors and, in particular, with the Soviet Union.

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318 TBMM, d. 4, c. 13, b. 1, s. 58 (July 12, 1940). Apparently Saydam’s speech was transmitted to London verbatim. See: FO 424/285 R6641/316/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, July 12, 1940).

319 TBMM, d. 4, c. 13, b. 1, s. 63 (July 12, 1940).

320 Ibid.
Any conspiratorial threat to Turkey's sovereignty, Saydam suggested, “would result in Turkish people taking up arms to defend their country to the end.”\textsuperscript{321}

Alarmed by a potential Turco-Soviet conflict after the Papen plot, which could expose Britain’s interests in the Middle East within Germany’s reach, Viscount Halifax desperately sought to offer his services as arbitrator. In his dispatch to Ambassador Cripps in Moscow, Halifax argued that the question was not whether the Turkish government would oppose Britain’s wish to approach the Soviets on their behalf for reconciliation, but whether they could prevent the Soviet Government from taking the initiative themselves, which would most certainly entail the question of the Straits since they had long been known to regard the Montreux Convention with dissatisfaction.\textsuperscript{322}

For Halifax, there were thus two courses open to the Soviet Government. Either Stalin would attempt to frighten and weaken Turkey to the point of ceding to Moscow a preponderant share in the control of the Straits; or he would seek to gain some more modest share in that control by friendly negotiation and co-operation with Turkey against an eventual German attack.

Ambassador Cripps was of the opinion that the latter course would be the wiser policy, since the former might defeat its own object by driving Turkey to seek German protection – “an eventuality, which Britain also must, in its own interests, do everything possible to avoid.”\textsuperscript{323} But either way, Cripps concurred with Halifax, the Soviet Government would undoubtedly aspire to some share in the control of the Straits particularly after the German White Book scandal. It was therefore agreed that if the Turkish Government was prepared to concede some modification of the convention in

\textsuperscript{321} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{322} FO 424/285 R6676/203/44 (Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Cripps, July 15, 1940).
\textsuperscript{323} FO 424/285 R6676/203/44 (Sir S. Cripps to Viscount Halifax, July 18, 1940).
favor of the Soviet Union, there was a good chance of bringing about a Turco-Soviet rapprochement, thereby barring Germany's advance towards Asia Minor and at the same time weaning the Soviet Union from German influence. If, on the other hand, the Turks were not prepared for this sacrifice “it would be folly to raise Soviet hopes in vain by promoting Turco-Soviet discussion.”\textsuperscript{324} Broadly speaking, everyone already knew what Stalin wanted from such discussions, and it was worse than useless to “bring him out into the open” if they merely “brought him out on the wrong side.”\textsuperscript{325} Both Halifax and Cripps realized that “a renewed and positive refusal to reconsider the Straits regime would simply encourage the Soviet Government to adopt a hostile course with all its dangers to Great Britain.”\textsuperscript{326}

While Great Britain briefly considered a revision of the Montreux Convention to ameliorate Turco-Soviet relations, it soon became clear that Turkey was by no means disposed to accept a compromise, which did not take fully into account its difficulties for the maintenance of its full sovereignty, and entire political independence and security. In the existing uncertain situation, Halifax decided that it would almost be impossible to make more than an ad hoc agreement, and that the elements necessary for any long-term revision of the Straits regime did not, in fact, exist at present.\textsuperscript{327} For Ambassador Hugessen too, it was completely unrealistic to expect matters to proceed further without the Soviet Government raising the Straits question, which involved the danger of a deadlock if the Soviet requirements went beyond what the Turkish Government could concede.

\textsuperscript{324} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{325} FO 424/285 R6676/203/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, July 19, 1940).
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{327} FO 424/285 R6830/203/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, July 24, 1940).
The Turkish Government was perfectly alive to this situation in drafting a reply to
Great Britain. Saraçoğlu told Halifax that if the Turks were to agree to allow or prevent
passage of warships in war-time Turkey would, in the event of war, inevitably become
the ally of the Power to whose warships it allowed passage, and the enemy of the Power
to whom it refused it.\(^{328}\) None of the Straits' regimes for the past 150 years had been in
essence more than ad hoc. Although some had lasted for long periods in peacetime, all
had been based on the relative strength of the Powers concerned or of Turkey, and they
had been upset every time the international equilibrium changed.\(^{329}\) The arrangements
envisioned in 1936 at the Montreux Convention, however, went well beyond covering the
contingencies of the moment and, from Turkey’s perception, established the best regime
possible. Naturally, the last thing Turkey wanted was to compromise its ultimate control
over the Straits.\(^{330}\)

Mindful of Turkey’s unyielding attitude, Halifax asked Ambassador Cripps in
Moscow to seek an early interview with Stalin and inform him that His Majesty's
Government was anxious to do all it can to see a progressive improvement in the
relations of Soviet Russia and Turkey and would be quite ready to place their services at
the disposal of the Soviet Government with this object in view.\(^{331}\) At the same time,
Halifax asked Cripps to make it plain that the modification of the Straits regime, to which
Stalin had long been referring, was a matter of great difficulty and complexity. For their

\(^{328}\) BCA 30.18.1.2/89.130.8 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, July 17, 1940).
\(^{329}\) Two important sources on the history of the Straits regimes are: Ronald P. Bobroff’s *Late Imperial
Russia and the Turkish Straits: Roads to Glory* (Tauris: New York, 2006); and İnan, Türk Boğazlarının
Siyasal ve Hukuksal Rejimi, 40-82; here, 73-80.
\(^{330}\) From the British perspective, Turkey’s fears were understandable but groundless; Halifax thought that
there seemed to be no definite attempt to upset the Montreux Convention; in fact, some of Stalin's demands
were for an interpretation of the convention, which actually contained in its final paragraph the phrase “in
view of the war in Europe.”
\(^{331}\) FO 424/285 R6776/203/44 (Viscount Halifax to Sir S Cripps, July 26, 1940).
part the British considered that the most hopeful line of approach was supplied by the possibility that the Soviet and Turkish Governments, in conjunction with the British, might recognize that they all had a common interest in protecting the security of the Straits against the ever-present threat of German and/or Italian aggression. Halifax urged Cripps to avoid making any concrete suggestions in regard to an ad hoc agreement between the two countries for the defense of the Straits, but merely to endeavor to elicit such suggestions from Mr. Stalin.

In his response, Cripps told Halifax that it was not possible for ambassadors to see Stalin except on the very rarest occasions; hence, he did not see any chance of another interview with Stalin under the present circumstances. Cripps said that it was almost equally difficult to obtain an interview with Molotov, even on instructions from Great Britain, and that he was still waiting for an interview he had asked for three times. As for Halifax’s attempt to act as middleman in Turco-Soviet negotiations, Cripps was much more aloof to such ideas and considered it to be dangerous and unwise for His Majesty's Government to become involved. For Cripps, the most they could safely do was to let each party know that the other was willing to discuss the matter, indicating their own attitude, and then leave the initiative to one of two parties. In Cripps’ opinion, it was precisely the form of guarantee to which the Soviet Government had persistently taken exception; in other words, the liability of some other country to decide when and how the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics should be called in to assist. If there was to be any question of joint action by Russia and Turkey to protect the Straits, then the Soviet

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332 FO 424/285 R6776/203/44 (Sir S. Cripps to Viscount Halifax, July 28, 1940).
333 Ibid.
Government would ultimately demand the right to take a full share in deciding whether and how that protection shall be given.

Ambassador Cripps must have been quite surprised when he finally managed to secure interviews with both Molotov and Stalin in early August to discuss the Turkish problem. In his first meeting with Molotov, Cripps regretfully found out that Molotov saw a fundamental deterioration in Soviet-Turkish relations. Molotov asserted that after the German White Book scandal, Massigli's disclaimers did not suffice to alter the essence of the alleged documents. As far back as early April, the Soviet Government had complained of flight of foreign aircraft over Batum. While the Turkish Government at first denied that any aircraft had come from Turkish territory, Molotov claimed that the Soviet Government saw no substantial undertakings in Ankara “to adopt measures to prevent flights of this kind in future.” On the contrary, Molotov argued, the White Book revelations convinced the Russians that the Turks even knew “what kind of airplanes were to be flown over.”

After his interview with Molotov, Cripps met with Stalin, only to find out that it would be futile to bring about a Turco-Soviet rapprochement. Cripps had initially advocated that the Turkish Government would welcome Britain’s arbitration and he was prepared to play his part as one of the principal negotiators. Having met Stalin, Cripps wrote Halifax that all his assumptions proved to be incorrect and that “even if [he] could secure another interview with Stalin, to go to him again without a single helpful or concrete suggestion (after six weeks to consider his earlier remark) and with nothing but a request that he should hold forth afresh on his own attitude towards Turkey would

334 Molotov quoted in Pravda (April 8, 1940), 4.
335 Ibid.
336 FO 424/285 N6109/40/38 (Cripps to Halifax, August 3, 1940).
merely be an irritant.”\textsuperscript{337} Stalin’s attitude towards Turkey had already been inspired largely by resentment at the \textit{non-possumus} red line taken by Saraçoğlu when he had been to Moscow in 1939; and in view of Massigli’s alleged telegrams, Cripps told Halifax that he did not see how he could “honestly pretend that the Turkish Government were now very much more forthcoming.”\textsuperscript{338} For Cripps, Britain should not hope to secure a betterment of Turkish Government relations with Russia without their co-operation. He therefore suggested that the time had come to make this position quite plain to the Turkish Government and to intimate that failing a more helpful attitude on their part Britain did not propose to do anything further.\textsuperscript{339}

Following the heated days of July 1940, fear of Russia clearly came to the forefront of the Turkish mind; but in assessing Stalin’s reaction to the White Book plot, İnönü decided that the danger constituted by Russia to Turkey was perhaps not as imminent as he had initially assumed.\textsuperscript{340} The course of events since the outbreak of war demonstrated that a major axiom of Stalin's policy was to avoid getting bogged down in the Anglo-German conflict as a belligerent on one side or the other, while at the same time doing everything short of that to favor Germany.\textsuperscript{341} İnönü realized that the Russians

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\textsuperscript{337} FO 424/285 R6987/203/44 (Cripps to Halifax, August 11, 1940).
\textsuperscript{338} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{339} BCA 30.01.0.0/60.367.14 (Turkish Ambassador in Moscow to PM Refik Saydam, October 4, 1940); and FO 424/285 R6830/203/44 (Halifax to Cripps, August 13, 1940).
\textsuperscript{340} BCA, Ibid; and FO 424/285 R6920/17/44 (Hugessen to Halifax, August 22, 1940).
\textsuperscript{341} Japan’s accession into the Pact of Steel on September 27, 1940, probably did not come as a big surprise to Stalin. Yet, the swiftness of the tripartite negotiations between Count Ciano, Adolf Hitler and Ambassador Saburo Kurusu was somewhat unexpected. The Turkish Ambassador in Moscow, who observed the pulse of Kremlin with attention when the Pact was proclaimed, contended that Molotov was greatly displeased by the fact that the preamble of the treaty agreement was presented to him by the German counselor only a fortnight before its entry into force. Molotov was apparently taken aback by Ribbentrop’s informing the Soviets “so late and in such an insolent way.” Ambassador Apaydin was convinced that Great Britain would most certainly attempt to capitalize on the crisis between the Nazis and Soviets. Indeed, less than 24 hours after the signing of the Tripartite Pact, British Ambassador Cripps began lobbying in Kremlin, seeking to convince Molotov that the whole raison d’etre of the Pact was to ultimately crush the Soviet Union. The Turkish Ambassador, who met with Cripps immediately after the latter’s
\end{flushright}
would not join in any German pressure on Turkey, for fear of being involved in the war. To fend off Soviet pressure, Turkey thus needed to make it plain and clear that it would resist any German pressure or conspiracy contrary to its policy of non-belligerence. In August-September 1940, suspension of the pro-German Cumhuriyet daily, arrests of Germans on charges of spying, the impending trial of a well-known German archaeologist on a charge of espionage, and amendments to the law concerning the stay of foreigners in Turkey increased precautions against Fifth Column activities.342

Addressing the events that transpired since July, İnönü made a three-hour speech at the opening of the Assembly in November 1940.343 With a discernibly acrimonious rhetoric against Nazi Germany, İnönü redefined Turkey’s precarious neutrality and signaled the materialization of a stronger partnership with Great Britain.344 “As the global tragedy extends beyond the confines of Europe and assumes proportions of worldwide conflagration,” İnönü stressed, “Turkey whole-heartedly supports… the many free and independent countries that have become victims of foreign invasion.”345 He argued that it became impossible for him “not to feel deeply grieved by this dark prospect, not to note with great sadness and bitterness this regression of civilization.”346 Nevertheless, İnönü reiterated Turkey’s desire to maintain its attitude of non-belligerence, “which needn't constitute obstacle to completely normal relations with all countries which showed and practiced towards [them] the same goodwill.”347 He admitted that Turkey’s attitude of

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342 BCA 30.18.1.2/92.80.9 (Prime Ministry to the Directorate of Press, August 17, 1940).
343 TBMM, d. 6, c. 6, b. 1, s. 4 (November 1, 1940).
344 TBMM, d. 6, c. 6, b. 1, s. 8 (November 1, 1940).
345 TBMM, d. 6, c. 6, b. 1, s. 16 (November 1, 1940).
346 Ibid.
347 TBMM, d. 6, c. 6, b. 1, s. 22 (November 1, 1940).
non-belligerence made it impossible “without exception” the use of Turkish territorial waters and airspace by belligerents against each other, and would continue to make such use “categorically and absolutely impossible” as long as Turkey took no part in the war. The most striking part of İnönü’s speech was greeted with long applause and excitement, when he spoke about relations with England, which was clearly a message to Nazi Germany: “At a time when England carries on heroic struggle for its existence under difficult conditions,” İnönü said, “it is my duty to proclaim that bonds of alliance which unite us to her are solid and unbreakable.”

İnönü spared the remainder of his address entirely on Turco-Soviet affairs, arguing that bilateral relations of confidence with the U.S.S.R., “which have a past of nearly twenty years, after experiencing difficulties which cannot be attributed to either of us, have returned to their norm of friendship.” He argued that in midst of world vicissitudes, Russo-Turkish relations were of intrinsic value and the two countries needed to perpetuate this fact “independently of all other influences.” For İnönü, Turks were convinced that it might be possible and even probable that there lay before Ankara and Moscow “a long period of suffering.” And yet, during this period, “while remaining sensitive to everything that affects our mutual vital interests, Turkey shall continue to be “faithful to our friendship and alliance with the Bolsheviks.”

In foreign affairs, the focus of interest temporarily shifted from Soviet relations to the events in the Balkans. By November 1940, neither Germany nor the U.S.S.R. wished to go to war with the other, but a conflict of interests between the two was becoming increasingly clear. This conflict was due to the threat of the growing German influence

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348 Ibid.
349 TBMM, d. 6, c. 6, b. 1, s. 24 (November 1, 1940).
350 Ibid.
and the possible military menace in the Balkans; a menace that was of concern to Russia, Turkey, and Great Britain.\textsuperscript{351}

\textbf{The Balkan Turmoil}

In some quarters of the British parliament, the decision of the Turkish Government to remain neutral after the French collapse and Italy’s entrance into war inspired doubts as to Ankara’s loyalty to the tripartite treaty. These doubts were increased by the refusal of the Turkish Government to make declarations as to their attitude in the event of an Italian attack on Greece or a German invasion of Bulgaria. But, as British ambassador Hugessen later confessed in his letter to Eden, the Turkish attitude on these occasions, was accepted as indicating a difference of method rather than of actual policy. Furthermore, the British government quickly realized that, in its existing state of unpreparedness, “Turkey would have been a liability rather than an asset as a belligerent ally,” and it was thought advisable not to press the Turkish Government too far.\textsuperscript{352}

Once the Anglo-Turkish understanding was placed on a solid footing around late summer of 1940, it became more important to weld the Balkan states into the fabric of the dam, which Great Britain was now singlehandedly constructing against Germany. Turkey resumed its conventional role as an intermediary amongst disputing Balkan nations. But there were serious obstacles, which eventually proved to be insurmountable. The main problem was that all the Balkan states distrusted Bulgaria, and none of them

\textsuperscript{351} In view of German innuendos in the Balkans, the British Ambassador once again urged London to take action in the Balkans in order not to loose Turkey’s partnership: See FO 424/285 R7567/316/44 (Halifax to Hugessen, September 11, 1940); and FO 424/285 R8186/316/44 (Hugessen to Halifax, November 2, 1940).
\textsuperscript{352} FO 424/286 R4368/15/44 (Hugessen to Eden, February 21, 1941).
seemed inclined to sacrifice much to improve the position.\textsuperscript{353} Without Bulgaria, the Balkan formation was insecure but its inclusion could only be brought about by concessions. Gafencu, the Romanian Foreign Minister, though opposed to any immediate concessions to Bulgaria, did not seem entirely adverse to some ultimate accommodation.\textsuperscript{354} By the time when Italy entered the war, Sarakoğlu was considering a solution whereby Bulgaria could be brought at once into the Balkan Entente, in return for an undertaking that a settlement of the Dobrudja difficulty would be made when hostilities were over. It was at least essential that Romania kept the door open.

Nevertheless, as Ambassador Hugessen later recalled in his memoirs, both Turkey and Great Britain “were doomed to disappointment.” Georgi Kioseivanov, the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, in a public utterance in August 1940, restated the Bulgarian claims to Dobrudja with more than usual emphasis. This might have been a maneuver in internal politics, as Hugessen claimed, since “it seems always admissible to make the most outrageous statements on foreign issues, provided they are labeled to be consumed on the premises.”\textsuperscript{355} But the result was a serious setback with regards to Romania’s position.

After September 1940, the Romanian Minister would hear of no concessions whatever and never lost an opportunity to say so during his visits to Ankara. Kioseivanov’s official visit to Ankara was followed by Romanian Foreign Minister Gafencu’s within a few weeks. Hugessen had hoped to get an early word with Gafencu, and, above all, to have that word before his Bulgarian colleague could speak to him. Alas, Hugessen was foiled. When they met and Hugessen put to him the essential importance of doing something to enable Bulgaria to join the Balkan Entente, Hugessen was horrified to find that “the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{353} BCA 30.10.0.0/256.723.6 (Foreign Ministry to the Prime Ministry, September 10, 1940).
\item \textsuperscript{354} BCA 30.10.0.0/247.670.1 (Turkish Embassy in Romania to the Prime Ministry, August 17, 1940).
\item \textsuperscript{355} Sir Knatchbull-Hugessen,\textit{ Diplomat in Peace and War} (London: John Murray, 1949), 154-164.
\end{itemize}
Bulgarian had already presented him with a *non possumus* in the most categorical terms.” Hugessen said; “*this was only to be expected of him.*”  

There was a final ray of hope later in 1940 when the Balkan Entente held another of its annual conferences. Signs of solidarity and co-operation emerged and rather pointed overtures were made to Bulgaria, who was kept informed of what passed and given to understand that there was a place ready for her at the Balkan table. Turco-Bulgarian relations, which had been disturbed by misunderstandings caused by Turkish troop concentrations in Thrace, also were mended and both Saraçoğlu and Menemencioğlu visited Sofia with results which appeared very encouraging. It was thought at this point that useful proof of British interest in Balkan developments could be given by the holding in London of a conference of British representatives in those parts. It was arranged that Hugessen should also pay a visit to Sofia. His presence might possibly be interpreted as an additional sign of interest, and coming from Turkey, the center of so much activity in favor of Balkan unity, it might have had some influence. Nevertheless, Hugessen came away full of fears and doubts and with uncomfortable sensation that anything which he put down on the credit side must, for that very reason, be due to wishful thinking. There were profuse assertions of the best intentions, of the entire absence of all pro-German leanings, of every intention to avoid action hostile to the Allies and so forth. But Hugessen had an uneasy feeling in all these talks and, behind the assurances – which he though to be perfectly genuine – there was always the qualification that it all depended on Germany; “There was a haunted look in those men’s eyes. It was

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356 Ibid, 158.
357 BCA 30.10.0.0/235.583.10 (Tevfik Rüştü Aras’s Note on the Balkan Pact to P.M. Refik Saydam, March 6, 1940).
358 BCA 30.18.1.2/90.40.7 (Turkish Embassy in Bulgaria to the Foreign Ministry, August 24, 1940).
359 Ibid.
obvious that, if Germany applied the pressure, they knew that resistance would be impossible.”

Before the end of 1940 all hopes for Balkan solidarity had crashed. As Hugessen asked with a fair amount of contempt, “How, indeed, could it have been otherwise?” “If Romania had shown more courage and more public spirit, Bulgaria less passionate nationalism and Yugoslavia less exclusive individualism things might have been very different.” The position was rendered worse by the disasters to Allied arms. Holland, Belgium and France had already been overrun before the year was half out. Some months previously the Kioseivanov Government had fallen in Bulgaria, only to be succeeded by the weak-kneed Bogdan Filov Cabinet. Bulgaria’s rapprochement with Germany in November 1940 was seen as “King Boris’s descent to avernum.” Filov followed him there at the beginning of 1941. It was certainly a discouraging end to the efforts of both Great Britain and of Turkey to strengthen Balkan resistance. By January 1941 all hopes for a Balkan Union disappeared.

On the Turkish side, while there was clear evidence of will power not to allow themselves to be hurried into hostilities before they had decided for themselves that the moment had arrived, there had never been any doubt that they would defend themselves if their vital interests were attacked. As events developed towards the end of 1940, verbal assurances were given by Saraçoğlu that this determination would cover an attack by any power on Turkey itself, an attack by Bulgaria on Greece or an invasion of Bulgaria by Germany (which Turkey would regard as aimed equally at herself and

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360 Hugessen, *Diplomat in Peace and War*, 162.
361 Ibid., 164.
362 BCA 30.10.0.0/253.705.5 (Turkish Ambassador in Sofia to the Foreign Ministry, December 12, 1941)
Greece), or a German attack on Greece through a non-resistant Bulgaria.\(^{363}\) Later the Turkish minister for foreign affairs stated that a threat to Thessaloniki “would equally be regarded as a casus belli, the only case left in doubt being that of a German advance on Greece through Yugoslavia leaving Thessaloniki unthreatened.”\(^{364}\) By the end of the year, the condition of the Balkan Entente became profoundly miserable. The good offices established at the Belgrade meeting in February 1940 had proved to be worthless. Romania was in German hands, Bulgaria in danger of “Romanization,” Yugoslavia frightened and hesitant. Only Greece and Turkey remained resolved against Axis penetration.

On October 28, 1940, Greece shared the same fate with fellow Balkan nations and fell into disarray as a result of Italy’s campaign against General Metaxas.\(^{365}\) Less than two weeks prior to the operation in October 1940, Mussolini arrived at Terni – the center of Italy’s metallurgic industries – where he met with Marshal Badoglio, Count Ciano, and the three heads of the General Staff to discuss a possible operation in Greece. The three heads of the General Staff unanimously pronounced themselves against it, arguing that the Italian forces in Albania were insufficient and that the Navy did not feel that it could carry out a landing at Prevesa because the water was too shallow.\(^{366}\) All of Badoglio’s talk had a pessimistic tinge and he foresaw the prolongation of the war, and with it the exhaustion of Italy’s already-meager resources. The Duce and Count Ciano, however, did not agree with the generals. They insisted that, “from a political point of view, the

\(^{363}\) BCA 30.18.1.2/96.72.3 (Turkish Ambassador in Sofia to the Foreign Ministry, December 13, 1941)  
\(^{364}\) Ibid.  
moment was good.”

Greece was isolated and Turkey would not move. Neither would Yugoslavia embark on an adventurous campaign to save Greece. If the Bulgarians decided to enter the war, Ciano argued, it would be on Italy’s side. On October 22, 1940, the Turkish ambassador in Rome reported that Mussolini “wanted to attack Greece soon and very vigorously,” mainly because he would like the operation to be won at the first clash. If the Italians left the Greeks too much time to reflect and to breathe, Il Duce was sure that “the English would come and perhaps later the Turks, and the situation would become long drawn out and difficult.”

Much to Ciano’s dismay, the popular response to occupation in Greece culminated in the form of widespread-armed resistance led by EAM/ELAS. In less than two months, the Greeks broke through Italian lines and, by December 4, any further military action became impossible. Mussolini called Ciano to the Palazzo Venezia and told him: “There is nothing else to do. This is grotesque and absurd, but it is a fact. We have to ask for a truce through Hitler.” Ciano later recalled in his memoirs that, upon hearing Mussolini, he thought this was simply impossible because the Greeks would, as a first condition, ask the Fuhrer’s personal guarantee that nothing will ever be done against them.” Ciano also claimed that he would rather put a bullet through his head than telephone Ribbentrop and asked: “Is it possible that we are defeated?”

When Italy first embarked upon its predatory war on Greece, The British government sincerely hoped that the Turks would try, by their military dispositions and their general attitude, to give the Italian Government the impression that they intend to

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367 Ibid, 54.
368 Ibid, 63.
369 Ibid.
370 Ibid, 78.
371 Ibid, 93.
intervene at once in the event of Italy attacking Greece. Despite Ambassador Hugessen’s warnings about the impossibility of inducing Turkey to jeopardize its benevolent neutrality, Halifax counted on Turkey’s declaration of war against Italy, which in his view “would act as a strong deterrent and thus indirectly contribute to the defense of Greece.” The British government had tried, and failed, to obtain Turkey’s support in the case of Italy coming into the war earlier, but on that occasion the situation was complicated by the sudden collapse of France. But in the event of an Italo-Greek conflict, Halifax instructed Hugessen to be adamant and make it clear to the Turkish government that they would “consider such a declaration as the acid test of [Turkey’s] sincerity.”

Yet Turkish action was confined merely to an assurance to Greece that they could safely remove their forces from the Bulgarian frontier to Albania and that Turkey would patrol the Greek-Bulgarian front. Useful assistance was also afforded in meeting Greek needs for certain supplies. But Turkey felt unable to declare war on Italy or to take any more active measures. As late as November 1940, Britain still regarded it certain that Turkey would go to war if Bulgaria and Germany joined Italy’s attack on Greece. Ambassador Hugessen came to this conclusion by looking at the Turkish public opinion and press, which “appeared increasingly determined and accustomed to the idea that the war was approaching them.”

372 FO 424/285 R7224/764/19 (Halifax to Hugessen, August 27, 1940).
373 Ibid.
374 While Turkey abstained from declaring war against Italy to defend Greece, İnönü authorized numerous covert naval operations in the Aegean to send arms, medicine and food to the Greek resistance. A recently declassified document in the Republican Archives provides intriguing details about these operations. BCA 030.10.0.0/179.235.12 (PM Refik Saydam to the Naval Command, November 13, 1941). The most famous of these covert ops was codenamed “Kurtuluş” (Independence). BCA 030.10.0.0/117.185.20.1 (Operation “Kurtuluş,” March 28, 1942).
375 FO 424/285 R8697/316/44 (Hugessen to Halifax, November 10, 1940).
natural that “a Government which finds itself steadily approaching a possible war crisis should hold back and avoid finally committing itself as long as possible.” Meanwhile, Herr von Papen was doing his best to propagate the belief that Germany wished to ensure peace in the Balkans. While through Herr von Papen's assurances the Turkish Government seemed relieved, in view of the Turkish preparations, and of the attitude adopted, Hugessen had serious doubts whether this "politique de chloroforme" would be effective.\(^{376}\)

In fact, Hitler did not really plan to invade Greece until the Greek forces held the Italians in the mountains in early 1941. The orders for Operation Marita had not been issued until it became clear that Mussolini would lose. It was simply unthinkable for Hitler to allow his partner to be defeated. Despite the Germans’ ambiguous philhellenism – nurtured by Hitler’s Aryan racialism – their unconcealed plans for Greece were soon realized in major capitals. \(^{377}\) The Nazi administrators, much to Italy’s dismay, confiscated as much as they could from the country’s already inadequate economic resources to support the Wehrmacht in Operation Barbarossa. By the end of May 1941, the Germans were masters in Greece, Crete, Western Thrace and the islands guarding the Dardanelles, the vital approach to the very heart of Turkey. Mitylene, Chios, and Samos fell soon afterwards, their loss intensifying the danger to the Turkish mainland. \(^{378}\)

In his retrospective analysis of the events that transpired during January-June 1941, Halifax contended that it would be easy to “condemn Turkey for evading her written obligations,” or even for neglecting its own best interests by refusing to cooperate with its Balkan neighbors. “But,” Halifax added; “Turkey’s position was indeed

\(^{376}\) Ibid.


\(^{378}\) Ibid.
difficult. In the first place, Russia, from whom Turkish eyes had never been averted, did not declare its position clearly. In fact, during the heated days of spring 1941, Stalin made advances to Bulgaria, in which the Turkish government detected a threat to itself. Secondly, as Saraçoğlu pointed out, Turkey was not sufficiently equipped to face a declaration of war. The secret of Turkish hesitation lies in this last point. French supplies had failed Turkey in 1940. British supplies, in the face of many demands on Churchill, had not come up to the required quantity. If Turkey had plunged into war to resist German invasion of the Balkans it would have been quickly overwhelmed. Incidentally, as Halifax later admitted, “the liability to Britain would have been dangerously heavy.”

Thus ended the long-drawn-out efforts to unite the Balkans in their common defense. Perhaps Romania was the most to blame or perhaps Bulgaria. The treachery of King Boris placed Bulgaria under the German heel. Athens briefly triumphed over Rome but its victory was brought to naught by Hitler’s assistance to Mussolini. Regardless of historians’ prosecutorial rhetoric on the subject, the Balkan Pact crumbled between the fingers of its signatories. As far as Turkey is concerned, policy makers in Ankara seemed to have played the role of Hamlet in their unwillingness to provide the necessary assurances to their allies in the defunct Balkan Pact. Yet, as the British Ambassador correctly defined, it was the fiscal situation in the country, more than anything, along with exhausted local remedies and overdue arms deliveries that deterred the Turks from implementing their treaty obligations in the Balkans.

379 FO 424/285 R8697/316/44 (Hugessen to Halifax, November 10, 1941)
380 Ibid.
A Volte-Face to Passive Neutrality

Soviet historians have long blamed Turkey for pursuing a Janus-faced agenda throughout the war, accusing the İnönü government with hedging bets by maintaining trade relations with both the Allies and the Axis. A common fallacy in existing Soviet scholarship is that Turkey had particularly lucrative commercial affairs with Germany.\(^{381}\) A closer examination of Turco-German trade reveals a different picture from what the Soviets had in mind – one that involves a distorted trade relationship by all sorts of artificial arrangements, which had long been conducted on a basis that had no relation whatsoever to world prices or to the ordinary laws of international trade. President İnönü was well aware of the perils of keeping Germany as Turkey largest trading partner. Mindful of the intricate balance in arms trade, İnönü sought to maintain a balanced volume in arms trade with both Germany and England even before the war, ordering three Neptune class vessels from the Royal Navy for the three Germaniawerft submarines he had received from the Kriegsmarine earlier that year. He tried to keep the same equidistance during the war and ordered three more from each country, even though the findings report indicated that Germany could deliver its portion in half the time (in 12 months as opposed to Britain who promised 24 months) and at a lower cost (223,000 pounds as opposed to Britain’s 225,000).\(^{382}\)

As late as June 6, 1940, İnönü received a similar report from the Commerce Ministry, urging him to fine-tune economic relations with Germany. The report concluded that the Germans were buying “whatever they can find” in the Turkish

\(^{381}\) Rozal'ev, K istorii Sovetskho-Turetskikh otnoshenii, 1-15; and Belinkov and Vasil'ev, O Turetskom "Neitralitete", x-xii.

\(^{382}\) BCA 030.10.0.0/168.172.4 (Directorate of Maritime Transportation and Naval Affairs to the Prime Ministry, July 14, 1939).
markets, from raw materials to fruits, tobacco, and cereals, in return for war materials which they never delivered on time. “While high levels of export is always a good omen,” wrote the commerce minister, “at a time when political distress is pressuring our diplomats and leaders, we deem it necessary to summon a special commission jointly headed by the commerce and foreign ministers with hopes of coming up with a tangible strategy that would maintain our fiscal relations commensurate with our political agenda.”

Although a favorable balance of £42,523,778 was achieved in 1940, compared to an adverse balance of £9,140,063 in 1939, the aggregate turnover in 1940 diminished by 26.6 per cent, including – 12.5 per cent for exports and 41.7 per cent for imports. Despite the radical decline in export volume much higher values were recorded in 1940 because of a stronger demand by the European countries for Turkish products such as wool, cotton, mohair, opium, olive oil, fish, cereals, oleaginous seeds and dried fruits. Smaller shipments of casings, skins, wool, barley, sultanas, figs, flax and hemp, copper and other minerals were also recorded.

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383 BCA 030.10.0.0/231.560.3 (Ministry of Commerce to the Prime Ministry, June 6, 1940).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1940 Tons</th>
<th>Wt. Value £.</th>
<th>1939 Tons</th>
<th>Wt. Value £.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Imports</strong></td>
<td>342,005</td>
<td>66,922,708</td>
<td>605,556</td>
<td>118,248,934</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exports</strong></td>
<td>611,203</td>
<td>111,446,486</td>
<td>927,696</td>
<td>127,388,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>953,208</td>
<td>180,369,194</td>
<td>1,533,252</td>
<td>245,637,931</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TBMM, d. 6, c. 11, b. 1, s. 42 (May 28, 1940).

384 Turkey's most valuable exports were:
- Tobacco: £24,223,000
- Cotton: £8,130,000
- Hazelnuts: £6,599,000
- Mohair: £6,582,000
- Olive oil: £6,070,000
- Sultanas: £4,407,000
- Opium: £3,566,000
- Wool: £3,517,000
- Chrome Ore: £3,224,000

Source: TBMM, d. 6, c. 18, b. 2, s. 152 (March 1, 1941).
Amongst the chief reasons for this decline in trade were supply and shipping difficulties arising out of the international situation, and, to a lesser extent, a restriction on certain imports with a view of economizing Turkey's limited resources in foreign exchange in favor of raw materials.\textsuperscript{386} This latter factor led to the conclusion of a series of barter agreements between Turkey and a number of countries as alternative sources of supply including Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Romania, Finland, Bulgaria, and Sweden. This reorientation of the import trade is reflected in the relative shares of the total import trade secured by the countries supplying Turkey.

Turkey’s trade volume in 1940 showed a marked deterioration particularly with regards to Germany, whose share diminished from 50.86 percent (£60,142,000) in 1939 to a mere 11.73 percent (£8,083,000) in 1940.\textsuperscript{387} The chief reason for Germany's loss of trade was a failure to implement the ad hoc Turco-German Agreement of June 12, 1940, for the reciprocal exchange of goods to a value of £21,000,000.\textsuperscript{388} Consequently,

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Turkish Imports by Principal Supply Countries}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Country} & \textbf{January-December 1940} & \textbf{Percentage} & \textbf{January-December 1939} & \textbf{Percentage} \\
\hline
Italy & 11,224 & 16.29 & 10,023 & 8.48 \\
Romania & 10,806 & 15.68 & 2,344 & 1.98 \\
United Kingdom & 9,665 & 14.02 & 7,388 & 6.25 \\
Germany & 8,083 & 11.73 & 60,142 & 50.86 \\
United States & 7,447 & 10.80 & 11,686 & 9.89 \\
Slovakia & 2,526 & 3.67 & 1,789 & 1.51 \\
U.S.S.R & 959 & 1.39 & 3,452 & 2.93 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Turkish Exports to Principal Customer Countries}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Country} & \textbf{January-December 1940} & \textbf{Percentage} & \textbf{January-December 1939} & \textbf{Percentage} \\
\hline
Italy & 17,951 & 16.11 & 12,754 & 10.01 \\
United States & 15,739 & 14.12 & 18,212 & 14.30 \\
Romania & 11,987 & 10.76 & 1,789 & 1.40 \\
United Kingdom & 11,551 & 10.36 & 7,302 & 5.73 \\
Germany & 9,687 & 8.69 & 47,504 & 37.29 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Source: TBMM, d. 6, c. 18, b. 2, s. 152 (March 1, 1941).

\textsuperscript{386} BCA 30.10.0.0/232.561.7 (Turkish Ambassador in Berlin, Hüsrev Gerede, to PM Refik Saydam, February 23, 1940).
\textsuperscript{387} BCA 30.10.0.0/232.561.15 (Foreign Minister Şükrü Saracoğlu to PM Refik Saydam, August 24, 1940).
\textsuperscript{388}
Saraçoğlu gave a comprehensive list of Turkish requirements to von Papen regarding a potential new trade agreement with Germany. Yet, Saraçoğlu did not seem to think that the Germans would be able to supply this; and if the negotiations dragged on for a considerable time he proposed to say to the Germans that this state of affairs could not continue and that the negotiations were at an end. He argued that the Turks and Germans should agree upon a list of goods, which could be exchanged without controversy or difficulty. He said that if the Germans could not come to terms over a reduced list he would then terminate the negotiations altogether. Franz von Papen had pleaded with the utmost insistence for a delay up to a month, if possible, before the payment of the guarantee money deposited in connection with some of the orders for goods and war material from Germany. Saraçoğlu had refused to agree to a month's delay – he had equally refused to agree to a fortnight's delay – but in deference to further appeals he finally agreed to submit the matter to Prime Minister Refik Saydam.

In the course of spring 1941, Hüsrev Gerede, the Turkish ambassador to Germany, opened up a new diplomatic window for negotiations with the Nazis. Gerede was convinced that even the remote possibility of Turkey’s entrance into the war on the side of the Allies would provoke the old territorial demands of Russia. Gerede also knew that since Turkey’s closest trading partners in the Balkans now fell mostly under German occupation, his government should try to maintain better relations with Germany and increase the volume of trade with Balkan countries as much as possible. Beginning with the early days of 1940, when Turkey’s industrial growth rate plunged a critical 50 percent, Gerede had been urging Ankara to enact new trade agreements with Germany.

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389 BCA 30.10.0.0/17.96.13 (Turkish Ambassador in Berlin to the Foreign Ministry, April 20, 1941).
390 BCA 30.01.0.0/232.562.2 (Minister of Finance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 30, 1941).
In his dispatch to Ankara, Gerede wrote that he had been approached by a “prominent Nazi” with the proposal that, if Turkey would allow a certain amount of chrome to go to Germany (between 10,000 and 20,000 tons), Germany would supply Turkey with all the goods outstanding.\footnote{Ibid.} The ambassador had been instructed to reply that he could not act on this unofficial approach; that it was Germany who had broken off the Turco-German commercial treaty; that if any such proposal was to be put forward it must reach him officially, and he would then pass it on to his Government, who would examine it.\footnote{Ibid.} Saraçoğlu kept the British Government informed about this recent development to preempt any misunderstanding. When the British Ambassador asked him what would happen next with the German proposal, Saraçoğlu laughed and said that he did not suppose anything could possibly come of it, as Germany would not be able to supply all the goods.\footnote{FO 424/284 R4236/316/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, April 1, 1940).}

In spite of Saraçoğlu’s cynicism, Turco-German negotiations gained a substantial momentum with Hitler’s letter to İnönü on March 1, 1941. In his letter, Hitler sought to “solemnly inform” the Turkish government that the German steps in the Balkans were “in no way directed against the territorial or political integrity of Turkey.”\footnote{DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 113, p. 201-203 (Hitler to İnönü, March 1, 1941).} “On the contrary,” Hitler argued, “in memory of that great and fateful common struggle and the subsequent years of suffering,” Turkey and Germany should work together to create the necessary conditions “for a really friendly cooperation” between the two countries.\footnote{Ibid.} For Hitler, such a partnership would be mutually beneficial because “the economic development which [was] destined to heal the European wounds after the end of the war

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{FO 424/284 R4236/316/44 (Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, April 1, 1940).}
\footnote{DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 113, p. 201-203 (Hitler to İnönü, March 1, 1941).}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
would of necessity make close trade partners of Germany and Turkey once more.”

Hitler argued that the decisive thing about a potential Turco-German agreement was not that Germany was interested in selling her industrial products but was able to make purchases on a very large scale.

İnönü’s response to Hitler was equally welcoming and adorned with several references to the Ottoman-German imperial alliance. At the same time, however, he reiterated Turkey’s wish to remain neutral: “After the last great war, which we fought side by side, and the glories and hardships of which we therefore shared…Turkey cannot consider her territory and her integrity from the standpoint of political and military combinations between one of the other group of powers and she cannot allow her sacred right to inviolability to be judged from the point of view of the victory of any foreign country.” Put differently, İnönü made it clear that Turkey was determined to oppose any encroachment upon its national domain. Nevertheless, İnönü concluded his letter by arguing “the Turkish and German soldiers, who not long ago shed their blood together, would never find themselves opposing each other for the satisfaction of temporary needs.”

The exchange of views, which took place between İnönü and Hitler, thanks to the latter’s ”auspicious initiative” certainly contributed toward normalizing and improving Turco-German relations.

The Turkish Ambassador personally presented İnönü’s response to the Hitler government. After the Führer read it, he provided Ambassador Gerede with Germany’s perception on the current problems in a lengthy discourse. He was impressed with the fact that the communication just handed to him was greatly appreciated in Ankara, and

396 Ibid.
397 DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 161, p. 286 (İsmet İnönü to Adolf Hitler, March 12, 1941).
398 Ibid.
repeated his assurances that Germany had no territorial interest in the areas in question, “any more than in Bulgaria, Rumania or Greece.”  

Hitler claimed that Germany was “perhaps the only state” that could truthfully say that of itself. He gave Ambassador Gerede the impression that it was extremely unpleasant for Germany to have to resort to military intervention in the Balkans as this was, after all, “contrary to the fundamental strategic principle of concentrating all forces upon a single objective.”  

He added that Germany would not have sent a single soldier if the Italo-Greek conflict had been confined to these countries alone.

In this connection, Hitler then referred to the conversations during Molotov’s visit to Berlin in 1940, when Germany had exerted itself to draw Russia into the Axis combination against England. Molotov had thereupon immediately brought up the Dardanelles problem, which would provide for the stationing of Russian garrisons in Bulgaria close to the Straits. In regard to the Dardanelles question, the Russians had spoken about the granting of bases. Hitler told Gerede that he had refused Molotov’s proposal because he simply did not believe this would be possible and that he did not consider it feasible. He had merely declared that he was prepared to advocate a revision of the Montreux Convention to the effect that the warships of the littoral states of the Black Sea would have the right of exit from that Sea through the Dardanelles, while foreign ships would not be permitted to enter. He had taken this positive attitude toward Turkey’s interest not for any sentimental reasons, although the memory of the German-Turkish comradeship in arms during the World War was still very strong; rather, he had

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399 DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 177, p. 308-312 (Record of Conversation between Adolf Hitler and Turkish Ambassador in Berlin, Hüsrev Gerede, March 18, 1941).
400 Ibid.
401 BCA 030.10.0.0/232.561.10 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, March 17, 1941).
acted from a feeling that it would be against Germany’s own interests if anything were to happen to Turkey. It would not be to the advantage of Germany to watch any other power establish itself in the Balkans and on the Dardanelles.

Hitler also hinted that Turkey “had really no interest in Germany’s losing the war, and thus seeing the country perish which had been the strongest restraining factor with respect to Turkey’s biggest neighbor in the north.” By the same token, Hitler contended that Germany had an interest in the continued existence of Turkey as the guardian of the Straits. In other words, Hitler claimed that Germany even fortified against Russia’s friendship on account of its alliance in the Dardanelles question. The Turkish ambassador, who was visibly gratified, thanked the Fuhrer for his words and promised to do everything in his power to carry on along the road that had now been taken.

Meanwhile, Franz von Papen went to see Numan Menemencioğlu to find out his opinion regarding the conversation between Hitler and Ambassador Geređe. After a few general remarks in which Menemencioğlu expressed the great satisfaction of the Turkish Government about Hitler’s flat rejection of the Russian preliminary condition for accession to the Tripartite Pact, in so far as it involved the right to intervene at the Straits. Menemencioğlu, in all of his statements, took a much more realistic and waiting attitude than Saraçoğlu. Menemencioğlu candidly said:

“In politics, let us not speak of sentiment, old friendships, and brotherhoods in arms, but of the actual interests which determine the policy of the Reich and of Turkey. We Turks have, of course, assumed that in the negotiations with Russia, Turkey was a subject of bargaining. In our thinking about the situation we have considered every one of these possibilities. But even then I expressed the view that if Germany opts for

402 Ibid.
403 Ibid.
Russia and wants to pay for this option with the Straits and the Mediterranean through Rumania and Bulgaria, etc. then Germany would be encircled from the south. If the Germans are willing to pay this high price, then they will presumably lose the war and we Turks will profit in a different way. The Fuhrer’s decision not to let the Russians get to the Straits is therefore very wise and is in the German interest. Being adherents to the old diplomacy we shall keep this wisdom to ourselves.\textsuperscript{404}

Yet one must not draw the conclusion from Numan Menemencioğlu’s clarification of German-Turkish relations that Turkey’s political position was radically different from that of the Great War. The basic principle of Turkey’s policy had always been to have a strong Germany in the center of Europe. Menemencioğlu, therefore, clearly stated Turkey’s wish that the war would not end with a total defeat either on the one side or on the other. Menemencioğlu had expressed this view to Eden earlier: “If you win the war and want to destroy Germany, then a tremendous abyss will open in Europe, a whirlpool into which we, Turkey, will also be swept.” Thus Turkey’s interest was in the direction of a negotiated peace. “We are egoists,” Numan said, and added, “[we] fight exclusively for ourselves.”\textsuperscript{405}

Papen went on to explain Numan that if Turkey desired a compromised peace in Europe, this was without doubt not expressed in the slightest way in her public opinion. The press demanded the total victory of England and did not have the slightest understanding for the German efforts toward a new order. Thus public opinion was evidently in contradiction to his statements. “Certainly,” said Menemencioğlu, “we do not want much to do with the new order. For us, every state has it right to independence and its own existence.”\textsuperscript{406} Menemencioğlu’s message was that Turkey knew too little

\textsuperscript{404} DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 231, p. 409 (Papen to Ribbentrop, March 28, 1941).
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{406} Ibid.
about the aims of the new order propagated by the Axis and the terms which Germany was willing to grant to the conquered and occupied areas.

In regard to Papen’s repeated remarks that something had to be done by the Turkish Government in order to put German-Turkish relations on a basis of greater trust, Numan only said: “You know that we are allied with England. We want to keep honorably the few obligations, which we have, and if you, Herr von Papen, now expect a kind of ‘benevolent neutrality’ on the part of Turkey, then I must tell you that such political acrobatics appear hardly possible to me.”\footnote{Ibid.} The entire conversation left Papen with the impression that Germany desperately needed to find a treaty instrument to prepare the transition of Turkey to their camp as a “benevolent neutral.”\footnote{DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 514, p. 812-817 (Papen to Ribbentrop, May 13, 1941).}

In the course of his subsequent meetings with Saraçoğlu in April-May 1941, Franz von Papen noticed Turkey’s growing concerns about German-Russian relations. In accordance with his instructions, Papen told Saraçoğlu that Berlin-Moscow affairs were entirely regulated, and that they had no problems with respect to Russia. However, Papen also informed Saraçoğlu that Hitler had taken note of the inexplicable political attitude of Stalin in the case of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia as well as of the fact that very strong Russian forces were mobilized at the frontier of the Reich. Papen argued that Germany’s primary goal continued to be England’s defeat and an attack on the island. Yet he also added that the Germans “were strong enough to cope with any other eventuality too.”\footnote{DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 231, p. 409 (Papen to Ribbentrop, March 28, 1941).} Saraçoğlu interrupted Papen with the remark that Stalin had evidently seen the mistakes in his political attitude and appeared to prove that Russia was now willing to do everything that the Reich desired. He did not want to leave Papen in doubt

\footnote{Ibid.}
that since Stalin had resumed the Tsarist policy toward the Balkans and the Straits, Turkey again had to regard Russia as its implacable and greatest enemy. It was clear that a German-Russian conflict could easily find Turkey on the German side.

Saraçoğlu argued that if there should be a German-Russian clash without an understanding with England having been reached first, then the war would continue for years, and that the Turks were afraid that “the end of a war weakened by exhaustion and destruction would mean an extensive Bolshevization of Europe.” The critical bit of Papen’s conversation with Saraçoğlu lies here; that it was exactly the fear of such German-Russian conflict, which would make the Turkish Government inclined to an agreement with Germany. Papen was convinced that in order for such a treaty to be concluded Germany should swiftly capitalize on Turkey’s uncertainty concerning German-Russian relations.

On May 15, 1941, İnönü received a detailed report from the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow on Nazi-Soviet affairs (dated May 1, 1941). But before the report was communicated to Ankara, a confidential source (codenamed “X” of the Turkish Embassy staff in Moscow) seized the document and forwarded it to Franz von Papen. In his report, which confirmed Papen’s prognosis, Ambassador Apaydin argued that the military operations of the Germans in the Balkans were far swifter than the Russian statesmen had imagined. Indeed, Stalin and his people were of the opinion that the Germans would strain themselves for at least two months in the Balkans and during that time British and American aid would begin to come in sufficient quantities and would win out in the Balkans. But the unexpectedly rapid defeat of the Serbs and the resulting

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410 Ibid.
collapse of Greece, which the English were unable to help, had the effect of a cold shower on the leaders in Moscow. As Ambassador Apaydın claimed, Stalin, who was one of the factors that had made possible the German victory in Poland by his support of the Germans, showed the same lack of foresight in the case of the French defeat.\footnote{Interesting to note here is that historian Gordon Wright brought up a similar argument in his \textit{The Ordeal of Total War, 1939-1945} (Illinois: Harper Collins, 1997).} In Apaydın’s opinion, Stalin was also the strongest factor in the French defeat “because of his blind obstinacy.” When the repercussions of the German victory began to shake the walls of Kremlin in Moscow, the beginning awakening was both pointless and futile.

In Apaydın’s view, Stalin expected that Poland would put up a resistance for at least six months, and that France would hold out one or two years. Indeed, Stalin expected that the German and English blockades would last two years and that both belligerents would be exhausted and that he could then greatly benefit by the situation. All his hopes were dashed, not in the course of a year, but of months. Ambassador Apaydın acutely identified Stalin’s fear of Germany, “which was casting a greedy eye at Russia.”\footnote{BCA 030.10.0.0/232.561.10 (Ambassador Apaydın’s Report to the Prime Ministry, May 15, 1941).} The fact that Turks were not plunged into the Balkan conflagration caused deep despair in Moscow. Stalin had believed that the war in the Balkans would be protracted in the event of Turkey’s intervention. Apaydın concluded his report by suggesting that “Stalin, the simple peasant...will one day understand the real truth that lies in the German-Soviet Russian controversy and that will dawn the appearance of the German fliers on the Moscow horizon...But then it will be too late. How ignominious he
will then appear to England, which has had to suffer all the afflictions resulting from this tragic play, I shall leave to your own estimation.”

Rekindling Turkey’s fear of Russia through ‘the fog and filthy air’ of April-May 1941, Franz von Papen masterfully steered Turkish diplomacy into a pro-German neutrality. While von Papen clearly became the main architect of the Turco-German treaty, bilateral negotiations proceeded hardly without troubles. The real problem was regarding the transit of German arms through Anatolia. Negotiations came to a halt on May 27, when Turkey received a British note, which was so full of most bitter accusations against Turkey that Saraçoğlu told Papen, he would not be surprised if England severed relations with Turkey when the Nazi-Turkish treaty was made public. Thereupon the Turkish cabinet met and decided they were unable to give the Germans any oral assurances about the transit of arms. On his own initiative, Papen decided to add a secret protocol to the draft Turco-German treaty, whereby the Government of the German Reich declared that at the time of the peace negotiations, they would take into account Turkish wishes which in principle related to: rectification of the frontier in Thrace west of Edirne; the islands in the Aegean near the Turkish coast; and a change in the Montreux Convention regarding the Straits.

At the time, Papen considered the general political and moral repercussions of a potential bilateral treaty to be of far greater importance than securing the transit of material since such a treaty would appear to the whole world as a signal that the last English ally in Europe now considers England’s cause as lost. But Ribbentrop was

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414 Ibid. Apaydın was replaced by a moderately pro-Soviet Mehmet Cevat Açıkalin as Turkish Ambassador in Moscow - BCA 30.18.1.2/99.63.9 (Açıkalın’s Appointment as Ambassador, July 14, 1942).
415 BCA 30.18.1.2/95.51.10 (Prime Ministry to the Foreign Ministry, June 6, 1941).
416 Ibid.
outraged and admonished Papen that he exceeded instructions in discussing his own
draft, which would offer guarantees to Turkey without granting Germany concessions in
the transit of arms.\textsuperscript{418} In a bitter personal letter, Ribbentrop told Papen that it was
“incomprehensible” to him why Papen was prepared to arrange a draft of secret protocol
regarding Edirne, the islands etc. as long as he was not certain that he could also put
through secret clauses regarding the arms transit. For Ribbentrop, the situation was now
such that the Turks had stated that they are willing to accept all of Germany’s extensive
assurances for guaranteeing their interests, without offering them more than the promise
to refrain from any aggressive attitude toward the German Reich.

Papen defended himself and claimed that Turkey was not, as Ribbentrop
suggested, “wavering between Germany and England like a shopper in the bazaars in
order to see with whom she can make a better deal.”\textsuperscript{419} For Papen this was a mistaken
view of the situation in Ankara and of the prestige of the present Turkish statesmen,
above all of the State President himself. Papen reminded Ribbentrop that İnönü was not
willing to make a treaty with Hitler and gradually shift the country’s foreign policy
toward cooperation with Berlin because the Nazis were issuing Ankara a bill in the
future, but because the Turks were “finally convinced that Hitler has not sold Turkey
either to Italy or to Russia.”\textsuperscript{420}

Like Papen, the German military attaché in Ankara also claimed that the Turco-
German Treaty would have more important repercussions than simply transit of arms,
and passed the Turkish Chief of General Staff Asım Gündüz’s message to Hitler: “If
Germany crushes Russia, the whole world will be happy and Germany will get her hands
\textsuperscript{418} DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 565, p. 910-912 (Ribbentrop to Papen, May 29, 1941).
\textsuperscript{419} DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 566, p. 913 (Papen to Ribbentrop, May 29, 1941).
\textsuperscript{420} Ibid.
on more material than America will be able to deliver to England in 5 years.”

In his reaffirmation of the German policy with respect to south-eastern Europe Hitler welcomed Asim Gündüz’s message and noted once more the agreement of Turkish and German views, “for they [were] animated by the common desire to prevent the war from spreading to the Near East and to restore tranquility to the Balkans.”

In a second round of reciprocal exchange of letters between İnönü and Hitler it was agreed that, in any case, Turco-German relations would be cemented by a treaty regardless of Russia’s or England’s reaction.

The Turco-German talks culminated in the form of the Nazi-Turkish Non-Aggression Pact of June 18, 1941. This was an explicit reversal of Germany’s position on Turkish-Soviet relations. Turkish historian Türkkaya Ataöv suggests that the Germans “declared to the world that they would stop supporting the friendship between Soviets and Turks but, from now on, would keep the Turks in constant fear of the Russians.”

The declaration in Berlin on June 22, 1941 stated that the goal of the German attack on the East was to save world civilization from the dangers of Bolshevism, one of which was the imperialist striving of the Soviets for the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Although the Soviet government immediately denied these charges, some Turkish newspapers inflamed the anti-Soviet campaign, attempting to convince their readers that the Nazis march against communist Russia was in the interest of the Turkish people.

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421 DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 621, p. 1020 (Memorandum by Head of Political Division, June 12, 1941).
422 For the text of Hitler’s address see: Monatshefte für auswärtige Politik (June 1941), 449-464.
423 DGFP, series D, vol. XII, no. 622, p. 1021 (İsmet İnönü to Adolf Hitler, June 12, 1941).
424 Resmi Gazete (No. 4849), 9 July 1941.
425 Türkkaya Ataöv, 2. Dünya Savaşı (İstanbul: İleri Yayınevi, 2001), 214.
426 Overy, Russia’s War, 58.
427 Cumhuriyet (22 August 1941), 3.
Soon after the signing of the Treaty, Papen discussed with Saraçoğlu the question of Russian shipping. While passage of Russian naval vessels was completely out of the question, it was decided that the Bosporus and the Dardanelles would be closed by net defenses and sown with mines. Passage of Soviet merchant vessels appeared to Saraçoğlu not very likely because “in the initial phase of the war Russia undoubtedly would not want to divest itself of its merchant tonnage for the benefit of England.”428 In any event, Saraçoğlu appeared very much willing to cooperate with Germany in this matter also, and he promised that he would promptly inform Papen of any Russian demarche in that regard.

In general, the reactionary circles in Turkey including a number of government leaders, greeted with favor the news of the German attack on the Soviet Union.429 Soviet accounts claimed that “already in the first months of the Great Patriotic War, the Turkish government more than once permitted the passage of German warships through the Black Sea Straits” and that the Soviet Government repeatedly protested against these “blatant acts of violations of international law.”430 These accounts seem to hold a firm belief that the ruling circles in Ankara ignored these protests under the influence of the temporary military successes of Germany and continued to aid Germany in the war against the Soviet Union.431

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429 Doğan Avcıoğlu, Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1995), 156.
430 Belinkov and Vasil’ev, O Turetskom “Neutralitete”, 92.
431 Rozal'ev, K istorii Sovetsko-Turetskikh otnoshenii, 248.
IV. THE BARBAROSSA BUBBLE

A Perilous Realignment

Generally speaking, the attitude of Turkey after the outbreak of the Russo-German War was such that Ankara preferred a German victory over Russia provided that this was followed by a British victory over Germany. Inevitably, public perception of Britain’s image in Turkey became somewhat tainted by its new alliance with Russia. The mere fact of an Anglo-Russian alliance, despite the fact that it arose out of Hitler’s attack on the Soviets, was distinctly displeasing to the Turks, who very much desired to see another Brest-Litovsk status-quo: two separate wars involving Germany, conducted independently by Britain and the USSR without cooperation. Germany lost little time in trying to derive concrete advantage from its improved relations with Turkey, which was cemented by the Turco-German Non-Aggression Treaty of June 18, 1941.

During the preliminary talks for the Turco-German treaty, the Secretary General of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Numan Menemencioğlu, made it quite clear that the Turkish government wished to preclude the smallest possibility for misperception on the part of Great Britain. Ribbentrop, however, was equally adamant about the wording of the draft treaty and stipulated what Germany considered to be its fault line: “The Turkish government must clearly understand that if Turkey cooperates even indirectly with England, with which Germany is waging a life and death struggle, she will automatically place herself against Germany.”\footnote{Dokumenty Ministerstvo inostrannykh del. Germanii, vyp II: Germanskiaia politika v Turtsii [hereafter GPT], 7 (Ribbentrop to Papen, June 9, 1941), 25-28.} Ribbentrop was also not happy about Menemencioğlu’s proposal to include the expression “Turkey’s peace-loving character”
in the preamble. For Ribbentrop, the expression “peace-loving,” would be too embellished a description, and was “even stylistically (sprachlich) impossible.” Ribbentrop insisted to replace that term with “friendly character” instead. As the Turco-German talks became protracted, Ribbentrop’s tolerance to Menemencioğlu’s equivocation grew shorter. In his dispatch to Herr von Papen the next week, Ribbentrop reacted against Menemencioğlu’s insistence to tailor “a stronger reference” for Turkey’s continued respect to its present commitments, referring implicitly to the Anglo-Turkish Treaty.

A week before the signing of the Turco-German treaty, it seemed as if Anglo-Turkish relations would remain untroubled; no substantial threat seemed in the offing to spoil the mellow atmosphere between London and Ankara, beyond perhaps some chronic problems arising out of Britain’s shortage of arms supply. Yet, on June 18, 1941, came the non-aggression treaty between Nazis and Turks, and four days later, the Nazis set out to invade Russia. There is no doubt that these two events were interconnected and that the signing of the Turco-German Treaty should have signaled something to both Churchill and Stalin. Germany required, undoubtedly so, to be sure of its southern flank before opening the Russian campaign. Von Papen was not slow in hinting that everything “depended on Turkey’s decision to accept or reject the proposed German treaty.” More clearly put, von Papen insinuated to İnönü that it was his choice whether Russia or Turkey would be attacked first. Once the Soviet Union became Great Britain’s ally, troubles between Moscow and Ankara began to rise exponentially.

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433 Ibid, 28.
434 Ibid.
435 GPT, 8 (Ribbentrop to Papen, June 13, 1941), 30-31.
436 Hugessen ruefully admitted this later: FO 421/326 R1471/24/44 (Hugessen to Eden, February 5, 1942).
When news of the Turco-German agreement arrived, soon after its conclusion the same day, Eden expressed his deep regret that the Turkish Government had chosen this moment, of all others, to enter into an economic alliance with Germany, which had strong and devious political implications. Since Turkey was under no military pressure from Nazi Germany at the time, Eden said that he “simply did not understand the need for it.”

In an emergency meeting with the Turkish ambassador, Eden argued that the crisis in Iraq had been liquidated and that matters were going “surely if slowly in Britain’s favor” in Syria, while for the first time they were taking local offensive action against the Germans in Libya. “Why now,” asked Eden quite frankly.

The Turkish ambassador knew only too well that the news of the Turco-German agreement would cause a profound shock to the British government. He did not deny Eden’s implications, but said that Turks were doing all they could “to gain time,” and he only hoped that “Britain should not blame Turkey for this.” Eden replied that it was not a question of blame, but of “correctly estimating the consequences of the agreement.” In Eden’s view, the Turkish Government should have made it plain and beyond the possibility of any doubt that nothing in the agreement affected the previous Anglo-Turkish Treaty. In fact, there existed in the preamble of the Turco-German treaty, a clause to that effect, reserving previous engagements; but since the treaty itself was not made public immediately at the time of its signature, the British public was not aware of the preamble and did not quite understand the situation, leaving Eden at an uneasy corner.

438 FO 424/286 R6258/1934/44 (Eden to Hugessen, June 18, 1941).
439 Ibid.
440 BCA 30.1.0.0/17.96.6 (Memorandum on German-Turkish and Anglo-Turkish Relations, July 17, 1941).
441 Ibid.
A second meeting took place between State Secretary Eden and Turkish Ambassador Tevfik Rüştü Aras on June 26. In a pessimistic mood, Aras blamed the Russians in general, and Molotov in particular, for the failure to form a Balkan front in the spring. The Turkish government considered that Molotov suffered from “the Russian disease of ambition to control the Dardanelles.” For Aras, Litvinov had had a much truer conception of Turkey’s foreign and domestic affairs; “It had been a great misfortune when he fell from power,” added Aras candidly. He was convinced that Litvinov, Saraçoğlu, and Eden himself would have been able to maintain the close collaboration, which had always existed between the three nations. Eden emphasized to Aras that he understood Turkey’s concerns regarding the Soviet Union, but urged the ambassador that Ankara needed to show its continued loyalty to the Anglo-Turkish Treaty more clearly, bearing in mind the recent reports that appeared in the British press, which put Turkey under a negative light. Eden also added that another factor that led them to view the German-Turkish Agreement with apprehension was “the fact that Germany had never yet signed an agreement with any country without finally making a victim of her co-signatory…Turkey would therefore have to be scrupulously on her guard.” Reflecting on the incipient progress of the Russo-German war, Dr. Aras also expressed his view that the power of the Red Army had probably been rather underrated in Britain. Aras argued that the Soviet army’s weakness lay in the High Command, but that “Stalin himself was tough.” Aras was convinced that the Germans would find their task a more difficult one than they had anticipated.

442 Ibid.
443 FO 424/286 R6539/236/44 (Eden to Hugessen, June 26, 1941).
444 Ibid.
445 BCA 30.1.0.0/17.96.6 (Memorandum on German-Turkish and Anglo-Turkish Relations, July 17, 1941).
This last point deserves some attention because a closer look at the communication between von Papen and Ribbentrop in the early days of the Nazi-Soviet war reveals a misperception on the part of Germany regarding Turkey’s attitude; Papen strongly believed that Turkey welcomed the outbreak of war between Germany and Russia due to its conventional animosity towards the latter. In Papen’s view, the Turkish press, in conformity with the Government’s neutrality declaration, had received instructions to restrain its enthusiasm – therefore most newspapers adhered to a strictly factual and dry editorial line. In fact, Papen further claimed; “the entire country was following the decisive developments with tremendous attention.”

Rather than enthusiasm, the outbreak of war brought a serious anxiety to the surface, which were clearly reflected in the memos circulated within the Turkish foreign ministry. Secretary General Numan Menemencioğlu, for instance, received a number of reports from the Turkish ambassador in Moscow, who revealed that since the Red Army was beaten on the Stalin Line, they were now planning to build up a new solid front east of Moscow and that there was talk of “120 new divisions, which the Russians could activate and arm.” From the Turkish perspective, this meant that Nazi Germany’s Russian campaign would last much longer than expected and that the Wehrmacht would be exposed to the grinding effect of a war on two fronts during winter conditions, the disastrous ramifications of which the Turks knew quite well from history. If carried into reality, Stalin’s attempts to force the Germans into lengthy warfare would probably require more German reinforcements (via re-routing the 1st Army) through the Caucasus

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447 BCA 30.1.0.0/30.179.1 (PM Refik Saydam’s Report on Soviet Relations, July 18, 1941).
to save the Wehrmacht from getting bogged down in the Russian winter, thereby
dragging the battlefield to the Turkish frontier.

It did not take too long before Papen realized that this very idea of a prolonged
war was a nightmare for the Turks. From that point onwards, Germany did everything in
its capacity to capitalize on this fear in Turkey and cemented the reemerging
Russophobia in Ankara. In his conversations with Saraçoğlu and Menemencioğlu, von
Papen repeatedly pointed out that Turkey’s self-evident interest in the elimination of the
Bolshevik system was “naturally bound to bring the country over to the side of the
German Reich…though not necessarily on the battlefield.” Papen reiterated Hitler’s
respect for İnönü’s decision to keep Turkey out of war’s reach and for the existing
agreements between Turkey and Great Britain. Yet, Papen also added that, as soon as the
campaign against the Soviets was victoriously concluded, the Reich would be in a
position to get down to the reorganization of Europe. What this meant for Turkey was,
when that moment arrived, İnönü would have to make the decision whether he wanted to
remain “an appendix to the British-Soviet front.”

It would be safe to suggest that Papen’s anti-Soviet propaganda met with
considerable approval in Ankara. The party newspaper, Ulus, wrote in its editorial of
July 11: “If Germany should lose this war, all mankind from the Pacific to the Atlantic
would be shaken to its roots…If Germany wins, the Russian world would be divided up
and scattered, and the edifice of the Communist International would be forever
overthrown…those on the European Continent, who but recently were at each others’

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449 DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 193 (Weizsacker to Ribbentrop, August 11, 1941); 304.
450 Ibid, 306.
throats have united to ward off domination by the Kremlin...Europe has been unified in the mystique of a crusade.”

On August 11, Weizsacker sent a dispatch to Ribbentrop regarding the question of Russian designs on the Dardanelles from the time of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. He reminded Ribbentrop that the Turkish government was still not aware of Molotov’s secret proposal in November 1940 to establish Soviet bases on the Straits. Pending the Führer’s approval, Weizsacker instructed Ribbentrop to disclose the minutes of these talks in writing to the Turkish ambassador in Berlin “as irrefutable proof of the Russian designs.”

In a detailed memorandum, Ribbentrop passed Weizsacker’s instructions to Franz von Papen the same day. Based on the information Ribbentrop gathered from the Turkish ambassador in Berlin so far, he seemed convinced that the Turks would try to maintain their neutrality at all costs. For this reason, Ribbentrop suggested that winning Turkey to Germany’s side as a non-belligerent state in the manner desired was feasible only if von Papen could interest İnönü in the acquisition of new territories, which included border rectifications in Thrace, the Greek islands at the entrance to the Straits, and further acquisitions to the south and east of Turkey at Russia’s expense. Ribbentrop hoped that these conditions would be obtained “after Russia was definitively

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451 Ulus (July 11, 1941), 2.
452 DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 193 (Weizsacker to Ribbentrop, August 11, 1941); 304-308.
453 This document deserves particular attention since Germany’s secret plans to reward Turkey with territorial acquisitions in return for its cooperation have thus far been a quasi myth in Turkish scholarship. Here we see that Germany indeed entertained such plans. Nevertheless, Germany made an official proposal to Turkey regarding the Greek Islands two years later, in August 1943 (Ibid, 307). İnönü, on the other hand, responded to the German proposal with the following telegram: “We would consider repatriating those Aegean Islands that are located in our territorial waters on the condition that such an annexation comes into existence with no (German) stings attached...Otherwise, it is unthinkable to carry out such an action that would potentially result in a dispute between Turkey and Great Britain or Nazi occupied Greece.” BCA 030.01.0.0/40.240.19 (İnönü’s Telegram to the Foreign Ministry, September 26, 1943).
smashed in autumn.” Until that time, Ribbentrop conceived of their diplomatic effort in the following terms: (1) To strengthen the Turks in their confidence that Germany would never make any territorial demands on them, or pressure them to enter the war on Germany’s side, but that, on the contrary, Germany would always regard them “as the historic guardians of the Straits;” and (2) To promote and keep alive “the hitherto somewhat dormant fear of Russian imperialist tendencies.”

In conclusion, Ribbentrop argued that Turkey would probably move more and more into the center of international interest in the immediate future, and that it was imperative that Germany maintained “its friendship with this state for all time to come.” Nor did Ribbentrop see the slightest reason for conflicts between the interests of Turkey and Germany. On the contrary, Ribbentrop thought that it might even be possible to have Turkey join them in the further course of the war, “provided Germany found the means to supply arms and assistance in sufficient quantities.”

Evidently, by August 1941, Nazi Germany did not want to have Turkey as a belligerent on its side, not at least until the Soviet campaign was successfully brought to an end. Germany was lagging behind in delivering the submarines and battleships that Turkey had already paid for, let alone pledging for a future arms supply. They did however propose financial assistance and extended a guarantee for buying large quantities of chrome ore after Turkey’s existing agreements with Britain expired. What Germany asked from Turkey in return for the bullion was to impede Russian naval traffic

454 Ibid.
455 DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 194 (Ribbentrop to Papen, August 11, 1941), 305-311.
456 Ibid, 309.
457 Ibid.
through the Straits without jeopardizing its neutrality\(^{458}\) – a task that was not only difficult to accomplish but simply impossible.

Meanwhile, Ribbentrop received Turkish Ambassador Hüsrev Gerede in Berlin, to exchange views regarding the course of the war and of the German offensives in Russia. Ribbentrop explained Gerede the military situation in the east, where Russian losses had amounted to almost 6 million. Ribbentrop confidently told the Turkish ambassador that the Red Army “would probably be destroyed and the greater part of European Russia would be occupied.”\(^{459}\) In any case, Stalin would be unable to rebuild the Red Army to any appreciative extent after such blows.

In the heated days of mid-September, a German delegation under Dr. Clodius came to Ankara with imposing demands to negotiate a wide commercial treaty\(^{460}\). Since the termination of the previous commercial treaty in August 1939, a few days before the outbreak of war, several attempts had been made to restore some order into Turco-German trade relations. Yet, nothing satisfactory or permanent had been affected. Dr. Clodius was successful in concluding an agreement on October 9, 1941, which provided, in theory, for exchanges on a substantial scale between the two countries. Chrome played a vital part of the agreement, with Dr. Clodius pressing persistently for Turkish supplies after the new year (January 8, 1942) when the original Anglo-Franco-Turkish Chrome Agreement was due to terminate.\(^{461}\) Much to Clodius’s dismay, by dint of some British pressure to induce the Turkish Government to extend the existing Anglo-Franco-Turkish agreement on similar terms regarding chrome for another year, until January 1943,

\(^{458}\) DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 227 (Ribbentrop to Papen, August 22, 1941), 354-358.
\(^{459}\) DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 238, (Ribbentrop to Papen, August 25, 1941), 373.
\(^{460}\) BCA 30.1.0.0/30.179.4 (Diplomatic Correspondence Regarding Turco-German Chrome Agreement, September 20, 1941).
\(^{461}\) Ibid.
proved to be successful. By the final agreement, the Turkish government undertook to let Germany have export permits for 45,000 tons between January 15 and March 31 of 1943, and the end of the year, and 90,000 tons in 1944, making a total of 180,000 tons for the two years 1943 and 1944. But this further agreement was to be conditional upon the delivery of all war materials to Turkey stipulated in the Clodius Agreement.

Meanwhile, in September 1941, Eden and Aras held another round of negotiations with regards to the state of financial affairs in Turkey. İnönü instructed Dr. Aras to convey the dire circumstances, under which Turkey was struggling to build up its defenses and that a need for British assistance in this sphere had now become most urgent. Aras explained to Eden that Turkey’s local remedies had been “totally exhausted, and that Turkish supplies of dollars were “completely expended.” They had no means of paying for anything more, either here or in the United States, unless either Britain could give them a credit or reduce their defense preparations by supplying arms.

Aras communicated Turkey’s requests to Eden in an aide memoire personally drafted by Saraçoğlu. The Turkish Foreign Minister communicated to Eden that, by means of the Turkish government’s radical economic policies and fiscal measures (the imposition of new taxes, a further increase of direct and indirect taxation, and the floating of internal loans etc.), it had been possible to balance for only six months the extraordinary budget of the Ministry of National Defense, which was estimated for the year 1941 at £297 million. Simply put, Turkey’s defense spending for the latter half of the year, there appeared no remedy except inflation.

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462 FO 424/286 R8394/139/44 (Eden to Hugessen, September 12, 1941).
463 BCA 30.1.0.0/48.309.10 (Budget Framework for the Ministry of National Defense Between 1939 and 1944, November 11, 1941).
A second meeting between Eden and Aras took place on September 23.\textsuperscript{464} The British State Secretary made a more straightforward impression on Dr. Aras, who was told that for a prospective financial aid agreement between London and Ankara to be concluded, Britain attached utmost importance to the Turkish Government refusing the German demand for chrome. Eden made it clear that chrome had become the touchstone of Turkey's good faith towards the Anglo-Turkish alliance. For Eden, the Turkish government and the press might understandably regard it as exaggerated that a small quantity of chrome should loom so large, but he had no doubt of the view British public opinion would take in his country: “After all, what was this chrome to be used for?” asked Eden, then answered, “To make munitions of war to kill our [British] soldiers, of course.”\textsuperscript{465} Eden suggested that he had done everything in his power to help Turkey, and would continue to do so, but in return he asked the Turkish ambassador to help him convince İnönü to resolve the chrome problem to Britain’s advantage. Dr. Aras replied that he understood the position and that the issue was “not 3,000 tons of chrome” but “a moral question.”\textsuperscript{466} He undertook to do his utmost to persuade his government not to yield on this point in the negotiations. As regards the United States, he feared “he did not see how Turkey was to obtain American supplies,” since Turkey had “no more dollars and could not be placed on the lend-lease list.”\textsuperscript{467}

The Anglo-Franco-Turkish Chrome Agreement of January 8, 1940, provided that the whole available Turkish chrome output up to the stipulated maximum of 250,000 tons should be bought in given shares by the British and the French governments,
respectively.\footnote{FO 424/286 R8597/179/44 (Eden to Hugessen, September 23, 1941).} No Turkish chrome was to be exported to any other country except with the consent, in each case, of the said countries. The agreement was valid for two years, but could be prolonged for a third year on the request of any of the signatories. On July 15, 1941, British Ambassador Hugessen addressed a note to the Turkish Government notifying them of Britain’s intention to renew the agreement for the further period of one year. The wording of the agreement was such that this option was to be exercised by the Government of the French Republic and the United Kingdom. But since the new Vichy Government in France disappeared from the agreement to take their share of Turkish chrome output, it was now up to Britain and Turkey to negotiate a revised agreement.

When Eden met Aras on September 23, Hugessen still had not received the Turkish government’s acknowledgment regarding his note, except for a separate message from Saraçoğlu, informing him that the Germans, in their economic negotiations with the Turkish Government, were pressing for the supply of chrome.\footnote{FO 424/286 R9849/236/44 (Eden to Hugessen, September 24, 1941).} Therefore, Eden tried to make sure that Aras understood his apprehension. “Should the Turkish Government not be prepared to renew the chrome agreement unconditionally, or agree to send chrome to Germany,” Eden stated, “His Majesty's Government could not but help regarding such action as against the spirit of the Anglo-Turkish Alliance.”\footnote{Ibid.} Eden urged Saraçoğlu to recall that after the collapse of France, Great Britain, without hesitation or reference to the legal position, assumed responsibility for the French share of the Arms Credit to Turkey. Naturally, Britain was now expecting Turkey to return the favor, by denying Germany to buy chrome from the latter.\footnote{Ibid.}
On September 29, during another meeting between Clodius, Menemencioğlu, and von Papen, Germany desperately pushed for securing all chrome output of Turkey for the year 1942. Referring to the Anglo-Turkish treaty, Menemencioğlu said that this was simply impossible before 1943. Clodius objected to Turkey’s transfer of France’s share of the chrome to Great Britain but he knew well from German intelligence reports that, in fact, Menemencioğlu and Saraçoğlu did the best they could to deliver some chrome to Germany, ultimately failed to convince the British. With regard to the political situation, in response to von Papen’s remonstrations, Numan replied that Turkey still wished to refrain from collaborating with the Nazis, and that, while Turkey had a vital interest in the defeat of Bolshevism, İnönü still refrained from making this public.

**Anglo-Soviet Occupation of Iran**

Following Germany’s execution of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, another contingency began to shape Turkey’s foreign policy in the Middle East, which in turn exacerbated its relations with the Soviet Union even further – the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran. Like the Turkish government, Reza Shah declared his country’s neutrality during the war, but until that summer in 1941, Iran remained by and large pro-German. Since the early 1930s Reza Shah had been receiving German aid to reduce Iran’s dependence on foreign imported goods, such as cotton textiles war materials. Generous German loans helped Iran build its own textile factories in Tehran as well as

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472 BCA 30.1.0.0/30.179.4 (Diplomatic Correspondence Regarding Anglo-Turkish Relations, October 1, 1941).
473 DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 367 (Papen to Ribbentrop, September 29, 1941); 589-594, here 593.
infrastructure and transportation facilities.\textsuperscript{475} The Third Reich, on the other hand, managed to promote its interests in that country by taking the third power role through these loans and consequently supported its industry with Iranian natural resources. Furthermore, the Nazi \textit{Weltanschauung} was very effectively employed as a weapon of propaganda in Iran. To impress the Iranians, the Reich Cabinet had issued a special decree as early as 1936 by which the Iranians were exempted from the restrictions of the Nuremberg Racial Laws as pureblooded Aryans. German authors strove to arouse the sympathy of leading Iranians by drawing endless parallels among Reza Shah, Hitler, Mussolini, and Kemal Ataturk, underlying the role and virtue of the \textit{Fuhrerprinzip}.\textsuperscript{476}

Britain and the Soviet Union had become wary of the growing German influence in Iran as early as the mid-1930s but failed to take any substantial action to preempt it. When the German armies began marching east, the British and the Soviets entered into an alliance, and occupied Iran to prevent German encroachment on the country, which could have led to subsequent attacks on the Soviet Union. The Soviets wanted to safeguard their southern borders, which they shared with Iran, as well as their oil fields in Baku, which lay in close proximity to the Iranian borders. The British also wanted to protect their oil investments in southern Iran.

The chief architect of Operation Countenance (codename for the occupation of Iran) was Anthony Eden, who had succeeded Halifax as Secretary of State in 1940. During the course of Anglo-Soviet talks in July 1941, when the two became formal allies against Germany, Eden sought to convince Iranian authorities to rid their country of Germans and delivered the message that Britain would, if necessary, support their

\textsuperscript{475} Gasanly, \textit{SSSR i Iran}, 23.
\textsuperscript{476} Rezun, \textit{The Soviet Union and Iran}, 186.
requests by vigorous action. At first, Molotov seemed indecisive about the effectiveness of a joint operation, and whether or not such vigorous actions were possible by British forces alone the Chiefs of Staff in London could not say. In Molotov’s view, the threat of economic measures against Iran might have sufficed to cause Reza Shah to act. But Eden was dubious about the use of economic sanctions and argued that Iranians knew quite well that “before the arrival of that hour, they would be rescued by Germans.” Moreover, after the bitter consequences of the Munich policy of appeasement, Eden was certainly not willing to embark on economic sanctions alone unless he was certain that Britain and the Soviet Union both had the means to implement those sanctions with military action should the need arise.

In view of the anti-Russian propaganda by the Germans, Molotov changed his prognosis about Iran and announced that the Soviet Union was under no delusion pertaining to the events in Iran, which required military action. On July 19, the Iranian government was requested by both British and Soviet representatives in Tehran to expel certain Germans on the grounds that they were engaged in activities prejudicial to Iran’s status as a neutral state.

On August 25 the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran officially began. The Iranian Army spearhead in Transcaucasia was crushed within two hours and, in defiance of Reza Shah’s orders, Iranian soldiers laid their arms without any significant resistance to the Anglo-Soviet advance. Having forced Reza Shah to abdicate in favor of his son

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477 FO 424/286 E 3995/3444/34 (Eden to Cripps, July 19, 1941).
478 FO 424/286 R 7615/112/441 (Eden to Halifax, August 8, 1941).
479 Gasanly, SSSR i Iran, 121.
480 For obvious reasons, when this request was made public Turkey became increasingly apprehensive about its own fate as another neutral state. BCA 030.18.0.1/002.95.54 (President’s Office to the Prime Ministry, July 6, 1941).
Mohammed Reza Pahlavi on September 16, the Allied Powers signed a treaty of alliance with Iran and declared that they “jointly and severally undertake to respect the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Iran...against all aggression on the part of Germany.”481 Soviet troops occupied northern Iran, while British troops occupied the south. While a neutral zone that included Tehran was placed under Iranian control, the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran eventually led to the stationing of American troops in 1942 as part of the allied war effort.482 It was made clear that in this demarche that Iran’s independence would be respected only so long as Iran proved capable of defending itself against Germany, but despite this veiled threat, the Iranians did not take decisive action.483 They agreed to keep watch on the Germans in Iran but refused to expel them immediately on the grounds (which were in fact quite reasonable) that to do so would be a breach of their obligations as a neutral and would lay them open to risk of retaliation by Germany.

As far as Turkey was concerned, from the very onset of Anglo-Soviet negotiations Anthony Eden considered it most desirable not to create the impression among Ankara’s ruling elite that Great Britain was returning to the Anglo-Russian partition policy of 1907. It was inevitable that the Turks were to become nervous when they saw Britain and the Soviet Union putting pressure on Iran in these conditions. Eden thought that an early assurance by both Britain and Russia to Turkey on these lines would

482 American service troops, who eventually numbered more than 30,000, began to arrive in the latter part of 1942. This force, the Persian Gulf Command, did not formally participate in the occupation, for it had arrived under British auspices after it was decided that the United States should assume primary responsibility for the supply route through Iran. T.H. Vail Motter, The United States Army in World War II: The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia (Washington, 1952), 155; George Lenczowski, Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-1948: A Study in Big Power Rivalry (Ithaca, 1949), 273; and Edward M. Mark, “Allied Relations in Iran, 1941-1947,” in The Wisconsin Magazine of History, 59, 1 (Autumn, 1975), 51-63.
do much to prevent that danger. As such, two weeks before the invasion, he instructed Ambassador Scripps in Moscow to convince the Soviets to join Great Britain in a shared declaration signaling their mutual determination to respect and protect territorial integrity of Turkey.\textsuperscript{484} It seemed to Eden all the more important not to allow the German Government a free field for propaganda in Turkey. The Germans had already been making great play with the charge that Britain and Russia had sinister designs on Turkey. Ambassador Maisky, who appeared to be attracted by the idea, said that he would certainly report Eden’s suggestion to his government. He thought it very likely they would agree to take some action on the lines Eden had suggested. In any event, Maisky assured Eden that his proposal would be “urgently and sympathetically examined.”\textsuperscript{485}

Mindful of Turkey’s concerns about Iran’s fate, and of its own for that matter, Eden and Molotov sought to assure the Turkish Government that they fully accept and endorse the Persian policy of neutrality and that they have themselves had no designs against Persia’s political independence or territorial integrity. In a joint communiqué delivered to Saraçoğlu on August 14, they expressed “a sincere desire to maintain their existing policy of friendship and co-operation with Turkey which they believe to be in the best interests of both the Soviet Russia and the British Empire.”\textsuperscript{486}

In a personal letter sent to İnönü, Eden also confirmed Britain’s fidelity to the Montreux Convention and assured the Turkish Government that they had no aggressive intentions or claims with regard to the Straits. Eden underlined the fact that the United Kingdom, as also the Soviet Government, “is prepared scrupulously to observe the

\textsuperscript{484} FO 424/286 R 8154/112/44 (Eden to Cripps, August 10, 1941).
\textsuperscript{485} FO 424/286 E 3995/3444/34 (Eden to Cripps, July 19, 1941).
\textsuperscript{486} FO 424/286 E 3995/3444/34 (Eden to Cripps, August 19, 1941).
territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic.” While fully appreciating the desire of the Turkish Government not to be involved in war, the letter continued, “His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, as also the Soviet Government, would nevertheless be prepared to render Turkey every help and assistance in the event of her being attacked by any European Power.” Likewise, in Molotov’s letter’s preamble the Soviet Union declared that, German agents provocateurs had been conducting a malicious anti-Soviet propaganda in Ankara to bring about discord between Stalin and İnönü. Molotov expressed that such hearsay in no way corresponded to the attitude of the USSR, and that, “if Turkey were in fact attacked and compelled to enter the war for the defense of her territory, she could count on full understanding and neutrality of the USSR on the basis of the non-aggression pact between the two countries.”

Yet from the Turkish perspective, the situation in Iran seemed much more dire than what the Soviet or British observers imagined. Despite Turkish policy makers’ resolve in isolating themselves from the Middle East theatre, where they would easily get bogged down in the midst of superpower conflict, a massive influx of refugees pouring into Turkey’s southeastern provinces from neighboring countries had been a recurring problem. Within days after the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran, Ankara faced a surge of thirty thousand refugees, which required immediate humanitarian aid. The building of refugee camps and supplying the region with gasoline, food, vaccines, and security forces compelled İnönü to rush the ongoing railroad project connecting the Diyarbakır-Elazığ line with the Iran-Iraq border, which put an extra burden on an already strained national

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487 TBMM, d. 6, c. 19, b. 69, s. 162-164 (August 25, 1941).
488 Ibid.
489 BCA 30.18.1.2/95.54.1 (Molotov to İnönü, August 22, 1941).
490 Ibid.
491 BCA 30.10.0.0/212.439.5 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, August 23, 1941).
economy.\textsuperscript{492} By February 1942, the Turkish government seemed to be losing control of the situation; hence deployed additional gendarmerie against bordering villages of Iran to block future waves of migration.\textsuperscript{493} Turkish intelligence reports indicate that aside from Iranian civilians who migrated to Turkey in the winter of 1942, certain high-ranking officers of the Iranian Army as well as businessmen of Azeri-Turkish origin had also settled in southeastern Anatolia.\textsuperscript{494} Iranian officers and businessmen “who were quintessentially anti-Soviet and anti-British” sought to propagate “disturbing” ideas through publishing books, pamphlets, and columns.\textsuperscript{495} Wary of these gyrations around Ankara’s periphery, the Turkish government consistently banned the circulation of these materials, which they deemed “perilous to [their] relations with the Soviet Union.”\textsuperscript{496}

In any case, Anglo-Soviet action in Persia did not meet with sympathy from the Turkish Government. Saraçoğlu never hesitated to express his disapproval of it. This was clearly due to the Russian share in the common policy. In Ankara, distrust of Russia prevailed over trust of Great Britain. This distrust increased and even grew into consultation as Kurdish activities developed in Azerbaijan. It was bad enough in Turkish eyes for Persian Azerbaijan to be in Russian occupation, and all the assurances regarding the temporary nature of this occupation and the promises of evacuation after the war, which were finally embodied in the treaty between Great Britain, the USSR and Persia did not console the Turkish government. But still more disturbing to them were the reports that the Kurds in those districts were being actively encouraged in an

\textsuperscript{492} Expediting the construction of the railroad project ultimately cost ten percent more than the estimated 35,000,000 Lira. Source: BCA 30.18.1.2/94.70.8 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, August 28, 1941); and BCA 30.10.0.0/55.366.3 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, August 27, 1941).
\textsuperscript{493} BCA 30.18.1.2/97.125.9 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, February 2, 1942).
\textsuperscript{494} BCA 30.10.0.0/262.763.32 (Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry, April 3, 1942).
\textsuperscript{495} BCA 30.10.0.0/100.648.11 (Intelligence Report on Anti-Soviet Propaganda in Eastern Provinces, January 31, 1942).
\textsuperscript{496} BCA 30.18.1.2/99.56.2 (Prime Ministry to the Directorate of Printing and Press, June 27, 1942).
independence movement, and even provided with arms with the connivance, if not the active assistance, of the Soviet authorities. This anxiety was aggravated by the appearance on Turkish territory of various spies who appeared to be acting for the Soviets. Several arrests were made in Eastern Turkey and on one occasion shots were exchanged with a party, which had been put ashore at night.

The Franz von Papen Affair

It would be fair to suggest that in the aftermath of the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan, Germany probably did everything in its capacity to revive and propagate the evil-Russia image in Turkey. But Stalin’s own blunders, which aggravated Turkey’s Russophobia, played an equally important role. The main incident that marred Soviet-Turkish affairs vis-à-vis Germany occurred on the morning of February 24, 1942, when two NKVD agents, V.V. Pavlov and A.P. Kornilov, were caught in Ankara after an assassination attempt on Franz von Papen. Soviet historians have long claimed that the failed assassination plot was in fact the work of Nazi Germany's own secret service to disrupt Soviet-Turkish relations and provoke Turkey into declaring war on the Soviet Union. With the opening of Soviet archives, however, several Russian monographs have now appeared, eschewing the Russian theory of German conspiracy, and confirmed Franz von Papen’s account.

497 Soviet historical accounts also seem to confirm Stalin’s plans to stir up Turkey’s Kurdish problem. Y. Gorkov, Kavkaz vystoyal, Kavkaz pobedil, veteran y vzpominayut (Tbilisi, 1973), 130-131; Lev Sotskov, Nezvestniy separatizm: na sluzhbe SD i Abvera (Moscow, 2003), 13.
498 FO 421/326 R1471/24/44 (Hugessen to Eden, February 5, 1942).
499 BCA 30.10.0.0/232.561.19 (Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Prime Ministry, February 24, 1942).
Ever since the Nazi-Soviet war had broken out, Papen was held under close surveillance by the Soviet secret service in Ankara. Mindful of Papen’s anti-Soviet propaganda, Pavel Sudoplatov, chief of NKVD’s 4th Bureau, commissioned military intelligence officers Naum Isaakovich Eytingon, Pavel Vasilievsky, and Ivan Vinarov for counter-espionage in Turkey.\footnote{502} Eytingon and Vasilievsky’s initial reports alarmed Soviet authorities about Papen’s secret plans to disrupt the Anglo-American support for the Soviet war effort. According to these reports, Papen was using the Vatican’s chargé d'affaires in Ankara to cut a deal with the British and American ambassadors.\footnote{503} Parallel to these reports, NKVD was also informed about secret meetings between the American ambassador to the Holy See, Myron Taylor, and Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who would later become Pope John XXIII. All of this pointed out to Germany’s designs to isolate the Soviet Union from its coalition with the Anglo-American bloc.\footnote{504} Although the mutual exchange between the Nazi Germany and the Anglo-American bloc through the Holy See did not really amount to an agreement, Papen’s attempt to use the Catholic Church as an intermediary against the Soviet Union became a source of great apprehension in Moscow, and led to Sudoplatov’s plot to assassinate von Papen in February 1942.\footnote{505} Upon Sudoplatov’s instructions, Eytingon hired Istanbul consular officer Georgiy Ivanovich Mordinov (Pavlov) and a military attaché (code-named Kornilov) to carry out the assassination. Pavlov and Kornilov planted the bomb in a Telefunken radio (presumably to draw the attention to the Gestapo) and recruited a

\footnote{502} Baturin, \textit{Dose razvedchika}, 393-398; and Şharapov, \textit{Naum Eytingon}, 103.  
\footnote{505} Franz von Papen, \textit{Der Wahrheit eine Gasse} (Innsbruck, 1952), 596.
Macedonian student Ömer Tokat, who had taken lodgings in a small hotel in Ankara, to kill Papen. 506

On February 24, at about ten o’clock in the morning Franz von Papen took his wife out for a stroll at the Embassy Row on Ataturk Boulevard, which to him seemed unusually deserted. Suddenly, the Papens were both hurled to the ground by a violent explosion. Franz von Papen immediately picked himself up and helped his wife, who, despite being noticeably shaken, made a gesture with a display of satisfaction that no bones were broken. At first, Papen assumed that they had set off a mine as he looked around to see not a single soul on the street. The explosion had broken all the windows for a couple of hundred yards and a crowd quickly begun to gather. Apart from a cut knee and a torn trouser leg, von Papen was unhurt; though he would suffer from a temporary hearing loss due to noise and concussion. Frau Papen, on the other hand, was completely fine, except for a large bloodstain on her coat, which turned out to be the assailant’s who was blown into pieces. 507

Members of the Turkish security service were soon on the spot for a detailed investigation. Within twenty-four hours they solved the riddle. Human remains, including a shoe hanging in a tree, had been found at the scene of the explosion. These clues led the police to Ömer Tokat, who was identified by hotel receptionists Halid Ünsal and Ali Çelik. 508 The trail ultimately led to the Russian Consulate-General in Istanbul, which was immediately encircled by the Turkish gendarmerie. 509 Despite the Russian Ambassador’s outraged protests, the embassy building – also on Ataturk Boulevard near

506 Baturin, Dose Razvedchika, 393-398; and Şarapov, Naum Eytingon, 103.
508 Cumhuriyet (February 26, 1941), 1-3; and Tan (February 26, 1941), 2.
Papen’s residence – remained surrounded until the Russians responded to an ultimatum to surrender Ömer Tokats’ two accomplices, Abdurrahman Sayma (student of medicine), and Süleyman Sağol (a local barber and friend of Ömer Tokat) who had taken refuge there earlier and were now suspected of complicity.\footnote{Sharapov, \textit{Naum Eytingon}, 62.} The Turkish Prime Minister announced that the incident would be further investigated, “whatever the political consequences might be.”\footnote{Ibid, 73.} Saydam said: “He would not allow Turkey to become the scene of political assassinations.”\footnote{Papen, \textit{Memoirs}, 489.} The investigations and trials lasted several months, and the accomplices were eventually sentenced for their part in the affair.

As it turned out, the would-be assassin, Tokat, and his accomplices, Sağol and Saydam, had been practicing pistol shooting for several weeks at the Russian Consulate General in Istanbul.\footnote{Yuriy Baturin, \textit{Dose Razvedchika} (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2005), 45.} Meanwhile, Pavlov and Kornilov had been observing Papen’s usual route to the office, which he preferred to do by foot at a certain hour every morning, and decided that at 10am they had the best opportunity for attack. In case the student found himself unable to make a get-away after the shooting, he was to pull off the pin of a bomb with which he had been provided.\footnote{Henry Picker, \textit{Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier} (Munich: Verlag, 1968), 127-132.} This, he was told, would emit a smoke screen, under cover of which he would be able to escape. The young man must have been over-cautious, and presumably decided to shoot with one hand and set off his bomb with the other. It may be that he exploded it a fraction of a second before firing the shot. At any rate, Papen later claimed that he had no recollection of hearing a bullet. However, the “smoke bomb” proved more effective than he had expected and he was blown into pieces. The investigation also proved that the prime conspirators in the plot,
Pavlov and Kornilov, tried to flee the crime scene so rapidly that the Turkish frontier guards at Erzurum were able to detain them with much difficulty.\textsuperscript{515}

Until the investigation got under way, Ankara was full of rumors regarding possible reasons and organizers behind the attack. At first, it was not clear whether it had been directed against Papen or head of the Turkish military, Marshal Fevzi Çakmak, who passed down the Ataturk Boulevard in his car a few minutes earlier.\textsuperscript{516} The Russians, the British Secret Service and the Gestapo were all suspected of having organized the affair. The fact that the assassin was so well informed about Papen’s walk was at first thought to be the work of British Intelligence, which had set up headquarters across the street from Papen’s private residence, which was kept under constant observation with binoculars. This rumor had also reached the British Ambassador, who immediately assured Papen that “his people had had nothing to do with the affair.”\textsuperscript{517} For Papen, the Gestapo seemed a distinct possibility, and this suggestion was reinforced by accounts of mysterious telephone calls that various people claimed to have heard.\textsuperscript{518} However, all this speculation came to an end very soon, as the Turks pinned the guilt on the Russians: Papen himself had had very little doubts as to who the real culprits were. Papen was showered with congratulations, and President İnönü and his wife presented Papen and his wife with a magnificent bouquet of flowers and expressed their regret at this murderous attempt on their lives.

The NKVD agents were ultimately convicted on June 17, 1942. “The Turkish court acted to benefit the Hitlerites,” wrote the popular army newspaper \textit{Krasnaya

\textsuperscript{515} Baturin, \textit{Dose Razvedchika}, 408.
\textsuperscript{516} Cumhuriyet (June 18, 1942), 4; \textit{Tan} (June 18, 1942), 2.
\textsuperscript{517} Papen, \textit{Memoirs}, 490.
\textsuperscript{518} Ibid.
Zvezda, “and sentenced two of our innocent citizens to twenty years imprisonment.” \(^{519}\)

Pravda published a similar article on the subject and pointed out to “the continued presence of German spies in Turkey.” The article claimed that there were “1300 fascist agents still operating in Turkey.” \(^{520}\)

Regardless of the number of Nazi spies in Ankara, the attempted assassination on Franz von Papen undoubtedly gave the Germans an upper hand in Ankara’s diplomatic intrigues. Papen now had a number of legitimate reasons to intensify his anti-Soviet campaign. In his monthly meeting with Şükrü Saraçoğlu, von Papen turned the provocation conspiracy around and blamed the Soviets for impeding German-Turkish friendship by using confiscated Luftwaffe planes against Turkey. The Turkish newspapers were giving considerable coverage to the four German bombers, which had been spotted in violation of the Turkish air space near the Soviet border. Papen presented concrete evidence that those planes – one Messerschmidt 109, one Messerschmidt 110, one Junkers 87s and another unidentified plane whose pilot had allegedly survived a crash near Kars – were not part of the Luftwaffe but had been apprehended earlier by Soviets, repaired and rearmed them to antagonize the Turks. \(^{521}\)

**Stalin’s Blunders on the Black Sea**

The night before Stalin’s unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Franz von Papen, on February 23, a Soviet Submarine (Shch 213) attacked a Turkish steamer (Çankaya) in the vicinity of Istanbul’s Black Sea coast. When the torpedo missed the Çankaya, the

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\(^{519}\) Krasnaya Zvezda (June 18, 1942), 3.

\(^{520}\) Pravda (August 30, 1942), 1.

\(^{521}\) BCA 30.10.0.0/231.562.11 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry on Soviet Attempts to Impede Turkish-German Relations, June 11, 1942).
submarine surfaced and used its onboard canon to sink it. While this gave additional time for the Turkish sailors to evacuate the ship into lifeboats and sail away, the Turkish government never felt so close to find itself in warfare other than the early morning hours of February 24. Just when the Turkish authorities began working on a diplomatic note to be delivered to the Soviet ambassador, in less than ten hours after the Çankaya incident, and minutes before the failed assassination attempt on von Papen, the Soviet submarine Shch 213 (Lieutenant D. M. Denezhko) torpedoed a second vessel north of Bosphorus, the SS Struma, which was chartered to carry Jewish refugees from Axis-allied Romania to British-controlled Palestine. After a series of engine failures, the SS Struma had barely made it half way through its voyage before anchoring in Istanbul with its 769 refugee passengers aboard. When this 170-ton former yacht sunk, it left behind only one survivor, a Romanian Jew named David Stoliar, making it the largest civilian naval disaster of the war. The ominous naval incidents of February 24 would leave Turkish-Soviet relations irreparably damaged.

Until recently, details surrounding the Struma tragedy were often conflicting, or confusing, or both. Only broad factors were recorded: The Struma and its passengers sat in Istanbul harbor for ten weeks before the ship was towed back to the Black Sea and set

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522 BCA 30.10.0.0/171.185.21 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, February 24, 1942).
523 BCA 30.10.0.0/124.881.6 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, February 24, 1942).
524 Another particularly untoward maritime incident involving the Jewish plight occurred on November 1940, when the 11,885-ton liner Patria embarked 3,600 illegal immigrants at Haifa for deportation to Mauritius. Haganah sabotaged Patria with explosives, she sank and 260 passengers died. This tragedy, along with the Struma disaster, caused Haganah to forbid any more sailings from Romania and for 18 months seaborne immigration ceased. Between May 1939 and August 1944 six ships sailed from Balkan ports with 16,797 immigrants. On August 9, 1944, three Turkish ships (Bülbül, Mefkure, and Marina) were commissioned to rescue 400 Jewish passengers of a Romanian ship that had been attacked by a German submarine. The operation was difficult (the Turkish vessels were attacked by three German submarines in the Black Sea) and its success found widespread coverage globally: BCA 030.10.0.0/117.814.3 (Ministry of Interior’s Report on the Rescue Operation, August 16, 1944).
adrift. A mysterious explosion had sunk the vessel, leaving only one survivor. We now know, after long weeks of arduous waiting on one of the world’s busiest waterways, the final verdict for the Struma arrived at noon on February 23. Wary of antagonizing either belligerent power, particularly the Soviet Union, which had been accusing Turkey of collaborating with the Germans and of allowing German vessels through the Straits, the Turkish government sent a massive Turkish military tugboat. Its arrival drew passengers to the deck and sent alarm shivering through all of them. The passengers were still not sure if the Struma’s engine was working. The tug’s captain had been given orders to take the ship far enough out that it would not return to Istanbul, and the coast guard was on alert in the event that the ship drifted back towards the straits.526

Meanwhile the Soviet submarine SC-213 was navigating in the vicinity of the entrance of the Bosphorus Straits. In the early hours of February 24, 1942, the submarine placed itself between the Turkish coast and the Struma. For many years David Stoliar believed that the Struma was torpedoed from batteries located on the Turkish Coast, because the Struma’s Chief Mate Lazar Dikof saw it coming from the coast. It seems that the submarine Captain Denezhko accomplished its mission well.527 When the torpedo hit the ship, David Stoliar, who was asleep exactly below the deck, was projected

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526 Was it possible the Turks on the tugboat were unaware the Struma’s engine did not work? Perhaps. Recently released Turkish archival evidence suggest that the Turkish coastal guard was notified that fixing the engine of Struma would require special technical equipment that could more easily be found in the neighboring port in Şile, where the ship was being towed. BCA 30.10.0.0/124.881.6 (SS Struma, February 24, 1942).

527 Interesting is the fact that this submarine, after a crew change, was navigating close to Constanza Harbor. In the same year of 1942, SC-213 was torpedoed by a German submarine. In 2008, Romanian divers discovered its wreck at the bottom of Black Sea. They could not identify it because it was completely enveloped in fishnets. It took two years and with the help of Dutch divers to penetrate the wreck and identify it.
in the air then fell in the water.\textsuperscript{528} When he surfaced, there was no ship; it had been completely destroyed from the explosion. Stoliar later estimated that about 100-150 people were still alive and trying to stay afloat among enormous amount of debris. It was extremely cold and as the day progressed, more people disappeared in the freezing waters of the Black Sea. By the evening, Stoliar was alone. The Turkish Coast Guard Station at Şile saw the debris in the Black Sea and sent their rowboat with 6 sailors, for salvage purposes. By coincidence, they found David Stoliar, who was still alive, floating aside Dikof, the chief Mate dead, and another dead body. This took place 24 hours after the explosion. They took Stoliar to their station, fed him, and told him that he was the only alive person found. Two days later, he was taken to the bus station, driven to their Istanbul Station where an ambulance was waiting for Stoliar.

As soon as the ambulance had taken David Stoliar from the bus station into Istanbul to the military hospital in Haydarpasha, Stoliar was wheeled in a room with a policeman at the door. Nobody was allowed in except the doctor and a nurse. Stoliar stayed there for seven days and he was not allowed to communicate with anybody. After seven days of camphor treatment to his legs, hands and arms (they were frozen) the police took him from the hospital to the European side of Istanbul, to the Central Police Station, and incarcerated him on the top floor – the prison floor. He was detained there for 71 days. The reason for his incarceration was stated as illegal person in Turkey without a proper Turkish visa.

During these 71 days in the Istanbul Police prison, Stoliar was supplied with plentiful food from a nearby luxury restaurant. The other prisoners, about 6 of them,}

\textsuperscript{528} The following account is from my personal Interview with David Stoliar, the only survivor of the torpedoed SS Struma after sinking (Washington DC: February 16, 2013).
German, Bulgarian, Russian, British, did not receive such luxury. According to David Stoliar, the Turkish authorities applied to London for a travel document with an entry visa for Palestine. The British Colonial Office refused, but the British Foreign Office overruled and issued him with the necessary travel documents with the visa entry to Palestine. On the 71st day there, Stoliar was released in the care of Mr. Simon Brod, who was then the President of the Jewish Community in Istanbul. He took Stoliar to his house, and the next morning he took him to the Railway Station on the Asian side of Istanbul, where a policeman was waiting for them. The policeman and Stoliar boarded the train that took him from Istanbul to Aleppo via Ankara. At the border between Turkey and Lebanon, the policeman gave Stoliar his travel documents and he returned to Turkey, while Stoliar went on to Palestine.

After the Struma incident, the surfacing of Turkey’s material and logistical aid to the flight of Jews from Nazi occupied territories to Palestine did not come as a surprise to Germans, who were well aware that Turkey had long been aiding the Jews either in the form of granting Turkish citizenship retroactively (to former Ottoman subjects now living in Europe) or simply by facilitating their journey to Jerusalem through Asia Minor. Numerous Jewish scholars from Nazi Germany had already migrated to Turkey in the 1930s, when Albert Einstein, Albert Malche and the prominent Frankfurt pathologist Philipp Schwartz brought to Mustafa Kemal’s attention the purging of hundreds of Jewish and socialist scholars from Nazi Germany. In a personal letter, Einstein asked Ataturk “to allow forty professors and doctors from Germany to continue their scientific

529 There are competing narratives on Turkey’s attitude towards Jews during World War II. See Stanford J Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust: Turkey’s Role in Rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi Persecution During the Holocaust, 1933-45* (New York: Palgrave, 1993); and Corry Guttstadt, *Die Turkei, die Juden und der Holocaust* (Assoziation A, 2008).
and medical work in Turkey.” In that same year, Malche, and Schwarz established the Notgemeinschaft deutscher Wissenschaftler im Ausland to secure academic posts for the persecuted scholars in philosophy and law.\footnote{Sources: BCA 030.10.0.0/116.810.37 (Albert Einstein to İsmet İnönü, September 17, 1933); F. Neumark, Zuflucht am Bosphorus: deutsche Gelehrte, Politiker und Künstler in der Emigration 1933-1953 (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1995), 13.} Much to the dismay of Hitler, these scholars spread a left-Hegelian ideology among the young generation in the 1930s, who were now holding important positions in Turkish intellectual life. Between 1941 and 1943, Germany had persistently presented Turkish ambassadors in Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Budapest, Sofia and Athens with several letters of protest regarding this issue – that is, impeding the Final Solution).\footnote{There are numerous diplomatic notes presented to the Turkish government for hindering the Final Solution. See: BCA 30.10.0.0/99.641.1 through 30.10.0.0/99.641.31.} But, generally speaking, both parties turned a blind eye to contain the problem.

Besides, in the case of the Struma, Romania presented a far greater, and somewhat ironic challenge for Hitler. Within a few weeks of ordering the extermination of Europe’s Jews in January 1942, a month before the Struma incident, Hitler began to worry that Germany was in danger of being outdone by Romania in terms of implementing the Final Solution and that the whole situation there might deteriorate into bloody chaos. When, for instance, Antonescu proposed sending 110,000 more Jews to concentration camps that were regarded as horrible even by the Germans, Eichmann asked the Foreign Office in Berlin to order a halt to the Romanian efforts to slaughter the Jews à la Vlad Tepes.\footnote{For a detailed account of Romania and the Holocaust, See: Jean Ancel, The History of the Holocaust in Romania (Nebraska: Yad Vashem, 2011).} The sinking of Struma with 768 Romanian Jews brought an untimely and unnecessary public attention to neutral Turkey and confirmed Eichmann’s concerns about Romania’s propensity to spread the problem beyond Germany’s control.
Great Britain, on the other hand, appeared as the primary suspect behind the Struma tragedy, perhaps even more so than Germany. For the passengers on the Struma, Britain’s determination to halt the Struma’s journey and the resulting political intrigue and gamesmanship would spell disaster, though no one knew it on the day they were towed into Istanbul harbor. The passengers fully expected that their engine would be repaired, they would receive the promised visas, and they would be on their way to Palestine. They did not count on the British. From the moment it arrived in Istanbul, the Struma presented a dilemma for the British government. While many British officials, including Winston Churchill, were sympathetic to the plight of European Jews, the British had generally been determined to block illegal immigration to Palestine.

On December 20, 1942, five days after the ship arrived in the Bosphorous with a broken engine, the British ambassador met with the assistant secretary of Turkey’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara. The Turkish official told Knatchbull-Hugessen that the Struma was entitled by law to sail through the Straits and the Turkish government could do nothing to stop it. “If His Majesty’s Government would let these immigrants enter Palestine, I will let the ship proceed on its voyage and even assist it,” the Turkish official told the British Ambassador. “His Majesty’s Government does not want these people in Palestine and they have no permission to go there,” replied Hugessen.533

Indeed, looking at Britain’s role in the Struma incident, it is quite difficult not to employ a prosecutorial narrative. Everything in the diplomatic arsenal was arrayed to stop Jews from reaching the country. The British government would prove itself willing and able to go beyond passive cables and raised voices in Ankara to stop the Struma from

533 FO 371/32662 (Reasons for the refusal by the Palestine authorities to admit the SS Struma refugees on board, Code 48, File 652, Papers 3354-4410).
leaving the Istanbul port. The motives were coldly strategic; London did not want to devote even more military resources to keeping a lid on hostilities between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Even and more important, the British did not want to antagonize the Arabs of the Middle East, who controlled huge areas of oil that were deemed essential to the Allied war effort.

Until recently, when the Turkish and Soviet archives were inaccessible, a nagging question loomed over the Struma tragedy as well as the sinking of the fishing vessel Çankaya in the vicinity a few hours earlier. If these vessels were sunk by torpedo fired from a submarine (and David Stoliar’s recollection gave credence to this hypothesis) was it a German or a Russian submarine? Both Germany and the Soviet Union maintained a crowded diplomatic corps and countless spies in Turkey throughout the war to have known exactly who was onboard the Struma and to observe their courses of navigation.

Germany naturally appeared as the sole culprit behind both attacks, particularly Struma, since they would have had a reason for attacking a shipload of Jews. And yet, there was no sign of German U-boats navigating in that area at that time. While the Soviet Union vigorously patrolled the area with submarines in order to protect their southern flank, to many researchers the prospect that a Soviet submarine sank a ship-full of refugees did not make much sense. The puzzling questions surrounding the Struma tragedy were resolved only after the unearthing of Stalin’s secret 1941 order to destroy all vessels headed toward Germany in the Black Sea and the discovery of a particular Soviet submarine’s logs.

534 The following documents held in the National Archives at Kew answer some important questions about the Struma Incident: CO 733/446/11 (Illegal immigration: Struma ship, PQS, 1942); and FO 371/32662 (Reasons for the refusal by the Palestine authorities to admit the SS Struma refugees on board, Code 48, File 652, Papers 3354-4410).
The first piece of evidence came in the early 1960s from a German investigator, Jurgen Rohwer. When relatives of the Struma victims petitioned the German government for compensation, German courts asked Rohwer to investigate a number of sinking incidents during World War II. Rohwer carried out a meticulous inquiry into the German submarines, which operated in that part of the Black Sea, and determined that no sign of German naval activity was present during the winter of 1942. Rohwer contended that the Germans decommissioned all submarines around the Straits after a dispute with the Turks over the accidental sinking of a Turkish boat. His research ultimately led him to Soviet naval archives, where he found the log of a Russian submarine SC (ShCh) 213 that had been operating in the Black Sea in early 1942. The log provided the coordinates for targets and a list of operations in the Black Sea. Among them was a listing for the sinking of a ship identified as the Struma. Nevertheless, many regarded Rohwer’s conclusions suspicious since he was in the pay of the German government, trying to pardon the Germans and accuse the Soviets.

The second piece of evidence came in the early 1980s from Yosef Govrin, an Israeli diplomat and scholar. Govrin was conducting doctoral research on Soviet-Israeli relations at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, when he came across G.I. Vaneyev’s Soviet Fleet in the Black Sea During the Great Patriotic War (Chernomortsy v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine). He noticed a reference to the Struma in Vaneyev’s book and he immediately recognized the ship’s name. Vaneyev’s book contained archival records from the Soviet military archives, which had hitherto been closed to public. In a rather dull language, Vaneyev listed every significant action taken by the Soviet navy in the

Black Sea. On his list was an entry detailing how a submarine identified the Struma at first light on February 24, surfaced and fired a single torpedo at the unaccompanied ship.

“On the morning of 2/24/1941 (sic 2/24/1942) the sub SC 213 under the command of Lieutenant D.M. Denezhko and Political Commissar A.G. Rodimatzav sighted the enemy frighter Struma, of 7,000 tons and no defenses. The submarine launched a torpedo from a distance of 1111.8 meters that found its target and sunk the ship. Sergeant Major V.D. Tchernov, until leader Sergeant G.G. Nusof, and torpedo operator Sailor I.M. Filtov showed courage during the operation.”

This clearly confirmed Jurgen Rohwer’s account that the Soviets had sunk the ship. But the records did not provide a reason for Captain Denezhko’s action (SC 213’s captain), aside from a few lines that indicated Danezhko and another senior officer had been given orders for sinking the ship. Yosef Govrin assumed that they might have mistaken it for a German military transport vessel. Perhaps the commander needed another kill; the log recorded three other boats sunk by the same sub in the area about that time. “The riddle is, what prompted the Soviets to torpedo that boat?” said Govrin, who spent the next four years as Israel’s ambassador to Romania. “This is the key question. Taking into consideration that the Soviets had their spies in Turkey, at that time, they probably knew it was a boat of immigrants. You didn’t even have to be a spy to know that this was a boat of immigrants.”

Despite his instrumental findings, Gorvin’s hypothesis that the Soviet captain had mistaken the ship for a military transport was false. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the opening of naval archives, Gennadi Kibardin, a Latvian researcher finally discovered

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538 Vaneyev, Chernomortsy, 78.
541 Ibid.
the key that solved the Struma puzzle and provided the motive. When Kibardin was examining documents about Soviet submarine tactics in World War II, he found Stalin’s secret order to destroy all neutral shipping in the Black Sea. It explained why the Struma was sunk and why the Çankaya had been sunk nearby.\footnote{542 “Doomed from the Start,” \textit{Naval History} (February 2004), 46-51.}

**Fruition of Russophobia in Turkey**

Until December 7, 1941, the Turkish government cherished hopes of a compromise between the British Empire and the Axis Powers. İnönü thought that this could be found so long as America did not join the other side, which would easily tip the scale. With the outbreak of the American-Japanese War after Pearl Harbor, İnönü realized that all doors to this option were now forever closed. The immediate consequence of this development was renewed emphasis on Turkey’s unalterable will to keep out of the war and not to be enlisted by any side for interests, which do not affect Turkey. Yet it seemed clear that the entente between the Anglo-American bloc and Soviet Russia determined the contours of Turkish foreign political thought. Turks knew too well from history that their national existence was intimately linked with the outcome of the German-Russian war. The fact that Britain decided to reorder Europe against Nazi terror with the help of Bolshevik Russia came as a severe shock. The joint Anglo-Soviet assurances to Turkey were regarded as a propagandist measure, in order to support Soviet Russia’s fight with every means.

In Ankara’s view, of the partners of the Anglo-American bloc, America was invincible. By the same token, the Axis Powers could secure a decision in their favor only by smashing the British world empire. Yet İnönü made it quite clear that the total
smashing of the British Empire was not the least in the interest of Turkey; Turkish interests required a balance of power in the Mediterranean, and not unlimited Italian domination, which might be the consequence of a total victory for the Axis.\footnote{BCA 030.10.0.0/239.613.7 (Foreign Ministry Report on Fascist Italy, January 12, 1942).} By January 1942, the other eventuality was a total victory for the Anglo-American bloc, with the help of Soviet Russia. This, in the Turkish opinion, would mean the complete dissolution of Europe, since neither Britain nor the U.S.A. would be in a position to check the Russians territorially, or to prevent the bolshevization of a starving, war-exhausted impoverished Europe.

Consequently, Turkish foreign policy makers were still concerned to find the possibility of a compromise, in the event of which they would undoubtedly be prepared at the proper moment to throw their military weight into the scales. İnönü and Saraçoğlu realized that if the Anglo-American bloc sought the decision in Europe, it could only find it on the Russian battlefields. Therein, however, existed a direct threat to the future of Turkey, and, therefore, developments in this theatre caused a great apprehension. Franz von Papen was acutely aware of these considerations and argued that “any attempt to induce Turkey prematurely to take up an active position, whether by demanding her participation in a war or demanding the right of transit for troops through her territory, would inevitably push Turkey over to the other side.”\footnote{GPT, 16 (Papen to Ribbentrop, January 2, 1942), 49-54.} In historical scholarship, the established narrative suggests that Germany put immense pressure on the Turkish government, particularly during 1942, trying to induce Turkey to join the Axis. Looking at the correspondence between Papen and Ribbentrop, it becomes evident that this was not the case. In 1942, Germany pursued a more cautious policy of winning Turkey’s
allegiance while respecting its neutrality, and was simply waiting for the right moment to ask for military cooperation.

The necessity of remaining aloof to the war theatre strongly dominated Turkish public opinion (with the exception of pro-Nazi Turanian factions); the government, in other words, could justify entry into the war only on the grounds of a violation of its sovereign rights. In the highly revealing talk Papen had with President İnönü in late December, the assurance was repeatedly intimated to him by the President that Turkey was strongly interested in the destruction of the Russian colossus, and that no propaganda or pressure from the Anglo-American side could induce Turkey to do the slightest thing against Nazi interests. Papen’s following conversations with Menemencioğlu and Şükru Saracoğlu again made it clear that they suspected a Russian threat. Papen told Ribbentrop that even if the Turkish Government were to receive no official confirmation of the territorial demands discussed between Eden and Stalin, “they would still assume that such demands conformed with the Bolsheviks’ actual intentions.”

Papen, therefore, suggested that it would be highly desirable if Germany shared all information confidentially with the Turkish government with regards to the Eden-Stalin talks. Papen also urged Ribbentrop “not to do anything which might put Turkey into a morally embarrassing position vis-à-vis its British alliance.” In order for Turkey’s trust for Nazi Germany to remain unshaken, he argued that the march of events “must leave the Turks free to chose for themselves the moment at which they become

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545 Ibid, 52.
546 Ibid, 53.
547 Ibid.
convinced that the maintenance of their alliance with Britain is incompatible with the safeguarding of their national future.”

In April 1942, mindful of Turkey’s growing concerns about the Anglo-Soviet alliance and Germany’s attempts to exacerbate Ankara’s anti-Soviet attitude, Anthony Eden sought to mediate Turco-Soviet relations once again. In his monthly meeting with the newly appointed Turkish Ambassador Rauf Orbay, Anthony Eden asked whether the arrival of spring increased Turkey’s anxiety with regards to the prolonged warfare at the eastern front. What he really meant was whether Turkey’s attitude would become more favorable to the Allied camp in light of Germany’s failure to bring Operation Barbarossa to a successful competition. Orbay, in his somewhat evasive reply, suggested that Turkey would seek to maintain its wait-and-see policy with composure, whatever the repercussions might be, and would uphold its previous commitments to Britain. Orbay said that the Turks had in their long history a variety of governments; “we had good Sultans, who were great administrators, we had mad Sultans, and we had drunken Sultans – but we had never had a government that had broken its word.”

The Ambassador mentioned Eden that the Great War had been a tragic and unnecessary interlude of the normal relationship between Great Britain and Turkey. Orbay expressed his firm belief that the reason behind Turkey’s integration to the opposing camp in 1914 was due to her fear and suspicion of Russia. “When Russia joined the Entente in 1905 and 1907,” Orbay claimed, “Turks immediately began to think that Britain would collaborate with Russia to

548 Ibid, 54.
549 Orbay replaced Tevfik Rüştü Aras on February 2, 1942; BCA 30.18.1.2/97.116.10 (Appointment of Rauf Orbay, February 2, 1942).
550 BCA 30.18.1.2/98.46.17 (Correspondence Regarding Anglo-Turkish Relations, April 17, 1942).
fulfill the latter’s long-cherished ambition of obtaining control of the Straits.”\textsuperscript{551} For Orbay, it was this suspicion sown then, which began the process by which Turkey was led to the side of Germany. The Ambassador added that Turks knew that they had made a terrible mistake, and it was inconceivable that they should repeat the same blunder now. Orbay told Eden that he himself had signed the Armistice at Moudros, and he knew then, while signing it, that it was better for Turkey than “if she had been victorious, because in that event she would have been quite literally a colony of Germany.”\textsuperscript{552}

In spite of Rauf Orbay’s mollifying statements, the arrival of spring surfaced a number of insecurities in Turkey, first and foremost being the increased Anglo-Russian collaboration. Mindful of this apprehension, Eden asked Orbay whether Ambassador Hugessen’s recent visit to Moscow had begun to revive in Turkey the old suspicions of Anglo-Russian collaboration. The Ambassador replied that it was necessary to distinguish between the Turkish Government and Turkish ruling classes and the masses of the people who were inevitably susceptible to a greater or less extent to German propaganda. As far as the former were concerned, Orbay said that they were not afraid of Bolshevik Russia, as they had been afraid of Tsarist Russia. He also added that the wisest thing Britain had done in this war was to give immediate recognition and friendship to the Bolsheviks as soon as Germany attacked them. But from the point of view of the Turkish people it was very important not to allow Axis propaganda too big a handle. For Orbay, the Turkish people generally had been worried much more by Sir Stafford Cripps’s speech at Bristol, when he referred to the necessity for giving Russia

\textsuperscript{551} FO 421/327 R2320/403/44 (Eden to Hugessen, April 10, 1942).
\textsuperscript{552} Ibid.
inviolable strategic frontiers, than they had been by Hugessen’s visit to Moscow.\textsuperscript{553} They were worried by the phrase because it immediately revived memories of the old Russian desire to control the Straits. They were not in the least worried by the idea of communist expansion. Neither he nor his government were afraid of Russian imperialist expansion, at any rate under the present regime. He was only afraid of it as a bogey for Axis propaganda.\textsuperscript{554}

Upon his meeting with Orbay, Eden asked the Soviet ambassador for a meeting on Turkish-Soviet relations.\textsuperscript{555} Ambassador Maisky had already been debriefed by Sir Alexander Cadogan, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, about Britain’s concern with regards to the ostensible Russophobia in Turkey, which became apparent after the ominous incidents of February.\textsuperscript{556} Eden asked Maisky to urge his government to do something to mitigate the danger of a closer partnership between Germany and Turkey. Maisky said that the Soviet Government admitted their mistake in the failed assassination attempt on Papen, and even reacted strongly to the Soviet press’ provocative coverage of the following trials. But he also added that the Turks had handled the matter most unfortunately; for Stalin, “it was inconceivable that the Turkish government found it impossible to pursue a hush-hush policy about this.”\textsuperscript{557} Far from doing so, the Turkish press had written up the whole matter; and this was what frustrated Stalin most. Maisky told Eden that originally Saraçoğlu gave Ambassador Vinogradov the impression that the whole thing would be handled judiciously, but, contrarily, the Turks did not pursue this

\textsuperscript{553} BCA 30.18.1.2/98.46.17 (Correspondence Regarding Anglo-Turkish Relations, April 17, 1942).
\textsuperscript{554} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{555} FO 421/327 R2730/1266/44 (Eden to Sir A. Clark Kerr, April 24, 1942).
\textsuperscript{556} Oleg A. Rjeshevskiy, Stalin i Cherchill: Vstrechi, Besedi, Diskussii, 1941-1945 (Moscow, 2004), 15.
\textsuperscript{557} Rjeshevskiy, Stalin i Cherchill, 28.
course, but had indulged in much political criticism directed against the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{558} Maisky reminded Eden that only Germany could gain from tactics of this kind, and in the circumstances his government maintained that it was natural that their press had reacted. Bearing in mind the fact that the Soviet Union was behind the assassination, it is hard to imagine anyone with a thicker skin than Maisky, who also complained that Britain’s ambassador in Ankara, Sir Hugessen, had been too pro-Turkish in his attitude. In speaking to Soviet Ambassador in Ankara, Vinogradov, Hugessen appeared to accept the Turkish thesis entirely, and the Soviet ambassador had been somewhat put out when Saraçoğlu told him that he had no cause to complain of the Turkish press, since Hugessen thought its attitude perfectly fair.

Following Stalin’s blunders in Turkey during the winter of 1942, Anthony Eden probably did everything in his capacity to bridge the widening gap in Turkish-Soviet relations. In June 1942, Eden met with Orbay numerous times with hopes of convincing the Turkish government that Turkey’s suspicions regarding the Soviet Union had largely been the work of Nazi propagandists. Eden reminded Orbay time and again that the German campaign seemed to fall into two parts: (1) Rumors spread by the Germans that the Soviet Government intended to make a separate peace treaty with Germany. This was obviously intended to sow suspicion between Turkey and the Soviet Union; and (2) German offers to supply Turkey with industrial equipment of various sorts, and particularly a recent offer of a credit to enable Turkey to buy war material, including tanks from Germany.\textsuperscript{559} “As an ally,” Eden told Orbay, “England felt justified in putting

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{558} Ibid, 35.
\item \textsuperscript{559} FO 421/327 R3717/1429/G (Eden to Hugessen, June 4, 1942).
\end{itemize}
the Turkish government on their guard against the German maneuvers.”

Eden also reminded Orbay that Great Britain had never asked Turkey to take an active part in the war, but they had looked to Turkey to serve as a sort of bulwark, “a protective pad,” against German penetration in the Middle East. In other words, as opposed to the established historical narrative, England also did not ask for Turkey’s military cooperation in 1942. Neither Germany nor Britain desired to see Turkey as a belligerent power that year.

As late as August 1942, the Turkish General Staff still believed that the capture of Stalingrad would be the copingstone of German operations in 1942. The solution of the Russian problem, in Asim Gündüz’s estimation, was to push forward northward from Stalingrad in order to cut the railway line between Kuibyshev and Moscow. Gündüz told Ribbentrop that the central and the northern Russian army groups would then have only one railway at their disposal, which was bound to lead to the collapse of these forces. That the Russians were for three weeks throwing their strategically reserves into a hopeless divertive action against the German forces in the central and northern sectors was a capital strategic error. In comparison with the complete liquidation of the Russian forces in the central and northern sectors by an operation against Kuibyshev, the operation in the Caucasus was only of secondary importance. In view of this situation, the General Staff was convinced that by the end of this year Germany will have so weakened the Russians that they will no longer count as a decisive factor in this war.

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560 Ibid.
561 Ibid.
562 GPT, 26 (Papen to Ribbentrop, August 26, 1942), 82-86.
563 Ibid.
On July 8, 1942, the unexpected death of Prime Minister Refik Saydam, who was succeeded by Şükrü Saraçoğlu – a professedly pro-British statesman – caused considerable anxiety in Germany. Franz von Papen paid his first official visit to the new prime minister in late August.\textsuperscript{564} In the course of their conversation, which touched upon the general situation in Turkey, Papen probed into Saraçoğlu’s views on the Russian problem. The prime minister said that he would like to reply “both as a Turk and as Prime Minister.”\textsuperscript{565} As a Turk, he “yearned for destruction of Russia, which would be an epoch-making deed on the part of the Fuhrer, and which had been the dream of the Turkish people for centuries.”\textsuperscript{566} No Turk, not even Hüseyin Cahid Yalçın who wrote for the British, could think differently, argued Saraçoğlu.

Saraçoğlu also told Papen that Germans could solve the Russian problem only if they rescued the Russified Turkic national minority regions from Russian influence once and for all, set them on their own feet, and educated them to be willing collaborators of the Axis and foes of Slavdom. Saraçoğlu was aware that the Germans had been entertaining such plans but did not know what the Fuhrer had decided regarding the future constitution of the minority regions. For Saraçoğlu, the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of these regions belonged to the Turkish race, and “Turkey therefore had a legitimate interest in the settlement of this question.”\textsuperscript{567} Saraçoğlu was of the opinion – and Papen fully shared it – that a lasting solution of the Russian problem would only be possible if the Germans enlisted the active co-operation of the minorities in the various parts of the Soviet Union, and if they were educated in a feeling of independence,

\textsuperscript{564} GPT, 27 (Papen to Ribbentrop, August 27, 1942), 87-94.
\textsuperscript{565} BCA 30.1.0.0/11.63.2 (Şükrü Saraçoğlu’s Parliamentary Address on Turco-German Relations, August 25, 1942).
\textsuperscript{566} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{567} Ibid.
“naturally within the framework of German spiritual, economic and military leadership.” The question of emancipating Soviet citizens of Turkic ethnicity to create Turkish satellite states (in Crimea, Azerbaijan, and Turkestan) that would be favorably disposed to Germany, had been the backbone of Hitler’s post-war settlement plans.

Ibid.
V. TURKS, TATARS, and GERMANS

In an age perplexed by nationalist fervor, the Soviet regime managed to consolidate its power over the world’s largest multi-ethnic, multi-confessional entity. Contemporary scholarship on Soviet nationalities has arrived at a consensus that sometime in the late-1930s the “Great Russian” image reemerged in the Bolshevik periphery. As the new Soviet constitution was promulgated in 1936, declaring the achievement of socialism and legal categories of the “enemies of the people,” Russianness was promoted to a position of *primus inter pares.*\(^{569}\) Between 1937 and 1939, Stalin focused on peoples of the border regions, which were regarded as more susceptible to provocation by their neighboring ethnic brothers and sisters, and systematically deported nationality groups *en masse.* This was a project to be decisively completed once the German occupation was over.

At times during the Nazi invasion, the fate of the USSR seemed far from clear. The Soviets ultimately emerged triumphant from their greatest challenge as a union. Of the thirty million Soviet soldiers who served in the Red Army during the Second World War, eight million were non-Russians. Behind the frontlines, urban life in virtually every region was transformed by rapid mobilization and mounting war industries

\(^{569}\) One of the major debates among scholars of Soviet nationalities is on how socialist nationalism was perceived in the periphery. Terry Martin, for instance, claims that, in its early phase, the Soviet program was to pursue an indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) program to promote local leadership in the periphery. But their plans had failed to address the question of representation at the federal center, which, for Martin, constituted the main reason why this policy faded into oblivion. In Crimea, for instance, the party sought to promote guidelines for progression through the cohabitation of ethnic culture and nationalism with a socialist content. But, this policy fell at odds with the industrial and technical elite in the republics, which remained mostly Russian, who were also aggravated by the loss of their privileges. Therefore, Martin further suggests, the events of the 1930s reflected a “Great Retreat” from Lenin’s “brotherhood of nations” to Stalin’s “friendship of nations.” Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).
unprecedented in Russian history. While Stalinist cultural reforms, collectivization and industrialization had already begun to shape people’s lives since the 1930s, it was during the Great Patriotic War that the Soviet citizens identified themselves with the regime under a different rubric.\textsuperscript{570} At this juncture, some scholars argue that the replacement of internal class enemies (i.e. kulaks, the bourgeoisie) with more vivid and external ones (fascists) provided the Soviet leadership with an opportunity to cement a stronger socialist union between peoples of various ethnic and confessional backgrounds.\textsuperscript{571} This is not to suggest that the war had just provided an enemy to fight against. Through bringing men and women of non-Russian peoples into factories, and military units, the Second World War had put to test the paradoxical relationship between traditional symbols of national identities and a superimposed socialist ideology.

Peoples of the so-called Ural-Altaic race were no exception; Tatars, Kalmyks, Buryats, and Kazakhs were asked to fulfill the brotherhood of nations and the collective socialist ideal by wearing the Red Army uniform, or, in the Nazi occupied zones, by joining the underground movements and partisan groups. What the war had changed for


\textsuperscript{571}Bruce Grant claims that the Second World War “proved to be a turning point for native peoples in the Soviet world.” (Grant, \textit{Soviet House of Culture} 108) Likewise, Slezkine argues that the War helped Moscow integrate non-Russians into the Soviet designs. (Slezkine, \textit{Arctic Mirrors}, 303) In a similar vein, Amir Weiner’s seminal \textit{Making Sense of War} focuses on the Vinnytsia region of Western Ukraine, and demonstrates how World War II determined the worldview of the political elite, ordinary people as well as “the fate of the Bolshevik Revolution.” (Weiner, \textit{Making Sense of War}, 16). Weiner breaks with traditional scholarship on Russian history in several respects. First, he situates the War and its ramifications, not in one of the major capitals in the Soviet Union but in a peripheral region. By looking at different vectors of Soviet war administration at the local level, he argues that the periphery determines the core and not vice versa. Those who are familiar with Peter Holquist’s \textit{Making War, Forging Revolution} will notice that this has become a popular approach in recent historiography. Weiner convincingly demonstrates how this seemingly trivial place has broader implications for the general Soviet experience of the Great Fatherland War.
the Turkic peoples was the criteria on which their allegiance had previously been measured. With the arrival of war, especially for those regions under Nazi occupation, people’s loyalty was now determined by the extent of their support for resistance. Each of these groups experienced the War differently; some were occupied, some were not; some collaborated some did not. Their divergent interests and unique historical ties with Turkey point out the need for a more extensive research at the local level about the fate of Soviet nationalism in the Nazi occupied Turkic realms.

Perhaps no part of the USSR featured a broader range of possible loyalties and choices for self-identification than did the Crimean ASSR. Within the pantheon of myths that endowed the Tatar foundation narrative with legitimacy and historical relevance, the Great Patriotic War and Stalin’s subsequent deportations loomed large. If one seeks to re-conceptualize the Crimean Tatars’ experience of World War II not as a post-revolutionary (Bolshevik) addendum, but as a continuum of the Jadidist nationalist agenda, it becomes possible to see the War as the defining moment for the Crimean Tatars (for the Soviets, too, though for mutually exclusive reasons and purposes). In other words, within the process of creating a new Soviet political elite during World War II by means of a retreat from korenizatsia and by mass deportations, Tatar nationalists forged their own foundation narrative.

One important overlooked aspect of Stalin’s wartime policy in Crimea was the role of Pan-Turkists, who found a reinvigorated zeal in the Tatar cause and facilitated the Tatar-Nazi collaboration. Precisely for this reason, the high rate of collaboration with the

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572 Amir Weiner makes a similar argument for the Russian side of the story. The author suggests; “Juxtaposed against other heroic tales, World War II superseded other foundational myths; such as the civil war and the collectivization of the countryside, which were increasingly viewed as distant, irrelevant, and in some cases, too controversial because of their traumatic legacy. (Weiner, Making Sense of War, 8.)
Nazis and Turks among the Crimean Tatars brings to mind several intriguing questions about Russo-Turkish relations: First of all, one needs to see the extent of Nazi collaboration in Crimea and whether it was the Turkish government (as the Soviets claimed) or Pan Turkist groups in Turkey who collaborated with the Tatars in a vehemently anti-Soviet campaign. Secondly, if Turkish nationalist circles – governmental or otherwise – had indeed entertained ideas of sponsoring a free Crimean Tatar republic, what was the role of the Nazi Germany in bolstering their hopes for the so-called “grand scheme of Soviet encirclement”? Thirdly, what were the public consequences of Nazi Germany’s efforts to orchestrate nationalist and fascist circles in Turkey? Providing accurate answers to all of these is difficult but vital to understanding not only Stalin’s policy in Crimea but also the post-war Soviet attitude towards Turkey and Stalin’s prosecutorial rhetoric towards Ankara with regards to the Crimean problem.

**Collaboration and Purges in the Crimean ASSR**

Perhaps the first inclusive Soviet study on collaboration and purges in Crimea was P.N. Nadinskii’s *Ocherki po istorii kryma*, which was published in 1951, covering the entire history of the peninsula and its inhabitants in four volumes. The last volume that came out in 1967 deals with the period from 1939 to 1950, focusing exclusively on “Crimea under German Occupation.” Yet, the author hardly goes beyond lengthy descriptions of the difficult circumstances, “under which most Soviet citizens bravely fought to survive.” There is only a single passage that briefly mentions collaboration: “Among the Tatar bourgeois nationalists, former kulaks and other anti-Soviet elements,

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574 Ibid.
the occupying forces found people to cooperate while the German soldiers, policemen and other Hitlerites made a mockery out of the national and patriotic feelings of our people."575 The author’s long narrative reflects solely on the German destruction of the Crimean infrastructure. Nadinskii suggests that the German occupiers changed the names of the cities “so that nothing was left of the glorious traditions of the “Russian” people. The street signs in Akmescit (Simferopol) which mirrored the achievements of 1917 were renamed on the spirit that was alien to our people, such as Hobt Straße or Park Straße.”576 Nadinskii repeatedly states how the remaining Soviet forces, loyalists, and partisans died heroically. Nowhere in the lengthy passages on post-war Crimea does he mention the deportations.

Deportations as a subject of serious historical research became available only after the strict censorship laws had been revoked during glasnost. The first major attempt to explore the history of Crimea in the Great Patriotic War is A.M. Basov’s Krym v Velikoi otechestvennoi voine.577 Basov starts off by saying that Crimea under Nazi occupation remains a subject of ideological war between Soviet and bourgeois historiographies in many aspects. He suggests that the Nazis carried out a more sophisticated political agenda in Crimea than other regions of occupation: “They saw an ongoing distrust between Moscow and the representatives of different nationalities. Naturally, they wanted to destroy some and use others for their purposes. They counted

575 Ibid, 42.
576 Ibid, 46.
on mainly Turks and Tatars, and other groups such as ethnic Germans, Kalmyks and Roma. Thus, Crimea became a base for their spy network.\textsuperscript{578}

According to Basov, the representatives of the German central command in Crimea believed that of the 12 million inhabitants of the Caucasus, Georgians, Armenians and other Christian groups would not collaborate with the Germans. Meanwhile, the 18 million inhabitants of Turkic heritage and Muslim faith were categorized as anti-Soviet elements. “Hence,” the author concludes, “the Nazis naturally turned to ethnic Germans, Turks and Tatars.”\textsuperscript{579} A particularly interesting passage describes prominent Tatar intellectuals’ efforts in setting up a provisional government with the support of Turks and Germans: “This bourgeois nationalist committee would serve the Nazis with a clear-cut program: the creation of an army, destruction of Communist activities and the reopening of mosques. By and large, anyone who suffered from Stalin’s terror helped the Germans. From their program it was clear that they not only tried to destroy individual belief in socialism but also strived to realize their nationalist goals beginning with the opening of Quran courses.”\textsuperscript{580} Here, Basov equates religion with national identity and claims that it came second after such primary goals as defeating the Russian state. Basov’s account is much different than its predecessors in two regards. First, he solely blames it on the Germans for abusing the Muslim Committee and tries to define (if not justify) people’s rationale when they collaborated. Secondly, the author claims that many Tatars were included in the German creation “against their will, by force.”\textsuperscript{581}

\textsuperscript{578} Ibid, 207.
\textsuperscript{579} Ibid, 208.
\textsuperscript{580} Ibid, 209.
\textsuperscript{581} Ibid, 210.
A more recent publication by Gulnara Bekirova, demonstrates the gradual emancipation of deportations as a historical subject in Russian scholarship. Bekirova’s Krymskotatarskaia problema provides a much different alternative to the collaboration narrative. “Collaboration among the Crimean Tatars undoubtedly occurred,” claims Bekirova, “just as it occurred among representatives of other peoples and among any nation whose territory was occupied by the enemy.” But there is also a wealth of evidence regarding heroic acts by the Crimeans, and among them, Bekirova assumes, there were Crimean Tatars: “Therefore acts of collaboration, and in this we are deeply convinced, cannot in any way serve as justification for the criminal decisions of the Soviet leadership about the deportation of innocent peoples and entire populations.”

The author points to the fact that “the fulfillment of this project brought uncountable tragedies to millions of people who were guilty of nothing.”

As far as Western scholarship is concerned, until the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was hardly any interest about the broader implications of purges on the fate of Soviet nationalism or on Stalin’s foreign policy. Stalin’s deportation of large nationality groups was simply taken to represent an imperial homogenization policy. The general idea was that “the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has never ceased in its efforts to undermine those historical nations within its orbit which have a rich heritage of culture and civilization.” Hence, the general focus was on the experience of what Stalin called “enemy nations.” Subsequent publications that appeared in Western libraries during the Cold War offered similar and highly critical accounts of the Soviet State. Despite the fact

583 Ibid, 24.
584 Ibid, 25.
585 Deker and Lebed, Genocide in the USSR, 63.
that Soviet nationalism indeed resulted in an unprecedented and unnecessary number of deaths, it is impossible to get a clear picture out of these publications as to how the Communist Party was perceived in the local administrative level or why the local Tatars suddenly became “traitors.”

Addressing the State Defense Committee (GKO) in a letter dated May 1, 1944; Beria outlined who those traitors were and described their operations to eradicate all Nazi collaborators from Crimea. This was an addendum to an earlier document that had been sent by the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) on 25 April, when the operational forces of NKVD-NKGB-Smersh arrested “4206 representatives of the anti-Soviet element out of which 430 spies have been exposed.” Beria’s letter revealed further arrests in the follow-up operations of the NKVD troops securing the rear from the

586 Three notable exceptions are Pavel Polian, Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003); Norman Naimark, Fires of Hatred (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 85-107 and Greta Lynn Uehling, Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars’ Deportation and Return (New York: Palgrave, 2004) --- Pavel Polian’s Against Their Will provides a fascinating account of forced migrations and resettlement (pereselejite) not only from the experience of those who suffered, but also from the viewpoint of the Soviet State. Norman Naimark’s Fires of Hatred briefly touches on the Crimean Tatar Deportations as part of a broader history of ethnic cleansing in the Twentieth Century Europe. In his short analysis, Naimark argues that the Soviet leadership regarded Crimean Tatars as a people too rigidly “attracted to their cultures, mores, and histories to become effective Soviet nationalities. They were also small enough to be moved en masse without being missed as the critical members of the labor force or as reliable masters of contiguous territory.” Greta Lynn Uehling’s Beyond Memory, on the other hand, offers the first ethnographic exploration of the deportees. Although not from a strictly historical perspective, Uehling seeks to unveil Tatars’ fifty yearlong desire for repatriation and their willingness to die for a collective national identity.

587 An inclusive primary source on the subject is the recently published Lubianka, which brings light into the actual decision making process of the Gosudarstvennyi komitet oborony (GKO) regarding wartime deportations. Lubianka is the last of a three volume series that came out in 2006 from the Mezdunarodnyi Fon (“Demokratia” (MFD). Overall, the MFD series investigate Stalin’s dictatorial leadership and the establishment of Soviet punitive system, through which Stalin consolidated his regime. The third volume offers a collection of 337 documents on the 1939-1946 period gathered from the archives of the Soviet government and the Communist Party organs. A particularly intriguing section in this book is the “Special Correspondence between Beria, Stalin, Molotov, and Malenkov” about the work of the operational Chekist group in their purge of anti-Soviet elements from the Crimean ASSR. See V. N. Khaustov and V.P. Naumov, Lubianka: Stalin i NKVD-NKGB-GUKR “Smersh” 1939 – Mart 1946 (Moscow: MFD, 2006), 423-479.

10th to the 27th of April, when 5115 people were apprehended. Among the number of arrested were “55 agents of the German Reconnaissance, 266 traitors of the motherland and 363 persons engaged in aiding and abetting the enemy.”

Looking at Beria’s letters, it would be fair to suggest that in its early stages NKVD operations particularly targeted organized Turkic and Muslim groups. Beria noted that among the total number of arrests, 449 were members of the Muslim Committee. Led by Abbas Ismailov and Batal Batalov, this organization carried out active pro-Fascist propaganda among the Tatar youth, gathered volunteer groups and recruited personnel for various cadres of the future Tatar Republic. Beria further asserted that almost every Muslim committee was subsidized by the Germans and carried a net of spying work. After the defeat of the German army in Stalingrad, for instance, “the Tatar Muslim committee gathered 1 million rubles from Turkey alone for aiding the Germans.” They propagated the banner “Crimea only for Tatars” and “spread rumors about the unification of Crimea to Turkey after the War.”

Likewise, Beria noted that the Germans founded a Tatar National Centre, representatives of which came from Turkey for making acquaintance of the Crimean youth. One particular Stanov was arrested by the Partisan brigade and apparently confessed that “in 1943 he was met by the SD [Sicherheitsdienst] for spy work and received the task of spreading espionage agents and creating a local institution of spies.” While Beria’s initial correspondence with NKO between early April and late May deals almost exclusively with the arrests of Muslim Tatars, by May 19, 1944, he was

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589 Ibid, 424.
590 Ibid, 427.
591 Ibid.
592 Ibid, 429.
convinced that other nationalities residing in Crimea should be deported as well; the list included Bulgarians, Greeks, and Armenians.\textsuperscript{593} Aside from the deportation of Crimean Tatars from their homeland, upon Beria’s order, NKVD carried out the formidable task of identifying and isolating all anti-Soviet elements. The investigation of forested regions not only targeted the apprehension of Crimean Tatars who were hiding from deportation but also other deserting and bandit elements including “12,075 Bulgars, 14,300 Greeks, and 9,919 Armenians.”\textsuperscript{594} Beria’s subsequent letters in Lubyanka include further information about where these people live and how exactly they collaborated during the Nazi occupation.

Several letters were exchanged between Beria and Stalin, showing that a significant portion of the Tatar populace was believed to have actively participated in the campaign for supplying the German army with bread, food, medicine, and arms.\textsuperscript{595} The Tatars were accused of cooperating with the Germans in an attempt to identify and arrest soldiers of the Red Army and Soviet partisans. In return for the help they had given to the Germans, they received a so-called “certificate of security” (ohrania svidetelstvo) whereby the identity and property of the collaborators were protected by the German army. The violation of ohrania svidetelstvo could result in execution. Aside from Tatars, the Greeks and Bulgarians, who lived primarily in coastal regions, were believed to have collaborated with the German forces through mutual trade and transportation of goods. Finally, the Armenian national committees “with the support of new immigrants that arrived from Berlin and Istanbul” were reported to have actively participated in an

\textsuperscript{593} Ibid, 430.

\textsuperscript{594} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{595} The one thing NKVD letters failed to describe was why they became “traitors of the motherland.” Despite the details with which NKVD folders enriched our understanding of the Soviet purges, they hardly tell us why the Soviet nationality scheme became stagnant in Crimea.
“independent Armenia propaganda.” In conclusion, Beria noted, “the NKVD of USSR considers it desirable to carry out the deportation from the territory of Crimea, all Tatars, Bulgarians, all Greeks and all Armenians.” Further evidence from these letters shows that Beria’s instructions were immediately seconded by the NKO and put into action.

By July 4, 1944, the deportation from Crimea of all peoples including Tatars, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Armenians had been completed: “In total 225,009 people were deported; among those the numbers were the following: 183,155 Tatars; 12,422 Bulgarians; 15,040 Greeks; 9,621 Armenians; 1,119 Germans; 3,652 other nationalities.” All Tatars were transported to the following places: “in the regions of the Uzbek SSR 151,604 people; in the regions of the RSFSR, in accordance with the decree of the GOKO May 21, 1944, 31,551 people...The rest [were] on their way to the Bashkir ASSR, Mariyskii SSR, Kemerovskii, Molotovskii, Sverdlovskii, Kirovskii oblasts of the RSFSR and the Gruiievskii ASSR of the Kazak SSR.” A significant portion of the resettled peoples (spetspereselentsy) that were capable of work were incorporated into work in agriculture in kolkhozes and sovkhozes as well as in lumber industry and other relevant industries.

By 1945, the entire Crimean ASSR was “emancipated” from the Nazi menace. An important role in Stalin’s decision to deport them was obviously played by the bitterness that existed between Soviet and Crimean officers since the latter had surrendered to the Germans en masse in 1941. On June 30, 1945, the Crimean ASSR

596 Ibid, 431.
597 Ibid.
598 Ibid, 432-435.
599 The recently published Sovietskiaia povsednevnost’ i Mosovoia soznaniye is a splendid source that looks at the dissolution of the Crimean ASSR in 1945 and draw similarities between other deportations under Stalin.
was liquidated as an administrated unit and its territory was incorporated into the RSFSR and later awarded to the Ukrainian SSR. Crimean names of all Ulusi and their centers were replaced by Russian ones. Soon after the deportations, the former Deputy Representative of the Sovnarkom of the Crimean ASSR wrote a personal letter to Stalin about the excessive measures taken against their nation. This is one of the many letters sent by the local authorities of various ASSRs to Moscow:

The deportation of the Crimean Tatars was completely unexpected for most us. We considered it necessary to purge the Crimean lands of all bastards (svoloshi) since we knew exactly then the Tatars would be liberated. Yet, it is unclear to us why you decided to deport all Crimean Tatars including the 100,000 innocent people. Surely, it was possible to deport and send to punitive labor the ten to fifteen thousand guilty ones who were associated with banditry and German fascism. In my opinion, the absolute majority of Tatars who turned out to be traitors of their rodina, were not persuaded by ideas but their betrayal resulted from their backwardness and the fact that they were subject to provocation and agitation by the Germans. Surely there were mistakes by our bureau too but it is about time to get over it. Autonomy needs to be granted back so that the entire Tatar narod can wash itself with honest labor and get rid of the stain of betrayal. The burden of guilt for honest Tatars should not be so heavy just because among us there were bastards.

Crimean Tatars were trying to warn Stalin that such a collective deportation may give grounds for “elements of nationalism in the future, in the East.” Aside from the fascinating clues on what was to come after 1991, this succinct document conjures up virtually every aspect of Stalin’s deportations, which targeted many other oblasts and autonomous republics. It provides the readers with exactly how the USSR was perceived at the local level and why a mutually enforcing suspicion emerged between the center and the periphery after the War. As the NKVD letters of correspondence demonstrate, the

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600 Sovietskaia Povednevnost’ i Mosovoia Soznaniye (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003), 410-420.
601 Ibid, 420.
602 Ibid.
Soviet leadership was convinced that the Crimean Tatars would be easily assimilated into the Kazakh and Uzbek worlds, while their homelands would be renamed, given a new history, and absorbed by other, ostensibly more reliable, nations. But the reality could not be farther from Beria’s assessment. Crimean Tatars proved to be strongly attached to their ethnic and confessional identities for half a century and forged their own foundation narrative, more popularly known as Sürgün (Exile).

The Turkish-Tatar Connection

Ever since the annexation of Crimea by Catherine II, Tatars had developed deep-rooted anti-Slavic sentiments and a great desire for independence. Inspired by Ismail Gaspirali’s ideas, and sponsored by the late Ottoman state, their desire for independence came close to realization during the short-lived Tatar National Parliament (Kurultay) between 1917 and 1920. But after the defeat of General Wrangel by Nestor Makhno and the closure of Tatar National Parliament by the Red Army, plans for an independent Crimean state had been put on the shelf for two decades. The return of the German soldier in 1941 rekindled hopes not only in Crimea but also in Turkey as well, particularly amongst the pan-Turkists and Tatar émigré community.

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603 For such details see: GARF f.9401, op.2 (various dela).
604 Three insightful works on Crimean Tatar nationalism are: Brian Glyn Williams, The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation (Boston: Brill, 2001); Hakan Kırımlı, National Movements and National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars (New York: Brill, 1996); and Edward A. Allworth, et. al., The Tatars of Crimea: Return to Homeland (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) --- Despite their different agendas, in all three of these accounts, subjugating Crimean Tatar nationalism appears as an exceptionally daunting task for both Imperial Russian, and Soviet policy makers. Of particular interest is how these works portray Crimean Tatars as a major reason behind the failure of Soviet korenizatsiia. Crimea was indeed a place where korenizatsiia became, what Terry Martin calls “a hole in the middle.”
The seizure of Crimea from the Ottoman Empire had had an equally abysmal impact on the Turkish public psyche, which continued to haunt Russo-Turkish relations until the end of the First World War. Turkish nationalists of the late Ottoman Empire dreamed of taking from Russia that part of its territory, which was settled by Turkic speaking peoples. The champion of the Pan Turkist movement during World War I was the Ottoman War Minister Enver Pasha – a semi-mythologized, wiry little figure, who could easily be mistaken for a miniature Napoleon or Kornilov in his flamboyant uniform. An architect of the Turco-German alliance, Enver was forced to resign after the Mudros Armistice in October 1918, and escaped into exile in Germany and later in Russia.

In the summer of 1921, with the Turkish War of Independence in full swing, Enver decided to return to Anatolia and fight the Greeks. Yet, Mustafa Kemal was determined to prevent Enver’s return. Having severed his ties to the Committee of Union and Progress and explicitly rejected pan-Turkic ideas, Mustafa Kemal sought to cleanse the country off from all the wrongdoings and debauchery, for which he held Enver responsible. In the midst of the Russian Civil War, Enver Pasha went back to Moscow and managed to deceive the Soviets into thinking that he was yet another pro-Bolshevik Jadidist. In November 1921, Lenin sent Enver Pasha to Bukhara in the Turkestan ASSR to help suppress an uprising against the Bolshevik regime. Instead, Enver defected to the Basmachi side, armed the Mlada Turki and organized a series of counter offensives, but ultimately failed to ignite the Pan Turkist movement he hoped for, and died in 1922.605

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605 A useful primary source on Enver’s final days in Russia is a biography written by his aide, Yaver Suphi. See: Yaver Suphi Bey, Enver Paşa’nın Son Günleri (İstanbul: Çatı Kitapları, 2007).
While most Pan-Turkists of Enver Pasha’s generation used German imperialism to incite expansionist feelings in Turkey, neither the German *Weltanschauung* nor pan-Turkic ideas played a noticeable role in the ideological life of the Turkish Republic during the presidency of Kemal Ataturk. Nevertheless, Kemalist principles of non-adventurism changed radically in the years of the Second World War, when the reinvigorated Pan-Turkic organizations promulgated propaganda and support of a close political and military relationship with Germany, the seizure of Soviet territories, and the liberation of their brothers including Azeris, Tatars, Uzbeks, Kirgiz, Kazaks, and Turkmens. Turkey’s rapprochement with Nazi Germany between 1941 and 1943 had radical social consequences from within. Friendly relations with Germany provided pro-Nazi groups in Turkey with new outlets to express themselves. On the initiative of famous Pan-Turkists – including General Erkelet, Nuri Pasha (brother of Enver Pasha), and the retired General İhsan Sabis – a series of anti-Soviet seminars were held in Istanbul and a special anti-Soviet propaganda coordination center was established.

Looking at the Turkish newspapers’ headlines during this period, it is easy to see why the Soviet officials gained the impression that Turks were reverting back to their imperial policy of aggression against the Russians. Most Turkish daily papers spared a substantial space for readers’ comments and public forums, which saw opinions from all sorts of ideologies, including those supporting fascist plans to annihilate the Soviet Union. The Turkish government, however, was not sympathetic to the fascist ideology nor did it encourage Pan-Turkist circles. Between June 1941 and August 1943, a period

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606 Soviet historians also seem to acknowledge this fact. Belinkov and Vasil'ev, *O Turetskom "Neitralitete"*, 179.
607 Moiseev, “SSSR i Tursiia,” 182.
608 *Cumhuriyet*, November 14, 1941.
when the Turkish government was allegedly leaning towards fascism, İnönü shut down such pro-German papers as *Vatan* (9 times), *Tasvir-i Efkar* (8 times), *Yeni Sabah* (3 times), *Akbaba* (4 times) and *Son Posta* (4 times), as well as numerous other local papers, each closure lasting from three months to nine months. These were called “publications that fundamentally opposed the Kemalist ideology, and the basic principles on which the Republic was established.” In other words, the Turkish government itself sought to curb rather then sponsor anti-Soviet or pro-German views as much as they did Pan-Turkist or pro-Communist ones.

Soviet historians further claim that “in the aftermath of the [Second World] war, Turkish intellectuals also attempted to downplay the significance of war-time Pan-Turkist ideology and their pro-Nazi tendencies on our relations.” This claim is simply unwarranted. Turkish scholars wrote extensively on the wartime surge of Crimean Tatar migrations and their role in reviving Pan-Turkism in Turkey. Türkkaya Ataöv, for instance, argued that there were people “attracted by the ideas of Pan-Turkism and these were mostly peoples of Turco-Tatar origin.” But the situation was strictly limited to immigrant and ultra-nationalists elements, rather than a government sponsored policy as the Soviets claimed. This was so much the case that, when, for instance, Berlin Academy of Sciences sent an official invitation to Professor Zeki Velidi Togan of Istanbul University in June 1942 to lead an international symposium on Turcology as a keynote speaker, the Turkish Foreign Ministry intervened and kindly refused the offer on Togan’s behalf “for administrative reasons.” Togan was a prominent pan-Turkist from Turkestan and a leader of the Bahkir liberation movement in 1919-1920, who later served as a

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610 Moiseev, “SSSR i Turtsiia,” 179.
611 Ataöv, 2. Dünya Savaşı, 152.
philologist and historian at Bonn and Göttingen Universities before migrating to Istanbul in the early 1930s.\textsuperscript{612}

Today, the few surviving memoirs of those active participants of the Crimean Tatar Independence Movement are in the possession of Turkish public libraries in İstanbul, Eskişehir, Konya, and Ankara. Among the accessible sources on the 1941-1944 interregnum in Crimea, two deserve particular attention: \textit{The Memoirs of Müstecip Ülküşal} and \textit{Azat Kırım} (a bi-weekly newspaper published in Simferopol between 1941 and 1944). Müstecip Ülküşal’s memoirs are particularly helpful in understanding the circumstances under which Crimean Tatars and Turkish nationalists collaborated with the Nazis.\textsuperscript{613}

Like most Tatar intellectuals who fled Crimea in 1920, Müstecip Ülküşal moved to Istanbul with his family. On June 22, 1941, the day Hitler unleashed Operation Barbarossa, Ülküşal was about to finish his judicial clerkship at the central courthouse in Ankara. Ülküşal’s memoirs begin at this juncture, a week after the invasion, when he received a letter from Cafer Seyitahmet Kırımer, who had previously served as Foreign Minister during the short lived \textit{Kurultay} between 1917 and 1919. When Kırımer became the de-facto leader of the Tatar Independence Movement, he met Ülküşal and the two worked closely throughout the 1930s, publishing the Turkish nationalist periodical \textit{Emel} (Desire). In his letter, Kırımer urged Ülküşal to join him in his visit to Berlin and help him “negotiate the future of Crimea with the Germans.” Ülküşal devotes a substantial space for their incipient plans and heated dialogues during a lengthy train ride from Istanbul to Berlin. In his second publication on the subject, \textit{Kırım Türk-Tatarları} (Turco-

\textsuperscript{612} BCA 030.10/229.542.9 (Foreign Ministry to the German Embassy, June, 30, 1942).
\textsuperscript{613} Müstecip Ülküşal, \textit{İkinci Dünya Savaşında 1941-1942 Berlin Hattaları ve Kırm'ın Kurtuluş Davası} (İstanbul: Kurtuluş Matbaası, 1976), 20.

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Tatars of Crimea), he comes back to this particular episode, which “set the grounds for most post-war Turco-Tatar periodicals, including the reintroduction of Emel in the 1960s, which was circulated in Istanbul.”

The latter half of his memoirs consists of numerous meetings with the German authorities at the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories (Reichministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete). The most striking aspect of Müstecip Bey’s encounters with Ostministerium officials was his deep frustration with the Nazi ideology, which excluded Crimea from the civil jurisdiction of Reichskommissariat Ukraine. Ülküsal clearly understood that he was not dealing with “the same Germans who allied with their Ataman [Tatar national leader] against the Bolsheviks in 1918.”

In the first weeks of the occupation, the Nazi forces had set up “14 Tatar battalions (4000 soldiers) to hunt down the Soviets hiding in the mountains… while the villagers welcomed the German soldiers, providing them with food and shelter ever since they arrived.”

In return for their good will and services, what they received in Berlin was “a few insincere excuses for not being able to send the much needed grain and medicine to Crimea due to insufficient transportation vehicles.”

Clearly, Ülküsal and Kırırme also felt a deep resentment against the Fuhrer’s treatment, yet, “out of practical reasons,” they agreed to go along with the Nazi plan, moved back to Crimea and waited “until the moment of independence to arrive.”

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614 Emel became the most cherished journal for such prominent Pan-Turkists as Nihal Atsiz and Alparslan Türkş and was a precursor to future ultra-nationalist periodicals along with Orhun. Müstecip Ülküsal, Kırım Türk-Tatarları: Dünü, Bugünü, Yarını (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1980), 23.
615 Ibid, 63.
616 Ibid, 67.
618 Ibid, 70.
The longing for independence among the Tatars of Crimea also becomes crystal clear in the popular wartime newspaper *Azat Kırım* (Independent Crimea). A group of Tatar intellectuals, who fled the country in 1944 with the Germans and secured political asylum from Turkey, donated the entire set of 210 *Azat Kırım* issues to the Central Library of Istanbul in 1948. This collection is an invaluable source for any researcher seeking to recover the voices of the Crimean Tatars wedged between the Nazi forces and the Soviet Union. First published on January 11, 1942, in Akmescit (Simferopol) using the Cyrillic alphabet, *Azat Kırım* was circulated twice a week in major Crimean cities. The first image that strikes the reader is the *Tarak Tamga*, which used to be the official insignia of the Crimean Khanate, now placed between the words *Azat* and *Kırım* on the front page. Most columnists gradually replaced the Cyrillic alphabet with Latin, which used to be the official alphabet of the Crimean ASSR between 1927 and 1937, until its abolition by Stalin as “a nationalist counter revolutionary symbol.” They emphasized the need for “a large scale re-Latinization campaign.” The ultimate goal was to revive and reinstate the “Gaspirali Language” as the official Crimean Tatar.

Most political columnists dealt in their writings with common themes, such as the operations of the German army, the significance of the Muslim Tatar committees for unity, and the urgent need to “crush the Soviet dragon’s head.” Aside from using a highly nationalist discourse, most articles published in *Azat Kırım* conjured up images of the dreadful Soviet ordeal and called for close cooperation with Hitler — “the savior of

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nations from atheist colonizers." At times, it contained a summary of events section in German (*Die befreite Krim*), and published advertisements for state-sponsored German language classes as well as career pages for Tatar Girls to be used as German translators. There was frequent coverage of theatre and music festivities organized to entertain the wounded German soldiers. In brief, *Azat Kırım* sheds light into several crucial anecdotes that defined the country’s historical trajectory and people’s daily lives during the War. Echoes of Crimean Tatars’ wartime daily lives also found a great deal of attention in Turkish newspapers and journals.

**Rekindling Pan Turkism**

Ever since the outbreak of the Nazi-Soviet War, it had been the unspoken wish of the Turkish Pan Turkists to offer their good offices to Germany against the Soviet Union. The further the war progressed towards the areas of Turkish interests, the greater the inducement was for the Turks to talk with the Nazis about the future situation in Crimea and the Caucasus. As Ali Fuad Erden, head of the Turkish Military Academy, intimated to Franz von Papen on July 18, 1941, “Turkey would be pleased if a federation of the local tribes, which [were] more or less related to the Turks, could be established in the Crimea and Southern Caucasus.”

Ali Fuad was not the only Turkish General who entertained thoughts of a Turkish Lebensraum at Russia’s expense. During their frequent meetings with Herr von Papen, retired Generals Erkilet and Nuri also argued for the making of Turkic states in Crimea and the Caucasus, and, even suggested a third “independent Turanian State in the Eastern Caspian Basin” as the best possible solution.

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For Turkish generals “these buffer states would relieve Turkey for a long time of the Russian pressure and at the same time greatly strengthen her economic situation.”

Hence, Franz von Papen became quickly convinced that “a skillful exploitation” of the Turks’ anxiety over the Crimean question could accomplish a great deal toward extricating Turkey from the present dilemma of “alliance versus friendship.” Papen urged Ribbentrop that “this should not be political, let alone military, pressure upon Turkey,” but on the contrary by slowly bringing psychological influence to bear (vis-à-vis the customary evil-Russia image) and by emphasizing the intrinsic “Turanian” element in Germany’s mission, “which [had been] devolving in that country.”

In view of the German successes in Russia, Papen believed that a circle of Turkish nationalists in Ankara (aside from members of the Turkish General Staff) were also giving increasing consideration to the fate of their co-racials on the other side of the Turkish-Russian border, especially the Azerbaijani Turks. There seemed to be a disposition in this group to revert back to the events of 1918 and to annex Azerbaijan, especially the valuable Baku oil region. To this end, a committee of civilian experts had been formed, composed partly of persons who rendered similar services at the time of the CUP. The chief responsibility of this ring was to win adherence both at home, among the émigrés from across the border, and abroad, especially in the Azerbaijan part of Iran, for a reunion of the new Turkey with the Turk-inhabited regions bordering on it in the east, as far as the Caspian. Another long-term plan of the Pan Turkists was to weld the Eastern Turks (the Crimean Tatars, the Volga Turks, the Turkomans etc.) into their own,

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626 Ibid, 176.
627 Ibid, 178.
628 Ibid.
outwardly independent, East Turkish state, in which, however, the Western Turks would play a dominant political and cultural role as “advisers.”

It was doubtful, however, whether this scheme conformed to the wishes of the Eastern Turks themselves. In their opinion, the Turks inhabiting Turkey had been “definitely lost to the true Turkic folk.” Looking at German intelligence reports acquired in Baku, von Papen argued that the Turks of Turkey were regarded as “nothing but Turkish speaking Levantines, with whom it [was] desired to have as little to do as possible.” As for the Eastern Turks, the Azerbaijanis did not want to be burdened with them either, and were convinced that these people in no way formed a compact community, and above all because of their economic backwardness, could have no claim yet to state independence, and must still go through a long period of evolution. In short, the Azerbaijani revolutionary movement did not regard it as its duty to train these Turks for statehood. Nevertheless, Papen’s confidential agents recommended him that this task should not be left to the Russians either. Therefore Papen decided to utilize Pan Turkists of Turkey (despite Azeri reservations) and make sure that German organization and experience be the decisive factor in their further development. In Papen’s view, Germany attached great importance to the formation of “as strong a state as possible in the southeast, in order by this roundabout way to be in a position to keep Russians constantly in check.”

On August 5, von Papen sent Ribbentrop the names of popular Pan Turkists in this group, who could give momentum to the “Greater Turkey” movement with German

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629 GPT, 10 (Papen to German Foreign Office, August 5, 1941), 34-38.
630 Ibid, 36.
Papen was relying on a wide network of “well-informed confidential agents in Turkey,” who communicated to him the names of the following persons: Professor Zeki Velidi Togan (Bashkir), who was formerly professor at the Istanbul University, but had to leave owing to a quarrel with Ataturk, and temporarily resided in Vienna, Halle and Bonn; Ahmet Cafer (Crimean Tatar), who was believed to be “unreliable” but was supposedly very close to General Wladyslaw Sikorski’s Prometheus organization in London. Şükrü Yenibahçeli (a Crimean Tatar), who served as Deputy from Istanbul and had been one of the founders of Teşkilat-i Mahsusa (precursor to the National Intelligence Organization) during the Independence War; and the Turkish ambassador at Kabul, Memduh Sefket, who scarcely took a different line from the Government in his official capacity, but was considered to be a sincere friend of the Eastern Turks.

A notable Tatar leader of the Pan-Turkist movement outside Turkey was Mehmed Emin Rasulzade (founder of the famous Musavat Party in Azerbaijan in 1911). Mehmed Emin later joined the Polish Prometheus movement, which sought to undermine the Russian Empire and its successor states including the Soviet Union by supporting national independence movements. Resultzade lived on the Polish General Staff funds transferred to Switzerland (the so-called Josef Pilsudski Fund) even after the fall of Poland in 1939, visited Wladyslaw Sikorski in London on a political mission in 1940, and then lived with other Polish refugees in Bucharest. Resultzade was represented in Turkey

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631 GPT, 10 (Papen to German Foreign Office, August 5, 1941), 35.
632 Cafer also acted as a spy for the Turkish government under the name Ahmed Caferoglu. He was a well-known Turkologist.
633 Mirza-Davud Guseinov, Tiurskaia Demokraticheskaia Partiia Federalistov “Musavat” v proshlom i nastoiaschem (Tiflis, 1927), 9.
by his adjutant, Mirza Bala, who served in the Turkish army after becoming a faithful disciple of his greater teacher.

Meanwhile, the Turkish ambassador in Berlin, Hüsvrev Gerede, was lobbying intensely for those nationalities of Turkic ethnic origin, which lived on the fringes of Soviet Russia. Gerede called Ribbentrop’s attention to the possibility of “spreading anti-Soviet propaganda among these Turkic tribes,” and “frankly” expressed the idea that the Caucasian peoples could eventually be united into one buffer state. He also hinted East of the Caspian Sea for a potential homeland. Ribbentrop was surprised to see Gerede’s “rather casual tone of conversation” when bringing up these far-reaching proposals. However, Ribbentrop added that Gerede’s remarks were by no means casual, since they agree to a large degree with the statements made by Ali Fuad in a conversation with von Papen. Gerede put his finger upon the decisive question by characterizing Baku as a possible capital since it was “an entirely Turkish-speaking city.”

Nevertheless, Gerede’s subsequent meetings with Weizsacker and Ribbentrop gave rise to rumors in the Berlin diplomatic corps about a Turco-German Pact, which allegedly would permit the passage of German troops through Anatolia. Although both the Turkish Foreign Minister and the German State Secretary immediately denied these rumors, İnönü was very much disturbed by Ambassador Gerede’s recent dealings in Berlin as a self-appointed arbitrator. On August 21, Gerede was called back to Ankara and given instructions not to enter into such discussions any further. After his return to Berlin he emphasized to Weizsacker that in fact “the Turkish government itself had no

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635 DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 179 (Memorandum by State Secretary, August 5, 1941), 284.
636 Ibid, 286.
637 BCA 030.11.1/156.26.17 (Prime Ministry to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, August 21, 1941).
ambitions outside its present borders, and that his earlier conversations with Weizsacker and Ribbentrop had not been of an official nature.  

In reply to Weizsacker’s question about Turkey’s earlier attitude toward the Turkish peoples near the border in the Caucasus and east of the Caspian Sea, Gerede stated emphatically that the Pan Turkist ideas were no longer alive among the ruling circles, “at least none existed in their official rhetoric.”  

When Weizsacker asked him further what position Turkey would take if England should wish to establish a new front in the Caucasus, “the Ambassador replied evasively that Turkey would be on her guard.” Gerede also gave vague and evasive answers to Weizsacker’s further questions whether the present official policy might not change, how the situation was in Syria, and whether a closer alignment of Turkey with Germany might not be possible after the collapse of Russia.

Evidently, the Turkish government decided to refrain from giving the slightest impression, which would remind the Soviet Union and Great Britain of yet another Turco-German collaboration in the latter’s yearning for the east. Informed about Turkey’s official position on the Turanian question, by early September of 1941, Ribbentrop and von Papen decided to devise a non-governmental channel, which would revive the sleepwalking Pan Turkists to be used as a fifth column in the Soviet borderlands. To this end, the German embassy in Ankara recommended Enver Pasha’s brother, Nuri Killigil (Pasha), as the future leader of the Pan Turkist movement. Nuri spent his entire youth under the spell of his brother and fought as an officer in Tripoli against Italy, and in World War I in the Caucasus against the Russians. His Pan Turkist

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639 Ibid, 374.
ideas had a certain romantic flavor in memory of Enver Pasha. Ribbentrop had received a letter from von Papen announcing that Nuri Pasha was coming to Germany to attend the Leipzig Fair and would pay a call at the Foreign Ministry.\textsuperscript{640}

Ribbentrop told Nuri Killigil, who was then a prosperous factory owner in Turkey in his early fifties, that in the areas in which fellow Pan Turkists would be potentially interested in, the German Reich had no political but only economic motivations. What Turkey was striving for, therefore, “was certain to meet with German approval from the outset.”\textsuperscript{641} Ribbentrop added, however, that the Turkish government was pursuing different ideas in this respect. Hence, Ribbentrop asked Killigil whether he should not first of all, exert influence at home. Nuri Pasha conceded this; actually he had been trying to do what was necessary in this regard for a long time. With regard to his immediate goals in Berlin, Killigil said that he could be useful by advising the German authorities on all questions concerning the Caucasus, with which he was thoroughly acquainted – in its geographic, ethnographic, military and economic aspects. Nuri Pasha tried to reassure Ribbentorp that “once the German advance toward the Caucasus had penetrated beyond Rostov and reached the important trunk railroad line in the vicinity of Armavir,” the fate of the Soviet troops around the Caucasus would be sealed.\textsuperscript{642} Nuri claimed that he himself was in a position “to bring about an uprising of at least 100,000 men in the Caucasus.\textsuperscript{643}

\textsuperscript{640} DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 298, p. 473 (Memorandum by State Secretary, September 10, 1941).
\textsuperscript{641} Ibid, 474.
\textsuperscript{642} Ibid, 478.
\textsuperscript{643} The number of soldiers Nuri pledged to raise is ironic. In his catastrophic campaign on the Eastern Front, his brother Enver led the same number of soldiers – more than half of them died of starvation and disease at the Battle of Sarikamish, making it one of the most tragic events of WWI.
On September 11, 18, and 25, Killigil met with Ernst Woermann, director of the *Politische Abteilung*. The second of these meetings took place in the form of a lunch together with Ambassador von Papen and Counselor of the German Embassy Gustav Hilger. In his circular, Woermann later described Nuri as “the champion of the future Turanian movement.”

According to Nuri Pasha, while the young Pan Turkists wished to create independent states for the Turkic peoples living outside the territory of present-day Turkey, these areas were not to be annexed by Ankara but were to receive their political direction from Turkey. This involved mainly ethnic groups residing in the territory of the present Soviet Union. Of present Soviet territories, Nuri primarily laid claim to Azerbaijan and Dagestan (not the entire Transcaucasia as some pan-Turkists later claimed); also the Crimea, as well as by and large the area between the Volga and the Urals, stretching northwards to the Soviet Tatar Republic, with its capital in Kazan. Essentially, all of ancient Turkestan was encompassed in the area Nuri designated, including the western portion of former Eastern Turkestan. Furthermore, Nuri claimed the northwestern portion of Iran down to Hamadan as being ethnically Turkic, and a border top of the Caspian Sea along the old Soviet border. Finally, of Iraqi territories, the area of Kirkuk and Mosul were included, as well as a strip of Syria.

The outline Nuri presented to his German colleague that Pan Turkist ideas essentially aimed to get back from the Soviets, what their Tsarist predecessors gradually expanded towards in the 19th century: Transcaucasia and Turkestan. Although Turkey remained a purely neutral state during Atatürk’s presidency (aside from certain frontier rectifications) and had not pursued any objectives outside its national territories, Nuri

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644 DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 361 (Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department, September 26, 1941), 571.
645 Ibid., 572.
claimed that this had only been “a policy of expediency in the mind of Ataturk, the motive of which had been fear of the Soviet Union.” With present German victories and “the prospect of smashing the Soviet Union,” Nuri suggested that this motive disappeared. When reminded of Turkish government’s continued objection to Pan Turkism, Nuri said that the entire Turkish people could easily be won over and that at the proper moment “a government would surely come to power, which would adopt these ideas.” Ultimately, Nuri Pasha hoped to convince Woermann that he was not acting behind the back of the Turkish government; and said that, on the contrary, before his departure for Berlin he had informed Prime Minister Refik Saydam. About the circle of people in Turkey, with whom he was involved, Nuri claimed that large portions of the Army were in favor of these ideas; in particular he mentioned the commanding general at the Caucasian front, who was closely related to him, and who could play a decisive role at the proper time.

Evaluating the question whether support for the Pan Turkist ideas was in the German interest, Woermann urged Ribbentrop to distinguish between the more tactical interests and long-term goals of some practical implementation. As far as Germany’s momentary interests were concerned, it was obvious that Turkey could realize the Pan Turkist ideas only in alliance with Germany. In other words, a Turkey with Pan Turkist orientation would be of natural consequence a Turkey with pro-German orientation. For Woermann, these pan-Turkist ideas at the same time represented a Turkish imperialism at the expense of the Soviet Union, “therefore to that extent, too, the German game would be played.”

Woermann’s entire memorandum spoke in favor of orchestrating the Pan

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646 Ibid, 573.
Turkist factions, but required careful attention “bearing in mind the divergent attitude of the present Turkish Government.”

Upon receiving Woermann’s report, Ribbentrop agreed with the idea of creating new Turkic states, which would be satellites of Turkey, but added that each of these potential Turkish satellites should be judged by different criteria. Ribbentrop argued that an actual enlargement of Turkish territory would possibly occur by acquisition of the oil region of Mosul or Transcaucasia through Batum and Baku. He argued that recovery of the Mosul region should certainly not be encouraged from the standpoint of Germany’s oil interests, but would perhaps be tolerable, “whereas it would be entirely out of the question to give the area of Batum and Baku into Turkish hands.” Moreover, in Ribbentrop’s opinion, there was a decisive difference between the Volga and the Urals intermingled with Turkic peoples, on the one hand, and the area of Turkestan east of the Caspian Sea. For purely German interests, once the Soviet Union was defeated, large areas of the old Russian Empire should come under German and not foreign influence. It would not be in Germany’s interest if states were created in Transcaucasia and between the Volga and the Urals “which would be politically aligned with Turkey and whose attitude would thus depend upon the vicissitudes of the policy of Turkey, who will certainly continue to be wooed by all the powers.” For Ribbentrop, the case of Turkestan was different. If Russia had been decisively weakened while the English had not been driven out of India, English imperialism would” certainly seek to seize these economically promising areas (cotton) that have only partially been opened up by the

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648 Ibid, 591.
649 Ibid, 592.
Turko-Siberian railway.\textsuperscript{651} Since these areas would not belong to Germany’s sphere of influence even in the future (if only on account of their geographic location), Ribbentrop suggested to encourage here the creation of ethnically Turkic states aligned with Turkey.

Between early September and late October, Nazi Germany carefully mapped out their immediate versus long-term goals with regards to reviving Pan Turkism and decided that, first and foremost, the Russian prisoners of war from Turkic ethnic origins should be separated out and brought together in a special camp on the model of the camp near Wünstorf in the last World War. Woermann was assigned with the duty of examining whether a separate combat unit for the future Turanian state could be formed out these prisoners of war at a later date.\textsuperscript{652} Secondly, Nuri Pasha’s request for assigning Nazi occupied Turkic regions’ administration to indigenous population was granted; whereby Crimea was considered the first area of that sort. Thirdly, Nuri Pasha was given authority to lead the Pan Turkists after the establishment of POW camps for ethnic Turks (where he would somehow participate in sifting and organizing the human material). Finally, if von Papen could ascertain the tacit toleration of the Turkish government, Nuri Pasha would establish a central office for Pan Turkist propaganda in Berlin. Ribbentrop also asked Minister Werner Otto von Hentig, who was on duty as a representative of the Foreign Ministry with Eleventh Army Headquarters, to attend to Nuri Pasha and deal with the Pan Turkist questions.

On October 28, 1941, the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) began preparations for the separation of the ethnically Turkic and Muhammedan prisoners of

\textsuperscript{651} Ibid, 642.
\textsuperscript{652} According to the information provided by Reichsleiter Rosenberg, the Chief of the Prisoner of War Department of the OKW, they were already considering this issue.
Meanwhile, Ambassador von Papen sent a detailed report on Turkey’s official position regarding the separation of the ethnic Turkic POWs. Ambassador von Papen said that “the role of Nuri Pasha in the Pan Turkist movement should be strengthened,” and suggested that he should participate in organizing the screening of the prisoners of war and in their indoctrination. Ribbentrop was certain that the Turkish government would not have any objections to it since had already remarked to Saraçoğlu that Germany was placing Turkic POWs in special camps.” With regard to the establishment of a Pan Turkist propaganda office in Berlin under the direction or with participation of Nuri Pasha, Ribbentrop was more cautious. In a separate letter, dated October 31, Papen argued that the Turkish Government, which played down Pan Turkist propaganda in its own country, would certainly consider such propaganda “if carried on from Berlin as very awkward.” Consequently Papen suggested that Pan Turkist propaganda should be limited to POW camps only, and to the training of people who might be sent if necessary to the German occupied areas.

In the early days of November 1941, von Papen set in motion another round of Turco-German talks and approached General Fuad Erden with hopes of rekindling Turanian propaganda amongst the young cadets. General Erden, who was then head of the Turkish Military Academy then, was subsequently invited to the Eastern Front for “an unofficial exchange with the Fuhrer.” Having returned greatly satisfied from his trip to the Führerhauptquartier Werwolf, General Erden asked Papen to thank Hitler for the courteous reception given him by all military authorities, and said that “it was beyond all

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653 DGFP, series D, vol. XIII, no. 431, p. 707 (Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department, October 28, 1941).
654 Ibid, 708.
655 Ibid.
656 GPT, 12 (Papen to Ribbentrop, November 10, 1941), 40-42.
praise, and everywhere [he] was strongly reminded of the comradeship-in-arms of the World War.”

Ali Fuad seemed to be particularly grateful for the instructive talks given him at the unit headquarters by officers of the General Staff, particularly on the Battle of Kiev, the forcing of the Dnieper, etc. He asked Papen if it was possible to receive a map of these operations indicating the Russian dislocations so that he might “use these exemplary historical operations for instructional purposes in the Turkish Military Academy.”

Erden added that it was naturally a great experience for him to be personally received by Hitler and to receive a detailed first hand account of the operational position. General Fuad concluded from what the Fuhrer had said that he intended to reach the Caspian and the Caucasus as speedily as possible. He inferred this particularly from the fact that the First Army was being used, with heavy forces and in spite of not inconsiderable losses to conduct the extremely difficult operation against Crimea, in order to push on from there to the North Caucasus. Otherwise, Erden added, “it would have been easier simply to cut off the Crimea, and to continue with the First Army the advance on Rostov.” Fuad finally shared his observations on his visit to a Russian POW camp, where many Turco-Tatar prisoners appealed to him to use his influence to secure for them “better treatment and rations than the Russians.”

While both the Nazis and Pan Turkists found a common ground in disseminating anti-Soviet propaganda in Turkey, negotiations were proceeding hardly without obstructions. After his meeting with von Papen, General Erden strove to widen the Pan

657 After another banquet given in Ali Fuad’s honor, Papen received a similar message from Colonel-General Fromm. Ibid, 42.

658 Ibid.

659 Having shared Fuad’s reflections, Papen asked Ribbentrop to comply with Fuad’s request and said that it would make a very strong impression on Turkey.
Turkist network in Turkey through propagating the Hitlerite cause among the military cadres. Perhaps the most resourceful of the active German spies Fuad recruited was General Emir Erkilet, who was also of Tatar origin and an expert on the East-Turkish question. Through Erden and Killigil’s connections, Erkilet began communicating with Otto von Hentig, who was in charge of the diplomatic minutiae of the Turanian question. Despite Erkilet’s repeated invitations for a cozier meeting in Istanbul, however, Hentig postponed his trip a few times, arguing that he was “strongly dissuaded by various parties, including semi-official Turkish, from going to Turkey just now.” Hentig apologized for not being able to resume their talks but reminded Erkilet that he needed to refrain from giving the slightest cause for biased parties “to reckon him among the fifth column.”

Dismayed by the incessant delays in Hentig’s visit, Erkilet sent a somewhat blunt response and argued that he could not understand “who these semi-official Turkish parties were,” and why they “strongly dissuaded” Hentig from coming. Erkilet was convinced that they were wrong and most likely had a malign agenda. He also asked Hentig to grant German entry visas to Müstecip Ülküsal and Edige Krimer; “following a brief period of indoctrination,” these men were to be sent to the Crimea and be used there “for the common Turco-German interest.”

Meanwhile, there seemed to be a fair amount of bewilderment on the part of the Turkish government about the Turanian question. Despite İnönü’s reserved attitude towards Pan Turkism and earlier warnings to Ambassador Gerede in Berlin, Gerede did...
not restrain himself from meddling in the Turanian movement. Not being able to negotiate the subject with Hentig in his official capacity, Gerede designated a certain “Dr. Harun,” who had been a professor at the Berlin Institute of Technology (TUB), as his agent. In his message to Ernst Woermann the same day, Hentig argued that Dr. Harun was inquiring about the German attitude toward Pan Turkism. Dr Harun conveyed to Hentig messages from Ambassador Gerede and the Turkish Chief of Staff, Fevzi Çakmak. Hentig suggested that, based on Dr. Harun’s words, both Gerede and Çakmak had declared “their great interest in this question,” and that “the Turanian question could be a basis on which to build relations between Germany and Turkey.”

In January 1942, İnönü replaced Ambassador Gerede with Saffet Arikan – the former Minister of National Defense. On several occasions Ambassador Gerede had been reproved by the İnönü government for being too “Germanophile,” and one of the alleged reasons for his recall was a public utterance leaning too far in this direction. Regarding the appointment of Saffet Arikan as the new Turkish ambassador in Berlin, Soviet newspapers initially circulated rumors of “the continued pro-Nazi sentiments in Ankara,” and labeled Arikan as “another well-known Germanophile.” Having made Arikan’s acquaintance in Ankara, British Ambassador Hugessen shared a detailed report on Arikan’s personality and political leanings with the Soviet ambassador in Ankara, arguing that it was “most improbable that the Turkish government would wish to send

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666 Ibid, 42.
667 GPT, 14 (Hentig to Woermann, November 17, 1941), 45-46.
668 BCA 030.11.1/156.26.17 (Prime Ministry to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, August 21, 1941).
another pro-Nazi Ambassador to Berlin,” and that such depictions of Arikan as a Germanophile were “simply erroneous.”

On the contrary, Saffet Arikan was a realist and an opportunist, who would play the government policy of the moment, whatever it is. By nature, he was alert and resourceful. Although he certainly had an admiration for German drive and capacity for organization, he was essentially pro-government and ostensibly in sympathy with the Allied cause. Saraçoğlu had confidentially suggested to Hugessen that the Turkish government had anticipated increasing pressure from Berlin, and wished to keep a strictly neutral representative in Berlin. Until Ambassador Gerede’s recall, İnönü, had split hairs about ambassadorial appointments, tried to send the right person to the right post, and labored hard to maintain harmonious bilateral affairs with each warring camp. But his tolerance grew shorter with Germany’s vain attempts to turn the table by propagating Pan Turkism in Turkey through semi-official channels.

During the course of 1942, Nazi Germany gradually abandoned the idea of inducing Turkey towards a closer friendship through promises of a Turanian state, due to Papen’s realization that İnönü entertained no such desire and that orchestration of Pan Turkist groups would hardly suffice to pressure the Turkish government. Papen, who engineered the star-crossed Turanian bridge between Turks, Tatars, and Germans, quietly warned Ribbentrop and Woermann that replanting Pan Turkism in Ankara had been a rather overambitious scheme. Nevertheless, Papen was still certain that Turkey could not remain indifferent to anything the Nazis were doing in Crimea, and therefore urged Woermann to inform the İnönü government about Germany’s drive towards Crimea during the ongoing Battle of Sevastopol.

669 FO 421/327 R4933/480/44 (Hugessen to Eden, July 15, 1942).
Based on Papen’s reports from Ankara, on January 23, 1942, Woermann sent new directives to Lieutenant General Walter Warlimont, who had recently joined Field Marshall Erich von Manstein’s 11th Army (Army Group South) in the Battle of Sevastopol. In his message that arrived during the heated days of the Crimean campaign, Woermann told Warlimont that “Turkic interest outside Turkey proper…ceased to evoke interest,” and that a Turkish desire for territorial increment in Crimea had thus far not been intimated. Clearly the Germans realized that Pan Turkist groups, who advocated the formation of outwardly independent Turkish satellite state in Crimea (as well as in the North Caucasus and Eastern Turkestan), failed to recruit more allies from the İnönü government. Since the Turkish government did not expect to receive any advantages without making compensation in return, Woermann argued, it seemed very questionable whether, “bearing in mind the price involved, Turkey’s participation in the war [was] desirable at all.” From that moment in January 1942 onwards, the object of Germany’s negotiations with Turkey was to ascertain how far Turkey was prepared to stretch the concept benevolent neutrality and thereby make it easier for the Germans to carry the war into the Soviet heartland successfully.

The failure of Germany’s Turanian propaganda prevented the coming into being of a silent Nazi-Turkish alliance similar to the one that existed in Spain. Nevertheless, through fanning Sovietophobia in Ankara, German policy makers accomplished their main objective of keeping Turkey as a benevolent non-belligerent power favorably disposed to Berlin against Moscow and forced İnönü’s hand into mobilizing Turkish

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671 GPT, 17 (Memorandum for General Warlimont with Covering Letter by Woermann, January 23, 1942), 61-64.
regiments in defensive positions on the Caucasian border against the Soviet Union. The unspoken agreement between the German and Turkish governments with regards to the latter’s wartime neutrality caused a great apprehension amongst the Pan Turkist circles, who were still convinced that without Turkey’s entrance into war on the side of Germany their dreams of realizing the Turanian network against Russia would hardly be possible. Even after Germany’s abandonment of post-war Turanian schemes, a number of Pan Turkists continued to serve as meddling intermediaries in Berlin, repudiating allegations that İnönü ultimately discarded the Turkish Lebensraum idea.

One such eccentric character was the self-appointed negotiator Dr. Harun in Berlin. As late as June 1942, days before the German victory in Sevastopol, Dr. Harun paid a reciprocal visit to Werner Otto von Hentig, claiming to be a confidential agent of the Turkish Chief Staff Marshall Fevzi Çakmak (Erkân-ı Harbiye-i Umumiye Reisi). German reports indicate that, according to Dr. Harun, Çakmak strongly favored Turkey’s entrance into war and told Dr. Harun that it was hardly avoidable. Dr. Harun told Hentig that “it may happen at any moment, and will as soon as the Turkish army possesses sufficient arms.” Dr. Harun further suggested that the Turkish advance “would be in the direction of Baku, through the Iranian uplands.”

With reference to the “Turan” question, Harun told Hentig that he had received assurances from Turkish Parliamentary circles and from Marshal Cakmak, that, contrary to official declarations and probably also to reports of the new Turkish ambassador, a Greater Turkey movement not only existed in Ankara but was steadily growing in strength and importance. Harun alleged that the true state of affairs was revealed,

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672 GPT, 23 (Conversation between Hentig and Harun, June 1, 1942), 76-78.
673 Ibid, 77.
among other things, by the fact that the President had ordered the deletion of all foreign words from the Constitution. Dr. Harun assured Hentig that what was envisaged was not the conquest of these lands by Turkey, but rather the creation of a federal state, similar to the Bismarck Reich. It was to include, besides Anatolia, the Caucasus and the Turkic peoples east of the Volga.

Pan Turkists’ attempts in Berlin to adumbrate İnönü’s eradication of Turanian adventurism at home proved to be futile. From numerous talks in the Ostministerium, Franz von Papen got the impression that neither Ribbentrop nor the Reichsminister Rosenberg favored plans for the creation of an independent Crimean State under German protection. As to the Crimean Tatars, von Papen learned that it had already been decided not to grant them self-government. In fact, Rosenberg even contemplated removing Tatars from Crimea and making the latter a purely German region. This plan was dropped, chiefly because of the technical difficulties involved in its execution. It was decided that Crimea would be administered by a Commissariat-General, under the direction of Gauleiter Frauenfeld.

As for the leading representatives of the Crimean émigrés in Berlin, such as Ülküsal and Kırımer, they were deeply disappointed. Franz von Papen referred in his report that their discontent had considerably increased in the summer of 1942 not for personal reasons alone, such as Rosenberg’s refusal to allow

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674 This simply doesn’t make sense. İnönü’s policy of ridding the Turkish language from foreign words was simply a continuation of Ataturk’s nationalist language reforms in the 1930s. It had more to do with creating a new dictionary based on the somewhat peculiar sun-language theory that Mustafa Kemal was so obsessed on in the 30s, rather than reverting the language back to its Turkic roots.

675 Ibid, 78.


677 GPT, 25 (Dittmann to Tippelskirch, August 5, 1942), 79-81.
them in the Ostministerium as advisers, but because the Nazi schemes implied a darker future in the offing.
VI. WHEN THE HURLYBURLY’S DONE

As Mark Bernes portrayed in his poignant songs of victory (*pesni pobedy*), millions of Russian soldiers died in World War II, turning into snow-covered cranes (*zhuravli*). For any rank-and-file Ivan, the Battle of Stalingrad was heavy with symbolism. Defense of the motherland meant something more than the number of cannons fired against the Hitlerite apocalypse in Europe. To accomplish Vasily Chuikov’s pyrrhic victory alone, more than half a million Russian soldiers were killed in action in January 1943. The whole story of Stalingrad is one of imprudence, mercilessness, and disaster; and it is revealing in a number of ways. On the German side, the most striking aspect of this battle lies in the confusion of its aims and purposes, particularly the muddle between political beliefs and their consequences. German troops in Stalingrad were in complete moral disarray and quickly realized that the objectives of subjugating the Slavs, and defending Europe from Bolshevism through a pre-emptive strike proved counter-productive, to say the least.

From the Turkish perspective, Stalingrad was a clever Soviet trap into which the Wehrmacht had been enticed by deliberate withdrawals. The consequences of Germany’s defeat were crystal clear from the onset. Turkish neutrality swung decisively towards the Atlantic, while Turkish-German relations became more neutral and colder. The Soviets were acutely aware that the deterioration in Turkish-German affairs owed more to Turkey’s “realization of the serious successes of Soviet troops in the battle on the

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678 While the exact number of Soviet casualties in World War II is a popular subject of historical debate, the most widely accepted statistics are presented in General Grigoriy Krivosheyev’s account. Krivosheyev states that the USSR lost approximately 9 million Soviet soldiers and close to 15 million civilians. See Grigoriy Krivosheyev, *Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses* (London: Greenhill, 1997).
Volga by the early months of 1943,” when İnönü changed “his prognosis relating to the country of victors.” The Germans seemed to have the same impression. Three weeks after the advance of the Red Army in late February 1943, the German Consul General in Istanbul spoke to the pro-Nazi daily Cumhuriyet and said; “In their official statements, Turkish leaders appear to be on the side of Germany in our fated march against Soviet Russia. This is all very well. But it has come to our attention that she is, in fact, seriously concerned about the possibility of a Soviet victory and might roll the dice for Great Britain at any moment.”

Indeed, Turkish official opinion became more vocal over the prospect of Soviet expansion after Stalingrad. The westward advance of the Red Army and its tacit acceptance by the British represented the surrender of Eastern Europe and the Balkans to the Soviets. It was thought that, if Great Britain would not have the courage or strength to oppose Russian designs at no distant date, Poland would be eventually forced to make the best terms it could with Moscow, that Romania was already condemned, and that Greece was rapidly following suit. Despite their skepticism and distrust, Turkish officials did not get beyond the stage of passive pessimism, remained silent with regards to their own orientation, which they repeatedly claimed to be “rapidly establishing,” and they merely confined themselves to croaking and alarm about the future.

During the greater part of the period under review here, roughly between February 1943 (Soviet victory in Stalingrad) and August 1944 (the end of Turkish-German diplomatic and trade relations), the problem before the Turkish government was

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681 Cumhuriyet (23 February 1943), 7.
682 BCA 490.1.0.0/1064.1083.2 (Letters of Rauf Orbay, February 4, 1944).
683 BCA 30.10.0.0/232.563.20 (Report of Colonel Sururi Akalin the Turkish Military Attaché in Berlin, July 6, 1943).
finding the right moment to fulfill their treaty obligations to Great Britain and enter the war. The Turkish attitude to these obligations, which by Britain’s consent had hitherto been allowed to remain dormant, and to the possibility of being involved in the war became a source of consistent apprehension in Ankara, mainly due to the Soviet Union’s improved military position. After the Tehran Conference in November 1943, İnönü quickly realized that Stalin did not relish a large scale arming of Turkey – since an adequately equipped Turkish army acting in tandem with the Allies could get in its way in the Balkans. Stalin had shown almost no enthusiasm for Churchill’s proposal for a Turkish-American lend-lease agreement. Nevertheless, as Turkish policy makers began to realize that the end of the war would not bring about a return to the state of affairs in 1939, they decided to adjust themselves and their national interests to a new build-up before it was too late.

Ultimately, Turkey’s entrance into war on the part of the Allies occurred in three stages: the first, immediately after the Adana meeting between Churchill and İnönü in January 1943, when the Turks moved closer to Great Britain, while still anxious not to become implicated in the Allies’ over-optimistic interpretation of Ankara’s attitude; the second, after the Second Cairo Conference in December 1943, following a sharp reaction from Great Britain when Turkey’s manifestations of neutrality were slightly modified; and, third, after a rapprochement with the American government in the summer of 1944, when Turkey cut off all political and trade relations with Nazi Germany.

Beginning with the Churchill-Inönü Talks in Adana in January 1943, the wartime position of Turkey was repeatedly called into question by Great Britain. As Ankara delayed the moment of entering the war, London made its dissatisfaction more explicit.
In his conversations with the Secretary of State Anthony Eden, the Turkish ambassador frequently complained that Eden had coupled Turkey’s name on a number of occasions with those of Spain and Portugal as “neutrals.”

Eden took the opportunity to urge that in due course Turkey should sit at the peace table as an ally, who fought in the war, adding that the time might soon come when, without active belligerency, Turkey would still be able to provide facilities for shortening the war. In addition to Britain’s grievances as to the open advocacy of neutrality, the question of Turkey’s position in the post-war world turned upon two factors, its position vis-à-vis the victorious powers and its relations with Russia.

Turkish policy makers were forced to play the role of Hamlet in their indecisiveness and wooliness, because Great Britain did not truly appreciate Turkey’s chronic mistrust and fear of Russia, which, in return poisoned Anglo-Turkish relations. War problems and Turkey’s revived Russophobia rendered only a single safe course for Turkey to enter the war: to align itself with the United Nations before Russian dissatisfaction found expression. The Turkish point of view was diametrically opposed to Great Britain. Whenever British policy makers proposed Ankara’s alignment with Moscow, the Turkish government responded that Turkey’s participation or non-participation in the war would have had no effect whatsoever on Russian policy. If Turkey were to fight, it would merely weaken itself and increase the danger of becoming a satellite of Russia – like Poland. In some ways, Great Britain understood Turkey’s psychology and admitted that “she had to keep her powder dry against the day when

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684 FO 421/329, R899/899/G (Eden to Hugessen, January 1, 1944).
Russian imperialism will inevitable revive,” but Turks’ fear of Russia, in the British mind, was never completely justified.  

After Ankara failed to convince London about an imminent Russian threat, two interrelated desiderata shaped Turkey’s diplomacy in the latter half of 1944 and early 1945: First, if there were a danger of the defeated countries becoming “Bolshevik or Slav,” as Saraçoğlu put it, Turkey needed to be “closely associated with the [future] United Nations and its prospective collective security system;” and second, if Russia were at any time to menace European peace after the war, Turkey needed a closer and stronger ally than Britain. This latter security concern, arising mostly out of Britain’s disdain of Turkey’s Russophobia, prompted the incipient Turkish-American rapprochement throughout the heated days of 1944.

Apart from its general desire to prevent itself from postwar Russian aggression, Turkey also strove to prevent neighboring Middle Eastern countries from becoming a threat to its national security through Soviet influence in those countries. It was no secret that the Arab world to Turkey had long been, as the British Ambassador put it, “something between a joke and a nuisance,” ever since the Great War. But Turkey’s established policy of isolationism towards the Middle East theatre was largely shaken after the Adana Conference in early 1943 in the face of their deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Turkey’s direct interest in the Middle East was largely occupied with the presence of Kurdish tribes located on both sides of its southern and eastern frontiers. The British ambassador aptly noted in his 1944 report that “the Kurds had little reason to love the Turks,” while some Turkish Kurds were

685 FO 421/329, R5703/55/44 (Hugessen to Eden, July 1, 1943).
686 FO 421/329, R6564/55/44 (Hugessen to Eden, July 20, 1943).
“pathetically loyal” to the Ankara government. Yet, in reality, alarm bells began to toll with the emergence of incipient Kurdish movements in Soviet Azerbaijan.\(^{687}\)

The Turkish government kept a watchful eye on movements in Tabriz after the Anglo-Soviet invasion in 1941, but seemed to have been duly assured that there was in no sense an imminent threat to Turkish interests arising out of British presence.\(^{688}\) Ankara had probably been casting a suspicious eye on some of the activities of British experts in connection with the “Kurdish Question,” but the Turks felt more disturbed than ever due to the Soviet involvement. Turkey was convinced that the Russians were, once again, planning to exploit Kurdish grievances against Turkey, just as their forefathers had in the early twentieth century. The Kurdish problem became such a source of apprehension that, when, for instance, the Iraqi government proposed to appoint an Iraqi Kurd as its envoy in Ankara, Menemenioglu confessed to Halifax: If they had only proposed an Arab, or even a Christian, but not a Kurd.”\(^{689}\)

Turkey’s relations with the Allies reached another critical conjuncture after the Adana Conference, and provoked serious worry among the Turkish policy makers who now began to perceive the Soviet presence in Iran with serious anxiety and contempt. The Turkish government was also apprehensive about Iranian Azerbaijan because, apart from its substantial Turkish population and geographic proximity to the historically disputed provinces between Russia and Turkey, the region was now conveniently exposed to Kurdish disturbances with a potential Soviet aegis in the offing. The

\(^{687}\) Ibid.

\(^{688}\) This is not to suggest that İnönü unequivocally trusted Britain’s activities in the Kurdish populated areas. On October 14, 1943, the Turkish intelligence prepared a detailed report on Ambassador Hugessen’s recent trip to the Eastern villages, describing when, where and with whom he met, dined or had tea. Hugessen was accompanied by his wife and deputy plenipotentiary E. Peckle and his chauffeur F. Cooper. BCA 030.10.0.0./99.641.16 (Minister of Interior’s Report on Hugessen, October, 14, 1943).

\(^{689}\) FO 421/329, R12089/55/44 (Helm to Eden, November 23, 1943).
A distressing wakeup call for the government came from the 9th Army Corps in October 1943. In his regular inspection tour of the Erzurum Garrison, the Chief of General Staff stumbled on numerous pamphlets posted on mosques, coffee houses and public buildings. Written in broken Turkish, these pamphlets appeared to be the work of Revolutionary Fedayeen of Kars and Erzurum, calling for an imminent Kurdish uprising. “The loathsome republican regime had treated us as naïve and ignorant subjects,” one of the pamphlets read, “the moment of salvation is near…the Russians are close.”

In the course of his annual opening speech delivered at the National Assembly, İnönü took the opportunity to condemn in severe tones “the spiteful propaganda” emanating from the eastern provinces. He also alluded to “disturbing rumors” of public discontent regarding the government’s “allegedly insufficient measure of assistance” furnished to the population throughout the war and “alleged disregard of looting and disorder.” But what seemed to have frustrated him most were the “ridiculous prophecies” regarding “an eventual Soviet emancipation of the region.” That some such rumors had in fact been circulated is confirmed by the British reports, from which it seems clear that the Kurds were playing upon religious feelings of the population, “propagating the likelihood of another barbarous repression of the Kurds,” and that “the President of the Republic is considered to be a bringer of bad luck.”

In view of this contingency, the Chief of General Staff increased the number of gendarmerie forces patrolling the border and gradually strengthened Turkish military line on the eastern frontier with new reinforcements. Receiving orders to suppress the
slightest grouping against the Republican regime, the 3rd Army raided a small band of Kurdish guerillas in Dersim, where the leaders of the Demenan Tribe were killed and their arms apprehended.\footnote{BCA 030.10.0.0/112.752.2 (3rd Army Inspectorate Headquarters to the Prime Ministry, October 20, 1943).} Although Kurdish disturbances in the eastern provinces were inconsequential and did not seem to culminate in the form of a significant uprising as before, İnönü became convinced that the Russians were once again entertaining the idea of sponsoring Kurds in the region. On November 1, 1943, the Directorate of Public Security (Emniyet Umum Müdürlüğü) prepared an extensive report on Soviet activities in Transcaucasia.\footnote{BCA 030.10.0.0/248.678.28 (Directorate of Public Security to the Prime Ministry, November 1, 1943).} The report emphasised the Karakabakh and Zangezur regiments of the Red Army, about one hundred Kurdish soldiers were garrisoned. “Few Kurds in these two regiments had known their language but used to speak Azeri Turkish instead,” the report concluded, “yet the Russians have been pursuing a state-sponsored campaign to educate these people in the recently established Kurdology centers in Erevan and Moscow.”\footnote{Ibid.} It seemed quite clear to the Turkish government that the new Soviet designs in Transcaucasia had completely different goals from the korenizatsiia policy of the 1920s, and was becoming much more reminiscent of late imperial Tsarist practices.\footnote{This view is clearly reflected in the 1943 Report of Avni Doğan – the Public Inspectorate for Eastern Provinces. See: “Umum Müfettişi Avni Doğan Raporu,” in Hüseyin Yayman, \textit{Turkiye’nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası} (Istanbul: DK, 2011), 166-175.}

\textbf{From Adana to Cairo}

The problem before the British government at the beginning of 1943 was to establish some means of cooperation with the Turkish government. To achieve this, Secretary Eden issued a statement on January 1, 1943, regarding Britain’s actual war
position and a general expose of their ideas on the subject of a Balkan cooperation. Three weeks later came Winston Churchill’s proposal to meet President İnönü privately in Cyprus or wherever the President preferred. In fact, there was a thin ray of hope that İnönü would receive Churchill in Ankara officially, but Eden himself admitted that this was quite unlikely. Upon serious deliberation, Turkey informed Great Britain that the Conference would take place in Adana on January 30-31, 1943.

The fact that İnönü brought with him a crowded diplomatic delegation to Adana was an encouraging sign for Churchill. İnönü was accompanied by Prime Minister Saraçoğlu, Chief of General Staff Fevzi Çakmak and Foreign Minister Menemencioglu. The British side had an equally high-ranking profile. Churchill asked an impressive number of officers to participate, including the Chief of Imperial General Staff Alan Brooke, General Maitland Wilson, Air Marshall Drummond and Commodore Dundas. The presence of so many of Britain’s high military authorities and still more the fact that, despite a certain degree of secrecy surrounding the Conference, the Turks had no hesitation in including their names on the communiqué, were certainly hopeful signs of a more robust Anglo-Turkish partnership.

The conversations at the Adana Conference mainly covered three stages; present wartime circumstances, immediate war future, and possible scenarios of a postwar order. In order to secure Turkey’s ultimate participation in the war on the side of the Allies, Churchill promised large quantities of supplies and technical expertise. These preparations were regarded as a necessary preliminary initiative and an affordable price to pay for Turkey’s entrance – either on its own initiative or as a result of a potential Nazi attack. At the very least, “Churchill hoped to stretch Turkey’s neutrality to any wide

698 FO 421/329, R899/899/G (Eden to Hugessen, January 1, 1944).
extent in Allied interests.” He deemed it essential to strengthen Turkey so that it could either stand up if attacked or not plead weakness if called on by London for assistance. Various hypotheses were put President İnönü to indicate developments, which might affect Turkey’s position of neutrality.

Churchill made it perfectly clear that İnönü was left entirely free to declare Turkey’s own course of action. But he also implied that the promised materiel would be contingent upon Turkey’s entrance into the war. From the British perspective, Churchill did not ask for any immediate undertakings or impossibilities; he did not propose Turkey to come into the war if it did not feel ready, nor did he suggest that Turkey should do so in a way that would require exhaustion of all its local remedies and lead to disaster. These assurances, however, were accompanied by a clear message that, if the British government were to fulfill their part in strengthening Turkey’s defenses, Britain would claim the right to call Turkey’s assistance and “make a firm proposal [to join London in its war effort] when the moment was right.”

Churchill also emphasized that even should Germany not attack Turkey, Turkish interests would still dictate that they should still intervene in the Balkans to prevent anarchy. Without becoming a belligerent, Turkey might at some point consider taking the same position as the United States before the war, by “a departure from strict neutrality.” Thus Turkey might grant permission to use Turkish airfields to bomb Romanian oil fields, the Dodecanese Islands, and Crete. Churchill also stressed the importance of joining “the winners’ table to assure its security after the war,” and added

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699 TBMM, d. 7, c. 1, b. 3, s. 1-7 (February 17, 1943).
700 Ibid.
that “at the end of the war, the United States [would] be the strongest nation and [would] desire a solid international structure.”

Indeed, when the Adana Conference was held in late January, the United States had just emerged triumphant from Operation Torch — the largest amphibious assault hitherto attempted. Although this was a defining episode for the Allied forces in the Mediterranean basin, Operation Torch has occupied a space of lesser significance in historical memory compared to the more popular D-Day or the Italian Campaigns of Avalanche, Baytown, and Slapstick. Repercussions of the African campaign had been most profound for the Americans. Four US divisions now had combat experience in five variants of Euro-Mediterranean warfare: expeditionary, amphibious, mountain, desert, and urban. The inexperienced American troops of 1942 evolved into probably the most advanced army in the world, which had learned “the importance of terrain, of combined armies, of aggressive patrolling, of stealth, of massed armor,” and which now knew “what it was like to be bombed, shelled, and machine gunned, and to fight on.” Commensurate with its improved military capabilities, the United States became exponentially more involved in shaping the new Mediterranean diplomacy and balance of power in Southeast Europe.

Immediately after the Adana Conference, the US Ambassador in Turkey, Laurence Steinhardt, held a meeting with Menemencioğlu and dispatched a memorandum regarding possible courses of action in Turkey. In his report, Steinhardt accurately

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702 Ibid.
pointed to the “non-committal tenor of the official [Adana] communiqué, which was offset by the impressive list of high ranking officials who attended the conference.”

For Steinhardt, although the Turkish government had complete trust for the Allied cause, Churchill was missing the real point; that the fear of “a seizure by Russia of Straits was so deeply rooted in consciousness of all classes” that the Turkish people would probably welcome entry into war on the side of Allies “as assuring active support of the United States against Russian aspirations.” In his astute analysis, Steinhardt contended that the Turkish government was already convinced that the Allies would win the war and that it was in its best interest to join sooner rather than later. The most important aspect of Turkey’s postwar considerations was not about Germany, but a conviction that “Turkey’s only salvation from possible Russian aggression lies in such protection as she may be able to obtain from the United States.”

Despite a better understanding of Turkey’s security concerns, however, the United States did not step up as the main facilitator of Turkey’s cooperation with the Allies until 1944. This was mainly due to the decisions reached at the Casablanca Conference between the US and Great Britain, whereby “Turkey was to be considered within a military sphere of primary British responsibility.” This agreement was limited strictly to military matters and implied no recognition by the American Government of any British

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705 Ibid.
707 Although the news of the Adana Conference caused considerable consternation at the German Embassy, von Papen’s reaction was surprisingly mild. On his return from the meeting with Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu, Papen actually went as far as to express some satisfaction. No sign of serious displeasure betrayed itself until the follow-up visit of Sir Henry Maitland-Wilson in April 1943 to discuss Turkey’s deliberations after the İnönü-Churchill talks in Adana. In April, von Papen was summoned to Berlin and on his return brought a personal message from Hitler to İnönü. Rumors of another Germany-Turkish agreement, which reassured non-aggression between the two parties, were circulated in Ankara for some time; but these soon proved to be false. Source: BCA 30.11.1.0/150.32.16 (Prime Ministry to General Staff, November 25, 1943).
responsibility in the political and social spheres with regards to Turkey. But it was obvious that, after the Adana Conference, there was a certain degree of suspicion on the part of the US whether it had been a good decision to delegate their own responsibilities to the British and let them “play the cards with Turkey on their behalf.”

Against this background, Turkey’s new foreign minister, Numan Menemencioğlu, went to Cairo on November 5, 1943, to meet with Anthony Eden and secure assurances from Great Britain against a possible Soviet threat. In fact, Winston Churchill had already promised a substantial military assistance to strengthen the Turkish army when he met with İnönü during the Adana Conference. Yet for the military supplies to be extended, Churchill emphasized that Turkey should be ready to take action and enter into the war against the Axis. While some British assistance was dispatched in the spring of that year, when Churchill was contemplating on a new Balkan front with Turkey as its spearhead, Turkey found the initial aid quite insufficient to abandon its non-belligerent position. By the end of the year, as Stalin’s shadow began to stretch out from Erzurum looming over the Straits, Menemencioğlu went to Cairo and sought to feel Eden’s pulse, who was returning from Moscow.

In his memoirs, Menemencioğlu claims that when he met with Eden in Cairo, he saw “a deplorable image of Turkey in Eden’s eyes,” and that Eden was “guided merely

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708 Ibid.
709 FRUS, Vol. IV, pp.1057-1167, *Diplomatic Papers 1943, Near East and Africa* (Clarification of decisions taken at the Casablanca Conference regarding the respective roles of the United States and British Governments in relations with Turkey, June 19, 1943).
710 BCA 30.18.1.2/104.3.38 (İnönü to Menemencioğlu, December 13, 1943).
711 BCA 30.10.0.0/235.588.3 (Churchill to İnönü, February 13, 1943).
712 Ibid.
by Russian considerations.” 713 Britain’s need for Russian cooperation in their war effort against Germany seemed to have convinced Eden that “Turkey was the only suitable offering to appease the Gods.” In brief, Menemencioğlu felt that Eden was acting as a mouthpiece for the Russians, “particularly with regards to [his] questions vis-à-vis the future of Iran and the current regime governing the Straits.” The pressure on Turkey was building up when the Big Three held their next meeting in Tehran on November 28-30, 1943. Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt agreed that it would be most desirable if Turkey entered the war on the Allies’ side before the end of the year. 714 In return, Turkey was offered Soviet Union’s pledge for support. 715

On November 28, 1943, Stalin met with Churchill and Roosevelt, this time at the Soviet Embassy in Tehran. The meeting took place a year after Operation Uranus, when the Red Army had launched its campaign against the German 6th Army flanks and emerged triumphant out of the bloodiest battle in human history. That evening, Churchill presented the Sword of Stalingrad to the “steelhearted” people of the Soviet Union “as a token of homage from King George VI.” 716 Moved by Churchill’s emotional oratory, Marshal Voroshilov rather clumsily let the sword slide out of the scabbard, which clattered on the floor. After lifting the sword to his lips, Stalin kissed it and raised his glass, proposing a salute to the “swiftest possible justice for all Germany’s war criminals.” 717

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713 Numan Menemencioğlu, Unpublished Memoirs, 147. This unpublished manuscript was in the private keeping of Nermin Streeter, the niece of Menemencioğlu, before being loaned indefinitely to its current patron – Ministry of Foreign Affairs Library in Ankara.
714 Staff of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the Department of State, A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941–49 (Washington DC: US Gov Printing Office, 1950).
715 Stalin stated that if Turkey found herself at war with Germany, and as a result Bulgaria declared war on Turkey or attacked her, the Soviet Union would immediately be at war with Bulgaria.
717 Ibid, 419.
Commensurate with the insurmountable casualties of the Red Army, Stalin held the upper hand in Tehran. A sort of bloodguilt was prevalent in the British and American delegations’ attitudes, through which Stalin managed to manipulate the Western Allies into unleashing just the sort of counter-attack against Hitler that he had envisaged a year before. The conference in Tehran determined Allied strategy for the rest of the war. Churchill’s plan for an invasion through the Balkans was vetoed for sound military reasons and the Western Allies’ main effort was devoted to northwest Europe. But with this strategic logic, the fate of the Balkans was left entirely in Stalin’s hands.

During the second Tripartite Meeting in Cairo, held four days after Tehran, İnönü met with Roosevelt and Churchill to clarify Turkey’s position with regards to the war and pointed out that the real danger for both Turks and the Allies would be to enter the war without proper preparations. The Cairo Summit represents the peak of pressure on Turkey, when Churchill played on Turkey’s sensitivity regarding the Soviets and made it clear that the only way for the Soviet storm to abate would be declaring war against Germany. If Lausanne was İnönü’s first diplomatic victory in his political career, Cairo was probably the last. On the one hand, İnönü’s stalling tactics prevailed and the Turkish delegation returned home without giving any pledges for any fixed date of entering the war. On the other hand, the Turks realized that the end of their neutrality was near.

In Cairo, the suggestion that Turkey should enter the war before the end of 1943 was presented to the Turkish government with the arguments that Turkey would thus confer a great benefit on the world in general, and on Russia in particular. Moreover, the British Ambassador argued, a favorable decision would place Russo-Turkish relations on

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718 BCA 30.18.1.2/104.3.38 (İnönü to Menemencioğlu, December 13, 1943).
a “sound and friendly footing.” In reality, the Anglo-Soviet pressure as to the date when Turkey should be required to enter the war was due to the intense Russian desire to shorten the war by every means possible. But the Turkish leaders and diplomats argued that they could not simply go into the war “out of the blue with no other task than to stand alone in a menacing attitude while doing nothing.”

This position was vigorously maintained during the roundtable talks and tripartite meetings held in Cairo on December 4 and 5. President Roosevelt told İnönü that “it would be a pity if Turkey now missed the opportunity [of sitting on the bench with her great friends and allies – the US, Great Britain and USSR] because in a few months, perhaps six, German resistance would be broken…and it would be dangerous if Turkey now missed her chance of joining the English speaking peoples numbering, excluding colored races, some two hundred million souls.” As a response, İnönü expressed that throughout the war “Turkey had remained anchored to her alliance with Great Britain, and to the ideas later postulated by the United States...in this decision she had not been moved by any egoistical interest.” He added that although Turkey had been seriously considering collaboration with the Allies, and even “mobilized all her equipment, including those that date back to the Middle Ages,” so far the assistance they received from the Anglo-American coalition had been far from adequate. “What could the Allies give Turkey in two months and what could be carried?” asked İnönü with a fair amount of contempt.

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719 Ibid.
720 TBMM, d. 7, c. 16, b. 1, s. 1-7 (İnönü’s address at the National Assembly, November 1, 1943).
722 Ibid.
By early 1944, the Turks’ position was such that, they agreed in principle to enter the war, but they could not do so in practice unless they were adequately armed for defense and until a joint military plan of action had been decided. But the talks in Tehran and Cairo were complicated by two suspicions in the Turkish mind; the first was that they were being forced into the war regardless of the consequences to themselves in order to satisfy Russia; and the second was that their acquiescence would be advantageous to Great Britain’s air offensives via Turkish bases, regardless of the risks Ankara would run.723

Little secret could be made of the anti-Russian aspect of Numan Menemencioğlu’s efforts to encourage a strong Balkan bloc. In Cairo, the Soviet Ambassador, Vinogradoff, described the whole policy as being aimed at creating a barrier in the Balkans against Russia.724 Likewise, Saraçoğlu repeatedly advised his British counterparts that they should not only increase Turkish strength against Russia but nurse their own for post-war exigencies. Yet, British policy makers, with their eyes on pragmatic needs of the day, rather then potential post-war emergencies, refused to build up a joint defense against predictable Russian aggressiveness.

The Evolution of US-Turkish Relations

As early as the Casablanca Conference of January 14, 1943 significant differences between Roosevelt and Churchill began to surface.725 Casablanca was the first of the wartime meetings that determined the Allies’ wartime policy, the sole purpose of which

723 TBMM, d. 7, c. 16, b. 1, s. 1-7 (İnönü’s address at the National Assembly, November 1, 1943).
724 Oleg Rjeshevskii, Stalin i Cherchill (Moscow: Eksmo, 2010), 393-396.
725 BCA 30.10.0.0/235.588.3 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Report on Casablanca and Adana Conferences, February 11, 1943).
was to affirm the primacy of the war against Germany and to enshrine a Mediterranean strategy. In Morocco, a war weary Eisenhower sought to deal with his well-prepared British counterparts “with their red-leather folders and cocktails.” 726 In his *An Army at Dawn*, Rick Atkinson argues that no soldier in Africa “had changed more, grown more, than Eisenhower… he had learned the hardest lesson of all: that for an army to win at war, young men must die.” 727 While confirming the American determination to punish the Axis without mercy, Casablanca also demonstrated “the ability of the British to outmaneuver and outmuscle their American allies.” 728 Following the conference, Albert Wedemeyer told the War Department: “We came, we listened, and we were conquered.” 729 For Atkinson, perhaps Ike shared Wedemeyer’s sentiments to some extent, but he kept them to himself, because he realized in Africa and in Iran the inevitability of American dominion and that “the old imperial order was cracking under the pressure of global war, and the British Commonwealth could not preserve the status quo forever.” 730

Following a heated period of wartime conferences after Casablanca in 1943 – Adana, Cairo and Tehran – it became clear that the United States and Great Britain swept more than a reasonable share of their strategic differences under the Turkish rug. As early as the Casablanca meeting in January 1943, it was decided that Great Britain should play the leading role where Turkey was concerned, and the United States ambassador made a point to second this strategy. But once a proposal for a lease-lend agreement between the United States and Turkey was made to the Turkish government, İnönü

726 Ibid.
728 Ibid, 289.
729 Ibid, 290.
730 Ibid.
realized the potential benefits of a closer partnership with the Americans. US-Turkish
relations, which had remained relatively dormant until 1944 when Churchill’s shadow
still loomed over Ankara, developed significantly through private bilateral talks held
during 1944. Roosevelt was acutely aware that the Soviets preferred a neutral, weak and
isolated Turkey; and, therefore, much better appreciated Turkey’s concerns about the
post-war order.

Following the conferences in Cairo and Tehran in December 1943, the British
authorities thought that the Turks had gained the impression that only Great Britain was
pressing for their entry into the war and that a much less lenient attitude was held by the
United States. In late January 1944, Ambassador Hugessen tried to persuade his
American colleague in Ankara (Ambassador Steinhardt) to open a new round of bilateral
Turkish-American talks and try to disabuse the Turks of any such impression. Yet,
Steinhardt was dubious about this mission’s purposes and thought that the conditions put
forward by the Turkish government regarding arms deliveries as a prerequisite for their
participation in the war was “quite reasonable.” Having failed to soothe Turkey’s
postwar anxiety about Russian expansionism, Great Britain gradually resorted to stronger
means of diplomatic pressure and, ultimately decided to punish Turkey by isolating it
from its existing connections with the Western Allies.

As a first step, on February 5, the British Ambassador received instructions
directing the immediate departure of the British Military Mission from Ankara to
Cairo. All shipments of war materiel to Turkey were being suspended and the
Ambassador was directed to avoid any association including social relations with Turkish

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Ambassador Steinhardt to the Secretary of State, January 17, 1944).
732 Ibid, (February 5, 1944).
officials. No action was taken to suspend commercial shipments to Turkey because of a possible retaliation by the Turks with particular reference to chrome. The abrupt departure of the British Military Mission after several weeks of fruitless discussion as to the amount of war material to be delivered to Turkey was designed to impress upon Turkish authorities the extreme displeasure of the British government. Until late spring of 1944, there had been no noticeable change in Anglo-Turkish relations. The British continued their attitude of aloofness, and in return, the Turks adopted an equally distant policy towards the British.

In fact, the United States was equally perturbed by the economic assistance Turkey had provided Germany in 1943 through maintaining previous trade agreements. From the US perspective, bearing in mind the rapidly approaching day of reckoning, it was essential that the enemy should be deprived of all means of resistance.\textsuperscript{733} While the US government realized that breaking trade relations with Germany would cause a serious inconvenience to Turkey’s national economy, they agreed with Britain to the extent that any renewal of previous Turco-German trade agreements or the conclusion of fresh treaties should entail the application to Turkey of blockade measures.\textsuperscript{734} This was essentially identical with the British mutatis mutandis.

İnönü was not in a position to survive a potent Anglo-American embargo and agreed to reduce its chrome deliveries to Germany by 4,200 tons monthly.\textsuperscript{735} This was approximately 50 percent of the rate at which deliveries had been made during the previous months. He also agreed to substantially increase chrome deliveries to the British through Turkey’s accessible ports in the Mediterranean (since Aegean coast would be

\textsuperscript{733} Ibid, (April 16, 1944).
\textsuperscript{734} Ibid (April 21, 1944).
\textsuperscript{735} BCA 30.18.1.2./105.23.15 (Report on the Revised Turco-German Trade Agreements, April 4, 1944).
open to a possible German retaliation). The reduction in Turkish chrome supply to Germany ran against such numbers: 5,180 tons in November; 6,926 tons in December; 11,294 tons in January; and 6,752 tons in February. On April 21, at the conclusion of his lengthy address to the National Assembly on the subject of chrome, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Menemencioğlu announced the Government’s decision to cease all shipments of chrome to Germany and other Axis countries effective immediately, and to forbid the further export of chrome from Turkey.

The abrupt action of the Turkish Government in publicly announcing repudiation of its obligation to deliver over 100,000 tons of chrome to Germany, for which the Germans had paid in advance over the past year by delivery of war materials including tanks, airplanes et cetera made the Germans uneasy. In his latest aide-memoire, dated April 28, 1944, Ambassador Steinhardt informed Roosevelt that von Papen asked Menemencioğlu whether he should “pack his bags.” Having announced its intention to discontinue shipments of chrome to Germany, Turkey offered from 4,000 to 5,000 tons of copper to the United States. Coupled with copper, the decision of the Turkish Government in lifting the volume of chrome shipments to the US was generally regarded as implying that Turkey was now prepared more actively associate itself with the US, rather than Britain, in bringing the war to a speedy conclusion.

The US State Department decided that every effort should be made to capitalize promptly on the spirit behind Turkey’s recent chrome embargo. Roosevelt informed Ambassador Steinhardt that the ultimate objective of the US diplomacy henceforward

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736 BCA 30.10.0.0./206.408.6 (Prime Ministry to the Foreign Ministry, April 24, 1944).
737 TBMM, d. 7, c. 13, b. 1, s. 1-10 (April 4, 1944).
738 Ibid.
would be to stop all Turkish exports to Germany or Nazi-occupied territories. “Should this goal prove unattainable in its entirety,” Roosevelt wrote in a personal message to Steinhardt, “the minimum objective should be the complete elimination of all exports of strategic materials to the Axis.”

Roosevelt also realized that the wisest tactic would be to negotiate with the Turks on a comprehensive basis, rather than attempt to obtain Turkish agreement item by item. The State Department fully appreciated this new policy and added the vital necessity of increasing imports into Turkey from Allied sources in order to compensate for expected lost imports from Axis. While Steinhardt agreed in principle with this new strategy, he urged Washington to be careful and “avoid arousing extravagant Turkish hopes.”

He thought that it would be inappropriate to consider negotiating a War Trade Agreement with Turkey (comparable to those negotiated early in the war with Sweden, Spain, Portugal and Ireland etc.) since that type of agreement proved to be useful when the US was relatively weak.

In his private talks with Ambassador Steinhardt, Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu repeatedly brought up the grave risks that Turkey’s national economy was suffering with the substantial reduction in export trade of its most valuable products to Axis countries. Steinhardt admitted that, by requesting the real sacrifice from Turkey in stopping all Turkish exports of strategic materials, Great Britain put the US government in a position, where they now assumed a moral obligation to meet Turkey’s essential requirements to the fullest extent of their ability. Steinhardt argued that while Great Britain had so far advanced the convenient excuse of “military necessity” or “shortage of shipping” for not delivering armaments to Turkey, he asserted that this

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741 Ibid (April 30, 1944).
would no longer appease the Turkish government and envisaged three substantial benefits which the US could derive out of their improved relations with Turkey: (1) the incentive to Turkey to take further steps to cut off all trade with Axis (2) the salutary effect on the other neutrals and (3) the strengthening of the US postwar commercial position in Turkey.  

In a private conversation with Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Ambassador Steinhardt said that he could not follow London’s reasoning that maintenance of constant pressure on the Turks until the launching of second front (Operation Overlord) would operate as a threat to the Germans, now that the Turks cut all trade relations with that country. Steinhardt argued that Germany was fully aware of the pressure Britain had been applying to Turkey since February and of the subsequent aloofness in Anglo-Turkish relations. “Quite the contrary,” Steinhardt added, “a sudden cessation of pressure accompanied by a public announcement of an agreement between Britain, the US and Turkey, without disclosing the details, would lead the Germans to believe that the agreement perhaps even transcended anything that might be published regarding the details.” Steinhardt simply did not understand what the British would gain by telling Numan ‘frankly’ that by rupturing relations with Germany what they sought to achieve was diverting Germany’s attention before D Day.  

In outlining the Turkish view, Saraçoğlu seconded Steinhardt’s position, asserting that his Government did not understand and had been “hurt” by the British policy of

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742 Ibid (May 29, 1944).
743 Ibid (June 3, 1944).
744 Ibid (June 7, 1944).
745 Emphasis in original.
“sulking” since the departure of the British Mission in February.\textsuperscript{746} He referred to the fact that the Turkish embargo on chrome deliveries to Germany and the prohibition of the passage of strategic deliveries to German ships through the Straits had failed to evoke “any indication of appreciation from London.” He remarked that when he had sent cordial messages to Eden and Molotov, he even received “a most cordial reply from Molotov” and yet a very “frigid” one from Eden. He said that, all in all, his government had come to doubt during recent months that Britain really wanted Turkey to enter the war. In light of the relatively limited amount of war materiel previously requested by the Turks and the abrupt departure of the British Mission, “could the Turkish government be criticized for wondering whether the British were serious in their request at Cairo that Turkey enter the War?”\textsuperscript{747}

In outlining his views as to the part Turkey could play on entering the war, Saraçoğlu stated that the Turkish Army could eject the Germans from Bulgaria observing that he was convinced that within 48 hours after the Turkish Army entered Bulgaria, the Bulgarians “would shift over to our side.”\textsuperscript{748} Steinhardt reported that, after speaking with Saraçoğlu, he was now more convinced than ever that the Turkish government was “not only willing but anxious” to enter the war and that if Turkey’s entry into the war at some time in the near future was deemed desirable for either political or military reasons, this result could be achieved “if account is taken in London of Turkish susceptibilities.”\textsuperscript{749} Ultimately, the American government was persuaded that by offering Turks additional war material in quantities commensurate with the military operations, promising them

\textsuperscript{746} BCA 030.01.0.0/11.63.8 (Report on Turkish-American Relations, August 2, 1944).
\textsuperscript{747} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{748} Ibid.
that delivery would be made within the time agreed upon, assuring them of fighter projection and radars for their principal cities, the Turkish government would now undertake to enter the war as of an agreed date.\footnote{Ibid.}

By July 1944, İnönü was convinced that Turkey’s entrance into war became more than a necessity. Turkey was very much alive to the situation in Europe and realized that with the gradual decline of Nazi menace, the need for Turkey’s operational assistance was also diminishing. Churchill was holding İnönü in disdain and refused to advance any sort of conversation with him unless he stopped dragging his feet. At this point, one would question as to why the Turks did not declare war on Germany unconditionally. It had been over a month after the Allied forces’ landing in Normandy and the Turkish government did not even rupture trade relations with Germany beyond existing chrome deals and transfer of other strategic materials. In an informal meeting with the US ambassador during the American Independence Day reception, Saraçoğlu said that Turkey intended to make the rupture complete.\footnote{Ibid (July 4, 1944).}

Von Papen would be handed his passports; German diplomats in Turkey would be exchanged for Turkish diplomats in Germany; and all other German nationals would be expelled from Turkey with the exception of a few German professors who have been teaching in Turkish schools for many years whose anti-Nazi sentiments are well known and a few German Jewish refugees.

But even then, Prime Minister Saraçoğlu put forward three conditions a week later: (1) Turkey to be treated by Britain as a full Ally and not “as a colony…nor an
inferior country;”\textsuperscript{752} (2) Turkey to receive such assistance as the US and UK may find it possible to accord in connection with the disposal of its export surpluses, which would result from the rupturing of trade relations with Turkey and to provide Turkey with the commodities essential to the maintenance of its national economy; (3) Turkey to be provided with such war materials as US and UK may regard necessary to protect the country from a surprise attack. Saraçoğlu emphasized that the assurances to be requested by the Turkish government should not be regarded as conditions but primarily as a statement of the treatment the Turkish Government would expect to receive after having broken off all relations with Germany.

A careful examination of Turkey’s prerequisites reveals that the first and second conditions appear more trivial than the third, the ending of which was open to interpretation with regards to who would launch the surprise attack. While a German attack still seemed plausible from Greece, which was liberated in October, clearly the Turkish government was more perceptive about a possible postwar Soviet expansion in the Balkans now that Bulgaria was placed under Stalin’s map and Greece’s fate was left undecided. Whether or not Turkey would have declared war on Germany had Churchill’s plan for a landing in Greece passed in Cairo is debatable. But one thing is certain; it was unthinkable for an underequipped Turkish army to march into a war theatre in the face of the advancing Red Army, while German garrisons continued to hold out in the Aegean Islands. On the other hand, İnönü knew that, with or without US military assistance against postwar Soviet designs in the Balkans, any further delays in breaking diplomatic and trade relations with Germany would have pushed Turkey to a diplomatic cul-de-sac.

\textsuperscript{752} BCA 030.01.0.0/11.63.8 (Report on Turkish-American Relations, August 2, 1944).
Finally, on August 2, 1944, Turkey cut all diplomatic and trade relations with Nazi Germany. In his parliamentary address delivered at the National Assembly, Prime Minister Saraçoğlu said that for centuries Turkey was tormented by continuous warfare along with a pitiful sort of clumsiness and lethargy that doomed the late Ottoman Empire’s reigning Sultans. “In a country like this,” Saraçoğlu added, “peace could not simply be construed as opium for the masses, but as a noble dream towards achieving the Republican principles both at home and abroad.” He stressed that this had been the fundamental reason behind Turkey’s neutrality since 1939. He added that they finally reached a moment, when accomplishing the same dreams, this time required severing their trade and diplomatic relations with Germany, thereby departing from their non-belligerent status for the sake of national security. 

Hours before Turkey’s declaration of rupturing all trade and diplomatic relations with Germany, the US Ambassador in Moscow met with Deputy People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Andrey Vyshinsky to feel Kremlin’s pulse. Ambassador Averell Harriman told Vyshinsky that the US considered the break with Germany as the first step toward getting Turkey into the war as a belligerent as agreed at the Second Cairo Conference. Vyshinsky, however, told Harriman that he simply did not believe any useful purpose would be served by such a course of action and remarked that Turkey

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753 BCA 030.01.0.0/11.63.8 (Şükrü Saraçoğlu National Address, August 2, 1944).
754 British diplomat Sir Frank Roberts, who served as British Chargé d’Affaires in Moscow later described Vyshinsky as “a quick, clever and efficient [diplomat] who always knew his dossier well.” But Roberts also added that whereas he had “a certain unwilling respect for Molotov,” he had none at all for Vyshinsky. All Soviet officials at that time had no choice but to carry out Stalin's policies without asking too many questions, but “Vyshinsky above all” gave Roberts the impression of “a cringing toadie only too anxious to obey His Master's Voice even before it had expressed his wishes.” Sir Frank Roberts quoted in Arkady Vaksberg, *Stalin's Prosecutor: The Life of Andrei Vyshinsky* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 252.
should “now be left to its own fate.” The Soviets have evidently now decided to hold aloof from Turkey and refuse to recognize that Turkey’s break with Germany or even entry into the war come soon enough to be of real help in the defeat of Germany. Under this policy, the Soviets would get whatever benefits the Turkish actions might bring without paying the price of recognition of any obligation on their part toward Turkey in the peace settlement.

Meanwhile, on August 26, 1944 the Turkish Government informed the Soviet Government that it felt it had substantially complied with Allied desires and that closer collaboration between the two governments became plausible. To this, the Russian Government replied that Turkey’s entry into the war would serve no useful purpose and was no longer desired. The Turkish government then proposed a joint statement emphasizing the friendly relations between Turkey and Russia, to which the Russian Government replied that such a statement would add nothing to the treaties already in existence. In response to the Ambassador Steinhardt’s inquiry as to whether the irritation between Moscow and Ankara could be ascribed to the fact that Turkey was yet to declare war on Germany, Prime Minister Saraçoğlu said that since the rupture with Germany, no such official request had been made to the Turkish Government by the Russians.

Negotiations for a preliminary lend-lease agreement between the United States and Turkey had already been planned but ultimately had languished during the first four months of 1944 due to political differences between Britain and Turkey. Though the

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758 BCA 30.18.1.2/107.99.3 (Appointment of Cevat Acikalin, September 2, 1944).
Anglo-Turkish differences were somewhat clarified favorably in April and May, there was further delay in the lend-lease negotiations between the United States and Turkey. In view of the unfriendly nature of Soviet-Turkish relations, İnönü decided to reenact Turkish-American dialogue “as soon as possible” and appointed the Secretary General of the Foreign Office, Cevat Açıkalın for this mission.\textsuperscript{759} In October, Açıkalın informed Steinhardt that he had completed his discussions concerning the proposed mutual aid agreement with the Prime Minister and various parliamentary leaders, and that Turkey was now ready for a Treaty with the US “more than ever.”\textsuperscript{760} After the signing of the lend-lease agreement, İnönü delivered an exhilarating oration for the opening of the new parliamentary year on November 1, 1944. Having outlined Turkey’s domestic issues and economic hardships, İnönü asserted that during the course of the past year (1943-1944) Turkey had gone through “a rewarding metamorphosis” and found a reliable new Atlantic Ally – “the United States of America.”\textsuperscript{761}

Even after April 1944, when Turkey decided to repudiate its chrome agreements with Germany, the British government repeatedly protested against the passage of small German naval vessels and of armed German transports down the Straits. Consequently, the Turkish government banned the passage of both categories of German ships and applied a strict search on all vessels.\textsuperscript{762} On August 2, 1944, at the request of both British and American governments, Turkey broke off economic and diplomatic relations with Germany. Finally in October 1944, the British government resumed the supply of military equipment and notified the Turkish government that it wanted to maintain the

\textsuperscript{759} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{760} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{761} TBMM, d. 7, c. 14, b. 2, s. 1-7 (November 1, 1944).  
\textsuperscript{762} BCA 30.10.0.0/163.140.18 (Inonu to Menemencioglu, April 20, 1944).
Anglo-Turkish Alliance. The Allies had made it clear to the Turkish government that a slight increase in Ankara’s chances of UN membership would be both possible and advantageous; but that this was contingent upon an entrance fee – levied in this case “blood, sweat and tears.”  

763 BCA 30.18.1.2/106.58.7 (Inonu to Menemencioglu, August 2, 1944).
The end of a major war tends to produce the illusion of absolute security, the susceptibility to which the Soviet Union showed with its drive for hegemony in Europe between 1945 and 1953. As Soviet historian Vojtech Mastny pertinently described in his *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, regardless of what the root cause of the East-West tension was, plans for a sustainable, if not cordial, relationship failed in Europe following the Second World War. Yet, in places like Turkey that remained on the periphery of Europe, post-war euphoria made Stalin even less resistant to expansionist designs. In June 1945, the USSR sent a threatening note to Turkey, demanding concessions on the Black Sea Straits and the repatriation of three major cities in Eastern Anatolia, which the Russian Empire had annexed in 1878, and Lenin decided to retrocede to Mustafa Kemal’s nascent state after Brest Litovsk. Furthermore, by delaying the evacuation of Soviet troops from Iran, Stalin sought to establish in its part of Azerbaijan a client regime to gain dominant influence in this other historic area of Russian expansion against Turkey.

Looking at Stalin’s postwar frenzy and quest to lock in war spoils in the Near East and beyond, almost every Cold War historian in the field has used the somewhat polluted term ‘empire’ to define the Soviet Union. Vladislav Zubok, for instance, argues that the best conceptual framework for explaining Soviet motives and behavior is a “revolutionary-imperial paradigm,” which conjures up rather obsolete features of 19th century imperialism and an ambivalently messianic revolutionary (Bolshevik) code.
Likewise, for Yoram Gorlizki, it was a so-called “socialist-imperialist” ideology that led the Kremlin to encourage and orchestrate component SSRs, such as Armenia and Georgia, in their quest to regain some of their “ancestral homelands,” which now belonged to Turkey and Iran.\textsuperscript{766}

In many ways, it was Stalin, who disrupted the Yalta scheme in the Near East between 1945 and 1947, by constantly probing the Soviet periphery in the Caucasus, bordering Iran and Turkey, and by pressuring the Ankara government to revise the 1936 Montreux Convention. Seen from this perspective, perhaps the Soviet Union was an ‘empire,’ as Yuri Slezkine too puts it, “in the sense of being big, bad, asymmetrical, hierarchical, heterogeneous and doomed.”\textsuperscript{767} As the Turkish and Iranian crises of 1945-1947 demonstrate, Stalin played a significant role in the development of the Cold War, and in aggravating regional conflicts by sponsoring Kurdish and Azeri revolts against Ankara and Tehran.\textsuperscript{768} Yet, regardless of how one defines the Soviet Union, as an empire or otherwise, as far as Turkish-Soviet scholarship is concerned, the main problem in existing historiography is not about finding the right label for postwar Soviet ambitions, but with the assumption that bilateral relations ended \textit{abruptly} after the Yalta talks in 1945.

This misperception exists partly because the Cold War historians have been too preoccupied with questions regarding which one of the superpowers was more responsible for the bipolar order, rather than how exactly the Cold War began to absorb

\textsuperscript{767} Yuri Slezkine, “Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Socialism,” The Russian Review 59 (April 2000), 227.
regional actors, such as Turkey. But the underlying reason behind the problem has more to do with World War II historians, and their fundamental disregard of the Soviet factor in Turkey’s wartime diplomacy. Behind their competing prosecutorial narratives, Cold War historians from opposing views, such as John Lewis Gaddis and Odd Arne Westad, all seem more or less convinced that soon after the Yalta Conference, the short-lived honeymoon between Ankara and Moscow ended, there and then, opening a new, more troubled chapter – one that was reminiscent of the imperial times.\textsuperscript{769} A closer look into their bibliographies would reveal that their arguments on the origins of the Cold War in Turkey are largely based on the works of historians such as Selim Deringil and Frank Weber.

This brings us back to what the present work seeks to accomplish in the first place: to eschew the notion that the glacial rift, which divided Moscow and Ankara for nearly half a century, suddenly came into being during the heated Yalta talks at the Livadia Palace. The first two chapters demonstrate how both Turkish and Soviet leadership had stumbled into a series of crises even before the Second World War, and gradually floated apart after the Montreux Convention. Secondly, more than simply pointing to a question of chronological disorder in existing historical literature, this dissertation also seeks to address another important problem in scholarship. As mentioned more in depth in the introduction, previous works on the subject have at least one thing in common; they argue that the Turkish leaders’ precarious wartime neutrality

was an attempt to capitalize on what they perceived to be a European conflict, and that by simply avoiding the theatre of war, the country successfully emerged unharmed.

In their conclusions, Deringil, Tamkin, Weber, and Ataov all determined that the Turks showed themselves “self-confident and bold negotiators” during the Yalta talks, and that “they had real advantages on their side.” Frank Weber, for instance, suggests that Turkish diplomacy during the war, and particularly during the Yalta Conference, was “a brilliant accomplishment by all standards except those of honesty and integrity…Only thirty years later, when they invaded Cyprus did the Turks reveal that, after all, they had been dissatisfied with what that diplomacy had gained for them.” Likewise, Deringil suggests in his final chapter, which is acerbically entitled “The Turkish Gambit,” that from 1939 to 1945 not only did Turkey avoid involvement in the war, but “she was able to influence both warring camps to her favor.” During the wartime conferences, Deringil further suggests that the “Turks showed considerable diplomatic skill and resourcefulness” and led their Anglo-American allies into thinking that Turkey, now truncated and poor, was in more dire conditions than it actually was.

On the contrary, a closer examination of the Turkish archives suggests that, seen from Ankara, thousands of kilometers and a mental world away from Washington and Moscow, the future looked far less exciting than what appeared to contemporary historians. Two interrelated desiderata shaped Turkish diplomacy before the Yalta Conference (1) the country’s somber economic outlook and (2) the need for foreign military assistance against Soviet expansionism. The decision to request financial and

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771 Ibid.
772 Deringil, An Active Neutrality, 184.
773 Ibid, 185.
military assistance from Western powers was a fundamental reversal of one of the early republic’s keystone principles. Turkish political leaders, in their official rhetoric, frequently justified this reversion with Turkey’s accession to the Western collective security alliance – a path, which in their view, Mustafa Kemal too would have taken.

Keeping an army on a war footing cost Turkey 184 million liras in 1939, 220 million in 1940, 280 million in 1941, 313 million in 1942, 400 million in 1943, and more than 500 million in 1944.774 A British war correspondent aptly noted that ever since the outbreak of war in Europe there had been a steady increase in Turkish prices of basic commodities – by late 1944, ordinary living costs were 400 to 500 per cent above their 1939 level.775 For instance, sugar was over 3 shillings a pound; rice was 3 shillings and 3 pennies; flour 2 shillings and 9 pennies, butter 5 shillings and 6 pennies; coffee 9 shillings; and tea 3 shillings a pound.776 The price of clothes was equally high; a man's suit cost 35 pounds, a pair of hand-made shoes between 7 and 10 pounds.777 The 1944 budget, the largest in Turkish history up until then, was three times that of 1939. It was divided into two parts: (1) The Ordinary Budget, which covered all the normal expenditures of the State, including part of the total expenditure on defense; and (2) The Extraordinary Budget, which covered solely expenditure on defense.778

For 1944, the Ordinary Budget amounted to 547,573,725 liras (approximately 75,000,000 pounds). Of this, about 20,000,000 pounds was spared for defense. The Extraordinary Budget, which covered credits demanded periodically during the year for defense, amounted to about another 500 million liras. The total yearly expenditure thus

774 TBMM, d. 9, c. 18, b.5, s. 24 (June 11, 1945).
775 “Turkey To-day,” in Bulletin of International News, 21, 9 (April 29, 1944), 335-341.
776 Ibid.
777 Ibid.
778 TBMM, d. 9, c. 17, b.4, s. 22 (May 5, 1945).
reached about 1,000 million liras. 779 While the Minister of Finance claimed that they could cover this amount from regular sources of revenue (that no special measures of taxation were needed), this proved to be impossible due to the increase in defense expenditures arising out of the Allies’ growing demands for Turkey’s participation in the war effort.

The largest share of the defense expenditure was spent for the upkeep of the Army. There were 900,000 men permanently mobilized at the end of 1944. This represented over 5 per cent of the total population. The total number of divisions was 40 with an average of 20,000 men to a division. 780 While there was only a single armored division in 1943, the number of Turkish officers and NCOs that were trained in mechanized warfare increased substantially during the course of 1944. Nevertheless, by the standards of the principal belligerents, the Turkish Army was not a highly efficient force. Its main asset was the large number of rank and file soldiers, for the most part comprised of peasants, who were loyal to their officers, enduring, obedient, courageous.

The Turkish Air Force was regarded as part of the Army and was directly controlled by the General Staff. 781 Though numerically small, its fighter squadrons could have probably contributed usefully to the daytime defense of the Turkish cities if they were attacked. Turkish flying instructors had been trained in both Britain and Germany but, as one American observer noted, in the Air Force, as in the Army, the big difficulty was to get proper care for the machines from crews and ground staffs. 782 The Turkish Navy, on the other hand, only had a symbolical value. It consisted of a 33-year-old battle

779 Ibid.
780 BCA 30.10.0.0/61.413.16 (Report of the Turkish General Staff regarding deficiencies of the Turkish Army, June 6, 1944).
781 Harp Akademileri Komutanlığı, Harp Akademilerinin 120 Yılı (İstanbul, 1968), 26.
782 “Turkey To-day,” in Bulletin of International News, 21, 9 (April 29, 1944), 335-341.
cruiser (the former German Goeben), two 41-year-old cruisers, and a few destroyers, gunboats, mine-layers, mine sweepers and submarines.\textsuperscript{783} Some of the submarines and destroyers were modern British-built vessels and could have had a serious defensive value if efficiently manned. But the Turkish Fleet spent most of its time at its base in the Gulf of Izmit, and only occasionally ventured out into the Sea of Marmara for maneuvers.

Turkey’s state debt had also witnessed an enormous increase; from 620 million in 1939 to about 1500 million liras in 1945 (approximately £300 million).\textsuperscript{784} In other words, state debt had more than doubled in six years. While Ankara owed nearly all this debt to its own people (following one of the key early republican principles of resisting Western loans) Turkey’s mounting internal borrowings ultimately led to domestic political pressure. While the gold holdings of the Central Bank have increased from 26 to 195 tons during the same period (explained to the public as necessary wartime precautions), Turkey’s note issue had also increased, from 190 million to nearly 1,000 million liras. Therefore, the most serious affliction, which Turkey had to endure, was inflation. In spite of the measures taken to put a lid on inflation, Turkey’s “ill-organized and ill-conceived” macroeconomics continued its “tempestuous course,” as one Western observer aptly put it.\textsuperscript{785} Commensurate with inflation, speculators in every commodity, industrialists, and farmers, were all waxed fat, leading to gambling, ostentation, and \textit{nouveaux riches} mushrooming everywhere in the country.

In short, historians, such as Deringil, Ataov, and Weber, who argue that Turkey successfully capitalized on war by maintaining relations with both warring blocs during

\textsuperscript{783} Ibid, 46.
\textsuperscript{784} TBMM, d. 9, c. 18, b.5, s. 24 (June 11, 1945).
\textsuperscript{785} A.C. Edwards, “The Impact of the War on Turkey,” \textit{International Affairs}, 22, 3 (July 1946); 389-400, here 390.
the period under review here, failed to balance their positive assessment of Turkey with the somber view of Turkey’s economic outlook before the beginning of the Yalta Conference. Moreover, Turkey’s desperate need and persistent demand (mostly shunned by Western powers until 1947) for foreign military assistance against the Soviet Union in February 1945, paints a diametrically opposed picture than that of an allegedly successful diplomacy. Therefore, the moment from the beginning of the Yalta Conference in February 1945 until Stalin’s explicit demands for Turkish concessions in June 1945, which is an intersecting period under scrutiny by both World War II and Cold War historians, deserves more careful attention.

**Mounting Soviet Pressure after Yalta**

When the Big Three finally met in Yalta at the Livadia Palace on February 4, 1945, there was little room for doubt that Stalin would eventually bring up the Dardanelles question. Built from white Inkerman granite in 1911 in the style of the Italian renaissance from plans by the architect Krasnov, the New Palace was situated 150 feet above the coast, and, seen from the Castle of Sinop across the Black Sea, it glowed with a daunting aura. Now housing its most important guests, not only since the departure of the Romanovs but ever, the meeting quarters of Livadia were to produce results that would determine much of the postwar order; and the Turks, who were kept out of the loop, feared that secret protocols regarding the Straits could also be signed in those rooms.

On the eve of the Yalta Conference (February 4-11, 1945), both Great Britain and the United States hoped that Stalin would raise no questions regarding the Straits,
because in their view, the Montreux Convention had functioned well. President Roosevelt indicated that the US would agree to minor changes, if Britain or the USSR deemed them necessary. The US Navy and War Departments concurred. Major changes, however, were likely to affect adversely the strategic and political balance in the Balkans and the Near East and would violate Turkey's sovereignty. Bearing in mind the upcoming Dumbarton Oaks Conference, where the UN statute would be formulated, Churchill contended that the UK might also consider taking part in a collaborative attempt to revise the Straits regime slightly, if it were asked to do so.\footnote{786 Winston S. Churchill, \\textit{The Second World War, VI, Triumph and Tragedy} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 242; Harry N. Howard, “The United States and the Problem of the Turkish Straits,” \\textit{The Middle East Journal}, 1, 1 (1947); 59-72, here 68.}

Indeed, towards the closure of the seventh plenary meeting, on February 10 around six o’clock in the evening, Stalin abruptly changed the subject from postwar Polish elections to the Montreux Convention.\footnote{787 N.V. Kochkin, “SSSR, Angliya, SShA i ‘Turetskii Krizis’ 1945-1947 gg.,” \\textit{Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya}, 3 (2002); 65-75.} He said that the treaty was now outmoded, recalling that the Japanese Emperor played a big part in that treaty, even greater than that of the Soviet Union.\footnote{788 Ibid, 67.} The treaty was also linked with the League of Nations, which was now defunct. Stalin contended that under the Montreux Convention the Turks had the right to close the Straits not only in time of war, but if they felt that there was a threat of war. He said that the treaty was made at a time when the relations between Great Britain and the Soviet Union were not perfect, but he did not think now that Great Britain would wish to “strangle Russia with the help of the Japanese.”\footnote{789 Ibid.} The treaty, Stalin said, needed revision; but added that he did not know “in what manner it
should be revised,” nor did he wish to prejudice any decisions. But he made it clear that it was impossible “to accept a situation in which Turkey had a hand on Russia’s throat.”

In his evasive response to Stalin, President Roosevelt said that the United States had a frontier of over 3,000 miles with Canada and that there was no fort and no armed forces. This situation had existed over a hundred years and it was his hope that other frontiers in the world would eventually be without forts or militarized zones on any part of their national boundaries. Churchill engaged more directly with the question and said that Stalin had already reminded them of the Straits question during the Moscow Conference last autumn. He said that the British certainly felt that the present position of Russia with their great interest in the Black Sea should not be dependent on the narrow exit and that if the subject was brought up during foreign ministerial level meetings, Britain would support the Soviet motion. In the meantime, Churchill argued, “it might be wise to inform the Turks that the matter of revision of the Montreux Convention would be under consideration.” Churchill felt that this matter affected the position of Great Britain in the Mediterranean more than it did that of the United States; therefore he proposed a London meeting between the foreign ministers of the three countries. It was agreed that the next meeting of trilateral talks over the Dardanelles problem to be held in London, whereby the Soviet Government could reveal their position to the Turks more directly. Although the subject of Turkey’s postwar situation did not carry as much weight as, for instance, the Curzon Line or demilitarization of Germany, insofar as

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790 Ibid, 69.
Russia’s century-old Straits policy is concerned, Stalin appeared less resistant to Tsarist designs in places like Turkey.

As part of the Yalta Conference resolutions, Turkey finally declared war on Germany and Japan on February 23, 1945, but the Soviets started a press campaign against their new ally, and on March 19 informed the Turkish Government they would not renew the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Neutrality and Non-Aggression of 1925, because of changed conditions (*rebus sic stantibus*). The Soviet Ambassador absented himself from the National Assembly session that voted unanimously on the war declaration, thereby creating a forum for several American newspapers to debate that Turkey’s last-minute move was part of an effort to seek protection against possible Soviet designs on the Straits.793 Russian newspapers, on the other hand, held Ankara responsible for departing from neutrality and blamed İnönü for “granting permission of passage to German military ships through the Straits, the supply of the strategic materials to Germany, and espionage activities in Ankara to pass information about the USSR to the Germans.”794 Facing growing Soviet accusations regarding Turkey’s belated war declaration, İnönü gave a long speech in the National Assembly, outlining their reasoning behind a seemingly protracted period of Turkish neutrality:

The Nazis considered this war as an extension of the previous one and sought to pursue their conventional *Drang Nach Osten* policy through using us. In the early days of 1941, when both Vichy Syria and the newly found Axis government in Iraq moved from a policy of subtle innuendos to direct hostility against England, we stood firm against Germany and denied all means of transit to these two states through our territories. We did not allow it; and that was the Turkish contribution to the victory in Europe...As for the recent Soviet accusations, we should get one thing clear: when the Germans advanced to the banks of Volga in 1942 we moved our troops to the eastern Soviet-Turkish border and by doing so,

793 New York Times, (February 24, 1945), 1; (February 28, 1945), 18.
we did not plan to hurt Soviet defenses; on the contrary, we had to quadruple the length of our own defense line, expanding it from Rhodes to Hopa.\textsuperscript{795}

On similar occasions after the Yalta Conference, İnönü repeated Turkey’s caution to carefully fulfill their contractual obligations in their relations with their “big eastern neighbor” during a period that tested loyalties.\textsuperscript{796} Likewise, during another parliamentary address, İnönü referred to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, arguing that Turkey stood its ground and preferred to be neutral at a time when even the Soviets themselves deemed it necessary to shake hands with the aggressor.\textsuperscript{797} İnönü urged the Soviets to bear in mind that remaining neutral had been “a strenuous ordeal” for them and “required even a greater sacrifice than simply aligning with one or the other bloc.”\textsuperscript{798}

Before leaving for his ambassadorial post in Ankara on April 25, Edwin C. Wilson met with the new American President Harry Truman and told him that, given Turkey’s ill-equipped army, a serious situation might arise after the Soviet denunciation of the 1925 treaty.\textsuperscript{799} If the USSR desired merely a modification of the Montreux Convention, the Turks were likely to be reasonable and cooperative, but if it made demands affecting Turkey's independence, they would resist. Wilson argued that the US should support the Turks now that “Eastern Europe had been lost, and America had interests both in the Middle East, and, more generally, in world security and cooperation.”\textsuperscript{800} The President agreed and said that Turkey might need American assistance sooner than later.

\textsuperscript{795} TBMM, d. 8, c. 20, b.1, s. 4 (March 11, 1945).
\textsuperscript{796} TBMM, d. 7, c. 14, b.1, s. 8 (November 1, 1945).
\textsuperscript{797} TBMM, d. 7, c. 19, b.2, s. 16 (August 15, 1945).
\textsuperscript{798} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{799} FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta (The President’s Log at Yalta, February 10, 1945); III, 982-984.
\textsuperscript{800} Ibid.
Only a fortnight after the V-E Day, Soviet pressure on Greece and Turkey mounted. Anxious and vulnerable, İnönü instructed the Turkish ambassador in Moscow, Selim Sarper to ascertain the precise Soviet views about the possibility of renewing the Treaty of Friendship or concluding a fresh one. On June 7, 1945, Molotov received Sarper and told him that all outstanding questions between Turkey and the USSR should be settled before negotiating any friendship treaty. First, Molotov demanded that all territorial cessions under the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of 1921 should be reversed, since “they had been made under duress.” These territories – Kars and Ardahan – should at once be returned to the Soviet Union. Appalled by Molotov’s ultimatum-like tone, Ambassador Sarper scoffed that his Government was not prepared to reopen these clauses of the 1921 Treaty, which they regarded as freely negotiated. He also told Molotov that he “must refuse to discuss any question affecting Turkey’s territorial integrity.” Molotov replied that this issue could be set-aside for the time being, with the understanding that it remained unsettled. Turning to the Straits question, Molotov recognized that Turkey had acted with goodwill and successfully defended the Straits, but “a people of 200 million could not depend solely on Turkish goodwill in this matter but should also consider what were Turkey’s capabilities of defending the Straits in the future should the need arise?”

Bluntly, Sarper inquired whether this meant that the USSR now wished to have bases in Turkey. Equally bluntly, Molotov replied “Yes!” Once again, the Turkish Ambassador said he could not discuss such a demand either. Following a long and

801 BCA 490.01.0.0/11.60.11 (Republican People’s Party Secretary General’s Report, May 8, 1945).
802 Ibid.
803 Molotov’s personal notes confirm that Sarper was indeed appalled and displeased by the rough Soviet attitude in that meeting. See Derek Watson, Molotov: A Biography (London: Palgrave, 2005), 221.
804 BCA 030.10.0.0/268.805.14 (Prime Minister’s Office to the Foreign Ministry, June 11, 1945).
inconclusive exchange as to what effective guarantees for the defense of the Straits Turkey could offer; Molotov turned to the Montreux Convention. In principle, the Soviets wanted an agreement with Turkey before the subject was reopened in any future international conference for revising the Convention, arguing that the two countries, “regardless of the views of other parties, should stand together.”\(^805\) Sarper replied that, in his opinion, such an approach would not be helpful and could only arouse mistrust. The interests of other parties to the Convention should be considered. From this talk as a whole, Sarper derived the impression that Molotov was suggesting that, if Turkey would break away from its alliance with Britain, the USSR would not feel it necessary to insist on the these points raised. On June 12, the Turkish Government, with an official statement, approved Sarper's firm stand, and authorized him to say that the Turks were always ready to talk over possible minor changes in the Montreux Convention, so long as Great Britain and the US were informed of the whole affair.\(^806\)

In the summer of 1945, when Stalin began contemplating on using the Armenian card to annex eastern Turkish provinces around Lake Van, Armenians worldwide pinned their hopes on the Kremlin’s policies. As Soviet historians Vladislav Zubok and Jamil Hassanli conclude, Armenian organizations, including the wealthiest ones in the United States, appealed to Stalin to organize mass repatriation of Armenians in to Soviet Armenia – with the hope that the USSR would give them the lands “reclaimed” from Turkey.\(^807\) Between late 1945 and early 1946, the Soviet Union preferred to implement Soviet objectives in Turkey through Georgian and Armenian officials Stalin tapped into nationalist ambitions in those Soviet republics. Actually, these aspirations resulted, rather

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805 Ibid.
806 BCA 030.0.0.01/11.64.1 (Foreign Ministry Memorandum, June 12, 1945).
unexpectedly, in considerable tension between Armenian and Georgian SSRs. Armenia’s sudden prominence in Stalin’s plans vexed the officials of Georgia. They nurtured their own “national project,” according to which the disputed Turkish provinces allegedly constituted Georgian ancestral lands.\textsuperscript{808}

On December 20, 1945, Soviet popular press propagated an article written by two Georgian academics, which was entitled “On Our Lawful Demands to Turkey.” The article was addressed to appeal “world public opinion” to help Georgia regain their “ancestral lands,” which the Turks had been occupying for nearly a millennium.\textsuperscript{809} When rumors, which were circulated in South Caucasus that the Soviet Union was getting ready for a war with Turkey, reached Istanbul in early December 1945, there were talks of a war with the Soviet Union, fuelled largely by anti-Soviet nationalist demonstrations in the Sultanahmet square abutting Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque.\textsuperscript{810} Reporting on these events to Moscow, Soviet ambassador S. A. Vinogradov proposed to present them to Washington and London as evidence of a fascist threat. He also suggested that they could be a good pretext for severing diplomatic relations with Turkey and for “taking measures to ensure our security,” a euphemism for military preparations.\textsuperscript{811}

\textbf{Stumbling into the Cold War}

Confronting an aggressive Soviet Russia, Turkey could not maintain its precarious neutrality and began negotiating a stronger alliance with the West. From the post-war conferences among the Allies, two factors stood out as sources of apprehension

\textsuperscript{808} Zubok, \textit{A Failed Empire}, 40.
\textsuperscript{809} BCA 030.01/101.634.3 (Press Directorate to the Prime Ministry on Georgian Claims, January 7, 1946).
\textsuperscript{810} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{811} Zubok, \textit{A Failed Empire}, 42.
for the Turks: the exigencies of war against the Axis and the historic rivalry between Britain and Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this rivalry between the two imperialisms, it was the Soviet Union that the Turkish ruling elite most feared. Therefore nothing would have relieved the Ankara government more than President Truman’s proclamation of American determination to uphold by whatever means necessary the integrity of states endangered by communist subversion.

In 1947, shortly after the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, Cevat Açıkalın, Turkey’s former ambassador in Moscow who had also chaired in 1936 the Turkish delegation to the Montreux Convention, published an article in the journal *International Affairs*. In his article, Sadak recalled that the Soviet Union’s treacherous proposals on Turkey had been delivered at an interesting moment when the Conference at San Francisco was in session to elaborate the Charter of the United Nations, “whose purpose and principles [were] so eloquently embodied in the document signed on June 26, 1945.” Therefore, “while it seemed to the world that a ray of hope was at last shining at San Francisco…a dark and heavy cloud had descended on Turkey.” Açıkalın accused the Soviets of singlehandedly and systematically severing their ties with Turkey, “the most peaceful nation on earth.” Açıkalın concluded that, beginning with the Montreux Convention in 1936, the Soviets gradually intensified their “war of nerves”, and ultimately made propaganda in 1945 for the cession to Soviet Russia of the Eastern Anatolian districts. “We had once answered ‘No;’ it is still ‘No;’ and it will always be ‘No,’” added Açıkalın bluntly and said: “Turkey will not allow this new kind of

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813 Ibid, 487.
814 Ibid, 489.
‘exclusive friendship’ nor relations, which lead to vassalage, nor can she repudiate her relations and ties with other countries.”

In an equally anxious tone, Necmeddin Sadak, who served as the last foreign minister of the postwar İnönü cabinet (1947-1950), wrote a personal article for *Foreign Affairs*, explaining the underlying motives that would guide Turkey’s staunchly anti-Soviet diplomacy throughout the remainder of the Cold War years. Addressing “the average American [who] knows very little about Turkey,” Sadak argued that prior to 1936, Turks, who had been obliged to war with Russia seven times in the course of two and one-half centuries, had sincerely thought that they were finally “delivered from the nightmare of Muscovite imperialism.” For foreign minister Sadak, it seemed unfortunate that, as the war broke out, Stalin “too readily fell into the trap” that Hitler and Ribbentrop cunningly designed for Russia, and, even after the Nazi-Soviet war, despite Turkey’s desire to renew friendly relations, he “launched a furious campaign against Turkey without any plausible reason.” Sadak asserted that “Russia’s greatest regret was that Turkey was not occupied first, and then ‘liberated.’ Later on, the Red Army would have come to liberate her, as it liberated Poland, the Baltic countries, Rumania, Bulgaria… A lost opportunity!” Sadak accurately concluded that Turkish-Soviet relations during the period from 1936 to 1945 had gone through an ugly metamorphosis, making it impossible within the framework of Ankara’s policy to keep good relations with their northern neighbor.

Heralding the policy of containment, which would remain at the essence of

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815 Ibid, 491.
817 Ibid, 458.
818 Ibid, 459.
America's conduct in the Cold War for the rest of its duration, the March 1947 Truman Doctrine resulted in the delivery of military assistance to not only Greece but also Turkey. Ultimately, the new post-war government in Ankara swiftly took the necessary steps to anchor itself in the Western bloc and position itself as Europe’s patrol guard. In 1951 the Turkish Grand National Assembly passed a resolution to send troops to Korea and materialized Turkey’s accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1952.

Beginning with the exacerbated Soviet-Turkish conflict after World War II, Great Britain too realized the need to formulate a new treaty alliance in the Middle East to replace the now defunct Saadabad Pact, which had been the only solid structure to be utilized in the region should the need arise. During the Anglo-Turkish talks after Yalta, the British government reiterated their hope that the Iranian situation would not in any measure weaken Turkey’s commitment to their partnership in the Middle East. It seems clear that the British viewed Turkey’s regional power as the deciding factor, noting how remarkable it was, and ironic at the same time, that Turkey “in spite of her laicism and treatment of the Caliphate, should still hold among the Moslem countries of the Middle East, both great and small, so central and so influential a position.”

Turkey, on the other hand, seemed to have accepted her new position, not without a certain degree of amused surprise. Nonetheless, İnönü cherished no desire to turn this influence to practical account in any policy of external expansion. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, on many occasions, had spoken about the benefits which have resulted from the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire, and the fact that Turkey was now left free to develop its own national life for the people, “now united and homogeneous, without incurring such responsibilities as, for instance, the maintenance of order in Iraq,

819 FO 406/82, E 871/41/65 (Furlonge to Spears, January 21, 1944).
Syria or Yemen, which in the present European situation would [have been] a disastrous obligation.\textsuperscript{820}

\textsuperscript{820} TBMM, d. 8, c. 17, b.53, s. 8 (April 11, 1945).
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