

TURKEY
AND THE
WORLD

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INTRODUCTION
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TO THE MEMORY OF ATATURK

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mean the Danube, the Black Sea Straits, the Rhine, the Kiel Canal and all the inland water ways of Europe which border on two or more states. The United States proposed at Berlin that there be free and unrestricted navigation of these inland waterways. We think this important to the future peace and security of the world. We proposed that regulations for such navigation be provided by international authorities.

"The function of the agencies would be to develop the use of the waterways and assure equal treatment on them for all nations. Membership on the agencies would include the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union plus those states which border on the waterways."

At Potsdam, according to British sources, the three governments decided that the Montreux Convention should be revised according to present-day conditions. It was also agreed that the next step would be for each of the three governments to take up the matter in direct conversations with the Turkish government.

In keeping with this agreement the United States government presented a note to Turkey on November 2, 1945, proposing that action for the revision of the Montreux regime proceed on the basis of the following principles: The Straits should be open to merchant ships of all nations, in time of peace or war. The Straits should in all circumstances be open to war vessels of the Black Sea Powers. Passage through the Straits should be forbidden to war vessels belonging to other powers, except with the consent of the Black Sea Powers or in the execution of a mission under the authority of the United Nations. Certain changes to modernize the Montreux Convention, such as the substitution of the United Nations system for that of the League of Nations and the elimination of Japan as a signatory.

The United Kingdom government concurred with these principles and on December 6 the Turkish Government accepted the United States proposals as a basis for discussion. Turkey was willing to approve a revision "enacted at an international conference as long as it did not infringe on her independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity." At this time both the United Kingdom and the United States governments implied that they did not "want Turkey converted into a satellite state."

From December 6, 1945, to August 21, 1946, the Straits Question remained where it was. But there were other, unrelenting facets of Soviet pressure on Turkey. On December 20, 1945 an article by two members of the Soviet Academy of the Georgia Republic appeared simultaneously in *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, and the *Red Star*. These articles

claimed the Turkish territories of Ardahan, Artvin, Oltu, Turtum, Bayburt, Gumushane, Giresun, and Trabzond. These reaffirmed and elaborated on Molotov's earlier demands for frontier "rectification." Coinciding with Russian moves in the Azerbaidjan province of Iran at that time these demands were extremely significant and indicative of Russian desire for expansion. In reply to these demands the Turkish Foreign Minister, Hasan Saka, plainly stated that Turkey would continue her "policy of no claims and no surrender."

In January, 1946, Prime Minister Saracoglu expressed Turkey's feeling of isolation with these words: "Even deprived of foreign assistance, Turkey will not hesitate to fight against aggression."

During the negotiations of the 1921 frontier treaty (Kars Treaty), the Russian delegate stated: "We recognize the Turkish rights (to Kars and Ardahan) and invite other nations to recognize them." The Turks now reminded the Russians of this pledge.

Although there was an internal upheaval in the striving for a multi-party regime in Turkey, the Turkish people and the Turkish press were fully behind the government in foreign affairs. Ahmet Emin Yalman wrote in *Vatan*:

"Turkey is not Czechoslovakia . . . Partial Russian occupation first, potential complete occupation, and ultimate death . . . The Russians cannot split our unity with their time-honored methods because we know their game and cannot become dupes.

"If they use force we shall resist, knowing that we cannot count on positive help from outside. But the Russians must realize that any shot on the Turkish-Russian frontier may become the first shot of the Third World War because all nations are bound to awaken to the fact the Russian appetite cannot accept Trafalgar Square or Times Square as its final limit. Distance is no protection!"

Such feelings, shared by most Turkish papers, were prophetic in warning the west against an acquiescent policy in regard to Russia.

Alone, Turkey faced and resisted the Soviet war of nerves. While the Russian press and radio attacked Turkey, Russian troops advanced toward Lake Urmia near the Turkish-Iran border, and a Soviet supported "Independent Kurdistan" was established. On Turkey's western frontier Greece was threatened by Communist guerillas.

For only a brief period there was danger of subversion in Turkey: In 1946 important developments had taken place in Turkey. Inonu, under the pressure of public opinion, had acquiesced to the formation of other political parties besides the People's Party.

One of the new parties, the Democratic Party, was formed under the leadership of an ex-prime minister, Celal Bayar. Co-founders, of

the party were Adnan Menderes, a brilliant young politician, Refik Koraltan, an ex-governor, and Fuat Koprulu, a distinguished scholar. The Party, formed in the beginning of 1946, had by the summer of the same year become a considerable political force.

The People's Party Government, fearing this growing political power, prematurely announced that general elections would be held before the regular time, and the way they were conducted, especially in the rural areas, caused much dissension in Turkey. It was pointed out by both Turkish and foreign observers that the Democratic Party was confronted with a *fait accompli* before it had even had a chance to complete its organization throughout the country. Furthermore the People's Party organization was widespread and so closely linked with local authorities that it proved to be more than a match for the one-year old Democratic Party. Thus when the elections were conducted with coercion and intimidation in the rural regions, the majority in the Grand National Assembly (396 seats) was easily attained by the People's Party, in contravention to the real sympathies and feelings of the populace. The Democrats won 65 seats in "un-coercible" regions including Izmir and Istanbul.

Leftist elements, although very few in number, attempted to exploit this tense and unsettled situation; first to make use of the new freedom to spread their venom and then, if possible, to infiltrate the bona fide opposition parties.

Several magazines and newspapers (ostensibly Socialist and Liberal, but in reality Communist,) tried to undermine the public confidence in the established authority and also to hint that it was to the best interests of Turkey to seek a reconciliation with Russia. The Government could not reintroduce repressive laws to deal with these publications, but the Turkish university students, possibly with the tacit approval of the authorities, took the matter in their hands. On December 5, 1945 the offices of the pro-Soviet publications *Yeni Dunya* and *Tan* as well as bookstores selling Soviet literature were attacked and destroyed. The ferocity of the Moscow Radio and press in lamenting over the destroyed newspapers helps justify the students' attacks.

American Interest. If the United States was hesitant to come to the unequivocal aid of Turkey during this critical period, it certainly was not the fault of President Truman or of the military leaders.

Truman even during the first few days of his presidency had the courage and foresight to say to the Turkish Ambassador in Washington, and to the new American Ambassador in Ankara, (Edwin C. Wilson) that "the United States would go to the aid of Turkey if she

were attacked." We also read in his memoirs that as early as January, 1946, he did not doubt that "Russia intends an invasion of Turkey and the seizure of the Black Sea Straits to the Mediterranean." He wrote at that time that "Unless Russia is faced with an iron fist and strong language another war is in the making. Only one language do they understand 'how many divisions have you.'"

Also it was due to leaders like Forrestal that dispatching of a U.S. fleet to the Mediterranean was suggested. A gesture of friendship toward Turkey and a show of force in her support were evident in sending the body of the deceased Turkish Ambassador in Washington to Istanbul aboard the "U.S.S. Missouri."

But there were those in the U.S. government who advocated "refraining from such actions which might provoke Russia." The then Counselor of the State Department, Mr. Benjamin Cohen, even went as far as favoring a Russian base on the Straits.

In spite of the restraint and caution of some State Department officials, the trip of the "Missouri" to Istanbul served its purpose formidably. At a time when Turkey felt isolated and neglected, the battleship's appearance signified America's interest in her welfare and her determination to resist the Soviet Union. The American sailors were accorded a tumultuous reception and to the present day the name "Missouri" remains on Turkish hotels, restaurants, and movie houses as a reminder of that fateful visit.

Admiral Hewitt, Commander of the U.S. Mediterranean Fleet, (no doubt at the suggestion of the still hesitant State Department) tried to minimize the significance of the "Missouri's" visit by pointing out that it was merely a gesture of goodwill. But the Turks in general knew that there was more to it than this.

The Fleet Commander paid a visit to Ankara and had a long conversation with President Inonu. The official communique stated that he had conveyed to the President a message of America's goodwill. Whatever the contents of the message, or whatever was discussed, the Turks had the impression that, now that Great Britain was preoccupied with her own internal problems and was no longer as strong as she had once been, the United States was getting ready to take her place in the Mediterranean region and that Turkey was, after all, not as isolated and exposed as they had begun to fear during the past few months.

While the Turkish press hailed the United States as the defender of the Near and Middle East, the Soviet press first tried to minimize the trip of the "Missouri" as "yacht making courtesy calls," but then began to attack the "meddling" of the United States.

Russia Strikes Again. On August 7 the Soviet Government again took up the question of the Straits with a verbal note, which was handed to Turkey, the United States, and the United Kingdom. This note criticized the Montreux Convention, pointing out that Turkey had violated it and made it redundant in the course of the Second World War. In the note were specified the dates and details of alleged passages of German and Italian war vessels through the Straits in contravention of the provisions of the Montreux Convention.

The Soviet panacea to prevent future complications was contained in the following principles:

"(1) The Straits should always be open to the passage of merchant ships of all countries.

"(2) The Straits should always be open to the passage of warships of the Black Sea Powers.

"(3) Passage through the Straits for warships not belonging to the Black Sea Powers shall not be permitted except in cases specially provided for.

"(4) The establishment of a regime for the Straits, as the sole passage, leading from the Black Sea and to the Black Sea, should come under the competence of Turkey and other Black Sea Powers.

"(5) Turkey and the Soviet Union, as the powers most interested and capable of guaranteeing freedom of commercial navigation and security in the Straits, shall organize joint means of defense of the Straits for the prevention of the utilization of the Straits by other countries for aims hostile to the Black Sea Powers."

These "principles" were a real threat to Turkish sovereignty. They also threatened the delicate balance between the strategic exigencies of Turkey, riparian and non-riparian powers. In case of war Turkey could safeguard her neutrality by prohibiting the passage of all belligerent war vessels. However, if the war vessels of Black Sea powers were to be given free passage in time of war, and entered the Aegean and Mediterranean to engage the enemy and then withdrew through the Turkish Straits to the Black Sea, Turkish neutrality would be threatened.

Obviously Soviet Russia desired ultimate control of the Straits and Turkey "by joint means of defense of the Straits." Sensing this design, President Truman remarked at that time that "to allow Russia to set up bases in the Dardanelles or to bring troops to Turkey, ostensibly for the defense of the Straits, would in the natural course of events result in Greece and the whole Near and Middle East fully under Soviet control."

The Turkish government showed no sign of giving in or of appeasing

the Soviet government by any conciliatory gesture. One of the first things the new Prime Minister, Recep Peker, had to say was this: "The new government's attitude in regard to relations with Soviet Russia is exactly the same as that of the former government. This is a dry statement, but I am not issuing a sentimental declaration. Merely, we are going to follow the same policy as previous governments because it is not party politics; it is a national policy."

The Turkish government informed the American, British, and French governments of the Soviet note, and received immediate support. Truman instructed his envoy in Ankara to suggest a reasonable but firm reply.

The United States sent the first reply to Soviet Russia on August 19, pointing out, among other things, the following:

In regard to the fourth proposal: The United States could not accept the establishment of a new regime confined to Turkey and other Black Sea Powers. The regime of the Straits was the concern of other powers including the United States.

In regard to the fifth proposal demanding joint Turkish-Soviet defense of the Straits, the United States was firmly of the opinion that Turkey should continue to be primarily responsible for the defense of the Straits. Should the Straits become the object of attack, or threat of aggression, the resulting situation would constitute a threat to international security and could clearly be a reason for action by the Security Council of the United Nations.

America found it necessary to bring the Straits regime into appropriate relationship with the United States and was willing to participate in a conference to revise the Montreux Convention. The British note of August 21, 1946 was along the same general lines.

The Turkish reply of August 22 contained, first, specific answers to the Soviet charges concerning the Italian and German war vessels which had passed through the Straits during the war. Then, examining the five points proposed by the Soviet government, it accepted the first three points as a basis for discussion, these being, in fact, similar to the first three points in the American note. It refused, however, the fourth and fifth points. Turkey contended that to exclude non-riparian powers from the negotiations for the amendment of the Montreux Regime would "upset the broad basis and general harmony of the regime." As for the proposition that there be a common defense of the Straits, it was pointed out that this was inconceivable since it would limit Turkish sovereignty on the Straits. The Soviet government reiterated the same allegations and proposals in a second

note on September 24 and the Turkish government reaffirmed its earlier position in its note of October 18.

In her note of September 24, 1946 Soviet Russia repeated the accusations concerning the passage of German and Italian warships through the Straits during the Second World War, and stated that this had threatened Soviet Russia and caused her strategic worries in the conduct of the war. The Russian note also tried to explain why the Black Sea should be a closed sea and why consequently the Straits differed from such waterways as Gibraltar or the Suez Canal. According to the note, recognition of the special position of the Black Sea powers had precedent in treaties concluded between Turkey, and Soviet Russia, Turkey and Transcaucasia, and Turkey and the Ukraine in 1921 and 1922. They also contended that joint Soviet-Turkish "defense measures" would not jepordize Turkey's security.

The U.S. reply on October 9, 1946, pointed out that the United States did not consider that the direct conversations which might take place between any of the signatories and Turkey, contemplated at the Potsdam Conference should have the effect of prejudicing the participation of the other two signatory powers in the revision of the Straits regime. The note thus reaffirmed the position the United States had taken in the previous note.

Turkey in her reply of October 18, 1946, reaffirmed her earlier point and then replied to Soviet charges concerning the passage of Axis ships during the war. The Turkish government was confident that she had acted in good faith and in loyalty to the provisions of the Straits Convention. The note pointed out that thanks to Turkish vigilance, the USSR was able, during the entire length of the war, to remain in the Black Sea sheltered from every Axis attack coming from the Mediterranean. Commenting on the Soviet view that the Black Sea was essentially a closed sea and that this limited interest in it to those powers which bordered upon it, the Turkish note, first pointed out that Turkey was the first power to recognize the vital interest which free navigation through the Straits had for the maritime countries of the Black Sea, and they reminded Russia that Turkey could not forget, however, that she herself was also a Mediterranean country. Considering the delicate geographic situation which made Turkey a "liaison between the two worlds separated by the restricted space of the Straits," she could not consider the question of the Black Sea and of the Straits as a problem interesting the maritime powers exclusively.

Turkey did not accept the Soviet reasoning based on the 1921-1922 treaties as they were clearly superseded by the Turkish-Soviet par-

ticipation in the subsequent Montreux negotiations. They also recalled that it was Litvinov who had said at Montreux that "All those who have participated in the conference will go away satisfied, there will be no one dissatisfied." Again in 1936 both governments had accepted that the Straits Conference would not be limited to Black Sea Powers exclusively.

The Turkish note repeated point five of the August 7 Note and pointed out that "acceptance by Turkey of Soviet defense of the Straits would mean no less than her sharing her sovereignty with a foreign power."

The Russians were reminded that Chicherin, the Russian delegate at the Lausanne Conference, had protested against a proposal to take control of the Straits away from Turkey and had considered it "a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and independence of Turkey."

Inonu elaborated Turkey's stand in his state of the republic speech of 1946: "We agree that it is necessary to improve the Montreux Convention in a manner conforming to new conditions, in keeping with the methods and within the limits clearly foreseen by Montreux. We are considering with good-will that the Convention in question should become the subject of conversations at an international conference. We shall welcome wholeheartedly any modifications which take into consideration the legitimate interests of each of the interested parties on the basis of ensuring the territorial integrity and sovereign rights of Turkey. We are convinced with a perfectly clear conscience that, during the Second World War, the Montreux Convention was applied by us with the greatest attention; and the allegation to the effect that the Montreux Convention was applied with a bias in favor of the Axis Powers is manifestly unjust. We have nothing to fear from submitting our actions to examination and decision by arbitration. Inasmuch as concerns the question of the Straits, too, we perceive in the United Nations Charter every possible guarantee for ourselves and for every other nation concerned. So long as the clauses of the United Nations Charter concerning territorial integrity and sovereign rights are respected, no obstacle should exist to prevent the adjustment of relations between ourselves and the Soviet Union."

Thus Turkey stood firm—prepared to fight in case Russia pressed any further. But the Russians did not make any formal moves, either on the Straits question or on the question of the Eastern Provinces. The time-tested Turkish belief that if, in dealing with the Russians, one shows determination and courage, nine times out of ten the Russians will not attack.

One important result of Turkish resistance was that it served as a

warning to the free world of the true intentions of Soviet Russia. Turkey was no longer to be alone in the struggle—her struggle had become the struggle of the whole free world against a system which threatened it.