

(R 7368/832/G)

*Separate
Minute:*

Turkey: G 188/4/4.

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

SECRET

30th July, 1941.



By Sir Stewart,

994/97/41
Telegraphic correspondence is apt to present a situation in a somewhat disjointed fashion and though it may give all the facts, the general picture is absent. I am therefore taking the opportunity of the newly established fast air service to write to you about Turco-American relations and the exchanges which have passed between this Department and your Embassy regarding Turkey's position under the Lease-Lend Bill, ending with your telegram No. 3352 of 17th July.

2. It is not necessary for me to go into the background of the Anglo-Turkish connexion, since you know it much better than I do. Suffice it to say that our friendship with Turkey was, and remains, one of the most important political and strategic points of our whole policy in the Middle East. Though the Tripartite Treaty and its satellite agreements have not, owing to causes for which the Turks cannot be held responsible, proved as satisfactory as we could have wished, the Turkish alliance still affords us very great, if negative, benefits. To put the matter at its lowest estimate, our position particularly in Iraq and Syria would be very different today if Turkey had followed a policy friendly to the Axis instead of forming, as she has done, a barrier against German infiltration towards the Middle East.

3. Incidentally, Hugessen has recently sent us two secret memoranda from his Military and Air Attachés which show how close has been the collaboration between them and the Turkish military authorities, and how often the Turks have departed from the strict path of neutrality in our favour. To give you a few examples, I might quote the fact that several thousand Allied volunteers have been allowed to cross Turkey to Palestine contrary to Turkish law. Escaping Greek and Imperial soldiers have been handed

The Right Honourable

Viscount Halifax, K.G., G.C.S.I.

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over to the Military Attaché for evacuation instead of being interned. During the Syrian campaign we were kept fully informed of all material which the Turks felt they were unable to stop on the Aleppo-Mosul railway. At our request telegrams despatched by the German and Italian Consuls have been delayed or mutilated. The two Attachés are allowed to visit military zones and institutions more or less when and where they like (a privilege not enjoyed by other Attachés, who usually find that when they wish to visit a military academy it has been given a holiday and there is nothing to see!). The Turkish Air Force is practically run by British instructors, and the Air Attaché has direct access to the Minister of Defence, the Under-Secretary of State for Air and the Chief of the Air Staff in the same way as the Military Attaché has to the Chief of the General Staff. A striking example of the slightly more than benevolent neutrality of the Turks occurred at the time of the operations in Greece when it seemed that our Air Force might have some difficulty in getting away. The Turkish General Staff informed the Air Attaché that even though the Turkish Government would not allow our Air Force to operate from Turkish territory, the General Staff would, on their own responsibility, allow our aircraft to land at Turkish aerodromes, refuel and pass on to Egypt or Cyprus. Similar facilities were granted to Roumanian pilots flying their aircraft out of Roumania, and having to land in Turkey on their way. When German or Italian aircraft have made forced landings in Turkey the General Staff have immediately handed over all documents found therein, and permitted machine guns, ammunition etc. to be sent to Egypt for examination by our technical staff.

4. The Turco-German Treaty was, frankly, a shock to us, but because the advantages of the continuance of our connexion with Turkey were so great, and because we were still convinced of Turkey's fundamental loyalty, we decided that no alteration should be made in our policy as regards both military and civil supplies (see my telegram No. 3628 of the 29th June). This confidence has, I think you will agree, been justified now that you will have seen Angora telegram No. 1800, conveying the proposal of the Turkish General Staff for immediate staff conversations and the

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very categorical assurance that the Turco-German Treaty means nothing and that the Anglo-Turkish Treaty is the corner stone of Turkish policy.

997/76/41 5. I very much hoped, for the reasons set out in my telegram No. 3628 referred to above, that the Americans would bring their own policy towards Turkey into line with ours. Unfortunately, from your telegram No. 3352 of 997/97/41 17th July, it looks as if they are reluctant to follow our lead. Though they are prepared to continue supplies, they propose to step down Turkish priority to below that of the Latin American States. What this will mean in practice is hard to say in advance, but we are inclined to think that it might make a very considerable difference.

6. In order to make the fullest and most economic use of the production and shipping resources at our disposal we have been diverting to the United States many of Turkey's military requirements, some new and some old obligations outstanding from the time of the signature of the Tripartite Treaty. It was hoped that this procedure would enable us to remove the well-worn Turkish objection that Turkey would have been able to fulfil her obligations if we had fulfilled ours, i.e. to supply her with the armaments necessary to put her defences in a fit state to resist direct attack. Further, by giving the Turks the benefit of increased United States production, we hoped to enable her to oppose successfully the inevitable German attack if it could be postponed until the spring of 1942. Should the Americans step down Turkish priority, this whole policy will have to be reconsidered, since there will be little chance of our obtaining the armaments necessary to achieve these ends. Moreover, the chances we have of following up the golden opportunity given by the Turkish proposal for staff conversations (and one which may never recur) would be seriously jeopardised since staff conversations can produce little concrete result unless United States, as well as British war material is to be available to the Turks. The Chief of the Turkish Air Staff explicitly said that he wished the fact that the Treaty with Great Britain was regarded as the corner stone of Turkish policy to be as widely/
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widely known as possible, so that the doubts and suspicions arising from the conclusion of the German pact should be removed both in the United Kingdom and in the United States of America. Inevitably the Turks will come to learn of the altered priority, which they will take as a mark of American displeasure, and all the heartening effects we may be able to produce in these staff conversations by impressing on them the vastness of the United States resources on which they will be able to draw will be lost, because the Americans will have shown that Turkey is not to benefit from them except in a minor degree.

7. It is therefore a matter of the very greatest importance that American policy should coincide with ours. I am sure the United States administration must, on reflexion appreciate the very difficult position in which Turkey finds herself. She is a relatively small and underarmed nation, which has been progressively surrounded by Axis forces as a result of our military defeats in Greece and Crete. She is now also faced with the possibility that the Russians will be driven beyond the Black Sea, and that the Germans will demand permission to send troops through her territory. In spite of her dangerous position and the hopes she once had of staving off further German demands by signing the pact with Germany, Turkey has shown, not merely that she is not going to throw herself into the arms of Germany, but that on the contrary she is wholeheartedly with us.

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8. In one particular matter, in which the United States are vitally interested and on which the Americans have said their whole attitude to Turkey would depend, namely chrome (see your telegrams No. 8 to Angora and No. 3224 to me), their attitude appears to be entirely satisfactory. There have been reports in circulation to the effect that Germany was to receive chrome (very possibly put out by the Germans themselves to embroil Turkey and the United States, not to speak of ourselves), but we have recently received a further categorical assurance from the Turkish Government that this is not so. (See Angora telegram No. 1779). Moreover, Hugessen has already informed the Turkish Government that we propose to exercise our option
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and renew the Chrome Agreement for a third year, and there seems no reason whatsoever to suppose that the Turks are seeking to prevent us from exercising this right. As regards deliveries of chrome 65,338 tons have been delivered to us in the last six months, admittedly in Turkey, but this is in accordance with our contract. We have shipped 51,249 tons since the end of last year and 17,610 tons in the eight weeks ending 15th July, all of which has been accepted by the United States authorities. It is true that there has been some difficulty in securing Turkish bottoms to carry chrome away from Turkey. But it must be remembered that the danger of shipping from the Sea of Marmora, where considerable stocks of chrome are lying, is very real. Nevertheless it should be possible for small Turkish craft, operating within territorial waters to ship from Fethiye without enormous risk. There are 40,000 tons at this port and if the United States Government could help us to induce the Turks to provide shipping it would be helpful.

9. I hope this rather long letter will provide you with a text on which to base a conversation with Hull or Welles in an attempt to persuade the Americans to allow Turkey to continue to enjoy the privileged position she did before she signed the pact with Germany, and that the decision to step down her priority may be reconsidered. In doing so you will no doubt aim at presenting a picture likely to appeal to the United States authorities' imagination and be careful to avoid giving the impression that we are trying to order the Americans about. I am myself taking the matter up on similar lines with Harry Hopkins.

10. It occurs to me also that it might be useful if you were to talk to the various officials under you who deal with supplies and give them the general picture of our policy towards Turkey, though it would be best to omit the confidential information I have given you

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in the third paragraph of this letter and, of course,
all mention of the proposed staff talks. It is
they, who, by daily contact with their opposite numbers
should be able to convince the Americans of the
importance of continuing our policy of economic and
military support to Turkey.

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Arthur Eden