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SOVIET DENUNCIATION OF NEUTRALITY PACT WITH TURKEY

The USSR, whose expressions of dissatisfaction with Turkish foreign policy have been increasing during the past two years, has now informed the Turks that the current Soviet-Turkish neutrality pact will be allowed to lapse after 7 November 1945. In denouncing the present pact, however, Moscow officially indicated its desire for a new treaty embodying a revision of Soviet-Turkish relations. The chief aims of the Soviets are believed to be a more substantial coordination of Turkish-Soviet foreign policy and a revision of the present status of the Straits (Dardanelles), fortified and controlled by Turkey under international supervision in accordance with the terms of the Montreux Convention of 1936. Turkey's reaction to the Soviet move has been cautious and conciliatory. On 7 April the Turkish Government officially announced its approval of the Soviet recommendation for a new pact "better confirming actual interests."

Despite the "traditional" friendship between Soviet Russia and the Turkish republic, born of their common opposition to the west European powers in the period following World War I, relations between the two Governments have been often cool. A degree of estrangement occurred in 1923 when Turkey failed to support either Soviet opposition to the opening of the Straits or the Soviet refusal to recognize the Lausanne Convention governing the Straits. Two years later, partly in reaction to the dispute with Great Britain over the disposition of the Mosul oil district, Turkey again drew closer to the USSR, and on 17 December 1925 the two powers signed the Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship now being terminated. In 1936, however, Soviet-Turkish relations were again strained over the question of the Straits. At the Montreux Conference of that year Turkey not only failed to support Soviet efforts to obtain greater control of the Straits for the Black Sea powers, but made it clear that her sympathies were now directed toward Great Britain and the west. This trend culminated in the Anglo-Franco-Turkish alliance of 1939, of which the USSR openly disapproved.

Following the German invasion of Soviet Russia, when the preservation of Turkish neutrality was an important strategic consideration, the USSR joined Great Britain in pledges to respect Turkish territorial integrity and the status of the Straits. However, after the military tide had turned in favor of the USSR in 1943, the Soviet press and radio became increasingly critical of Turkey's wartime policy. The fact that these attacks have not been modified either by Turkey's severance of relations with Germany in August 1944 or by her declaration of war on 23 February

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1945 would indicate that Moscow's dissatisfaction is based primarily on political and strategic considerations rather than immediate military policy.

Judging by the past course of Soviet-Turkish relations, the chief targets of Soviet disapproval are Turkey's western orientation (as embodied in the Anglo-Franco-Turkish pact) and Turkish policy on the Straits, which favors their continuance under Turkish control as against regional control by the Black Sea powers. It is reliably reported that the USSR informed the United States and Great Britain at Yalta that she wished a revision of the Montreux Convention, and in February 1945 Molotov is said to have notified the Turkish Government of the Soviet desire to alter the Straits convention. Soviet objectives in the Straits appear to include control by the Black Sea powers, free passage at all times for the naval forces of the Black Sea powers, and closure of the Straits to naval forces of all other countries.

In order to institute such a regime, a revision of Turkish policy would be essential; in order to enforce it, there would have to be close coordination of the foreign policies of all Black Sea powers. A minimum requirement would appear to be a new Soviet-Turkish agreement which would prevent Ankara from forming a mutual assistance pact with a third power such as Britain, whose interests in the Straits might not coincide with those of the USSR.

While the Turks are expected to be extremely wary of any far-reaching Soviet proposals, they may incline toward closer cooperation with Moscow if an alliance were proposed which (1) would be regional in character and would re-establish Turkish prestige in the Balkans and the Near East, (2) did not entail concessions in the Straits endangering Turkish security, and (3) did not imply Soviet domination of Turkish political and economic relations or interference in Turkish domestic affairs. Much will depend on the manner in which the Soviets approach the Turkish Government. Threats would probably stiffen Turkish resistance.

Thus far the USSR has given no indication of aiming at exclusive domination of Turkey or the Straits. The test will come with the type of relationship which the USSR now attempts to establish with Turkey and the regime it proposes for the control of the Straits. Regardless, however, of whether Turkey chooses to stress her alliance with Great Britain or decides to shift her policy in the direction of Moscow, she is expected to maintain her advocacy of an international security organization as the best guarantee against domination resulting from an alliance with any major power.

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