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THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TURKEY

1. THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF TURKEY.

Turkey's basic significance to US security lies in the preservation of its independence and in the maintenance of its present status as a buffer against expansion of the Soviet Union into the Near and Middle East. Turkey is a factor of political and economic, as well as military, stability in the Near and Middle East. Domination by the USSR would not only facilitate the spread of Communism and Soviet influence and jeopardize United States interests throughout this region, but it would also increase the vulnerability of the communications facilities and military base sites throughout that area and in the Mediterranean basin.

2. PROBABLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS.

Turkey's future, largely because of political, military, and economic factors of great importance to the security of the United States, depends in large measure upon the Soviet Union. If Greece is saved from Communist domination, Turkey's position vis-a-vis the USSR will become less precarious although by no means impregnable. The USSR will not lessen its efforts to dominate the Straits nor, presumably, its claims on northeastern Turkey—steps important in themselves but only preliminary to domination of the whole country and the consequent attainment of a base for stepping up penetration of the Near and Middle East.

Soviet pressure on Turkey will vary, but domination by the USSR is not likely to be abandoned as a major long-term purpose, even if the Kremlin is faced with such determined resistance as to make expedient a temporary relaxation of its pressure.

Politically, Turkey not only opposes Communist penetration and Soviet influence but is also making determined and successful efforts to develop its democratic processes. The American Aid Program has greatly encouraged the Turkish policy of close association with the US and UK and of adherence to the UN. Economically, also, Turkey's importance to US security arises principally from its stubborn resistance to Soviet penetration into regions where the US has valuable oil concessions and other interests. Militarily, an independent Turkey serves as a deterrent to Soviet aggression.

The current American Aid Program, by its direct manifestation of sympathy and material support, has already done much to bolster Turkish self-assurance. In the event of attack, the Turkish armed forces—rendered more capable with US aid—may be enabled to prolong the period of initial resistance until their allies have had time to activate bases in the Near and Middle East from which to support the Turks.

Continued Western support, providing not only for military contingencies but also for economic rehabilitation, will further contribute to the political, economic, and military security of the Turkish bastion, already an important stabilizing factor in the

Note: This paper has been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and Air Forces.

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area. Such support will insure effective Turkish participation in the establishment of world security and economic stability.

3. POLITICAL SITUATION.

The Turkish political regime is fundamentally both stable and secure. With very rare exceptions, the entire people wholeheartedly support the government's conduct of foreign relations, while in internal affairs almost all the Turks are agreed that their republican regime must be cherished and allowed to evolve in the democratic pattern established by its founder, the late Kamal Ataturk, and developed by his successor, President Inonu.

The only real threat to the security of the republic lies in the constant pressure exerted upon the Turks by the USSR in its desire to dominate Turkey and the Straits. The Turkish Government and people, however, remain adamant against any such threat of infringement of their national independence and territorial integrity, and they support the government's policy of maintaining large forces under arms, although the financial and economic burden is exceedingly heavy. The Turks are not susceptible to propaganda emanating from their traditional enemy. Effectuation of the basic principles of Communism is illegal in Turkey. There is, therefore, no legal Communist Party there, and such few subversive and anti-government groups as do exist are weak and effectively controlled by the police and security services.

Until 1945, Turkey was ruled by a one-party government. The Turks then began issuing licenses to other political groups whose declared purposes were judged to be consistent with the principles of the republican constitution. One major opposition group, the Democratic Party, has emerged. In the 1946 national elections it was well supported, and the constant weight of its criticism—together with pressure from within the government (People's Republican) party—recently forced the inflexible Premier Peker to resign and make way for a more moderate government under Hasan Saka, which has already shown signs of being more tolerant of legitimate opposition criticism.

Differences between the two major parties arise chiefly over the direction of internal, and particularly economic, affairs. The Democrats, for example, insist upon the liberalization of certain restrictive laws which they regard as unconstitutional. They claim that the government exercises arbitrary control over the press, and they demand less partiality in electoral procedures. The government is charged with ineptitude in its handling of economic affairs and with failure to halt the rising cost of living. The government's contention, on the other hand, has been that until the danger from abroad is ended, certain wartime restrictions and controls must be retained.

President Inonu tries to curb excesses of both parties and continues to guide the nation in the evolution of its democratic processes. In this purpose, as in the policy of resistance to Soviet pressure, he has the almost unanimous support of the Turkish people. Direct US aid, now in the process of application, has strengthened Turkish self-confidence and has raised US prestige to a high level.

4. ECONOMIC SITUATION.

While the Turks are faced with difficult economic problems, the fact that Turkey was neutral during most of World War II and was never an active belligerent has re-

sulted in a relatively stable economy. Turkey adheres to the etatist principle of state control and direction of the national economy, and has developed plans for further industrialization, increased agricultural and mineral production, and the reconstruction of transport and communication facilities.

Turkey's chief economic difficulty arises from the expense of maintaining large forces under arms—a precautionary measure resulting from Soviet ambitions to dominate Turkey. The severe drain of national defense appropriations upon the budget hampers the execution of the economic reform programs. Moreover, large numbers of men who would normally be contributing to the national income must be supported by the government as members of the armed forces. US aid, therefore, is aimed not only at improving Turkey's military capabilities but also at easing the financial burden of maintaining the armed forces.

Another economic problem is the cost of living, which has been rising for some years and is now several times the prewar level. Considerable hardship is caused to many workers, particularly in urban centers, where wages have lagged far behind prices. There are no labor troubles; however, the government encourages the formation of labor syndicates but keeps them under rigid control. Turkey is primarily an agricultural state, with four-fifths of its population dependent upon agricultural pursuits for a living. It has no unemployment problem.

Turkey's foreign trade has increased since the end of hostilities. Figures showing the increased value of exports, however, may be misleading because of the devaluation of the Turkish pound in terms of foreign currency in September 1946. The increased volume of imports consists largely of industrial or producers' goods, the alleviating effect of which upon the national price structure must necessarily be slow.

Implementation of the government's programs for rehabilitation and development will require foreign exchange, which is immediately available for little more than current trade needs. Although the government holds stocks of gold sufficient for a currency reserve and for emergency use, it has recently been converting gold into dollars for the purchase of producers' goods, a process which it is reluctant to continue. The government is even more unwilling to permit a large increase in the amount of currency in circulation or to resort to dangerous inflationary measures.

Turkey's plans for strengthening its industrial economy will therefore depend largely upon the amount of foreign exchange which becomes available, either through Turkey's membership in the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development or from some other foreign source. This situation will continue so long as Turkey feels compelled to maintain its present burdensome national defense structure.

5. FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

The conduct of Turkey's foreign affairs is largely governed by one predominant factor—the threat of Soviet domination. Determined to resist the USSR's demands for a dominant role in the defense and control of the Straits, as well as for territory in northeastern Turkey, the Turks seek to counter the continuing pressure upon them by basing their foreign relations upon the following four major policies:

- a. Cooperative assistance in strengthening the United Nations;
- b. Continued, and even increased, US support of Turkey;

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- c. Maintenance of the alliance with the United Kingdom; and,
- d. Establishment and maintenance of friendship with all nations, including the USSR.

With the realization that their British allies must adopt a policy of retrenchment in the Near and Middle East, the Turks are increasingly dependent upon the US for support. They have been greatly heartened by the provision of US aid which, apart from its intrinsic value, is regarded by them as a sure sign that Turkey is not alone in resisting Soviet pressure.

In an effort to counter the menace of Soviet penetration into the Middle East, the Turks have recently been strengthening their relations with Arab states to the south. Pacts of friendship with Iraq and Transjordan, which are non-military in character and not intended to involve Turkey in controversial Arab League affairs, have been concluded. Relations with Syria and Lebanon have been improved by Turkey's recognition of the independence of those states, although the currently quiescent problem of the Hatay* remains a potential source of serious friction. An additional factor contributing to the stability of the Middle East is the 1937 Pact of Saadabad, which although not now a powerful instrument, remains in force, and provides for collaboration and consultation among Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

The Government of Iran, in its efforts to avoid falling under Soviet influence, has the cordial sympathy of the Turks. Similarly, the Turks view with friendly anxiety Greece's prolonged struggle to avert Communist-USSR domination. The Turks are fully aware that the fall of Greece, or of Iran, would seriously endanger the security of their own country.

In its foreign commercial relations, Turkey is slowly concluding trade and payment, as well as civil air, agreements with a number of countries. The greatest difficulty lies in replacing the lost trade with Germany—in prewar years Turkey's largest source of supply and chief customer.

6. MILITARY SITUATION.

The Turkish armed forces are maintained and disposed with a view to deterring and, if necessary, countering an attack from the USSR and the Soviet-dominated Balkans. The most recent estimate indicates that there are approximately 555,000 men under arms—about one in six of all male Turks between the ages of 19 and 44, inclusive.

The Turkish armed forces alone could not long withstand a major USSR or USSR-satellite attack. Upon implementation, however, of the American Aid Program to modernize and strengthen the armed forces, the period of such resistance might well be sufficiently prolonged for Turkey's allies to activate valuable bases in the Near and Middle East, from which attacks could be directed upon the enemy's vulnerable targets.

The courage, patriotism, and discipline of the Turkish soldiers are of a high order. Improvement, under the American Aid Program, of the Army, Navy, and Air Force

*Hatay is a Turkish province on the Syrian border, awarded to the Turks in 1939 by the mandatory power, France. Syria has never recognized Turkey's sovereignty over Hatay, with its valuable harbor at Iskenderun (Alexandretta).

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training, standards, organization, and equipment will enhance the military potentialities of both officers and enlisted men, whose physical and psychological qualities are basically sound.

Turkey by itself can provide sufficient food to maintain large forces in the field, even if substantial portions of the country are cut off in the initial stage of combat. For military industrial production, however, the Turks will remain largely dependent upon foreign sources of supply for a long time.

The weapons of the armed forces are a mixture of German, British, French, Czech, and other types of assorted calibers, many of them obsolescent. The American Aid Program seeks to remedy this defect by enabling the Turks to initiate their program of standardization of equipment. The program also provides for some improvement of the logistical situation by assisting in the construction of greatly needed strategic roads, and for increasing indigenous production of war materiel through supplying equipment for Turkish arsenals.

Implementation of the current aid program will, therefore, improve the mobility and firepower of the Turkish Army. It is designed not only at improving Turkey's ground, sea, and air forces, but also at easing the economic burden of building and maintaining an increasingly efficient war potential.

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