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# The Preservation of Turkey's Neutrality During the Second World War: 1940\*

*Selim Deringil*

On 19 October 1939, the Turkish Republic signed a treaty of Mutual Assistance with Britain and France. But leaders like President İnönü and the close circle of foreign policy advisers around him knew that Turkey was in no condition to take part in any modern war.<sup>1</sup> She was only just beginning to heal the wounds left by the continuous wars from 1909 to 1923, when the Republic had been founded. Therefore, Turkey had to be kept out of the war, and yet her sovereignty and territorial integrity safeguarded. This brought forth from the Turkish leaders at the time, a most remarkable feat of diplomacy. Despite her vital strategic location Turkey managed to avoid involvement in the worldwide upheaval.

The most critical stage of the war for Turkey was 1940, as this year presented the Turkish foreign policy planners with great difficulty in the application of their policies. It was a year of severe crises and unforeseen events. 'When the Turks, the French and the British signed an alliance it was impossible to foresee either the German successes in Western Europe and the developments which brought the Axis to the very doors of Turkey, or the threat of complete hostile encirclement . . .'<sup>2</sup> In the previous year during the treaty negotiations the British had spoken in terms of the 'Maginot line' and the French having 'the best existing land defences in the world', this making 'a direct attack on France most unlikely'. They had also spoken of a 'Polish Offensive in the East'.<sup>3</sup> In view of what actually happened it was hardly surprising that the Turks kept their reserve.

It is no more surprising that Turkey, 'was not even ready to allow the indispensable naval and air bases to be prepared in her territory'.<sup>4</sup> The British and Turks approached the Alliance with completely contradictory viewpoints. To the Turks it was an insurance policy to be put into practice only in case of dire need, while for the British it was a means of effective action in the Balkans and Middle East. Barutçu quotes İnönü as saying at the time:

'The aim of Turkey is [in the case of British entry into the war. . .] to remain out as long as possible. For us this is the ideal . . . Turkey is now no longer alone, she has insured herself with the world's strongest insurance firm . . . For us war is out of the question unless we are left absolutely no choice . . .'<sup>5</sup>

This contradiction did not become obvious until later in the war, because the Turks managed to obscure the issues with what were ostensibly credible arguments of military weakness, which the British had to take at face value. Faced with a situation in which they found themselves powerless to insist on

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Turkish compliance, the British had to acquiesce none too willingly in the view that they approved of Turkey's actions.

The Germans, on the other hand like the British, seemed to fail to appreciate the true nature of the Anglo-Turkish treaty. To them (no doubt due to British design), the Anglo-Turkish treaty seemed to pose a very real threat. They sought therefore to restrict its scope. On 14 March the German Ambassador Von Papen proposed to İnönü a German-Turkish treaty including a statement from the Turkish Government that Turkey would defend its neutrality, 'even with the force of arms' against the Allies.<sup>6</sup> The British Foreign Office felt that the Germans feared the Allies would be granted facilities in Thrace, the Straits, or the Caucasus even when Turkey was not a belligerent.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE BAKU AFFAIR AND RUSSO-TURKISH RELATIONS

This question of 'facilities' was also prominent in what was one of the most ambiguous episodes of the early war years: the projected bombardment of the Russian oilfields at Baku in the Caucasus. The Russian gains in Poland, the Baltic States and Finland worried the French who now looked for some way of crippling Russia's war potential by opening a theatre of war geographically distant from France. Also Baku oil was being exported to Germany. Between January 1940 and June 1941, the Soviets delivered sixteen million barrels of oil to Germany. The Germans had hoped to share in the exploitation of Soviet oil but Stalin was not willing to go so far.<sup>8</sup> The French felt Baku could only be hit by aerial attack. A study of the problem commissioned by Edouard Daladier and prepared by General Weygand and Admiral Darlan was completed by 22 February 1940. The study entitled 'sur une intervention éventuelle pour la destruction des pétroles russes' concluded that such an attack would seriously disrupt Soviet organization.<sup>9</sup> It soon became obvious however, that Turkish cooperation was essential to any undertaking of this nature. When the French studied the question in conjunction with the British at the Supreme War Council meeting of 28 March 1940 it was decided that, 'Action by the Allies would necessarily depend on the attitude of Turkey'.<sup>10</sup> Although Paul Reynaud felt the Turks would not countenance a naval action in the Black Sea, he put forward evidence that aerial attacks would not be subject to the same objections. This evidence consisted of a report from the French Ambassador in Ankara in which the latter recounted a conversation with Saracoğlu on this matter.<sup>11</sup> The Ambassador reported that Saracoğlu had 'spontaneously' broached the subject and said the Russians were worried about such an attack. Massigli upon being requested to comment had pointed out that any such operation would involve Allied aircraft flying over the territory of Iran or Turkey. To this Saracoğlu had replied by asking: 'Do you fear a protest from Iran?'<sup>12</sup> The Ambassador therefore concluded that there would be no objections from Turkey but that it would have been indiscreet on his part to press the Foreign Minister further. He recommended that if such an attack was planned it should be undertaken without Turkish authorization, no request being made to Ankara, thus enabling Turkey to plead *fait accompli* in the face of Russian reproaches.<sup>13</sup> On the whole the British were at best

lukewarm on the idea. Although a Foreign Office report dated 25 March mentioned that a way had to be found 'of disabling Germany's only ally', and the Chiefs of Staff saw Baku oil as the 'Achilles heel' of the USSR; Chamberlain felt the plan had too many flaws.<sup>14</sup> The major consideration for their lack of enthusiasm was the Turkish attitude. Alexander Cadogan wrote on 23 March, 'The weak point in the scheme . . . is that so far as I can judge we should forfeit the assistance of Turkey. Turkey might wink at us flying over Turkish territory but if we "aggress" in this way that will give her a splendid excuse (which I think she would be glad of) for not coming into the war . . .'. Halifax wrote to Cadogan on 25 March that Britain would be doing herself a 'great injury' if she 'fell foul' of the Turks on this issue, he felt that the French report was 'painted in rather attractive colours'.<sup>15</sup> His own information from his Ambassador in the field, Hugessen, did not tally with the French version. Hugessen reported that Turkey was not yet ready for such a move.<sup>16</sup> Indeed the British were extremely aware of Turkey's importance for them. During the meeting of the Chiefs of Staff with the Ambassadors to the Balkan countries on 26 March it was decided that, 'Turkey is the northern bastion of our position in the Middle East . . .'. The same men stated on 8 April, 'It is of vital importance that we retain Turkey as an ally . . .'.<sup>17</sup> These considerations plus the German success in Norway and its consequences ruled out of practical consideration the project of an attack on Caucasian oilfields.

The true nature of this episode remains unclear. It is unlikely that a man as cautious as İnönü would have approved such a venture. Yet Professor Fahir Armaoğlu states, 'Although Turkey did not oppose the plan (of bombing Baku) she did not give official authorization to overfly her territory. In other words, the Allied planes were to have flown over Turkish territory without her knowledge.'<sup>18</sup> The evidence tends to imply that Saracoğlu who was somewhat given to making off the cuff remarks, and whose recent humiliations in Moscow still rankled, may have given Massigli the impression he got, which the latter as a dutiful career diplomat reported to Paris.<sup>19</sup> Aydemir likens this episode to the First World War situation when an ill-considered bombardment of Russian ports by the *Yavuz* and *Hamidive*, ex *Goeben* and *Breslau*, involved Turkey in war with Russia. The bombardment of Baku, he maintains would have given the Soviets reasons to invade Turkey.<sup>20</sup> The position was exacerbated by the publication of the German White Book which alleged on the basis of falsified captured French documents, that Turkey had been party to a plan to attack the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> But Russian reaction was surprisingly measured. This sheds some light on Russo-Turkish relations at this stage. The truth of the matter was that as the situation in Europe began to look more favourable for Germany, particularly after the invasion of Rumania, the Russians pursued a policy of hesitant rapprochement with Turkey. It is interesting to note that both Germany and Great Britain used Turkish wariness of Russia for their own ends. Germany used Russia to frighten the Turks away from a more active cooperation with Britain while the British sought to convince Turkey that they were her only real hope of avoiding Russian intimidations.<sup>22</sup> On the whole the British approved of the Russo-Turkish rapprochement hoping to use Turkey to draw Russia away from Germany, while they still feared a Russo-German understanding at

Turkey's expense. One deterrent to any German move through the Middle East was the fear that this would bind Russia to Britain.<sup>23</sup> On 1 August Papen explained to Hitler that the situation between Russia and Turkey should be kept 'fluid' so that Turkey could not become the connecting link between Britain and Russia.<sup>24</sup>

It is interesting to note that the British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir Stafford Cripps, cabled on two occasions on 2 August 1940 and on 30 October that Turkey should forestall any Russo-German ultimatum by making concessions to Russia on the Straits.<sup>25</sup> The Foreign Office had no illusions however, and felt that Cripps should be told that it would be wrong and 'extremely ill advised' to try to force sacrifices out of Turkey which would be contrary to her vital interests. A minute by O. Sargent dated 20 August stated that, 'we are not in a position to dictate to Turkey in this matter and the latter has made it quite clear that she does not intend to make the attempt at buying-off Russia'.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless relations seemed to be improving and on 2 November Hugessen reported that Menemenciöglü had told him Turkey was looking into the possibilities of acquiring war material and petroleum from Russia.<sup>27</sup> This indicates that Turkey was not ruled by blind prejudice in her relations with Russia and despite suspicions of Russian intentions was prepared to look for possibilities for cooperation in the face of a common threat.

On the occasion of Molotov's visit to Berlin, Yunus Nadi of the influential newspaper *Cumhuriyet* reviewed Nazi-Russian relations since the Nazi-Soviet Pact. He said this Pact, which many had considered 'impossible' had proved profitable for the Soviets: 'Those who said this possibility did not exist have been proved wrong by events. However, arrangements and agreements between States are always calculated on interest, and are always temporary. Even those treaties put on the market having been stamped "eternal" are only temporary and transient.'<sup>28</sup> Nadi certainly seemed to be leaving the door open for Russian realignment.

But the Russians in the meantime showed their hand to Germany. On 13 November, barely ten days after Menemenciöglü had talked of procuring arms from Russia, Molotov told Hitler that Russia considered the Straits vital to her security and wanted to give Bulgaria, the country nearest the Straits, a guarantee similar to that given by Germany to Rumania. Hitler was extremely suspicious of such a move and asked if Bulgaria had asked for such a guarantee. He also stressed that he would have to consult Mussolini before approving any such guarantee. Molotov was adamant and insisted on a guarantee 'not on paper but in reality'.<sup>29</sup> Before Russia would agree to join the Axis she would require 'a base for light naval and air forces on the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles' and recognition that the area south of Batum and Baku in the direction of the Persian Gulf was the 'centre of the aspirations of the Soviet Union'.<sup>30</sup> Once again, the extreme strategic importance of the Straits saved Turkey. The Russian demands showed the Germans that there was no further hope of cooperation with Russia. Like Russia, Germany had no intention of sharing the Straits with anyone. On 18 December, barely three weeks after Molotov left Berlin, Hitler ordered the preparation for operation *Barbarossa*.<sup>31</sup>

## THE FRENCH COLLAPSE

The French catastrophe came as a deeply felt shock for Turkey. It further confirmed their belief that they wanted no part in the European conflagration. France had been judged by the Turks to have the best armies in Europe, and İnönü himself had believed that the war in the west would be fought on the Maginot line and would last four or five years.<sup>32</sup> The British also, believed war would be a long, drawn-out affair. When France caved-in within the space of a few weeks the Turks reacted with a mixture of shock, fear and anger at what they considered to be the extremely irresponsible manner in which France had been pressuring them to join in the fray when she knew her own end was approaching. There was also an element of relief in the Turkish attitude, as they saw that their policy of caution had paid off, and their realism and pragmatism in putting Turkish interest first was vindicated by events. The entry of Italy into the war had made their treaty obligations operational but they had managed to parry the Anglo-French call to duty. France signed an Armistice with Germany on 22 June: 'How could a country withdrawing from the war force another to join in it?'<sup>33</sup> As the Allied military reverses multiplied in Europe there had been increasing fears in some quarters in Turkey that they had once again, joined the weaker side. As the battle raged in Sedan, Turkish MPs had their doubts: 'It was possible that we were once more fated to join the weak side. We began to feel the vociferous presence of those opposed to the Anglo-Turkish Alliance.'<sup>34</sup>

After Dunkirk the Assembly was extremely active in its examinations of the situation. There were those like Fazıl Ahmet (Elazığ) and Hikmet Bayur (Manisa) who felt Turkey had to go to the aid of the Allies and that public opinion should be prepared for war.<sup>35</sup> There were also those who felt Turkey had acted with undue haste in concluding the Alliance. All were worried about the attitude of Italy. Kâzım Karabekir asked Saracoğlu what the meaning was of joining a war on the losing side, as Italy would only join after the Allies were clearly seen to be losing. Saracoğlu made a non-committal reply, and added that it was not true that Turkey was about to enter the war, and public opinion should not be unnecessarily alarmed.<sup>36</sup> There was a general aura of awe in the face of unfolding German military might as the Germans rolled back the French armies, 'fighting shoulder to shoulder like their teutonic ancestors'.<sup>37</sup> This was accompanied by a general feeling of anger that the Democracies should have allowed themselves to be caught out to such an extent. 'The whole French Army collapsed in 23 days. This is the end of a government and nation whose infrastructure had completely rotted away . . . The Democracies showed themselves to be entirely unprepared. Why, in this condition, did they declare war on Germany? It is incomprehensible . . .'<sup>38</sup>

There were calls in the Press at this time for Germany to be reasonable and not repeat the mistakes of 1919. The Press urged a compromise peace and moderation, as Turkey saw the balance of power in Europe begin to look dangerously one-sided. Y. Nadi wrote in *Cumhuriyet* that now the 'scenario' of the French surrender in the same rail carriage used in 1919 for the Germans was over and out of the way — let Germany turn to constructing world peace:

The belief of a society of nations can only take root if nations allow each

other the right to exist. Europe could have achieved this in 1919 if the men claiming to set up a new order had sufficiently understood the needs of our century. Military and economic hegemony only serve as files to sharpen the hatred of oppressed masses. Those who by brandishing their arms think today that they have cowed their opponents, or by clinking the gold in their palms believe they have made servants out of their neighbours, should know that they are only strengthening their future enemies.<sup>39</sup>

A. Ş. Esmer took a more anti-German line, commenting on Hitler's speech of 21 July 1940, he said that things were not as Hitler painted them:

The truth of the matter is that Nazi-Germany's policy of aggression and conquest in Europe has followed definite stages. At first the Nazi movement stood for the destruction of the Versailles system, and as such had been received sympathetically all over the world. Germany wanted equality in armaments. As a great nation why should this be denied to Germany? Germany finally achieved this right through peaceful means . . .

He went on to say Germany invaded the smaller countries claiming that Britain was forcibly pulling them into her camp and Germany needed to liberate them.

The small nations of western Europe have met their present fate not because they tried to assume an aggressive posture towards Germany, but because they believed in Germany's word and followed a policy they called neutrality and were unprepared . . . Let us see if Hitler, if he is victorious, is able to give Europe a system more just than the system of Versailles, which he has criticized so severely. If he can, and only if he can, he will prove himself justified in making these criticisms. But if present developments are any indication this seems unlikely . . .<sup>40</sup>

Even in this anti-German article it was possible to discern emphasis on compromise and balance in Esmer's reference to Germany's justifiable claims. It is interesting to note that he criticized neutrals, considering Turkey's status very different. Not all the Press was pro-Allied however, and E. Velid in *Tasviri Efkar* reputed to be pro-German, followed quite a different line and criticized Chamberlain for offensive language against Hitler, referring to his calling Hitler 'a Mad Dog that should be destroyed'. He invited both sides to moderation and told them to stop insulting each other. 'We see no advantage at all in the persistence of the two sides in this violent provocation. . . . Give up these harsh words and take advantage of any talk of peace, sincere or insincere . . .'<sup>41</sup>

On the 23 June Velid in *Tasvir* attacked the exaggerated news stories about 'thousands of aircraft sent by America to Britain' etc. . . . He said exaggeration and provocation in the Press had got France to where she was now. The losses of the last few months on the Western Front had occurred precisely because too much time was spent writing words such as these. 'One side spent its time drawing sarcastic caricatures while the other went without butter to construct

guns. The horrifying results we now witness occurred because of this.<sup>42</sup> Turks had always admired military success and the weakness and defection of France filled them with distaste. There were even suspicions that France had ulterior motives in forcing Turkish entry. A. Ş. Esmer still believes that France, although she knew she was losing, was pushing for Turkish entry hoping to use this as a counterweight to secure more favourable armistice terms from the Germans.<sup>43</sup> A Cabinet Minister in İnönü's Cabinet said that when it became known that approximately two weeks prior to making their official *démarche* through Massigli, the French had already made it known in London that they were planning surrender, this raised a general outcry against France.<sup>44</sup> Even Massigli, who claims he wasn't informed, admits that the Turks were quite right to be enraged at what they saw as an attempt to push Turkey forward at a time when France was beyond helping even herself. The Ambassador also admits confessing to Knatchbull Hugessen on the way to their interview with Saracoğlu to ask him to fulfill Turkey's treaty obligations: 'Rappeler à la Turquie la parole donnée était une chose, l'inviter à rallier à notre cause, précisément le jour de l'évacuation de Paris en était une autre . . . « Je me fais un peu l'effet d'un assassin, » dis-je à mon collègue durant le trajet.'<sup>45</sup>

There was also feeling in the Assembly that if it was not too late, a new opening should be looked for in the direction of Germany. Turkey, it was said should make use of her unique strategic position in this new European balance.<sup>46</sup> Kâzım Karabekir maintained the need for a Turkish-German agreement in the face of a mutual Russian danger. He said this did not mean the scrapping of the Anglo-Turkish alliance but a realistic appreciation of what other possibilities existed which could combine with it to safeguard Turkey.<sup>47</sup> There was also a feeling amongst some of Turkey's leaders that it was not such a bad thing if Britain were weakened. Barutçu quotes Rauf Orbay as saying that he hoped that the Allied forces in Belgium would be made prisoner; Orbay went on to say:

The British will not be beaten. There is no doubt that an Empire capable of raising 45 million soldiers will gain the final victory. But the more they are weakened beforehand the better it is for us. If they win an outright victory, we also are in trouble. Let them come down to our level, where they will have to ask our views, where they will need our soldiers and our military advice. Yes, let them fall prisoner in Belgium.<sup>48</sup>

It is interesting and ironic that Rauf Orbay was sent to England as Ambassador in 1942, because he was considered favourable to the British. The Turkish elite, as this example illustrates, although they may have been considered pro one side or another, were purely pro-Turkish in the final analysis.

The Turks saw the French defeat as the destruction of the delicate power balance in the Mediterranean. They were particularly worried about the French fleet, as if this were to go over to the Axis Turkey would be gravely threatened from the sea. Britain's position was considered so precarious that on 5 June the British Ambassador reported that Churchill's speech in which he sought to underline British determination to resist ('We will fight them on the beaches', etc.) had had a very bad effect on Saracoğlu.<sup>49</sup> When the British



and the French Ambassadors emphasised to Saracoğlu on 11 June the good effect a Turkish declaration of war would have in the Balkans, the Minister retorted that a French victory would have an even better effect.<sup>50</sup> When the British suggested Turkey insert 'for the present' into the wording of their statement of non-belligerency, the Minister for Foreign Affairs told Hugessen on 18 June that the British wording had been approved and the declaration was about to be made when news was received of Pétain's armistice request. The declaration had been postponed as a result.<sup>51</sup> On 19 June Hugessen reported that the Greek Ambassador had told him that there was very strong feeling in the Turkish Government against the French for having tried to bring Turkey into the war at a time when they must have known that they themselves could not go on. The Greek Ambassador assured him that the Turks felt they had chosen the wisest course in the general interest.<sup>52</sup>

Although Hugessen reported on 25 June that there was no change in the Turkish attitude, he admitted that the two questions being asked continually were: a) What will happen to the French fleet? b) Is the aircraft strength in the UK up to dealing with the expected attacks? Saracoğlu had told him that if the French fleet was to surrender to the Axis, 'it would be the greatest mistake in history'.<sup>53</sup> The British hold on Turkey during this time seemed tenuous even to the British themselves. A Foreign Office minute dated 1 July 1940 and written by Sir O. Sargent underlined the

enormous importance the Turks attach to this issue [French navy]. It is, in fact, abundantly clear that on the answer to the question whether or not we are to lose the French fleet depends our ability henceforward to hold the Turks. If we lose the French fleet, we may be able to argue that it was not our fault. But this will not cut much ice with the Turks . . . The Turks may well take the loss as finally disposing of our sea power in the Mediterranean, and as depriving us of any value as an ally. It might even afford them the occasion to make terms with the Germans . . .<sup>54</sup>

The Foreign Office were also worried that Turkey would decide that Britain could no longer protect her against Russia and thus turn to Germany (there had in fact been stirrings in this direction as seen above).

'The seriousness of such a *volte-face* on the part of Turkey need not be stressed, and it is for this reason that we ought I am sure, to do our utmost to hold Turkey where she is . . .' The Foreign Office wondered:

what means we have of convincing Turkey that it is in her own interest to continue to collaborate with us? . . . The first thing is clearly to convince her that if she refuses to compound with Germany and Italy she is safe from being attacked by sea . . . It all depends, therefore on whether we can assure her that the Germans and Italians will not be able to use the French fleet to establish a complete preponderance in the E. Med.<sup>55</sup>

All this evidence points to the fact that securing Turkey's loyalty was a major factor in the British decision to destroy the French fleet. The Turks heartily agreed with this action, according to Hugessen's 18 July report: 'Turkish civilian opinion highly approving of forceful action easily interpreted by their mentality'. Although the Ambassador reported that the Press had been

'fearfully understanding of our dilemma, and favourable ...', there were indications that the Turks saw these latest developments as only confirming their convictions that when it came to questions of national survival, friendship came a very poor second.<sup>56</sup> Selim Sebit wrote in *Tasvir* that it was always thought that the French-English friendship was one of the strongest ever. Now, he said, the old friends had become deadly enemies. The British destroyed the French fleet and the French bombed Gibraltar. He stated that this enmity between two powers who had formerly been fast friends was terrifying.

Now we have begun to examine our closest friends with suspicion — After all one is never sure, and cast friendly looks at our enemies, if we have any — After all, one never knows . . . While there are such poignant examples before our eyes, it has become a matter of necessity for us to observe caution in our actions, and adopt a very prudent attitude.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, developments seemed to justify the Turkish leaders political cynicism, and the poet MP Yahya Kemal voiced their feelings with a traditional Turkish verse:

'As soon as are seen the beginnings of collapse and decay,  
the friends will race the enemies to the plunder . . .'<sup>58</sup>

#### ITALY COMES INTO THE WAR

On 10 June 1940, Italy declared war on the Allies. This rendered operational Turkey's obligations under Clause 1 of the second article of the treaty with Britain.<sup>59</sup> But the Turks had decided well in advance that they would try by all means at their disposal to stay out before admitting any obligations. The view is frequently put forward by a number of students of this period, that the Allies, Britain in particular, did not want Turkey to come in at this time as it would bring the war to the Balkans and endanger the Middle East.<sup>60</sup> But a more realistic interpretation is that Britain could not do much about Turkish entry. Faced with the Turkish determination to uphold their interests as they saw them coupled with their own precarious position, the British *had* to accept Turkey's terms as forcing her further might have been counterproductive and pushed her towards Germany. We have seen above how tentative the British felt their hold on Turkey had become. In this position the British had to give the best possible interpretation to Turkey's attitude and reluctantly put about the story that they agreed with the Turks. There were however, undeniable elements of logic in the Turkish position and as events progressed the British actually became convinced by the Turkish arguments, and had rather ignominiously to recant their previous position. Although there were some in the Assembly who felt that Italy's entry gave rise to an immediate and automatic state of war between Italy and Turkey; the majority favoured caution and advocated finding a way to stay out. There were fears that Russia would take advantage of the situation and Saracoğlu spoke of a Russian build-up of aviation in Crimea.

'We had to consider conditions, the position of our allies and ultimately the defence of our nation. There was no question of being swept into adventures for the interests of others as in the First World War'.<sup>61</sup> Turkey decided to

apply protocol 2 of the treaty which absolved her of any action which might lead to war with the USSR. This was considered a blatant 'pretext' by the British who were gravely disappointed by the Turkish action. When Saracoğlu told Hugessen about the Government's decision he greatly emphasised the Russian danger which the Ambassador attempted to play down. Saracoğlu said that during the interview between the Turkish Ambassador and Molotov regarding this issue, Molotov's manner had been 'most menacing' but admitted that there had been no official Russian *démarche*. Hugessen and Massigli kept the pressure on Saracoğlu:

We repeated that we could not believe in the seriousness of the Russian danger, and it seemed clear that Russia and Germany had hit on Protocol 2 as a convenient means of paralysing Turkey. We were convinced that the Turkish Government had allowed themselves to be bluffed . . . In general we made no attempt to minimise the deplorable effect which the decision would create in Allied countries and we expressed the greatest possible disappointment with the Turkish reply.<sup>62</sup>

Hugessen said Turkey's attitude to Russia was based almost entirely on practical considerations and that as long as the Allies were unable to furnish direct assistance Turkey would not run 'the supposed risk'. The Ambassador reported on 14 June that it was 'impossible to resist the impression that the Turkish application of Protocol 2 is a pretext'.<sup>63</sup> He attributed the Turkish attitude to the unfavourable military situation. G. L. Clutton of the Foreign Office remarked on one of Hugessen's telegrams on 16 June: 'The evidence in favour of the conviction that Turkish invocation of Protocol 2 is merely a pretext is very strong.'<sup>64</sup> The paper went on to say that the British had been informed that when the Turkish Ambassador had told Molotov of Turkey's intention to mobilise if Italy came into the war Molotov had said something like 'do what you like', M. Saracoğlu's version of this was that Molotov had said — 'Turkey could choose which country she wanted to be wiped out by'.<sup>65</sup>

On 14 June Hugessen saw İnönü. İnönü told him that it would be no good to provoke Russia now as she could in the course of time come around to the Allies' side. Hugessen stressed the bad effect the Turkish move would have on the attitude of the Balkan States. İnönü countered that it would have quite the opposite effect, 'any Turkish involvement now would encourage the Balkan states to pull away from her. Whereas if Turkey remained as at present and continued to build up strength, Balkan countries would be drawn towards her'.<sup>66</sup> On 15 June Halifax instructed Hugessen to stress with the Turks that the present decision of the Turkish government could only have the most deplorable effect on the Allied governments. He was told to remind the Turkish Government of the Allied determination to continue to struggle to ultimate victory: 'If Turkey falters now she may well have cause later to regret her decision'.<sup>67</sup> There was therefore never any question of the British approving Turkey's decision to stay out. When Saracoğlu told the British of his intention to make a declaration about Turkish non-belligerency the British suggested the Turks put 'for the present' in the wording. Also when Saracoğlu asked the Allied Ambassadors if he could say in the Assembly that Turkey had taken this step with the approval of the Allies, their reply was categorically

negative.<sup>68</sup> The French Ambassador in London wrote on 25 May that if Italy attacked Greece and the Allies had to go to her aid Turkey should be asked to concert all measures with the Allies, but 'this would not necessarily mean a declaration of war', it could be in the form of military and naval facilities.<sup>69</sup> When Hugessen inquired what was meant by the above the Foreign Office told him in instructions dated 2 June:

The point is that if the Allies implement their guarantees to Greece as a result of an Italian attack on Greece a state of war will exist between the Allies and Italy, and it is essential that in these circumstances a state of war should also exist between Italy and Turkey. Turkey should adopt the same attitude as the Allies with regard to any formal declaration to be made . . .<sup>70</sup>

On 26 June Turkey issued her declaration of non-belligerency:

The Government of the Turkish Republic has considered the situation which has arisen from Italy's entry into the war and have decided on the application of Protocol 2 . . . Turkey will preserve her present attitude of non-belligerency for the security and defence of our country. While continuing on the one side military preparations, we also have to remain more vigilant than ever. We hope by this position of watchfulness and by avoiding any provocation, we shall preserve the maintenance of peace for our country and for those who are around us.<sup>71</sup>

R. Bowker of the Foreign Office Southern Department commented on 28 June that the declaration was 'unsatisfactory on all points'.<sup>72</sup> G. L. Clutton outlined its defects from a British point of view: a) omission of any reference to an agreement with Britain. b) Statement of Turkish military preparation falling far short of notification and mobilisation. c) No hint that non-belligerency was only provisional. 'The declaration, in short, gives the impression of a move towards strict neutrality'.<sup>73</sup> Papen in fact reported to his Ministry that, 'the game has been won'.<sup>74</sup> The British even in this situation, made an attempt to salvage what they could out of Turkey and suggested to Hugessen that he inquire whether they would 'turn a blind eye' to their territorial waters being used to interrupt enemy shipping.<sup>75</sup> The Ambassador replied however, that this was highly unlikely: 'I think they are mainly guided by a desire to avoid anything likely to get them into difficulties'.<sup>76</sup> Turkey had in fact shifted into a much stricter neutrality than she was to observe in 1943 for instance, when she allowed the British to supply their campaign in the Aegean islands from Turkish soil and gave haven to escaping troops, and actually helped evacuate them. On 1 November 1940 İnönü declared that Turkey's position as out of the war precluded any use of her sea or airspace by any of the belligerents.<sup>77</sup>

There was in fact feeling in some Turkish quarters that any declaration at all was redundant:

The situation of the Allied front was clear. France had collapsed. Britain had gone into this war unprepared. According to Marshal Pétain Britain would not last long. In this situation, to make a declaration implying

commitment to the alliance would be a grave mistake . . . As far as I was concerned the alliance was annulled *de facto*. It was not necessary to explain this.<sup>78</sup>

Barutçu claims that even Saracoğlu admitted that the declaration was 'politically weak' though grounded on legality.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, although Turkish foreign policy was applied with seeming unanimity to the outside eye, there were those who disagreed with the Government and felt an even stricter neutrality was called for. Similarly there were those like Recep Peker and Şevket İnce who considered Turkey automatically at war. But the majority backed İnönü in his cautious policy, although they may have believed in a different emphasis on parts of their foreign policy.<sup>80</sup>

Therefore the British who on 11 June had instructed their Ambassador to tell the Turks to take immediate action against Italy, and 'not delay awaiting any hostile act', as there was 'no excuse for further delay', now realized that Turkey would not be moved by anything except her own interests.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, it had become doubtful whether she still considered herself bound to Britain. The British decided to cut their losses and make what they could out of the situation: 'The Foreign Secretary could see no remedy for this unfortunate situation'.<sup>82</sup> Halifax told the Cabinet on 15 June that in discussion with the Prime Minister on the previous evening: 'It had been agreed that the best plan was to make the best of a bad job. The Turks were to be informed that Britain was not happy with them and were to have pointed out to them the deplorable effect of their action on world opinion.'<sup>83</sup>

In a Foreign Office minute, R. Bowker commented on 19 June:

Her (Turkey's) use of Protocol 2 is a pretext, the real reason for her unwillingness being the very unfavourable development of the war for the Allies in France. We have decided to put the best face on Turkey's attitude. Nevertheless if the occasion arises for Turkey to appeal to us to carry out our obligations under the treaty we shall no doubt have at least a moral justification for determining our action in accordance with the circumstances of the moment.<sup>84</sup>

The British felt so strongly about their failure in Turkey that they were even prepared to look upon Turkish intransigence as an excuse absolving them of their obligations to Turkey. The Turkish press at this time tried very hard to impress upon the Allies that Turkey was still loyal and was in fact acting in their interests. On 17 June 1940 Sadak outlined the Turkish predicament in *Akşam* by stating that although Turkey was still loyal to the treaty with Britain, 'Unfortunately our geographical position is unlike any of the great democracies . . .' Sadak stressed that Turkey found herself unable to help her ally although if she could, 'no man would hesitate to bear the difficulties'. He went on, 'But for Turkey to leave her position outside the war in the present unsure world conditions would only bring the war to the Mediterranean, which is as yet peaceful. This would only increase the burden on the Allies by enabling war to spread to the Balkans, the Middle East and beyond'.<sup>85</sup> The article voiced the recurring argument which the Turks were to use on the British; that Turkey should save her strength. Saracoğlu told the British

Ambassador on 6 September, ... But surely, you do not want to waste Turkey?'<sup>86</sup>

It is interesting to compare the article above with an article written by the same man on 21 October 1939 concerning Turkish obligations to enter the war if Rumania or Greece were attacked.<sup>87</sup> Şadık emphasized at the time that Rumania and Greece as 'Balkan Allies', were of vital interest to Turkey:

In this situation when England and France are fighting for the security of the Balkans and consequently of Turkey, to help them will be an act dictated by our vital interests. Nor is it necessary for war to be actually taking place in the Mediterranean. Even in a war to be fought in Europe that by one way or another spreads to the Mediterranean there is a mutual obligation to assist.<sup>88</sup>

Only eight months after this article was written France collapsed and precisely this situation occurred. It is indicative of the extreme flexibility and resourcefulness of those in charge of Turkish foreign policy that they used two absolutely contradictory situations to further a consistent aim. In October 1939, they felt in danger and by stressing the obligation to help Britain and France (hence the wide interpretation of the Mediterranean clause in the Şadık article) insured themselves with them. In June 1940, the Allies were in danger yet the Turks managed to avoid any commitment, squirmed out of the same Mediterranean clause, justified their actions by the same treaty (Protocol 2), and emphasized that by staying out they were avoiding placing additional burdens on the Allies. In two contradictory situations the result was the same, Turkey was preserved. Leading Turkish journalists underlined that although Turkey was outside the war she was not neutral and was determined to fight if attacked. Again, Şadık proclaimed in *Akşam*, 'Neither neutrality nor fear has ever saved any nation'. He said the countries which had been invaded had only wanted peace, but had made too many concessions in order to have it. A country had to be ready to fight for its rights.

... a nation must be ready for war and must prepare itself as if that war were to come tomorrow. The first policy to go bankrupt in this war was the policy of neutrality. Not only from a national point of view but generally, the reason for Europe's present catastrophe is that some nations seeking to protect only their own existence hid behind the shield of neutrality. If Turkey has been able to remain where she is in this confused situation despite her delicate geographic position, she owes this to her position as 'outside the war'.<sup>89</sup>

Y. Nadi of *Cumhuriyet* mentioned that Turkey had 'no designs on the territory or rights of any country', but that she would 'do her duty to the end' if the need arose.<sup>90</sup> F. R. Atay in the official *Ulus* stressed that the Turkish homeland abounded with natural defences. He also made it clear that 'We have frequently repeated that we are not after any adventures. But no one can guarantee that adventure will not one day come after us ...'<sup>91</sup>

Despite such strong official language Turkey took great care to pursue a balanced policy at this time. On 20 June a Turco-German Trade agreement was signed. The fact that this agreement was signed so soon after Italy's entry

into the war was interpreted by Papen as a demonstration of Turkey's desire to continue to maintain relations with the Axis.<sup>92</sup> The agreement, however, excluded chrome and did not have much long-term significance. The Axis themselves seemed to have been taken aback by the extent of Turkey's reserve. The Italians had been expecting at least a rupture of relations and had even sent their families home.<sup>93</sup> Even though the British had been gravely disappointed by the Turkish decision to announce non-belligerency, events showed the Turkish arguments to be correct. As the full extent of the damage done by France's collapse became known, and Britain's position in the Middle East and India became threatened, Turkey's value as a friendly neutral at the crossroads was more than appreciated. But the British also saw that Turkey's position was precarious. On 17 July Major General Cornwall-Evans estimated that the Germans could conquer Turkey and reach the Iraqi border in sixteen weeks. Once the Germans were across the Straits, the Turks he said, could offer little resistance.<sup>94</sup> This contrasts markedly with the British attitude in the days before the conclusion of the Treaty when they thought Turkey could 'hold out indefinitely' on the Straits.<sup>95</sup> The General also estimated that if Turkey were threatened by Germany and Russia at the same time she would not offer any resistance. R. Bowker commented on Cornwall-Evans' information, 'We conclude from it that the Germans would not have any difficulty in forcing their way through Turkey'.<sup>96</sup> The British were therefore forced to recant, and now adopted the position that the Turkish treaty had negative value in as much as it denied Turkey to the Germans. The British now stated that they 'had hardly expected Turkey to do otherwise' when she declared non-belligerency and 'fully recognized the difficulties in which she found herself'. The Treaty was valuable as a potential rather than actual asset. It was feared that any other attitude would force Turkey 'to throw herself into the arms of Germany'.<sup>97</sup> We have seen above that the British *had* expected Turkey 'to do otherwise'.<sup>98</sup> Hugessen somewhat grudgingly admitted on 21 August that, 'Turkey at this stage would prove more of a liability than an asset'.<sup>99</sup> The War Cabinet Chiefs of Staff Committee agreed that to force Turkey would be counter-productive and 'might jeopardise Turkey's own security and through Turkey our whole position in the Middle East'.<sup>100</sup>

#### ATTACK ON GREECE

When Italy attacked Greece on 28 October, this brought into force Article 3 of the Anglo-Turkish treaty.<sup>101</sup> It also rendered more blatant the contradiction between the previous British position and the later one. It will be recalled that on 25 May the British had declared that if they had to implement their guarantee to Greece as the result of an Italian attack, 'it is essential that a state of war should also exist between Italy and Turkey'.<sup>102</sup> Yet on 9 September they were of the opinion 'that no great advantage would accrue to us from a Turkish declaration of war against Italy, should the latter attack Greece'.<sup>103</sup> The run of events had enabled the Turks to make such a convincing argument that the British were fully prepared when Greece was actually attacked, to ignore Article 3 of the treaty. It must be noted that at this stage in the war Turkey's potential was assessed in terms of manpower. As a reserve or

actually fighting, the British saw Turkey primarily as a provider of troops and secondarily, a provider of bases. This situation would last until it was reversed in late 1943. A Foreign Office telegram sent to Hugessen in Ankara and Palairot in Athens on 22 May suggested that the Turks might be prepared 'to carry out the duty of protecting Greece' as they 'had a large number of troops and were not directly threatened'. The telegram went on: 'Such a duty, if suggested to them by their allies under the Treaty of Mutual Assistance might also appeal to their vanity.'<sup>104</sup> Although Hugessen never made this suggestion, the fact that the Foreign Office felt Turkey might be swayed by 'vanity', amply illustrated how much they misjudged the situation. On 28 May the Foreign Office boldly instructed Hugessen in Ankara that in the case of a direct Italian attack on Greece or the Allies Turkey 'should declare war on Italy and occupy the Dodecanese'. On 31 May Sir R. Campbell reported from Paris that the French were anxious for Turkey to 'show Italy danger in her rear' by taking military measures in conjunction with her Balkan Allies.<sup>105</sup> It was hardly surprising for the French to be so out of touch with the realities, considering they disastrously underestimated the danger to their own 'rear'. Even if the Balkan Allies had not been too worried about merely angering Italy, let alone taking military measures, it is doubtful whether Turkey would even have asked them at this stage.

On 18 August Hugessen was instructed to draw the attention of the Turkish Government to the threatening attitude of Italy towards Greece. He was asked to suggest mutual consultation to the Turks and was given discretion as to whether he was to invoke specific treaty obligations or just mention the treaty in general terms only. He was also instructed 'in as discreet a manner possible' to inquire whether the Turks would give any 'effective cooperation' if Britain had to implement her guarantee.<sup>106</sup> When Hugessen saw Saracoğlu on 20 August the latter said he could make no categorical statements beforehand and added that he did not want to put any further strain on Russo-Turkish relations. 'My impression is that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was leaving the door wide open for eventually avoiding anything beyond consultation'.<sup>107</sup> The British, although they had decided to tread lightly, had not completely given up on Turkey. Hugessen wrote to the Foreign Office on 21 August that the Germans might make political capital out of a second default by Turkey of her treaty obligations if she did not help Greece. Hugessen reported that Turkey, 'will certainly not send troops to Greece'.<sup>108</sup> It is worth noting here that the question asked on 28 May about whether Turkey would send some of her large number of troops to Greece, was finally answered.

In their meeting of 23 August the Chiefs of Staff Committee stressed that the failure to support Greece and a consequent Greek capitulation would have a very bad influence on British credibility in Turkey. Also: 'The Committee were informed that there was a danger of Turkey endeavouring to find a way out of her treaty obligations if Greece was attacked'.<sup>109</sup> The impression derived from the above is that the British were still sounding Turkey as to any move they might induce her to make. On 6 September Hugessen asked Saracoğlu what he felt about Rumania and Greece. The Ambassador got the impression that Turkey, although she was watching both situations closely,



still maintained the same reserve. 'I think that they have taken no decision beyond one to lie low as long as possible and hope for the best.'<sup>110</sup> The Ambassador again mentioned the disastrous effect a Greek collapse before Italy would have on Turkey if she allowed this to happen. The British Ambassador at Athens, Sir M. Palaret felt very strongly about the Turkish attitude. On 23 August he wrote: 'If we cannot prevent Turkey from refusing to enter the war if Greece is attacked are we ever likely to be in a position to get her to play her part?' If Turkey would be a liability as argued by Hugessen then, 'why were we at such pains and expense to obtain Turkey's alliance? . . . and will anyone be taken in by Turkey making Russia a good excuse for evasion in their case?'<sup>111</sup> On 30 August Palaret lamented that if Turkey 'is always allowed to repudiate her engagements on grounds of Russian danger, I can see no use in alliance'. He called the Turkish policy 'pusillanimous' and 'evasive'.<sup>112</sup>

On 2 September Palaret reported that the Greeks although hopeful of Turkish help, were discouraged by the Turks' evasive attitude. Koliopoulos points out that the British Government made a reluctant effort to get Turkey to promise to help Greece in the event of an Italian attack. The Turks he says, refused to make such a commitment, and only promised to make a statement in the National Assembly to the effect that Greece's fate was of 'vital' interest to Turkey.<sup>113</sup> A. Cadogan felt on 4 September that: 'We have decided two things, not to nag them (Turks), but at the same time to let them understand which way our mind is working'.<sup>114</sup> Palaret's repeated appeals prompted Halifax to cable him on 3 September that it was necessary '... to exercise caution in urging Turkey to go any further than she is prepared to go ...'<sup>115</sup> Yet on 11 September the Foreign Office instructed Hugessen to point out to the Turks that any weakness Turkey showed in regard to an Italian attack on Greece would be merely likely to encourage Stalin and Hitler to deal with Turkey in a like manner.<sup>116</sup> It would seem that although direct pressure was not being applied at this juncture the Foreign Office still used any opening to keep Turkey up to the mark.

On 7 October German troops began to enter Rumania. This rendered completely operational Article 3 of the treaty whereby Turkey was obligated to give 'all aid and assistance in her power' if Britain had to implement her guarantee to Greece and Rumania. Yet Hugessen wired London on 12 October that it would not be wise to ask Turkey to implement Article 3, as Turkey would ask for concrete support and general statements of goodwill would not sway her. The British, aware of their weakness, had decided that the best they could do was aim at 'maintaining Turkey as a benevolent neutral rather than an unwilling belligerent'.<sup>117</sup> Although the official Turkish Government position was one of caution the Turkish press, while echoing this line to some extent, could be more outspoken. This is one instance where a government-directed press let some of the government's true feeling show, under the mantle of freedom of the press. Faik Fenik wrote in *Ulus* that now there were German and Italian troops in Rumania:

... In this way the Axis have set about creating the New Order in Europe according to the blueprint in the Tripartite Pact. They have started in

Rumania. It is no secret that Germany needs oil to continue the war. In this situation Germany has sought to make the most use of Rumania, who was already in her power.<sup>118</sup>

F. R. Atay wrote in *Ulus*:

German-Rumanian cooperation has finally led to the establishment of German control on the whole of the Danube basin down to the Black Sea coast. Today's Rumania is nothing but a piece of living-space unable to decide her own destiny, and under political, economic and military control.<sup>119</sup>

In relation to the effect of this situation on Russo-German relations, A. Ş. Esmer wrote in *Ulus*: 'Now the Soviet lands from north to south are neighbouring lands under German occupation. If the Russians take one step anywhere at all they are bound to tread on Germany's toes'.<sup>120</sup> This was an obvious warning to Russia of the dangers she was now facing. Turkey was also an important factor in Italian calculations. On 17 October Ciano estimated the time to be ripe for a move against Greece even though Badoglio was against it because 'Greece is isolated. Turkey will not move...'<sup>121</sup> Ciano also agreed with Mussolini that 'If we leave the Greeks too much time to reflect and to breathe, the English will come, and perhaps the Turks and the situation will become drawn out and difficult'.<sup>122</sup> Ciano also informed the Bulgarians of his intentions implying that they should act, but King Boris was reluctant: 'Above all he fears the Turks'.<sup>123</sup> When Italy did attack Greece on 28 October the Turks informed Bulgaria that if she attacked Greece Turkey would declare war. Hugessen reported on 28 October that Saracoğlu had informed the Greek Ambassador that Greece could count on Turkey absolutely in the event of a Bulgarian attack. The Greek Ambassador's view was that if Turkey were to hold Thrace against Bulgaria, 'this is all that Greece requires or could expect'.<sup>124</sup> The Turks rightly calculated that by doing this they would pin down the Bulgarians enabling Greece to concentrate on containing the Italian attack from Albania. 'The Turks did not share the prevalent opinion that Greek resistance was hopeless... Without a doubt Turkish policy contributed substantially to the success of the Greeks'.<sup>125</sup> Ahmet Ş. Esmer declared in *Ulus* on 30 October:

Italy's attack on Greece did not come as a surprise after years of bullying. The Italians have in any case found that Greece is a much tougher adversary than they suspected. Italy will see that a country rising united, to the defence of its independence, honour and integrity is capable of performing miracles.<sup>126</sup>

In keeping with their belief of stating clearly what was for them a fighting matter, the Turks deprived Italy of an ally, without actively involving themselves. The Press directed an attack on Italy and supported Greece. F. R. Atay quoted Mussolini's assurances that he had no aggressive intentions against any country bordering Italy or her Empire. He emphasised that Greece had always pursued a friendly policy towards Italy: 'Those who

invented a thousand reasons and excuses to call a sea bordered by many independent countries "our sea", should not judge as excessive the claim of a free people to call the land of their fathers "our land".<sup>127</sup> Y. Nadi of *Cumhuriyet* wrote that Italy had only bound Greece closer to Britain, 'now Britain is in a position to make use of all the Greek territory and coastline to inflict heavy losses on Italy'.<sup>128</sup>

Churchill felt that help for Greece was crucial as it was likely to have an important effect on Turkish opinion. He cabled Wavell on 26 November:

It might be that 'Compass' (Operation of aid to Greece), would in itself determine action of Yugoslavia and Turkey, and anyhow in event of success, we should be able to give Turkey far greater assurance of early support, than it has been in our power to do so far. One may indeed see the possibility of centre of gravity in Middle East shifting suddenly from Egypt to the Balkans and from Cairo to Constantinople.<sup>129</sup>

But Wavell and the British General Staff did not see it that way, and in view of their impending offensive against Graziani were loath to part with troops or aircraft.<sup>130</sup> The military, unlike the Foreign Office, although admitting Turkish military weakness, felt an immediate Turkish entry into the war was necessary. This way, Greece could be reinforced without weakening Egypt. A Chiefs of Staff memorandum of 17 November stated:

The balance of advantage is in favour of doing all that we can to bring Turkey in as a belligerent at once. Further we believe that the effect of Turkey's entry into the war at this stage following the recent successes against the Italian armed forces by both ourselves and the Greeks might have a decisive effect on Italian morale. We think this outweighs the risk of Germany making an immediate move against Turkey.<sup>131</sup>

The Military felt that if Turkey were not obliged to commit herself openly, '... She might stall and find reasons for not standing by the Alliance at a later stage'.<sup>132</sup>

The Foreign Office however, who had come around to the Turkish point of view, now disagreed with the Military. They had come to appreciate that, 'Turkey will decide whether or not to (come in) simply on her own estimate of her own interests, and nothing we can say can affect this decision ...'<sup>133</sup> Halifax told the Military Chiefs in the War Cabinet on 22 November that increased pressure on Turkey 'would only bring a demand for increased munitions which Britain was hard put to meet'.<sup>134</sup> In the end it would seem that the Foreign Office view prevailed on Churchill who came to realise along with them that Turkey could not be pushed. It would also seem that he had come to appreciate the military difficulties involved in helping Greece. When Palaret sent one of his many urgent appeals for help on 30 October asking for 'immediate and visible support' such as RAF units flying low over Athens, the Prime Minister replied on 31 October that it was 'idle to ask for visible signs of support ...' and instructed his Ambassador in Athens in strong terms that he, 'should not encourage vain hopes when forces to execute them do not exist ...' Halifax added his own instructions: 'No pledges have been made except that we will do our best ... Greeks should not be allowed to forget that our

guarantee was given in conjunction with France and our whole position in the Middle East has been terribly injured by the French desertion.'<sup>135</sup> Koliopoulos contends that at this stage, 'Essentially the British considered Greece a lost cause ...'<sup>136</sup> The Turks were confirmed in their conviction that prudence was the best policy by the symbolic nature of the support given to Greece. Although some Australian and New Zealand troops were hastily scraped together and the few RAF units sent certainly did help to stem the Italian advance, Britain always gave priority to Egypt and her vital communications with India. Turkey was valuable for Britain, precisely because of her great strategic importance along these lines of communication. The British realised that Turkey would not be pushed and did not want to risk alienating her by doing so. The Foreign Office summed up the position for Palairret:

Nothing we can do will persuade her (Turkey) to take up arms. Not much can be spared for Greece because of the needs of the British in Egypt. Meanwhile Turkey is the keystone of our policy in the Middle East and is of far greater relative importance than Greece. Greece can be lost and the war in the Middle East still won. To lose Turkey would gravely imperil the whole of our position in the Middle East ...<sup>137</sup>

Although Turkey had won a temporary respite from British pressure there was little doubt that Britain still wanted to bring her into the war. Churchill suggested the following instructions to Hugessen on 26 November: '... We do not wish to leave you in any doubt of what our opinion and your instructions are. We want Turkey to come into the war as soon as possible. We are not pressing her to take any special steps to help the Greeks.' He underlined however, that if Germany moved through Bulgaria, with or without Bulgarian cooperation, 'it is vital Turkey should fight there and then. If she does not she will find herself absolutely alone ...'<sup>138</sup> Evidence which has since come to light vindicates the Turks in their cautious policy. Hitler's Chief of Staff Halder wrote in his diary on 26 October 1940: 'If anything conclusive is to be achieved, Bulgaria and Turkey have to be subdued, if necessary by force, especially in the case of the latter, to leave the way open through the Bosphorous to Syria.'<sup>139</sup> On 24 November he wrote, 'If Turkey does not keep quiet in the event of an attack against Greece, she must be thrown out of Europe.'<sup>140</sup>

As early as June 1940 an influential lobby had evolved in Hitler's camp including General Jodl of the OKW and Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy, Grand Admiral Raeder, which advocated an enlargement of the war on the periphery rather than a direct attack on Britain. They maintained that the first priority had to go to the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>141</sup> On 4 November 1940 Hitler had decided that fighters and fighter-bombers should be sent to Rumania in preparation for MARITA (operation against Greece). He had given orders that Bulgaria should be supported against Turkey with ten divisions.<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile, the Chiefs of Staff in London were deciding that Germany might well not want to provoke Turkey and not move against her, and advocated her immediate entry even though they admitted she was open to 'practically unopposed air attack'.<sup>143</sup> But Hitler was becoming increasingly preoccupied with Russia, particularly after his meeting with Molotov. Both

Hitler and his Staff felt that operations against Russia or Turkey were mutually exclusive. Halder wrote in his diary on 24 November: 'We have to see clearly that the possibilities against Russia disappear if we decide for Turkey.' Hitler told him, 'We can get at the Straits only after Russia has been beaten.' Halder concluded, 'we have come to the considered decision to avoid conflict with Turkey at all possible cost'.<sup>144</sup> The Turks could hardly have failed to sense which way the wind was blowing, as the Russians seemed particularly keen on rapprochement with them as the German menace loomed nearer, and Von Papen returned from Berlin on 19 November to tell representatives of the Turkish press that 'it was of the utmost importance to know what Turkey's attitude would be if Russia decided to put into practice her plans in the Straits and the Persian Gulf'.<sup>145</sup> Hitler's opting to attack Russia would lead to the conclusion of the German-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and non-Aggression on 18 June 1941, three days before Hitler launched operation *Barbarossa*. After the Nazi advance was stopped in Stalingrad and El-Alamein, Turkey found herself under strong pressure once again. In 1943 the Allies began to press once more for Turkish entry, but German forces were still on Turkey's borders and any involvement was sure to draw German wrath. The Turks stalled successfully until the opening of the Second Front in western Europe lifted the pressure on them. The U.S. had never been over-enthusiastic about the idea of involving Turkey, which had been primarily Churchill's 'pet plan'. As Allied forces converged on Germany from both east and west, any advantage they might have gained by Turkish entry was superseded by events.

## NOTES

1. İsmet İnönü had become President immediately after the death of the Republic's leader and founder Kemal Atatürk, on 10 November 1938.
2. Türkkiye Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1939-1945*, p. 66.
3. F.O. 371/E4151/143/44.
4. J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy*, Vol. II, p. 70.
5. Faik Ahmet Barutçu, *Siyasi Anılar* (Political Memoirs), p. 36; Barutçu was Deputy from Trabzon during the war years and was reputed to be close to İnönü. He was involved closely with the events of the time. He went on to hold prominent positions in the CHP, and became its leader when it was in Opposition during the second İnönü Presidency. (CHP stands for Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, the Republican Peoples Party, the only legal party until 1946).
6. D.G.F.P; vol. 8, p. 931; This treaty the Ambassador said, would cover parts not conflicting with Anglo-Turkish obligations.
7. F.O. 371/R3390/R3391/316/44.
8. A. J. Klinghoffer. *The Soviet Union and International Oil Politics*. (Columbia University Press 1977), p. 40.
9. R. Massigli, *La Turquie Devant La Guerre*; p. 381; G. Kirk, *Middle East in the War*, part IV, USSR and Middle East.
10. F.O. 371/C5988/9/17.
11. *Ibid.* Saracoğlu was Minister of Foreign Affairs 1938-1942.
12. *Ibid.*
13. R. Massigli, *La Turquie Devant La Guerre*, p. 385. Massigli was French Ambassador at Ankara, 1938-1940.
14. F.O. 371/N3698/40/38.
15. *Ibid.*
16. F.O. 371/C5988/9/17. Sir Hughe Knatchbull Hugessen was British Ambassador to Turkey 1939-1945.

17. F.O. 371/R4666/5/67.
18. Professor F. Armaoğlu. *İkinci Dünya Harbinde Türkiye* (Turkey in the Second World War). Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi, Cilt. XIII/1958, p. 199.
19. Barutçu, p. 54; In September 1939 Saracoğlu had gone to Moscow hoping to bring the Soviets into the Anglo-Franco-Turkish Alliance. His visit coincided with that of Ribbentrop and he was left to his own devices for about ten days when Stalin or Molotov avoided seeing him.
20. Aydemir, *İkinci Adam*, Vol. 2, p. 159.
21. D.G.F.P., D; X, No. 198, p. 258; Massigli, pp. 465–9; Papen, *Memoirs*, p. 463.
22. D.G.F.P., D; IX, No. 10.
23. Langer and Gleason, *Undeclared War*, p. 115.
24. D.G.F.P., D; X, No. 272, p. 393.
25. F.O. 371/N6243/30/38; R.8117/242/44.
26. F.O. 371/N6243/30/38.
27. F.O. 371/R8116/203/44. Menemencioglu was Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry.
28. Y. Nadi, *Cumhuriyet*, 14 November 1940.
29. *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, pp. 244–6.
30. *Ibid*, p. 259.
31. *Ibid*, p. 274.
32. Barutçu, p. 40.
33. Professor Dr Ahmet Şükrü Esmer, Dr Oral Sander: *Olaylarla Turk Dis Politikasi*, p. 157.
34. Barutçu, p. 71.
35. *Ibid*, p. 79–80.
36. *Ibid*. Karabekir had been a leading military Commander in the Turkish War of Independence, and was now serving as a Deputy in the Assembly.
37. *Ibid*, p. 83.
38. *Ibid*, p. 104.
39. Y. Nadi, *Cumhuriyet*, 23 June 1940.
40. A. Ş. Esmer, *Ulus*, 22 June, 1940.
41. E. Velid, *Tasviri Efkar*, 22 June 1940.
42. E. Velid, *Tasvir*, 23 June, 1940.
43. Conversation with A. Ş. Esmer 29.10.1977: Professor Esmer was a Deputy in the Assembly at the time, and one of the most informed observers of European politics. He was also a distinguished journalist.
44. Conversation with Cabinet Minister, 29.10.1977. This Minister who has expressed the desire to remain anonymous served in İnönü's Cabinet through the war.
45. R. Massigli, p. 432.
46. Barutçu, pp. 106, 107.
47. *Ibid*, p. 127.
48. *Ibid*, p. 75. Rauf Orbay had been one of the leaders of the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1922) and was a leading member of the Kemalist clique. He was condemned in 1926 for plotting against Mustafa Kemal and banished for ten years.
49. F.O. 371/R6464/542/44; presumably Saracoğlu saw an invasion of Britain as imminent.
50. F.O. 371/R6510/316/44.
51. F.O. 371/R6510/316/44.
52. *Ibid*.
53. F.O. 371/R6641/316/44.
54. F.O. 371/R6641/316/44.
55. *Ibid*.
56. *Ibid*.
57. Selim Sebit, *Tasviri Efkar*, 18 July 1940.
58. Barutçu, p. 109. Yahya Kemal was quoting from Yenisehirli Avni (1826–1883): 'Ahibba sive — i — yağmada mehbut eyler a — dayi ... Bedidar Olmasin asar-l izmihlâl bir yerde ...'
59. This Clause stated that Turkey would 'render all the resistance in her power' to Britain and France 'in the event of a war in the Mediterranean'.
60. Olaylarla, p. 57; Armaoğlu, p. 150; H. Howard, *Turkey, the Straits and U.S. Policy*, p. 164.
61. Barutçu, pp. 90–91.
62. F.O. 371/R6459/542/44. tel. no. 541.
63. *Ibid*, tel. no. 548. Dipp.

64. Ibid.
65. Ibid, tel. no. 563.
66. Ibid, tel. no. 588. Dipp.
67. Ibid. tel. 455. Dipp.
68. R. Massigli: *La Turquie Devant La Guerre*, p. 443; PRO. CAB.65.7/169(40)7.
69. F.O. 371/R6269/58/22.
70. Ibid.
71. F.O. 371/R6510/316/44.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. D.G.F.P.; D.X. No. 424, p. 25.
75. F.O. 371/R6510/316/44. tel. no. 482. DIPP. 21 June.
76. Ibid, tel. 618. 22 June.
77. Olaylarla, p. 160.
78. Barutçu: pp. 116–17.
79. Ibid, p. 100.
80. Ibid, pp. 90–91.
81. FO. CAB 65/7 161(40)7; The Turks had made known to the British their intention of applying Protocol 2 well before the actual official declaration of non-belligerency on 26 June.
82. CAB. 65/7. 166(40)7.
83. CAB. 65/7. 167(40)9.
84. FO. 371/R6608/316/44.
85. N. Sadak, *Akşam*, 17 June 1940.
86. FO. 371/R7555/316/44.
87. In Paragraph 3 of the treaty, Turkey had undertaken to render 'all aid and assistance in her power' if France and Britain had to implement their guarantees to Greece or Rumania.
88. N. Sadak, *Akşam*, 21 October 1939.
89. N. Sadak, *Akşam*, 16 July 1940.
90. Y. Nadi, *Cumhuriyet*, 21 June 1940.
91. F. R. Atay, *Ulus*, 16 June 1940.
92. D.G.F.P.; D. IX, No. 434, p. 568.
93. D.G.F.P.; D. IX, No. 308.
94. FO. 371/R6762/318/44.
95. FO. 371/E4151/143/44.
96. FO. 371/R6762/318/44.
97. FO. 371/R6821/542/44.
98. FO. 371/R6510/316/44.
99. FO. 371/R7274/764/19.
100. Ibid.
101. See above, footnote 87. p. 42.
102. FO. 371/R6269/58/22.
103. FO. 371/R7487/764/19.
104. FO. 371/R6261/58/22. Sir M. Palairt was Britain's Ambassador to Greece.
105. FO. 371/R6269/58/22. Sir R. Campbell was British Ambassador to France.
106. FO. 371/R7058/764/19.
107. FO. 371/R7211/764/19.
108. FO. 371/R7274/764/19. Tel. no. 1077.
109. FO. 371/R7274/764/19.
110. FO. 371/R7555/316/44.
111. FO. 371/R7254/764/19.
112. FO. 371/R7400/764/19.
113. J. S. Koliopoulos, *Greece and the British Connection*, p. 140.
114. FO. 371/R7430/764/19.
115. FO. 371/R7464/764/19.
116. FO. 371/R7529/764/19.
117. FO. 371/R7912/316/44; C. M. Woodhouse declares in his review of Koliopoulos' book, *Greece and the British connection*, that Koliopoulos is mistaken in claiming that Turkey did not implement her treaty obligations. He says, 'surely there were no such obligations at that

- date (1940)'. He is mistaken in this view, there were explicit obligations at this time; see C. M. Woodhouse, 'The Intermittent King', *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 July 1978, pp. 860–861, and British and Foreign State Papers, Cmd. 6165 (19 Oct. 1939), *House of Commons Sessional Papers*, vol. XII (1940).
118. Faik Fenik, *Ulus*, 8 October 1940.
  119. F. R. Atay, *Ulus*, 12 October 1940.
  120. A. Ş. Esmer, *Ulus*, 15 October 1940.
  121. *Ciano's Diaries*, p. 299; Badoglio, *Italy in the Second World War*, p. 25, Describes Ciano as the 'evil genius' behind Greek campaign.
  122. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
  123. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
  124. FO. 371/R8069/764/19.
  125. Langer and Gleason, *Undeclared War*, p. 115.
  126. A. Ş. Esmer, *Ulus*, 30 October 1940.
  127. F. R. Atay, *Ulus*, 30 October 1940.
  128. Y. Nadi, *Cumhuriyet*, 14 November 1940.
  129. Winston Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, p. 483.
  130. *Undeclared War*, p. 115.
  131. FO. 371/R8586/316/44.
  132. CAB. 65/10-294(40)3.
  133. FO. 371/R8586/316/44.
  134. CAB. 65/10-294(40)3.
  135. FO. 371/R8114/764/19.
  136. J. Koliopoulos, *Greece and the British Connection*, p. 14.
  137. FO. 371/8114/764/19.
  138. W. Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, p. 484.
  139. General Oberst Halder, *Kriegstagebuch* (War Diary), Vol. II, p. 151.
  140. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
  141. G. Warner, *Syria and Iraq*, 1941, pp. 41 and 59.
  142. *Undeclared War*, p. 109.
  143. FO. 371/R8586/316/44.
  144. *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 191.
  145. *Cumhuriyet*, 19 November 1940.