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T-516
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THE SOVIET UNION AND THE PROBLEM OF THE
TURKISH STRAITS

I. STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF THE SOVIET UNION

Second only to the Republic of Turkey itself and more than any other Great Power, Soviet Russia is directly interested in the problem of the Turkish Straits, since these waters represent a strategic key of the greatest importance to the Black Sea shores of the Soviet Union. Traditionally, consideration of the strategic factors in the region of the Turkish Straits has centered around the inter-relation of land and sea power. The new factor of air power may, however, fundamentally alter the setting of the problem for the Soviet Union as for other Powers. A non-riparian fleet could hardly challenge Soviet air power, by entering the Black Sea, while Soviet air power, based on the region of the Straits, could dominate Turkey and the Balkan States, as well as other states in the Near East. On the other hand, air power based on Aegean or Greek bases could control passage of the Straits in time of war.

Strategically, the Soviet Union is interested in limiting or closing the Turkish Straits to the entry of foreign war vessels or aircraft and preventing their entry into the Black Sea, where the Soviet Black Sea fleet, though the largest in that sea, might be at the mercy of a non-riparian fleet or combination of fleets. If the Straits are opened freely to foreign war vessels, the Soviet Union is threatened in the Black Sea; if the Straits are closed, the Black Sea may become a Soviet lake and Turkey may be subject to the domination of the Soviet Union. In sum, the strategic problem which the Straits present to the Soviet Union is that of the security of the Black Sea shores of Southern Russia.

II. ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF THE SOVIET UNION

The economic interest of the Soviet Union in the region of the Turkish Straits is as direct as the

strategic

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strategic interest. Russian commerce in the Straits has been of growing importance especially during the past one hundred years. By 1913 Russian shipping passing the Straits reached a total of about 1,428,435 tons (10 percent), ranking fourth after Great Britain, Greece and Austria-Hungary. 1/ By 1914 approximately forty percent of Imperial Russia's total export commerce-- or about fifty-four percent of its total maritime exports--went out through the Turkish Straits, while seventy-four percent of Russian cereals, eighty-eight percent of its oil, ninety-three percent of its manganese, and sixty-one percent of its iron were exported through the Straits. 2/

In the years immediately following the revolution of November 1917 the economic interest was somewhat lessened, though the statistics of Soviet shipping in the years after 1924, especially, showed a growing Soviet trade until the coming of the war in 1939. In 1924, for example, the Soviet tonnage was only 172,103, though by 1930 it passed 600,000 and five years later was more than 1,600,000, surpassing the 1913 Russian tonnage of 1,428,000, and being exceeded only by the Italian, British and Greek tonnage. 3/ In the years 1927-1928, over eighty percent of Soviet exports and imports passed over the European frontiers of the U.S.S.R., including the Straits. The years after 1935 witnessed a decline in Soviet tonnage in the Straits, although in 1937 it once more exceeded 1,000,000 tons. The war years naturally witnessed a

decline

- 1/ See the table in Coleman Phillipson and Noel Buxton, The Question of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles (London, 1917), 232-33 and the tables in T-515.
- 2/ Russian Political Conference. Memorandum Presented to the President of the Conference of Peace, Paris, July 5, 1919 (Paris, 1919).
- 3/ In 1908, 368 Russian vessels passed the Straits; in 1928 the figure was 275 and the tonnage about 470,000; in 1938 there were 333 vessels of 740,000 tons.

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decline. ^{4/} Under normal commercial conditions, however, Soviet exports from Black Sea ports, clearing through Istanbul, formed a considerable proportion of total Soviet exports. In 1938, they were only about eight percent by value of the larger total, but in the two previous years, 1936 and 1937, they ran thirty percent or more. Grain, coal, manganese ore, petroleum and petroleum products, and licorice root were shipped almost entirely from the Black Sea region and were recorded as they passed through the Dardanelles. ^{5/}

As the Soviet Union recovers from the ravages of the present war and becomes a great industrial as well as agricultural nation the economic importance of the Straits to the Soviet Union should materially increase.

III. THE POLICY OF THE SOVIET UNION WITH RESPECT TO THE STRAITS

A. The Historical Backgrounds of Soviet Policy

In general, the historic policy of Russia in the Turkish Straits has centered around the problem of

attaining

^{4/} A report from the American Embassy, Istanbul, Turkey, January 23, 1941, declared: "Exports from Russian Black Sea ports passing Istanbul during the calendar year 1940 showed a heavy decline compared with the previous year. The only exports made in any considerable quantity were cereals to Greece and manganese to the United States. Except for these two products other exports fell to an almost negligible quantity. The total volume of merchandise exported during 1940 amounted to 311,925 tons as against 1,713,405 tons during the previous year. This represents a decline of 1,401,581 tons."

^{5/} See E. C. Ropes, "Foreign Trade of Soviet Russia in 1927-1928", I Commerce Reports 9 (March 4, 1929), 518-22; "Soviet Transit Shipments Through Istanbul," Commerce Reports March 9, 1940, p. 231. For statistical data, 1932-1935, concerning Soviet maritime commerce, see Centralnoe Upravleniie Narodno-Koziastvennovo Ucheta Gosplana SSSR. Socialisticheskoe Stroitelstvo SSSR. Tschikhy Gosplana SSSR (Moskva, 1936) Statisticheskii Ezhegodnik. Table 43.

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attaining freedom of passage for commerce through the Straits and of assuring the security of Southern Russia from hostile attack by foreign fleets passing through the Straits into the Black Sea. Although desirous of barring access to the Black Sea to non-riverain warships, Russia has sought to secure the right of passage through the Straits to its own fleet. These desiderata may be secured either through war and outright seizure of the Straits from the Ottoman Empire (or Turkey) or by means of close alliance and understanding between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

The modern history of the problem of the Straits may be said to begin with the arrival of Imperial Russia on the Black Sea and the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774), which gave Russia commercial access to the Straits, though these waters remained closed to warships, in accordance with "the ancient rule of the Sultan's Empire." By the Treaty of the Dardanelles (1809), the British Government agreed to respect the principle of closure. The Russo-Turkish Treaty of Adrianople (1829) confirmed commercial freedom in the Straits, but in 1833 the Russians were able, through close alliance with the Sublime Porte, to impose closure of the Straits to foreign warships at Russia's command, thereby converting the Black Sea into a Russian lake and subjecting Turkey to Russian domination. 6/

Under British pressure, however, Russia had to abandon its position, and in the conventions of 1840 and 1841 the Straits were open to the commerce of all

nations

6/ See S.M. Goriainov, Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles (Paris, 1910), 25-81; V. J. Puryear, England, Russia, and the Straits Question, 1844-1856 (Berkeley, University of California, 1931); P. E. Mosely, Russian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Eastern Question in 1838 and 1839 (Cambridge, Harvard, 1934); R.J. Kerner, "Russia's New Policy in the Near East After the Peace of Adrianople; including the Text of the Protocol of 16 September 1829." V Cambridge Historical Journal 3 (1937), 280-90; P. H. Mischef, La mer noire et les Détroits de Constantinople (Paris, Rousseau, 1899), 694 pp.

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nations and closed, under established international rule, to foreign war vessels. The legal rule of closure remained a part of the public law of Europe from that time until 1914 despite the vicissitudes of international politics and intervening wars. The Treaty of Paris (1856), following the Crimean War, did not alter the fundamental rule, though it demilitarized the Black Sea. Neither the Convention of London (1871), by which Russia regained the right to arm on the Black Sea, nor the Treaty of Berlin (1878), made essential changes in this respect, though the penetration of Germany into the Ottoman Empire before 1914 altered the political situation in the Near East fundamentally.

By the early part of the Twentieth Century Russian policy concerning the Straits could be seen in clear perspective. The negative aim was to prevent the installation of a foreign power in the region of the Straits, for the obvious reason that this would endanger the security of Russia. The alleged positive aim of conquest of the Straits by Russia appeared as a veritable mirage. Imperial Russia, however, pursued a positive subsidiary aim of close alliance and understanding with the Ottoman Empire, by which security of passage through the Straits would be obtained in a manner similar to that established in the Treaty of Unkiar-Eskelessi of 1833. This was attempted both in 1911 and in August 1914, on the very eve of the World War. If unable to achieve a privileged position, however, Imperial Russia preferred the status quo--i.e., closure of the Straits, to the opening of the Straits to all foreign fleets. 7/

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7/ See André N. Mandelstam, La politique russe d'accès à la Méditerranée au XXe Siècle. Hague, Academie de droit international. Recueil des cours. 1934. Tome 47. (Paris, Siroy, 1934), 599-802. Also Harry N. Howard, The Partition of Turkey (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1931), Chs. 1-2.

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Tsarist Russia had no clearly defined policy as to the attainment of its desiderata with respect to Constantinople and the Straits until the inception of the Dardanelles Campaign in February 1915. In the midst of that campaign, however--the Ottoman Empire having come into the war in October 1914 by means of an attack on Russia in the Black Sea--the Petrograd Government finally demanded and obtained consent to the annexation of Constantinople and the region of the Straits, including the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus. Great Britain gave its consent on March 12, 1915 and France on April 10, 1915. In return, British and French commercial interests were recognized, the British were to have the so-called "neutral zone" in Iran as defined in the Anglo-Russian Agreement of August 1907, and the position of France in Syria was acknowledged. 8/

B. Soviet Policy Towards the Problem of the Straits

The policy of the Soviet Union toward the Straits, since the Russian Revolution of 1917 did not alter the geography of Southern Russia, has not differed fundamentally from that pursued by the government of Tsarist Russia. 9/

The policy of the Tsarist Government concerning the Straits was reaffirmed by Professor Paul Miliukov as Foreign Minister of the Provisional Government in April and May 1917. But with the forced resignation of Miliukov on May 15, 1917, the Provisional Government declared for a peace without annexations, without indemnities, and on the basis of the self-determination of peoples. When the Bolsheviks seized power on November 8, 1917, they immediately abrogated "absolutely and

immediately

8/ See Howard, Partition of Turkey, Ch. IV. For the documents see: E. A. Adamov, Evropeiskie derzhavi i Gretsia v epokhy mirovoi voyni [The European Powers and Greece During the Period of the World War] (Moscow, 1922); Konstantinopol i prolivii [Constantinople and the Straits] (Moscow, 1925-1926, 2 volumes); Razdel Aziatskoi Turtsii [The Partition of Asiatic Turkey] (Moscow, 1924).

9/ Paul Miliukov, La politique extérieure des Soviets (Paris, Librairie générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1936), 530 pp., passim.

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immediately all the provisions of these secret treaties". On publication of the Inter-Allied secret agreements by the Bolsheviks on November 22, 1917, they declared them "not binding for the Russian people."

Strictly speaking, the Conference of Paris did not arrive at a solution of the Turkish problem in general or of the question of the Straits in particular. No Russian delegation was present, though a group of Russians associated both with the Tsarist Government and with the Provisional Government did present memoranda unofficially to the Peace Conference outlining the Russian aspirations to a mandate for Constantinople and the region of the Straits. A new régime of the Straits was achieved at Sévres, on August 10, 1920, 10/ placing the region of the Straits under the naval dominance of Great Britain, and designed not only to keep Turkey in subjugation but to threaten the position of Soviet Russia in the Black Sea through the access which it would have given to the British and other Allied fleets. The Treaty of Sévres, however, proved abortive thanks to the resistance of the Turkish nation under the leadership of Mustafa Kamal. The Soviet Government was, of course, bitterly opposed to the Sévres Straits Convention.

Soviet Russia abandoned the so-called imperialism of the Tsarist régime and attempted to solve the problem of the Straits through a policy of close co-operation with Turkey, based on the somewhat common interests which the two countries had in the region of the Straits. This policy found expression in the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of March 16, 1921, 11/ signed while Turkey was fighting for its life against the Greeks, who were supported by the British. For the purpose of guaranteeing the freedom of the Straits "and their free passage for commercial purposes to all countries", the agreement provided for the calling of a special conference of the riverain states, to draft a new convention of the Straits

and the

10/ Treaty Series No. 11 (1920). Treaty of Peace with Turkey. Signed at Sévres, August 10, 1920. Cmd. 964.
11/ For text see XVII Current History 2 (November 1922), 277-79.

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and the Black Sea, "on condition that its decisions shall not prejudice the absolute sovereignty and the safety of Turkey and of her capital, Constantinople." That conference was never held, however. Nevertheless, the Treaty of March 16, 1921 marked the beginning of Soviet-Turkish collaboration and was renewed in 1925, 1929 and 1941. A treaty of friendship rather than of alliance, it still remains technically in force.

Soviet Russia was invited to send representatives to the Conference of Lausanne, which was to bring the Greco-Turkish War to an end, only for discussion of the problem of the Straits. While the British delegation called for preservation of "freedom" of the Straits for both war and commercial vessels under an international régime which would have given supremacy to the British fleet, and the Turkish delegation desired to preserve Turkish sovereignty over the region of the Straits, the Russian delegation insisted on Turkish sovereignty, but called for closing the Straits to all warships, thereby converting the Black Sea into a Russian mare clausum. ^{12/} The Lausanne Convention of the Straits (July 24, 1923), ^{13/} was unsatisfactory to the Soviet Government, although the Soviet Representative signed on August 14, 1923. The Soviet Government looked upon the provisions of the Lausanne Convention as a constant threat to Soviet security in the Black Sea. The Soviet Delegation at Lausanne held that the new Convention

threatened

- ^{12/} In general see Howard, Partition of Turkey, 285-97. It is noteworthy that the General Board of the United States Navy, on November 10, 1922, just on the eve of the Lausanne Conference, declared: "No solution that imposes an artificial barrier between so great a power [as Russia] and the sea can contain within it the elements of permanency, --of stability." See U.S. Foreign Relations, II (1938), 893-97, for text.
- ^{13/} For text of the Lausanne Convention see Treaty Series No. 16 (1923). Treaty of Peace with Turkey and other Instruments Signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923. Cmd. 1929.

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threatened "the security and vital interests" of Soviet Russia, the Ukraine and Georgia; that it made impossible the establishment of a stable and peaceful situation in the Near East and the Black Sea; and that it would impose the burden of additional naval armaments on Soviet Russia and other riversain states and would not, therefore, serve the interests of peace.

Both Soviet Russia, which did not ratify the Convention, and Turkey were dissatisfied with the Lausanne Convention and when Turkey took the first real opportunity to modify the status of the Straits, it had the full support of the Soviet Government. This opportunity did not come until the rise of Adolf Hitler threatened the peace of Europe, and did not take concrete form until the Montreux Conference of June-July 1936. The Turkish note of April 10, 1936, urging modification of the régime of the Straits, was especially well received by the Soviet Union. The Soviet note of April 16 declared that its views of the Lausanne Convention had not changed, and in view of the threatening situation the Soviet Government considered "quite well-founded the Turkish Government's apprehension of the dangers to general peace at the present moment and the serious menace of war." Therefore, the desire of the Turkish Government to assume sovereign control over the region of the Straits was quite natural.

In general the Soviet Government supported the Turkish demand at the Montreux Conference, June 22 to July 20, 1936, 14/ for complete control over the Straits, a position which Great Britain was reluctant to concede. The Montreux Convention 15/ affirmed commercial freedom of the Straits in time of peace and war, even if Turkey were a belligerent, provided the commercial vessels committed no hostile acts. In war, belligerents were

forbidden

14/ Actes de la Conférence de Montreux concernant le régime des Détroits. 22 juin--20 juillet 1936. Compte-rendu des séances plénières et procès-verbal des débats du comité technique (Liège, Belgium, 1936), 310 pp.

15/ Turkey No. 1 (1936). Convention regarding the Régime of the Straits with Correspondence relating thereto. Montreux, July 20, 1936. Cmd. 5249. See also T-539. The Montreux Convention of the Straits (1936).

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forbidden to use the Straits, except when acting under the League of Nations, or under the terms of a regional pact to which Turkey was a signatory and which was registered under the Covenant of the League of Nations. Subject to a two-thirds vote of the Council of the League of Nations, Turkey had a right to close the Straits. Naval vessels of the Black Sea states--primarily the Soviet Union--were subject to some restriction, but non-riverain states were limited to a maximum of 45,000 tons of light vessels.

The new Convention was a distinct victory for Turkey, for the members of the Balkan Entente and for the Soviet Union, and at the time it altered the Mediterranean balance to the disadvantage of Italy. But it also added further complication to Turkey's foreign policy. No longer was the Soviet Union the only Great Power on which Turkey would place reliance--for Great Britain, reluctant though it had been in its final approval of the Turkish position at Montreux, now became one of the mainstays of Turkish security. Relations with the Soviet Union, however, continued substantially unaltered until the outbreak of the war in September 1939.

C. The Straits, The Soviet Union, Turkey and the War

The Montreux Convention remained in formal operation in the years following 1936, but as the war clouds gathered, Turkey continued to move, however cautiously, in the orbit of Great Britain and France. Following the destruction of Czechoslovakia by Germany in March 1939 and the subsequent British guarantee to Poland, the British Government offered to support Greece and Rumania on April 13, and communicated this declaration to Turkey. At the same time, Soviet Russia, while Maxim Litvinov still remained at the head of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, appeared to be trying to organize a Turco-Balkan group for the preservation of the security of the Straits and the Black Sea. 16/ On June 23, 1939,

Turkey

16/ Such a solution has been suggested many times--as late as 1911-1912 and 1914 in Imperial Russia. It was proposed at the Lausanne Conference on December 8, 1922, and in February 1939 by M. Litvinov, as well

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Turkey signed a declaration of mutual assistance with Great Britain and France which ultimately developed into the treaty of October 1939.

There is no doubt that the Turkish Government was somewhat shocked at the seeming shift in the position of the Soviet Union in the signing of the so-called non-aggression pact with Germany on August 23, 1939 on the eve of Germany's attack on Poland. The Turks were further alarmed at the aggressive and expansionist attitude shown by the Soviet Union in the direction of the Baltic States, especially in the case of the war with Finland. Moreover, the treatment accorded the Turkish Foreign Minister, M. Saracoglu, on the occasion of his four-week visit to Moscow in September and October 1939, was considered a studied insult. V. M. Molotov, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, explained the Soviet position with respect to the Straits in his address before the Supreme Soviet on November 1, 1939. ^{17/} Molotov denied any suggestion of altering the Montreux Convention for the purpose of establishing "a privileged position as regards the Straits", but he did declare that "the subject at issue was the conclusion of a bilateral pact of mutual assistance limited to the regions of the Black Sea and the Straits." The U.S.S.R. considered that the conclusion of such a mutual assistance pact

would

^{16/} Continued. as by M. Molotov in the fall of 1939. See especially Gabriel Hanotaux, La Guerre des Balkans et l'Europe, 1912-1913 (Paris, Plon-Nourrit, 1914), 197-200; Cmd. 1314 (1923), 159-65; New York Times, February 8, 1939; D. J. Dallin, Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, 1939-1942 (New Haven, Yale, 1942), 105-111; N. Dascovici, La question du Bosphore et des Dardanelles (Geneva, 1915), 299-300.

Without specific guarantees to Turkey, Bulgaria and Rumania, these powers would run the risk of complete domination by the Soviet Union and the Black Sea would become a Russian lake.

^{17/} For text of Molotov's address see the New York Times, November 1, 1939. See also Ernest Jackh, The Rising Crescent (New York, 1944), 228 ff.

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would help to prevent armed conflict with Germany, and thought that the U.S.S.R. "should have a guarantee that in view of a war danger Turkey would not allow warships of non-Black Sea powers through the Bosphorus to the Black Sea." Turkey had rejected these proposals, doubtless because of the understanding with Great Britain and France and because of its fears concerning Soviet policy. Turkey, according to Molotov, had drifted into the Anglo-French camp and warned rather directly that Turkey might come to regret its pro-British attitude.

A few days after his return from Moscow, Saracoglu signed the Anglo-Franco-Turkish Treaty of Mutual Assistance of October 19, 1939, 18/ pledging that Turkey would "collaborate effectively with France and the United Kingdom, and would "lend them all aid and assistance in its power." This would seem to have implied use of the Straits, though Protocol No. 2 declared specifically that Turkey's obligations could not compel Turkey to engage in armed conflict with the Soviet Union. Despite some wavering, partly motivated by the ebb and flow of the fortunes of war, Turkey remained a non-belligerent ally of Great Britain.

Relations with the Soviet Union perceptibly cooled, and for a time there were indications of a possible bargain between Germany and Russia with respect to the Straits. Indeed, in his proclamation of war against the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, 19/ Adolf Hitler charged that when Molotov visited Berlin

from

18/ See Turkey No. 2 (1939). Treaty of Mutual Assistance between His Majesty in respect of the United Kingdom, the President of the French Republic and the President of the Turkish Republic. Ankara, October 19, 1939. Cmd. 6123.

19/ For text see Adolf Hitler, My New Order. Edited with Commentary by Raoul de Roussy de Sales. (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), 984. It should be recalled that a German-Turkish Treaty of Non-Aggression was concluded on June 18, 1941, just four days before the German attack on Russia.

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from November 11 to 14, 1940, the Soviet Commissar demanded, among other things, not only a fundamental alteration of the Montreux Convention of 1936, but German agreement to "Russia's taking possession of the Straits." This, however, was immediately and explicitly denied by Molotov on June 22, 1941 and by the Soviet foreign office on many occasions thereafter. 20/

A few weeks after the German attack on the Soviet Union, the British Foreign Minister, Mr. Anthony Eden, noting the German propaganda concerning an alleged arrangement "at the expense of Turkey", told the House of Commons on August 6 that "we would never agree to anything of the kind, nor had any suggestions of the kind ever been made to us by any party." 21/ Four days later, on August 10, 22/ the British Ambassador in Ankara, Sir Hugh Kaatchbull-Hugessen, and the Soviet Ambassador, M. Vinogradov, in joint declarations, confirmed "their fidelity to the Montreux Convention" and assured the Turkish Government that they had "no aggressive intentions or claims whatever with regard to the Straits." Both governments were "prepared scrupulously to observe the territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic", and, moreover, were ready to "render Turkey every help and assistance in the event of her being attacked by a European Power."

Following

20/ Note especially the statements in the Moscow Pravda on June 27, 29, October 5, 1941, denouncing the statement as a baseless lie. But see John Scott, Duel for Europe (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1942), 150, who indicates that Hitler did mention to Molotov possible acquisitions in Iran, Iraq, India, a naval base on the Bosphorus, and a free hand in Finland.

21/ The London Times, August 7, 1941.

22/ Goodrich-Jones-Myers, Documents on American Foreign Relations, IV, 686-87.

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Following his return from Moscow, in an address of January 8, 1942, 23/ before the House of Commons, Mr. Eden reaffirmed the Anglo-Soviet position with respect to Turkey. "The references to Turkey," he declared, "were in all respects friendly, and such as the Turkish Government themselves would have been glad to hear." Turkey had nothing to fear from an Allied victory. Turkish territorial integrity was in no way menaced by either Great Britain or Soviet Russia, "and the Anglo-Soviet pledges that we gave to Turkey last autumn will be fully honoured." Both Soviet Russia and Great Britain wished "to see Turkey strong and prosperous." Finally, in his report to the Supreme Soviet on June 19, 1942, on the occasion of the ratification of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance of May 26, 1942, Molotov specifically denied any desire for territorial aggrandizement. 24/

Despite

23/ Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, No. 377, No. 20, p. 373. This position was confirmed to the British and American press representatives in Ankara on January 13, 1942 by the British Ambassador to Turkey, who had been with Mr. Eden in Moscow. For another aspect of the development of policy toward the problem of Turkey and the question of the Straits, see T-517. Great Britain and the Problem of the Turkish Straits.

24/ For text see Embassy of the U.S.S.R., Information Bulletin, No. 74, June 20, 1942. Molotov cited Stalin's statement of November 6, 1941: "We have not and cannot have any such war aims as the seizure of foreign territories and the subjugation of foreign peoples, whether it be peoples and territories of Asia, including Iran." In the Anglo-Soviet-Iran Treaty of Alliance of January 29, 1942, Great Britain and the Soviet Union were pledged "to respect the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of Iran", and to withdraw their forces from Iran within six months after the cessation of hostilities between them and Germany. See Louise Holborn, War and Peace Aims of the United Nations (Boston, 1943), 224-25. The United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union repeated this pledge as to "their desire for the maintenance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran", on December 1, 1943, at Teheran. In part this pledge was intended,

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Despite these assurances there was continued apprehension on the part of Turkey as to Soviet intentions concerning the Straits. While the Soviet Union appeared reasonably satisfied with the Montreux Convention and had guaranteed it, the Turkish Government feared that at the end of the war, the Soviet Union might demand additional guarantees, which, together with possible territorial acquisitions in the Balkans, would constitute a substantial Soviet dominance in the Straits. Until the latter part of 1943 it appears that Great Britain and the United States were not urging Turkish entry into the war lest its involvement result in extending German lines into the Near East and drain United Nations supplies when they were seriously limited. When Mr. Churchill flew to Adana, Turkey for a conference with President İnönü, in February 1943, after his meeting with President Roosevelt at Casablanca, he did not press Turkey for early entry into the war, but expressed his wish to see "Turkish territories, rights and interests effectively preserved". The British Prime Minister also desired to see "warm and friendly relations" between Turkey and the Soviet Union. 25/

The problem of the Straits does not appear to have been discussed at the Moscow Conference in October 1943. Differences in Anglo-American and Soviet policies toward Turkey were ironed out at the Teheran Conference in conversations between Prime Minister Churchill, President Roosevelt and Premier Stalin, in November 1943, following which President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill held discussions with President İnönü on December 4, 5, and 6, 1943 in Cairo. 26/ Pressure was now applied to

Ankara

no doubt, to calm Turkish fears as to the intentions of the Powers, and especially the Soviet Union, in the Middle East.

25/ For the British position see Prime Minister Churchill's statement to the House of Commons on February 11, 1943, in III United Nations Review 3 (March 15, 1943) 106-110.

26/ See IV United Nations Review I (January 15, 1944), 1-3. See also the New York Times, December 7, 12, 1943.

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Ankara in order to secure the use of airfields for attacks on Rumanian oil centers and to stop the exports of vital raw materials, especially chrome, to Germany. As long as Turkey feared German retaliation for any assistance to the United Nations, it refused to accede to British and American requests. 27/ By June 1944, when military successes of the United Nations reduced the German menace, Turkey agreed to suspend chrome exports to Germany and to prevent the passage of partly dismantled German warships through the Straits." 28/

On August 2, 1944 Turkey broke off relations with Germany. 29/ By this action Turkey, no doubt, hoped to secure a voice in the peace settlement, especially with respect to the frontiers of Turkey in Europe, the balance of power in the Balkan peninsula, and particularly in the question of the Straits. It is with respect to the latter two problems, in particular, that Turkey is apprehensive concerning the policy of the Soviet Union. If the problem of the Straits should be raised

in the

27/ While Mr. Churchill, in his speech of May 24, 1944 severely criticized Turkish policy, Soviet sources declared that "Turkey supplied Germany with valuable strategical raw materials and especially with chrome ore. Out of 100,000 tons of chrome ore mined in Turkey in 1943, 47,000 tons went to Germany. These consignments increased in 1944, totaling 25,000 tons in the first three months. Consignments to Germany of cotton, copper, oilseed, wool, leather, etc., likewise reached large proportions. The Economiste d'Orient in its issue of January 10 stated that "Germany acquires 90 percent of Turkey's exports." Pravda, August 7, 1944, cited in Embassy of the USSR, Information Bulletin, IV, No. 92 (August 12, 1944).

28/ Numan Monomencioglu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, who had pursued a very cautious policy, resigned on June 15, 1944 following a British protest over the passage of German armed vessels between the Black and Aegean seas. See the New York Times, June 15, 16, 1944.

29/ See the New York Times, August 3, 1944.

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in the future by the Soviet Union, the Turkish Government no doubt, believes that its chances of retaining the control of the Straits, established at Montreux in 1936 may be enhanced by its overtures to the United Nations. While Turkey's action was received as another stroke against Nazi Germany, Pravda (August 7, 1944) struck a reserved note in assessing Turkey's action, stressing that as late as June "instances were revealed of Turkish authorities permitting German war vessels to pass into the Aegean sea through the Dardanelles." Moreover:

Thus for quite a long period Turkey's rulers pursued a policy which in practice was tantamount to aiding Hitler Germany in the war. And even when the three Allied powers--Great Britain, the United States and the USSR--at the end of last year made insistent representations to Turkey on the necessity of putting an end to such a foreign policy, which was of benefit only to Germany, the Turks refused to do so. This refusal could only make for the protraction of the war. It is scarcely necessary to point out that this policy was to the detriment of her political and economic relations with the democratic countries. Apparently, this line of Turkish foreign policy was to a large measure due, on the one hand, to the influence exercised on Turkish leaders by the thesis of German propoganda that a split in the Allied Camp was inevitable; and on the other, by an overestimation of Germany's chances in this war.

Although the conferences at Moscow and Teheran had "brilliantly demonstrated" the unity and strength of the "Anglo-Soviet-American coalition," Turkey continued to "adhere to her former foreign policy." It was perfectly obvious to Pravda that the Turkish decision to break diplomatic and economic relations with Germany "was dictated first and foremost by the fear that Turkey would be politically isolated after the war." It was also "undeniable that the rupture of diplomatic and economic relations" with Germany would "cause additional concern and disappointment to the Hitler Government" and that this was its "advantageous side for the Allied countries." Nevertheless, the change in policy was "extremely belated and should not be over-rated", since the issue of the war had been predetermined against Nazi Germany--"thanks to the heroic efforts of the Red Army and the Allies, and without any part having been taken in these efforts by Turkey." Finally, Pravda concluded:

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In assessing Turkey's decision to break off diplomatic and trade relations with Germany, it should be borne in mind that even this decision does not mean that Turkey is joining the states which are waging a grim fight against Hitler Germany. Nor should it be forgotten that Turkey is preserving intact her close relations with Germany's satellites, especially with Hungary and Rumania, which in alliance with Hitler Germany are at war with the Soviet Union and other democratic countries.

In the months following the break in diplomatic and economic relations between Turkey and Germany, the United States and Great Britain opened negotiations with the Turkish Government with respect to the right of merchant ships to pass through the Straits into the Black Sea carrying supplies for the Soviet Union, in accordance with the terms of the Montreux Convention. The United States Government took the position that since the Montreux Convention provided for passage of merchant vessels under any flag and with any cargo, there was little question as to the right of merchant vessels to pass through the Straits, even though they carried a defensive armament. 30/ It was also thought that assurance of the right of passage and the sending of supplies via the Straits would serve as an element in the rehabilitation of Turkish political relationships with the Soviet Union, in particular, and with the United Nations as a whole. 31/ By the middle of January '945 it was publicly announced that supplies to the Soviet Union were passing through the Turkish Straits. 32/

IV. SUMMARY

Soviet strategic and economic interests in the Turkish Straits are more direct than those of any other

Great Power

30/ See T-537. Passage of Merchant Vessels through the Turkish Straits.

31/ It should also be noted that the break in diplomatic relations between Turkey and Japan would serve a similar purpose.

32/ See New York Herald-Tribune, January 10, B, 1945.

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Great Power. Soviet policy with respect to the Turkish Straits remained fundamentally similar to the policy pursued by the government of Imperial Russia. The historic policy of Imperial Russia centered around the problem of attaining freedom of passage for commerce through the Straits and of assuring the security of Russia from hostile attack by foreign fleets passing through the Straits into the Black Sea. These desiderata could be secured either through war and outright seizure of the Straits from the Ottoman Empire--or by means of close alliance and understanding between Imperial Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Imperial Russian policy was not necessarily motivated by a desire to seize Constantinople and the Straits in order to attain its ends.

Traditionally the policy of the Soviet Union toward Turkey has rested on the Treaty of Moscow of March 16, 1921, which was renewed as late as the spring of 1941. The aims of the Soviet Union with respect to the Straits appear to have been attained in the Convention of Montreux of 1936, which both the Soviet Union and Great Britain agreed to respect in August 1941. Doubtless the Turkish Government still fears that the Soviet Union might seek to dominate the Straits either through some basic change in the Montreux Convention to the detriment of Turkish control or through territorial acquisitions or influence in the Balkan peninsula. There is at present, however, no decisive indication of a basic change in Soviet policy toward the Straits. 33/

33/ Note the various rumors as to Soviet demands concerning the Straits. New York Herald-Tribune, November 7, 1944; New York Times, November 7, 1944.

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