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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Elections on 15 October 1961 to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Republican Senate and National Assembly)

1. Offices to be filled: All 450 National Assembly seats and 150 Republican Senate seats.

2. Parties participating: Republican People's Party (RPP). In power from 1923 to 1950, the RPP stands for secularization and Westernization of the country and a predominant role for the state in the economy.

Justice Party (JP) and New Turkey Party (NTP). New parties without a well-established program. The JP and NTP are trying to win over the remnants of the outlawed Democratic Party (DP) of former Premier Menderes.

Republican Peasant Nation Party (RPNP). Favors permitting the peasants to revert to their traditional, religious-centered ways.

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Since the coup in May 1960, legislative functions have been vested in a Constituent Assembly dominated by the 22-man Committee of National Union. Election of a Grand National Assembly is essential to a return to civilian rule. Whoever emerges victorious from the elections will probably be in a strong position, since in Turkey the persons in control of the machinery of government have always been able to use it to their advantage and to the detriment of the opposition.

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5. Indications of party strengths:

The present military junta outlawed the DP following the coup, and previous political alignments have been completely disrupted.

The RPP won 28 percent of the seats in the October 1957 elections and polled a popular vote of approximately 40 percent. It is Turkey's most strongly established party and the only one organized throughout the country.

The JP and the NTP are new, untested parties. While not organized throughout the country, both are attempting to appeal to all voters and to win the votes of the supporters of the outlawed DP.

The RPNP's appeal is limited to peasants and other religiously minded elements. Despite the handicap of the imprisonment of its leader Osman Bolukbasi during the 1957 election, the RPNP polled over 6 percent of the popular vote. However, it won less than 1 percent of the seats in the legislature.

6. Principal issues:

a. The moral justification of the junta's overthrowing the Menderes government, executing Menderes and two others, and imprisoning virtually all the party's leadership.

b. The role of the state in imposing social reforms--by force if necessary--in order to advance the secularization and Westernization of Turkey.

c. The extent and pace of the state's economic development measures.

7. Principal factors influencing the outcome:

The National Assembly--the more important of the two houses--will be elected on the basis of a new electoral

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law which provides that the seats in each province be divided roughly in proportion to the popular vote of all parties. In past elections the party winning a plurality in each province won all the seats; this worked to the advantage of the larger parties.

Former supporters of Menderes may express their disapproval of the military regime by voting against the RPP, which in the public mind shares responsibility with the military junta for events since May 1960.

The junta is pledged to hold elections and return the country to civilian rule. Civilian politicians probably realize, however, that the military may renege on its pledge if campaign arguments center on the legitimacy of the military coup and if it seems likely that the vote will go against the RPP, which is closely aligned with the junta. Along with the great majority of Turks, civilian political leaders want an end to military rule. It seems possible that these politicians, in the interests of making sure that the country returns to civilian rule, will accede to the orders of the junta and refrain from full discussion of the Menderes regime and the coup. Such circumspect behavior by political leaders will probably work to the advantage of the RPP.

8. Informed opinion on the outcome:

If the military regime permits a free vote, the RPP will probably win a plurality but not a majority, thus forcing it to seek the support of one of the other parties to form a coalition.

9. Significance for US security interests:

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There appears to be no prospect that any government to which the present military junta will yield power would sharply and immediately reverse Turkey's generally pro-American and pro-NATO alignment. Some Turks consider that the Menderes government was subservient to the United States, however, and the new government can be expected to demonstrate its "independent" position vis-a-vis the US. The significance of the election to US strategic interests is long range.

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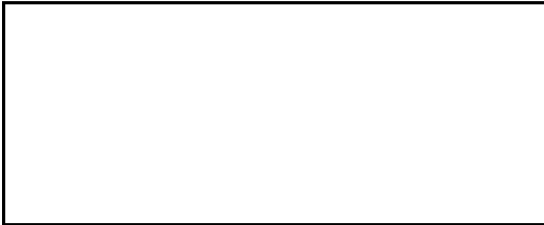
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Should the vote be evenly divided among several parties and a period of instability result, persons in the military and among civilian politicians who are xenophobic and authoritarian might seize power, and in such hands the effective cooperation of Turkey with the United States and the NATO countries might be seriously affected.

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