

THE 1945 CRISIS OVER THE TURKISH STRAITS*

Late in 1940, during the ultra-secret Nazi-Soviet talks on a spheres of influence agreement between the USSR, on the one hand, and Germany, Italy, and Japan, on the other, the Soviet Government repeatedly stressed it regarded both the Turkish Straits and Bulgaria as lying within its "security zone". Both parties agreed that the Montreux Convention of 1936, governing the regime of Turkey's strategic natural waterway linking two sections of the eastern Mediterranean, was "worthless" and should be revised. Within range of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles the Soviets wanted a base for land and naval forces. If Turkey opposed such demands, Germany, Italy, and the USSR would agree to work out and carry through the required military and diplomatic measures to ensure the realization of the Soviet claims¹.

The Turks were not unaware of the Soviet aversion to the Montreux Convention. Indeed, their talks with the Soviets of September 26 - October 16, 1939, had failed partly because Molotov had proposed closing the Straits to warships of non-Black-Sea countries. Moreover, even before the German attack on the USSR, Hitler had informed them of the alarming details of the Soviet desires. However, after this attack, the Soviet and the British Government reaffirmed on August 10, 1941, their fidelity to the Montreux Convention and their respect of Turkey's territorial integrity².

Less than three years later the Red Army was descending upon Rumania, Bulgaria and the Straits. The British, Soviet, and American diplomatic exchanges initiated by Eden in May suggested American indifference to the Balkans as a whole, for the time being at least³. On the other

* A grant from the American Philosophical Society's Penrose Fund made possible the gathering of many of the sources mentioned in this article.

1. Department of State, *Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948), pp. 258-259.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 168. Necmeddin Sadak, "Turkey Faces the Soviets", *Foreign Affairs*, v. 27, (April, 1949), 453; 457.

3. Stephen G. Xydis, "The Secret Anglo-Soviet Agreement on the Balkans of October 9, 1944", *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XV, no. 3 (October, 1955), 248-271.

hand, the prospects of a Soviet-occupied Bulgaria could not but worry that country's two Southern neighbors—and bring them together. On July 24, 1944, Enis Akayen, Turkish Ambassador to the Greek Government, which was then in Cairo, told a Greek diplomat that Turkey regarded friendship with Greece cornerstone of its foreign policy⁴. This link served not only to contain Bulgaria, which Moscow could be expected to support at the peace settlement, but also to face the common danger from Russia. The USSR, he said, was already conducting a clearly imperialist, tsarist policy. It would surely soon raise the issue of the Straits. Using religious propaganda in the Middle East, Moscow, he predicted, would appear tomorrow with the sickle in one hand and the cross in the other⁵. For its reconstruction, the USSR would try to avoid recourse to foreign capital and would depend on its own resources at the expense, of course, of the already pauperized Russian people. However, though it would go through a tremendous economic crisis, the USSR, on the international scene, would appear most powerful, most demanding, most impudent and also most voracious. As a barrier against Soviet policy, the Turkish diplomat envisaged the unity of Greece, Turkey and, if possible, of Yugoslavia, with the clear, firm and practical support of the British and the Americans. The latter, he believed, would not repeat their mistake of 1919-1920, of abandoning Europe. On the contrary, the U.S. would safeguard its great economic and moral interests in the Middle East by conducting a positive policy, "which we have every interest to promote and mobilize in favor of our own defensive policy in the eastern Mediterranean".

Three days later, the British Ambassador to the Greek Government (Reginald Leeper) hinted to the Greek Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs (Philip Dragoumis) it might be desirable to set up in the Mediterranean, along the imperial lifeline, a strong bloc of countries consisting of Italy, Greece, and Turkey⁶. Then, at a press conference in Cairo, on August 6, that same Greek official hailed as an event of great significance for Greece the Turkish decision to sever diplomatic relations with Germany⁷. The fate of Greece was bound to that of Turkey in many and sundry ways, he

4. Memorandum on a conversation with Enis Akayen, Archives of Mr. Philip S. Dragoumis, Athens (hereafter cited as "Drag. Archives").

5. The election of a patriarch of Moscow in 1943 had been followed by various contacts of Russian Orthodox prelates with orthodox communities in the Near East.

6. "Drag. Archives".

7. Philip S. Dragoumis, *Selection of Political Publications, Lebanon Conference, Liberation Government, 1944* (in Greek), (Athens: publication of the *Political Review*, April, 1945), pp. 13-15.

declared. For the first time since the Greek War of Independence of 1821, Turkey and Greece, he emphasized, did not find themselves in opposing, warring camps. The two peninsulas of Greece and Anatolia, linked by the Aegean and its islands, formed, together with the Straits, a cohesive geographical, economic and political entity. For all humanity this crossroads and meeting place of three continents was of exceptional importance. The more conscious this region's peoples became of this, the more this fact became acceptable to them, the greater were their chances for prospering to the advantage of other peoples in the eastern Mediterranean as well. The Alexandrian, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires had demonstrated this.

Was Britain behind this friendly demonstration toward Turkey? the Soviet Ambassador in Ankara asked his Greek colleague in the bluntest of manners, a few days later⁸. "I know", he added, "that Turkey attaches great importance to friendship and co-operation with you, and expects much of you. But you, what do you expect from Turkey?" Greece, the Greek envoy replied, could not be expected to settle Balkan problems; Turkey, therefore, could expect nothing from Greece. "Quite right", retorted the Soviet ambassador. From this conversation, his colleague drew three conclusions. First, Moscow viewed with disfavor any close Greek rapprochement with Turkey in which the Soviet Government could read the intervention of some third power; second, even less liked, would be Turkish immixtion in Balkan affairs; and, third, in the settlement of Balkan problems, the Balkan states directly concerned would merely stand on the sidelines, as spectators.

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Late in September 1944, a high-ranking American diplomat told a Greek colleague in Cairo that the question of the Straits would surely be posed soon, but that the U.S. did not believe it could support Turkey against the Russians⁹. The Turks not only had refused to enter the war on the side of the Allies in February but had also sold chrome to the Germans, though the pre-emptive purchase of this ore had been proposed to them. They had also permitted the passage of warships through the Straits, he said. Britain, of course, would surely try to support the Turkish Government but it could do so only up to a certain point. Not to have given Bulgaria an outlet to the Aegean after World War I, not through

8. "Drag. Archives".

9. *Ibid.*

Greek but through Turkish territory near the Turko-Greek frontier, had been a great mistake, he had added.

October 9, in the Kremlin: Churchill and Stalin decided the fate of the Balkans in a secret agreement¹⁰. For the British, this rendered superfluous further efforts to set up any sort of bloc in the eastern Mediterranean with Greece and Turkey as its nucleus. Turkey's western neighbor, though, did remain within the British sphere and the Turko-Greek frontier was restored when Bulgarian military and other authorities were made to withdraw from northern Greece as a precondition for the Bulgarian Armistice. And, although the USSR obtained the control over Bulgaria it had coveted since 1940, it was unable to preserve that access to the Aegean which it regarded as justified and which the Bulgars had achieved during the war.

In his talks with Churchill, Stalin also said he wanted the Montreux Convention modified to allow free passage of Soviet warships through the Straits at all times, i.e. in wartime, too, not only in peacetime. It was agreed that the Soviet Government would set forth detailed proposals for the revision in notes to the U.S. and Britain. America, though not a party to the Convention, was thus drawn into the picture. Churchill advised Roosevelt of Stalin's views and explained he had not contested them because Japan's role as a signatory rendered necessary the Convention's revision¹¹. In very general terms, the Turks, too, were kept posted. Neither Washington nor London received, however, any Soviet proposals on the Montreux Convention the following months¹². Meanwhile, after American and British negotiations with the Turks, allied merchant ships carrying supplies to the USSR were allowed through the Straits¹³.

At the eve of the Yalta Conference (February 4-11, 1945), the U.S. hoped no question regarding this matter would be raised because, in its view, the Montreux Convention had functioned well¹⁴. To minor

10. Xydis, *op. cit.*, 262-266.

11. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, VI, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 242.

12. *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta 1945* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), 904 (cited hereafter as *The Malta and Yalta Conferences*). Also *The Conference of Berlin 1945* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960? page proof), I, 1010, undated memorandum submitted to Admiral Leahy, July 1, 1945, doc. no. 679 (cited hereafter as *The Potsdam Conference*).

13. Harry N. Howard, "The United States and the Problem of the Turkish Straits", *The Middle East Journal*, I, 68.

14. *The Malta and Yalta Conferences*, pp. 328-329.

changes the U.S. should not object, if Britain or the USSR suggested them, and the Navy and War Departments concurred. Major changes, however, were likely to affect adversely the strategic and political balance in the Balkans and the Near East and would violate Turkey's sovereignty. Having in mind Dumbarton Oaks, America would be prepared to consider with sympathy, nevertheless, the idea of taking part in a revision of the Montreux Convention, if it were asked to do so.

At Yalta on February 10, Stalin declared that the Straits Convention was outmoded and should be revised¹⁵. The Japanese emperor and the defunct League of Nations played a part in it. Moreover, under this instrument, the Turks had the right to close the Straits not only in time of war but also if they felt a threat of war existed. When the Montreux Convention had been concluded, relations with Britain were not perfect but he did not think that now Britain "would desire to strangle Russia with Japanese help". It was impossible to accept a situation in which Turkey had a hand on the throat of the USSR. Turkey's legitimate interests, however, should not be harmed in the course of revision. The three Foreign Ministers, at their first meeting, might consider the matter and report to their respective governments.

Roosevelt made no specific remark on the Straits but expressed hope that, like the U.S.-Canadian boundary, other frontiers in the world would eventually be without forts or armed forces on any part of their national boundaries.

As for Churchill, he reiterated Britain's sympathy for Stalin's desire for revision of the Straits Convention but observed that no proposals had yet been received. If the matter was brought up at the Foreign Ministers' conference, he hoped the Soviet proposals would be made known. The Turks, meanwhile, might be informed of the projected revision and, at the same time, be given some assurance that their independence and integrity would be guaranteed. Stalin assented to this, as did Roosevelt.

In conclusion, the Big Three resolved that the Straits matter should be considered at the next meeting of the three Foreign Ministers and that the Turkish Government would be informed at the appropriate time¹⁶.

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15. *Ibid.*, pp. 903 - 904.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 982.

Turkey declared war on Germany on February 23, 1945, but the Soviets started a press campaign against their new ally¹⁷ and on March 19 advised the Turkish Government they would not renew the Turko-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality and Non-Aggression of 1925, because of changed conditions¹⁸. Soviet press complaints of allegedly unfriendly Turkish acts followed in April¹⁹. Edwin C. Wilson, before leaving for his ambassadorial post in Ankara, told President Truman on April 25 a possibly serious situation might arise between the two countries after the Soviet denunciation of the above treaty²⁰. If the USSR desired merely a modification of the Montreux Convention, Turkey was likely to be reasonable and co-operative. But, if the Soviets made demands affecting Turkey's independence, the Turks would resist. The U.S. Government should support them in that event. Eastern Europe had been lost to the USSR, and America had interests both in the Middle East and, more generally, in world security and co-operation. The President replied he agreed and thought this should be done.

Early in May, by V-E Day, Soviet pressure started also on Turkey's western neighbor. At San Francisco, Molotov told the Greek Foreign Minister (J. Sofianopoulos) that the Greeks should no longer rely exclusively on Britain, and in an editorial of June 5 the Secretary of the Communist Party of Greece raised squarely the question of the British "presence" in Greece²¹.

In Moscow on June 7, as a result of Turkish anxiousness to ascertain the precise Soviet views about the possibility of concluding a new treaty of friendship with the USSR, as well as of Soviet diplomatic encourage-

17. The Soviet Ambassador absented himself from the session of the Grand National Assembly, which voted unanimously in favor of the war declaration and provided a forum for several responsible Turkish leaders to deny that this move was part of an effort to seek protection against possible Soviet designs on the Straits, *New York Times*, February 24, 1945, p. 1; February 28, 1945, p. 18.

18. George Kirk, *The Middle East 1945-1950*, Survey of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 21. Also *New York Times*, March 21, 1945, p. 3.

19. *New York Times*, April 24, 1945, p. 5.

20. *The Potsdam Conference*, I, 1041-1042, doc. no. 698 (Wilson to Grew, July 5, 1945).

21. Stephen G. Xydis, "Testing the Yalta Declaration through Greece" *American Slavic and East European Review*, (scheduled for publication in February, 1961).

ment²², Molotov received the Turkish Ambassador to the USSR, Selim Sarper. Developing the Soviet viewpoint, Molotov declared that, before negotiating any new treaty, all outstanding questions between Turkey and the USSR should be settled. First, there was the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of 1921²³. The cessions of territory to Turkey under that treaty had been made under duress. These territories—Kars and Ardahan—should be returned to the USSR. The Turkish diplomat replied his Government was not prepared to reopen the question of this treaty, which it regarded as freely negotiated²⁴. He must refuse to discuss any question affecting Turkey's territorial integrity. Molotov then said this issue could be set aside for the time being, with the understanding that it remained unsettled²⁵. Turning now to the Straits question, he recognized that during World War II Turkey had acted with goodwill and had acted satisfactorily as defender of the Straits. However, a people of 200 million could not depend solely on Turkish goodwill in this matter but should also consider what were Turkey's capabilities of defending the Straits. Bluntly Sarper inquired: Did this mean the USSR wished to have bases in Turkish territory? Yes, was the answer. Once again the Turkish diplomat was obliged to say he could not discuss such a demand either. A long and inconclusive exchange followed as to what effective guarantees for the defense of the Straits Turkey might offer and then Molotov turned to the Montreux Convention. He wanted an agreement in principle with Turkey as to changes in that instrument, he said, the inference being that at any future international conference for revising the Convention, the two countries, regardless of the views of other parties, should stand together. Sarper replied that, in his opinion, such an approach would not be helpful and could only arouse mistrust. The interests of the other parties to the Convention should be considered. Retorted Molotov: the USSR and Turkey were independent countries. It was not necessary for them to inquire about the views of other powers on this matter. From this talk as a whole, Sarper derived the impression that Molotov was seeking to suggest that, if Turkey would break away from its alliance with Britain²⁶,

22. *The Potsdam Conference*, I, 1031, doc. no. 691 (Wilson to Grew on conversation with Acting Secretary of State Nurullah Esat Sumer on June 26, 1945).

23. *British and Foreign State Papers*, CXVIII, 990-996.

24. *The Potsdam Conference*, I, 1018, doc. no. 683 (Grew memorandum on conversation with British *chargé d'affaires* on June 18, 1945).

25. *Ibid.*, I, 1020, doc. no. 684 (Wilson to Grew on conversation with Acting Secretary of State Sumer, June 18, 1945).

26. *Ibid.*, I, 1021.

the Soviet Government would not feel it necessary to insist on the three points raised.

By June 12, the Turkish cabinet had approved Sarper's firm stand, authorized him to say that the Turkish Government was always ready to talk over possible changes in the Montreux Convention, and informed the British about the whole affair²⁷.

For the Foreign Office, the Turkish problem was now piled up on that of Greece, Pelion-on-Ossa-like. It turned to the New World for help in both. On June 16, the British Embassy in Washington inquired what were the American views on implementing the Yalta Declaration in Greece by an allied supervision of a plebiscite and elections there²⁸. On June 18, the *chargé d'affaires*, John Balfour, spoke to Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew and proposed a joint approach to Moscow on the Turkish question prior to the Posdam Conference, where it might be necessary to discuss this matter²⁹. In this demarche, the British and American Governments should tell the Soviet Government they were at a loss to understand Molotov's action, which seemed to be in direct conflict with Stalin's statements at Yalta about the need to reassure the Turks about their independence and integrity in connection with the matter of revising the regime of the Straits. Even if the revision of the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of 1921 was the primary concern of the USSR and Turkey and, although this was open to doubt, the cession of bases by Turkey to the USSR was, possibly, likewise a Turko-Soviet affair, both points, nevertheless, also concerned the Powers responsible for the UN. Besides, in the settlement of the Venezia Giulia problem, President Truman had enunciated that the fundamental principles of territorial settlements by orderly process should be upheld against force, intimidations or blackmail³⁰. It was also surprising that Molotov had proposed a Turkish-Soviet understanding on the Straits at a time the British and American Governments were still awaiting the Soviet views as agreed upon at Yalta. Grew promised to give immediate attention to the British proposal but said he could make no commitment until the whole matter had been carefully studied. He thought, at any rate,

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, I, 656, doc. no. 445 (Department of State to British Embassy, July 5, 1945).

29. *Ibid.*, I, 1017 - 1019, doc. no. 683 (as note 24). Also British *aide-mémoire*, *ibid.*, 1019 - 1020.

30. Tito was the target of this statement as he was trying to confront the British and Americans with a *fait accompli* in Trieste. *Department of State Bulletin*, XII (May 13, 1945), 902.

it would be good to wait until the San Francisco Conference was over. Between its close and the Big Three meeting, there would be plenty of time, if action was to be taken. Balfour agreed but added that, even if the U.S. Government did not feel in a position to make the proposed joint approach to Moscow, his Government hoped that the U.S. would at least support the British action with some step of its own.

Likewise on June 18, but in Ankara, the Acting Turkish Foreign Minister, Nurullah Esat Sumer, told Ambassador Wilson his Government would greatly appreciate receiving the views of the U.S. on the Molotov-Sarper conversation, which the Turks regarded as "very grave"³¹. While acknowledging that there had recently been some encouraging developments in Soviet policies³², he feared lest the Soviets, when informed of Turkey's unyielding stand, provoke a break in relations or at least start a new violent radio and press campaign against Turkey. His country, however, was ready to take all the consequences and there was no other way open than to stand firm. Two days later, Wilson learned that the Turks welcomed the idea of a British demarche in Moscow, hoped the U.S. would take a similar step, and was anxious about reports of Soviet troop movements toward the Turkish border³³. The Soviet proposals, he commented, were wholly incompatible with Soviet participation in the new world organization and, though (like his British colleague) he doubted the Soviets would take any military action on the eve of the Potsdam Conference, he believed that a prompt expression of the American views in Moscow would be "of the greatest importance in keeping the situation from getting out of hand and in contributing to the possibilities of an ultimate solution".

In Moscow, meanwhile, on June 18, in a second Sarper-Molotov meeting, the Turkish Ambassador informed the Foreign Minister that his Government could not accept as a basis for discussion the three points Molotov had proposed on June 7³⁴. In the lengthy but not acrimonious discussion that followed, Molotov indicated his Government was prepared to envisage the negotiation of a treaty of "collaboration and alliance" with Turkey. Moreover, though this was later denied by the Turkish Foreign

31. *The Potsdam Conference*, I, 1021, doc. no. 684 (as note 25).

32. *Ibid.*, I, 1022, doc. no. 684. Stalin yielded to U.S. views that the veto in the UN Security Council should not apply with regard to decisions as to whether or not a matter would be placed on the agenda of the Council for discussion.

33. *Ibid.*, I, 1023, doc. no. 685 (Wilson to Grew on conversation with the British Ambassador in Ankara, June 20, 1945).

34. *Ibid.*, I, 1024-1026, doc. no. 686 (Wilson to Grew on conversation with Sumer, June 22, 1945).

Ministry³⁶, he was also said to have proposed that the Soviet Government present to Turkey the point of view of Balkan states with regard to certain questions affecting those states and Turkey. Molotov's frequent references to Poland and the Polish precedent for retrocession of territory to the USSR annoyed Ankara and created a "negative impression" there, suggesting, as it did, the eventual satellization of Turkey. If the USSR continued to make such proposals, Acting Foreign Minister Sumer told Ambassador Sergei M. Vinogradov shortly after this meeting, the two countries, instead of reaching a better understanding, were likely to draw further apart. When the Soviet diplomat observed that Molotov had put aside the territorial question, Sumer replied that there were two ways of putting matters aside: First, to put them aside with the intention of taking them up again; and, second, to put them aside for good. Did the USSR, which owned a respectable portion of the earth's surface really need any more territory? Vinogradov replied it was the Armenian SSR, which was very small, that needed the additional territory, not Russia. Sumer retorted he, of course, could not accept such a statement, but when the Soviet envoy indicated he might wish to discuss further in Ankara the matter of a new Soviet-Turkish treaty, the Turkish official said he would be glad to do so at any time³⁷.

Informing Ambassador Wilson of the above developments on June 22 Sumer expressed his Government's sincere hopes that the U.S. would agree to take some action in Moscow. This would be of the greatest assistance³⁸. He also referred to reports about Soviet troops movements on Turkey's eastern frontier and to steps the Turkish Government was taking so that additional reserves might be mobilized³⁹.

To the British proposal of June 18 for a joint demarche in Moscow with regard to the Soviet demands on Turkey, the State Department replied in the negative on June 23³⁹. It also advised the British against such a move. The Department had carefully studied the British memorandum on

35. *Ibid.*, I, 1043 - 1044, doc. no. 686 (Wilson to Grew, July 7, on conversation with Cevat Acikalin on July 6, 1945).

36. *Ibid.*, I, 1024 - 1025, doc. no. 686 (as note 3). The Turkish Government sent relevant instructions to Sarper in Moscow and authorized him to inquire about the Soviet views on the Montreux Convention's revision, to discuss them and determine whether it would be helpful to call a conference for revising this instrument, *ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. The Turkish Government, he said, would call no additional classes before the Potsdam Conference, however. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, I, 1027 - 1028, doc. no. 688 (State Department to British Embassy).

the Sarper-Molotov conversations of June 7 undertaken "at Turkish initiative", and had noted that the British favored an early approach to the Soviet Government in firm language, pointing out the contradictions between Molotov's statement and those made by Stalin at Yalta. The Department, however, considered it premature to protest against what, in its view, amounted to a preliminary exchange of views carried out in a friendly atmosphere and of an exploratory character. It was not aware that the Soviets had presented any formal demands to the Turks and felt that overemphasis on the conversation of June 7 by a firm protest on the part of "either the American or the British Government" might create an "unfortunate background" for eventual talks on the Straits at the forthcoming Big Three meeting. Under the circumstances, the best tactics would be to treat the conversation as a matter not calling for special action, because that meeting was so close at hand. In any case, before the Potsdam Conference, the U.S. would not wish to appear as having reached any decision on this question. The Department also advised the British of the answer it intended to send to the Turks and, verbally, indicated that its representatives at Yalta did not recall that Stalin had taken a position as categorical as the one depicted by the British with regard to Turkey's independence and integrity⁴⁰.

Would, now, the British Government proceed alone in its demarche in Moscow?

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A day after the U.S. informed the British of the above decision, Ambassador Sarper was analysing the Soviet objectives toward his country, in a conversation with a member of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow⁴¹. The gist of his remarks was that Turkey was obviously in the Soviet "security zone" that was taking shape from Finland to China. Therefore, despite the unequivocal Turkish replies to Molotov's proposals which had made the Soviets pause, the USSR should be expected to resume its efforts to bring Turkey under its control, and might have two further objectives affecting Turkey specifically. First, was its desire to close the Black Sea to states not in the Soviet bloc and, at the same time, to have free access through the Straits to the Mediterranean. Hence its demands for bases. Expansion from the Caucasus through eastern Turkey to Alexandretta and

40. *Ibid.*, I, 1026, doc. no. 687 (Loy Henderson to Grew). For British response, *ibid.*, I, 1048 - 1049, doc. no. 705 (Balfour to Henderson, July 9, 1945).

41. *Ibid.*, I, 1029 - 1030, doc. no. 690 (Harriman to Grew, June 25, 1945).

the Mediterranean, on the one hand, and on the other, through Iran and Iraq to the Persian Gulf, was the second possible objective. Hence the demand for retrocession of Kars and Ardahan. Soviet pressure could be resumed either within the next few weeks or after America and Britain had demobilized. Ha had heard reports of possibly ominous Soviet military movements in Bulgaria and the Caucasus. "We are used to wars of nerves", Sarper had added. "I have lumbago but no nerves".

On June 26, Ambassador Wilson conveyed to Acting Foreign Minister Sumer the American reply to the Turkish inquiry of June 18 about the U.S. views on the Sarper - Molotov conversation of June 7⁴². His Government, he said, appreciated the fact it had been courteously informed about this conversation and hoped it would continue to be kept informed about developments. It was gratifying to note the friendly atmosphere "unclouded by threats" in which this conversation had been conducted and it was sincerely hoped that further conversations would take place in similar circumstances "with due respect for each other's point of view". The U.S. was confident neither party would act in a manner that was incompatible with the principles of the UN which America had pledged itself to uphold. After expressing thanks for the U.S. interest and promising he would keep Wilson fully informed, Sumer said that Turkish "respect" for the Soviet view that Turkey should cede territory and bases to the USSR could hardly be expected. His country, though, would pursue no course that was opposed to UN principles. In reply to Sumer's inquiry, Wilson revealed his Government's decision to take no action in Moscow and explained the rationale of this attitude. Sumer said he understood this viewpoint but expressed hope that, when the Big Three discussed the matter, the U.S. would take a position "supporting respect for equal sovereignty and independence of all states". Molotov, on June 7, had uttered no threat; that was true. Soviet military movements, however, did look like threats. Though he admitted he was frankly doubtful the USSR would take military action, Turkey could not be caught unprepared. By explaining the diplomatic background of the Sarper - Molotov meeting, he sought, in conclusion, to dispel the American impression that this conversation had resulted from Turkish initiative exclusively.

In spite of the U.S. decision not to raise the matter in Moscow, a confrontation of sorts occurred on June 28 in Ankara, when Wilson, after dining with his Soviet colleague, inquired what was taking place between

42. *Ibid.*, I, 1030 - 1031, doc. no. 691 (Wilson to Grew on conversation with Sumer, June 26, 1945). For Grew instructions to Wilson, *ibid.*, I, 1028 - 1029, doc. no. 689. (June 23, 1945).

the USSR and Turkey⁴³. Vinogradov confirmed the basic facts of the Sarper-Molotov Conversation, definitely mentioning Kars and Ardahan. What would world opinion be on this territorial request, Wilson wondered. Vinogradov took refuge in the argument about the smallness of the Armenian SSR. However he sought to de-emphasize the issue of a base. Molotov, he said, had not mentioned bases specifically but had insisted on measures for adequate Black Sea security⁴⁴. Turkey, in time of war, could close the Straits to the USSR and open them to the USBR's enemies, under the Montreux Convention. This could not go on. The USSR should be granted freedom of passage for warships at all times as well as the right to close the Straits to others. Would not such a regime affect the existing Turko-British alliance, Wilson asked. Excitedly at this point, Vinogradov said the Soviet attitude was in no way directed against Britain. Asked whether he expected further developments in the immediate future on this whole question, he replied he did not know. The next move was up to the Turks. He did not know either whether the USSR would present its views at Potsdam but said laughingly he was sure the British would raise the question there. He had heard the Turks had asked the British and Americans for help against the USSR. Wilson denied it was so as far as the U.S. was concerned. He had asked for information though and the Turks had obliged⁴⁵.

At the end of June and early in July, Washington received from Italy and England reports that Soviet forces were massing in depth north of the Turkish and Greek frontiers in a "war of nerves" designed to browbeat the Turks into accepting the Soviet proposals on the Straits⁴⁶.

43. *Ibid.*, I, 1031 - 1032, doc. no. 692 (Wilson to Grew, June 29, 1945).

44. Formally, this was correct. It had been Sarper who had inquired whether Molotov had bases in mind.

45. Wilson then turned the conversation to eastern Europe and Vinogradov admitted that the Allied Control Commissions there were more Soviet than tripartite. He insisted, however, that the situation in that area made this necessary and in any case the USSR was doing only what Britain had done in Italy. *Ibid.*

46. On June 29, 1945, Ambassador Kirk informed the State Department that the summary impression of General Oxley, head of the British Delegation to the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria, who had made a trip to Varna on the Black Sea, was that Soviet forces were massing north of the Greek and Turkish frontiers. On July 5, the same source reported that the British general was convinced there could be no other reason for the concentration of Soviet troops in Rumania and Bulgaria than browbeating the Turks into accepting the Soviet demands. A dispatch from Winant in London, likewise of July 5, reported that the Foreign Office believed that the large increase of Soviet troops in Bulgaria was part of a war of nerves on Turkey. *Ibid.*, I, 1033, doc. no. 693; 1042 - 1043, doc. no. 699; 1043, doc. no. 700.

With Potsdam coming up, the Turkish Government continued its efforts to impress on the U.S. the gravity of the entire situation. Premier Sukru Saracoglou himself had a long conversation on this matter with Ambassador Wilson on July 2, and expressed his disappointment at the American stand⁴⁷. On July 7, the Turkish Ambassador in Washington had a long talk with Grew on the subject⁴⁸. In London, on his way back to Turkey from San Francisco, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Hasan Saka, conferred not only with Eden but also with Ambassador Winant, on July 12⁴⁹. In these meetings, the Turkish officials expressed their willingness to discuss a revision of the Montreux Convention but only on a multipartite basis⁵⁰. However, for the maintenance of the territorial status quo, unless only minimal frontier rectifications were involved⁵¹, they would fight. They would not accept Soviet domination, either⁵². If the U.S. failed to support Turkey in this attitude and, after the Potsdam Conference, the USSR felt it could again press its territorial demands on Turkey, then, not only Turkey, but the whole Middle East was likely to fall under Soviet domination. "The Soviets", said premier Saracoglou, "have gone mad. They dream of world domination...When they find a weak spot, they exploit it. They have nothing to lose". If they met resistance at one point, they dropped it for a moment but they had raised the question and they would come back to it. They were promoting disorder and suspicion everywhere and trying to create chaos out of which they hoped to profit. The Soviets wished to bring about a political reorientation of Turkey. They wished nothing less than to draw Turkey economically and politically into the Soviet orbit. They even had in mind Turkey's annexation⁵³. To deal with such policies, "the only hope"

47. *Ibid.*, I, 1034 - 1036, doc. no. 695 (Wilson to Byrnes, July 3, 1945). Saracoglou said he could not believe the U.S. wanted Turkey to carry on further conversations with the USSR on matters relating to the cession of bases and territory. All Turkey wanted was to be let alone to work out its social and economic problems. The Turks were a danger to no one.

48. *Ibid.*, I, 1044 - 1046, doc. no. 702 (memorandum by Grew). The Turkish Ambassador asked Grew whether, if the Soviet Government should demand from America the cession of Boston and San Francisco to the USSR, the U.S. would not consider such a demand a threat, and also whether such a demand could be regarded as a matter for negotiation.

49. *Ibid.*, I, 1050, no. 706; 1050 - 1051, doc. no. 707 (both Winant to Grew, July 12 and 13, 1945, respectively).

50. Hasan Saka talk with Winant, July 13, 1945.

51. Saracoglou talk with Wilson, July 2, 1945.

52. Saracoglou talk with Wilson, July 2; Ambassador Baydur talk with Grew, July 7; Saka talk with Winant, July 13, 1945.

53. Saka talk with Winant, July 13, 1945.

was for the U.S. and Britain to stand firmly together and say to the Soviets this could no longer go on. If the U.S. and Britain convinced the Soviets they meant this, then the world would have some years of peace. If those two Powers refused any compromise on principle, the situation would still be saved⁵⁴. Strong American representations in advance of possible trouble would have a powerful effect on the Soviets. Turkey looked to its ally Britain and its friend the U.S. for support and was convinced that with such support the ominous character of the situation would be attenuated⁵⁵. If the Turkish question was discussed at Potsdam, Turkey hoped it would be given the opportunity to be heard.

To these views Ambassador Wilson subscribed in the main⁵⁶. And he linked the Soviet moves with the beginning Bulgarian campaign for an Aegean outlet; the stepping up of Moscow Radio attacks on the Greek "fascist" government, and the Belgrade and Sofia broadcasts charging that government of persecuting the "Macedonians" in Greece⁵⁷. The war had demonstrated that the Straits could be closed by air power based on Crete. The Soviet claims for security, therefore, could be extended to the Aegean and thence to the Mediterranean - Suez - Gibraltar. In the interest of peace and co-operation, the U.S. should leave the Soviets in no doubt as to its conviction that these proposals were contrary to the spirit and principles of the UN.

Despite, however, Turkish pleas and Wilson's analyses, the U.S. remained unmoved, prior to the Potsdam Conference. The State Department was very definitely concerned with any threat to the peace that might fall within the purview of the UN, Grew told the Turkish Ambassador on July 7, but it hoped the matter would be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the Big Three. For that purpose, the President had been fully briefed. Perhaps a direct talk of the President with Stalin could achieve much more than any formal representation in Moscow. As a friend of both Turkey and the USSR, the U.S. would naturally be glad to be of aid

54. Saracoglou talk with Wilson, July 2, 1945.

55. Saka talk with Winant, July 13, 1945.

56. *The Potsdam Conference*, I, 1033 - 1034, doc. no. 694 (Wilson to Grew, July 2, 1945). Wilson also observed that in August 1941, the USSR had given assurances to Turkey of fidelity to the Montreux Convention and respect for Turkish territorial integrity. This, he commented, was a procedure with which the world had become only too familiar in the years after March 1936.

57. *Ibid.*, I, 666 - 668, doc. no. 454 (McVeagh to Byrnes, June 23, 1945); and 668, doc. no. 455 (Shantz to Grew, June 25, 1945).

in arriving at a peaceful solution. This, however, should not be interpreted as an offer for mediation.

* * *

With Potsdam ahead, the Department, meanwhile, had prepared briefing book papers on various matters. Less forward-looking than that on Greece which urged American active mediation between British and Soviet policies in that country on the basis of the Yalta Declaration⁵⁸, the one on Turkey, of June 29⁵⁹, recorded that U.S. relations with Turkey had been "friendly and profitable". Except for a sort of spill-over from the Yalta Declaration spirit, among the principles enumerated as the foundations of this relationship, no novelties featured⁶⁰. America had no special objectives in that country. In this potential arena of Anglo-Soviet diplomatic, economic and military conflict, America's role was envisaged as that of a balancer normally standing outside the area of conflict. As long as neither party did anything incompatible with UN principles, the U.S. should adopt "a detached but watchful attitude". It "could thus make its weight felt at any crucial moment". The brief survey of Turkish foreign policy that followed took note of the recently formulated "serious Soviet claims" against Turkey and of the Turkish attitude toward them, but in no way suggested that the U.S. Government already had knowledge of those German documents on Nazi-Soviet relations that were to cast such a lurid light on the desires of the USSR in the Balkans and the Near and Middle East⁶¹. This

58. *Ibid.*, I, 651-653. An "active and benevolent interest in Greece", according to this document, would be one of the most practical means for demonstrating America's "determination to play an international role commensurate with its strength and public commitments".

59. *Ibid.*, I, 1015-1017, doc. no. 682.

60. The principles enumerated were 1 the right of peoples to choose for themselves without outside interference the type of political, social and economic system they desired; 2. maintenance of the "Open Door" in commerce, transit, trade and business (either through private or private agencies); 2. freedom for press representatives on an equal footing with other countries for disseminating information to the public of their own countries; 4. freedom for American philanthropic and educational organizations to carry on their activities in Turkey, on a non-discriminatory basis; 5. the protection of American citizens and legitimate American economic rights, existing or potential. These interests do not differ greatly from those mentioned in the U.S. *aide-mémoire* to Britain, France and Italy, October 30, 1922. J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East* (Princeton, N. J.: Van Nostrand Company Inc., 1956) II, 114.

61. *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, *op. cit.*, does not give the exact date of the capture of these documents by the American and British armies but the *Washington Times*

document, however, did anticipate a difficult period of political pressure from both East and West, should the UN fail to help Turkey preserve its independence and territorial integrity. From the U.S. viewpoint, a desirable solution might be for Turkey either to have special alliances in both directions or none at all. At the forthcoming Conference, at any rate, the U.S. should make it abundantly clear that it could not and would not remain silent if any state threatened Turkey's independence and integrity. It should make the foregoing stand clear to Turkey and any other interested powers, at the appropriate time.

Two other briefing book papers, both on the Straits, of June 27 and 30, respectively, reveal the extent to which the U.S. despite the aforementioned counsel, was already involved in the Turkish arena⁶². These acknowledged that, though not a signatory of the Montreux Convention, the U.S. had been brought fully into the picture by Britain and the USSR without consulting Turkey, though the latter would undoubtedly be pleased to know of America's interest in the future of the Straits. Ensuring world peace and freedom of commerce constituted the twofold interest of the U.S. in that strategic waterway, both papers agreed, though with a slightly different emphasis and wording. However, in contrast to the former, that of June 30 squarely recognized that the Montreux Convention would be outmoded after the war and, therefore, required certain revisions. Aside from the substitution of the UN for the League of Nations, the most important acceptable revision to the Montreux Convention with regard to the passage of warships through the Straits in wartime were, first, that no non-Black Sea power warships should be allowed to pass through the Straits during hostilities involving one or more Black Sea powers, unless the UN authorized such a move; second, regardless of whether one or more Black Sea powers were involved in war, the passage through the Straits of belligerent or other Black Sea warships should be permitted, in the absence of contrary

Herald, February 20, 1945, carried an article entitled "Secret Hitler - Stalin Pacts now in United States State Department Files" with reporter Walter Trohan saying he had learned of this fact only "last night". In June 1946 an Anglo-American agreement was signed for joint publication of these documents and in May 1947 a special publication was discussed, and again in October 1947. Letter to author from Mr. E. Taylor Parks, of the Historical Office, Department of State, May 18, 1960. It may or may not be relevant to observe that in June, 1945, Ambassador Vinogradov in Ankara was interested in getting a look at the German archives there; *The Potsdam Conference*, I, 1024, doc. no. 686 (Wilson to Grew on conversation with Sumer, June 18, 1945).

62. *The Potsdam Conference*, I, 1011 - 1013, doc. no. 680; 1013 - 1015, doc. no. 681. It was the latter which found its way into the President's briefing book.

UN provisions; and, third, no power other than Turkey should have the right to have a fortification or base in the Straits without Turkey's "free consent". At the same time Turkey's wartime rights under Articles 20 and 21 of the Montreux Convention were preserved, for, regardless of the above points, the passage of warships through the Straits should be entirely a matter for the Turkish Government to decide unless the UN forbade such a course, according to this document.

* * *

On July 7, the British *chargé d'affaires* in Washington, John Balfour, informed Grew that his Government had decided to take action in Moscow after having considered most carefully all factors in the case, including the second Molotov - Sarper conversation. In particular, it was thought better to inform the Soviet Government of its views in advance of the Big Three meeting rather than to give the Soviets the impression that the British were indifferent, and then to spring it on them for the first time at the Conference. Accordingly, the British Ambassador in Moscow was getting instructions to point out to the Soviets that His Majesty's Government had been "very much surprised by the . . . territorial claims and demands for bases in the Straits, since these activities could not be regarded as exclusively Turko-Soviet matters". The former should be examined in the light of the UN. The latter affected the multipartite Montreux Convention. Moreover, it had been agreed at Yalta that the Soviet Government should consult with the American and British Governments on matters affecting that Convention. And Stalin had agreed to take no action affecting Turkey's independence and integrity and to assume a reassuring attitude toward the Turkish Government. Concerning this last undertaking, the British Government had been very much surprised at the recent Soviet press and radio campaign against Turkey. It wished the Soviet Government to be aware of its views on these matters as it considered the whole question would have to be discussed at Potsdam⁶³.

* * *

In Athens, three days before the Potsdam Conference opened, a Greek ex-premier, unaware that the current one was agreeing that very same day that the Americans and the British should propose to the USSR and France Big Four supervision of the forthcoming Greek elections, stressed the

63. *Ibid.*, I, 1046 - 1047, doc. no. 703 (Grew memorandum); 1047 - 1048, doc. no. 704 (British Embassy to the Department of State).

extremely difficult position of Greece as it was caught in the coils of British-Soviet antagonism and expressed the view that the U.S. would play an ever diminishing role in Greek affairs⁶⁴. Should the Soviets manage to get a solution of the Straits question in accordance with their desires, they were likely to raise also the issue of the Greek Aegean islands dominating the access to the Dardanelles from the southwest.

Indeed, the American position those delicate days seemed still in the balance. State Department efforts to define the American attitude toward the Straits continued⁶⁵. The British regarded as reasonable the Soviet demand for the right to send warships through that waterway in time of war as well as in peace but were firmly opposed to Soviet bases being set up up there. They would insist that either the Big Four or the UN should discuss the question, if the Soviets persisted on bases. The question of bases was not, they held, a matter for bipartite settlement between the USSR and Turkey. As for the Turks, they usually insisted on the right to exclude warships from the Straits in wartime to prevent Turkey from getting involved in hostilities. But were not belligerent warships allowed to pass through the Panama Canal in wartime, while America was neutral? Was not Suez kept open to all warships at all times? Should not the U.S. concur with the Soviet desire that the Straits be opened to Soviet warships at all times? Bases though were a different matter. Here, the U.S. might support the British view that the UN should discuss this question. Anyway, Turkey would appeal to the UN. But, how could the U.S. support the British view that the question of bases was not an exclusive Turko-Soviet concern? Was not America negotiating with Brazil, Ecuador, Portugal, for bases? Should the USSR and Turkey reach an amicable agreement, it would be hard for the U.S. to object. It should insist, however, that negotiations be conducted in a friendly manner without use or threat of force and should attempt to get assurances from the USSR that any bilateral talks with Turkey be carried out in that manner. It might inform in all frankness the Soviet Government that the U.S. considered Turkey would be justified, under the UN Charter, in referring the matter to the UN, and that the world organization should take cognizance of the question because of the importance of the Straits for international security.

64. Archives of Emmanuel J. Tsouderos, Gennadius Library, American School of Classical Studies, Athens. Tsouderos was speaking behind closed doors before the Constitutional Committee on Foreign Affairs.

65. *The Potsdam Conference*, I, 1053 - 1054, doc. no. 709 (G. V. Allen to J. C. Dunn, July 15, 1945).

Asked for its views, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended on July 17 that the U.S. Delegation at Potsdam should, from the long-range and overall security viewpoint, try "to limit and postpone" the discussion of both the Straits and Kiel Canal questions until talks on the general peace settlement were under way⁶⁶. But, if it became necessary to discuss this matter earlier, then the U.S. should support demilitarization of the Straits and, "failing that, should oppose any proposals for granting a nation other than Turkey bases or other rights for direct or indirect military control of the Straits". Commented a State Department official:⁶⁷ demilitarization would, in effect, mean a return to the Lausanne regime of the Straits. If the Turks fell some day under the influence of a power hostile to the U.S., this would be in the American strategic interest. Outright opposition to any sort of control over the Straits by any state other than Turkey, on the other hand, went beyond State Department views contained in the paper of June 30 on the Straits, coincided with Britain's attitude and was in America's interest as long as Turkey remained friendly to the U.S.

* * *

At Potsdam's first Plenary Meeting, on July 17, President Truman raised the question of implementing the Yalta Declaration in Rumania and Bulgaria and of Big Four supervision of elections in Greece⁶⁸. On July 22, at the Sixth Plenary Meeting, Churchill raised the question of the Straits⁶⁹. He sought to impress on Stalin the importance of not alarming Turkey on this matter and noted the concentration of Bulgarian and Soviet troops as well as Molotov's conversations with Sarper in Moscow. Molotov stated he would circulate a document and then referred to the treaties of 1805 and 1833 (Hünkâr Iskelesi) which had granted Russia a privileged position in the Straits⁷⁰. The President said he was not ready to express an opinion and requested they defer consideration of the question.

Molotov's document⁷¹ proposed that the Conference declare that the Montreux Convention should be abrogated "in the proper regular procedure"⁷²; that it should be the business of Turkey and the USSR, "as the

66. *Ibid.*, II, 1420-1422, doc. no. 1363 (Joint Chiefs of Staff to SWNCC).

67. *Ibid.*, II, 1425-1426, doc. no. 1366 (Allen to Dunn, July 19, 1945).

68. *Ibid.*, II, 52.

69. *Ibid.*, II, 256 ff.

70. *Ibid.*, II, 257-258.

71. *Ibid.*, II, 1427-1428, doc. no. 1369 (dated July 22, 1945).

72. Article 29 of the Convention stipulates that "at the expiry of each period of five years from the date of the entry into force of the present Convention each

states chiefly concerned and capable of ensuring the freedom of commercial navigation and the security of the Straits", to determine the new Straits regime; and that this new regime should also provide, "in addition to other measures", that Turkey and the USSR should prevent "by common facilities" in the Straits the use of that waterway to other countries for purposes inimical to the Black Sea powers, in the "interests of their own security and the maintenance of peace in the area of the Black Sea".

At the Conference's Seventh Plenary, on July 23, Churchill and Stalin reverted to the Straits problem⁷³. The Prime Minister said he would not consent to a Soviet base there. A long argument followed about the strength of respective forces in Bulgaria and Greece and brought forth a statement by Stalin that the Turks had nothing to fear with their twenty-three divisions. Perhaps, he added, the Soviet request for rectification of the Turko-Soviet frontier had frightened them. The matter of Kars and Ardahan, however, would not have been brought up at all had not the Turkish Government suggested an alliance with the USSR. An alliance meant that two countries would mutually defend the frontiers between them. The borders in that region were not correct. If rectification of the frontier was not agreeable to the Turks, the question of an alliance would be dropped. As for the Straits regime under the Montreux Convention, the USSR, said Stalin, regarded it as inimical. Repeating the familiar argument, Turkey, he said, had the right to prevent use of the Straits not only if it was at war but also if it seemed to Turkey that there was a threat of war⁷⁴. A small state supported by Britain held a great state by the throat and gave it no outlet to the Mediterranean. There would be a great commotion in Britain and the U.S. if similar arrangements existed at Gibraltar, or in the Suez and Panama Canals. In case of complications, Turkey was too weak to guarantee free passage for Soviet shipping to pass to and from the Black Sea freely.

At this meeting, President Truman spoke up⁷⁵. America's attitude was, he declared, that the Montreux Convention should be revised. However, without developing any of the specific revisions suggested by the Department or the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and going beyond the official suggestion on European waterways⁷⁶ (perhaps in a fit of atomic euphoria), he pro-

of the High Contracting Parties shall be entitled to initiate a proposal for amending one or more of the provisions of the present Convention". League of Nations, *Treaty Series*, no. 4015, CDXXXIII (1936-1937), 241.

73. *The Potsdam Conference*, II, 299 ff.

74. Article 21 of the Montreux Convention.

75. *The Potsdam Conference*, II, 303 ff.

76. Jonathan Daniels, *The Man of Independence* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippin-

claimed that the Straits should be a free waterway open to the whole world and should be "guaranteed by all of us". He then went on to link this matter with the whole problem of the peace settlement. After a long study he had reached the conclusion, he said, that all the wars of the last two centuries had originated in the area from the Black Sea to the Baltic and from the eastern frontiers of France to the western frontiers of Russia. In the last two instances the peace of the whole world had been shattered. The Conference should see to it that this did not happen again. He thought that to a great extent this could be achieved by arranging for the passage of goods and vessels through the Straits on the basis of free intercourse just as was the case in American waters. He wanted to see the USSR and Britain and all other countries have free access to all the seas of the world, and then he went on to read a paper on the free and unrestricted navigation of inland waterways⁷⁷. In this, the U.S. proposed the establishment of international authorities representative of all nations directly concerned with Big Four membership in order to regulate free and unrestricted navigation in inland waterways bordering on two or more states. As soon as possible, interim navigation agencies for the Danube and the Rhine should be set up⁷⁸. Truman commented he did not want to engage in another war twenty-five years hence over the Straits or the Danube. America's ambition was to have a Europe that was economically sound and could support itself, a Europe that would make Russia, England, France and all other countries in it happy. With such a Europe, the U.S. could trade and be happy as well as prosperous. His proposal, he thought, was a step in that direction. As for the territorial concession, this was a Turko-Soviet dispute which would have to be settled by the two parties themselves. Stalin had said he was willing to do so. But, Truman reasserted, the question of the Black Sea Straits concerned America and the whole world.

Churchill both strongly supported Stalin's desire for a revision of the Straits regime and entirely agreed with Truman that the Straits should be guaranteed "by all of us". A guarantee of the Big Four and interested

cott Co., 1950), p. 284. Writes Daniels, *ibid.*, p. 280, that at Potsdam the bomb "became portentous reality in Truman's thinking as an item of great hope in terms of both war and peace".

77. *The Potsdam Conference*, II, 654, doc. no. 755.

78. The functions of these agencies should be, according to this document, the restoration and development of the navigational facilities on the rivers concerned, the supervision of the river activities in the interest of equal treatment for various nationalities and the establishment of uniform regulations concerning the use of facilities, rules of navigation, customs and sanitation formalities, and other similar questions.

states would certainly be effective. He earnestly hoped Stalin might consider it as an alternative to a base near Constantinople.

Stalin stalled. Before discussing the President's proposal, which was being translated, he would like to read it attentively. The Big Three then turned their attention to Koenigsberg.

Next day (July 24), at the Eighth Plenary, when the President inquired whether his paper on inland waterways had been considered, Stalin observed it did not deal with the question of Turkey and the Straits but with the Danube and the Rhine⁷⁹. The Soviet Delegation would like to get a reply to its proposal about the Straits. Truman retorted he wanted the two questions considered together. To this Stalin answered he was afraid they would not be able to reach an agreement on the Straits since their views differed so widely. Perhaps they should postpone the question and take up the next item.

On July 27, the U.S. submitted to the Conference's subcommittee on Inland Waterways a second proposal on this matter, specifically mentioning this time both the Turkish Straits and the Kiel Canal⁸⁰. No agreement was reached, however. After an initial resistance by Stalin⁸¹, the Protocol of the Potsdam Conference stated that the Big Three had agreed that the Montreux Convention should be revised and that as a next step "the matter should be the subject of direct conversations between each of the three Governments and the Turkish Government"⁸².

The Turkish Premier was "perturbed" on being informed by the British Ambassador on July 26 about the Potsdam discussion on the Straits⁸³. The international regime the President had proposed struck him as probably something between the regimes of Lausanne and Montreux. The possibility that Turkey might be asked to demilitarize the Straits especially troubled him. Unless Turkey got a satisfactory guarantee from the USSR regarding its territorial integrity, this would be impossible. Stalin's attitude had not been reassuring. The British envoy expressed hope that the very great importance of Truman's proposal would be understood. An increase of Soviet pressure on Turkey could now be expected but the Turks, he advised, should keep their heads and, in reply to Soviet approaches, should maintain firmly that a settlement could be reached only on an international basis.

79. *Ibid.*, II, 365.

80. *Ibid.*, II, 656 - 657, doc. no. 758 (July 25, 1945).

81. At the Twelfth Plenary Meeting, August 1, 1945, *ibid.*, II, 578.

82. *Department of State Bulletin*, XV (August 6, 1946) 208 - 213.

83. *The Potsdam Conference*, II, 1437 - 1438, doc. no. 1376 (Wilson to Grew, July 27, on conversation with British Ambassador of July 26, 1945).

* * *

On his return from Berlin and also in his first major speech on foreign policy, on Navy Day, October 27, President Truman referred to the principle of the freedom of international waterways he had exaltedly invoked at Potsdam as a rationale for America's novel interest in the Turkish Straits⁸⁴. Then, on November 2, first among the Big Three to act in accordance with the aforementioned provision of the Potsdam Protocol, the U.S., in a note to Turkey, expressed hope that the Straits problem would be resolved in a manner that would enhance international security and give special consideration to the Black Sea States and the interests of Turkey⁸⁵. The American Government soberly declared in this note that it was looking forward to a revision of the Montreux Convention by an international conference in accordance with the changed world situation and that it would be pleased to take part in the Convention's revision, if invited. "Certain changes to modernize the Montreux Convention such as the substitution of the UN system for that of the League of Nations and the elimination of Japan as a signatory" were called for. The U.S. was also willing to accept the discriminatory principle of the Montreux Convention under which the passage through the Straits by warships of non Black Sea powers should be restricted. Moreover, it was willing to agree that the Straits should be open to the transit of warships of the Black Sea powers "at all times". This important concession to the Soviet viewpoint suggested that Turkey would be obliged to let Soviet warships pass through the Straits even if it was at war with the USSR. However, the American note called neither for demilitarization nor for neutralization of the Straits and, in order to deal with the contingency of Turko-Soviet hostilities the "inherent right of self-defense" under Article 51 of the UN Charter might have been deemed sufficient.

British views on the matter, communicated to Turkey likewise in November, did not differ from the American proposals, though the British Government stated it did not regard the revision as a matter of particular urgency⁸⁶. As for the Turkish Government, it accepted the principles of revision enunciated by the American Government, as Premier Saracoglu declared on December 5, provided "Turkey's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity" were not infringed upon. The Premier stressed he re-

84. *Department of State Bulletin*, XIII (August 12, 1945), 212; Repeat of Potsdam exalted speech; (October 28, 1945), 654 ff.

85. H. N. Howard (ed.), *The Problem of the Turkish Straits: Principal Treaties and Conventions*, U.S. Department of State Publication no. 2572, Near Eastern Series no. 5 (1947), p. 47.

86. *The Times* (London), November 26, 1945.

garded American participation in the solution of the problem as internationally necessary⁸⁷.

Over a year was to pass from the end of the Potsdam Conference before the Soviet diplomatic voice was to be heard on the Straits question. Meanwhile the Soviet war of nerves on Turkey as well as on the latter's western neighbor continued. As the last opportunity for proposing amendments to the Montreux Convention was about to lapse for five more years, the Soviet Government on August 7, 1946, send to the Turkish Foreign Ministry its views on the Straits regime⁸⁸. A virtual repetition of the already-mentioned Soviet proposal of July 22, 1945, at Potsdam, this note revealed once again the Soviet insistence on excluding non-Black Sea powers signatories to the Montreux Convention and, *a fortiori*, the U.S. from any role in the revision of that instrument, as well as the familiar desire to secure military "presence" in the Turkish Straits and, thereby, a paramount influence in Turkey, an objective first put forward in 1940 during the Soviet-Nazi honeymoon.

The U.S. decision concerning the Soviet note of August 7 on the Straits was taken on August 15. At a gathering in the White House which included Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal and the Under-Secretary of War, Kenneth C. Royall, Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson said that the Departments of State, and Navy had examined the situation thoroughly and then proceeded to an exposition of his own Department's conclusions. The Soviet note to Turkey, he said, revealed a desire to control and dominate Turkey. Yielding to these demands would be followed by infiltration and domination of that country by the USSR with obvious consequences for the Middle East. The President ought firmly to resent this Soviet trial balloon but should also fully realize that if the Soviet Government did not yield and the American Government maintained its attitude, armed conflict might ensue. Royall, Forrestal, and Acheson, all declared themselves in favor of upholding the Turks, however. The decision was now up to the President. The U.S., he stated, would take a firm position. He had made up his mind but he was glad not to be alone in this decision. The U.S., he said, might as well find out whether the Soviets were intent on world conquest then as in five or ten years.

On August 19, the State Department sent its note to the Soviet Government, reaffirming the views expressed in its note to Turkey of No-

87. Kirk, *op. cit.*, p. 24, note 5. Also C. Acikalin, "Turkey's International Relations", *International Affairs*, XXIII (October, 1947), 488 - 489.

88. Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 - 49.

vember 2, 1945, stressing once again that the matter of revising the Montreux Convention was not the exclusive concern of the Black Sea powers and adding that, in case of attack, the UN Security Council should be competent to deal with the situation⁸⁹.

The likewise firm notes of Britain and Turkey to the Soviet Government followed on August 21 and 22, respectively⁹⁰. The chronological order of all three notes was suggestive of the new role thrust upon the U.S. during this crisis, that of assuming the leadership in joint efforts to stem Soviet expansionism. It symbolized the tremendous change in Great Power relations that had taken place since the eve of the Potsdam Conference, scarcely over a year before. And it represented a new major American step leading up to the third postwar crisis over the Turkish Straits which was the "Truman Doctrine".

When the American and British governments on October 9, 1946, sent their replies to a second Soviet note which had been sent to the Turks on September 25, and stated that the notes exchanged had fulfilled the purposes of the Potsdam Protocol and that therefore there was no reasons to continue these exchanges⁹¹, the crisis somewhat subsided, though the Soviet attitude remained unchanged.

After Stalin's death, a Soviet note to Turkey of May 30, 1953, contained assurances that the USSR no longer had any claims to the provinces of Kars and Ardahan. Recently, this was reiterated in a note of June 28, 1960, from Khrushchev to general Cemal Gürsel, who acknowledged with great satisfaction this renewal of the Soviet assurance. Of course, as the above account shows, Molotov, too, was reported to have put aside this territorial question, in 1945, with the Turkish Foreign Minister replying that there were two ways of doing so: First to put them aside with the intention of taking them up again; and, second, to put them aside for good. The recent Soviet reaffirmation, it might be added, had been preceded by an unconfirmed report that Adnan Menderes had supposedly offered to cede Ardahan to the USSR in order to get large-scale Soviet economic aid.

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89. Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 - 50.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 50 - 55.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 55 - 60.