

## THE VIEW FROM ANKARA

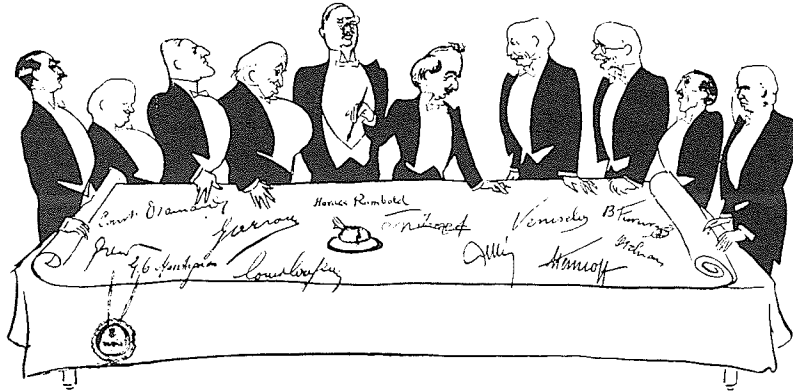
*by George S. Harris*

The Turks have been having their difficulties of late with old friends and old foes. The "Greek lobby" in the United States (there is no corresponding "Turkish lobby") joins Hellenes in Greece and Cyprus in pillorying Turkey for its 1974 occupation of the northern third of the island. Radio broadcasts from Eastern Europe, speaking in the name of the outlawed Turkish Communist Party, regularly assail Turkey's two-year-old military government. Around the world, Armenian nationalists, based outside Turkey and seeking to split off several eastern provinces for themselves, have taken the lives of 23 Turkish diplomats or members of their families since 1975.

In an interview published earlier this year, Turkey's Foreign Minister, İler Türkmen, emphasized these and other "points of distress" as he described how the world looked to him. The picture was mixed.

*The Europeans:* Since General Kenan Evren and his brother officers seized power in 1980, Turkey's European NATO partners have raised insistent questions about civil rights and the pace of return to democratic government. The Turks withdrew from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe earlier this year after members of that body castigated the Turkish military regime for "particularly flagrant and intolerable violations of the rule of law." Meanwhile, the arrests of Turkish labor leaders and politicians (including former Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit) now threaten to stop completely the flow of financial assistance from Europe—currently about \$500 million a year—that has helped tide Turkey over its latest economic crisis.

*The Greeks:* Andreas Papandreou's socialist government, after coming to power in autumn 1981, stepped up the level of rhetoric against Turkey's military government and at the same time authorized oil exploration projects in disputed areas of the Aegean Sea. Last March, Greece abruptly withdrew from NATO military exercises scheduled to be held jointly with the Turks, alleging Turkish violations of Greek island airspace. After two decades, moreover, the future of divided Cyprus is still unresolved. With the Turkish Cypriot minority demanding to share political power equally with the far larger local Greek community, and the Greek Cypriots insisting on a unified island admin-



Courtesy Karacan Yayinlari.

July 1923: The signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, establishing the Turkish Republic, by representatives of Turkey, Great Britain, Greece, France, and Italy. Prime Minister İsmet İnönü is at center. This contemporary caricature was drawn by the French cartoonist "Derso."

istration under majority rule, no accord on the island's future appears to be in sight.\*

*The Soviets:* Relations with Moscow, never really warm, have cooled considerably. The Soviet Union, source of some of Turkey's electricity, chemicals, heavy machinery, and oil, and buyer of its cattle, vegetables, tobacco, and cotton, greeted the generals' 1980 takeover with open disapproval, expressing concern lest the new regime in Ankara fall in with Washington's new plans for the defense of the Persian Gulf. "Promising new dollars to Turkey for military purposes," Moscow Radio commented recently, "the United States makes demands of its small partner that are to be followed to the letter." For their part, the Turks, not inclined to worsen the situation, have refrained from publicizing any complaints they may have against the Soviet Union. In any event, as Foreign Minister Türkmen pointed out, media tirades from the USSR "are in contrast with what the Soviet Union has been communicating officially."

*The Americans:* Strong ties with the United States remain

\*The *Enosis* ("union") movement to join Cyprus and Greece exacerbated differences between the Turkish Cypriots (just under 20 percent of the population) and the ethnic Greek Cypriots (about 80 percent of the population) during the 1950s. Creation of the independent state of Cyprus in 1960 under Archbishop Makarios stilled inter-communal violence for a time, but by December 1963, clashes had resumed. In 1974, the military junta in Athens sponsored a coup unseating President Makarios. Thereupon, Turkey, citing the 1959 Treaty of Guarantee which authorized it to defend the Cyprus constitution, landed troops on the island. They have remained there ever since.

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at the heart of Turkey's foreign policy. Washington's sympathetic understanding of the reasons for the generals' intervention, and the fading memory of the 1975 vote by the U.S. Congress to curb arms sales to Turkey in the wake of its Cyprus invasion, have paved the way for renewed intimacy, with visits to Turkey within the past year by then Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger. The United States has strongly backed the effort by an OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) Consortium to provide about \$1 billion a year in relief for the hard-pressed Turkish economy. U.S. military and economic aid to Turkey in 1982 totaled \$700 million. Foreign Minister Türkmen specified that "we have no problem with the United States."

*The Mideast:* Here, Ankara has scored unusual successes over the past two years. Commercial dealings with Libya and Saudi Arabia, for example, have grown dramatically. In March 1982, Ankara concluded a trade deal with Iran worth more than \$1 billion—Turkish food and manufactured goods for Iranian oil. The Turks' trade with the Middle East—involving nearly \$2 billion in exports in 1981—now exceeds in value that with Western Europe. Thanks to the near-capacity operation of the 450-mile Iraqi pipeline through Turkey to the Mediterranean, transit fees are up, and the Iraqis have been willing to provide oil on favorable terms (\$26 per barrel in 1981, versus a world price of \$34). Not by coincidence, Turkey has assumed a more prominent role in the 43-nation Islamic Conference.

Turkey's preoccupations are not altogether new. While the republic itself is only six decades old, it is the successor to an empire that goes back six centuries. It was not during the past decade or even the past century that the Turks first traded with Arabs, fought with Greeks, haggled with Europeans. The lands and peoples now bordering the modern Turkish state were once all under the rule of the Ottomans (20 countries represented at the United Nations contain territory of the old Ottoman Empire), and the relationships and enmities between Turks and their neighbors are of long standing. More than most people, perhaps, Turks have a deeply ingrained sense of place.

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Since Ottoman days, the Turks have sat astride both the exit from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Since the time of Peter the Great (1672–1725), the Russians have perennially sought control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits in their quest for a warm water outlet to the open sea. That goal long made Russia the Turks' most ambitious foe, and warfare between the two was frequent. It was always a cardinal principle of Ottoman diplomacy, therefore, to seek a powerful ally against the empire's Slavic neighbor. France and Britain historically alternated in this role, and it is played today by NATO.\*

### **Accentuating the Positive**

Geography is a constant the Turks can do little to change. Thus, with the defection of the Arabs from Ottoman rule during World War I, the Turks forever lost control of territories that now produce the bulk of the oil moving in international trade. In a final act that condemned Turkey to an energy-deficient future, the British in 1925 forced Kemal Atatürk to abandon his claims to the oil-rich province of Mosul. Had this area, inhabited by Kurds and Turkomans and now part of Iraq, been left to the Turks, they would today be a net exporter of crude oil and thus able to maneuver a bit more freely in the world arena.

Typically, the Turks have accentuated the positive, stressing that the end of empire allowed the formation of a relatively homogeneous national state with a clear Turkish identity. Still, a memory of the Ottoman riches lingers. Hence the dispute with Greece (a nation born out of the empire in 1830) over the Aegean seabed. The catalyst was the discovery, during the early 1970s, of oil deposits in Greek waters off the island of Thassos. The Turks quickly advanced their own seabed claims under international waters but in areas spoken for by Athens, arguing that it was hardly fair to deny Turkey the use of large tracts of the Anatolian continental shelf simply because some Greek islands were in the way. Ankara was by no means trying to abrogate the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (which gave Turkey only two Aegean islands, Imbros and Tenedos, the rest going to Greece and Italy), but it was determined not to lose out once again in a scramble

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\*With development of ICBMs and long-range reconnaissance aircraft, Turkey's importance as a frontline NATO staging area has declined somewhat. After Turkey joined NATO in 1952, Incirlik airbase near Adana figured heavily in U.S. Strategic Air Command planning for possible wartime operations. U-2 reconnaissance flights over the USSR from this base ended after Francis Gary Powers was shot down by the Soviets in May 1960. U.S. Jupiter missiles installed in Turkey during the early 1960s were withdrawn in 1963 after the Cuban missile crisis.

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for natural resources to which it might have a claim.

Those eastern Mediterranean islands remain a sore point. Greece seized many of them in the waning days of the weakened Ottoman empire and got the rest from vanquished Italy after World War II. Enough hug the Turkish coast to screen much of it from access to the open sea, leaving the Turks largely hemmed in by Greek territorial waters. It should come as no surprise that Ankara is sensitive to the possibility, oft-threatened by Papan-dreou, that Greece will one day claim a 12-mile (versus the current six-mile) territorial limit around each of its 2,383 islands. This would put all of Turkey's normal navigation channels into the Aegean under Greek control. Under such circumstances, Foreign Minister Türkmen has said, "it would become necessary to redefine all elements of the status quo"—meaning the Aegean would be up for grabs.

#### Atatürk's Legacy

All of this helps explain "the importancy of Cyprus to the Turk," as Shakespeare put it in *Othello*. The perception of being cut off lay behind Ankara's contention, initially voiced during the 1950s, that Cyprus in Greek hands would complete a ring around Turkey. A Turkish journalist, Ömer Sami Cöşar, wrote in 1955: "One look at a map would be enough to see that all of our routes are under Greek control and blocked by countless Greek islands. . . . Should our neighbor become a Communist state one of these days, all of Turkey would be encircled with a strong Communist ring. . . . Cyprus sits astride the only route that connects us with the free world." This concern with unimpeded sea access clearly animates Ankara's insistence that independent Cyprus never unite with mainland Greece, no matter what the island's Greek majority may desire. That is why a Turkish invasion became almost inevitable in 1974 when, after years of confrontation between Turkish and Greek Cypriots, Athens installed Nikos Samson as puppet President of Cyprus. In Ankara's eyes, this amounted to a de facto union of Cyprus and Greece.

The Ottoman past has served for some 60 years as one reference point in the conduct of Turkish foreign policy. The Turks have drawn other lessons from Kemal Atatürk's 15 years as Turkey's first President. Atatürk shaped Turkish thinking in quite new ways. He was a pragmatist and experimenter. Though determined to see Turkey accepted as a modern, European-style nation, he never tried to pursue this goal by locking the country into a single ideology or foreign policy.

Atatürk renounced empire and the dream of "pan-

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Turanism" (which would have ensured perpetual conflict with Iran and the Soviet Union, both home to many ethnic Turks). Once the Republic was established, he also preached "peace at home, peace in the world." Atatürk was willing to risk war only for high ends of state—as when, to guarantee unmolested navigation, he joined Britain and France in 1937 to hunt down unidentified (but thought to be Italian) submarines prowling the Mediterranean. He did not intend to be supine, and his successors have not been, as they proved by sending troops to South Korea in 1950 and to Cyprus in 1974.

### **"No to NATO"**

Atatürk adopted the policy, followed by all subsequent Turkish leaders, of establishing especially close working relationships with Iraq and Iran (no matter who happened to hold power in Baghdad or Tehran). These countries, like Turkey, are home to large numbers of Kurds, many of whom are willing to fight (and regularly do so) for enhanced autonomy or outright independence. Atatürk also advocated formation of regional groupings of nations to enhance security. His 1934 Balkan Pact (with Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia) was complemented in 1937 by a similar alliance with Middle Eastern states (Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan) to protect his southeast flank. The image of Atatürk, evoked during the 1970s by some Turkish leftists, as a leader who would have spurned the U.S.-sponsored Baghdad Pact and Central Treaty Organization—and who might even have said "no to NATO"—is thus fundamentally misleading.

Finally, recalling how European creditors had exploited the country after the Ottoman government was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1881, Atatürk advocated self-reliance (autarky) for Turkey in principle.\* In practice, he accepted first Soviet loans (during a thaw in relations during the 1920s and 1930s) and then German and British aid, in order to develop a rudimentary industrial base. Atatürk's legacy in this respect is his most ambivalent, and vacillation has bedeviled Turkish economic strategy ever since. Skittish about "economic imperialism" but also desirous of Western capital and technology, Turkish governments have alternately put out the welcome mat for foreign investors and nationalized their operations. This per-

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\*The Decree of Muhaiem of 1881 gave the Europeans, acting through a Public Debt Administration, the right to collect a large portion of all Turkish customs revenue. European agents were actually stationed inside Ottoman customs booths. The Public Debt Administration could also veto new taxes Istanbul wished to impose on its own population. The PDA was virtually a state within a state. This regime existed up to World War I.

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formance helps explain why Turkey has never been able to attract sufficient capital from wary businessmen in the West.

Atatürk's successors during the past 35 years have largely followed his lead. All of Turkey's modern leaders have been devoted to the goal of making Turkey the developed, Westernized state Atatürk hoped it could become. But, like Atatürk, they have all felt free to experiment and adapt to new conditions.

Prime Minister İsmet İnönü's diplomatic acrobatics kept Turkey out of World War II (until 1945, when a pro forma declaration of war against the Axis powers was the price of membership in the United Nations) despite treaties of alliance or friendship with all of the European belligerents. Atatürk would probably have approved. But the early postwar years were dominated in Turkey by the threat from the USSR. Even if Turkish leaders on occasion exaggerated the danger to extract the maximum in military and economic aid from the United States (\$2.5 billion during the Eisenhower years), the pressure from the Soviet Union for the surrender of two of Turkey's eastern provinces and for joint control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles was certainly real. The Soviets pushed Turkey into NATO's arms and the Turks were glad for the embrace. Joining the Atlantic Alliance, moreover, was construed by Turks as providing the cachet of Western acceptance that Atatürk had coveted.

### Changing Perceptions

By the mid-1960s, however, a series of events had altered the single-minded emphasis in Ankara on containing Moscow.

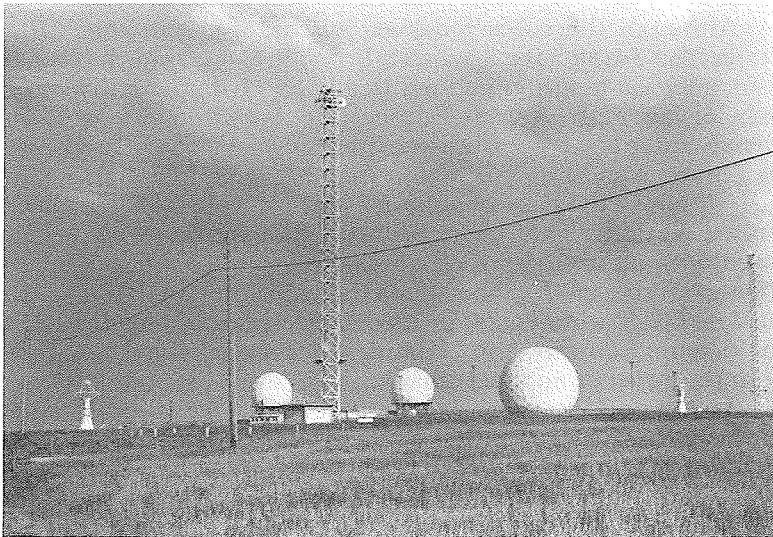
¶ The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 shocked Turkish leaders into the realization that NATO could, under some circumstances, bring insecurity rather than protection. Having accepted nuclear Jupiter missiles when most other NATO partners refused, the Turks found themselves an object of Soviet wrath as John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev negotiated their way out of military conflict over an issue far from Turkey's shores. The Turks also felt let down when the Jupiter missiles were withdrawn as part of the implicit quid pro quo for removal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba.

¶ The Cyprus crisis of 1963–64 reinforced this disillusionment. In a four-page letter, President Lyndon Johnson threatened to withhold aid in the event of a Soviet attack if Ankara carried out military operations against Cyprus. The "Johnson letter" called into question the very basis of Turkey's foreign strategy. "In half an hour we would be left without an ally," complained Prime Minister İnönü.

¶ Meanwhile, the Soviet Union modified its behavior. With the Jupiter missiles gone, Moscow began to see Turkey as less of a menace. Khrushchev's successors in the Kremlin took advantage of Turkish-American strains to improve ties with Turkey, moving toward a more even-handed position on the Cyprus dispute and assisting in various development projects.

¶ Finally, by the mid-1960s, the United States no longer felt able to provide the increasingly huge amounts of foreign aid needed to make a significant contribution to Turkish GNP. This gap was filled for a time with remittances sent back by the millions of Turkish "guest workers" who poured into Western Europe during the 1960s and '70s.

The upshot of all this was that Turkey, like many of its European NATO partners, began to shed its substantially "bipolar" view of the world for a more sophisticated assessment of the nature of things. Determined to avoid provoking Moscow, the Turks now banned active U.S. air reconnaissance over territory adjacent to the Soviet Union and later adopted a liberal interpretation of the 1936 Montreux Convention concerning the



*Photo by Paul B. Henze.*

*Nothing but the Black Sea lies between the U.S.-Turkish "listening post" on a bluff at Sinop and the Soviet Union's underbelly, 200 miles to the north. One leftist Turkish journalist has complained that Turkey's role in NATO is to be "1. an advance post, 2. a big ear, and 3. the first target."*



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passage of Soviet naval vessels through the Straits. The Montreux Convention bars aircraft carriers; Turkey has allowed Soviet warships such the *Moskva*, *Kiev*, and *Minsk*, officially designated as cruisers though equipped with canted flight decks and fixed-wing aircraft, to pass unchallenged.

While Ankara has sought to "normalize" relations with Moscow—expanding trade, exchanging state visits—Turkey has remained an active member of NATO, participating regularly in its military exercises. The Turks promptly reopened joint U.S.–Turkish military facilities in Sinop, Diyarbakır, and elsewhere in October 1978, despite Soviet entreaties, as soon as Washington lifted the last vestiges of its post-Cyprus arms embargo. But Ankara is also sensitive to perceived infringements on its sovereignty. Turkey will not allow foreign combat troops to be based on Turkish soil (as NATO forces are deployed in West Germany), and the current military regime regularly rebuts the notion that the new U.S. Rapid Deployment Force would ever be permitted to use Turkish bases.

#### What Next?

Although the subject draws few headlines in the United States, the Turks have also been branching out into the Middle East, a region long slighted politically and commercially by Ankara in favor of Western Europe and the United States. The initial impetus for a shift in orientation was, ironically, Cyprus, as Turkey sought to cultivate other Islamic states during the early 1960s in the hope of winning support for its position in the United Nations. That effort proved disappointing. But it coincided with an upsurge of religious observance by Turkish Muslims and the emergence of an Islamic political party, the National Salvation Party. In 1969, Turkey became a member of the Islamic Summit, and "Islamic diplomacy" slowly acquired both prominence and legitimacy.

In the end, however, what proved decisive in building up Turkey's ties with Middle Eastern and North African nations were the massive increases in the price of oil decreed by OPEC in 1973–74 and again in 1979. As a result of this double shock, the Turkish economy began to deteriorate. Belatedly launched in 1980, Turkey's economic counter-offensive—a free-enterprise, export-oriented program backed by the International Monetary Fund and the OECD—unleashed a determined sales campaign abroad by nearly 200 Turkish firms. Exports aside, in 1981 some \$10 billion worth of construction contracts were signed with Libya (the main customer), Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

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Turkey's burgeoning "Mideast connection," though a boon, entails certain risks and makes certain demands. It means, for example, that the Turks must avoid being caught up in inter-Islamic disputes, such as the Iranian-Iraqi War raging near the Persian Gulf (a conflict that Turkey has unsuccessfully tried to mediate). It means embracing, if tepidly, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), despite the indirect supporting role the PLO seems to have played in the political violence that ravaged Turkey during the late 1970s. It greatly complicates Ankara's relations with Israel, warmed for years by common concern over Soviet inroads in the Middle East. Along with its Arab neighbors, Turkey has deplored the policies of the Begin government, but it has refused to sever ties with the Jewish state (which Turkey was among the first to recognize in 1948).

The Turks are a self-confident people, and that spirit has been buoyed by their recent success in putting the home front back in order. In general, and despite the familiar aggravations of their foreign affairs, they are optimistic about the future. The generals are going forward with a timetable for resumption of democratic government. When that happens—in 1983 or '84—some of Turkey's difficulties abroad will ease. Moscow, for example, will no longer have Turkey's military regime as a whipping boy. Cordial official ties with Western Europe (and full-scale economic assistance) will be revived. On the other hand, with civilian politicians back in power, relations with the United States may cool somewhat; in Turkey as in America, there are votes to be had in "running against Washington." But the Turkish leaders will no doubt realize, as they always have in the past, that Islam or nonalignment is no alternative to NATO.

The most significant trend of the past few years—the turn to the Middle East—is unlikely to end soon. The benefits are apparent to both Turkey and its Arab neighbors. Even the recent slowdown in Arab payments to Turkish contractors, caused by the current softness in the world petroleum market, has not curbed the enthusiasm. With commercial activity, of course, comes political interest. All of this virtually ensures that, in the coming decades, overall Turkish involvement in the Mideast will be greater than at any time since the dissolution of the Ottoman state in the wake of World War I. In a sense, the Turks didn't lose an empire, they (eventually) gained a market.

