

PSF

Turkey



In reply refer to
PR 867.713/13

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

PSF Turkey - 1939
Sumner
1
August 25, 1939

My dear Miss LeHand:

At the suggestion of the Honorable John Van A. MacMurray, American Ambassador to Turkey, I am sending you herewith a set of Turkish postage stamps issued to commemorate the One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the United States Constitution. A copy of Mr. MacMurray's despatch is also enclosed.

I shall appreciate it if you will bring the stamps and despatch to the attention of the President.

Sincerely yours,

G. H. Sumner
Chief of Protocol

Enclosures:

Despatch from Istanbul,
July 21, 1939;
Stamps.

Miss Marguerite A. LeHand,
Private Secretary to the President,
The White House.

PSF Turkey

August 28, 1939.

Dear Jack:-

Ever so many thanks for the set of
the new Turkish stamps.

Do write me your personal impressions
of the effect on Turkey and Turkish policy caused
by the Russian and German alignment. Of course,
I hope greatly that Turkey will not change what
seems to me to be a pretty sensible present
policy.

As ever yours,

Honorable John Van A. MacMurray,
American Embassy,
Istanbul,
Turkey.

Department of State

BUREAU
DIVISION

PR

ENCLOSURE

TO

Letter drafted

ADDRESSED TO

Miss LeHand

PSF Turkey

Istanbul, Turkey,

July 21, 1939.

No. 1149

Subject: Issue of Turkish Stamps Commemorating the
One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the
United States Constitution.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

With reference to my despatch No. 1038 of May 12, 1939, and previous correspondence on the issuance of Turkish stamps commemorating the One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the United States Constitution, I have the honor to inform the Department that these stamps were placed on sale on July 15, 1939.

While

While it was the intention of the Turkish authorities to commemorate the One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the Constitution it is of interest to note that the legend appearing on the stamps actually reads "In Commemoration of the One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America".

Two sets of the stamps are enclosed - one for the Department's files and one for possible transmission to the President should the Department wish to do so.

Respectfully yours,

J. V. A. MacMURRAY.

Enclosures:

Two sets of stamps.

A TRUE COPY
OF THE SIGNED
ORIGINAL

KW

801.1

RH:maj

FAST



RCA

DIRECT



RADIOGRAM

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Turkey - 19393

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT PRESIDENT DES ETAS UNIS D AMERIQUE WASHINGTON

TRES SENSIBLE AUX FELICITATIONS ET VOEUX QUE VOTRE EXCELLENCE A BIEN
VOULU M EXPRIMER A L OCCASION DE LA FETE NATIONALE TURQUE JE LA
PRIE D AGREER MES REMERCIEMENTS LES PLUS VIFS AUXQUELS JE JOINS LES
SINCERES VOEUX QUE JE FORME POUR SON BONHEUR PERSONNEL LA PAIX ET LA
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*File
3*

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To secure prompt action on inquiries, this original RADIOGRAM should be presented at the office of R.C.A. COMMUNICATIONS, Inc. In telephone inquiries quote the number preceding the place of origin.

PSF: Turkey ~~AVE~~

December 18 1939

Ankara, Turkey, November 9, 1939.

Dear Mr. President:

The courier taking this letter from Istanbul at the end of this week will afford the first opportunity for me to make any reasonably intelligent reply to the letter of August 28 in which you asked for my impressions of the effect of the Russo-German alignment upon Turkey and her policy. For it reached me at a moment when the very question you had asked was uppermost in the minds both of foreigners and of the Turks themselves, as a query for the answer to which nobody had any reliable data. Only a few days before, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Saracoglu, who is admirably honest and frank in answering one's questions, although perhaps inclined in some cases to take a little advantage of the privilege of answering no more than the precise question put to him) had told me that he was going to Moscow primarily for the purpose of satisfying his own

mind

The President,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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mind as to whether the Soviet authorities were now friendly or unfriendly towards Turkey. And it is only very recently that the question has cleared up enough to justify even a tentative opinion on that question and on its effect upon the Turkish attitude with regard to Soviet Russia.

Perhaps, in order to put things in perspective, I should start with a comment upon the rather exceptional relationship of friendliness that until recently prevailed between Turkey and Russia. In the days when both countries were international pariahs, fighting against interventions in order to assert themselves as new national entities, it was not unnatural that they felt a considerable mutual sympathy, lent each other support (Russia's assistance to Turkey naturally being far the more important), put aside the rivalries and ambitions that each of them associated with a discredited past, and convinced themselves that their common boundary and their common interest in the Straits as the key to the Black Sea could thereafter be regarded as matters of cooperative effort against an unfriendly outer world rather than as matters of contest between them. And I really believe it is true that, for a dozen years and more, this sense of an especial closeness of sympathies was a reality, among the leaders of both peoples, to a degree that seemed to confute those of us

who

who find it hard to conceive of nations or peoples as entertaining, for more than a brief spell of emotional excitation, those sentiments of affection and sympathy which are normal as between individuals. This rather idyllic friendship between the two nations was somewhat clouded by the Soviet Government's reluctance at the Montreux Conference of 1936 to concede to Turkey full control of the Straits: but it continued to receive at least lip service (perhaps a sort of Coué treatment) from both sides. And up to a few months ago I think it might have been said, without any sentimental illusions, that there continued to exist relations of an exceptional degree of friendliness and of mutual trust between the two Governments.

The favorable psychological relationship which had existed over all this period had meanwhile taken legalistic form in a treaty of non-aggression between them, which ten years ago had been supplemented by an agreement that neither of them would, without fully consulting and obtaining the approval of the other in advance, come to any political understanding with any neighboring country.

This was, in outline, the background of Turco-Russian relations at the time when, last April, the Italians moved into Albania and thereby precipitated a new situation

in

in the Balkans and compelled the Turks to seek some method to meet what they not unnaturally felt to be a menace to their national safety. The story is current -- whether it is true or not, I do not know; but I really think it not unlikely -- that Atatürk had some years ago made to his more responsible advisers the observation that, if Mussolini really wanted to restore the ancient Roman Empire, he was stupid not to see that his first step to that end should be the taking of Albania; in which case, Turkey could assure its own safety only by allying itself with Great Britain as the dominant sea power of the world, and incidentally with France as the necessary ally of Britain. Whether or not such a voice from the tomb was decisive, it is natural enough that the Turkish Government did, under the circumstances of last April, promptly go at least half way to meet the desire of the British and French to reinsure themselves on their commitments to Greece and Rumania.

But the Turks (despite having their fair share of human weaknesses, and being often enough irritating in cases where we find it hard to understand why they should be) have at any rate a rather fine sense of obligation in the matter of their loyalties; and feeling that the Russians were, so to speak, their best friends in the international society,

society, they insisted on taking the Soviet Government into their confidence, and working with its full approval, before coming to an agreement even with the British, who might well have been construed to stand outside of the Turkish obligation to consult Russia before reaching new understandings with a neighboring power. Thus the Russians were, so to speak, unofficial observers of the negotiations which led to the preliminary Anglo-Turkish Agreement of last May, and the Franco-Turkish Agreement of a month or so later. And in the arrangements leading up to both of those declarations, it was clearly understood that they were subject to Turkey's non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, and would not require her to engage in hostilities with Russia -- although the clause providing that there should be no separate treaty of peace implied that if Turkey were once engaged in hostilities on the side of the Allies, she would not drop out in the event that Russia should later become involved on the other side.

Having thus, with Russian acquiescence, committed themselves to the Allied camp, the Turks felt it was a blow in the face when Russia (in the latter part of August), without the slightest intimation to them, entered into the preliminary agreement with Germany which at least potentially ranged the Soviet Union with the

opposite

opposite camp. The Turks were hurt and at a loss to understand the meaning of it. Their inclination was to feel disillusioned, suspicious and even antagonistic; but they at least made an effort to rationalize as favorably as possible what Russia had done, and to keep as much of the old confidence as they could.

They were somewhat reassured when (early in September) the not very personable or beloved Soviet Ambassador returned from a prolonged visit to Moscow and laid before them a Russian proposal for a Turco-Russian treaty of mutual assistance, which would have paralleled and supplemented the tripartite Turco-Franco-British treaty which was then in the later stages of negotiation, and which, in conjunction with it, would seemingly have made Turkey the central pier in a bridge uniting the Soviet Union with the Democracies in the protection of the Balkan and Black Sea region against invasion by either Germany or Italy. These proposals (whose precise terms, by the way, are still a well-kept secret) were promptly laid before the British and French Ambassadors, and approved by their Governments; and although naturally under very heavy pressure of work here, Mr. Saracoglu eventually yielded to the insistence of the Russians that he should go to Moscow to negotiate the details of a treaty on the basis of the proposals.

I talked with him just before he left, and found him in a mood of almost pathetic desire to justify the traditional Turkish confidence in the Soviet leaders, but with a very realistic and even cynical apprehension that, in view of their unknown commitments to Germany, they might well prove to be double-crossing their old friends. President İnönü evidently shared that apprehension, and is understood to have given Mr. Saracoglu, by way of parting instructions, a warning to be on the alert against any trick detrimental to the interests either of Turkey herself or of her British and French allies.

Before Mr. Saracoglu had actually left Turkish soil, the Russian invasion of Poland had brought closer and made more acute the apprehensions that Russia really belonged to the opposite and potentially hostile camp; and after he reached Moscow, he was held at arms' length and treated like a tourist until the Soviet leaders had finished their new set of negotiations with von Ribbentrop. Even then, he was still kept dangling, without an opportunity to talk with any responsible officials, for about another week. Whatever may have been the reason for this, it had a lamentable effect on general Turkish opinion, which felt affronted by the seeming lack of even

common

common courtesy towards the representative of the Turkish Government.

When the actual conferences with the Soviet leaders (including Stalin himself) began on October 1, it appears that they put forward two new proposals which would wholly have changed the purport and the bearing of those which they had previously made. One was that the proposed Russo-Turkish pact of mutual assistance should not obligate the Soviet Government to assist Turkey against Germany; the other was that Turkey should bind herself to Russia in advance that, in the event of a war in which Turkey might be a belligerent, she would forego the discretion granted to her in such a case by the Convention of Montreux, and would undertake to close the Straits to the war vessels of her co-belligerents. Both of these proposals Mr. Saracoglu refused to consider or even to refer to his Government; whereupon, as he has told me, the Russian negotiators dropped them with the statement that they did not attach much importance to either of them.

They also made two other proposals, which contemplated modifications of the tripartite treaty with Great Britain and France as already drafted. One of these was to the effect that Turkey should go no further than she had

already

already gone in the Turco-British and Turco-French declarations in undertaking to consult (rather than to participate) in the event of Britain and France being called upon to fulfill their guarantees in the Balkans; the other was that, in the event of Soviet Russia's becoming involved in hostilities against the Allies, the provisions both of the Turkish alliance with Great Britain and France, and of the proposed Turco-Russian treaty of mutual assistance, should be suspended for the duration of the war. The Turks talked over both of these proposals with the British and French, and worked out with them formulae which were believed to meet the Russian requests in full. When, however, Mr. Saracoglu informed the Russians that he was prepared to meet their views, they again (actually for the third time) raised the two demands which he had refused to consider, and said they would negotiate no further until these demands were conceded; whereupon Mr. Saracoglu apparently asked his Government to order him home.

He actually left after having been in Moscow more than three weeks. While he was on his return journey, the Turkish Prime Minister made a singularly blunt and unreserved statement that the negotiations which the Minister for Foreign Affairs had gone to Moscow to conclude

had

had come to nothing because the Russians had made new (and impliedly incompatible) demands. The Russians, on the other hand, published a communiqué which said in effect that there was a mere pause for rest and refreshment in the course of negotiations which were necessarily long and arduous, and that the talks would shortly be resumed in Ankara. And (no doubt at the suggestion of Mr. Saracoglu) the Turkish Government pressed the British and French Governments to sign the new tripartite treaty of alliance, exactly as it stood in the initialed text before the three Governments had consented to the changes requested by the Soviet Government, at as early a date as possible -- or rather, at the earliest moment after Mr. Saracoglu should have left Russian territory.

Mr. Saracoglu returned to Ankara in a sweeter temper than I should have thought possible: he showed none of the resentment that many of his fellow countrymen had felt about his being kept dangling in a rather humiliating way. On the contrary, he professed a very optimistic view of the Russian situation as his experience in Moscow had disclosed it. His views are worth considering, because he is an exceptionally intelligent man, representing a country which undoubtedly does still have some special sort of relationship to Russia, and having known personally

for

for years most of the Russian leaders with whom he had been dealing. Against these qualifications as an observer should perhaps be set the fact that he was undoubtedly somewhat elated and exalted in his ego by the fact that he had received from the lips of Allied statesmen as well as from the press considerable praise (to which he adverted somewhat naively in the course of my conversation with him) for the staunchness and loyalty with which he had met a difficult situation. But in any case, his views have the importance that they represent the bases on which Turkish policy has been and doubtless will be formed.

His explanation of the situation starts with the assumption that Soviet Russia has reverted to old Tsarist imperialism, but that it is not yet morally or materially prepared actually to fight for its imperial ambitions; and that it is therefore rather a jackal (to borrow a phrase once used to me in another connection by a certain Chinese politician) feeding where bolder beasts have killed. He does not believe that the Soviet Government has committed itself to Germany more deeply than is necessary to enable Russia to profit by the situations which German aggressive activities may bring about. He thinks that Russia has not any concrete plan of expansion, but is simply on the watch for any advantageous opportunity that

that may turn up. He feels fairly confident that she will not risk any adventure in Bessarabia or elsewhere in the Balkans unless, despite her having screened the northern border of Rumania, Germany should make such a devastating rush into the Balkans as would completely destroy the morale of the Balkan peoples -- in which case the Red Army would, as in Poland, be able to enter without serious cost or risk, and interpose itself between the Germans and the coveted objective of the Straits. In the meanwhile, he believes the Soviet refusal to go on with its own proposals of last September was primarily the result of indecision and a desire to play for time, and perhaps in part a tactical incident to the game which the Soviet Government is playing, the Russians having possibly agreed to turn him away as part of a bargain by which they got from the Germans a free hand in the Baltic States: but he considers that this will not necessarily stand in the way of a future agreement at some time when the Russians find it opportune to assert their real interest in keeping Germany and Italy away from the Straits and the Black Sea. He does not deceive himself into any belief in the tenderness of Russian regard for the interests of Turkey or the other Balkan countries, but assumes that circumstances will for some time to come incline Russia to

cooperate

cooperate with them rather than against them; and so long as that state of affairs exists, he feels that Turkey should make the most of the traditional closeness of relations with Russia. It is a hard-boiled point of view, with just a trifling rather self-conscious but not altogether insincere residue of sentiment.

A different estimate of the situation -- an estimate which, I understand, became a matter of very violent debate and even of fisticuffs in one of the private meetings of the official party, although no word of it has been allowed to reach the public ear -- is that Mr. Saracoglu's judgment of the matter, hard-boiled as it is, is altogether too optimistic, and that the Turkish Government should from now on recognize and act upon the assumption that Russian neo-imperialism is a definite threat to the safety and independence of Turkey. That, perhaps, is stating the case in its most extreme aspect. Another opinion -- one which I understand is rather general among journalists and others of the more intelligent Turks outside of the Government -- is rather less extreme and less definite: it could perhaps be described as a feeling that the Russians had failed to live up to the part of old friends, and in a critical time had not only ignored the interests but also deliberately humiliated and hurt the feelings

feelings of their Turkish friends. Not only is this feeling somewhat indefinite, but it finds as yet no public expression. I believe, however, that it exists widely, and rankles very deeply, and that it carries with it that especial bitterness which is peculiar to a feeling of having been let down or betrayed by those in whom one has placed his trust. If so, it is to be anticipated that the canker will in time destroy whatever remains of the more sentimental aspect of Turkish friendship for the Soviet Government.

Meanwhile, what has happened only makes the Turks more resolute in their policy of holding aloof from involvement in the war unless and until new circumstances create a situation calling for positive action by them jointly with their British and French Allies. They have been challenged in their loyalties, and are proud of the faithfulness with which they met that challenge. One feels that even if the Germans were right (and I do not think they are) in their whispering propaganda that the Turks now repent of having committed themselves even conditionally to the side of the Allies, they would nevertheless hold true to the obligations they have undertaken; for my own belief is that the action of the Russians in compounding, to whatever extent, with the Germans,

Germans, has had the effect of making it more than before a matter of honor and of stubborn pride for the Turks to abide staunchly by the policy in which they have pledged themselves to the British and French.

To sum up the story in its broad outlines:-

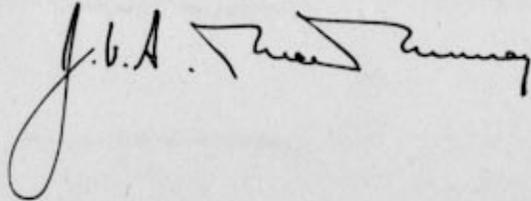
The Turks were completely surprised by the Soviet rapprochement with Germany and participation in the invasion of Poland, at a loss to understand the motives or the implications of that course of action, and torn between a feeling of suspicion and recoil and a desire to put the best possible construction upon it; in the course of the Foreign Minister's visit to Moscow, their first confusion and bewilderment settled into a pragmatic acceptance of the situation that the traditional friendship has proved a bit hollow, that any such idealism as they had supposed to guide the Soviet Government has died out and been replaced by a revived spirit of Russian imperialism which may well become a menace to the interests and the independence of Turkey, but that for the time being Russia has not the resolution or the material strength to take any risks of really serious involvement, and that it may therefore be worth Turkey's while to jog along in cordial relationship with Russia so long as no definite conflict of interests is brought

to

to an issue; and the upshot of the Soviet effort to inveigle them into playing fast and loose with their obligations to Great Britain and France has been to stiffen them in the determination to manifest to the world an even Quixotic staunchness in their loyalty to their Allies.

I trust that I have not, in this lengthy outline of what seems to us here an important aspect of the war situation, trespassed too greatly upon your patience or upon the interest which your letter expressed.

Faithfully yours,

J. B. A. 

COPY

PSF: Turkey
1

December 13, 1939

Memo to Hull
From the President

"To read and prepare reply for my signature"

Re-Letter from Ambassador MacMurray to the President
dated Nov 9, 1939, giving his impressions of the effect
of the Russo-German alignment upon Turkey and her policy.

For original memo of the above
See: Hull folder-Drawer 1-1939

*Turkey
Folder*

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 11, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE SECRETARY OF STATE

What are we doing about
this?

F. D. R.

Dispatch from London, dated Feb. 8, 1941, re Eden's suggestion that it would be helpful if President could do something to stiffen the President of Turkey and the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia urging them to reach an agreement in the face of the common German danger. Suggests backing up the line taken by Colonel Donovan when talking with representatives in the Balkans.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
—
THE SECRETARY

*file
personal*

February 11, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

I refer to your memorandum of February eleventh. Acting upon Hopkins' suggestion contained in London's telegram 492 of February 8, I sent the attached message to Ankara and Belgrade. The substance of this message was communicated to the Bulgarian Minister and a summary of this conversation is being sent to Earle at Sofia.

CH

Turkey Folder

This cable was sent in confidential code. It should be carefully rechecked before being communicated to anyone. *sc*

February 9, 1941
8 p.m.

NO DISTRIBUTION

AMERICAN EMBASSY
ANKARA (TURKEY)

12
FOR THE AMBASSADOR

In view of recent discussions of this Government's position with regard to the developing world situation we desire you to make clear to the Turkish Government just what our position is as outlined below.

In a recent statement to the nation the President said quote we are planning our own defense with the utmost urgency and in its vast scale we must integrate the war needs of Britain unquote

This continues to be the keystone of American National defense policy and the developing situation has intensified this effort. We are convinced that Britain will win. Production of war material in America has already been undertaken on the vast scale indicated and the providing of facilities to meet British requirements will continue ever increasingly until the final victory. The President has pointed out on several occasions there can be no deviation from this policy

as in his own words quote we know now that a nation can
have peace with the Nazis only at the price of total
surrender unquote

HULL

(RA)

PA/D

PSF: Turkey Folder
File
personal

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 26, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR

HON. SUMNER WELLES

This from Jack MacMurray
is interesting. Would you mind pre-
paring a little reply for me to
send by pouch?

F. D. R.

Enclosure

Let. to FDR from Ambassador to Turkey,
John Van A. MacMurray 5/23/41 - Ankara,
Turkey delivered by Capt. James Roosevelt
re the general situation in Turkey.

PSF: Turkey folder
file
Personal

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

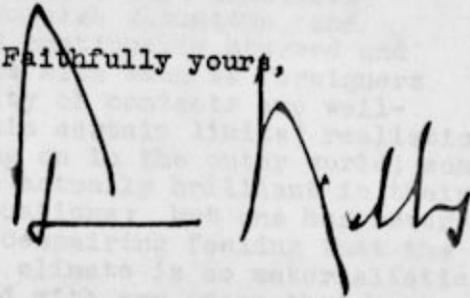
July 5, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

In accordance with the request contained in your memorandum of June 26, I am sending you herewith a suggested reply to send to Jack MacMurray's extremely interesting letter to you of May 23.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Encs.
From Ambassador MacMurray,
May 23, 1941;
Draft reply to Ambassador
MacMurray.

The President,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

The President,
The White House.

PSF: Turkey

Ankara, Turkey, May 23, 1941.

Dear Mr. President:

The opportunity afforded by the offer, which your son James telegraphed from Cairo, to take back to you any letter which I could find safe means of getting to him by June 2nd, prompts me to attempt writing even though I must confess that I should not otherwise have felt impelled to write because I frankly feel I have become, here, not only a bit stale, but cut off from any but the most immediate realities of the Turkish situation, and intellectually and emotionally starved and sterile. The Turks with whom we foreigners have the opportunity of contacts are well-informed and (within certain limits) realistic about what is going on in the outer world; some of them seem to me actually brilliant in their perceptions of situations: but one has nevertheless an almost despairing feeling that the whole intellectual climate is so materialistic -- so little concerned with any ideas that have not an immediate application -- so narrowly confined to estimations of the concrete effects upon Turkish interests to be anticipated from this or that development -- that one comes to feel a rather futile remoteness from the vital things that are happening to the civilization of our world. It is rather as though one were

The President,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

a surgeon performing an operation in the sick-bay of a steamer, conscious of the inconvenience and distress resulting from the typhoon going on outside, but not in any position to observe the typhoon itself. I am afraid that (to carry on the figure of speech) my telegrams have, in consequence, been rather in the nature of fever charts of my patient.

In certain of them I have tried to convey some impression of the spiritual ferment that is now going on in Turkish minds, particularly in view of the fact that the more recent British reverses have for the first time come home to this country and made it conscious of what it risks and what it actually suffers by its election to share the fate of the British in this war. I hope I have made clear that I am not ashamed of my Turkish friends, that (discounting a few false impressions created by a slight tendency to braggadocio in their make-up) I feel they have on the whole played the game loyally, and that I have faith that they will in the final issue prove staunch and dependable.

But although the Turks seem to me extraordinarily sportsmanlike in conceding the British reasons for not having supplied them (as they allege) more than 10% of the promised war material, and in having failed to secure the Greek islands whose occupation gives Germany the strategic mastery of the Aegean and the Straits and the Black Sea and indeed of all the defenses of Turkey itself, and in having (as they quite generally believe) bungled in permitting the Iraq troubles to flare up into hostilities, it cannot be denied that the Turks feel they are themselves taking it on the chin for British decisions and British actions. A

more

more mercurial people might have turned sour on the British. I think it is to the credit of the Turks that they have not. They do not even give me the impression of being irritated; their attitude seems to be that Allah willed it that the British are queer folk and that those who have chosen (for definitely realistic reasons still accepted as valid) to ally themselves with them must expect to accommodate themselves to the adage that the British always lose all the battles except the last. To me it is amazing, the good-nature and confidence and sang-froid with which the Turks (although not all of them or all the time) accept that situation.

It would be a mistake in political psychology, however, to assume that in this attitude the Turks are just imperceptive or dumb. They are not insensitive to the possibility that their calculations may be wrong, although they do not see (and, God bless them! I don't either) what else they can do but go on backing the side whose victory would be their only chance of going on with the task of national regeneration that they have so creditably begun. They still believe in that British victory: but they are keenly aware that circumstances -- and they are quite fatalistic in the feeling that it is all a matter of events having taken control over the decisions of Hitler or Mussolini or anybody else -- may precipitate them into a conflict which they frankly and openly want if possible to avoid, and would quite likely destroy most of what progress the New Turkey has achieved, before they could expect the possibility of going on again with the working out of their own problems. As it is, they fully realize that they are hemmed in politically and militarily, in a way which they had never reckoned on: the

Black

Black Sea coast is exposed; the freedom of the Straits is as effectually under control, from Constanza and Burgas on the east, and from Lemnos and Mytilene on the west, as though the Germans were in occupation of both the European and Asiatic shores; their Aegean coastline, and even the stretch of shore from the Dodecanese Islands to Syria, are under rather easy threat of German or Italian artillery, planes or landing forces; the frontiers with Syria and Iraq (neither of them strategically good) are confronted with the explosive possibilities not only of international strife but of by-plays of Arabic restlessness and intrigue which the Turks themselves (who know more about Arabs than most people) scarcely pretend to understand; so that there remain no Turkish boundaries as to which their minds can be quite easy, except those with Russia and with Iran; and although the former is considered by the Turks to be pretty safe if only because the nature of the country mostly stands up on edge, and the latter is regarded with comfort because the Iranians are friendly, the fact remains that the Russians might go past the Caucasus frontier and attack from Iran or Iraq.

And while this almost complete political and military encirclement is a matter of possibilities, the economic blockade of Turkey is pretty close to a complete reality. For the goods that this country needs -- not only military equipment, but prosaic things like locomotives and cars, and automobiles and tires, and oil and containers, and cotton thread and spindles, and chemicals and pharmaceuticals -- the only gates of access from overseas at the moment are the very inadequate and very dangerously approached ports of Mersin and Iskanderun (Alexandretta); Turkey is economically starving,

and

and has no safe line of communication for trade with any supplier but Germany. The British have at least theoretically done their best: they have bought up not only the Turkish output of chrome and other metals, but contracted for the purchase of more figs and raisins than all the Britons in the world could safely eat for I don't know how long; but they have not been in a position either to take home their minerals and their Christmas goodies, or to deliver the railway rolling-stock or other things without which the industrial and economic life of this country is coming to a standstill. (One cannot build even an outhouse, because there are no nails: we cannot fence off our recently purchased Embassy property, because there is no barbed or unbarbed wire.)

In spite of the rigors of their blockade of Germany, the British have been pretty understanding and tolerant of this country's necessities, and have tempered the wind to the shorn lamb by acquiescing in Turkey's working out with Germany (as the sole available supplier) various ad hoc barter deals in order to get spare parts for machinery, and this and that of most immediate necessity, in exchange for such things as tobacco and hazel-nuts. But, as time goes on, things are getting beyond that. This country's needs are becoming more urgent and inescapable, and Britain less capable of meeting them; if Turkey is not to revert completely to the mud-village stage, she must necessarily have to give Germany wheat and other foodstuffs, and iron ore, and copper, and manganese, and even chrome, in exchange for those things without which her really infant textile and metallurgical industries and her transportation system will just wither away. The British are perhaps prepared (at any

rate,

rate, my rather broad-minded and sane colleague, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, is urging that view upon his Government) to accept that as a matter of long-run policy the Turks should be free to do this (if only that they be enabled to keep alive as a potential bulwark of the Near and Middle East) as regards anything but chrome, for the total output of which the British have contracted. Well, one of my best-informed Turkish friends now tells me that he rather expects that, if the British prove unable to remove the chrome and bring in something in return, the Turks may let it go to Germany in exchange for what the Germans can actually give to meet the Turks' desperate need. Which would not be pleasant for the British, or (under existing arrangements) for us.

For us, at least, who view the thing from the rather restricted point of outlook here, it seems impossible to divine what are the objectives or the plans of Germany in her present drive Southward through the Aegean and perhaps thence to Syria. But if, as seems almost inescapable, her present objectives are the Mosul oil fields or the Suez Canal or both, it seems scarcely possible that the German army will not sooner or later demand passage through Turkey. It is nevertheless conceivable that if the present campaign were to be carried forward successfully along the lines thus far indicated, by-passing Turkey, Germany might wish to avoid the difficulties -- not insuperable, perhaps, but still arduous -- of campaigning over the long road from the Straits to the Cilician Gates; and there might, moreover, be a purpose for her to serve in avoiding such a conflict and making it possible that ultimately Turkey, with no unhappy memories to be effaced, and economically dependent upon Germany, would become a subservient keeper of the Straits and makeweight against Russia. While the Turks may hope that

such

such considerations, or any other chance of fortune, may spare them from invasion, I think that those in control of Turkish affairs are fundamentally convinced that the respite cannot at best be very long, but that probably within this year they will be forced to fight for their national existence, and justify a place for themselves in such a Europe as the victory of the Allies would make possible.

With warmest personal regards and hopes and good wishes to you, I remain

Faithfully yours,

J. G. A. [Signature]

J. V. A. MacMurray

Ankara, Turkey.

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D. C.

Kindness of Captain James Roosevelt.

My dear Jack:

I have read with particular interest your letter of May 23, delivered by my son.

Although you view the Turkish situation in a thoroughly realistic manner, I note especially your faith that Turkey will prove staunch and dependable in the final issue.

I hope very much that you will have opportunities to send me more of your valued letters of this nature.

Very sincerely yours,

The Honorable
John Van A. MacMurray,
American Ambassador,
Ankara.