

The Massigli Affair and its Context: Turkish Foreign Policy after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact

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Abstract

This article examines Turkey's wartime diplomacy between the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and Hitler's unleashing of Operation Barbarossa. Rather than a survey of Turkish foreign policy as a whole, it takes a critical episode from July 1940 as a case study that – when put in context – reveals how fear of Nazi power and even greater fear of the Soviet Union created in Turkey a complex view of a desired outcome from the Second World War. Juxtaposing archival materials in Turkish, Russian, German, and English, I draw heavily on the hitherto untapped holdings of the Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA). Overall, this article demonstrates both the breadth and limits of Nazi Germany's sweeping efforts to orchestrate anti-Soviet propaganda in Turkey; efforts that helped end interwar Soviet-Turkish cooperation. Against previously established notions in historiography that depict Soviet-Turkish relations as naturally hostile and inherently destabilizing, this article documents how the Nazi–Soviet Pact played a key role in their worsening bilateral affairs between 1939 and 1941. The argument, then, is in keeping with newer literature on the Second World War that has begun to compensate for earlier accounts that overlooked neutral powers.

Keywords

Diplomacy, Nazi Germany, propaganda, Second World War, Soviet Union, Turkey

A fortnight after the Nazi occupation of Paris in June 1940, the *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* leaked a telegram sent by the French Ambassador in Ankara, René Massigli, to General Maxime Weygand of the French high command in Syria. The *DNB* claimed the Nazis had discovered a wrecked train wagon between

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Nevers and Loire, containing thick folders of French cables and sensitive information about Turkey's wartime position. Between 5 July and 12 July 1940, the *DNB* released Massigli's subsequent telegrams along with several other French reports, which were carefully woven into a coherent scheme that implicated Turkey in an anti-Soviet conspiracy. The coverage of the Massigli Affair in Soviet newspapers and radio broadcasts caused unprecedented tension in Turkish-Soviet relations, feeding Ankara's fear of Moscow's latent revanchism. As the Soviet Union mobilized troops in the Caucasus, the Turkish government watched with trepidation.¹

This forgotten episode demonstrates both the breadth and limits of Nazi propaganda, and thus provides a revealing window onto Turkish foreign policy at a crucial juncture. Between the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and Hitler's unleashing of Operation Barbarossa, the Third Reich attempted to cultivate Turkey's historic fear of Russia, which had a new, distinctly anti-Soviet hue. These efforts also created, however, a deep reserve, and even fear, in Ankara toward Berlin. This article focuses on the Massigli Affair as a case study that – when put in context – reveals how fear of Nazi power and even greater fear of the Soviet Union created in Turkey a complex view of a desired outcome from the Second World War. The wartime exchanges between Nazi Germany and Turkey invite us to consider the ways in which Ankara struggled to confront what it came to perceive as 'an imminent Soviet threat'.² This two-year period helps us to understand the roots of the Soviet-Turkish animosity that emerged during the Second World War, and which sharply contrasted with the cordial atmosphere of the interwar years. Nazi Germany was not the sole cause behind this reversal, but significantly contributed to the deepening rift between Ankara and Moscow, even as, in the process, Berlin itself came to be seen as an increasing threat.

A succession of influential books has offered new perspectives on Turkey's relations with Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.³ But, with restricted access to Turkey's own archives, the mindset of Turkey's historical actors has been largely a matter of speculation. The hitherto untapped holdings of the Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA) contain scores of diplomatic cables, intelligence reports, and policy papers that offer a much fuller understanding of Turkey's

1 Türk Diplomatik Arşivi [hereafter TDA], TSID 144144 (Ali Haydar Aktay to Şükrü Saraçoğlu, 10 July 1940). An accepted practice for citing the Turkish Diplomatic Archives has not yet emerged among historians; the TDA archivists stipulated that references be made to digital image identification numbers (TSID).

2 TDA, TSID 172385 (Ambassador Hüsrev Gere de to Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu, 9 April 1941).

3 Selim Deringil's book remains the standard account of Turkish foreign policy during World War II, and it is based primarily on British archival documents. The opening of Russian archives has produced a set of accounts about Soviet policy towards Turkey, which received deserved acclaim, helping us understand what Turkish politicians were responding to. See: S. Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War: An 'Active' Neutrality* (Cambridge 1989). Also see: N. Tamkin, *Britain, Turkey and the Soviet Union, 1940–1945* (London 2009). For Soviet-focused perspectives, see J. Hasanli, *SSSR–Türkiye: Ot neytraliteta k kholodnoy voyne, 1939–1953*; G. Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia* (New Haven 1999); V.M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill 2007).

Weltanschauung. Turkish records demonstrate a consistent fear of Soviet Russia coupled with an apprehension about Nazi encirclement that allow us to account for the factors that shaped Ankara's diplomacy between 1939 and 1941.

After the eruption of hostilities in Europe, Turkey's 'neutrality' was, in fact, an attempt to maintain relations with both Britain and the Third Reich, as possible allies against Soviet aggression.⁴ In internal correspondence, leading members of President İsmet İnönü's cabinet were vocal about their hope for Britain's ultimate success, but they also alluded to the need for a strong Germany in the center of Europe to check Soviet expansion. The Turkish Ambassador in London, Tevfik Rüşti Aras, candidly told Anthony Eden that, as much as Turkey hoped to see Britain emerge triumphant, 'if the war ended with the total destruction of Germany, then a tremendous abyss will open in Europe, a whirlpool into which Turkey will also be swept'.⁵ In other words, Turkish leaders did have sympathies for both sides, but those sympathies were not equal. After France succumbed to Hitler's armies in June 1940, Ankara began hedging its bets for two separate wars involving Nazi Germany, conducted independently by Britain and the USSR. On the eve of the impending Nazi-Soviet War, fear of the Soviet Union was so strong that Ankara hoped for a Nazi victory over the Soviet Union, provided that Britain was then able to check the Third Reich, which encircled Turkey via Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.⁶

Turkey's phased-thinking has often been misconstrued as pro-Axis neutrality, given the country's impressive trade volume and historic relations with Nazi Germany.⁷ A closer look into Turkish records, however, reveals a different story. İnönü was, in fact, deeply disturbed by Turkey's levels of trade with the Third Reich. He carefully appointed pro-German men of the old order to negotiate with the Nazis, but he worked hard to contain that spirit at home. When, in 1940, Ambassador Hüsrev Gerede in Berlin made his pro-Nazi tendencies too explicit

4 Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi [hereafter BCA] 030.10.0.0/168.172.4 (Directorate of Maritime Transportation and Naval Affairs to the Prime Ministry, 14 July 1939). President İsmet İnönü, for instance, purchased three Neptune class vessels from the Royal Navy to offset the three *Germaniawerft* submarines he had received from the *Kriegsmarine* earlier that year. İnönü tried to keep the same equidistance during the war and ordered three more from each country, even though the findings report indicated that Nazi Germany could deliver its portion in half the time (in 12 months as opposed to Britain who promised 24 months) and at a lower cost (£223,000 as opposed to Britain's £225,000).

5 TDA TSID 173537 (Aras to Saraçoğlu, 29 June 1941).

6 A series of cables communicated between the Ministry in Ankara and various Turkish diplomatic mission demonstrates that Turkey was less than enthusiastic about the coming into being of an Anglo-Soviet coalition against Nazi Germany, which now made it even more difficult to retain close relations with Britain without factoring in the Soviet element in the equilibrium. See: TDA, TSIDs 11359443; 11359494; 11359513; 11359566; and 11359580.

7 Ankara's export of chrome to feed the Nazi war machine led both the Soviet and British governments to levy moral allegations against Turkey. The Turkish government conceded to delivering 180,000 tons of chrome ore in 1943 and 1944, in return for war materials as stipulated by the Clodius Agreement. By dint of some Anglo-American pressure, Turkey agreed to reduce its monthly chrome deliveries by approximately 6,000 tons until its decision to cease all shipments in April 1944. See: Foreign Relations of the United States [Hereafter FRUS], Vol. IV, 1057-1167, *Diplomatic Papers 1943, Near East and Africa* (The Charge in Turkey, Kelley, to the Secretary of State, 16 October 1942); and BCA 30.1.0.0/30.179.4 (Nazi-Turkish Chrome Agreement, 20 September 1941).

and implied that Turkey's leaders' 'still belonged to the previous generation who fought alongside Germany' in the First World War, he was reprimanded not once but twice.⁸ In August 1941, Gerede was recalled to Ankara for delivering a public speech 'leaning too far in the Nazi direction' and in 1942 he was dismissed after publishing an article that celebrated Germany and Turkey's cooperation in the Great War.⁹

The 1939 agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union played a crucial role in shaping Turkey's phased-thinking. Ankara's new leaders were animated by a strong desire to remain aloof from what they now perceived as a European politics characterized by imperialism on all sides. On the other hand, they needed allies because rapprochement between two colossi that had previously been at each other's throats made it difficult to play one against the other.¹⁰ President İnönü defined his government's only goal as the nation's uncompromised sovereignty and rebuffed the sort of imperialist designs that once trapped the Ottoman Empire. Parliamentary minutes during this period are full of Kemalist aphorisms such as 'anti-imperialism', and 'independence', but, while in the Kemalist years national sovereignty was used exclusively in conjunction with Western imperialism, under President İnönü's leadership the term acquired a new meaning and reflected Turkey's apprehension vis-à-vis Soviet Russian imperialism.

The first section of this paper looks at Turkish diplomacy at the onset of the war in Europe, and explains how the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact radically transformed Turkey's politics, which had been based on friendly relations with the Soviet Union throughout the interwar period. The next part probes the Nazis' sweeping anti-Soviet propaganda – from diplomatic maneuvers to pro-Nazi organizations and social clubs – that contributed to the revival of the image of an evil Russia in Turkey. The article then turns to the Massigli affair and shows the ambition and limits of Berlin's anti-Soviet propaganda. The logical endpoint of the Massigli Affair and Ankara's fear of Moscow would have been Turkey's accession into the Axis, but Turkey remained neutral until February 1945. Ironically, the heart of Nazi Germany's propaganda success – Russophobia – was also the reason that the Nazi plot failed, for Turkey was not prepared to take steps that would provoke conflict with the Soviet Union. The last part of the article takes the narrative into the period between the Massigli Affair and the outbreak of Nazi–Soviet War. Stalin's response to the Nazi plot was harsh and paved the way for 'countless rumors' that a Soviet advance towards the Straits was in the offing. For Hitler,

8 TDA, TSID 138591 (Gerede to Saraçoğlu, 26 June 1940).

9 Hüsrev Gerede, 'Die deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 32, 1 (1942), 1–3. Years later, when Gerede compiled his memoirs, he moaned about the unceremonious way in which he was dismissed. Hüsrev Gerede, *Harb İcinde Almanya, 1939–1942* (İstanbul 1994), 41.

10 In 1989, in his influential book on Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War, Selim Deringil described Ankara's diplomacy as one of 'active neutrality' and cemented the vision of a neutral but ambitious Turkey in the historiography. Deringil successfully challenged previous notions of Turkish war-profiteering and argued that the principal reason behind Turkey's non-belligerence was its leaders' shared perception of the war as a mainly European imperialist conflict, unrelated to Turkey's basic security and vital interests. Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy*.

Turkey was necessary as a buffer zone against the Allies, mainly because Romanian oil destined for Nazi Germany was shipped via the Straits to Italian ports.¹¹ The Third Reich decided not to cajole the Ankara government into a full-fledged war-time alliance, but to advocate a strategy of benevolent neutrality for Turkey, and in doing so continued to stoke Turkey's fear of the USSR. The argument, then, is in keeping with newer literature on the Second World War that has begun to compensate for earlier accounts that overlooked neutral powers.¹²

Neutrality should not distract us from the fundamental transformations that took place in Turkish politics. When, for instance, Nazi Germany began invading the Soviet Union, Turkish Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu was having drinks with colleagues at Karpiç Baba, a famous Georgian tavern in Ankara. It was just after midnight on 22 June 1941, and Saraçoğlu, upon learning of Operation Barbarossa, is reported to have jumped on stage and danced to zeybek tunes until dawn.¹³ For anyone unfamiliar with Saraçoğlu's personal scorn for Stalin, such behavior probably seemed unbecoming.¹⁴ But the Foreign Minister's reaction was understandable in the context of his most recent trip to Moscow, in September 1939, when he had lobbied in vain for a new Soviet-Turkish alliance. During the three exhausting weeks he spent in the Soviet Union, Saraçoğlu was kept busy with trivialities, and only managed to see Stalin for a fleeting moment.¹⁵ Ultimately, he returned with a handful of empty gestures, and manifested disdain for the insolence of his Soviet counterparts at every opportunity thereafter.

Yet Saraçoğlu's actions were more than a personal vendetta, and represented Turkey's position toward the Nazi invasion of the USSR, which many observers found unremarkable at the time. Ernst von Weizsacker, for instance, later recalled in his Nuremberg prison cell that everyone expected the Turks to 'look on at [the

11 Exploring the broader ramifications of the Nazi New Order, Jenifer Jenkins makes a similar argument in her recent article, arguing that Iran's real worth for Hitler, much like Turkey's, lay in its quality to serve as a non-belligerent neutral, shielding the Baku and Caspian oilfields from a potential Allied assault. J. Jenkins, 'Iran in the Nazi New Order, 1933–1941', *Iranian Studies*, 49, 5 (2016), 727–751, here 741.

12 A recent article by Mercedes Penalba-Sotorrio published in the pages of this journal shows that German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop pursued a similar policy of neutrality in Spain. Examining the objectives of Nazi activities in Spain, Penalba-Sotorrio demonstrates that propaganda aimed at more than just obtaining Spain as a belligerent ally – hence its broad impact. German records demonstrate a similar dynamic in the dispute between Ribbentrop and Ambassador to Ankara Franz von Papen about Turkey's role in the Nazis' impending war against the Soviet Union. In response to von Papen's attempts to incite Turkey, Ribbentrop instructed Papen to refrain from language that could be misconstrued as a military alliance, as Germany's sole objective was to guarantee Turkey's neutrality. But Ribbentrop's instructions did not indicate a lack of ambition. German propaganda in Turkey, as in Spain, had aims beyond cajoling the Turks into a belligerent stance and concentrated on strengthening the ideological and economics links between Berlin and Ankara. See: M. Penalba-Sotorrio, 'Beyond the War: Nazi Propaganda Aims in Spain during the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*. Epub ahead of print 17 May 2018. doi:10.1177/0022009418761214.

13 C. Madanoğlu, *Anılar, 1911–1953* (İstanbul 1982), 302.

14 Not, of course, for those with Nazi sympathies. The Third Reich's Ambassador in Ankara witnessed Saraçoğlu's delight the morning after Barbarossa and reported ecstatically to Berlin. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, No. 670, p. 1,080 (Papen to Ribbentrop, 22 June 1941).

15 TDA, TSID 161936 (Report on Saraçoğlu–Molotov Talks, 9 October 1939).

Nazi–Soviet War] with folded arms and legs crossed'.¹⁶ After four centuries of incessant warfare between the Soviet Union's and Turkey's imperial predecessors, it is understandable that Weizsacker saw the default nature of the two states' relationship as chronically hostile as inherently destabilizing. But Turkish records demonstrate that the antagonism in Soviet-Turkish relations was not a product of natural hostility and that just a few years before the incident in the Georgian tavern, nothing suggested that Saraçoğlu would greet the news of the Nazi–Soviet War in such transports of joy. His personal frustration with Stalin, after all, had emerged during an attempt to negotiate a Soviet-Turkish pact.

Friendly Soviet-Turkish relations had been the default throughout the 1920s and 30s, as nationalist Turks and internationalist Bolsheviks forged an alliance that transcended routine diplomatic arrangements, stretching into the economic and cultural realms. The founders of the new Turkish state, including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü, looked to the Soviet Union – whatever its other faults – as a foil to European imperialism. Recent historical scholarship argues that, despite the two states' obvious ideological differences, Soviet-Turkish cooperation was more than a pragmatic partnership and was part of a broader narrative of opposition to the Western-dictated international order.¹⁷ Between 1939 and 1941, this cooperation came to a spectacular end, and the rapidity of its downfall must surely explain why this story has received so little attention in scholarship.

Up until the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union was a source of Turkey's security, rather than a threat to it. As annexationist politics swept Europe in 1938, Turks and Soviets sought ways to establish a tangible collective security mechanism that would shield the Black Sea from similar intrusions.¹⁸ The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany, disturbing as it was for Turkey, was still more or less remote, and the alarm in regard to an ultimatum to Romania, which followed almost immediately afterwards, proved to be false.¹⁹ But the Italian occupation of Albania in April 1939 touched a more delicate spot.²⁰ For the greater part of the past two decades, Italy had been the chief enemy in Turkish eyes. By seizing Albania, Rome had become a Balkan power, thereby posing an even more alarming situation for Turks themselves as well as to those

16 E. Weizsacker, *Memoirs* (Chicago 1951), 255.

17 S. J. Hirst, 'Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet-Turkish Convergence in the 1930s', *Slavic Review*, 72, 1 (2013), 32–53.

18 During the Moscow Talks in the summer of 1937, Turkey and the Soviet Union almost entered into a Black Sea military alliance, which would have granted Soviet vessels privileged passage through the Straits. See: Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii [hereafter AVP RF] f. 5, op. 17, pap. 100, d. 135, l. 19 (Stomonyakov to Zalkind, July 27, 1937); and TDA, TSID 5071728 (Aras–Potemkin Talks, 26 October 1938).

19 BCA, 30.10.0.0/200.370.3 (Conversation with Romanian Foreign Minister Grigore Gafencu, 8 June 1939).

20 Dilek Barlas, 'Friends or Foes? Diplomatic Relations Between Italy and Turkey, 1923–36', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36 (2004), 231–252.

Balkan Allies to whom they had treaty obligations.²¹ Despite the remilitarization of the Straits in 1936, Turkey's growing concerns over Italian mobilization in the Mediterranean paved the way for mutual assistance agreements with Great Britain and France in May 1939. Turkey's rapprochement with Western powers came at the expense of a predictable apprehension in Moscow.²² Yet, Turkey's decision was premised on the common understanding in the spring of 1939 that there would soon be the announcement of a triple alliance binding the Western powers to the Soviet Union. Turkish records reveal that between April 1939 and the outbreak of war in Europe, Ankara pursued a quixotic mission of bridging London and Moscow. Only days before the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact, the Soviet Ambassador in Ankara had led Turkish diplomats to believe that a mutual assistance treaty was indeed possible.²³

The news of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact thus turned İnönü's national defense strategy upside down. With Nazi Germany's execution of Operation Tannenberg, Turkey watched the Wehrmacht's annexation of Western Poland with apprehension. After Britain's declaration of war on the Third Reich, İnönü expressed some anxiety about Poland's future, but was even more concerned with the next point of attack and the likelihood that it would be the Balkans. But even here, it did not seem that the Soviet Union had irreversibly transformed from friend to foe. It was precisely at this point that İnönü sent Saraçoğlu to Moscow to see whether a new treaty of neutrality and friendship with the Soviets was possible.²⁴

Saraçoğlu's Moscow visit was unquestionably related to the exigencies of war and was a final attempt to return Soviet-Turkish relations to their earlier, friendlier footing. In their private conversations, up until Saraçoğlu's mission, Turkish leaders clearly hoped to maintain a triangular channel between Ankara, London and Moscow.²⁵ Upon arrival in Moscow, Saraçoğlu thought that he was given a warm welcome. But as Saraçoğlu was shunted from opera to football game and boat tours on the Moscow river, his patience was gradually worn down until he refused

21 On February 9, 1934, Greece, Turkey, Romania and Yugoslavia concluded the Balkan Entente, whereby the signatories suspended all territorial claims against each other. The Balkan Entente would become an excruciating headache for Turks as the Axis powers challenged the regional status quo.

22 Stalin knew that Turkey's leaders looked at the supremacy of the French and British navies as their most effective shield against Italy. G. Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia* (New Haven 1999), 15.

23 TDA, TSID 11847604 (Saraçoğlu to Aktay, 18 August 1939). In his *Wages of Destruction*, Adam Tooze argues that Britain too cherished similar hopes. See A. Tooze, *Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London 2006), 309.

24 In fact, the 1925 Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality was still in effect. But in the second half of the 1930s, both Turkish and Soviet leaders found the wording of this early treaty to be too vague and entered into intense negotiations to establish a more contractual and binding treaty, which never materialized. An important round of discussions took place in 1936. See: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial 'no-politicheskoi istorii [hereafter RGASPI], f. 17, op. 166, d. 566, l. 78–79 (Litvinov's record of his conversation with Apaydin, 25 October 1936); also see TDA, TSID 8513398 (Apaydin's record of his conversation with Litvinov, 20 October 1936).

25 TDA, TSID 11847777 (Aras to Saraçoğlu, 30 September 1939).

to go anywhere unless Stalin saw him.²⁶ Saraçoğlu's sojourn in Moscow was prolonged because of Ribbentrop's visit for a private round of exploratory talks with Molotov.²⁷ This seemed unlikely to be coincidence. Saraçoğlu suspected that Molotov's invitation was a ploy to strengthen Moscow's hand in negotiations with Ribbentrop. On the rare occasions he was able to meet with Molotov, Saraçoğlu was vexed by the Soviet Commissar's impudence on the Straits question and by menacing references to occupied Poland as an example of the kind of fate that might befall Turkey.²⁸ What was more, Molotov insisted on a reserve clause that would include Nazi Germany in a Soviet pact with Turkey, which Saraçoğlu firmly rejected.²⁹ During Saraçoğlu's unusually long absence, Turkey's initial faith for a negotiated peace between Nazi Germany and the Anglo-French bloc had quickly faded. On 18 October 1939, President İnönü concluded a tripartite mutual assistance treaty with Great Britain and France, without even waiting for Saraçoğlu's return from Moscow.

Nazi-Soviet reconciliation was mind-boggling for Turks because they had been at pains to respond to Soviet fear of Nazi Germany throughout the late 1930s. When, for example, Ambassador Lev Karakhan inquired about 'the unfortunate pro-German tendencies of certain top-ranking Turkish generals', President İnönü soothed his apprehension by sending the Turkish chief of general staff with a delegation to observe Red Army maneuvers in Ukraine.³⁰ During the Montreux Conference, the Turkish Foreign Minister assured his counterpart that 'not only was a German-Turkish rapprochement implausible, but that Turkey would be willing to participate in a coalition against German aggression'.³¹ Turkish leaders even sought unusual forms of diplomatic cooperation, and expressed their 'discontent over the surge of German specialists infiltrating Turkey's cultural institutions' to plead for more 'Soviet experts and cultural figures to work in Turkey'.³² Less than a year before the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the

26 TDA, TSID 161936 (Report on Saraçoğlu-Molotov Talks, 9 October 1939).

27 Jamil Hassanli offers an extensive account of Saraçoğlu's talks in Moscow based on Soviet records, and eschews the prevalent Soviet argument that it was the Turkish side responsible for the failure of the negotiations. Hassanli demonstrates that the Soviets had no real motivation to sign a pact with the Turks and essentially decided to remain neutral in case of an Axis operation against Turkey. This explains Molotov's menacing suggestions about the Straits. J. Hasanli, *SSSR-Turtsiya: Ot neytraliteta k holodnoy voyne, 1939-1953* (Moscow 2008), 53-62.

28 In fact, the granting of Soviet bases had been a subject of friendly negotiations between Ankara and Moscow before 1939, in the framework of Soviet-Turkish plans for joint-defense of the Straits in case of naval assault. In return for Soviet assistance, Turkey had offered to close the Straits in case the Soviet Union was attacked. There had even been negotiations for maintaining a Soviet fleet on the Aegean near the port of İzmir. See: *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, vol. 19 (Moscow 1974), 326 (Karakhan to Litvinov, 29 June 1936).

29 Until the release of Turkish diplomatic records, historians have relied on Feridun Cemal Erkin's oft-cited *Les relations turco-soviétiques et la question des détroits* to make sense of Turkey's attitude. Erkin, who was part of Saraçoğlu's delegation in 1939, published his account many years later (1968) through a discernibly Cold War perspective. For similar accounts see: C. Açıkalın, 'Cevat Açıkalın'ın Anıları: 2. Dünya Savaşı'nın İlk Yılları (1939-1941)', *Belleten*, LVI:216, (1992), 985-1078; and R. S. Burçak, *Moskova Görüşmeleri (26 Eylül-16 Ekim 1939) ve Dış Politikamız Üzerindeki Tesirleri* (Ankara 1983), 84-87.

30 AVP RF, f. 5, op. 15, pap. 110, d. 86, l. 10 (Internal NKID Correspondence, 28 May 1935).

31 AVP RF, f. 5, op. 15, pap. 110, d. 86, l. 12-13 (Litvinov to Zalkind, 13 June 1936).

32 AVP RF, f. 5, op. 16, pap. 122, d. 112, l. 1 (Zalkind to NKID, 1 March 1937).

Turkish ambassador in Moscow reported that, despite Ankara's assurances, the Soviets were still anxious about the breadth of Nazi 'infiltration' in Turkey, and were probing him about possible ways to enhance Soviet Union's sphere of influence by improving trade relations and cultural exchange.³³

Nazi Germany's 'export empire', which stretched out from Hungary to Turkey and Iran, was difficult to compete with.³⁴ In a private letter to Kliment Voroshilov, Karakhan aptly noted that Nazi-Turkish trade had been accompanied by exponential growth of Berlin's propaganda network in Turkey. This is 'ultimately a question of preparing for war', he wrote, 'and the Germans are doing this well'.³⁵ Karakhan knew that the rapid advance of Nazi-Turkish commercial exchange had not been solely a product of mutual benefits, but due to growing Turkish demand for goods such as iron and steel, locomotives and trucks, and machinery, mainly owing to Turkey's railway construction program.³⁶ Since Turkey's main railway system had been built according to German standards before World War I, most of its rolling-stock were of German origin and most of its technical employees had received their training in Berlin. Additionally, however, both Ankara and Berlin faced similar economic policy challenges after the Great Depression, and cooperation was facilitated by an effective policy that limited the outflow of coveted hard currency for either. Agreements between the *Reichsbank* and the Central Bank of Turkey in 1934 and 1935 established a clearing system, and a stipulated margin guaranteed that any Turkish debts to the Third Reich would be paid.³⁷ According to Turkish statistics, Nazi Germany absorbed 48.7% of Turkey's total exports in 1935, up from 36.6% in 1934.³⁸ The exponential advance was, in part, a result of the net-balance system.³⁹ By 1939, despite the slight decrease in Turkey's volume of trade with countries that fell under Nazi occupation, the value of all imports from Nazi Germany rose to an astounding £20,946,837 (55.3% of all imports into Turkey for that year). Likewise, the level of exports to the Third Reich rose to an unprecedented £11,860,968 (43.75% of Turkey's entire export market).⁴⁰

33 For the Nazi factor in Soviet-Turkish relations see: TDA, TSID 5001797 (Apaydın to Aras, 09 May 1938); TDA, TSID 5000995 (Apaydın to Aras, 16 November 1938); and TDA TSID 5001202 (22 November 1938).

34 See S. G. Gross, *Export Empire: German Soft-Power in Southeastern Europe, 1890–1945* (Cambridge 2015), 222–223.

35 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki [hereafter RGAE], f. 7292, op. 38, d. 309, l. 61 (Karakhan to Voroshilov, 31 December 1936).

36 TDA, TSID 9139755, (Celal Bayar's Report, 23 November 1936).

37 A key aspect of the Nazi-Turkish trade was that exchange occurred without depleting the two countries' foreign currency reserves. As with other countries, the Nazi New Plan aimed to conduct trade agreements with Turkey, which accepted German goods in return. Dilek Barlas, 'Germany's Economic Policy Towards the Balkan Countries in the 1930s: A Case of Great Power Pursuit of Domination in the Peninsula', *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies* 2 (1994/1995), 135–145, here, 138.

38 TDA, TSID 5032535, (Apaydın to Aras, 9 November 1936).

39 In line with Reich Economics Minister Hjalmar Schlacht's New Plan, Nazi Germany pursued a similar economic policy in Iran as a containment strategy toward the Soviet Union. By comparison, Jenifer Jenkins suggests that German imports into Iran in 1941 made up close to 48% of the national total, while Iranian exports stood at 42%. See Jenkins, 'Iran in the Nazi New Order', 728.

40 Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Tutanakları, [hereafter TBMM], d. 6, c. 13, b. 1, s. 106–128 (7 August 1940).

If Nazi Germany provided Turkey with necessary industrial goods in a fashion that prevented Turkish accumulation of a trade deficit, then why did İnönü relentlessly plead the Soviets to counterbalance the Third Reich's share? In 1936, the message İnönü conveyed during his meetings with the Soviets was that, despite the impressive trade volume between Ankara and Berlin, the reality was different than what the numbers suggested. Turkey had become caught, he argued, 'in the webs of a trade system that placed her in the hands of Germany'.⁴¹ Despite the clearing agreements, Turkey was rapidly accumulating a foreign trade deficit.⁴² Turkey's purchase of war materials was growing and becoming ever harder to be paid off with the sale of Turkey's chief exports. Part of the difficulty, according to İnönü, was that, as Turkey had become more and more dependent upon Nazi Germany, Turkey's outside markets had been lost while the Soviets were looking elsewhere. It was presumably understood that he lamented the loss of other export markets as well, but it was a clear plea to the Soviet Union to step in. İnönü made it clear that Turkey's conundrum was fundamentally a political one that reflected its political preferences.

In less than three years, Soviet rapprochement with Nazi Germany, and hence with the aggressive revisionism that Turkey feared, challenged the very logic of this thinking.⁴³ The Soviet Union's accession into an ever expanding Nazi trade zone prevented the Ankara government from being able to use the former against the latter. With the eruption of hostilities in Europe, Turkey began to look at Great Britain and France not only as potential allies against Italian revisionism but also as partners to subside Nazi Germany's share in Turkey's foreign trade. İnönü's plea to the British Ambassador in Ankara – in almost identical terms with the one he had made to the Soviets a few years earlier – is interesting for the anxiety that it bore. From his perspective, Turkey's trade with Nazi Germany was anything but a healthy relationship, and that 'if Turkey was essential to France and Great Britain, they must free her from this economic slavery'.⁴⁴ Indeed, İnönü had received several reports from the Trade Ministry, warning that Nazi companies were buying all sorts of goods in the market for a future dumping option that would lead to

41 AVP RF f. 5, op. 16, pap. 122, d. 114, l. 26 (Apaydin to Stomonyakov, 16 November 1936); and AVP RF f. 5, op. 16, pap. 122, d. 114, l. 24 (Stomonyakov's Diary, 7 November 1936).

42 Adam Tooze in his *Wages of Destruction* refers to the New Plan as a system of National Socialist economic management, which was essential if the Third Reich was to survive a truly global war. Since clearing agreements were vital for the extension of this system to countries such as Turkey, Tooze claims that maintaining a balanced trade account was the primary Nazi objective. If we read İnönü's pleas to the Soviets (and later to Britain) in this context, it becomes all the more revealing about Turkey's changing political preferences. Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 308–309.

43 TDA, TSID 161948 (Report on The European War – Political Developments, 30 September 1939). Based on numerous cables received from 25 August through 30 September 1939, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara compiled a comprehensive report, pertinently entitled 'The European War'. This 189-page long pamphlet not only attests to Turkey's fading hopes of a reconciliation with the Soviet Union, but also casts doubts on previously held views that on the eve of the Saraçoğlu–Molotov Talks, Turkey was unable to ascertain the Soviet Union's position. See for instance: A. L. Macfie, 'The Turco-Soviet Talks of September–October 1939: A Secret German Report', *Balkan Studies*, 2 (1985), 431–442.

44 FO 424/284 C13322/1110/55 (Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, 10 September 1939).

predatory pricing in the Turkish market and give the upper hand to Nazi monopolies.⁴⁵ The Trade Minister's report concluded that Nazi traders were stocking high quantities of goods, from raw materials to fruits, tobacco, and cereals, in return for war materials which they never delivered on time. Looking at the minutes of İnönü's conversations with Sir Knatchbull-Hugessen and his repeated appeals to secure a trade agreement that would counterbalance the Nazis, it is striking to see how Turkey had changed a great deal since the previous World War, when the Ottoman government had been satisfied with strong economic ties with Germany.

To assume that Turkey's volte-face in their Soviet strategy inbetween was a logical step in its so-called 'active' diplomacy underestimates Nazi Germany's role in feeding Ankara's panic. In fact, the Nazis were prepared to see Turkey's association with the British and French as a measure born of necessity, and, after some initial concern, they seized the moment. Just after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, on 23 August 1939, Franz von Papen called on the Turkish Foreign Minister to clarify Berlin's position in the changed circumstances. Alluding to earlier warnings, von Papen expressed his 'profound regret that Turkey was on the wrong side'.⁴⁶ The most significant implication of the Nazi–Soviet Pact was that a blockade of the Axis Powers by Britain was now almost impossible and that the balance of power in Europe had tilted in favor of the Axis powers. Hoping for a change in Turkish policy, von Papen also met with İnönü to present to him Hitler's 'sincere' view of the situation, 'which had now become entirely to Turkey's disadvantage'.⁴⁷ İnönü was greatly distressed by the Nazi–Soviet Pact, but maintained that Turkey would act in accordance with what it considered to be its vital interests. If the Balkans and the Caucasus were unaffected, İnönü hoped to be able to remain neutral, but he saw no possibility of preventing conflict from spreading to the Black Sea. Ambassador von Papen, who successfully read between İnönü's lines, was now aware that the only way to induce Turkey into a pro-Axis neutrality was to aggravate Ankara's fear of Soviet aggression.

Ambassador Franz von Papen in Ankara could see that Turkey was not 'wavering between Germany and England like a shopper in the bazaars'.⁴⁸ Von Papen understood that Turkey was a silent ally of Great Britain and ultimately desired to see that country emerge triumphant. The Nazi Ambassador's allegorical depiction of Turkish diplomacy might appear hyperbolic but it points to the

45 BCA 030.10.0.0/231.560.3 (Ministry of Commerce to the Prime Ministry, 6 June 1939). After receiving a preliminary report from the General Staff on available food supplies and mass mobilization, on 8 September 1939, Prime Minister Refik Saydam passed a resolution restricting over-consumption of 'essential goods and medicine' in the country. The General Staff's report indicated a justifiable fear of inflation and a jump in imports 'since certain citizens [were] buying 50 bottles of the same medicine instead of one... and 40 packages of coffee for only a single month's worth', and warned the government that, with the existing consumption level, national supplies would be dried out in four months, necessitating further concessions to Germany in return for a trade agreement. Source: BCA 030.0.001/34.204.1 (Prime Ministry, Memorandum on Mobilization and Conscription, 8 September 1939).

46 DGFP, series D, Vol. VII, No. 247, p. 260 (Papen to Ribbentrop, 24 August 1939).

47 DGFP, series D, Vol. VII, No. 342, p. 348 (Papen to Ribbentrop, 27 August 1939).

48 DGFP, series D, Vol. XII, No. 566, p. 913 (Papen to Ribbentrop, 29 May 1941).

anti-Soviet element that had become central in Turkish politics. After the Saraçoğlu–Molotov negotiations in Moscow, Papen realized that the idea of a prolonged war was a nightmare for the Turks and that a Soviet threat would eclipse all other considerations. The Nazis were adequately informed about İnönü's persistent management of the country's press to manipulate public opinion and hence devoted efforts to this field.

Of primary concern was the Turkish Left's publication of pro-Soviet articles that might jeopardize relations with Nazi Germany. The Turkish Prime Minister's Office worked in tandem with the Directorate of Press to counter pro-Soviet publications, by either silencing anti-Nazi columns with new censorship laws or by enlisting an equal number of anti-Soviet headlines. In government-sponsored newspapers, for every pro-Allied coverage of the European theaters of war a corresponding column from the pro-Axis perspective was juxtaposed next to it.⁴⁹ In a wide-ranging survey, von Papen informed the Nazi Propaganda Ministry that the official party newspaper, *Ulus*, presented a microcosm of Ankara's attempt to influence the public psyche. *Ulus* had a bi-fold editorial structure, chaired by Ahmet Şükrü Esmer and Falih Rıfkı Atay. While Esmer almost exclusively wrote pieces from a pro-Allied stance, Atay wrote columns more favorable to the Third Reich. Likewise, *Tasvir-i Efkar* and *Cumhuriyet* employed pro-Nazi correspondents, but were balanced by newspapers like *Yeni Sabah*, *Son Telgraf*, or *Vatan*, which adhered to a more pro-British discourse.⁵⁰

As did the Turkish government, the Third Reich sought to sideline the pro-Soviet Turkish Left as one of its first tasks. The newspaper *Tan*, whose editor Zekeriya Sertel was a Columbia University alumnus and a socialist, was particularly problematic. Predicting that Nazi–Soviet war was inevitable, Sertel emphasized the ephemeral nature of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and pushed his newspaper into a vehemently anti-Nazi line.⁵¹ Sertel published columns in *Tan* arguing that the Nazi propaganda service employed cunning tactics that would force the Ankara government to first silence the independent Turkish press and then drive a wedge between Turkey and the Soviet Union. In December 1939, he wrote an open letter to the Turkish government, making a case for 'how Turkey should take measures against Nazi propaganda at home'.⁵² He argued that the long-term goals of Nazi propaganda in Turkey were two-fold: first, to spread pro-Nazi feelings among Turkey's scientists and academics, who would potentially raise future generations in that fashion; second and more important, to disrupt Turkey's good relations with its allies, primarily with the Soviet Union.

49 C. Koçak, 'Millî Şef Döneminde Yönetim ve Basın Hayatı', *Kebikeç*, 2 (1995), 149–160, here 153.

50 Among the Turkish newspapers that fell within this spectrum, *Cumhuriyet* probably played the most dubious role. *Cumhuriyet* was established by Atatürk's request in 1924, whose founder, Yunus Nadi, had been the chief editor of the official party newspaper of the Turkish Communist Party – also established by Atatürk. But the Soviets neither trusted Nadi nor his party. In 1926, a Soviet report described him as 'a typical Anatolian bourgeois, overgrown with fat and degenerated into a comprador'. AVP RF f.132, op.11, pap.78, d.33 (Biographical sketches of Turkish journalists, November 1926).

51 *Tan* (20 November 1939), 1–3.

52 *Tan* (9 December 1939), 5; and *Tan* (12 December 1939), 2.

Tan relentlessly published articles on the *Auslands-Organisation* (AO), which was the foreign branch of the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP), and exposed AO's secret activities in Turkey. The Nazi government sought to use economic pressure to silence Sertel. Berlin prohibited German companies from giving advertisements to his newspaper. Bayer, for example, which had been a leading sponsor of the Turkish media, was one of the many German companies that severed their commercial ties with *Tan*.⁵³ The Nazis also tried to buy out Sertel's newspaper, although this effort proved futile. Finally, since Turkey depended on paper imported from the Third Reich, Sertel claimed that the Nazis attempted to curtail his publications by cutting *Tan*'s paper supplies.⁵⁴

Sertel was right to focus on Nazi organizations in Turkey, for this was a key arm of their propaganda effort. The AO set up chapters in Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir, all of which belonged to an umbrella organization led by the *Landesgruppenleiter*. The organizations subservient to the *Landesgruppenleiter* served various means, including assisting and sponsoring Nazi-sympathizers to publish local journals and newspapers; aiding anti-Semitic newspapers through various Nazi grants; networking for potential Nazis of Turkish citizenship; preparing regular reports that reflected the mood of the Turkish people vis-à-vis the Third Reich; monitoring bookstores in major neighborhoods and observing their inventory to understand the reading habits of Turks who purchased foreign language books; and supplying bookstores with anti-Soviet propaganda materials.⁵⁵ The Istanbul local chapter was the most influential one in Turkey, members of which were also associates of older German social clubs such as the Teutonia Club, the German church, the *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* news agency (DNB), *Türkische Post*, and various German pubs in Beyoğlu. The AO sought to manipulate Turkish public opinion by inviting people of interest to social gatherings, plays, balls, and exhibitions.

The Turkish government was by no means unaware of the breadth of Nazi campaign in the country.⁵⁶ The archives of the General Directorate of Security demonstrate that Turkish intelligence and security officers were closely monitoring the *Deutsche Schule* as well as several other Nazi institutions, including the

53 *Tan* (11 December 1939), 1–3; and *Tan* (9 December 1939), 4.

54 *Tan* (25 November 1939), 2.

55 In 1957, the CIA prepared a comprehensive list of Turkish nationals known for their pro-Axis sympathies. The report included personal details, wartime dealings as well as their role in Nazi Germany's anti-Soviet propaganda. See: Central Intelligence Agency (hereafter CIA), 'Turks and Neighboring Nationals who were Agents, In Contact, or of Operational Interest to the German Intelligence Service in Turkey' (CIA-RDP81-01043R0035000800004-7), 171–189. Accessed on 16 November 2016 through CIA Records Search Tool (CREST) at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

56 Until Berna Pekesen's recent *NS-Propaganda und die türkische Presse im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, existing literature on Nazi propaganda in Turkey depicted Turkey's leadership without agency. See for instance: J. Glasneck, 'Methoden der Deutsch-Faschistischen Propagandatätigkeit in der Türkei vor und während des Zweiten Weltkriegs', *Wissenschaftliche Beiträge* (Saale 1966). In her book, published in 2014, Pekesen offers a convincing account of Turkey's position towards Nazi propaganda, where the author successfully eschews the idea that Turkey simply acquiesced in Nazi designs. B. Pekesen, *Zwischen Sympathie und Eigennutz: NS-Propaganda und die türkische Presse im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin 2014).

Türkische Handelskammer für Deutschland and the *Deutscher Orient Verein*.⁵⁷ According to police reports, by 1939, 150 of the *Deutsche Schule*'s 642 students were German nationals, and the school's board of trustees included such influential names as the director of *Deutsche Orientbank* Paul Burghard, German maritime trading company *Deutsche Levante-linie*'s CEO Karsten Meves, and the chief engineer of *Wayss und Freytag* Ernst Schiller, who was commissioned to build weapons factories for the Turkish armed forces. Autonomous institutions also became centers of Nazi cultural propaganda, including the *Deutsche Schule* in Istanbul. 18 of the 20 school teachers were members of local Nazi societies, and most of the *Deutsche Schule*'s teachers adhered to a heavily anti-Bolshevik line in their lectures.⁵⁸ Sertel's *Tan* also alleged that the chief representative of the biggest Nazi news agency in Turkey, the *DNB*, was an agent provocateur whose primary objective was to orchestrate anti-Soviet propaganda. And, indeed, the Third Reich's cultural propaganda in Turkey did provide pro-Nazi groups with outlets to express themselves. On the initiative of famous Pan-Turkists – including retired Ottoman generals Emir Erkilet, Nuri Killigil (half-brother of the famous Enver Pasha), and Ali İhsan Sabis – a series of anti-Soviet seminars were held in Istanbul and a special anti-Soviet propaganda coordination center was established.⁵⁹ Erkilet and Killigil were frequently in touch with Nazi intelligence operatives in Turkey and were received by Hitler in Berlin after being treated to a tour of the Eastern Front in November 1941.⁶⁰ Ali İhsan Sabis, on the other hand, was the chief editor of the *Türkische Post*, which reflected Berlin's official position with financing from a Nazi consortium that included the *Deutsche Bank*.⁶¹ Until his arrest in February 1944 during the so-called 'Racism-Turanism Trials',⁶² Sabis published pamphlets that critiqued the Turkish government's 'appeasement policy' toward the Soviet Union and wrote an ardently anti-Soviet account of the Wehrmacht's offensive against the 'the tyranny of Bolshevism'.⁶³

57 BCA 33.166.01; 33.166.02; 33.166.04; 33.167.01 and 33.170.01 (Miscellaneous reports on Axis propaganda in Turkey, General Directorate of Security, May–November 1939).

58 The first German social club in Turkey was the famous Teutonia Foundation – established in 1848 by glass-makers of Böhmen. The NSDAP later acquired control of Teutonia and utilized it as an umbrella organization for propagating national-socialism and anti-Soviet propaganda. The *Türkische Handelskammer für Deutschland* was another important Nazi-Turkish foundation that brought together Turkish and German businessmen. The *Deutscher Orient Verein* (German Oriental Foundation) established in 1934 became another leading Nazi organization, spreading Hitlerite propaganda in the Turkish society.

59 *Tan* (8 December 1939), 3.

60 *Dokumenty Ministerstvo inostrannykh del. Germanii, vyp II: Germanskaia politika v Turtsii* [hereafter GPT], 7 (Ribbentrop to Papen, 10 November 1941), 40.

61 Established by the Weimer Republic's first ambassador to Turkey, Rudolf Nadolny, the *Türkische Post* was the only local daily published in German. But German bookstores in Istanbul sold papers direct from the Third Reich on a daily basis, including *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Völkische Beobachter*.

62 İ. Aytürk, 'The Racist Critics of Atatürk and Kemalism, from the 1930s to the 1960s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, 2 (2011), 308–335.

63 Sabis badly timed his book's publication, which was meant to come out in 1942 but was delayed due to Soviet victories against Nazi Germany. Ultimately the book was published with sloppy editing and an apologetic epilogue. See: A. İ. Sabis, *İkinci Cihan Harbi* (Istanbul 1943).

Paradoxically, the Turkish Directorate of Press stifled newspapers that challenged the official policy of neutrality, while simultaneously trying to co-opt them to illustrate Turkey's equidistance to both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. This proved to be an arduous task. Scores of cables from Turkey's diplomatic missions in Berlin and Moscow demonstrate that Ribbentrop was levying all sorts of accusations against Sertel's *Tan* for exactly the same reasons that Molotov held the *Türkische Post* in contempt. Yet, rather than complying with Nazi or Soviet demands for tighter censorship regulations, the Turkish government effectively pitted opposing newspapers by allowing a certain degree of freedom so long as Ankara's neutrality was not questioned.

In that sense, Turkey was not simply a stooge in Nazi or Soviet machinations. Contrarily, the Ankara government not only profiled pro-Nazi and pro-Soviet media outlets, but also managed to get several agents employed as translators and anchormen at foreign news agencies and radio stations for counterintelligence.⁶⁴ For instance, in order to find out the scope of Nazi propaganda in Turkey, Ambassador Gerede in Berlin personally endorsed a mission in July 1940, when approached by a retired Ottoman medical officer of Syrian descent who had been living in Berlin since the Great War, offering his services to provide delicate information from various Nazi circles that he claimed to belong.⁶⁵ The fact that the Turkish government took proactive measures against Nazi propaganda challenges previously established notions that portrayed Turkey without agency.

Nazi propaganda means and purposes were ubiquitous and not exclusive to Turkey.⁶⁶ But with these institutions at work on the ground, diplomats of the Third Reich did their best to amplify fears of the Soviet threat among Turkish political elites. When the Red Army marched into Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, Ernst von Weizsäcker of the Nazi Foreign Office asked for a meeting with Hüsrev Gerede, the Turkish ambassador in Berlin. Weizsäcker insinuated to Gerede that Stalin might soon make a motion to revise the Straits regime. If an agreement was not reached, Gerede was informed that the Soviets might even come up with 'claims to Turkey's frontier provinces in Eastern Anatolia'.⁶⁷ Gerede had faith in the Turkish army and cited the Soviets' recent ordeal in Finland to cast doubt on the scenario, and he admitted that the Nazis might be playing on Turkish insecurities vis-à-vis Moscow. But, looking at the scarcely populated frontier towns in Eastern Anatolia, he ruefully admitted that the Soviets' Caucasian forces were far superior in terms of arms and manpower. With the absence of natural defenses, such as Finland's ice covered lakes, Gerede thought that Turkey's Eastern Anatolian plateau might be rendered defenseless against a potential Soviet

64 TDA, TSID 12940344 (Council General K.A. Payman's Report to Ankara, 15 July 1940).

65 TDA, TSID 15312339, 153122350 and 15314321 (File on Dr. Zeki Haşmet Kırım, 21 February, 27 February and 15 July 1940 respectively).

66 Louis de Jong's *Die deutsche fünfte Kolonne im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (1959) and Peter Longerich's more recent *Goebbels: Biographie* (2010) are useful sources to probe Nazi propaganda efforts in general.

67 TDA, TSID 138591 (Ambassador Hüsrev Gerede to Ankara, 29 June 1940).

offensive in the summer. The tone of these messages from Berlin was unquestionably fearful.

What is more, the Third Reich used these meetings to drive home the connection between diplomacy and public opinion. Gereade reported with consternation that his Nazi counterparts persistently inquired about the fate of the Tripartite Agreement between Turkey, France, and Great Britain. Now that France seemed on the brink of collapse and Britain was grasping at straws, the Nazis were curious to find out whether Ankara 'felt obliged to assist France in any way, if not in the Balkans then in Syria'.⁶⁸ In subsequent meetings with von Weizsäcker, Gereade witnessed a discernible skepticism in his counterpart's references to Turkey's neutrality and urged his government to clarify their position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and the Anglo-French bloc.⁶⁹

Gereade's experience was, in fact, only a precursor of what was to come. Ribbentrop instructed von Papen to urge the Turkish government to close down pro-Soviet newspapers and increase the number of pro-Nazi papers.⁷⁰ If the Turkish government could not be induced, Ribbentrop suggested that more financial aid could be extended to recruit more pro-Nazi journalists in the Turkish press. The Third Reich's agents were to be given full autonomy on how and where this money would be spent, so long as more editors, columnists, and newspaper owners were brought on the Nazi payroll.⁷¹ The culmination of this ambitious attempt to influence Turkish public opinion was a Nazi-sponsored conspiracy that succeeded in producing serious tension between Moscow and Ankara.

On 5 July 1940, the *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* leaked confidential cables that were allegedly found in a wrecked train wagon near Nevers two weeks after the Nazi occupation of Paris. The publication of these cables, which contained sensitive information on Turkey's wartime position, implicated the Ankara government in a conspiracy against the Soviet Union. The first telegram – dated 14 March 1940 – was René Massigli's summary of a conversation with Şükrü Saraçoğlu about a projected aerial bombardment of Baku and Batumi by the French air force.⁷² In his report, the French Ambassador informed General Maxime Weygand that Saraçoğlu would not create any obstacles in an Allied operation targeting Soviet oil fields. On the contrary, Massigli claimed, the Turkish Foreign Minister confirmed his assessment of Moscow's vulnerability in the Caucasus. Saraçoğlu was alleged to have revealed a recent cable from the Turkish ambassador in Moscow to

68 TDA, TSID 5499943 (Ambassador Gereade's Meeting with Ernst von Weizsäcker, 1 June 1940).

69 TDA, TSID 145303 and 148496 (Ambassador Gereade's Meetings with Ernst von Weizsäcker, 16 June and 18 June 1940 respectively). In one of his meetings with von Weizsäcker, when Gereade provided evasive answers, von Weizsäcker changed tack and complained about Turkish newspapers' negative depictions of Hitler, particularly in the pages of Sertel's *Tan*.

70 TDA, TSID 148484 (Ambassador Gereade's Meeting with Ernst von Weizsäcker, 11 June 1940). Although Ambassador Gereade claimed to 'have done his best in giving assurances about Ankara's benevolent neutrality towards Berlin' in his official dispatch, he surreptitiously conveyed that some leftist newspapers in Turkey indeed followed 'an unequivocally shallow, gratuitously aggressive, and flamboyantly biased editorial line', and suggested that they might be silenced.

71 TDA, TSID 12941485 (Ambassador Gereade's Report on Nazi Propaganda, 3 June 1940).

72 *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* (5 July 1940), ausgabe 710.

the effect that the Soviet Government was anxious regarding their oil refineries and the time it would take to extinguish fires after an aerial bombardment due to the hazardous Soviet methods of extraction. The critical part of Massigli's telegram, and what seemed to truly compromise Turkey's neutrality, was a question Saraçoğlu posed regarding the radius of the French aircraft that would carry out the operation. Upon learning that French aircraft from Syria would have to cross Turkish and Iranian territory to reach Baku, the Turkish Minister was reported to have asked, 'Do you then fear a protest from the Iranians?' The French ambassador apparently understood the Turkish Government to have tacitly consented to opening their airspace to bomb Soviet territory.⁷³

On 6 July, the *DNB* released Massigli's second telegram, which indicated that in the event of military action against Baku and Batumi, Turkey's neutrality should not be compromised.⁷⁴ Essentially, Massigli proposed an intricate mise en scene to prevent Soviet-Turkish armed conflict. French bombers would fly unnoticed from Jezira to Baku over a mountainous area stretching less than 200 kilometers between Lake Urmia and Lake Van. The proposed flight route was the safest for a covert operation since local villages in this region had become sparsely populated after the Turkish Army's systematic eradication of Kurdish rebels in 1937–38. To allow Saraçoğlu to profess ignorance, Massigli advised against sharing flight routes in advance – 'instead, an apology for airspace violation should be extended to the Turkish government either during or immediately after the operation'. Against a potential armed response from the Soviet Union, Massigli urged Weygand that the Ankara government should appear to be the victim of Soviet aggression and not the instigator of it. Massigli held that Turkey would be less harmed by a *fait accompli* rather than pre-existing intelligence.

Massigli's second telegram was more detailed than the first, and outlined a naval blockade of the Black Sea trading routes that the Soviets had been using to provide the Nazis with oil, food, and other supplies. The French Ambassador ruefully acknowledged that Black Sea naval traffic would be impossible to impede without Turkey's physical assistance. Massigli wrote: 'According to the [Montreux] Straits Convention, dispatching our warships and submarines would be possible strictly under the auspices of the League of Nations and only if Turkey feels itself in imminent danger... At this point, none of these extenuating circumstances have been vocalized by Turkey.'⁷⁵ Therefore, it seemed quite possible that the Soviet Union would regard any naval undertaking through the Straits as *casus belli*

73 BCA 30.10.0.0/60.367.14 (miscellaneous reports on the Soviet-Finnish War, 10 April 1940). The date on Massigli's first telegram was just a fortnight after the collapse of the Finnish resistance in the Winter War, when France found itself pondering alternative scenarios to contain the Soviet Union's means of collaboration with the Third Reich. The Turkish ambassador in Stockholm, Agah Aksent, had passed on numerous reports about Finland's fate during the Winter War, categorically urging the Ankara government to regulate their relations with the Kremlin and take extra cautious steps. It was thus plausible that Massigli would consider Turkey 'a great asset if drawn in as a silent ally'.²⁴gabc 7of this document crate (hich, from the Turkish

74 Massigli's second telegram was dated 28 March 1940. *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro*, ausgabe 718.

75 Ibid., ausgabe 720.

against Turkey. In other words, Massigli thought that France should be prepared to offer military support to the Ankara government most rapidly, since a Soviet-Turkish War would be inevitable in this scenario. Whatever French and Turkish intent, the telegrams made abundantly clear Turkey's significance for the Soviet Union's security.

On 7 July, the *DNB* published General Weygand's assessment of Massigli's initial reports. Transmitted to the commander-in-chief of the French Army the commander-in-chief of the French Air Force, Weygand's telegram addressed a broad range of issues pertaining to Turkey's neutrality and cautious diplomacy. Weygand indicated that the scope and length of a possible aerial bombardment of Soviet oil fields had been studied thoroughly and that, from a purely strategic perspective, securing Turkey's active collaboration seemed neither plausible nor necessary. Ultimately, the French general strongly urged his colleagues that Turkey should not even be remotely implicated since the violation of Turkish air-space would be too costly an endeavor and that alternative flight plans could be found in order to execute the mission, 'such as for instance those that run parallel to the Aleppo-Nusaybin railway'.⁷⁶

Exacerbating Turkey's concerns about a hostile Soviet response, the *DNB* next released transcripts of a communique prepared by the French Prime Minister Edouard Daladier. Two days before his resignation on 21 March, Prime Minister Daladier's hand-written report showed him desperately trying to contain Nazi-Soviet collaboration. Daladier's earlier strategy to aid Finland in the Winter War had clearly failed by the time of signing of the Moscow Treaty on 13 March. Therefore, he welcomed Massigli's plan to ease France's troubles in the Western theatre through a twofold campaign in the East: against the Nazis on the Black Sea and against the Soviet Union in the Caucasus. In his letter, Daladier instructed the heads of the French army and air force to devise a faster and all-inclusive operation plan against the supply routes between Soviet oil fields and the Third Reich. Daladier also proposed closer cooperation with Great Britain in a joint campaign against the Nazi-Soviet bloc and suggested that, concurrent with the military operations, the Allies should incite nationalist propaganda among the Muslim peoples of Southern Caucasus. Here, too, Turkey's relevance was clear.

Finally, in the addendum to their 8 July issue, the *DNB* released a secret protocol between France and Great Britain, which laid out the details of an Allied operation against the Soviet Union through Turkey. According to this latest document, the French and British general staff agreed to establish a joint command center to destroy 35 per cent of Soviet oil fields in a projected six-day aerial campaign, which would involve six squadrons of 100 aircraft, carrying 70 tons of incendiary ammunition and other explosives.⁷⁷ The estimated damage would leave the Nazi-Soviet Commercial Agreement of February 1940 practically inoperable, easing the Allied war effort on the Western theatre. By the time the *DNB*

⁷⁶ *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* (7 July 1940), ausgabe 721.

⁷⁷ The communique was dated 19 March 1940. *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* (8 July 1940), ausgabe 723.

published this secret protocol, the Massigli Affair had become breakfast news across Europe and the Near East.

The Massigli Affair, which transpired only two weeks after the capitulation of France, seemed to be a blatant sign of Turkish aggression against the Soviet Union. A month before his removal from office by the newly formed Vichy government, Massigli drafted a public letter denying all allegations that he had ever requested Turkish permission for French airplanes to fly across Turkish territory to bomb Baku, nor had the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs ever consented to such an operation.⁷⁸ Massigli admitted that he might have prepared a report for General Weygand's eyes only, passed on some casually collected information about Baku, and made certain personal conjectures, but that he could never have informed the French Government that Turkey had agreed to permit any operation against Baku, nor had he been authorized to seek such agreement.

Nonetheless, the publication of Massigli's telegrams by the *DNB* shocked Ankara. From the Turkish perspective, the objective behind the Nazi scheme was to incite a strong Soviet reaction and leave no room for the Ankara government but to appeal to Nazi Germany for mediation and help. The threat was serious enough that İnönü coopted his party newspaper's editorial line to actively support his Foreign Minister and refute the *DNB*'s claims about Turkey's silent approval of proposals for an attack on Baku.⁷⁹ The Turkish press as one sought to discredit the *DNB* accounts. The government-sponsored *Ulus* ridiculed the Massigli Affair, and argued that 'there was something eerie about the mysterious document container, which the *DNB* had allegedly unearthed in a wrecked train wagon in France'.⁸⁰ Burhan Asaf Belge, a frequent contributor to *Ulus*, claimed at a time when French mothers could not locate their sons and the French government had misplaced her navy, the *DNB*'s miraculous discovery of this document crate seemed as plausible as divine revelation. Belge went on to interpret the French cables differently, as demonstration of Turkey's bona fides as an honest neighbor even under duress. According to Belge, the perpetrators of the Nazi conspiracy belonged to a much broader clan of European fascists and capitalists who jointly sought to breach the walls of friendship between Turkey and the Soviet Union. *Ulus* also published verbatim coverage of the crisis from the Swedish *Ny Tid* daily, which mocked the incident, labeling Nazi hopes for a Turkish-Soviet war 'Hitlerite bureau fantasies'.⁸¹ Generally speaking, most Turkish newspapers cited anti-Nazi lampoons of the affair that appeared in foreign publications.

Despite Turkish newspapers' attempts to put a good face on the scandal, behind closed doors panic overtook İnönü's cabinet. Faik Ahmet Barutçu – the owner of the *İstikbal* daily and Turkey's future Deputy Prime Minister – attested to the Turkish government's fear as the Massigli affair quickly unfolded. When Barutçu met with Prime Minister Refik Saydam on 6 July, the President's entire

78 *Ulus* (7 July 1940), 1.

79 *Ulus* (6 July 1940), 1–4.

80 *Ulus* (7 July 1940), 2.

81 *Ulus* (8 July 1940), 3.

inner circle was desperately pondering courses of action that would contain the scandal. They were tormented by bitter radio broadcasts from Moscow, which echoed in every parliamentary meeting room. Barutçu noted that the Soviets were levying all sorts of accusations against the Turks, 'from backstabbing to collaboration in heinous imperialist plots'.⁸² Meanwhile, Ambassador Haydar Aktay in Moscow admitted that he was struggling to maintain his composure as Molotov kept showering him with questions regarding the content of his conversations with the British and American diplomats.⁸³ Despite Aktay's best efforts, Molotov was certain that Saraçoğlu was complicit in the Allied scheme and kept asking Aktay whether the Turkish foreign minister had sent him instructions to inquire about Soviet fire-fighting capabilities in Baku.⁸⁴

Members of İnönü's own cabinet also questioned Saraçoğlu's role in the scandal on account of his Anglophile inclinations. Atıf Bey, for example, bluntly told Barutçu that if a Soviet-Turkish war could be prevented by simply replacing Saraçoğlu, the Turkish government should consider sacrificing its Foreign Minister. In a slightly sanctimonious tone, Atıf Bey added that 'Saraçoğlu had always been rather temperamental, unceremonious and frivolous', that 'by nature he talks too much'; and was hence prone to disclose sensitive information.⁸⁵ Amidst threats to his career, Saraçoğlu requested a meeting with the Soviet Ambassador Alexei Terentiev, who had been immediately recalled to Moscow after the scandal. Saraçoğlu urged Terentiev to reassure Moscow that during these critical times the Soviets should trust Turkey's commitment to benevolent neutrality. Saraçoğlu maintained that the whole plot was von Papen's machination, whose principal objective in Ankara had been to drive a wedge between Ankara and Moscow by capitalizing on the uncertainties of war and by throwing Turkey under the bus.

In response to Saraçoğlu's repudiation of Turkey's role in an anti-Soviet scheme, the *DNB* published another communiqué describing Massigli's counter-statement as a futile attempt to reverse blunders and Saraçoğlu's remarks as a deceitful maneuver to extricate himself from a difficult position.⁸⁶ As Nazi Germany insisted on the authenticity of Saraçoğlu's compromising remarks, İnönü became convinced that the scheme was designed to discredit Saraçoğlu, whose pro-British sentiments were well known. Much to Ribbentrop's dismay, the Nazi plan backfired and the publication of the Massigli telegrams in Turkish (verbatim without comments) rallied most Turks around their Foreign Minister.

Turkey's reaction actually testified to the French cables' authenticity. Ankara's official position was that the Massigli files were genuine, but that the *DNB* deliberately took them out of context, aiming to implicate Saraçoğlu in an anti-Soviet

82 F. A. Barutçu, *Siyasi Amlar, 1939–1954* (İstanbul 1977), 130–140.

83 TDA, TSID 865429 (Ambassador Aktay's Telegram on Kars, 10–11 July 1940).

84 This confirms Gabriel Gorodetsky's account of the Soviet position toward Turkey in July–August 1940. See Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, 60.

85 Barutçu, *Siyasi Amlar*, 135.

86 *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* (8 July 1940), ausgabe 724.

plot. By giving verbal assurances to the Soviet Union, Turkey hoped to keep things in perspective. Nevertheless, behind Ankara's brave face lay fear of a hostile Soviet reaction. In an urgent communique dispatched 24 hours after the *DNB* scandal broke, the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow, Ali Haydar Aktay, weighed in on 'the dreadful impact of the Nazi publications', which appeared to him 'a very carefully crafted plot' to sever good neighborly relations between Ankara and Moscow.⁸⁷ Ever since the Soviet victory in Finland, Aktay had been arguing that Stalin was 'pondering measures in the Balkans and in the Caucasus' in order to recalibrate the Soviet Union's southern security corridor, which meant that Romania and Turkey might be adversely affected by new mobilizations.⁸⁸ With the outbreak of the Massigli Affair, Aktay admitted that he was 'terrified of what might happen next', now that 'the Nazi scheme provided Stalin with a legitimate excuse to implement new designs on the Turkish border'.⁸⁹ In his initial assessment of the situation, Aktay quoted 'reliable sources', arguing that the Soviets felt justified in their suspicions of Turkey's neutrality and emphasized 'how fragile the situation had become'.⁹⁰

Aktay reported with trepidation from Moscow that the Soviet Union had mobilized troops on the Caucasian border, moving 10,000 soldiers to Nakhichevan and Sokhumi from Tbilisi.⁹¹ Countless rumors and an evident surge of anti-Turkish public spirit in Moscow convinced Aktay that 'a re-annexation Kars, Ardahan and Artvin was in the offing'.⁹² Furthermore, the Soviet agents were circulating propaganda materials in Transcaucasia with purposes of mustering an anti-Turkish and anti-Iranian coalition. On 11 July, for instance, the Turkish embassy received unconfirmed stories about the Turkish border patrol's downing of two of the five Soviet reconnaissance planes flying near the Borçka Air Base in Artvin. While the Turkish government ridiculed such allegations in their internal correspondence, rumors of a revived Soviet interest in Eastern Turkey were growing exponentially. Ultimately, the Turkish government dispatched reinforcements to the Kars-Ardahan border. From Aktay's point of view, even if one assumed that Stalin's invasion of Kars did not seem like a plausible scenario, 'the increased Soviet mobilization towards the Batumi checkpoint after the Nazi plot was petrifying'.⁹³

What was more, Aktay feared that control of the Straits now became a prerequisite for Soviet interests since Massigli's telegrams implicated a broader fault

87 TDA, TSID 145331 (Turkish Ambassador in Moscow to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara, 5 July 1940).

88 Hüsrev Gerece, the Turkish ambassador in Berlin concurred with Aktay's assessment and said that the Straits was the current center of gravity in Nazi-Soviet relations. TDA, TSID 6844011 (Turkish Ambassador in Berlin to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara, 28 June 1940).

89 TDA, TSID 145331 (Turkish Ambassador in Moscow to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara, 5 July 1940).

90 TDA, TSID 144156 (Ambassador Aktay's Compte-Rendu on Pravda and Izvestiia, 5-7 July 1940).

91 TDA, TSID 144144 (Turkish Ambassador in Moscow to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara, 10 July 1940).

92 TDA, TSID 865429 (Ambassador Aktay's Telegram on Kars, 10-11 July 1940).

93 TDA, TSID 144141 (Report on Batumi and Kars, 11 July 1940).

line across the Black Sea. From various sources, Aktay gathered that Stalin was concerned about the Soviet Union's southern flank, but now that France had collapsed, his anxiety about Nazi designs in the Black Sea became more pronounced.⁹⁴ Hüsrev Gerede, the Turkish ambassador in Berlin, had recently endorsed Ambassador Aktay's forecast and reported that the Nazis also expected Stalin to reinstitute Soviet frontiers back to pre-1914 demarcation lines.⁹⁵ Any combination that involved British cooperation with either the Soviet Union or Turkey would have hindered Nazi plans beyond the Straits, and thus Hitler attempted to isolate them simultaneously by releasing Massigli's telegrams. Thus by August 1940, when Ambassador Aktay was recalled for consultations in Ankara, the main source of apprehension in Turkey was the prospect of a new Nazi-Soviet understanding regarding the fate of the Straits.

Although the Massigli Affair did not effectively amount to a state of war between Turkey and the Soviet Union, it was the nadir in a relationship that had begun to deteriorate since the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. By the same token, the Third Reich understood its limitations but hoped to further capitalize on the rhetoric of this imperial historical legacy. By September 1940, Nazi Germany managed to force İnönü's hand into mobilizing Turkish regiments in defensive positions on the Caucasian border against the Soviet Union. As the Turkish and Soviet armies moved closer to one another, in more than a few occasions shots were fired across the border.⁹⁶ With rumors of Soviet designs on the Straits, Turkey did revert to something of the old imperial attitude, at least in the sense that the Porte's foreign policy had been dictated by the Sultan's fear of Russia. This was so much the case that the British Ambassador noted: '[O]nce again, Turkey's foreign policy [was] governed by that of Russia – the hereditary enemy, whose age-long ambition is to wrest the Straits from Turkey... whatever country is opposed to Russia is, ipso facto, favored by Turkey'.⁹⁷ Where Nazi Germany succeeded was in cementing that fear.

In his personal correspondence with Hitler, İnönü repeatedly gave hints that the wartime exchange between Ankara and Berlin would ultimately fall short of a military alliance.⁹⁸ Yet, Franz von Papen still believed that some form of accord could be reached through their existing connections with former Ottoman generals and Pan-Turkist groups who had always been skeptical about the Kemalist claim that the Soviet Union was somehow different than Tsarist Russia. Negotiations between Berlin and Ankara in the spring of 1941, which culminated in the Nazi-Turkish Non-Aggression Pact of 18 June 1941, declared that the goal was to save world civilization from the dangers of Bolshevism, one aspect of which was the

94 TDA, TSID 144144 (Turkish Ambassador in Moscow to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara, 10 July 1940).

95 TDA, TSID 6843977 (Turkish Ambassador in Berlin to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara, 27 June 1940).

96 TDA TSID 179978 (Gerede to Saraçoğlu, 06 November 1940).

97 FO 424/285 R6703 G (Halifax to Hugessen, July 5, 1940).

98 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, No. 161, p. 286 (İsmet İnönü to Adolf Hitler, 12 March 1941).

Soviets' imperialist quest for the Bosphorus and Eastern Anatolia.⁹⁹ Four days after the Nazi–Turkish Pact, the Third Reich declared war on the Soviet Union. When Ribbentrop ordered the Nazi Ambassador in Moscow, Count Wener von der Schulenburg, to communicate the Third Reich's war declaration to Molotov, he counted six reasons, one of which pertained to an earlier Soviet proposal to establish military bases on the Straits for Stalin's acceptance of the Four Power Pact.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, on the eve of the Molotov–Hitler meeting in Berlin in November 1940, Molotov had handed Schulenburg a draft protocol regarding Soviet conditions for acceptance of the Four Power Pact, which included 'the establishment of a base for land and naval forces of the USSR within the range of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles'.¹⁰¹ The Nazi declaration of war against the Soviet Union thus proclaimed that competition for influence in Turkey was a crucial part of the Nazi–Soviet relationship.

Among the several fault lines of Russo-Turkish relations, the Straits question always loomed large. A key moment in this century-old dispute transpired on 11 August 1941, when Weizsacker advised Ribbentrop to disclose parts of Count Schulenburg's telegram 'as irrefutable proof of Russian designs' on Turkey.¹⁰² Capitalizing on Turkey's historic fear, Ribbentrop followed the advice and shared Molotov's demands in writing with the Turkish Ambassador in Berlin on 25 August 1941.¹⁰³ The timing and purpose of this disclosure was critical. Two months after the outbreak of the Nazi–Soviet War, Nazi Germany's qualms about Turkey's pro-British tendencies were exacerbated on 10 August 1941 when simultaneous British and Soviet declarations were presented to Turkey in identical terms, each assuring Turkey that they had no aggressive intentions with regards to the Straits. By sharing proof of Molotov's aims in 1940, Ribbentrop challenged the Anglo-Soviet guarantee to Turkey. Ribbentrop told Ambassador Gerede that Hitler's rejection of this demand had been a basic cause of the Nazi–Soviet enmity, precisely because the Führer did not want to let the monster, Bolshevik Russia, advance any farther. What was more, Ribbentrop's meeting with Gerede took place on the same day that Operation Countenance began, when Great Britain and the Soviet Union invaded Iran. The timing of this disclosure also suggests that it was meant to rekindle Turkey's bitter memories of the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907.¹⁰⁴

Exactly when Nazi Germany disclosed Molotov's request is more than a question of chronological order and provides us with a much fuller grasp of Turkey's

99 *Resmî Gazete* (No. 4849), 9 July 1941.

100 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, No. 659, p. 1063 (Ribbentrop to Schulenburg, 21 June 1941).

101 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XI, No. 404 (Schulenburg to the Nazi Foreign Office, 25 November 1940).

102 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XIII, No. 193, p. 304 (Weizsacker to Ribbentrop, 11 August 1941).

103 TDA TSID 172385 (Gerede to Saraçoğlu, 25 August 1941).

104 By the same token, the news of the Molotov–Hitler meeting in Berlin caused an equally disturbing anxiety in Iran that swept Turkey at the time. Although existing rumors in Iran were paradoxical – that in return for a free hand in the Dardanelles, Germany was offering Russia an equally free hand in Iran – public perception of the Berlin meeting in both countries were unequivocally anti-Soviet. Jenkins, 'Iran and the Nazi New Order', 741.

considerations with regard to the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany after the Massigli Affair. One of the central accounts of this period suggests that Hitler divulged the Soviet request for bases in March 1941, and that this was the principal reason for the Turks' willingness to sign the Non-Aggression Pact with the Nazis on 18 June 1941, before Barbarossa was unleashed.¹⁰⁵ In fact, Turkish records demonstrate that, as early as 18 July 1940, in the immediate aftermath of the Massigli scandal, the Ankara government already anticipated an aggressive Soviet reaction that might target the Bosphorus and Dardanelles.¹⁰⁶ Nazi documents do show that in March 1941 Hitler referred to the Soviet bases in passing as he considered bringing Turkey to a more benevolent neutrality towards Berlin. Hitler insinuated that 'the Russians had spoken about the granting of bases' which no doubt fed Turkey's apprehension, but the context of that conversation was mostly about the closure of the Black Sea to non-Black Sea powers.¹⁰⁷ Hitler was informed that just a few days before his meeting with Gerede, Ambassador Aktay in Moscow had been delivered a declaration which showed that 'Turkey could rely on the full neutrality and benevolence of Moscow in case it gets attacked'.¹⁰⁸ By referring to Molotov's request in passing, Hitler sought to ridicule the Soviet Union's volte-face after the failed talks in Berlin, whereby Stalin decided to improve the Straits regime in direct negotiations with Turkey and not behind her back.¹⁰⁹

Despite the Nazis' best efforts, however, it was equally impossible to rid İnönü of his doubts that the Third Reich 'was also trying to encircle Turkey by way of Romania, Bulgaria and Greece'.¹¹⁰ The Turkish government suspected that by divulging Molotov's request, a fortnight before the Wehrmacht marched into Greece with Bulgaria on its heels in April 1941, Hitler might be offering an ambiguous reassurance to Turkey that the Straits would be off Nazi limits. Indeed, the Nazis were acutely aware that the Straits question was the 'alpha and omega of [Ankara's] policy', and was full of symbolism because it meant 'the preservation of Turkey as a European great power'.¹¹¹ Hence, 'as a gesture toward Turkey', Hitler ordered the Wehrmacht to halt troop movements near Turkey's Balkan outpost in Edirne.¹¹² But with the Axis occupation of Greece, Ambassador Papen ruefully admitted that he saw no possibility of change in the very reserved and waiting attitude of Turkey towards the Third Reich. During the ensuing negotiations,

105 B. R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey and Greece* (Princeton 1980), 27.

106 TDA, TSID 11584331 (Ambassador Hüsrev Gerede to Ankara, 18 July 1940).

107 TDA TSID 11848208 (Gerede to Saraçoğlu, 17 March 1941).

108 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, No. 177, p. 308–312 (İsmet İnönü to Adolf Hitler, 12 March 1941), here page 310.

109 Here too, Turkish records confirm Gorodetsky's assessment about changing motives behind the Stalin's attempt to secure an agreement with Turkey after Molotov's failed negotiations with Hitler in Berlin. See Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, 76.

110 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, No. 231, p. 409 (Papen to Ribbentrop, 28 March, 1941).

111 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, No. 154, p. 277 (Papen to Ribbentrop, 11 March, 1941).

112 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, No. 195, p. 338 (Directive of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, 22 March 1941).

Ribbentrop incessantly plead Ambassador Gerede in Berlin that 'the Führer would welcome it if he could have all Germany's old allies at our side at this time', at least in memory of the hard times experienced together.¹¹³

The content and tone of Franz von Papen's meeting with Numan Menemencioğlu in late March 1941 illustrates how Turkish leaders did not attribute too much role to historical conditioning in their relations with Berlin. Menemencioğlu, who would succeed Saraçoğlu as Foreign Minister in 1942, conveyed to Franz von Papen that in real politics there was no room for 'old friendships and brotherhoods in arms', except for the actual interests which determine the policy of the Reich and of Turkey. Responding to von Papen's repeated remarks that something had to be done by the Turkish Government in order to put Nazi-Turkish relations on a basis of greater trust, Menemencioğlu told him that the Führer's decision not to let the Soviets get to the Straits was 'very wise', and in Nazi Germany's interest as well. With regards to von Papen's concerns about Great Britain, however, Menemencioğlu was much more restrained and told him: 'You know that we are allied with England. We want to keep honorably the few obligations, which we have, and if you, Herr von Papen, now expect a kind of 'benevolent neutrality' on the part of Turkey, then I must tell you that such political acrobatics appear hardly possible to me'.¹¹⁴

Reflecting on Papen's subsequent discussions with Turkish leaders, Weizsacker admitted that they expected a more committed neutrality than what the Turks were prepared to give. Although Turkey's fear of Soviet Russia was stronger, after the Massigli Affair, Ankara felt wedged between two colossi. At a time when Great Britain was not in a condition to render any tangible support, İnönü was struggling to maintain a neutral face against what Ribbentrop labelled as 'an assumed German and an actual Russian threat'.¹¹⁵ In the end, the Third Reich failed to bring about the sort of pro-Axis neutrality that existed in Spain. But through fanning Ankara's apprehension, Hitler accomplished his main objective of keeping Turkey as a non-belligerent power malevolently disposed to Moscow.

Nazi Germany's anti-Soviet propaganda found many receptive ears in Turkey. *Ulus*, the same newspaper that so forcefully denounced the *DNB*'s account of the Massigli Affair, at the same time voiced its support for Nazi Germany's war effort: 'If Germany wins, the Russian world would be divided up and scattered, and the edifice of the Communist International would be forever overthrown'.¹¹⁶ A number of government leaders also greeted the news of Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union with favor.¹¹⁷ Şükrü Saraçoğlu, Turkey's Foreign Minister, who was having drinks with his friends at a Georgian tavern that night, was just one of them. In the remaining years of World War II, Turkish foreign policy went through a number of twists and turns. One thing, however, was fundamentally

113 TDA, TSID 172385 (Gerede to Saraçoğlu, 10 April 1941).

114 DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, No. 231, p. 409 (Papen to Ribbentrop, 28 March 1941).

115 GPT, No:3 (Ribbentrop to Papen, 17 May 1941), 10.

116 *Ulus* (11 July 1941), 2.

117 D. Avcioğlu, *Millî Kurtuluş Tarihi* (İstanbul 1995), 156.

changed by this period. As the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the ensuing disarray decisively put an end to any Turkish belief in the novelty of the Bolshevik regime, Ankara began to look at Moscow through the lens of history and respond in terms of an older *realpolitik*. Nazi propaganda played a significant role in that process.

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