

Turkey: 6788/4/41

BY SAFE HAND
SECRET
MOST SECRET

August 9th, 1941

Dear Ellis,

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Providentially your letter to Maude, No. 141 of August 4th, was brought to our notice before any action was taken on it by Maude or the Joint Staff Mission. I say providentially advisedly because if representations had been made to the United States Service authorities in the sense you suggested serious embarrassment and difficulties might have been caused.

At the moment the British Government are doing all they can to prevent a Turko-German rapprochement. It is vitally important for our whole war effort in the Near East, and indeed for the whole British position from Afghanistan on the one side to North Africa on the other, that Turkey should not depart from her present attitude of neutrality and should resist any further German pressure or infiltration. There is good reason to believe that the Turkish Government themselves are determined to do what they can to resist any further German pressure and that they regard the recent Turko-German Treaty merely as a means of gaining time. At all events, the British Government have decided not to be deflected by this Turko-German Treaty from their earlier policy of doing everything they can to help the Turks to strengthen their position by furnishing them with supplies, war material, etc.

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Unfortunately the United States Government have/

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have taken a rather different attitude. Until the conclusion of the Turko-German agreement, the United States Government were for giving the Turks exceptional facilities for obtaining war material and other supplies in this country, and were generally taking much the same line vis-à-vis to the Turks as the British Government. The American authorities have however tended to regard the Turko-German Treaty as implying that Turkey had more or less surrendered to Germany and that it was undesirable, or at all events unwise, to continue to help the Turks to obtain supplies in this country. As a result, the United States authorities from having previously given the Turks very exceptional facilities have now ruled that in the matter of the supply of arms, etc. they can only be treated on a par with the Latin American countries.

On instructions from London we have been and are still doing all we can to induce the United States Government to modify their policy and to conform their attitude towards the Turks to our own. London attach great importance to this - indeed the Ambassador has just had a ten page personal letter on the subject from Mr. Eden, and he is in fact at the moment talking to Mr. Hull about it.

The upshot of all this is that it is of the greatest importance that all the British authorities in this country should in their dealings with the American authorities take every opportunity of impressing on the latter how important it is to help Turkey to resist German pressure and how necessary it is for this purpose that the Americans should continue to send the Turks war materials.

You/

You will appreciate that if the United States Service authorities were now to be told that some members of the Turkish Naval and Air Force Mission which is about to arrive in this country were in German pay, the very worst impression would be created and our chances of inducing the Americans to help the Turks would be greatly diminished. It is therefore clearly necessary that we should go very carefully in this matter and if it is possible some other means of dealing with it should be found than giving the Turks away to the Americans.

To our mind the most obvious solution would be to be perfectly frank with the Turkish authorities who can be no more anxious than we are ourselves that no information of the kind in question should get to the Germans. Could not the British authorities tell the Turkish Government of their suspicions against the members of the mission and get the Turkish Government themselves to recall the offending officers? Alternatively, perhaps some other means could be found to prevent the mission from ever reaching this country at all.

However in the first place the proper thing to do seems to be for the whole question to be referred back to London and to be discussed there between your people and the Foreign Office. If, as we hope, you will agree to this course perhaps you would have the necessary telegram sent to London as soon as possible as there is not much time to spare.

Quite apart from the particular question of this Turkish mission above, there is, I think, a moral to be drawn from this incident, and that is/

is that this Embassy should always be consulted before any action is taken which could affect either our own relations with foreign governments or those of the United States Government and foreign governments. This is particularly the case now that there are so many British Missions in Washington, many of whom of necessity have very little knowledge of the day-to-day developments in foreign affairs. So we should be grateful if in future you would make it a rule always to consult us first in such matters.

Yours ever,

(SDD) F. H. Hoyer Miller