

İKİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI VE TÜRK-YUNAN ANTANTI

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Özet

Atatürk'ün Yunanistan'daki en yakın arkadaşı genel olarak inandıklarının aksine, Eleutherios Venizelos değil, Iōannēs Metaxas (1871-1941) idi. Nitekim, Venizelos-Atatürk yakınlaşması esas olarak Benito Mussolini'nin önerileri sayesinde başarılmıştır. Metaxas'ın Modern Türkiye kurucusu ile olan yakınlığı açıklanamaz, ancak reddedilemez.

Metaxas 1936 yılının başında İkinci Dünya Savaş'ının patlak vermesinden haberdardı; ve ilerleyen günlerde, ülkesini gelen çatışmaya hazırlamak için çabaladı. Yine de büyük bir endişe vardı: Yunanistan küresel çatışmaya karıştıktan sonra, Bulgaristan'ın tepkisi ne olacaktı? Böylece, arkadaşı Atatürk'e döndü ve ölümünden sonra onun haleflerine yöneldi.

Bilindiği gibi, Türk siyasi liderliği bir anda Metaxas'ın taleplerini memnun etti. 1941 yılı başında Almanlar Bulgaristan'ı işgal etti. Nisan 1941'de ise Yunanistan, Bulgarlar tarafından değil Almanlarca işgal edildi. İngilizlerle iyi ilişkileri olduğu bilinen İnönü, buna rağmen Almanlar'a karşı savaşa girmeyi düşünmedi.

Anahtar kelimeler: İkinci Dünya Savaşı, Türkiye, Yunanistan, Bulgaristan, Metaxas, Atatürk, İsmet İnönü.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE GRECO-TURKISH ENTENTE

Abstract

Unlike what is generally believed Atatürk's best friend in Greece was not Eleutherios Venizelos but Iōannēs Metaxas (1871-1941). As a matter of fact, the Venizelos-Atatürk rapprochement was achieved mainly thanks to Benito Mussolini's exhortations; for he wished, motivated by his own interests, a good intercourse to be established between Greece and Turkey. On the other hand, Metaxas' amity with Modern Turkey's founder remains inexplicable but irrefutable.,

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Paradoxical as it may appear, I. Metaxas was beware of the outbreak of the Second World War as early as 1936; and from that year onwards, he feverishly began preparing his country for the incoming conflict. Nonetheless, he had a major apprehension: after Greece would be involved in the global conflict, what would be the reaction of Bulgaria? For if the Greek Army had to confront an invasion from Albania or even the Dodecanese (at the time, under Italian rule), a Bulgarian aggression would essentially be a stab in the back of Greece. Thus, he turned for help to his friend, Atatürk, and following the latter's death to his successors.

Needless to say, the Turkish political leadership satisfied the demands of Metaxas at once. The borderlines of both Greece and Turkey with Bulgaria were regarded as a "common frontier" and, subsequently, any aggression by Bulgaria against Greece would be considered as a *casus fœderis*. It was the German occupation of Bulgaria early in the year 1941 that nullified this very term. For in April 1941, Greece was initially invaded by German troops and not by Bulgarian ones. And İsmet İnönü, the leading personality in post-Atatürk Turkey, despite being a firm friend of the British, did not want Turkey to be involved in the war against the German Reich...

Keywords: Second World War – Turkey – Greece – Bulgaria – Metaxas – Atatürk – İsmet İnönü

As an Introduction

On December 12, 1938, there was an article written by the notorious German archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1853-1940) that was published in the leading Athens newspaper *Hē Kathēmerinē*. Needless to say that Dörpfeld's article was accurately translated into Greek¹; and as a result of its author's renown and Greek version's scrupulousness, the theory of the German archaeologist created a sensation among the Greek public opinion. For Dörpfeld argued that Ionians were by no means Greeks. They were a Semitic people, namely the Iawan, a medley of Arabs and Phoenicians, who dwelt at the south-eastern coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, migrated into Asia Minor, Aegean islands, and Greece no later than the mid-16th century B.C.

When Dörpfeld's article was published, Greece was under the dictatorial regime of Iōannēs Metaxas. The dictator was both intelligent and cunning (a rare combination) and, accordingly, fit to control everything. In other words, it was quite unlikely that such an article would be published

¹ See article's analysis in: Iōannēs Bounias, *Kerkyraïka. Historia, Laographia* (= History and Folklore of Corfu Island), Athens, 1954, p. 7.

without dictator's consent. Does it mean that the latter was sharing Dörpfeld's ideas and theory? Paradoxically enough, one should answer in the affirmative: yes, he did. That is why he was opposed to the Greek expedition to Asia Minor. It is typical of his thinking, in fact, what he set out on March 29, 1921, when the Gounarēs administration asked him to undertake the leadership of the Greek troops fighting by then against Kemal's Turkish Nationalist Army: The native peoples of Asia Minor were neither Greek nor Grecized; as a result, they defied their "conquest by the Greeks". It was alike in Ancient Times. In Antiquity, nonetheless, thanks to the radiance of the Hellenic Civilization, the Asia Minor's dwellers were metamorphosed into Greeks; and so was paved the path to Ionians' absorption into the Greek World².

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The above clarifications are indispensable in order to understand the background of Metaxas attitude as far as Greek "Ionian Dream" is concerned. In other words, to Metaxas, every military campaign targeting to expand the Greek sovereignty over Turkish lands was just a "conquest war"³. Thus, the path to his cordial friendship with Atatürk had been well and effectually paved...

Be that as it may, it is Eleutherios Venizelos that was credited with the post-1922 Greco-Turkish rapprochement. Yet, that very Venizelos' achievement was mainly due to Mussolini's instructions⁴. For the Greek statesman was pursuing by then an openly pro-Italian policy⁵ that occasioned eventually his downfall and death. His visit, therefore, to Ankara in October, 1931, and İsmet İnönü's one to Athens a year later were spectacular acts but politically unimportant ones. The true Greco-Turkish Entente Cordiale, in fact, was established on the 14th of September, 1933, in Ankara, by Panagēs Tsaldarēs and Dēmētrios Maximos, respectively Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Greece, and İsmet Paşa and Tevfik Rüştü Bey, their Turkish counterparts⁶. For the pact concluded and signed by them inaugurated the straight diplomatic co-operation between the two countries, providing even their common representation on some international forums⁷. In November, 1934, moreover, D. Maximos met Tevfik Rüştü Aras in Ankara and established

² I. Metaxas. *To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio* (= The Diary of I. Metaxas), vol. III (Athens: Gkovostēs, n.d.), entry of the 29th of March, 1921, p. 85.

³ I. Metaxas. *To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. III, entry of the 29th of March, 1921, p. 83ff. passim.

⁴ *Hē pros polemon proparaskeuē tou Hellēnikou Stratou, 1923-1940* (= Greek Army's Preparation for War, 1923-1940), Athens: The Army Supreme Command/Department of Military History, 1983 (re-impression), p. 5; A. I. Korantēs, *Diplōmatikē Historia tēs Eurōpēs, 1919-1945* (= A Diplomatic History of Europe, 1919-1945), vol. I (Athens: Eleutherē Skepsis, 1996²), p. 385.

⁵ AYE, 1933, A/3/xiv, «Memorandum on Treaties' Revision, composed by the First Department of the [Greek] Ministry of Foreign Affairs», Athens, April 15, 1933.

⁶ *Hē pros polemon proparaskeuē tou Hellēnikou Stratou...*, pp. 5, 160-161.

⁷ Article 3 (ibidem, p. 160).

formally the Greco-Turkish cooperation also in the Defence sector⁸. And it is remarkable that the pact signed by them, in fact, contained the following promises:

... En précision... des circonstances dans lesquelles une agression de la part de la Bulgarie contre leur commune frontière pourrait se produire...

La Turquie et la Grèce s'engagent à s'opposer dans tous les cas, par des moyens militaires appropriés, à toute violation de leur frontière commune...

Les autorités techniques compétentes de la République Turque et de la République Hellénique fixeront, d'un commun accord, les dispositions nécessaires pour parer à une pareille éventualité⁹.

The words *frontière commune* signified the Bulgarian-Turkish and Bulgarian-Greek borderlines¹⁰. It goes without saying that the military pact was the fruit of the quadrilateral Balkan Pact, concluded in Athens on February 9, 1934, between Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Romania¹¹; still, the bilateral Greco-Turkish agreement was a stroke taken forward in both countries' own interests...

On August 4, 1936, I. Metaxas imposed his authoritarian regime over Greece with the consent of King George II; and he grew straight off delighted with the prospect of a Greco-Turkish alliance against a Bulgarian aggression. For the "Bulgarian Menace" was an obsession for him¹². He considered southern Macedonia to be the "natural Lebensraum" of the Greeks, and he had assumed a primordial role in the conduct of the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars, that had worked out the annexation to Greece of this very part of the Balkans. As early as February 1937, therefore, during a Tevfik Rüştü Aras' visit to Athens, it was conceived the ambitious plan to extend the fortification of Edirne, the city in East Thrace, very close to the Greco-Turkish borderline, westwards, into Greek territory¹³. The plan was actually abandoned, because of severe financial difficulties¹⁴. As a result, Metaxas grew anxious; and a reason of major concern to him became the fact that Bulgaria, thanks to a multilateral agreement concluded in Salonika in November, 1938, obtained

⁸ Ibidem, p. 6.

⁹ AYE, 1934, A.A.K. 3.

¹⁰ Tevfik Rüştü Aras to D. Maximos (letter), Ankara, November 4, 1934. (The text in: *Hē pros polemon proparaskeuē tou Hellēnikou Stratou...*, p. 161.)

¹¹ *Hē pros polemon proparaskeuē tou Hellēnikou Stratou...*, p. 7; V. P. Papadakēs, entry "Hellas. Diethnēs Thesis" (= Greece. International Position), *Megalē Hellēnikē Enkyklopaideia*, vol. X (Athens: "Ho Phoenix", n.d. [second edition]), pp. 329C-336C; cf. newspaper *Le Temps* (Paris), February 6, 1934.

¹² Cf. I. Metaxas. *To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, entry of October 21-December 11, 1938, p. 315.

¹³ *Hē pros polemon proparaskeuē tou Hellēnikou Stratou...*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 15-17.

the abrogation of armament limits imposed on her in the framework of the 1919 Neuilly Treaty¹⁵.

The Bulgarian Army was actually considerable: 60 Infantry regiments, 190 batteries of light artillery, 35 ones of heavy artillery, 40 anti-aircraft ones and about 80 armoured vehicles and a strong Air Force as well¹⁶. Of course, the Greek military leadership was sadly impressed¹⁷. Therefore, even prior to the 1938 Salonika agreement, Lieutenant-General Alexandros Papagos, chief of the Greek Army General Staff, paid an official visit to İstanbul and conferred with Field Marshal Fevzi Çakmak, chief of the Turkish General Staff, about the military co-operation between the two countries¹⁸. It goes without saying that the steady framework of such co-operation was the more or less overt Anglophilia of either Metaxas' and Atatürk's regimes¹⁹.

It is characteristic of the atmosphere prevailing between the two countries what happened when, in May 1937, İsmet İnönü, Prime Minister of Turkey, came to Athens on an official visit²⁰. During the dinner that was given in his honour, Atatürk called him by phone several times and asked him to declare to his Greek hosts, "Turks' brotherly friends", that the military cooperation between the two countries "would be limitless in time, above and over the sort of the quadrilateral Balkan Entente"²¹. Metaxas visited Turkey in October 1937, and through his talks with the Turkish political leadership he confirmed the commonly taken decision concerning the "endless Greco-Turkish cooperation and alliance"²². Accordingly, on April 27 of the following year, a new Treaty was signed in Athens by Celal Bayar, Tevfik Rüşti and Metaxas, in the terms of which it was interdicted, in time of peace, any kind of propaganda and agitation in Greece against Turkey and in Turkey against Greece²³. It is unquestionable, moreover, that both Metaxas and Atatürk had in mind the formation of a Greco-Turkish Federation²⁴, an "old dream"²⁵; and

¹⁵ *Aitia kai aphormai Hellēno-Italikou Polemou, 1940-1941* (= Causes and Motivations for the Greco-Italian War, 1940-1941), Athens: Greek Army General Staff, 1988 (re-impression), p. 2.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *I. Metaxas. To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, entry of April 26, 1940, p.464 (and note 2).

¹⁸ *Hē pros polemon proparaskeuē tou Hellēnikou Stratou...*, p. 12.

¹⁹ FO 424/289, Sir N. Charles, ambassador of the United Kingdom in Ankara, to Ernest Bevin, U.K. Foreign Secretary, No. R 11929/1012/44, Ankara, n. d. (leading personalities in Turkey). As for Metaxas' Anglophilia, see the solemn and revelatory statement he made to the naval leadership of Greece in autumn, 1936. (Epeleinōndas P. Kavvadias, *Ho nautikos polemos tou 1940 hopōs ton ezēsa. Anamnēseis, 2 Martiou 1935-25 Martiou 1943* [= The 1940 Naval War as I experienced it. Memoirs, March 2, 1935-March 25, 1943], Athens: "Pyrros", 1950, pp. 103-104.

²⁰ *I. Metaxas. To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, p. 274.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 274-276.

²² Alexandros Papagos, *Ho polemos tēs Hellados, 1940-1941* (= The War of Greece, 1940-1941), Athens: "Hoi Philoi tou Vivliou", 1945, p. 39.

²³ *Hē pros polemon proparaskeuē tou Hellēnikou Stratou...*, pp. 12-13; cf. *Aitia kai aphormai Hellēno-Italikou Polemou...*, p. 32.

²⁴ *I. Metaxas. To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, p. 274 (comments of the editor).

only the early death of Atatürk²⁶, on November 10, 1938, thwarted such a grandiose plan²⁷. It is quite natural, therefore, that the telegram Metaxas addressed to Şükrü Saracoğlu, Foreign Minister of Turkey, on the 10th of November 1939, the anniversary of Atatürk's death, was worded as follows:

À l'occasion anniversaire mort regretté grand chef Kemal Atatürk, dont le souvenir restera à jamais vivant, le Gouvernement Royal et la Grèce tout entière rendent un respectueux hommage à la mémoire de celui qui fut le régénérateur de la noble Nation Turque, amie et alliée, et un des principaux créateurs de l'amitié turco-grecque qui unit si étroitement nos deux pays dans leur effort pacifique²⁸.

Beyond his pro-British stance, nonetheless, Metaxas admired both Atatürk's personality and policy. For either had a similar problem, namely the modernization of a religion-based nationhood. Thus, Metaxas tried to restrict the influence of the Orthodox Church through a brutal intervention of his administration in purely ecclesiastical affairs²⁹. He attempted, moreover, to curtail Modern Greeks' attachment to their alleged "glorious ancient past"; and the measures that he subsequently took astonished even the leadership of Soviet Russia³⁰. That is why he regarded Atatürk as a "great political leader"³¹, with whom he was in "telephone contact"³²; and, further, when he heard about latter's death, he travelled from Athens to Ankara, notwithstanding his ill-health, in order to be present at the funeral³³. For him, the bond between Greece and Turkey was "a special and indissoluble one"³⁴; and he grew happy to ascertain that İsmet İnönü shared this very view-point³⁵.

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Early in September 1939, it was the Second World War that started. Metaxas' decision was already taken: Greece would fight against the Reich because

²⁵ Cf. Dimitris Michalopoulos, "The Enlightenment, the Porte and the Greek Church: A Paradox of Balkan History" in Seyfi Kenan (ed.), *Osmanlılar ve Avrupa. Seyahat, Karşılaşma ve Etkileşim/Ottomans and Europe. Travel, Encounter and Interaction* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), p. 467.

²⁶ His death was expected as early as February 1937. (AYE, 1937, 14.6, Raphaël Raphaël, Greek minister plenipotentiary at Ankara, to I. Metaxas, dispatch No. 532, Ankara, February 19, 1937.)

²⁷ I. Metaxas. *To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, p. 274.

²⁸ AYE, 1939, A/3/3, 4 (copy).

²⁹ Ibidem, vol. IV, entry of October 21-December 11, 1938, pp. 312-314.

³⁰ AYE, 1938, B/2, P, I. Kindynēs, chargé d'affaires of the Greek legation at Moscow, to the Foreign Ministry of Greece, No. 550, Moscow, March 31, 1938..

³¹ See newspaper *Akşam* (Istanbul), October 23, 1937.

³² I. Metaxas. *To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, pp. 274-276; cf. A. Papagos, *Ho polemos tēs Hellados, 1940-1941*, p. 37ff.

³³ I. Metaxas. *To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, entry of October 21-December 11, 1938, p. 314.

³⁴ See the statement he made on November 26, 1938. (Ibidem, p. 316.)

³⁵ Ibidem. p. 314.

Germany's victory was "unfeasible"³⁶. Thus, the military attaché of the Greek legation at Paris submitted to General Maxime Weygand a list of the war material that Greece was applying for³⁷. Weygand had retired in 1935, but was recalled for active service in August, 1938, and appointed Commander-in-Chief for the "Eastern Mediterranean Theatre of Operations"³⁸. He established, therefore, his headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, and being convinced that the issue of the war would be decided in the Balkans, attempted to activate the Balkan Entente on the side of France and the United Kingdom³⁹. He was dreaming of a "multinational expedition" against Germany along the lines of the 1914-1918 Great War. It is self-evident that in the framework of his plan, the crucial point was Salonika, the Macedonian megalopolis that, although annexed to Greece, had preserved its international character.

Weygand, therefore, met at Ankara a high ranking Greek officer, member of the Greek Army General Staff, who was sent ad hoc to the Turkish capital; and the Greek officer furnished Weygand with "all the necessary information" as far as the Greek Armed Forces were concerned⁴⁰. Afterward, it was a delegation of French Army officers who came to Athens and were further informed – especially on the location of the military airports⁴¹. At last, Maurice Gamelin, Generalissimo of the French Army, dispatched to Athens the lieutenant colonel Mariot

... *Un officier de toute confiance*

whom the Greek military leader, namely the Lieutenant-General A. Papagos, could instruct on everything that the Greek Army was standing in need of⁴². Papagos was happy to do that⁴³; and, as a result, it was from him, *le colonel Mariot*, that a contemporary French writer drew inspiration for a most striking character in his work⁴⁴.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 524 (statement made to the Press of Athens); cf. ibidem, entry of August 2, 1940, p. 487. It is noteworthy that Greek diplomats accredited abroad began by then furnishing important intelligence to their British colleagues. (AYE, 1938, A/11/6, Vasileios Dendramēs, Greek minister plenipotentiary at Buenos Aires, to I. Metaxas, dispatch No. 2266, Buenos Aires, August 13, 1938.

³⁷ AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, the major of Artillery Apostolos Bazaios to Lieutenant-general A. Papagos, chief of the Army Staff, No. 1 (secret), Paris, April 9, 1940.

³⁸ Alain Rey (ed.), *Dictionnaire universel des noms propres, alphabétique et analogique* (Paris : « Le Robert », 1988), p. 1912 A.

³⁹ AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, R. Raphaël to I. Metaxas, cable No. 3200/A, Ankara, September 11, 1939.

⁴⁰ AYE, 1940, A.9, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Greek legation at Paris, cryptographic telegram No. 12002/A, Athens, May 2, 1940.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, Maurice Gamelin to A. Papagos, December, 1939 ([sic] letter).

⁴³ AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, A. Papagos to M. Gamelin, Athens, December 26, 1939.

⁴⁴ Roger Peyrefitte, *Les ambassades* (Paris: Flammarion, 1951), p. 51ff. passim.

Both Weygand and Gamelin, nonetheless, wished the precedent of the First World War to be avoided. For the 1915 landing of Entente troops in Salonika had provoked the Greeks' so-called "National Schism". Consequently, in addition to the consultations between the military leaders, Gaston Maugras, French minister plenipotentiary at Athens, sounded out the Greek government on the so-called "Salonika Issue"; and the semi-official response was not late to come. Nikolaos Mauroudēs, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, informed G. Maugras that if the French wanted to land

... une armée à Salonique, la Grèce non seulement ne s'y opposerait mais même joindrait ses forces aux... [forces françaises], si une préparation diplomatique et militaire appropriée en aurait au préalable assuré le succès. La première condition à remplir [néanmoins] serait d'obtenir le concours de la Yougoslavie, puisque c'était l'armée yougoslave qui devrait former l'avant-garde de l'expédition [contre l'Allemagne]⁴⁵.

It is quite impossible that Mauroudēs would give such a reply to Maugras without Metaxas' acquiescence; and, in fact, that was the case⁴⁶. Still, beyond Yugoslavia's stance, the point was the attitude of Turkey; and it is remarkable that the Turks were by no means prosperous at that time. Thanks chiefly to the loss of the Mosul oilfields, the pauperization of Turkey was rampant⁴⁷. Beyond that, the bitter experience of the First World War remained alive. In 1914 Turkey was an Empire but emerged from the conflict as a State confined to Asia Minor. Nonetheless, Turkey became, late in the 1930s, a sort of apple of discord between the two rival camps⁴⁸. Sir Percy L. Loraine was the British ambassador in Ankara from 1934 to 1939; and during his service

... [Il avait] joué un rôle prépondérant. Il s'était proposé de lier étroitement la politique de la Turquie à celle de l'Angleterre. Reconnaissant que la condition indispensable à l'exécution de ce projet était d'établir une coopération économique intime, il ... [avait] essayé avec ténacité et persévérance de développer l'influence économique anglaise en Turquie. Sir Percy Loraine... [avait] cru qu'à la longue ce résultat ne pourrait être obtenu qu'en affaiblissant l'influence économique de l'Allemagne et, en réalité, il n'a rien négligé

⁴⁵ AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, G. Maugras to Édouard Daladier. (Copy without date.)

⁴⁶ AYE, 1938, A/11/3, I. Metaxas to the Greek legation at Bucharest, dispatch No. 23738/A, Athens, September 18, 1939.

⁴⁷ AYE, 1938, A/11/3, Kimōn Kollas, Greek minister plenipotentiary at Bucharest, to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dispatch No. 910, Bucharest, April 6, 1938.

⁴⁸ *Aitia kai aphormai Hellēno-Italikou Polemou...*, p. 66.

*pour amoindrir la situation économique prédominante de l'Allemagne en Turquie*⁴⁹.

Sir Percy Loraine's successor was the notorious Sir Hughes Montgomery Knatchbull-Hugessen, former ambassador to China⁵⁰. It goes without saying that the Germans had already taken action and appointed as the Reich's ambassador in Ankara Franz von Papen⁵¹.

Von Papen was a cunning personage; this is why he had survived the 1934 Night of the Long Knives and, at last, achieved to be in favour with Hitler. Moreover, he was regarded as the architect of the 1938 Anschluss⁵². What is more, he was considered to be "familiarised with the Turks" thanks to his detachment to the Ottoman Army towards the end of the First World War⁵³. Most likely, his appointment in Ankara was a step taken by Adolph Hitler in person⁵⁴; for he was already preparing the German aggression against the Soviet Russia⁵⁵. It is remarkable that Wehrmacht's leadership had views quite opposite to that perspective⁵⁶; Hitler, nonetheless, shared the common belief that the Red Army was enfeebled because of the 1936-1938 "Great Purge"⁵⁷, and chiefly thanks to the execution of Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky on June 12, 1937⁵⁸. Accordingly he was trying to prepare the German invasion into the Soviet Union.

Of course, the Turkish government smelled the rat. Thus, early in 1940, it was made *urbi et orbi* known that the avoidance of a Turkish-Soviet conflict was a "must" of Ankara's policy⁵⁹. That is why the Turkish government, regardless of the British and French guarantees that Turkey enjoyed from

⁴⁹ Auswärtiges Amt, *Documents relatifs à l'histoire des origines de la guerre* (Berlin : Reichsdruckerei, 1939), p. 157: Document No. 236, Hans Kroll, chargé d'affaires of the German Embassy in Ankara, to the German Foreign Ministry, Ankara, January 1939.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ AYE, 1938, A/11/3, Chrēstos Diamantopoulos, minister plenipotentiary of Greece to the Netherlands, to the Foreign Ministry of Greece, dispatch No. 237, The Hague, April 1st, 1938.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ AYE, 1938, A/11/3, K. Kollas to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dispatch No. 910, Bucharest, April 6, 1938.

⁵⁴ AYE, 1938, A/11/3, the Greek legation at Belgrade to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dispatch No. 2902, Belgrade, December 5, 1938. (Memo of talks between diplomats accredited to Yugoslavia.)

⁵⁵ AYE, 1938, A/11/3, K. Kollas to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dispatch No. 644/A, Bucharest, April 2, 1938.

⁵⁶ AYE, 1938, A/11/3, Raoul Rosettēs, Greek minister plenipotentiary at Belgrade, to I. Metaxas, dispatch No. 2902, Belgrade, December 5, 1938. According to Greek diplomats, the "Russophile" leadership of the Wehrmacht was a major cause of Reich's defeat by the Soviet Union. (AYE, 1943-1944, 36.2, A. Koutoumas, chargé d'affaires of the Greek legation at Bern, to the Foreign Ministry ("in exile") of Greece, dispatch 1080.N/20, Bern, November 12, 1943.

⁵⁷ AYE, 1938, A/11/3, K. Kollas to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dispatch No. 644/A, Bucharest, April 2, 1938.

⁵⁸ AYE, 1938, B/2,P, D. Nikolopoulos, chargé d'affaires of the Greek legation at Moscow, to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dispatch No. 291, Moscow, February 28, 1938.

⁵⁹ AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, A. Papagos, chief of the Greek Army staff, to I. Metaxas, No. 115391 (confidential), Athens, March 23, 1940. (Report on a conversation between A. Papagos and the Turkish military attaché.)

1939 onwards⁶⁰, interdicted the entrance of British warships into the Black Sea: Ankara did not want complications with Moscow⁶¹. On the other hand, the Turkish leadership did not place much reliance on Weygand's plans and promises, since the troops of the French General were "colonial and undisciplined ones"; as a result the Western Allies' forces in the "Eastern Mediterranean Theatre of Operations" were quite ineffective⁶². And it was known in Greece that the Turkish side was right. In point of fact and though Weygand used to boast about the 300,000 men under his command, "who that eventually would amount 1,000,000"⁶³, his actual strength was considerably lesser: no more than 150,000 men⁶⁴. Yet the talks between the Greek and Turkish military leadership kept going on⁶⁵, but in May 1940, the formation of a Balkan front was adjourned indefinitely by the French⁶⁶; and soon afterward it was the end of the *drôle de guerre* that occurred...

As it is apparent from his personal life, İsmet İnönü, President of the Turkish Republic following Atatürk's death, was a prudent man⁶⁷. Thus, in mid-June, 1940, Turkey "withdrew from the Franco-English bloc"; and as Metaxas was prompt to remark, the withdrawal took place notwithstanding the "hurrahs" of the Turkish National Assembly for France and Great Britain!⁶⁸ Such a "disengagement" was due to the fear of complications not only with the Reich but with the Soviet Union as well. For "Moscow had been strongly discontented" with the Franco-Turkish and Anglo-Turkish rapprochement⁶⁹. It was still the time of Hitler's and Stalin's close friendship...⁷⁰

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On the 28th of October, 1940, Italy declared war on Greece. Metaxas, nevertheless, had well prepared his country's defense; for the Italian aggression was long awaited before it took place. Yet Greece stood alone.

⁶⁰ *Aitia kai aphormai Hellēno-Italikou Polemou...*, pp. 23-24.

⁶¹ AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, A. Papagos to I. Metaxas, No. 115391 (confidential), Athens, March 23, 1940; P. Verykios, Greek vice-consul at Burgas, Bulgaria, to Panagiōtēs Pipinelēs, Greek minister plenipotentiary at Sofia, dispatch No. 922 (confidential), Burgas, August 1st, 1940. According to Greek intelligence, moreover, the Turkish government rejected down the "Anglo-French suggestion" that the Turkish Army should invade the Soviet territory in order to conquer the Caucasus oilfields. (AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, A. Papagos to I. Metaxas, No. 115391 [confidential], Athens, March 23, 1940.)

⁶² AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, A. Papagos to I. Metaxas, No. 115391 [confidential], Athens, March 23, 1940.

⁶³ AYE, 1939-1940, A/4, R. Raphaël to I. Metaxas, cable No. 2429, Ankara, January 28, 1940.

⁶⁴ AYE, 1940, A.9, document signed by A. Papagos (May 16, 1940 [draft]). In Egypt and Palestine there were British troops, about 70,000 and 50,000 respectively strong (ibidem).

⁶⁵ A. Papagos, *Ho polemos tēs Hellados...*, pp. 52-56.

⁶⁶ *Aitia kai aphormai Hellēno-Italikou Polemou...*, p. 77.

⁶⁷ AYE, 1937, 14.6, R. Raphaël, Greek minister plenipotentiary at Ankara, to I. Metaxas, dispatch No. 532, Ankara, February 19, 1937.)

⁶⁸ *I. Metaxas. To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, entry of June 15, 1940, p. 475.

⁶⁹ *Aitia kai aphormai Hellēno-Italikou Polemou...*, p. 60.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 59.

Atatürk's premature death had frustrated the shaping of a Greco-Turkish federation⁷¹; and the defeat that the French suffered at the hands of the Germans had thwarted any perspective of a Balkan front against the Reich. As a result, Metaxas was not disposed to make of Salonika an air base against the Ploiești oilfields, as the British wished to do⁷². And he passed away on January 29, 1941...

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⁷¹ Cf. *I. Metaxas. To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio*, vol. IV, entries of January 4, 1941, p. 555, and of January 15, 1941, p. 559.

⁷² *Ibidem*, entry of January 15, 1941, p. 559; a note of the Greek Government to the British one, pp. 560-561.

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