

# **THE STRUGGLE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST**

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The Soviet Union and the Middle East  
1958–68

Walter Laqueur

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WAR AND SECURITY IN  
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Volume 11

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# **The Struggle for the Middle East**

**The Soviet Union and the Middle East  
1958-68**

**Walter Laqueur**

Written under the auspices of the  
Center for Strategic and International Studies  
Georgetown University, Washington D.C.



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# I Introduction

The present study is devoted to a review of Soviet policy in the Middle East during the last decade and to an analysis of its future prospects. It also deals with developments inside the various Middle East countries in so far as they may influence the outcome of the struggle for the Middle East. It is in some ways a sequel to *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East* (1956), and *The Soviet Union and the Middle East* (1959). The shortcomings of these earlier books were, and are, obvious to the author. They were written at a time when little source material was available, and when it was just beginning to be realized that the topic itself was a legitimate subject of study. The general outlines of Soviet policy in the Middle East could be only dimly recognized at the time. Since then the situation has changed radically; as far as source material is concerned, the danger now is not of drought, but of drowning, and many new problems have appeared. In the nineteen-fifties Soviet relations with Iran and Turkey were much less complex than they are today; Soviet interest in Middle East oil barely existed, and there was virtually no Soviet interest in Cyprus, Sudan, Algeria, South Arabia, and a great many other places. There was no Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean and, on a different level, hardly any Soviet writings on the Middle East; but as the area assumed growing importance in Soviet policy, so has the volume of literature expanded. I was tempted at times to bring my two earlier books up to date, but refrained for a number of good reasons. They summarized the early stages (the 'prehistory') of the Soviet drive towards the Middle East. It was not simply a question of continuing the historical narrative and adding fresh material; the whole perspective has changed. I believe that the basic assumption of these two earlier books was correct: the Soviet drive

towards the Middle East was gathering momentum in the fifties; given the weakness of the area as a whole and the domestic situation in the Arab world, the Soviet Union had an excellent chance greatly to strengthen its position in the Middle East and perhaps even to become the dominant power there. These assumptions were by no means generally shared fifteen or even ten years ago. Soviet pre-occupation with Europe was taken too much for granted, while the prospects of Nasserist Pan-Arabism as an independent political force were overrated.

It was difficult to foresee in the middle fifties exactly what form the radicalization in the Middle East would take in the years to come. The communist camp was still united; no rival centers had arisen to shake the monolithic bloc. We are much wiser now. During this past decade the importance of communist parties has on the whole decreased; there has been a far-reaching *rapprochement* between a number of Middle East countries and the Soviet Union, but it has largely by-passed the official communist parties in the area. Military dictators and new political groups (such as the neo-Ba'th) have been of far greater significance in this context. Even in the nineteen-fifties there were reasons to doubt the relevance of the doctrinal discussions in Soviet writings as a key to the understanding of Soviet policy in the Middle East. These books and articles were of some interest because they helped to explain shifts in policy; occasionally they reflected internal dissension. Today I feel even more sceptical about their relevance, for they shed very little light on the real mainsprings of Soviet policy. The interests of Russia as a great power have played a role in Soviet foreign policy from its earliest days, and this was, of course, inevitable. As the years passed their specific weight has steadily increased and that of Leninist ideology has steadily declined. It has declined, but not altogether disappeared. Official Soviet doctrine still survives almost in its pristine state, but the discrepancy between theory and practice is still growing, and it is now very difficult to ascertain to what extent even those making the doctrinal pronouncements believe in them. The Soviet political and military leaders are, of course, communists, and any attempt to explain their foreign-policy decisions solely on the basis of traditional power politics is ultimately futile. But what does it mean to be a leading communist in the Soviet Union today? The writings of Marx and Lenin alone are unlikely to provide a satisfactory answer. For this reason I have dealt with doctrinal disputations in this book

only in passing; it is still a legitimate subject of study, though no longer a very important one. I have had to neglect some other aspects of Soviet policies in the Middle East, and of Middle East reactions, in order to concentrate on the central issues. To treat the issues touched upon fully and exhaustively, each chapter would have to be expanded into a separate monograph.

Key sections of this book were written during the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968. All history is contemporary history, and even Western historians of ancient Rome and Greece are known to have been influenced by the impact of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. There was an almost overwhelming temptation to deal with the prospects of the Middle East in the light of the Czech crisis, a temptation which had to be resisted. The historian knows from his own and others' experience that the danger of distortion is greatest at a time of crisis; that events which loom very large at the moment of writing may appear in a different perspective a few years later. He knows about the cunning of reason: a great triumph may be the prelude to disaster and a defeat may eventually turn into victory. Lastly, he knows that the future is *a priori* unpredictable, that there is no inevitability about it, and that even highly probable events may never come to pass. Nevertheless, with all these reservations, a major crisis such as the invasion of Czechoslovakia has its advantages for the historian: all the quasi-problems suddenly disappear and his perception of the essential issues is sharpened. An event of this kind furnishes a sudden and usually brutal test: it clears away the cobwebs of wishful thinking, of irrelevant theories and spurious explanations. It shows that at a time of decision it is power that matters and the firm resolve to use it.

The Soviet leaders have frequently stressed that the area adjacent to their southern borders is of vital concern to them. They regard it as their legitimate sphere of influence. But the Middle East is not Eastern Europe, and the Soviet capacity to intervene there will probably be limited for a number of years to come. Soviet ties, even with Egypt and Syria, are not nearly so close as those with Poland and East Germany, but Moscow has no intention of giving up the bridgehead established in the Middle East at great cost and with great patience over many years. On the contrary, it will try to consolidate and extend it, and for this reason the critical years are still ahead. The Middle East is not intrinsically one of the most important areas in world affairs. It has long ceased to be a crossroads, its military

bases are no longer needed, it has no important natural resources other than oil, but there is no lack of oil elsewhere in the world. And yet, in view of the delicate balance of global power, the Soviet Union attributes great importance to the Middle East, and its presence there may have far-reaching political effects in Europe as well as Africa and Asia. From the Soviet point of view, the area has a great attraction, both because of its nearness to its southern frontiers and because of its internal instability. Among Soviet foreign political priorities the Middle East now takes a high place, not because it is intrinsically important, but because it is so weak. In many ways it seems to present the line of least resistance: in the Far East there is the growing threat of China; in Europe any advance beyond the 'red line' would mean a clash with NATO and the Americans. But the place of the Middle East in the contest between the powers has never been clearly defined, and it is therefore likely to remain one of the main danger zones in world politics in the years to come.

I have received assistance and advice from many institutions and individuals. I am greatly indebted to Dr David Abshire and Professor Alvin Cottrell of the Center for Strategic and International Studies of Georgetown University, who first suggested this study to me and made it possible for me to write it. I owe much to Mr Zeev Ben Shlomo, who helped me in my research, to Miss Diana Langton, my secretary, and to Mrs C. Wichmann and Mr E. Kahn of the Middle East Documents section at the Institute of Contemporary History (Wiener Library) in London, who within a short period have made this a collection of great help to the student of contemporary history.

*June 1969*

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## 2 Prelude: 1945-58

Russian interest in the Ottoman Empire, its involvement in what was then the Eastern Question, antedates the revolutions of 1917 by about 150 years. In Tsarist foreign policy, throughout the nineteenth century, in the ideology of Slavophiles and Panslavists the question of Constantinople and the Straits played a central, almost mystical, role. Turkey was about to disintegrate, the Hagia Sofia was at last to return to its rightful owners. The Russian mission in the Near East was the dynamic centre of Russian history; there its manifest destiny would be fulfilled. But the first world war brought not only the demise of the Ottoman Empire, it also caused the downfall of the Romanovs. With the Bolshevik revolution such imperialist ambitions were solemnly forsworn: communist Russia, the pioneer of world revolution, was to be also the friend and ally of all national liberation movements. The industrialized countries of Central and Western Europe were expected to play the leading role in the coming stage of the world revolution; the hopes of Marx and Engels had been centred in the West, and the eyes of Lenin and Trotsky were turned there too, although they did not entirely neglect Asia and the East. About a decade before the revolution they had begun to realize that there was a revolutionary potential in the East, that the colonies and the semi-colonial countries of Asia would not forever remain quiescent. Bolshevism tried to assist them in their fight; the Congress of Baku, calling on the toilers of the East to rise against foreign imperialists as well as against native capitalists and landlords, was the first important milestone in this struggle. The Soviet leaders followed with a great deal of sympathy the fight of the Turks under Kemal and the national movements in Persia and Afghanistan. Not much attention



was paid at that time to events in the Arab world. By the standards of those days, the Arabs were a faraway people; most of their countries were not yet even semi-independent. Nor was there a great deal of interest in Zionism, which at that time had just acquired a Jewish national home. Zionism, in the communist view, was an anachronistic, reactionary movement. The salvation of the downtrodden Jewish masses in the East European ghettos would come with the victory of world revolution. The Jewish question could not be solved in a distant country under the protection of British bayonets. Moscow and the Communist International also attacked the pan-movements of the day – Panislamism, Panarabism, Panturkism; these too were condemned as reactionary in character. Support for ‘progressive’ movements in the Near East involved Soviet Russia from the beginning in political and doctrinal contradictions, since they could not be expected to embrace Bolshevik ideology and practice lock, stock and barrel. Islam, for instance, still had deep roots in the East, and a frontal attack against it was obviously out of the question, despite communism’s unalterable opposition to religion in general.

The existence of Communist parties outside Russia was for the Soviets, needless to say, a matter of gratification, and in theory their interests could never collide with those of the Soviet state. In practice, alas, clashes occurred all too frequently from the very outset. The policies of Kemal Atatürk, the champion of the Turkish struggle for independence, were warmly supported in Russia, and close relations were established between Ankara and Moscow. But the political and military alliance with Russia did not prevent Kemal from suppressing the Turkish communists and from having their leaders assassinated, once they had challenged his rule. Their fate was deeply deplored in Moscow, but support for Kemal was not discontinued. Russia could not afford to be particular in its choice of allies, nor could it ignore the immediate interests of the Soviet state. This kind of dilemma was to recur many times.

With the ebbing of the first revolutionary wave after the first world war, conditions in Europe and Asia became more stable and the hopes for an early victory of the national liberation movements, let alone of the Communist parties, evaporated. Soviet relations with Turkey and Persia remained fairly close; there were no other independent states in the Near East at the time with whom Moscow could directly deal. Stalin prevailed in the struggle for power in the

Kremlin; the construction of 'socialism in one country' got under way, and foreign policy was relegated to second place. Revolution, it was announced, was not for export. The Comintern underwent strange contortions. After 1928, in response to a new world crisis, it preached an ultra-revolutionary course of action, refusing to co-operate even with the left-wing leaders of the national movements in the East. 'National reformism' was now anathema; Kemalism was re-examined and found wanting. Only the Communist parties could be relied upon, but they, too, had to be severely purged before becoming truly Bolshevik in character. Followed to its logical conclusion, such a policy would have brought about a complete rupture between the Soviet Union and the national movements in the East. But extreme radicalism did not prevail for very long; by the middle nineteen-thirties the orientation was again towards a united front of all anti-imperialist forces. There was less warmth now in the relations with Turkey and Persia than in the early years after the revolution, but this was by no means the fault of the Russians alone, for with the changes on the international scene Turkey and Persia needed Russia less than in the early twenties. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was deeply absorbed in its domestic problems, while in its foreign policy Europe all but monopolized its attention as both a promise and a danger.

During the first two decades after the revolution and almost up to the end of the second world war, the Near East, once a central preoccupation of Russian statesmen, did not figure high on the list of Soviet priorities. Seen in retrospect, it does not appear that the Soviet Union missed many chances in this part of the world. Of course, the narrow, sectarian approach of the Communist International towards potential allies was not very promising. It was unlikely that anti-religious slogans, with heavy emphasis on the class struggle and on the leading role of the industrial proletariat, would go down well in Turkey, Persia, and the Arab world. But it is doubtful whether Russia would have made much more headway even if Soviet policy had been more flexible and Comintern slogans less sectarian. A revolutionary situation did not yet exist in the Middle East; Britain and France, though facing some unrest, were still firmly in the saddle. Radical Arabs, Turks, and Persians riding the wave of the future were far more likely to opt for nazi Germany and fascist Italy than for Soviet communism.

From time to time the Middle East cropped up in diplomatic

negotiations. When Molotov, then Soviet Foreign Minister, saw Hitler and Ribbentrop in Berlin in November 1940, the 'general direction of the Persian Gulf' was mentioned as one of the obvious spheres of Soviet interest to be discussed at some future stage. But Hitler had different plans; during the first two years of fighting on the Eastern front the survival of the Soviet state was at stake, and Russia's Middle East interests were not energetically pursued. In co-operation with the Western allies, Soviet troops occupied part of Iran, and at the end of the war showed great reluctance to withdraw. But Iran had been occupied primarily to prevent a pro-Axis coup, as had happened earlier in Iraq, and to safeguard the delivery of Allied lend-lease supplies at a time when many other routes had been cut. Turkey was neutral during the war, but as the tide turned the Soviet Union became more and more critical of Turkish policy. Towards the end of the war the demand was pressed both for control over the Straits and for the surrender of certain Turkish provinces. While Russia's main concerns were still focused on Europe, and while the political and military problems of absorbing Eastern Europe preoccupied Soviet leaders, interest in the Middle East also reawakened. The claim for a Soviet mandate over Tripolitania made at the Potsdam Conference was perhaps not meant very seriously and was not pressed strongly when it encountered resistance. But it was indicative of the growing awareness in Moscow that the Soviet Union was now a global power and that there were many new opportunities to strengthen its position in various parts of the world.

The Palestine issue came to the fore as the war ended. Almost six million Jews had been killed in nazi-occupied Europe, and the struggle of the Jewish community in Palestine for national independence came to preoccupy first the powers, and later the United Nations. Soviet policy, which had been violently hostile to Zionism, was modified and favored the establishment of a Jewish as well as an Arab state in Palestine. This pro-Israeli phase in Soviet policy did not endure, but while it lasted it was an important factor in the creation of the Jewish state.

Soon after the war the Arab world entered a period of prolonged crisis. Syria and Lebanon attained independence, and anti-British feeling in Egypt and Iraq became far more intense than ever before. With the downfall of the Axis, many erstwhile supporters of fascism came to regard the Soviet Union as a potential ally in the struggle

against the West. They were not necessarily willing to embrace the basic tenets of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, but there was considerable sympathy for an ideology favoring radical change – quite apart from the growing prestige of the Soviet Union as the main champion of anti-Westernism. As the war ended there was in the Middle East a growing reservoir of goodwill towards the Soviet Union. At first, Soviet policy made little use of these new opportunities. The intransigence of the Communist parties at the height of the cold war made it all but impossible for them to collaborate with other parties. Soviet political thinking contemplated a sharpening of the global conflict; the independence achieved by many Asian and African countries after the second world war was ‘sham’, not real, the leaders of these countries, the ‘petty-bourgeois nationalists’, were potential traitors – if they had not already betrayed the national interest. Stalin was firmly convinced that in between the Soviet bloc and the camp headed by the United States there was no middle ground; the slogans of positive neutralism, of a ‘zone of peace’, let alone of peaceful co-existence, were still in the future. In the view of the Soviet leaders communism could make decisive progress only in countries under the direct control of the Soviet army.

There were a few signs of a shift from this rigid position even before Stalin’s death, but only after 1953 was there a basic re-orientation of policy. Now Turkey was told that Soviet territorial claims had been dropped, and the attitude towards the Arab national movement became much more friendly. The colonels who had overthrown King Farouk, and who had at first been denounced as fascist reactionaries, were now reappraised and upgraded. Syria became of considerable interest to Moscow in view of the growing influence of the extreme left in that country. The idea that only an industrial proletariat could lead a national revolution was tacitly dropped, and the progressive character of ‘military socialism’ was discovered. There was even a certain improvement in Soviet-Israeli relations. At the height of the anti-Semitic purge, during Stalin’s last year, diplomatic relations had been severed by Moscow. They were renewed some months after his death, but relations never again became really close, for in the Arab-Israeli dispute the Soviet Union gave increasing support to the Arabs. The discovery of the revolutionary potential of the Arab world was the great turning-point in Soviet Middle East policy in the post-Stalin period. The great breakthrough came in 1955 – the year of the Bandung Conference,

when Bulganin and Khrushchev visited India, and when, perhaps most significantly, the arms deal with Egypt was signed. The initiative for this deal came at least as much from Egypt as from the Soviet Union. Colonel Nasser was committed to Arab unity under Egyptian leadership, yet the Baghdad Pact, the defensive alliance then sponsored by the Western powers, was splitting the Arab camp and jeopardizing his plans. Arms were needed by Egypt for all too obvious reasons; Nasser wanted to reassert Egypt's strength, to forge an Arab bloc which under his leadership would be a real power in world affairs. He realized that economic development, however urgent, would not give quick results; given the backwardness of the Arab world, it would be at best a long-drawn-out process. The mood both among leaders and the public was not one of patient waiting. Building up Arab military power seemed a short-cut, and the Soviet Union offered arms in much greater quantities and on far more advantageous terms than the West. At this stage the Soviet Union probably wanted to keep out of Middle East internal conflicts; the arms deal, it was asserted, had nothing to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict. For the Russians this was a side issue; their main purpose was, of course, anti-Western. But the arms shipments directly affected the political situation throughout the area; tension continued to grow and the Soviet Union gradually became involved in the Arab-Israeli confrontation as well as in other local conflicts. The Suez crisis of 1956 helped to cement the Soviet-Egyptian alliance. On November 5, 1956, Bulganin sent notes to Britain, France, and Israel announcing that the Soviet Union was firmly resolved to use force to destroy the aggressors and restore peace in the Middle East; the possibility of attacking these countries with ballistic missiles was mentioned. As for Israel, the note stated that its very existence had been put in question. Whether these threats really stopped the war is more than doubtful; they came only after American pressure on Britain and France had made it virtually certain that the 'expedition' would be a failure. But little credit was given to Mr. Dulles in the Arab world, whereas the Soviet Union got all the praise for assisting Egypt in the hour of peril.

The Eisenhower doctrine which was made public several weeks after Suez caused further resentment in the Arab world; the reference to the vacuum that now existed in the Middle East, indirectly stressing Arab military weakness, was bound to cause great offence in the Arab capitals and to make them more inclined than ever to

move towards a *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union. What had begun as a 'purely commercial transaction' to break the Western arms monopoly became the starting-point of a political and even ideological reorientation from 'positive neutralism' to 'scientific socialism'. In Egypt this was a more or less orderly process, the licensed infiltration by pro-Soviet elements of a nationalist one-party regime and the gradual change of its character. But the stormy developments in Syria and Iraq threatened to upset for a while the newly established alliance with Arab nationalism. The growth of communist influence in Syria frightened the radical nationalist leaders of the Ba'th and drove them into union with Egypt. In Iraq the overthrow of Nuri Said and Hashemite rule propelled the communists suddenly into a commanding position from which they threatened the pro-Nasserist forces. This challenge could not fail to alarm President Nasser, who sounded the tocsin during the last week of 1958. The communists in the Arab world were separatists, he declared, opposed to Arab unity—an assertion hotly denied by Khrushchev at the 21st Congress of the Soviet Communist party. But Nasser was not easily mollified, and Egypt's communists were again arrested for having deserted the national cause. Although relations with the Soviet Union became for a while markedly cooler, Egypt could not afford an open break. It insisted that the quarrel between the communists and Arab radical nationalism was a purely domestic affair which did not in the least affect Arab admiration for Khrushchev, Mao, Gomulka, and Tito. An Egyptian periodical argued that the Soviet Union would not sacrifice for the sake of the Arab communists the trust and respect it had won from the Arabs as a whole: 'The road to Moscow does not lead via the Syrian and Iraqi Communist parties.' This prediction proved to be surprisingly correct; Soviet policy in the Middle East was not to be deflected from its long-term aims by the temporary suppression of the Communist parties. Soviet patience paid dividends. The United Arab Republic broke up a few years later as suddenly as it had come into existence, and independent Syria again became the most trusted ally of the Soviet Union in the Middle East. The further radicalization of the Egyptian regime, the sharpening of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the end of the struggle in Algeria, and the war in Yemen offered fresh opportunities for consolidating Soviet influence in the Arab world.

The successes of the Soviet Union in the Middle East during the

nineteen-fifties cannot be ascribed to any single cause; they certainly cannot be explained by the magic of such words as 'Israel' or 'Algeria' or 'Arab oil'. They cannot be interpreted solely in terms of foreign policies. Russia was not physically involved in the Middle East and thus could refrain from action on occasions and in regions where the West could hardly avoid it. In the Arab world Russia was not tarred with the brush of imperialism. For forty years it had been absent from the area, whereas the Western ('colonial') powers had been very much in evidence. The Western powers sought to 'organize' the Arab world, and established sundry defensive strongholds there, whereas Russia could advocate a neutrality which coincided with the desires of the Arab *élites*. The West, or to be precise Western Europe, was largely dependent on Middle East oil, and believed that its loss would be a catastrophe, whereas the Soviet Union could very well do without it. While Western interests clashed everywhere with the rising tide of radical Arab nationalism, Russia appeared to be a disinterested and benevolent onlooker. Both the Russians and the Nasserists had a vital interest in weakening and ultimately destroying Western positions in the Middle East. At the same time radical nationalists in the Arab world became more receptive to communist ideological influences. The Soviet Union evoked dazzling dreams of speedy modernization and industrialization. The general mood was anti-capitalist and the radical Arab one-party regimes, having decided to nationalize industry, foreign trade, and banking, and having greatly strengthened the State sector, seemed to be moving steadily towards a society that resembled communism in some important aspects.

There was no Soviet advance in other parts of the Middle East in the nineteen-fifties comparable with the dramatic breakthrough in the Arab world. Soviet friendship with Egypt and Syria precluded any closer ties with Israel. Relations with Turkey and Iran remained normal but cool. Ankara and Teheran noted with satisfaction that Soviet territorial claims had been dropped and that Moscow was showing interest in promoting commercial exchanges. But suspicions based on long experience with the powerful neighbor to the north lingered on. In Moscow, on the other hand, Turkey's membership in NATO and Persia's involvement in Western-sponsored defence pacts constituted a major obstacle to any real *rapprochement*.

During the decade between, roughly, 1948 and 1958, between the struggle for Palestine and the creation of the UAR and the revolution

in Iraq, the Middle East stood high among the global danger zones. Every year brought new crises, military conflicts, revolutions, and *coups d'état*; at times the Middle East all but monopolized the world's attention, overshadowing events in other parts of the globe – such as the Far East – which were of equal if not greater importance. After 1959 the Middle East figured less frequently in the headlines of the world's press. Internal tensions did not abate by any means, nor was there any dramatic decline in Soviet interest in the area. But the strategic importance of the region was no longer regarded in the West with the same urgent concern, there was an abundance of oil from other sources, and, above all, the Middle East's near monopoly as an area of permanent unrest was broken. Crises in Africa, the Far East, and the Caribbean preoccupied both foreign ministries and newspaper offices to the detriment of the Middle East. This period of relative calm lasted for about seven or eight years, terminating in a new crisis. This lull before the storm is a convenient starting-point for the present study.



### 3     The Neutralization of the Northern Tier

#### Turkey

Adnan Menderes' Democratic party, which had ruled Turkey for a decade, was overthrown by a *coup* on May 27, 1960. His regime had alienated a great part of the country's *élite*, especially the urban middle class, many army officers, and the younger intellectuals, who by and large supported the Republican party. Many of the promises made in 1950, when Menderes came to power, had not been kept: political life had not been liberalized, and the government had retreated from secularism, one of the basic principles of the modern Turkish State. The Democratic party had strong roots in the countryside, for the peasants had on the whole benefited from the regime; but ill-considered economic policies had caused galloping inflation and led eventually to an unofficial devaluation which severely affected the urban population. Following widespread student riots, troops were called in by Menderes to restore order, but the army command refused to use force against the demonstrators; instead, a group of officers under General Gürsel, whose declared aim was to restore democracy, arrested Menderes and his closest collaborators and seized power. The new men were politically by no means a homogeneous body; some of them advocated a fully fledged military dictatorship on a Nasserist (or left-wing fascist) pattern. But in the tug-of-war that ensued, the upper hand was gained by those who stood for a compromise with the civilian establishment and for eventual reconciliation with the erstwhile supporters of Menderes. Conditions soon returned to normal; the elections of October 1961 were won by the Republican People's party, whose leader, İsmet İnönü, one of

Atatürk's closest collaborators, became once again prime minister.<sup>1\*</sup>

Under Menderes Turkey had collaborated closely with the Western powers; having joined NATO in 1952, it was one of the original signatories of the Baghdad Pact (subsequently CENTO). As the second world war ended, Turkey found itself under great pressure from the Soviet Union, which had demonstratively revoked the 1925 Soviet-Turkish treaty of neutrality and non-aggression; Moscow also demanded a revision of the Montreux Convention governing the Straits and claimed the Turkish provinces of Kars and Ardahan. After Stalin's death the Soviet leaders decided to revise their attitude towards Turkey. The governments of the Georgian and Armenian Soviet Republics renounced their territorial claims and Khrushchev admitted in a speech in the Supreme Soviet that 'we cannot say that this [the deterioration in relations between the two countries] occurred solely because of Turkey's fault . . .'.<sup>2</sup>

No radical changes took place, however, in Turkey's foreign political orientation in the following years, and Soviet attacks on Turkey continued as the Menderes government showed little readiness to renounce its treaty engagements with the West. When the United States decided to send troops to Lebanon in 1958, following a request by the Lebanese government, the expedition started from the NATO base near Adana. At the time of the *coup* against Nuri Said, Menderes at one stage planned military intervention in Iraq; he desisted only after he had been warned by the Americans that the Soviet threats and troop concentrations should not be taken lightly. Towards the end of the Menderes regime relations with Moscow began to improve: the Turkish minister of health visited the Soviet capital, and in early 1960 an exchange of visits was agreed upon in principle between Menderes and Khrushchev.

The *coup* of 1960 was followed in Moscow with much attention and a great deal of sympathy. Though General Gürsel had made it clear from the beginning that there would be no substantial change in Turkey's foreign policy, Soviet observers knew that not all members of the junta shared his views. İnönü, who became prime minister the following year, had always advocated closer relations with the Soviet Union, and Selim Sarper, the new foreign minister, was thought to tend towards neutralism. In the following months there was a good deal of diplomatic activity. Sarper and the Soviet ambassador in Turkey, Ryshov, declared that a marked improve-

\* The notes appear at the end of the book, pp. 195-207.

ment had taken place in the relations between the two countries. Admiral Korutürk, the Turkish ambassador in Moscow, made soundings on his own initiative about the Russian attitude towards a new Balkan-Near East pact extending from Belgrade to Cairo. Turkish newspapers, especially those close to İnönü and his party, published favorable articles about the Soviet Union; all this was a far cry from the days of the cold war. Several new political and cultural associations came into being advocating left-wing policies at home and a *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union (the periodical *Yon*, the Peasants Institute, etc.). This ferment on the left produced a reaction on the right;<sup>3</sup> the Turkish public was traditionally suspicious of pro-Soviet activities, a label freely bandied about and often fatal in the domestic struggle for political power.

The diplomatic negotiations had no immediate tangible results, though a few minor economic agreements were concluded, and there was disappointment in Moscow that relations between the two countries did not improve faster and that NATO manœuvres were still taking place in Turkey. Marshal Malinovsky again warned the Turks.<sup>4</sup> Sarper was replaced in 1962 by the pro-Western Erkin. The reaction of Soviet commentators was unfriendly; 'Our Radio', a communist broadcasting station beamed to Turkey from East Germany, asserted that since the progressive elements had been removed from the junta, reactionary policies were again being pursued.

The repercussions of the Cuban crisis in autumn 1962 were felt in the Near East too. When the American government decided to remove its Jupiter missile bases from Turkey, it was generally assumed in Ankara that this was part of a secret deal between Washington and Moscow. If the American government put its own security above the interests of its allies (it was reasoned in Ankara), Turkey, too, should put its national interest first and regain some freedom of manœuvre. Several members of İnönü's cabinet and some senators suggested that Turkey should contribute towards the new climate of coexistence by a gradual reduction of its military and political obligations towards the West and by a neutralist foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> They referred to the friendly relations with Russia which had prevailed in the twenties and thirties, a state of affairs that had changed as a result of Stalin's aggressive demands and threats. İnönü was often quoted at the time to the effect that Turkey had to find its place in the new world that was being born.

Tension between the left and right became more acute throughout

1963. Parliamentary debates and discussions in the press gave the impression that communism had suddenly become a burning issue.<sup>6</sup> Various popular and national front organizations were established, and the right wing reacted by creating associations to combat the spread of communism. Between these claims and counterclaims, it was not easy to form a realistic appraisal about the real power of communism in Turkey. The illegal Turkish Communist party had only a few thousand members, but there were in addition a great many intellectual fellow-travellers in public life, some of them in prominent positions in the mass media. Their doings attracted much attention, the more so since up to 1960 all pro-communist activity had been strictly illegal. The Turkish right prepared new laws to ban communist activities, but in the changed climate of 1963 these encountered strong opposition. The right could not even prevent communists (appearing on behalf of the Turkish Labour party) being permitted for the first time in Turkey's history to broadcast on the occasion of the municipal elections in November 1963. Representatives of twenty-four left-wing organizations, including the Socialist Cultural Society, the Village Teachers Association, and others, in May 1964 established an executive committee to combat Panturanianism, fascism, and religious reaction. Many regarded this as another attempt to establish a pro-communist 'national front' on a broad basis.<sup>7</sup>

The left-wing advocates of Turkish-Soviet *rapprochement* were heavily handicapped in their efforts by the Cyprus problem. The Soviet Union openly supported Makarios, and in September 1964 signed an agreement to supply arms to Cyprus. The Turkish government was firmly resolved to assist the Turkish minority, by military intervention if necessary, but it gained little encouragement for such action among its Western allies. In a letter to İnönü in June 1964 President Johnson gave the Turkish government to understand that it could not count on automatic American support if by its actions it provoked Moscow to intervene. Turkey felt betrayed by its allies and some influential voices suggested that the country should either reduce its NATO obligations or leave the Treaty Organization altogether.<sup>8</sup> Erkin, the foreign minister, went to Moscow in October 1964, and though he talked to his hosts mainly about the promotion of trade between the two countries, the intention was clearly to 'clear up old misunderstandings' and to create a better atmosphere between the two countries.<sup>9</sup> It appeared highly doubtful whether these or other Turkish overtures (such as negotiations with Bulgaria)

would induce Moscow to change its policy on Cyprus. Since İnönü could not point to any tangible achievements or even any specific promise, the government's foreign policy was attacked by many critics who felt that it might leave the country during a crisis without any allies at all.<sup>10</sup> The Justice party was among the critics of a comprehensive reorientation towards the East, so were leading army circles, and Erkin advocated a more cautious line than the prime minister.

In 1965 the initiative again passed to the diplomats, with Podgorny's and Gromyko's visits to Turkey and Urgüplü's trip to Moscow; but again there were few tangible results. İnönü's domestic position had progressively weakened; after a defeat in parliament in February 1965, he resigned. Urgüplü was made head of an interim government and after the great electoral victory of the Justice party in October 1965, Demirel became the new prime Minister. After the fall of Khrushchev, Soviet Near East policy, too, was re-examined. Obviously it was not a suitable moment for any far-reaching new departures in Soviet-Turkish relations.

İnönü's policy towards the Soviet Union had been motivated not by any ideological sympathy with communism, but by his interpretation of Turkish national self-interest. The Kemalist tradition had played a great part, and the example set by de Gaulle also had a certain impact. İnönü was firmly convinced that if Turkey was too closely connected with the Western powers it would find it difficult to pursue its own national interests; in addition, there was always the danger of a deal between the two super-powers in which Turkish interests would be sacrificed. Demirel, a much younger man than İnönü and more modern in his outlook, was more sceptical about the prospects of Soviet-Turkish *rapprochement* and the political benefits that Turkey could derive from it. He did not in principle oppose closer relations, but the main purpose of such moves was, in his view, to bring pressure on Washington. His attitude began to change only after Moscow reversed its Cyprus policy.

Demirel's great electoral victory came as a surprise to Moscow. Soviet observers expected that İnönü would continue in office or that the army would again intervene to prevent the accession to power of a party which, in some respects, was in the Menderes tradition. This was, however, a misreading of the Turkish situation: İnönü's position had been precarious even before the acute crisis developed, Demirel was not a new Men-

deres, and the army seemed perfectly willing to work with him.

With the establishment of the Demirel government and the resulting reshuffle, many left-wingers and fellow-travellers lost their position in the public service. Demirel announced that the country would stay in NATO; his government refused to ratify the cultural agreement with the Soviet Union which had been prepared under İnönü. (This did not prevent a steady stream of cultural exchanges; Soviet literary delegations came to Ankara and Istanbul, the Soviet Union bought several Turkish movies, and an agreement on the promotion of tourism was reached.) Demirel's lack of enthusiasm did not exactly endear him to Moscow, even though the Soviet government preferred not to engage in polemics. But the Turkish communists stepped up their propaganda campaign against the new government: the Justice party, they claimed, was hostile to all the domestic progressive forces; it was enlisting all the extreme reactionary forces; it was an American puppet brought to power by the American imperialists; it did not want good neighborly relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> It was accused of having killed Gürsel with the help of the Americans in a most horrible way, for they regarded him as an obstacle to their plans; did he not return a living corpse from the American hospital where he was to have been cured? Then they had placed Sunay, who agreed to cede new bases to the Americans and to make other concessions, in the presidential mansion, while Tuval, a 'reactionary with fascist views, opposed to the principles of Atatürk', was made chief of the general staff.<sup>12</sup> While the Demirel government denied that there were any new military bases in Turkey, a new base had in fact been established at Sogauli.<sup>13</sup> In an official statement the Turkish CP asserted that Demirel was about to establish fascism and an open military dictatorship in Turkey; it was stirring up anti-communist hysteria which threatened everyone; it had made the country into an American and NATO base for military aggression against both the socialist camp and the freedom-loving peoples of the Middle East – all this despite the fact, freely and cynically admitted by the Western imperialists, that in the event of a nuclear war Turkey would be the first country to be obliterated from the face of the earth.<sup>14</sup> Under Demirel the nation was facing economic and political ruin, as well as military disaster; fully implementing the American cold war policy, it was engaging in aggressive military manoeuvres directed against the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup>

The propaganda campaign was extremely violent and it could have created the mistaken impression that Soviet-Turkish relations had reached an all-time low. But there was, as so often, a division of labor; Moscow acted as if the Turkish communists did not exist. There was a definite improvement in relations in 1966, Turkish trade with the communist bloc (about which more below) expanded, and several high-level meetings took place. Demirel and Caglayangil, the new foreign minister, had stated soon after their party came to power that, while they did not feel too sanguine about the prospects of Turkish-Soviet relations, they would do nothing to antagonize Moscow, but would work for a *détente*. By December 1966, on the eve of the Kosygin visit to Ankara, there had already been a definite change for the better; official Soviet spokesmen noted that 'favorable conditions existed for a radical improvement in Soviet-Turkish relations', while the Turks likewise commented on the 'positive changes that evoke satisfaction'.<sup>16</sup>

The gradual reversal of the Soviet position on Cyprus had much to do with this change. In 1964, after the Soviet decision to send arms and equipment to Makarios, the Turkish foreign minister had given warning that open Soviet support for the Greeks would bring the improvement in Soviet-Turkish relations to a standstill.<sup>17</sup> Ryshov, the Soviet ambassador, tried to explain that Ankara was interpreting the Soviet position wrongly. Why would it not trust Moscow as a mediator in the conflict? There were in fact certain straws in the wind that suggested a Soviet retreat from its extreme position; Cyprus was not important enough in Soviet eyes to sacrifice good relations with Turkey. Gromyko had declared as early as January 1965 that the USSR would support an arrangement that would permit Cyprus to continue as an independent state, in which the rights of both the Greek and Turkish communities to live in peace would be observed.<sup>18</sup> This was not incompatible with the Turkish position on Cyprus (independence plus federation). The Cyprus communists noted with regret that the Soviet Union was talking increasingly about 'two communities' in Cyprus, that it was no longer giving all-out support to AKEL – that, in brief, it was moving towards a neutral line, a shift which became even more obvious after the right-wing *coup* in Greece in April 1967.

In Turkey national passions had been running high in connection with the fate of the Turkish minority in Cyprus, and there was deep disappointment when it was realized that Ankara could not muster

international support for its position. The Western countries were not sympathetic, while of the Muslim countries only Iran and Pakistan (no Arab country) had voted with Turkey in the UN General Assembly. The signs of a change in the Soviet position were therefore all the more welcome, and there was increasing belief in Ankara that the key to a desirable solution of the Cyprus problem was to be sought in Moscow, not in the West. The Soviet press, in contrast to the propaganda of the Turkish communists, had noted soon after Demirel had taken over that the new regime intended to work 'for the establishment and development of good neighborly relations',<sup>19</sup> and, as a first sign of goodwill, a Soviet Armenian party secretary was removed from his post in May 1966 for having permitted anti-Turkish demonstrations in a border district. Soviet spokesmen, in preparation for Kosygin's visit to Ankara in December 1966, stressed that the Soviet leaders had no ulterior motives in their desire for good neighborliness and that their policy was based solely on the principles of 'equality, respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty, and non-interference. In return for friendship the Soviet Union had not interfered with Turkish relations with other countries, had not burdened the country with unbearable military expenditure, and had not asked for immunity for its citizens on Turkish soil so that they could behave arrogantly and insult the national dignity of the Turks.'<sup>20</sup> *Sapienti sat.* Kosygin's visit to Ankara was the first ever by a Soviet prime minister. There were a great many Turkish and some Soviet flags at the airport, and banners reading '*Hoş Geldiniz*' (Cordially welcome); there was much curiosity and traditional hospitality, neither much hate nor much love. Traditional friendship was invoked incessantly in the after-dinner speeches, but observers noted that the general atmosphere, though polite and dignified, was on the whole quite cool.<sup>21</sup> The Turkish opposition did not exploit the occasion for partisan manoeuvres, while Kosygin was exceedingly cautious in his speeches, which were for the most part devoted to the need to expand economic relations. He stressed time and again that there were no longer any questions in dispute between the two countries; statements by Turkish leaders that they were striving for a further improvement in relations had been received with trust in Moscow. Kosygin also emphasized repeatedly that 'we do not consider that such a development should happen at the expense of a worsening of Turkey's relations with any other state'.<sup>22</sup> His trip to Turkey, he



said, was not an isolated episode, out of context with what had already happened and without continuation in the future; it was part of a consistent political line which would not be subject to fluctuations: 'The Soviet Union was prepared to take definite steps in order to assure and consolidate this feeling of confidence in our peoples.'<sup>23</sup> It was not quite clear what definite steps he had in mind, unless he meant the non-aggression pact he had suggested in an interview the year before.<sup>24</sup> Views were exchanged about the Cyprus situation, and Kosygin seems to have expressed regret about an arms shipment to Nicosia made shortly before by the Czechs. In the final communiqué reference was made to the Middle East ('both sides expressed the desire that the Near and Middle East should become a zone of peace and security'), as well as to disarmament and European security.<sup>25</sup> Most of the formulations were vague, but the inclusion of a reference to the war in Vietnam was interpreted by some as a Soviet diplomatic victory. However, Kosygin's main intention was not to discuss detailed questions with a view to reaching full agreement, nor would the trade negotiations have made his presence necessary. Above all he wanted to reassure the Turks and to create a climate of confidence, and in this, to a certain extent, he succeeded. One week (some Turkish observers noted) was too short to eradicate the memories of several centuries, but it helped to establish the basis for further agreements paving the way for a general *rapprochement*.

The Soviet leaders did not, of course, expect that Kosygin's visit would solve all problems and prevent future tension altogether. In connection with President Sunay's visit to Washington in 1967, Moscow revived the old issue of American bases. The Soviet press gave a great deal of publicity to appeals by groups of Turkish intellectuals to remove these bases; *Pravda* seemed willing to put the main blame on the Americans 'seeking to keep, by hook or by crook, their rights and privileges'.<sup>26</sup> The Turkish communists, as usual far more outspoken, attacked the 'Demirel-Sunay clique' for accepting the Acheson plan (for establishing new American bases in Cyprus):

During the first phase Cyprus's independence will be destroyed and during the second phase America will establish . . . radar stations, nuclear stockpiles, rocket-launching pads and air and naval bases. . . . The Demirel-Sunay group, which has betrayed the Turkish people and its territorial integrity, is diligently helping the imperialists in the Cyprus question, too.<sup>27</sup>

Official Soviet statements did not, of course, put it so crudely. On the contrary, they went to great lengths to make a success of Demirel's visit to the Soviet Union in September 1967. The communiqué published after the meetings in Moscow mentioned 'positive results brought about by a constructive approach to problems of bilateral relations'.<sup>28</sup> In an interview after his return, the Turkish premier said that his visit had 'eliminated the last traces of hostility from Soviet-Turkish relations'.<sup>29</sup> In 1966, when Kosygin and Demirel had met in Ankara, there had been 'exchanges' on Cyprus; less than a year later, following the deterioration in the relations between Moscow and Athens, the communiqué was more positive. 'The Soviet view on Cyprus is fairly close to ours', Demirel said in his interview.<sup>30</sup> The discussions on disarmament and European security still seemed somewhat academic at the time; but when the Turkish foreign minister again visited Moscow in July 1968 he took with him more specific proposals; moreover, he was also speaking on behalf of his NATO colleagues, who (at their meeting in Reykjavik) had just decided on a common approach to the Soviet Union. Turkey was not willing to accept the Soviet denunciation of Israel as the aggressor in the Middle East crisis, but supported Moscow's call for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories. Demirel said that if there were several ways to preserve peace it was irresponsible of the Israelis to insist on one of them. This was a step in the right direction as far as the Soviet Union was concerned, and it was favorably received in Moscow.<sup>31</sup>

Demirel's mission to Moscow and his declarations after his return surprised the opposition at home. The right began to refer to him as 'Comrade Demirel', whereas the opposite camp claimed that his comments on Russia's technical and social achievements were not really consistent with his former style. The man who had once considered closer relations with Russia dangerous and a sign of enmity towards the West had mellowed. After his Moscow trip he had become fair-minded and realistic in his outlook. 'His enthusiastic praise of Russia boosted even Russian pride.'<sup>32</sup> The left was no doubt concerned that Demirel's policy would take much of the wind out of their sails, and the results of the elections of June 1968 seemed to confirm their fears. The Justice party scored minor gains; the People's Republican party, which under Bulent Ecevit had moved to the left, was split: in protest against this trend some fifty of its deputies and senators had broken away from the party in 1967 and

established a new group, the Reliance party. The Turkish Labour party, which for practical purposes represented communist interests in the country, had a sizable following among intellectuals, students, and some trade unions, but with its fifteen seats in the 450-member National Assembly it did not constitute a major political force.

What mainly mattered in the elections from the Soviet point of view was Turkey's attitude to NATO; wide publicity was given to demonstrations, appeals, and newspaper comments in Turkey calling for a withdrawal from NATO.<sup>33</sup> Since the NATO treaty was up for renewal in 1969, this had become a topical issue. The Soviet approach seemed to ignore the obvious fact that while there was concern in Turkey about restrictions imposed by the Western alliance and the presence of foreign bases, most Turks were more worried about the growing Soviet presence in the eastern Mediterranean. Military ties with America had been under review since 1965, and while many of the American bases were likely to be evacuated in the near future, the Soviet Union, to quote a highly-placed Turkish commentator, had worked diligently and methodically to eliminate the potential for U.S. military interference, and was successfully filling the vacuum left in the Middle East by the West:

We used to be certain that the walls built by NATO and CENTO would keep Russia in the north. Recently, however, the Soviet Union has with great ease climbed over the walls to the other side. Today we do not feel the threat of her presence. The Soviets are particularly careful not to let Iran, Turkey, and Greece feel such a threat . . . leading countries in the West, possibly to avoid additional political and military obligations, look the other way, pretend they are not aware of a threat, and furthermore, try to convince others that there is no threat.<sup>34</sup>

Previously, Turkish leaders had been mainly concerned with the Straits and possible Soviet pressure for a modification of the Montreux Convention. But the provisions of the Convention made it perfectly legal for the Soviet Black Sea Fleet to enter the Mediterranean, whereas it restricted the entrance of ships of third powers into the Black Sea. In the circumstances there was no urgent need from the Soviet point of view to demand a revision of the *status quo*. There were occasional Soviet complaints about alleged violations of the Convention following the visits of American warships in the Black Sea,<sup>35</sup> but the Soviet Black Sea Fleet had meanwhile been

built up to such an extent that Moscow could not plausibly argue that the visit of an American frigate endangered the security of the Soviet Union. The reason for Soviet restraint was, as a Turkish commentator noted, that the Straits had lost much of their original importance in the age of ICBMs and nuclear parity.<sup>36</sup>

They had certainly not lost *all* their importance, as the events of 1967 were to show: a record number of Soviet warships passed through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles that year, 167 to be precise, of which roughly two-thirds went through the Straits after the Arab-Israeli war. There was a great deal of sudden concern about the successful Soviet attempt to by-pass Turkey. The pro-government *Son Havadis* asked: 'What are those Soviet vessels looking for in a sea where they have no coast? We should be vigilant and understand once again the importance of the Western alliance against which our leftists are conducting a fierce campaign.'<sup>37</sup> The non-communist left opposition also expressed misgivings: the presence of the Soviet Mediterranean fleet was not a development to be welcomed by Turkey, which preferred the previous balance of naval forces. But there was nothing Turkey could do about it; it had to get used to the idea of coexisting with the Russians in the Mediterranean.

To many Turks, the continuing economic and social backwardness of their country, in a world in which so much depended on technology and productivity, was an even greater menace than the Soviet army or navy. Three out of four Turks were still employed in agriculture, and almost a million citizens were unemployed or under-employed. If Russia had a certain appeal among some sections of the intelligentsia, it was as a once-backward country which had been transformed into a modern power.

The Turkish economy, after many false starts and a great deal of mismanagement, could point to substantial advance in the sixties. The average yearly growth of the GNP in the first five-year plan (which began in 1963) had been 6.4 %; in 1966 it reached almost 9%. OECD, in its yearly report, called it a 'good year for the Turkish economy, with fast growth and a high rate of investment'.<sup>38</sup> But it was also a period of major problems: foreign exchange reserves fell to a very low level, capital inflow was reduced, and imports higher than had been envisaged. Optimists argued, not without reason, that if the same level of economic expansion was sustained for a number of years, Turkey would soon attain medium-power status. But fast

and orderly economic expansion was threatened by the country's weak financial position. The second five-year plan envisaged investments at a level of 120m. Turkish pounds a year; the country faced an uphill struggle in attracting investors from abroad, and the capacity of the State Bank to finance the expansion of the public sector was also limited. Turkey was already heavily in debt; up to 40 % of its exports were needed to cover interest and capital repayments. Severe cuts in imports would have helped to remedy the situation, but would at the same time have caused a substantial decline in economic growth.

In these difficult circumstances the expansion of economic relations with the Soviet Union seemed an obvious way to eliminate or reduce the trade deficit. Negotiations started in 1964 and concerned several major projects, such as the building of an oil refinery south of Izmir with a yearly capacity of 3m. tons, and an aluminium plant near Seydischir with an output of about 60,000 tons per year. Other projects included plants for manufacturing sulphuric acid, fibre-board, glass strip, and an engraved glass factory. Soviet geologists were to help in the search for Turkish oil, and an iron and steel mill was also under consideration. These talks lasted for more than two years and there was hard bargaining. The final offer made by the Soviet Union in this package deal was considerably below the figures quoted originally. Turkey received a credit of \$200m. for a period of fifteen years at a 2.5 % interest rate to pay for these projects. Most important, the agreement provided for payment in Turkish surplus agricultural products, such as tobacco, raisins, fruit, olive oil, nuts, and cotton, for which it had been difficult to find markets in the West. At the same time Turkey also intensified its trade with the other Soviet bloc countries; this roughly doubled between 1963 and 1967. Seen in a wider context, however, it seemed unlikely that the Soviet Union and East Europe would replace the West in the foreseeable future as Turkey's main source of credit and its chief trading partners. The Soviet credits of \$200m. over fifteen years compared with \$350m. of loans provided yearly by Western states and private firms. The Soviet Union figured in 1967 only sixth among Turkey's trade partners.<sup>39</sup>

Soviet-Turkish relations during the nineteen-sixties reflected the changing world situation: at the height of the cold war and up to the early sixties Turkey felt directly threatened by Russia and regarded the Western alliance as its main shield against pressure from

the north. With the *détente* in West-East relations, the American military presence became much weaker, while the practical value of CENTO in an emergency was more than doubtful. American economic aid, which had totalled \$1.9 billion over nearly two decades, was cut to \$59m. in 1968 and was to be phased out in 1972.<sup>40</sup> In these circumstances Soviet influence was bound to increase; the fact that Moscow had stopped threatening the Turks, combined with the feeling that the Western alliance no longer sufficed to safeguard Turkish national security, let alone guarantee Turkish interests elsewhere, such as in Cyprus, made for a switch towards neutralism in Turkish policy. Turkey's internal stability made such a reorientation appear less than risky. Close collaboration with the Soviet Union was unlikely to subvert the Justice party and to make it communist in character; even the Republican People's party, further to the left and ideologically committed to a form of neutralism, could not compete with the attractions offered to Soviet foreign policy by regimes such as Nasser's, not to mention the Syrian Neo-Ba'th. The influence of communism in Turkey was small, nor was it always certain what kind of Marxism was preached by its adherents; in the age of Mao and Castro, the Soviet Union had suffered painful experiences with many revolutionary groups in the third world. The realization that communism was basically weak in Turkey and that its future was uncertain no doubt contributed greatly to the Soviet decision that wooing Turkey was preferable to using the frontal-attack approach advocated by the Turkish communists. Friendly relations with a 'reactionary' regime might gravely embarrass communists in Turkey (as well as in Iran and many other countries), but that was the price that had to be paid, in view of the higher interests of proletarian internationalism.

Many Turks were flattered by the attention given to their country by the Russians, and the economic help extended by the Soviets was gratefully acknowledged. Yet there remained a great deal of uneasiness and even fear, which was reinforced by the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968. The Soviet Union had solemnly declared that it would strictly adhere to the principle of non-interference, yet it was not clear whether the Soviet and the Turkish definitions of non-interference were identical. Did it mean that any criticism of things Soviet and of communism was ruled out, and that at some future stage only pro-Soviet politicians would be acceptable to Moscow? The Finnish experience was not encouraging, and Finland was so