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By JACQUE Date 07-10-99

MEMORANDUM FOR THE STANDING GROUP

SUBJECT: Association of Greece and Turkey with NATO

The Italian Representative has furnished, for information, the enclosed copy of a memorandum sent by the Italian Foreign Office to the Governments of the NATO Nations and to the Council Deputies, on the subject of the association of Greece and Turkey with NATO.

*C. H. Donnelly*  
C. H. DONNELLY  
Senior Secretary

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The Italian Government deems it necessary to state to the other Governments parties to the Atlantic Pact its views on the admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO, and to set forth the motives that have caused it to consider with favor since the beginning such an admission.

The aims and the organization of the Atlantic Pact are purely defensive, for it is designed to safeguard member states against the danger of external aggression. Obviously, it is solely against this regrettable contingency that the Pact has set up a defensive system based on the control of certain strategically important points, on the raising of member countries' armed forces to a reasonable level of strength, and on a commensurate development of production. It is to be hoped that, the nearer these policies will come to perfection, the more adequate will they show themselves, not only to assure the defense of the free world, but also to deter from its evil intent any potential aggressor.

The Italian Government is of the opinion that, in order to achieve this result, when issues arising from the Pact are examined, paramount importance should be ascribed to anything that may contribute to ensure the best possibilities of effective defense in the event of an aggression. From this point of view there is no doubt that the bastion represented by Asia Minor (Turkey) has the same value for the South Mediterranean sector of NATO as the Scandinavian bastion has for the Northern sector. The loss of the former bastion would drive Atlantic defense back to the Central Mediterranean, the same as the loss of the latter would drive it back to the Channel. In both cases the defense of the Continent would become extremely difficult and the whole system would be weakened by the loss of points d'appui of the highest strategic value.

It has seemed to the Italian Government that, confronted with these vital considerations, the questions whether Greece and Turkey are, in the stricter geographical sense, part of the Atlantic area (that gives its name to the Pact) or again whether their historical and political characteristics fully qualify them for membership of the Atlantic community lose a great measure of their importance. Even so, in our view, the extension of the Pact to Greece and Turkey is quite conformable to its regional character. It should moreover hardly be necessary to recall: that Greece has in the past few years withstood a prolonged armed pressure on her border that has kept the free world in anxiety; that Turkey, when subjected to repeated diplomatic pressure for a new settlement of the Straits Question, has stood her ground and has since had to resort to grievous sacrifices in order to strengthen her defenses, not only in her own interest but in that of the whole West. Nor must excessive credit be given to the opinion that the admission of Greece and Turkey in the Atlantic defensive system could be mistakenly viewed as an aggressive move. We all know that such is not the case and that on the other hand a show of timidity may increasingly encourage an unscrupulous opponent, whereas a firm stand may happily assure the maintenance of peace.

These considerations have been constantly before the Italian Government and have prompted it to declare itself, since some time,

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in favor of admitting Greece and Turkey to NATO.

Of course, the Italian Government is, for its part, willing to accept and second other solutions, if practicable, that may bring about in other ways the participation of Greece and Turkey in the defense organization of the free world. As it is well known, the plan of a guarantee to be given by certain powers to these countries has come up against serious difficulties of a constitutional nature raised by some of the Governments concerned. Moreover, such guarantees as exist cover Turkey alone, and do not contemplate Greece.

Another proposal has been put forward, that of a pact not limited to Greece and Turkey but open to other countries of the Middle East. The Italian Government is, in a general way, not opposed to it. It would present the advantage of more easily bringing the Arab countries - which hold important strategic positions in the area - to share, at least subsequently, in the defense of the Eastern Mediterranean. True as it is, that these countries can today make, if armed forces are considered, no important contribution to it, we must keep in mind that, in the regrettable event of a conflict arising in or extended to that area, their territories would therefore be expedient for the Western Powers to have them even now for friends and allies. It must however be granted that precisely for the reason that study for the creation of a Mediterranean Pact, though prolonged, has led to no concrete results, the mere admission of Greece and Turkey to the Atlantic Pact is again under consideration.

In certain quarters doubts have been voiced as to the present existence of urgent reasons for this renewed consideration. The Italian Government believes that such question can be answered in the affirmative. Certain neutralist tendencies (so-called of "non-identification", "equidistance", etc.) have of late found expression in the Middle East. Their development and consolidation might be very dangerous for Western Europe, since those countries would never be capable of defending their neutrality. It is well known that disappointment with the Western world has contributed to the growth of these tendencies. The West, in fact, after sending sundry committees of inquiry and after giving promises of manifold aid, has been so far unable to take effective action for raising the living standards of these peoples or for removing the serious situation of uneasiness due to the still smouldering Arab-Israeli conflict.

Recent events in Iran are also a consequence of all this. If Persia is now again a center of unrest and a source of anxiety, this must in part be imputed also to the difficulties the West has met with, in making good its promises of aid to this country, which must, on the other hand, be given full credit for beating back, till now, Communist pressure on its richest and strategically most valuable regions. If this pressure were renewed, we might suddenly be faced by an aggressor appearing on the Mediterranean from a turbulent and ill-defended zone.

It is for deep-reaching reasons that the precipitating of the situation in Iran has had extensive repercussions in Turkey where it has been considered as an instance of the results to which continued procrastination of "decisions" by the West can lead. The upheavals in Iran - according to reports of Italian Representatives in the Middle East - have not only caused discouragement, but have also fostered a strain of dismay and uncertainty in responsible circles at Ankara and other capitals, to the point of causing serious discussion on the greater expediency of seeking refuge in neutrality rather than await ever delayed guarantees. These neutralist

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tendencies are today barely perceptible, but it is hard to foresee the possible extent of their growth, were the present condition of drift and discontent prevailing in the Levant, between Suez and the Persian Gulf, to continue unchecked.

In the opinion of the Italian Government action should be taken to break this dangerous mood and strengthen the hand of the West and of the free world in this important area. The admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO seems to be the most effective way to round off the European defense system in the Mediterranean, thereby also starting the settling down of the Middle Eastern situation into a definitive pattern. This would help to keep the Levant on the side of the West. The present fitful uncertainty presents nothing but danger to the cause of peace.

Washington, D.C. June 25th, 1951

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