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*SUBJECT & MASTER
TURKEY : PM's Visit
Feb 88*

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

9 April 1988

Dear Mr.

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO TURKEY: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT EVREN

The Prime Minister called on President Evren on the first afternoon of her visit to Turkey (7 April). The President was accompanied at the meeting by Prime Minister Ozal, the Turkish Ambassador to London and by a Private Secretary (who interpreted). HM Ambassador to Ankara was also present.

Bilateral relations

President Evren said that it gave him great pleasure to see a British Prime Minister visit Turkey after such a long interval. He was also looking forward to his own State Visit to the United Kingdom. Taken together, these two events would signify a resumption of exchanges between Britain and Turkey at the highest level. Relationships between the two countries were in fact excellent, but such visits nonetheless helped to keep them in trim. Looking back into history, relations between Britain and the Ottoman Empire had gone through difficult times. That was not surprising: Empires had always quarrelled with each other. But since the founding of the Turkish Republic a new page had been turned.

The Prime Minister said that she was grateful for the tremendous welcome which she had received in Turkey. We were looking forward to the President's visit in July. Britain and Turkey had drawn increasingly close in recent years and agreed on most major issues, particularly on East/West relations. We had tried to act as good friends to Turkey in Europe. Her talks earlier in the day with Prime Minister Ozal had been very useful. They both held very similar views on economic matters, believing it was the duty of government to maintain sound finance and give every incentive to enterprise. Both governments had achieved economic success on the basis of these principles, thus enabling them to take on a more prominent and active role in world affairs. We wanted to continue to work closely with Turkey.

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Cyprus

The Prime Minister said that she would like to seek the President's views on Cyprus. There was no doubt that it was a very difficult problem. Our aim was to see Cyprus remain a unified state with a federal structure. The fact was that Cyprus' independence constitution had not been implemented properly and this had to be taken into account in working out future arrangements. President Vassiliou had recently visited London. He seemed anxious to make progress and appeared more constructive than his predecessor. She had advised him not to introduce pre-conditions about withdrawal of Turkish troops and de-militarisation. A more practical objective was the establishment of conditions in Cyprus in which the presence of foreign troops would eventually no longer be necessary. She thought President Vassiliou was prepared to compromise and he was obviously encouraged by the new spirit in relations between Greece and Turkey. He understood that a solution to Cyprus's problems would only in the end be found by negotiations between the two communities in Cyprus and that this meant he must meet Mr. Denktash. She hoped that Mr. Denktash would not set impossible conditions for such a meeting.

President Evren said that, in plain language, the Cyprus problem had not changed since 1974. It was unfortunate that, following Turkey's intervention, President Ecevit had left office and been succeeded by a series of weak coalition governments. As a result, it had proved impossible for Turkey to agree on a way forward and it was only in 1981 that Mr. Denktash had been able to table proposals. The Greek Cypriots had always tried to insist on withdrawal of Turkish troops and de-militarisation as a pre-condition for negotiations, and this had been the main obstacle to progress. Turkey had been approached several times over the years by its friends and allies with the request that it should reduce its forces in Cyprus, and had actually done so. Unfortunately, there had been no positive response: instead, the Greek Cypriots had reinforced their troops to the point where there was now an imbalance in their favour. Turkey had always favoured a federal state and had never wanted to see a permanent division of the island. If a bizonal, federal state was eventually established in Cyprus, it might be possible to withdraw troops. But even then they would certainly have to remain for a time to guarantee a settlement, otherwise history would simply repeat itself. In any event, it was impossible for Turkey to make any further troop withdrawals in the meantime. President Evren continued that if the Greek Cypriots were able to accept the United Nations' Secretary General's proposals of 29 March 1986, there might be a possibility of reaching a solution. These proposals had been accepted by Mr. Denktash only after Turkey had used its full powers of persuasion.

The Prime Minister asked how the President saw the best way to proceed now. It was important that any meeting between President Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash should not be a failure. That meant that it would need careful preparation. President

Evren said that the best approach would be to arrange for the leaders of the two communities to meet through the good offices of the United Nations. There was also the suggestion which Mr. Ozal had made for a quadripartite meeting. Mr. Ozal interjected that the first step should be for the leaders of the two communities to meet and get to know each other rather than try to make substantive progress. Thereafter there should be a further recourse to the good offices of the United Nations Secretary General, who could propose minor modifications to the document of 29 March 1986. President Evren said that the crux of the matter was that so long as the Greek Cypriots were recognised as the legitimate government and the Turkish Cypriots were treated as second-class citizens, there would be no progress. There was no real pressure on the Greek Cypriots to negotiate in this situation. They had the recognition, they were more prosperous and they received external assistance. But the longer matters dragged on without a solution the more difficult the problem would be to solve. To give an example, the younger generation of Turkish Cypriots no longer spoke either English or Greek and would have difficulty in taking part in a future federal assembly or government.

The Prime Minister agreed that the passage of time made the problems more difficult. Mr. Kyprianou had not been prepared to accept the changes necessary to enable agreement to be reached. President Vassiloiu on the other hand seemed to recognise the need for compromise. We must not let the opportunity slip. But there would need to be good-will gestures on both sides. Mr. Ozal commented that Mr. Kyprianou had never understood that, with the passage of time, the Turkish Cypriots would become more obdurate rather than more flexible. President Evren repeated that his impression was the Greek Cypriots did not really want a solution. After all, it would only bring additional economic burdens for them. If President Vassiliou really wanted a peaceful solution, then his response to Mr. Denktash's offer to hold a meeting was an unfortunate start.

Middle East

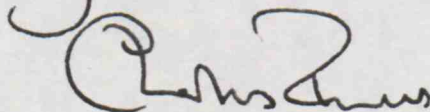
The Prime Minister gave her assessment of the latest United States' proposals. She was sceptical about the prospects of progress. President Evren said that much greater efforts were needed by the United States to persuade Israel to accept a peaceful solution. The Palestinian problem was at the root of all the other difficulties in the region. If progress could be made on that, it might improve the situation elsewhere in the area. But he feared that the Arabs were turning increasingly to the Soviet Union out of frustration. Even the more conservative Arab states were establishing diplomatic relations. He felt that the West had to offer the Arabs more support. The Prime Minister commented that the Arabs had nothing to gain and everything to fear from the Soviet Union. She repeated that she was not optimistic that the United States would make much progress in the immediate future. But we should aim to convince the next US Administration to pick up the problem and take an initiative

very early in its period of office.

European Community

The Prime Minister gave an account of her discussion with Mr. Ozal on Turkey's application for membership of the European Community. We believed that the immediate tasks were to make the Association Agreement work more effectively and to un-block the Fourth Financial Protocol. The next step was for the Commission to give its opinion on Turkey's application. Meanwhile, she thought that Mr. Ozal's strategy of strengthening the Turkish economy and narrowing the gap with the rest of Europe was a sensible way forward.

I am copying this letter to Brian Hawtin (Ministry of Defence) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,


C. D. POWELL

Lyn Parker, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.