

THE TRAGEDY OF CYPRUS – A KISSINGER FOLLY

George C. Vournas

The Turkish invasion of Cyprus, coupled with characteristic Turkish atrocities against the Greek people – murder, arson, rape and pillage – had as a result the unification of Greeks at home. Unity among Greeks is rare, indeed, and it has occurred in modern times only once before – during the Italian-fascist aggression in 1940.

It is ironic that on both occasions the people of Greece were subjected to repressive dictatorships – in 1940 to the dictatorship of Metaxas, and in 1974 to a military junta. The dictatorships were identical in both means and objectives. In both, freedom of speech, of assembly and of the press were suppressed; arrests were made without warrant, to be followed by detention, imprisonment or deportation to the waterless islands of the Aegean; the dissolution of professional organizations and/or confiscation of their treasuries and property; the suppression of trade unions; the dismissal of all mayors and all locally-elected officials and their substitution by agents of the regime; the censorship not only of news but even of private correspondence; the dismissal of judges or their substitution by organs or agents of the junta; and last but not least – a legacy of the German Gestapo – the systematic torture of prisoners at police headquarters, army enclaves or on the Island of Yaros.

The infamy of both attacks that brought forth unity at home had its echo in the U. S. Committees for Cyprus, reminiscent of the Greek War Relief days, sprung up spontaneously everywhere. Thousands of Americans of Greek descent and their friends took the road to Washington to voice their bitterness and disappointment at official U. S. policy at the gates of the White House.¹

A brief survey of the scene is in order.

There are three Greek influence centers in America, eliminating minor ones, and all three rendered either tacit or outright support to the dictatorship of the Colonels. First, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America; second, the Order of Ahepa; and third, *The National Herald*, a Greek daily newspaper.

All three, either feeling conscience-stricken or fearing the loss of their constituencies in view of the peoples' deep feeling of outrage, rose into action. Archbishop Iakovos hastily departed – accompanied by his usual retinue of "yes men" – for Athens (would not Washington or, better, Ankara be the proper place?) wherefrom he issued his usual inflated statements pledging the raising of millions for Cyprus relief.

The Order of Ahepa, not to be outdone, dispatched a committee to the Department of State in Washington to point out – presumably – the obvious, that Secretary Kissinger's Cyprus architecture tilted. Coincidentally, full-page advertisements appeared in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* recording the Order's official protest! (Obviously it has not occurred to the powers-that-be in the organization that had the Ahepa remained true to its constitution² and traditions, the junta might not have lasted as long as it did and the tragedy of Cyprus *might* have been avoided.)

The *National Herald*, too, which – thanks to the Tourist stipend – follows the policy of whatever government is in power in Athens, joined the protestation chorus.

One may ask: Were all three protesters ignorant of what was taking place in Athens for seven long years, or did they not care? Is it possible that the suppression, torture and terror which constituted deliberate policy of the regime escaped their attention? Organizations from all over the world took notice of it and dispatched delegations to Athens to observe and record how "justice" was administered. The writer was privileged to be named – together with Congressman John B. Anderson – observer for The International League for the Rights of Man at the trial of seventeen charged with conspiracy to overthrow the Government.³ I recall a defendant – Fragias by name, an engineer, age 53 – who could not even stand on his feet, the result of torture mercilessly administered at Security Headquarters. There were others who were healthy and robust men at the time of their arrest who, when brought to trial, were helpless old men unable to stand or use their hands and legs – the result of torture.

Were the three "influence centers" above-referred-to deaf and blind? Whatever the excuse of the other two, the Ahepans were fully informed. The junta mentality, however, had so permeated the Ahepa epigones that the Chairman of the Atlanta Convention (1972) indulged in *advanced censorship* by denying the speaker – a Past Supreme President – the opportunity to finish his report which was critical of the junta dictatorship.⁴

Has the attitude of Archbishop Iacovos really undergone a change, or is it just pretentious? It is recalled that during the junta regime His Eminence was, as the saying goes, more Royalist than the King; that when friends of Melina Mercouri – a target of persecution by the junta – whose father died in London, desired to have memorial services at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New York, His Eminence approved – albeit reluctantly – on condition that there be no speeches at such memorial services. (No speeches, that is, honoring the dead. The officiating priest, however, took time out to deliver an oration totally unrelated to the memorial service, which Professor Rousseas of Vassar aptly termed a "Church commercial.") On a subsequent occasion Church rites were denied by the Archbishop to Melina Mercouri on the ground that she is married to a Jew.⁵

Ahepans, seeking to justify their organization's aberration, have pointed to the fact that since the junta was recognized and actively supported by the U. S. Government, the Ahepa was duty-bound to follow official policy. They point to the Constitution of the Order – and oath each member is required to take: "Loyalty to the U.S.; allegiance to its flag; support to its Constitution; obedience to its laws and reverence for its history and traditions."

Since the propounded argument makes a *prima facie* case, it must be analyzed further.

Let us begin at fundamentals. To whom does an American owe allegiance? Is it to the Constitution or to the State Department as it pronounces policy, even though such a policy may be contrary to the Constitution and American traditions?

Americans were shocked recently by the horrors of Watergate. A number of public officials were either indicted or convicted of illegal acts. The President of the United States – Mr. Nixon – who declared while President that he was not a "crook" sought and received a pardon from his successor, which makes him a pardoned criminal. Illegal acts were covered by the mantle of "national security" or "executive privilege." General Haig (who succeeded H. R. Haldeman as Chief of the White House Staff) told the Deputy Attorney General, Mr. Ruckelshaus – when he also refused to fire Special Prosecutor Cox after the refusal of Mr. Richardson to do so – "The Commander-in-Chief orders you to do so." I submit that these doctrines may constitute part of the Nazi *Kultur*, but they are totally alien to the American tradition.

Spiro Agnew, a former Vice President of the U. S. – who proved unequal to his inheritance and the name bequeathed by a wonderful father, Theodore Agnew – was running for years up and down the country putting, so to speak, men and institutions to the sword for dissenting or exercising their rights as citizens. So did the then-Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Connally. The latter also distinguished himself by organizing a *Democrats-for-Nixon Committee*, of which Mr. Nakis, a former Supreme President of the Ahepa, was Vice President. (Mr. Nakis also pinned medals on himself by advertising his Ahepa connection – contrary to Ahepa law.) In a conversation recorded on White House tape which occurred between President Nixon and his former counsel (now imprisoned), John Dean, the name of Tom Pappas – intimately connected with the junta – was mentioned as the person who might raise the necessary funds for the Watergate coverup. The Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Stans; Ambassador Tasca; and Admirals and Generals had words of approbation and praise for the junta.

The question is: Would a citizen be disloyal to the U. S. were he to take exception to such acts of public officials? To be specific. Are the thousands of "Greek" – naturalized or native-born – Americans who, leaderless, converged

on the White House on August 18th, 1974 to protest Kissinger's handiwork, to be classed as unpatriotic Americans? Are those who take exception to the illegalities perpetrated by Nixon, Stans and Mitchell (to mention only a few, since the list is quite long) less devoted to America's true interests than their associate and collaborator, Dr. Kissinger?

A "flashback" into history indicates that the image of America – Freedom and Democracy – attracted like a magnet freedom-loving persons from the world over.

One may ask in all honesty: Does present-day America continue to project its traditional image of freedom and democracy when, through open or surreptitious means, it promotes and establishes fascist or quasi-fascist regimes the world over?

There are many who fought under the Stars and Stripes who are today disheartened and disappointed at official American policy – a policy clearly at odds with the "Freedom and Democracy" battlecry in the war against Hitler. Take the case of Andreas Papandreu – to mention the most celebrated present-day critic of U. S. policies. Mr. Papandreu is American-educated; taught at American universities; fought under the U. S. flag; married an American and lived in the U. S. for a number of years; and his children are native-born U. S. citizens. He argues that the U. S. must cease the pursuit of the policy of "containment" of the Soviet Union that led America to interfere in the affairs of many small nations, and particularly Greece; that it must withdraw its fleet from the Mediterranean to prevent possible accidental conflagration; and to abandon all Greek bases. Is the advocacy of such policies contrary to true American interest?

Now that we are undergoing a catharsis as a result of Watergate, maybe it is a good time to review policies and practices to the end of reclaiming America's old image.

It is time to realize that our attitude towards Turkey has undergone a radical change from the policy advocated by President Monroe at the time of the Greek revolution and followed down to World War II. It will be recalled that the long-suffering people of Macedonia and the islands of the Aegean were liberated from the Turkish yoke by the common effort of the Balkan Christian nations in 1912. The result of that war might have been different had Turkey been free and able to move troops from Asia to Europe. Turkey was paralyzed because Greece, enjoying naval superiority, bottled up the Turkish fleet at the Dardanelles and thereby cut Turkey's sea communications! And to insure Greece continued naval superiority viz-a-viz Turkey, the U. S. sold to Greece the old battleships "Idaho" and "Mississippi."

Then came World War II. The Greeks defeated the hordes of Mussolini. Hitler was forced to come to his rescue. Greece succumbed, but Hitler's time table for the attack of the Soviet Union was delayed for at least two weeks — a time factor of considerable importance. The Greek nation laid prostrate under the Axis occupation. Famine followed, taking its toll by the thousand — despite the relief efforts of the International Red Cross. The countryside came increasingly under the control of guerillas, with the EAM playing a leading role. Further guerilla activity brought more occupation troops to meet the challenge. The enemy's acts of terror, instead of reducing guerilla activity, brought about intensification of effort. At war's end approximately 90% of the countryside was in the hands of the guerillas.

But it was destined that the suffering of the Greek people should not end with "peace." Churchill — who had repeatedly proclaimed that he did not become the King's First Minister in order to liquidate the Empire — decreed that King George should return to the throne — the wishes of the Greek people to the contrary notwithstanding. The deliberate murder of a number of protesters who had peacefully assembled at Constitution Square to voice their sentiments — Churchill had ordered General Scobie, his field commander, to treat Athens as a *conquered city* — brought forth the first American reaction toward's Churchill's policy. The Secretary of State issued what amounted to an official U. S. protest.

The Greeks interpreted the official U. S. statement as a reaffirmation of the President's earlier statement⁷ and saw in it rays of hope for better days. They felt that their sacrifices in the cause of freedom were recognized and entitled them to remain free and enjoy the blessings of freedom in common with their comrades at arms of the anti-Hitler front. In the meanwhile, and before Churchill was to throw in the sponge in his struggle in Greece, F.D.R. died. No worse calamity could befall the Greek people.

Mr. Truman, unlike Roosevelt, swallowed Churchill's line hook, line and sinker. Confronted with bold and unprincipled domestic political enemies — Nixon, McCarthy, etc. — he resolved to follow the path of least resistance by becoming *more* anti-communist than they. Thus a deliberate mythology of Russian involvement was raised to the mast, and for this policy to succeed, in the words of Senator Vandenberg, steps had to be taken to "scare the hell out of Congress."

When Great Britain advised the U. S. (it had claimed Greece as its special sphere) that it could not carry "the burden" any longer, Mr. Truman gleefully stepped into Churchill's shoes. The civil war over the return of the King then in progress in Greece, became a war against "communism." The former guerilla fighters were no longer nationalists or patriots. They became overnight either "communists" or communist or Slav "dupes."

Under American tutelage the Greek army, which was once before purged of nationalistic elements in Cairo, Egypt, was purged again not only of democratic elements, but also of suspected moderate Royalists. The successive Greek governments – all of them Royalist with some collaborationist elements from liberation onward and recipients of American aid – set their sail to the anti-communist wind blowing with hurricane force out of Washington, most enthusiastically. The State machinery being in Royalist hands, "communism" was outlawed; communists, suspected communists and fellow travelers persecuted; a reign of terror was employed in the countryside by rightist bands, faceless and hooded, known as "X"-ites, who resorted to arson and murder in the middle of the night; police powers were broadly expanded to permit arrest, detention and exile in camera; the citizenship of all those who sought refuge behind the Iron Curtain after the conclusion of the civil war was revoked; and an "espionage" law of such broadness was enacted that it was used as a "catch-all" against government or Royal critics and real or imagined communist sympathizers.⁸ All persons seeking public or private employment had to procure and submit a certificate pertaining to "social views" issued by the police, and all army conscripts of other than "safe" background were precluded from officer-rank.

The junta did not seize power on April 21st, 1967 from a healthy Parliamentary Government. All governments prior to and after the civil war preceding the last Papandreou government had as their constituency a minority of the population. King Constantine, being cognizant of this and feeling that the elections would be won over by the Papandreou party, was ready to put in force the NATO plan "Prometheus" calling for power-seizure by the Generals. The Colonels, of whom George Papandopoulos was the C.I.A. liaison officer, and as such, privy to all military plans, beat the King and the Generals to the punch. Talk about American non-interference in Greek affairs is pure and unadulterated nonsense. Agents of the United States Government did whatever they wanted to irrespective of the wishes of the Greek governments up to and including the second Papandreou government. The intelligence services of Greece were so subordinate to that of the United States that their stipend from the C. I. A. went outside the Greek budget.⁹ Despite the record, the mythology of American intervention in Greece as due to Stalin expansionist policies persists.¹⁰

While the Truman "Doctrine" was "saving" Greece, poor Turkey was not overlooked! For every dollar expended for relief in Greece, an ally – Turkey – which during the war played "footsie" with Hitler and suffered no loss or damage and rendered no aid to the cause – was given four dollars in economic aid and armaments!

To bring U. S. policies in harmony with justice, as well as long-view U. S. interest in peace, the wrongs committed against the people of Greece and Cyprus must be redressed. Since the U. S. could not – or was unwilling to – protect Cyprus

against Turkish invasion, it is just that the old power balance between Greece and Turkey be reconstituted. This could be done through the payment (in armaments) of rent for U. S. installations during the past twenty-five years and continue until parity is established, without any political strings.¹¹ It is the only way that the bitterness and disappointment of the Greek people can be assuaged.

Let us not forget that today Turkey, enjoying superiority in armaments provided at the expense of American taxpayers, has taken attitudes of the Sultanate of yore. Mr. Ecevit talks like a Grand Vizier of the Sublime Porte, and his performance and that of the Turkish troops in Cyprus indicate that a Turk is always a Turk.

Notes

1. The protesters coming from the Eastern section of the U. S. numbered, according to police estimates, about 20,000. They acted in an exemplary fashion and peacefully returned home after completing what they thought was a worthwhile mission.
2. *Paragraph E, Article II.* "To arouse mankind to the realization that tyranny, wherever it may exercise its baneful power, is a menace to the life, property, prosperity, honor and integrity of every nation; and that the preservation of our liberties can be assured, only as this country becomes the Champion of Liberty and the Defender and protector of all oppressed and downtrodden peoples."
3. The trial was held on Friday, March 17th, 1972 before the Special Military Court of Athens. Sessions started at 8:30 A.M. until 2:00 P.M. Resumed at 5:00 P.M. and continued until after midnight. In two days seventeen persons were tried and convicted! The marathon sessions were obviously intended to prevent Congressman Anderson (who was scheduled to arrive on Monday) from observing the trial. They succeeded. Congressman Anderson stayed in Washington.
4. The report was xeroxed and was privately circulated at the Convention.
5. Director Jules Dassin. (By contrast, the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Western Europe personally officiated in Paris, France, at the wedding ceremony of the daughter of C. Sulzberger.)
6. State Department release, November, 1944. "Allied peoples had the right to work out their problems of Government along democratic lines without influence from the outside."
7. The text of White House Statement by President Roosevelt on April 25, 1941 to the Supreme Lodge of the Order of Ahepa reads as follows:

"The heroic struggle of the Hellenic people to defend their liberties and their homes against the aggression of Germany after they had so signally defeated the Italian attempt at invasion has stirred the hearts and aroused the sympathy of the whole American people.

"During the Hellenic war of independence more than a century ago, our young nation, prizing its own lately won independence, expressed its ardent sympathy for the Greeks and hoped for Hellenic victory. That victory was achieved.

"Today, at a far more perilous period in the history of Hellas, we intend to give full effect to our settled policy of extending all available material aid to free peoples defending themselves against aggression. Such aid has been and will continue to be extended to Greece.

"Whatever may be the temporary outcome of the present phase of the war in Greece, I believe that the Greek people will once more ultimately achieve their victory and regain their political independence and the territorial integrity of their country. In that high objective, the people of Greece can count on the help and support of the Government and the people of the United States."

8. Of 19 persons awaiting execution on June 1st, 1958 only 6 were convicted of common law offenses; of 1,613 sentenced to life imprisonment only 209 were convicted of similar offenses. (To list those convicted and imprisoned for, or, lesser terms, exiled or ordered domiciled in "police areas" would unduly encumber this report.)
9. *Democracy at Gunpoint*, by Andreas Papandreou.
10. George W. Ball at Northwestern University Alumni Association, Congressional Record, January 31st, 1966.
11. It is assumed that the Foreign Assistance Act (Sec. 505, subsec. (a)(1)(c) denying armaments to Turkey will be enforced.



"The UN as a Scarecrow in Cyprus" by Skoulas (*Apogevmatini*, 8/17/74).