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The nationalism of the present Greek regime and its impact on its foreign relations

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the nationalism of the present Greek regime and its impact on its foreign relations

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The article presents (the author's view of) the ideology of the present-day revolutionary government in Greece as contained in its strategy and tactics. Within a historical perspective, the author discusses the regime's nationalism, neutrality, the role of the monarchy in Greece, and Greece's relations to her neighbors and to the super powers. The prime minister, George Papadopoulos, is viewed from the standpoint of other modern leaders including Andreas Papandreou, Ceausescu and Charles deGaulle. [J. Chernoff]

I. The ideology of the regime contained in its strategy

A. *Chauvinistic or egalitarian nationalism?* In many places of the world to-day, small countries are struggling to get rid of powerful protectors. But many see their efforts survive for a few years and then fail. The story of conflict between the powerful and the feeble is an old story and the great powers have long been acquainted with discovering the multiple tricks imagined by small nations to become more independent. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the Rumanian Prime Minister suggested to the Greek Prime Minister that small States present at the Conference stick together in order to resist the pressure of the big States, but the Greek Prime Minister answered that he must be naive to think it possible for small nations to resist the will of the big ones.

Hierarchy means dependency and dependency means lack of liberty. Nations, like individuals, wish to be different, they do not want to be unequal. The struggle for equality, against hierarchy, is universal: against the hierarchy of races, against the hierarchy of classes, against the hierarchy inside professions, against the hierarchy of ages, against the hierarchy of sex, against the hierarchy of nations. But this means necessarily struggle for power. The danger is to see the hierarchy reversed when the feeble succeeds in overcoming the strong. If you say Black is beautiful you must also think White is beautiful and if you say Greece is beautiful you must think the United States are beautiful too: this is egalitarian nationalism as opposed to chauvinistic nationalism.

Prime Minister Papadopoulos has repeatedly stated that he is the only one responsible for the foreign policy of his country and it seems to-day that the leader of the 1967 military coup has complete control of his regime. Not only there will not be war with Albania, but even though there has been no treaty of peace signed between the two countries since the second world war, for the first time in January of this year* an Albanian commercial delegation visited Athens and a Greco-Albanian commercial agreement was signed. Publicity was also given to another Albanian commercial delegation who came to Athens last May.

* 10th September 1970. Public talk delivered at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA.

When Prime Minister Papadopoulos speaks of Greece, he does it passionately. His passion is so evident that his opponents have declared him mad. But one could not say that he believes in chauvinistic nationalism, like Ladas. Unfortunately, as he never made a clear statement supporting egalitarian nationalism, the doubt as to which of these two nationalisms he is a supporter, remains. Nevertheless, when asked about Greco-Turkish friendship, he said one should not give too much importance to the unilateral presentation of Greco-Turkish History in both countries as it is a natural tendency for each nation to exalt its own military successes, a statement that is definitely not chauvinistic. In addition, a few weeks after the declarations of Colonel Ladas on southern Albania, Prime Minister Papadopoulos solemnly stated that Greece does not have expansionist views against other countries.

B. Dogmatic Neutralism or pragmatism? Neutralism sprung out of realism after the second world war: small nations did not feel involved in the ideological dispute between the two super-powers. They were only preoccupied with the interests of their own countries which had been so long sacrificed to the interests of the great powers. Nationalists used neutralism to attain their national objectives.

The success of neutralism turned it into a more or less dogmatic ideology which meant a loss of realism, of efficiency, because life changes, situations change and that you cannot use perpetually the same formula. The Greek prime minister has proved to have an extraordinary sense of pragmatism. He does not see why he should leave NATO, if NATO is not bad for Greek interests, just because one of the dogmas of neutralism is not to be a member of NATO.

I think that here lies one of the basic differences between Andreas Papandreou and George Papadopoulos. Andreas Papandreou lacked realism to a very high degree. Instead of creating his own way, he followed too closely the path of others which was already known to his enemies. But basically his two main nationalistic slogans were correct and that is why they had such a profound appeal on the people. These two slogans were: 1) «The King reigns but must not govern», 2) «Greece to the Greeks».

The King from the start of the independent State of Greece, in the 19th century, up to now, has always been the representative of the interests of Great Powers in Athens. To rid Greece of foreign influences without neutralizing the political power of the King was nonsense. So any true Nationalist ought to agree with this first slogan. Ex-prime minister Karamanlis in his conflict with the royal family adopted the same view, and one must not forget that Papadopoulos was a supporter of Karamanlis.

Is it Andreas Papandreou or George Papadopoulos who succeeded in ousting the King from his political strongholds? In politics, as usual, it is not what you say but what you succeed in doing that matters.

C. Modernism plus religion. Efficiency is a basic word of the regime. Like kemalism in Turkey before the war, papadopolism means catching up with the most advanced techniques of the West, because a strong Greece cannot exist without a modern industrialized State, but unlike kemalism religion is not considered an opium for the people, but one of the basic constituents of the Greek soul. Rejecting the Greek Orthodox Church is rejecting a great part of national tradition, in the same way that an Arab nationalist cannot reject Islam. The western inspired Greek liberals like Andreas Papandreou, who in the 19th and 20th centuries overlooked religious traditions, overlooked a basic element in the understanding of the Greek peasantry who composes still to-day 50% of the population. That is why Andreas' second slogan: «Greece to the Greeks», was modified to «Greece of Greek Christians» which is the basic slogan of the present regime.

D. Anticommunism plus fear of Russia. Papadopolism is basically anticommunist because socially it represents the petty bourgeoisie and a peasantry of small owners, as in Greece the agrarian reform was decided and executed as far back as 1917. But the main reason of its stern anticommunism is the fear of Russia as an imperialist State.

Slavism, Hellenism and Turkism, are three components of one world, the world of Eastern Europe and Asia Minor. The bonds of civilization are very tight between those three groups. But brothers often fight one another more strongly than strangers. Each of these peoples headed Empires in the same area which struggled for supremacy: the Greeks the Byzantine Empire, the Turks the Ottoman Empire, the Russians the Russian Empire. The first two empires were destroyed and after the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922, an equilibrium was installed between Greeks and Turks, basically satisfied with their respective territories, except for the current dispute on Cyprus.

But the Russian Empire not only is still intact but is even more formidable than ever before, struggling to make its way into the Mediterranean Sea. If, for instance, Russia was still tsarist and the Slavic Balkan States still backward kingdoms, perhaps Greece to-day would have been communist. But the perspective of entering the same family, with Russia as the supreme protector, and with Bulgaria, the favorite of Russia, dominating Greek Macedonia, was enough for the Greek people to reject communism, called

very accurately by them Slavo-communism, or even Bulgaro-communism. The military who did the coup of 1967, knew something about this threat as they had been fighting the communists up to 1949 and are conscious of having saved their country from Bulgarian domination.

In such a context the problem of NATO and neutralism looks different to Greek nationalists than, for instance, to Arab nationalists. The fear of Russia is even greater than in Turkey which has not experienced a communist guerrilla war. Here is another difference between Andreas Papandreu and George Papadopoulos because Andreas was not well enough acquainted with Greek reality.

E. *Planified economy and social reforms.* There is no basic difference in the economic and social ideas of Andreas Papandreu and those of the present regime. Both are in favor of non compulsory economic planification of the French type that would give a guiding role to the State in a private owned economy. Both are in favor of extensive social reforms and both feel no sympathy for the Greek establishment. The concern of the present regime for social justice is such that severe measures against the privileges of the establishment are not excluded in the long run. Pattakos, the vice-president, said last year on September 8: «Liberty does not exist where there is no dignity. And dignity does not exist in societies where prevails the ruthless rule of exploitation of man by man.»

All this was not denied by Andreas Papandreu in an interview he gave in Paris to the French newspaper *Le Monde*, on January 25, 1968, shortly after being liberated by Papadopoulos. The question of *Le Monde* was the following: «It is said that the colonels have a secret admiration for your nationalist ideas and your economic theories, and that they have even adopted in its greater part the project of a five year plan that you presented. The colonels are of poor origin and they do not belong to this financial oligarchy that you have so much denounced. They have liberated you and have allowed you to leave Greece. Why then are you so much against them?» And here is Papandreu's answer: «Because a gulf separates us. I am a democrat. They are dictators... They are nearly uneducated people and they want to impose the army as the elite of the nation... They are violently xenophobes.»

Papandreu's answer indicates clearly that his disagreement with Papadopoulos is not on the substance but on the means. Even if the aim is good, he does not accept dictatorship to attain it. As a politician he does not accept that the army, even in the special conditions of Greece, take the place of the political elite. He seems to think that to be able

to make a progressive revolution you must be a University professor and that, for instance, a proletarian revolution could not be headed by a worker. Finally he condemns the resentment of Greeks against foreign influence as an excessive feeling. But with what is known of Papandreu's political sympathies before 1967, one is allowed to doubt that these arguments are the main reasons for his opposition to the present regime. After all, Atatürk or Nasser, were officers like Papadopoulos, and they were no more educated than the Greek prime minister. I think the main reason is the natural resentment anyone would have against the man that kicked you out of your seat, and, in fact, many of the young officers reputed in favor of Andreas before 1967 are presently supporters of Papadopoulos.

II. Tactics of the regime

On the 2nd August 1968, the spokesman of the Greek Government said ironically that Andreas Papandreu was no more capable of making a revolution in the past than he is of making a counter-revolution to-day. The common reproach made to Andreas' tactics between 1964 and 1967, was huge imprudence. A good politician must not unveil all his cards at once. Andreas Papandreu was making passionate statements which frightened the Greek establishment, the royal family and the Americans. Even the extreme left thought he talked too much and some of its members suspected him of being a provocator, which was certainly not true. Papadopoulos is doing exactly the contrary. As a former intelligence officer he realizes the importance of secrecy, that you must use words, not to inform your enemy but as sleeping powder.

Greece is in the position of Rumania. She belongs to a system that will crush her if she makes an independent move. So she tries to act armour-plated with reassuring statements that she will never disturb the system. Nothing has changed and nothing will change. Greece cannot speak like Libya who has behind her the Arab world. The regime's tactics are very simple in theory but excessively difficult in practice: it must make no move that would be considered by the Americans as a threat to their interests as long as Greece is not strong enough to get rid of foreign pressures. Gain time to consolidate itself is still its main preoccupation. At the same time it tries not to make a negative move against any country. In this effort, the regime is greatly helped by the present trend of rapprochement between the United States and Soviet Union. It tries to improve its relations with everybody: with France, with the Arab countries, with Israel, with Turkey, with all the communist Balkan countries, with Bulgaria as well

as with Albania, and also with Soviet Russia. China is certainly not excluded in the long run. If relations were bad up to now with Great Britain, Italy, Germany and the Scandinavian countries, it is certainly not due to the will of Athens. Relations are excellent with Cyprus. There is complete understanding between these two nationalists, Papadopoulos and Makarios. In fact the Cypriot president would have been overthrown to-day by a coup without the unrestricted support of Papadopoulos and the Greek army.

During this first phase, while the regime tries to avoid all blows, waiting for the second phase to attack, Papadopoulos cannot gain the support of his people for a precise policy of national independence because this would oblige him to publicize such a policy and thus unveil his cards. So he cannot really answer the accusations of the emigrates that he is in fact an American puppet. The danger in this case is that the people will not understand for what purpose Papadopoulos suppressed democratic institutions. The sincere disgust for the old political elite, thoroughly corrupted except for some very few exceptions, is not in itself enough to rally the support of the people to the regime. The danger of a communist takeover is not convincing. The colonels knew that the Americans are ready to accept nearly anything if coated with anticommunism. Many are those who made their career with American help, having on their visiting cards just this magic word: anticommunist. So this argument was mainly for American consumption and in order to allow the colonels to make use for their coup of April 21, of the Greek version of NATO emergency plan against communist subversion, the «Prometheus plan». The Greek people do not believe that there was a danger of communist take-over in 1967 and I do not think Prime Minister Papadopoulos believes it either.

The Greek people have shown many times in the past that when they are conscious that their interests are at stake they do not hesitate to take up arms. They have the reputation of being very courageous and good fighters. The argument of the emigrates that the Greeks still remember the hardships of the civil war of 1946-1949 and do not want a new one is not convincing. Twenty years have elapsed since then and a new generation has arisen. So there was real danger for Papadopoulos of having to face guerrilla warfare.

This danger was avoided for two main reasons: First the virtual dethronement of the King only a few months after the coup, in 1967. King Constantine and his mother Queen Frederica had become very unpopular. At the elections of May 28, 1967, cancelled by the revolution of 21st April, the people were prepared to give the majority to the Papandreuos as victims of the royal family. It would have been in

fact an antimonarchical majority. The King was the symbol of the establishment and of foreign influence. The people were informed of the fact, revealed in the international press, that the King with his royalist generals was preparing a coup that was at the last second forestalled by the colonels' coup of April 21. The compromise between the King's group and the colonels' group only lasted from April 21 to December 13, 1967, when the King attacked the colonels and lost. The royalists were then immediately cleared out of government and army. In less than a year the colonels had succeeded a tremendous and nearly unbelievable accomplishment: liberate the Greek people from the chief agent of foreign domination. No politician, not even Andreas Papandreuos would have ever dreamed of succeeding in such a short time. If the coup of April 21 had not occurred, Greece would have been to-day in the hands of a royal dictatorship like the one it experienced under Metaxas from 1936 to 1941.

The second reason why the Greek people did not revolt against the colonels was the social and economic measures taken by the regime. Primacy was given to the provinces and to the peasants where the present leaders have their social roots, but the two big cities of Athens and Salonica were not neglected either. The great problem of Greek agriculture was the peasant debts. In 1968 they were all cancelled by the government who added to this spectacular measure considerable social and financial help to farmers. Farm workers first and then industry workers saw in the same year their wages increased by 15%. At the same time the habit of the Greek businessmen to practice extensively huge fiscal frauds was severely punished. The result was that the income declared in 1969 increased by more than 70% compared to the income declared in 1967. Expenses for public social insurance nearly doubled this year compared with 1966. The regime has from the beginning declared war on bureaucracy. For instance, last July, the head of the passport division of the ministry of Home Affairs was fired on the spot, after vice-president Pattakos entered by surprise the room in Athens where passports are delivered and noticed that the people had to wait too long. In government offices many old civil servants have been replaced by young men, considered as young modern technocrats.

The first five year plan of the regime was launched in January 1968. National independence is illusion without economic strength, that is why economic development is the religion of the regime. This plan gives great importance to regional development in order to privilege the provinces and thus fill the gap between Athens and Salonica and the rest of the country. 1969 proved a successful year for this plan. Industrial production increased by 12%.

III. The opposite side: Scylla and Charybdis or the positions of the United States and Soviet Union

A. *United States.* It is very probable that the United States and even Great Britain would have backed a royal dictatorship that would have been established with a coup d'état, the one that was prevented thanks to the prompt action of the colonels on April 21. In the past, Great Britain backed the Greek royal dictatorship of 1936-1941. The colonels' coup took the American and the English Governments by complete surprise. Their man was the King surrounded by his royalist generals. These colonels said they did the coup for the benefit of the generals, the King and Western interests. They had launched the Greek military emergency plan against communist subversion, called «Prometheus», a part of NATO framework dated April 25, 1966 and signed by the King and the Greek prime minister of the time. They launched the plan on behalf of the generals, the King and the government, but in fact without their approval. Like Prometheus, the Greek Titan who stole fire from the gods to give it to man, the colonels had stolen the «Prometheus plan» for the benefit, as they thought, of the Greek people.

The King and the Americans certainly did not believe the colonels' argument who stated that communist danger was so imminent that they had to send the coded signal in the night of the 20th April, to set the Prometheus plan in motion. But if they opposed the colonels, they were afraid of an armed clash between two anticommunist groups that could benefit the communists. After all, these military were intelligence officers that had been in excellent terms with their American friends. So the King preferred to negotiate. He accepted the fait accompli but the seats of the new government were shared between the royalists and the revolutionaries. The new prime minister, Kollias, was a close friend of the royal family. The leader of the coup, George Papadopoulos, was only given the seat of minister of Information. The King thought that as most of the royalist generals were still at their posts in the army, he had not lost his cards and that he could quickly regain the complete control of the situation.

The American government accepted the King's tactics and only tried to keep pressure on the revolutionaries, first by publishing one week after the coup, on the 28th April, a statement of the Secretary of State Dean Rusk, clearly showing that he was on the side of the King and not of Papadopoulos and, second, by deciding twenty-five days after the coup, to delay the shipment to Greece of heavy military equipment, mainly planes, tanks and ships. This decision was announced by the Department of State on the 17th May 1967. Nevertheless, the supply of

light equipment, such as ammunitions and spare parts, was never stopped.

From May 1967 up to the present moment, the supply of heavy military equipment to Greece continued to be suspended, but the eventuality of its resumption was continuously left open in order to exert constant pressure on Papadopoulos. The resumption of such supplies was approved by the Department of State only for a single shipment, in October 1968, because the Soviet threat had at that time greatly increased with their invasion of Czechoslovakia and the reinforcement of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean Sea.

On the 13th December 1967, the King launched a counter-coup against the revolutionaries and lost in one day. The King's defeat was so quick and his move proved so plainly that the people were not backing him, that the American 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean did not intervene to help him. The American press was not as cautious as the American government and did not hesitate to call the colonels bandits and fascists. The fact is, I think, that by deciding not to intervene in Greece, on the 13th December 1967, to help the King, the American government lost the game. Papadopoulos who very naturally feared this intervention, acted in such a way that he proved he was a great politician. This was a discovery for nearly everybody who accused him of being a narrow-minded officer mentally disturbed. Since then he has amply confirmed his political gifts.

When the King flew pitifully from Greece and found refuge with all his family in Rome, Papadopoulos could have immediately proclaimed Republic. Such a move would have, I think, aroused the enthusiasm of the majority of the Greek people. It was a wonderful occasion for the regime to acquire popular support. In fact, in many public offices, civil servants were taking down the portraits of the royal couple. Papadopoulos gave the order to put them back on the walls and said that there was no question of abolishing Monarchy and even on the 11th January 1968, answered British journalists with a «Long live the King».

The dangers of abolishing Monarchy were the following: 1) Papadopoulos would have lost totally the support of the United States which would have perhaps decided to intervene in Greece by force to overthrow him. 2) Even though the majority of the people were against the King, there still existed a minority, a great part of the establishment and of the army, in favor of Monarchy. Such a revolutionary move would have perhaps created a strong enough reaction to allow the King to head a small popular resistance which, with the help of the Western countries, could cause civil war. 3) Inside the revolu-

tionary group, complete harmony did not exist. Papadopoulos was not yet the recognized and undisputable leader of the revolution. Past experiences in the History of Greece, during the Greek Republic of 1924-1935, has shown and the present history of the Arab States shows, that when a revolutionary leader becomes the sole symbol of the State, he encounters the danger of being overthrown by another leader. The History of the Greek Republic of 1924-1935 was a long succession of military coups d'état which finally ended with the return of the ousted king. The souvenir of the fate of General Kassem in Irak is also instructive.

Papadopoulos declared and still declares to-day, that he did not oust the King. King Constantine himself decided to leave the country and is still welcome if he wants to return under certain conditions. Constantine, still hoping that he has not lost his throne for ever, dare not attack the regime with violent statements and accepts to negotiate with Papadopoulos the eventuality of his return. The link between the two men existed up to the 19th July of this year through the Greek Secretary of State, Pipinelis, who was all his life a personal friend of the Greek royal dynasty. Pipinelis had also always been a good friend of the United States, so he was at the same time the main link between Athens and Washington. His presence in the government at the head of the Greek Foreign Office, was a kind of guarantee given to the United States that the foreign policy of Athens would maintain a pro-American line. As a stern supporter of Greco-Turkish friendship he was a'so very useful for the Cyprus question. The mystery of his stay in the government even after the departure of his King who had been the symbol of his whole life has not yet been elucidated. Perhaps he took this decision to please the American government who, otherwise, would have no one left in the Greek government on whom to count. Whatever the real reason the fact remains that the guarantee he gave by his presence in the government, helped Papadopoulos' tactics very much.

On the 19th July, Pipinelis died. It is most probable that Washington tried to replace him by another pro-American, but Papadopoulos decided to cumulate with his positions of prime minister and minister for National Defence, the duty of Secretary of State. He nevertheless gave the Americans a small satisfaction by appointing as Under-Secretary of State a friend of Washington, Mr. Palamas, who had represented his country in NATO headquarters since 1962.

Now, in this very tough game, Washington seems to be the loser up to now and certainly not Papadopoulos. The King is still in exile and as the Athenian paper *Eleutheros Kosmos* put it on the 31st May: «The question of the King has been put in the

frig». Meanwhile the years fly past and the people forget the King. In some years there probably will be very few royalists left in Greece.

The pressure exerted on the Government by suspending the supply of heavy military equipment seems to-day to be neutralized by the fact that France offers to sell to Greece, under very good financial conditions, any military equipment she could not obtain from the Americans. The strategic position of Greece, already very important, increases steadily with the importance taken by Russian influence in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean.

B. *Soviet Union*. Soviet Union from the first day of the colonels' experience follows very carefully what is happening in Greece. It is evident that she could not approve officially a regime that makes passionate anticommunist statements and declares constantly its indefectible loyalty to NATO. So she is obliged to call the Greek regime a fascist one. But in fact more and more Greek communists are furious against the real attitude of Moscow and its satellites, mainly Bulgaria, because they maintain exceptionally cordial relations with Athens and develop their commercial relations with the Greek regime. The tremendous propaganda campaign against the colonels, mainly after the King's exile, was exclusively organized in and with the help of Western countries and even Western governments, especially Great Britain and the Scandinavian governments. I have consulted the greatest part of the mass of literature written by non Greeks who attack the regime. There is nearly nothing coming from the Soviet Union and the communist countries of Eastern Europe.

Here are some extracts of the important interview given by the Greek Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the 9th May of this year, following the visit to Athens of the Bulgarian Foreign Minister: «We have noticed the moderation and care with which the Bulgarian press has followed political events in Greece. Compared to other countries, their attitude towards our present national government is among the least hostile.» And about Albania the Greek Foreign Minister stated: «Lately the Albanian border authorities have shown much understanding and have sent back on their own initiative, fugitives from the Greek soil who sought refuge in Albania. The Albanian press has also been neutral for several months now, concerning the Greek questions, if not completely silent.»

The Greek government in its effort to develop commercial relations with the communist countries has been criticized in the West. The minister for Economic Coordination, Makarezos, answered on the 31st May of this year: «Between the right of the

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