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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

PAPADOPOULOS—A Question of Survival

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
25 September 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

PAPADOPOULOS—A Question of Survival

In the past four months, dissatisfaction with Prime Minister George Papadopoulos' rule has increased significantly. While there has always been an element of disaffection with Papadopoulos, mainly from younger officers who feel they have not risen fast enough, this time the discontent seems much more widespread and basic. Officers are complaining more frequently about Papadopoulos' failure to carry out the goals of the revolution [redacted]

[redacted] The prime minister needs the support of the military to stay in office, and if the discontent continues to spread, it could ultimately lead to his ouster. So far, however, Papadopoulos' opponents do not seem to have settled on a successor or overcome their distaste for pitting military units against each other.

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Chronological Background

On 21 April 1967, George Papadopoulos, then a colonel in the army, spearheaded a successful military coup. Along with a score of other middle-ranking officers, he outlined a plan to revamp the Greek Government, remove the political elements in Greek society that had contributed to the anarchy of the preceding four years, and finally bring the country to true democratic rule. On 13 December 1967, the clumsy, abortive countercoup attempt by King Constantine only strengthened the colonels' resolve. The King fled to Rome, anti-regime organizations that were formed abroad quickly splintered, and the Greek public lapsed into an apathetic acceptance of their new rulers. All this gave the colonels the opportunity to proceed with their high-sounding but vaguely defined programs for ridding the government of favoritism, restructuring the education system, rooting out inefficiency in the ministries, and purging the military of disloyal members. Inveighing against the ills of Greek society, Papadopoulos has continually urged the Greek public to seek "moral rearmament and adherence to Greek traditions and Christian teachings."

Papadopoulos, as the leader of the Revolutionary Council that pulled off the coup and as the most intelligent and politically minded of that group, gradually gained control of the post-coup government. He carefully maneuvered his colleagues into positions of lesser power and influence. In 1968, the Greek public overwhelmingly endorsed a new constitution, and Papadopoulos gained the personal power to implement it piecemeal at whatever pace circumstances seemed to warrant. Gradually, as he got more deeply involved in essentially civilian matters, Papadopoulos increasingly used civilians and the normal chain of military command, while consulting less and less with the Revolutionary Council. This did not sit well with elements in the military, particularly those who felt they had played significant roles in the revolution. In late 1970, a major confrontation developed between the prime minister and some of his colleagues in the Revolutionary Council, who demanded that Papadopoulos either accede to the collective will of the Revolutionary Council or step down. The commanders of key military combat units around Athens, however, lined up behind Papadopoulos, and the disgruntled members of the Revolutionary Council—unable to agree on a successor—were forced to back down. It was a clear victory for Papadopoulos, but it left an undercurrent of discontent that has persisted in some quarters within the military.

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Papadopoulos' recent performance has not been impressive. His failure to carry out much-needed reforms within the bureaucracy and especially in economic and social affairs, his contact with former politicians, and his tolerance of opposition in the press have cooled the military's admiration for him. The prime minister's loss of prestige began to show in 1971 when his merger of the economic ministries failed to improve their efficiency. The snail-like pace of the regime's programs has appeared very unrevolutionary, and military and civilian officials alike talk at length about a need to reinvigorate the government. Papadopoulos' latest effort to get things moving came on 31 July in the form of yet another cabinet reshuffle. He brought more military men into the cabinet in an obvious attempt to appease them, but so far the effects have been minimal.

The Military—Friends and Foes

Papadopoulos' future depends upon his standing with the military. The armed forces are his major source of support and at the same time the principal threat to his staying in office. But the military itself is divided on a number of important issues. Younger officers, for example, continue to press for more power. They tend to be anti-monarchist and are reluctant to go along with the implementation of the constitution, which they fear will erode their power and prestige. Older officers do not oppose the monarchy per se, although they oppose Constantine's return. They do favor implementing the constitution, albeit in a gradualist, conservative fashion that would not endanger their positions and that would prevent the army from being blamed for the day-to-day failures of government programs.

Tactically, these differences work to Papadopoulos' advantage because they prevent coordinated moves against him. In the long run, however, they are a net disadvantage. Papadopoulos appears to be finding it increasingly difficult to move the revolution along without incurring stronger opposition from one faction or another. Since he cannot satisfy everyone, he is having to settle for compromises that completely satisfy no one. Even this is proving so difficult that many problems are not addressed at all.

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Meanwhile, Papadopoulos has been personally assuming a growing number of functions. He now holds five portfolios, including the Regency, and his responsibilities have isolated him more and more from working relationships with his revolutionary colleagues. As he has concentrated more power in his own hands and relied more on members of his family and close personal friends, he has forfeited the advice of seasoned experts and has become vulnerable to criticism for administrative lapses.

In spite of his shortcomings, Papadopoulos is generally considered head and shoulders above any potential rival. There is no evidence, moreover, that he has lost the support of most key leaders. His principal advisers include the chief of the armed forces, General Odysseus Angelis, and the newly appointed head of the intelligence organization, Mihail Roufougalis. Angelis is the only leading figure in the council hierarchy who did not participate in the coup, but his able leadership of the military and his lack of personal political ambition have made him one of Papadopoulos' most trusted advisers.

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Stylianos Pattakos and Nikolaos Makarezos once shared equal power with Papadopoulos in the triumvirate that ran the government following the coup. They have since been downgraded to subordinate roles—deputy prime ministers. Occasional rumors that Makarezos is less than loyal to Papadopoulos have surfaced in recent months, but Pattakos still appears to be in Papadopoulos' camp. In any event, unless the situation in Athens deteriorates rapidly, Papadopoulos can probably count on the backing of these two men.

One principal unknown quantity within the leadership is Dimitrios Ioannides, the incorruptible commander of the military police. Ioannides resents the fact that his constant warnings to Papadopoulos to put an end to corruption in the government have gone unheeded. The military police play an important role in maintaining security in Athens, and Ioannides' loyalty to Papadopoulos is vital. Rumors that Papadopoulos bought off some junior-level Revolutionary Council members with appointments to the ministries to dull their reformist zeal could only have had a negative effect on Ioannides. At this stage, Ioannides seems to be maintaining an ambivalent

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attitude toward Papadopoulos. If he decided to go against the prime minister, the threat of a successful military coup would balloon rapidly.

A Shaky Future

On the surface Papadopoulos remains confident, but the military opposition clearly worries him. Earlier he may have taken some comfort in the fact that military unrest emanated only from the younger officers, but now he cannot be so sure.

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[redacted] At this point, in all probability, he is cautiously assessing his military support before deciding what, if any, further action is needed. Meanwhile, the opposition may not find it easy to agree on a successor to Papadopoulos.

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Even less apparent is just how much of a deterioration in the situation would be enough to force Papadopoulos out. A major scandal involving someone in his own entourage might suffice.

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[redacted] Stepped-up terrorism or disorder by students or the leftist opposition could hurt Papadopoulos badly, particularly if he gave an impression of indecision in coping with it. With the opening of the fall sessions at the universities, a recurrence of last May's student demonstrations for educational reform cannot be ruled out, and leftists will probably try again to turn student unrest into opposition to the government.

The perennial Cyprus problem, which has toppled several governments in the past, bears watching in the context of Papadopoulos' tenure. The intercommunal talks under way in Cyprus and relations with Turkey are emotional issues in Greece. Papadopoulos is seeking better relations with one of Greece's traditional archenemies, Turkey, in the hopes that this will provide a better atmosphere for the solution of the Cyprus problem. Not much progress has been made, however, toward resolving basic questions: Can the Greek and Turkish Cypriots live together peacefully in an independent state, should the island be attached to Greece, or should it be divided between Turkey and Greece? In the interests of expediency, the various parties have—with varying degrees of reluctance—shelved these fundamental

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considerations and are trying to work out a scheme that will ensure harmony between the two Cypriot communities. To this end discussions are under way on Cyprus between the two communities' negotiators, with participants from Greece, Turkey, and the UN. This approach has not met with universal approval in Greece. If it does not work—or if Papadopoulos seems to be too accommodating to the Turks—it might give his opponents another excuse to move against him.

Longevity has never been a hallmark of Greek regimes. Papadopoulos has already held power for five years in a country that since 1821 has seen seven coup attempts—five of them successful—one royal assassination, three repudiations of the monarchy, and three military dictatorships. In the words of one Greek politician, "Leaders are not recognized in Greece by what they achieve, but by how many enemies they acquire. To prove you are a great man in this country you must be vilified—every day if possible!" No Greek government has lasted longer than the seven-year rule of former premier Constantine Karamanlis. Military governments in Greece have been particularly susceptible to early demises because of traditional factionalism within the armed forces. The next few months should shed a clearer light on the fate of this government, but the warning signs are here.

If Papadopoulos becomes a victim of a coup, it will be essentially because of a failure on his part to maintain a close relationship with those military officers who see themselves as the guardians of revolutionary virtue and Greek national pride. Any immediate replacement government is likely to be at least as anti-Communist and as highly nationalistic and sensitive to outside interference as its predecessor.

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