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CIA/DNE/MEMO 72-11-09

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

9 November 1972

MEMORANDUM*

SUBJECT: Some Alternatives to the Papadopoulos Regime

NOTE

This memorandum looks at the political situation in Greece today. It finds some stirrings of opposition to Papadopoulos. It judges that abrupt change is not likely in the near term, but speculates as to the nature of the regime(s) which might come after the present one if and when it should be replaced.

* *This memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates. It has been discussed with the Office of Current Intelligence and with the Clandestine Services who are in general agreement with its judgments.*

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DISCUSSION

1. Since leading a coup which ousted the elected government of Greece in April 1967, Colonel George Papadopoulos has gradually concentrated more and more power in his own hands. He is at present Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Minister for Government Policy. In addition, he has taken over the post of Regent for King Constantine, in exile since his abortive attempt to upset Papadopoulos' regime in December 1967.

2. In the last six months or so certain rumblings of a political nature have begun to be heard from Greece. Readers will recall that in the first two or three years following the 1967 coup d'etat, activities of exiled Greek political leaders and others opposed to the regime received considerable attention. The efforts of such persons as Andreas Papandreou and Melina Mercouri to stir up opposition and antipathy to the colonels' regime were widely covered in the world press. The last two years have seen less of this sort of publicity and apparently less activity on the part of the exiles. The recent noises

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are of a different nature since they come primarily from inside Greece. There was in late summer, for example, a coup in the planning stage, which Papadopoulos heard of and circumvented. Officers have criticized the government for inefficiency and corruption. The US Embassy in Athens has begun to report on stresses and strains in Greek domestic politics, after several years of silence on the subject.

3. Are we then getting forewarnings of imminent change on the Greek political scene? At least one or two observers, including C.L. Sulzberger in the October 16 *Herald Tribune*, have expressed the view that Papadopoulos may be nearing the end of a natural term of office. It is a fact that George Papadopoulos has enjoyed a tenure exceeded in this century only by that of Prime Minister Karamanlis which lasted for seven years.

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But in the past

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the perennial longing for the excitement of politics has sooner or later overcome the attraction of disciplined rule. Hence, it might seem that the end of Papadopoulos' regime is imminent.

4. Yet the signs that are visible do not seem to indicate that the former political leaders are particularly active or that the people in general are eager for immediate political change. The country is in good economic shape; per capita GNP has grown forty percent in real terms in the 1967-1971 period. Unemployment is low thanks to modest industrial expansion and migration of workers to Western Europe. Greece's chronic balance of payments deficit has been eased by the growth in remittances from Greeks working in Western Europe. The administration has done a fair amount in terms of public works projects and helping to improve agricultural production. All these factors have helped keep the population -- if not deliriously happy -- at least willing to put up with Papadopoulos' regime. Certainly no significant part of the population has been stirred to risk its personal liberty or economic well-being by launching a campaign against the present government.

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5. There have been stirrings recently within the military junta. We know that a fairly large number of the younger members of the junta are unhappy with the government. They dislike the concentration of power in Papadopoulos' hands. They are becoming increasingly outspoken about the rise in corrupt practices by high officials and cabinet ministers. These officers feel that the junta's principal purpose of purging Greek society of its evils is not being served. George Papadopoulos has been very skillful at ferreting out moves against him and at making the necessary counter-moves by repositioning officers and maintaining the loyalties of key commanders. Nonetheless, a coup could succeed.

6. There are, basically, two directions which a successor military regime might follow, depending on the identity of the officers carrying out the coup. Thus, one led by retired Colonel Stamatelopoulos (who recruited many of the officers for the 1967 coup), in association with Military Police head Ioannides, would probably move slowly toward constitutional government and greater participation in the political process which the 1968 constitution

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provides for. One dominated by the younger officers in the junta would probably set up a tighter, more dictatorial regime. In other respects, neither would be much different from the present regime; i.e., pro-NATO, vocally anti-communist, puritanical. Either would probably start off by claiming to be more efficient and more dedicated to purifying Greek society.

7. Probably the most important effect of a successful military move against the present government would be to call into question the legitimacy of the Athens government.

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A second military move would look more like a power-grab by self-seeking military officers. If Colonel X felt called upon to seize power, then Colonel Y could feel equally justified if he felt he was more efficient. If the regime in Athens were to change frequently through the agency of military force, we believe that the civilian side of the Greek political scene would heat up fairly quickly.

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8. At this stage, the political forces of the pre-April 1967 era are pretty much in disarray. Former Prime Minister Karamanlis (now 65) has been living in self-imposed exile in Paris since 1963. He too is dropping hints that he would like to return to Greece, but his temperament would probably cause him to insist on returning in a leading -- indeed dominant -- role. This a military regime almost certainly would not permit. It is more likely that Karamanlis would return to Greece -- if at all -- to live out his days in retirement, although there is an outside chance that circumstances might develop in which he could be the man on the white horse. The forces of the left side of the political spectrum, symbolized by Andreas Papandreu, were badly torn up by the coup and Papandreu would never be allowed back by the present or any likely ruling military junta. Those politicians still living in Greece lack their own organizations. We know of no new political organized groups

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9. Fears that political developments could get out of control and that the stability, order, and economic well-being which the Papadopoulos regime has achieved be put in jeopardy could lead the Prime Minister's senior colleagues to put extreme pressure on him to make some reforms. Responding to such pressures would require the Prime Minister to surrender much of the power he has arrogated to himself. He might accede, but the role of a virtual figurehead would not be in keeping with his temperament. He probably would resist any effort to diminish his personal power and, by holding on to it, help to build up pressures for a coup.

10. Papadopoulos, or indeed any successor, still has the problem of what to do about the Greek monarchy. It is in no sense an alternative to the present system of government. There are those in Greece who would like to make the country a republic again, notably the younger anti-Papadopoulos officers in the junta. The monarchy can, however, with the right incumbent, serve a symbolic role as an above-politics rallying point for the country.

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Papadopoulos probably would be willing to have a King in Greece again at an opportune time; so might a successor. But Constantine, who has recently indicated in a speech that he is willing to come back to Greece on almost any terms, may not be the one. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Greece might seek another member of the family or turn to a regency for Constantine's young son.

11. All things considered, Papadopoulos will probably remain in office for some time to come. He could be overthrown by a coup, but on the whole we think that his skill at ferreting out plots is adequate to keep him going for another year or two. What does seem predictable however, is that a change in the Greek political setup, e.g., Papadopoulos' replacement by another military group or a decision by Papadopoulos or a successor junta to implement key provisions of the 1968 constitution, would start an era of politicking in the country. Once the Greek body politic sees that change is possible, the old political volatility is almost certain to reappear with a

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vengeance. But when? The best guess is that such developments are from two to five years away. But that is only a guess. We do feel quite sure that the immediate successor to George Papadopoulos will be another military government. Such a regime might be more willing gradually to open the gates to civilian politics. But any full restoration of the democratic process (Greek-style) will almost certainly not come about until a successor regime to that of Papadopoulos has had a time in office.

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