



Rowland Evans and Robert Novak *Part*

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# Agnew's Gift to Greece



DESPITE a half-baked effort by President Nixon's foreign policy-makers to portray Vice President Agnew's official visit to the Greek dictatorship as "routine," the trip—privately opposed by U.S. diplomats—badly undermines the President's policy aimed at restoring parliamentary government in Greece.

That conclusion is inescapable considering the publicity now pouring into the government-controlled press in Athens, which is promising that the reception for Agnew will be the most lavish in postwar Greece and that the son of a Greek immigrant will be treated like royalty in the land of his father. That's justifiable. No other Greek-American has ever reached so high a political pinnacle in America.

What is not justifiable is the corollary: This outpouring of emotion for Agnew will be instantaneously converted by George Papadopoulos, the Greek military dictator, into proof that the Nixon administration, despite words to the contrary, is surreptitiously all the way behind the dictatorship.

THE FACTS are quite different. U.S. Ambassador Henry Tasca, after months of kowtowing to Papadopoulos, recently has been making ostentatious visits to leaders of the outlawed political parties who ran Greece before the 1967 coup d'etat of the colonels.

His private talk with exiled former Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis, a highly respected conservative, in Paris last week so infuriated the regime that it threatened to ban all contacts between U.S. diplomats and the ex-parliamentary leaders, most of whom still live in Athens. That threat will not stop Tasca's overtures to the silenced opposition.

In short, the Nixon policy remains as is: To keep the dictatorship at semi-arm's length and to encourage the regime to end the long period of martial law and schedule free elections.

But Agnew's six-day visit (two days as the official

guest of Papadopoulos, four to visit his family's village of Gargalianoi in the Peloponnesus) will drown out the effect of Tasca's tentative gestures toward the intensely anti-Papadopoulos democratic forces.

IT IS NO wonder, then, that the State Department cried in vain to stop the Vice President's junket to Greece. On Agnew's worldwide trip last summer, top State Department officials succeeded in persuading the White House not to permit Agnew to stop in Greece, even though his visit took him to the eastern Mediterranean area and he beseeched the President to let him include Greece on his itinerary.

But when Mr. Nixon designated his Vice President to represent the United States in Iran at the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian empire, Agnew renewed his request for permission to visit Greece with such fervor that the President (in the words of one aide) "could not say no."

Now, having lost the main battle, State Department operatives are preparing briefing papers they hope will convince Agnew to say the right things to Papadopoulos. But that effort is likely to fail.

Agnew was popping off

exultantly about the military takeover as long as three years ago. In a speech on Sept. 27, 1968, he said the Papadopoulos junta "has not proven itself to be as horrendous a specter to contemplate as most people thought it would." Rather, he said, it had "done a bit to stabilize the Communist threat" and would "provide a salutary climate in which a free elective system can take place."

IN SHORT, Agnew is philosophically and ideologically tied to Papadopoulos and his military regime, an historical fact not likely to make him an earnest advocate of President Nixon's public policy of coolness toward Greece.

His visit also will be of inestimable value to Papadopoulos in smothering the impact of the congressional ban on all U.S. aid to Greece passed by the House and pending in the Senate. Finally, it has been allowed to take place despite new evidence under study here that Papadopoulos will not consider free elections until 1973 at the earliest.

So, the "routine" Agnew visit to his ancestral land is another episode where this most controversial of Vice Presidents is running counter to the President's stated policy.

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