

Agnew Visit Seen Aiding Athens

By William J. Coughlin
Los Angeles Times

ATHENS—Whatever else Vice President Spiro T. Agnew's sentimental journey last month to Greece accomplished, it convinced the Greeks that the United States firmly supports the military regime which seized power here in a coup d'etat in April, 1967.

Opposition politicians, who met and talked with the Vice President in the course of his week-long visit, were depressed by the Agnew odyssey.

"I am a political animal," said one. "I know the handwriting on the wall when I see it." The handwriting was visible enough for there was nothing subtle about Agnew's embrace of the government of the colonels.

After a ringing declaration at Gargaliani, his father's native village, that I recognize and appreciate the achievements that are going forward under the present Greek government," the Vice President described Prime Minister George Papadopoulos in a statement released two days later as "a highly intelligent

and very frank man who, I am convinced, intends to return his country to representative government."

Agnew, for his part, assured Papadopoulos that President Nixon intended to continue military aid to Greece under the escape clause in the foreign aid bill which permits him to restore the aid if he deems it vital to national security.

Whatever else the two men discussed in more than six hours of talk spread over three closed meetings was held secret except for the fact that it included the NATO military situation. But it seems certain Agnew must have received some assurances about a timetable for the restoration of representative government in order for him to be so blunt in his affection for the prime minister and his policies.

Whether Agnew discussed the possible return of King Constantine from exile with Papadopoulos is not known. He had a long talk with the king at the Iranian 2,500th

anniversary celebration at Persepolis, and it seems likely the subject may have come up, particularly in the Vice President's unannounced three-hour informal visit with Papadopoulos one Sunday. Greek government sources have said the question of the king's return was not taken up but they could hardly state otherwise. Other sources have said the government would be happy to have the king back under the proper circumstances.

Royalist sources here said many of the king's former supporters have become disillusioned with him and think he might do well to make his peace with the present government. One said condescendingly, "After all, those peasant boys (the colonels) haven't done all that badly."

While no commitments have been made public, something seems to have taken place during the week that caused Agnew to come so vigorously to the support of the present regime and its prime minister. The advance copy of his remarks at

the Gargaliani luncheon contained no praise of the "achievements" of the present government. The praise was inserted extemporaneously by the Vice President.

It also was not until after the luncheon that the Vice President went out of his way to praise the prime minister to the press and voice his belief that representative government was on the way.

Papadopoulos was at the Vice President's side throughout the official three-day visit and even made the flying trip to be with Agnew when he visited his ancestral home at Gargaliani. The rousing welcome at his father's hometown was an emotionally moving experience for the son of a Greek immigrant who rose to the Vice Presidency of the United States. The crowds there and elsewhere were genuine in their affection for Agnew.

"The government did not make us come," one bystander explained to a correspondent. "They simply provided free transportation."