

Washington Merry-go-round

F Post
3-15-77 By Jack Anderson & Les Whitten

WASHINGTON — Sen. George McGovern, D-S.D., has dispatched a secret letter to the Senate Intelligence Committee urging an investigation of "unresolved questions" about CIA dirty tricks in support of the now-fallen Greek dictatorship.

Such a probe could spark more fireworks in the already volatile U.S.-Greek-Turkish situation. It could also prompt official interrogation of such former Washington stalwarts as President Richard Nixon, Vice President Spiro Agnew, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Atty. Gen. John Mitchell, and CIA director William Colby. Millionaire oil man Thomas Pappas, a former Nixon fundraiser, might also be queried.

McGovern, chairman of the Near Eastern Affairs subcommittee when he sent the October 29 letter to Intelligence Committee chairman Daniel Inouye, D-Ha., suggests a scenario of intrigue at the highest levels.

Inouye had pigeonholed the letter until he learned we had obtained a bootlegged copy. Within hours after our call, he agreed to meet with McGovern.

In his missive, McGovern asserted that the CIA's involvement with the Greek dictators between 1967 and 1974 and in the Cyprus coup of 1974 "merits...a careful investigation by your committee."

McGovern quoted Kissinger, Colby and former CIA special counsel Mitchell Rogovin as saying that "our covert involvement in Greece was substantial enough to endanger our present relations with the restored democratic government of Greece."

Moreover, wrote McGovern, Spiro Agnew offered to testify in 1975 "before

the Church committee on charges that he changed his position from one of 'neutrality' toward the Greek military dictatorship in 1968 to support for the junta."

But the reason for the switch "has never been investigated" by U.S. officials, said McGovern. For a while, wrote the senator, the Greek government had planned to study the junta's ties with the CIA but had dropped the idea "at the request of the CIA station chief in Athens."

An investigation is also needed, claimed McGovern, to determine the truth concerning charges that CIA funds were sent to Greece and then "funnelled...back to the U.S. for use in the 1968 presidential campaign."

In addition, "the extensive and longstanding ties of (Thomas) Pappas to the Greek junta...and the intelligence community...indicates a need for a thorough investigation of his activities..."

The wealthy Greek-American businessman, McGovern pointed out, "was the first person named by President Nixon in the White House tapes as the man to be approached for money to satisfy the demands of Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt."

Although there is no evidence Pappas provided the hush money, he was a prominent Nixon contributor and also served on President Ford's Finance Committee.

McGovern also charged that Greek exile journalist Elias Demetracopoulos, one of the dictators' most effective enemies, was harassed by the Justice Dept., the FBI and CIA.

Demetracopoulos, wrote the senator, was threatened with deportation by

John Mitchell; his Wall Street employers were visited by FBI agents; "slandorous raw material and disinformation from CIA operatives... was given to reporters and freelance writers like Russell Howe and Sarah Trott" for their book "The Power Peddlers"; and a plot by Greece to kidnap him and take him back to Athens was hatched with possible CIA collusion.

Footnote: An intelligence committee spokesman said that a reply to McGovern had been in the works for some time. The senator's office, however, told us they did not even get a courtesy acknowledgment that the letter was received. Pappas has consistently denied any improper activities during the reign of the junta. Howe and Trott maintain their book is scrupulously accurate.

HOSPITAL HUSTLE — A lucrative franchise scheme is milking millions from taxpayers and insurance companies by legally exploiting visits to hospital emergency rooms.

The franchises resemble fast-food chains, except that instead of hamburgers and french fries, they dispense sutures, X-rays and pills. But unlike food franchise operations, the U.S. Treasury pays the bills.

Nonprofit and moneymaking hospitals have always had difficulty staffing emergency rooms, which are filled around the clock with grisly sights of auto wreck victims, burst appendices and hypochondriacs looking for a sympathetic medical ear.

To overcome the problem, hospitals are increasingly turning to franchise operators to supply doctors eager to pick up extra dollars for part-time or

even full-time assignments.

According to a study done by Dr. Eugene Schoenfeld, head of the Hermes Foundation, which distributes medical data and does on-the-spot emergency room investigations, the medical-mercenaries by and large perform well. But they often charge what the traffic will bear, and most emergency room visitors are Medicaid patients for whom the taxpayer foots the bills. The hospitals and patients, therefore, care little about the costs. Insurance firms who should be griping usually prefer to avoid squabbles with hospitals by simply raising premium rates.

As a result, such abuses as these have occurred:

— A Washington hospital with a franchise emergency room charged the parents of one patient with almost every X-ray taken during one entire shift. The child only needed on X-ray but if the parents had not squawked, the insurance company would have paid without a question.

— In a California emergency room, 11 members of the same family showed up with sniffles. Medicaid paid some \$400 for "emergency" treatment.

— One doctor found doing shift work for a franchise operation so well-paying that he gave up his practice to work full-time as a contract physician. He works eight 24-hour shifts a month and makes \$90,000 a year.

The American Medical Association, which traditionally has sought ways to put a Cadillac in every doctor's garage, runs ads in its magazine for the franchise operations under the innocent heading of "Physicians wanted."