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## Dictatorships and Diplomacy

Something can still be salvaged from the Cyprus disaster if it prompts the United States to reconsider its long-time policy of supporting anti-democratic right-wing military dictatorships around the world on the questionable assumption that they are vital to American security.

The dismal end results of blindly sticking with the Greek colonels and generals is only one example of how this shortsighted policy has more often betrayed U.S. interests than advanced them. If any confirmation of this is needed, a quick look at Southeast Asia and Korea ought to suffice.

In the case of Greece, the official justification (under Democrats as well as Republicans) for aiding, if not abetting, the military junta that overthrew a democratic government in 1967 was that Greece, supposedly being the southern anchor of NATO, was indispensable to the collective defense in case of aggression in the Mediterranean.

If the clash over Cyprus has served no other purpose, it at least has demonstrated the bankruptcy, to say nothing of the naivete, of relying on Greece as an important and dependable ally. The military establishment organized by the junta with massive help from the United States was so feeble that, when put to the test, it couldn't even stop a limited Turkish expeditionary force. Since this was the military machine that in a showdown was counted on to help stand off a superpower like Russia, it is just as well we know now rather than later how feckless it really is when the shooting starts.

The tyrannical junta apparently demoralized the armed forces as well as the Greek people. The generals, in short, lost the confidence of everybody but Washington. Also distressing is that Washington, even though it had advance knowledge of the junta's plans, did not have enough influence to head off the Greek-inspired coup that overthrew the Cyprus government of Archbishop Makarios and set off the chain of events which finally culminated in the sacking of the U.S. embassy in Cyprus and the killing of our ambassador.

In sum, after being supported for years by both American guns and butter, the Greek militarists simply told Washington to go to hell when it suited their purpose to do so. This should not have come as a surprise for, during the Arab-Israeli war, the Greek generals also refused to co-operate in expediting the U.S. arms aid to Israel.

Once the hostilities began in Cyprus, it may well be that, if Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had to tilt between Greece and Turkey, it was the better part of valor to tilt on the side of the Turks. That remains to be seen. Unfortunately, however, this decision was forced on Washington just at the moment a new Greek democratic government was replacing the hated military junta.

The upshot is that Premier Constantine Karamanlis, the new leader of the country that invented democracy, has been weakened at the moment when he needed all the support he could get. With Greek crowds taking to the streets to chant "Americans, go home,"

it is not hard to understand why Karamanlis felt he had to withdraw his country from NATO.

Not long ago, Congress and the American public were being told that the administration had to play ball with the Greek military dictatorship not only because of NATO but also because of the naval bases we had to have for the U.S. Sixth Fleet, which patrols the Mediterranean. Now that these bases are to be closed to us, however, the Pentagon finds they are no great loss because the Navy can always go back to the old bases in Italy or, perhaps, new ones in Turkey.

The debacle of our policy in Greece comes at a time when Congress is showing signs of taking a new hard look at the military dictatorships we have been supporting for so long in South Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia and Taiwan. The recent House slash of aid to Vietnam was an eye-opener.

Since the end of World War II, America's costly interventions in Asia on behalf of anti-democratic right-wing governments have generally been undertaken in the name of saving the people from anti-democratic left-wing governments, although the people often can't seem to tell the difference.

As of now, the best hope for the future is the accession of a new U.S. President who supports a detente with China and Russia, but who is not saddled with old personal commitments to such Asian generals as Nguyen Van Thieu, Park Chung Hee and Chiang Kai-shek.