

Agnew's Turnaround on Greece

A sudden policy reversal just before the 1968 presidential election that lined up Spiro T. Agnew behind the Greek military dictatorship is now under close scrutiny by the Senate committee investigating the Central Intelligence Agency.

What has given the committee's staff sudden new interest in the 7-year-old events is the unearthing of a private, unpublished letter from the Maryland state campaign manager of the 1968 Nixon-Agnew campaign which specifically documents Agnew's spectacular switch from careful neutrality to overt support for the junta.

The Sept. 27 handwritten letter signed by Louise Gore, then a Maryland state senator and political ally of then Gov. Agnew, expressed "shock" at Agnew's sudden embrace of the junta in a speech earlier that day to the National Press Club in Washington. As such, the letter may prove indispensable to the committee's probe of long-standing charges that the junta funneled Greek government funds into the Nixon-Agnew campaign in return for Nixon-Agnew support.

The next phase of the CIA probe, headed by Sen. Frank Church of Idaho, is "covert action" abroad—allegations of CIA political intervention to influence domestic politics in sensitive situations abroad. The allegations in the case of the Greek junta, however, are deeper: whether any funds transmitted from the junta to the Nixon-Agnew campaign included money from the CIA's covert-action account in Athens.

Miss Gore's letter, written on the letterhead of her family-owned Fairfax Hotel in Washington to Elias Demetrapoulos, then an exiled Greek foe of the junta, was explicit and specific. She had been assured by Agnew the day before his press club speech that there would be no change in his position of strict neutrality toward the junta. As governor, Agnew had maintained that position since the April 1967 military coup, even though a large majority of Greek-Americans supported the junta.



But all that changed Sept. 27. Agnew strongly implied that the junta was "seriously living up to their obligations" and had "promised free elections" following a constitutional referendum to be held Sept. 29—just two days after Agnew delivered his blessing. (The free elections, as was quite predictable, were never held.)

A sudden endorsement by Agnew, the highest U.S. public official of Greek ancestry and Nixon's running-mate, gave the junta new respectability with profound implications inside Greece. Agnew's words were headlined in the junta-controlled press and the referendum was carried overwhelmingly.

The key sentence in Miss Gore's letter to Demetrapoulos was one of extreme indignation. "It was bad enough," she wrote, "that he told us he was going to have to be neutral. But then to turn around and support the regime, I can't believe it. What made him change his mind—or rather, who?"

That is precisely the question being asked today not only by members of Church's CIA-investigating committee but by two other congressional panels:

the Middle East subcommittees of the Senate Foreign Relations and the House International Relations Committees. Copies of Miss Gore's letter to Demetrapoulos are under study by staff investigators of both panels, with her complete approval.

For seven years, Miss Gore refused to give her letter to Congress. But now, following her campaign as Republican nominee for governor of Maryland last year, she is fully ready to cooperate. How much she can help, however, is another matter. When we asked Miss Gore to explain Agnew's sudden switch, she replied she is as much in the dark today as when she wrote the letter.

Crucial to the unfolding investigation is millionaire Thomas A. Pappas of Boston, who holds U.S.-Greek dual citizenships and was one of the Nixon-Agnew campaign's chief money-raisers. As the junta's unofficial emissary to the Nixon administration, he usually was along on the endless parade of visiting American officials to the junta during the Nixon administration.

The beneficiary of lucrative commercial deals with the junta, Pappas on June 18, 1968, gave an interview to the pro-junta Athens newspaper, *Apogevmatini*, in which he bragged about his alleged connection with the CIA. "I have worked for the CIA anytime my help was requested," Pappas was quoted as saying in the interview.

Accordingly, Pappas is certain to be summoned for testimony when the Church committee ends the assassination phase of its probe and moves into the explosive area of covert CIA operations abroad. A central exhibit will be the private letter of Louise Gore, with its incriminating question: "What made him change his mind—or rather, who?"

In a recent column, we incorrectly identified Col. Gen. Tran Van Tra of the North Vietnamese army as an ethnic northerner. In fact, he was born in Quang Ngai Province in Central Vietnam.