

Mr. Agnew's Greek Visit

Vice President Agnew's official visit to Greece later this month will give the military dictatorship there the biggest prestige boost it has enjoyed since it seized power in 1967. It will strip the last vestige of credibility from Washington's pious claim that it disapproves of the Athens regime and has tried to persuade the ruling colonels to restore democracy.

Presidential press secretary Ronald Ziegler probably is correct in saying the visit implies "no change" in American policy. The actual policy all along has been to continue—even to increase—military aid to Greece while expressing, when it was considered politically necessary to do so, the mildest reservations about the regime's perpetuation of martial law, arbitrary arrests and the torture of political prisoners.

The Agnew trip does, however, represent a change of Administration tactics—to a more open demonstration of approval and support for Colonel Papadopoulos. Mr. Agnew reportedly sought to add Greece to the ten countries—nearly all dictatorships—that he visited last July. But State Department counsel prevailed at that time and Athens was omitted from the itinerary.

Whatever it may be that has made Washington amenable to the October visit, it emphatically is not any lifting of repression in Greece. On the day Mr. Agnew's travel plan was announced, an Athens military court sentenced Lady Fleming, the Greek-born widow of the discoverer of penicillin, to sixteen months in jail for assisting an abortive plot for the escape of a young Greek who had tried to assassinate Colonel Papadopoulos.

Before embracing the colonels, Mr. Agnew might wish to consider what kind of conditions in Greece would drive a 62-year-old woman suffering from acute diabetes to participate in such a desperate venture.