

THE CIA'S ATHENS CONNECTION

For decades, many Greeks have complained that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was playing a secret role in their country's political affairs—a charge made so frequently that Washington stopped denying it. But in the wake of the return to civilian rule in Athens, it became clear last week that the American intelligence service had indeed been dabbling in Greek politics. According to high State Department officials, CIA agents subsidized politicians and bought votes in Parliament. During the tenure of the recently deposed military junta, it was the CIA and not Ambassador Henry Tasca who dealt directly with Brig. Gen. Dimitrios Ioannidis, the strongman of the regime. "In practice," said one Washington official, "Tasca handled the flunkies, while a CIA officer saw *numero uno*."

The agent closest to Ioannidis, according to the story that leaked out of Washington, was a Greek-American named Peter Koromilas. More than two weeks before the coup in Cyprus, the CIA learned from Ioannidis that he intended to oust President Makarios. The information was relayed to Washington, where Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph Sisco cabled Tasca to go directly to Ioannidis to make clear Washington's strong opposition to a coup attempt. It was an unusual step on Sisco's part, since Tasca had not been dealing

with Ioannidis in order to avoid obvious contact with the man held responsible for the worst excesses of the regime. In a protocol sense, too, it was strange, since Ioannidis was not a top minister but chief of the military police.

Tasca balked at going to Ioannidis and instead sent a CIA man on the mission, while he himself went to President Phaidon Gizikis with the American complaint. When the ambassador's cabled account of this procedure reached Washington, the furious Sisco again cabled Tasca ordering him to see Ioannidis personally and make utterly clear the American concern over his intentions with respect to Cyprus. Eventually, Tasca did see Ioannidis, but top-level officials in the State Department—where the ambassador is generally disliked—doubted that he conveyed the U.S. message with the proper enthusiasm.

Clearly, the State Department, in laying bare some of the secrets of past U.S. relations with Athens, is now trying to suggest that the CIA, not itself, was responsible for the U.S.'s close relations with the junta. But Tasca is also in trouble at the State Department, and he is likely to be recalled soon. He is, however, a favorite of President Nixon and, at the age of 61, career-man Tasca will probably either be permitted to retire gracefully or be handed a first-class assignment in Washington.



Camera Press

Tasca: He handled the flunkies