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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Memorandum

The Greek Junta: Its Problems and Prospects

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
19 January 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Greek Junta: Its Problems and Prospects

Summary

With nearly nine months of rule under their belt, the leaders of the "21 April revolution" in Greece appear to have settled in for an extended stay. The junta's defeat of King Constantine's ill-fated counter coup attempt in December removed the only apparent mechanism for focusing resistance to its rule, at least from outside its ranks.

Many of the problems the junta has at home were inherited from the chaotic situation existing before it seized control. It has set as its basic goal the total reform of the country's economic, political, and social institutions--an objective it will almost certainly be unable to realize. Steps taken thus far toward this end have enabled the junta to forestall any immediate threat from domestic opposition and it can probably overcome the discontent of those extremists in its own ranks who think the cause is being betrayed.

Nevertheless, the regime is impatient and nervous about some of the problems it faces. It is baffled by its failure to win friends abroad and has indicated that it will not wait indefinitely for acceptance by its NATO allies, and

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particularly by the US. Prime Minister Papadopoulos, irritated by the lack of US recognition, is reported to have said that if some sign of recognition were not forthcoming by 20 January, he would show the Americans that "we mean business." He did not specify what action he had in mind.

Although the junta's long-term tenure remains questionable, most Greeks reportedly accept its control and will probably be moved to significant protest only if the regime clearly fails to show movement toward the objectives it has set.

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The Regime's Frustration in Its Foreign Relations

1. Since the junta took power last April, its principal problem has been with its allies. The open disapproval of the military regime by some NATO governments and the grudging acceptance by others have produced an increasing sense of frustration. Possibly in response to this adverse reaction from its friends, the government has moved to draft a new constitution, which at least in its initial form retains the basic institutions of a constitutional monarchy. Further, the regime has declared it will hold a national referendum as soon as practical before 15 September. Soon after the King's abortive attempt to oust the junta, the regime released its most prominent detainee, Andreas Papandreou, presumably to satisfy some of its foreign critics.

2. The regime obviously believes these steps toward "democracy" should convince its friends of its good intentions. Prime Minister Papadopoulos so far has fended off some of his hard-line colleagues who are less sensitive to the need for outside support.

3. Nevertheless, the regime has let it be known that it will not wait indefinitely for signs of acceptance from its NATO allies, and specifically from the US. Prime Minister Papadopoulos reportedly is unwilling to wait beyond 20 January for a favorable sign of US recognition. If some sign is not forthcoming, Papadopoulos reportedly said he will then show the Americans that "we mean business." Other reports have suggested that the action might take the form of a statement that Greece had been "ejected" from NATO. The regime, however, has just circulated to the NATO representatives assurances that it remains loyal to NATO. The US rather than NATO thus seems likely to be the target, and press reports hinting at this began to surface in Athens on 17 January.

4. Papadopoulos' range of options, however, does not seem wide. His regime can make life difficult for US installations in Greece, and he could

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attempt to embarrass the US with public censure of Washington in retaliation for the criticism to which he believes Greece is being subjected. There have even been suggestions that the regime might espouse Gaullism--a semiofficial emissary from Paris is reported to have brought a message from De Gaulle. The regime's vocal and vehement anti-Communism would stand in the way of a move toward "Nasirism," however, as some other observers have suggested.

The Regime's Domestic Problems and Its Attacks on Them

5. The junta faces serious problems, many of them inherited from the chaotic situation existing before the take-over last April. These will demand considerable time, energy, and administrative talent to resolve. Moreover, the fact that the regime has established the "total" reform of Greek society as its basic goal complicates its position. By professing an intention to overhaul completely all aspects of the country's economic, political, and social institutions, the regime has almost certainly bitten off more than it can chew.

6. The specific economic and social problems are generally those which confronted previous regimes. The gross national product has risen impressively in recent years, but the economy has basic vulnerabilities--a dearth of natural resources, a low level of industrial production, a highly unfavorable balance of trade, and overdependence on foreign investment. The regime has gained at least a temporary psychological advantage regarding economic problems with its simplification and lowering of income taxes. The Greek regime reasserted the primacy of private enterprise, actively encouraged foreign capital, and introduced highly important measures designed to reduce the gap between rural and urban incomes.

7. Socially, the regime has focused on two sectors--the church and the schools. Both of these institutions are conservative, even stubborn in their outlook. The junta early moved to bring new, enlightened leadership to the church with its installation of a highly respected archbishop whose views are

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more progressive. Although little movement has come in the educational field, reforms in university administration were instituted in early December which resumed some of the force of the program of the Papan-dreou government. On balance, the junta's objectives in these areas now seem more tangible and clearly enunciated than before, when its goals were expressed in generalities and seemed the result of varied ideological considerations.

8. A political cleanup continues to be the prime objective of the junta leadership. From the outset, the regime has tried to purge the country's political institutions of what it regards as the effects of the "corrupt" personalities and inadequate policies of previous regimes. Generally disdainful of politicians of all persuasions, the junta banned political activity; Communists, left-wing sympathizers, and even heretofore "respectable" conservative political figures were jailed or placed under house arrest, and violators were subject to punishment by military tribunals. Criticism of the regime was stifled by press censorship, and the regime intends to reform the venal precoup press.

9. The past cooperation of the Palace with political elements also made the monarchy suspect, and the King quickly found some of his previous influence in the army overshadowed by the junta's power. The King periodically was confronted with military retirement lists which, in the circumstances of his straitened position, he found expedient to sign in spite of the inclusion of officers whom he believed should be retained. In these and other ways, the King's position was severely undermined by the 21 April coup, and his abortive countercoup attempt in December has left him virtually isolated in exile in Rome. The junta has not completely barred the door to his return, nor has the King burned his bridges with the top junta leaders. If he does come back, he is likely at best to reign rather than rule.

10. Virtually every section of government at both the national and local levels has felt the effects of the coup. Officials in district and local

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government have been replaced by projunta nonarchs (governors) and mayors, many of whom were ex-military officers. Control elements, again usually military officers, were established in the various ministries and agencies to maintain surveillance over hundreds if not thousands of "politically tainted" career professionals, many of whom were removed or transferred to lesser positions.

11. Even the military establishment itself has been included in the "political cleanup." The officer corps and security forces have been subjected to periodic forced early retirement and transfer of men not believed to be in sympathy with the regime. Where opposition, chiefly from the King, prevented any such move, projunta monitors were placed in key positions within command elements to observe any antiregime activity. This paid off, at least in the short term, in blocking the King's move of 13 December. Most of the officers who opposed the junta have now been removed.

12. While it has been enforcing these and other measures and apparently consolidating its control, the regime at the same time has insisted that its rule is temporary. Upon completion of the reforms, regime spokesmen reiterate, the government will return the country to "democratic" institutions. That promise is the regime's major political hurdle.

13. In the early weeks of its rule, the junta appointed a commission to draft a new constitution for submission to the government by mid-December 1967. The government received the draft a few days after the King's countercoup attempt, and announced that a referendum would be held on or before 15 September 1968. Presumably the regime will set the date for new elections upon promulgation of the constitution, but it has been deliberately hazy on this point. [REDACTED]

1.5(c)(d)
3.4(b)(1)(6)

[REDACTED] the draft constitution shows relatively little basic change from the constitution of 1952. The King's powers are reduced to some degree, a constitutional court is instituted, and the freedom and "obligations" of the press are more strictly defined, as are other individual rights such as those of assembly and association. The executive was not strengthened to the degree anticipated.

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Reaction to the Junta's Works

14. The junta's performance to date has met with varying reactions. The regime apparently has won the respect, if not the admiration, of the apathetic Greek populace by its "clean sweep" tactics, combined with its public commitment to return to constitutionality. The repeated assurances on the latter score, however, along with the present draft of the new constitution appear to have contributed to a split between the "moderates," controlled by Premier Papadopoulos, and a group of extremists. This group apparently under the leadership of Colonel Ladas, the secretary general of the Ministry of Public Order, is critical of Papadopoulos' conciliatory attitude toward the King and was probably chiefly responsible for the exclusion from the pre-Christmas amnesty of suspect Communists, who remain in detention. The Ladas group reportedly further believes that only an extended period of military rule can bring about real reform. Papadopoulos believes he can curb this group and has indicated he will put it down if it continues to interfere, but he clearly must take account of the sentiment for "root and branch" change which the group represents.

Prospects

15. In an immediate sense the regime's domestic prospects appear to be good. At present no political element seems capable of effective protest. The only observable alternative in the short run seems to be an uprising of another group of officers which is even less inclined than the present group to move toward parliamentary government.

16. Economically, the junta appears to have gained at least temporary advantage from the stimulus generated by its programs which have been initially well received by the man in the street and, which, if carried through, will probably generate additional popular support.

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17. Socially, the junta still must demonstrate a capability for carrying out broad reform of an antiquated educational system, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels. It also faces a formidable task in attempting to give new life to the church, an extremely conservative establishment populated by a corrupt and poorly educated clergy. These areas presumably require the assistance of trained professionals, a group that the regime has shown little inclination to recruit as yet.

18. In its foreign relations, the junta's course clearly will depend in large part on the attitudes of Greece's allies. As a practical matter, a sharp realignment of Greek foreign policy would involve difficult adjustments, especially in the military establishment on which the junta basically depends. It is nonetheless clear that the junta is determined to press its "revolution" as far as it can, regardless of foreign criticism, and that it feels forced to move toward a more independent policy.

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