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CONSEQUENCES OF CERTAIN COURSES  
OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO GREECE

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By: 024

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## CONSEQUENCES OF CERTAIN COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO GREECE

## THE PROBLEM

1. By direction of the National Security Council, we estimate herein the consequences of the following courses of US action with respect to Greece:

*Course A:* to continue and strengthen the present program of US assistance by all feasible means short of the employment of US military power.

*Course B:* to continue and strengthen the present program of US assistance in combination with one or more of the following uses of US military power:

- (1) Dispatch of a token armed force to Greece.
- (2) Employment in Greece of all presently available US armed forces to assist in preventing Communist domination of Greece.
- (3) Strengthening and disposing US armed forces outside of Greece as would be deemed most effective.
- (4) Partial mobilization in the United States as an indication of determination to resist Communist expansion.

## DISCUSSION

2. Discussion of the probable Soviet reaction to the courses of US action under consideration is in Enclosure "A"; of the probable consequences in Greece, in Enclosure "B"; and of the probable reaction elsewhere in Europe and the Near East, in Enclosure "C".

## CONCLUSIONS

3. *Course A* would have no appreciable effect on current Soviet policy toward either Greece or the United States. It would have a beneficial effect in Greece, but would be unlikely to prove decisive.

4. *Course B (1)* would have no effect substantially different from the effects of *Course A*.

5. *Course B (2)* might alarm the USSR initially, but not after it had become apparent that the US force in Greece was limited in strength and mission. The USSR would not accept risk of war for the sake of Greece. Only this course gives definite

NOTE: The information in this report is as of 15 March 1948, at which time the report was submitted to the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and Air Force for concurrence or substantial dissent.

The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Navy, and Air Force have concurred in the report.

The Intelligence Division, Department of the Army, "does not agree with the general tone of extreme pessimism found in the paper with regard to the success of the United States aid program (pp. 1, par. 3; 8, par. 6; 9, sec. 5); the apparent lack of will on the part of the Greek Army to achieve a military decision (p. 8, end par. 1) and the statement that political interference with the Greek Army command is likely to continue or that such interference is habitual (p. 8, par. 2). The Intelligence Division, Department of the Army, estimates that the situation in regard to these factors is not such as to lead to a conclusion that employment of United States tactical units would be required to achieve success."

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assurance of the pacification of Greece, which is essential to that country's economic recovery and political stability.

6. *Course B (3)* would have a less decisive effect on the situation in Greece than would *Course B (2)*, but a more favorable effect than would *Courses A, B (1), or B (4)*. Friendly states in Europe and the Near East would prefer it to *Course B (2)*. It might cause the Kremlin to reconsider its current general policy. (See below.)

7. *Course B (4)* would have no direct effect on the local situation in Greece, but would have a generally reassuring and stabilizing effect throughout free Europe and the Near East. It would probably cause the Kremlin to reconsider its current general policy, the basic choices before it being (a) to continue that policy substantially unchanged, (b) to seek a general peace settlement, or (c) to launch a preventive war. The Kremlin would resort to war only if convinced that a US attack on the USSR was in prospect and inevitable.

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ENCLOSURE "A"

SOVIET REACTION

1. GENERAL.

The consequences of the various courses of US action under consideration would depend primarily on the Soviet reaction thereto. The Kremlin would interpret the significance of each in terms of the global situation, not merely in relation to the local situation in Greece. Appreciation of the probable consequences, therefore, requires summary review of the basic policy of the USSR and consideration of the relative importance of Greece in Soviet strategy.

2. BASIC SOVIET POLICY.

The Soviet Government anticipates a possible war of survival with the capitalist world. It therefore seeks to increase its relative strength by building up its own war potential and improving its strategic position while undermining the strength and position of its presumed antagonists. In particular, it seeks to gain control over Western Europe, or at least to prevent hostile development of that area as a potential base of attack on the USSR. For the present, however, the potential (as distinguished from immediately available) strength of the Soviet Union and its satellites is so markedly inferior to that of the United States that, in its efforts to improve its strategic position, the USSR must take care to avoid provoking prematurely a warlike reaction on the part of the United States. Consequently, although the USSR would resist with determination a real or supposed threat to the security of its existing strategic position in Eastern Europe, it will be flexible and opportunistic in its efforts to extend the area under its control, taking care to avoid any commitment which might bring it or its satellites into direct and inescapable physical conflict with the United States.

So far this policy has produced satisfactory results. The Soviet Union has made significant progress in the development of its war potential and has consolidated its position in the Satellite States. It has prospects of expanding further the area under its control by means short of general war. No power or possible combination of powers could mount an effective military attack on the USSR without intensive preparations over a considerable period of time.

3. CONTINGENT ALTERNATIVE POLICIES.

Pending the development of a Soviet war potential decisively superior to that of the United States, there appear to be only two possible contingencies in view of which there might be a radical revision of Soviet policy as set forth above.

If the Kremlin were to conclude that, despite its efforts, the situation in Western Europe was definitely becoming stabilized on the basis of the European Recovery Program and the Western Union, it would have occasion to reconsider its policy. There is no reason to suppose that the Kremlin already considers such a development inevitable. In the contingency envisaged, the basic choices before it would be: (a) to continue to adhere to its current general policy; (b) to accept the stabilization of

Western Europe, abandon (for the time being) an expansionist policy there, seek a general European settlement, concentrate on the internal development of the area under firm Soviet control, and await with confidence the "inevitable" occurrence of a new "revolutionary situation"; or, (c) to take advantage of its still existing, but gradually diminishing, capability to overrun Western Europe in a preventive war. The Kremlin would be predisposed in favor of the first or second alternative. The third, presumably involving a global war with the United States, would be acceptable only if the Kremlin were also convinced that the United States and Western Europe would inevitably attack the USSR once the recovery of Western Europe had been accomplished.

Expansion of the existing US military establishment and a significant increase in US military strength in Europe and/or the Mediterranean would also cause a re-consideration of Soviet policy, the broad alternatives before the Kremlin being the same as those presented above. Again, the Kremlin would probably prefer to seek a general settlement if it could believe that thereby war could be avoided. It would resort to preventive war only if convinced that a US attack on the USSR was actually in prospect and inevitable.

It must be taken into account, in this connection, that Kremlin appreciation of US capabilities and intentions may be distorted by ideological preconceptions and imperfect intelligence.

#### 4. THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF GREECE TO THE USSR.

The only vital Soviet interest in Greece is a consequence of the vulnerability of vital targets in the Soviet Union to long-range air attack from the Near East. On this flank the USSR lacks the defense in depth which it has gained on the west by its advance from the Pripet Marshes into the heart of Germany (850 miles). The ideal desirability of creating a similar defensive zone on the south (and of gaining other advantages) by extending Soviet control over Greece, Turkey, Iran, and the Arab States is obvious. At the very least the Kremlin is likely to regard it as vital to prevent the establishment in Greece of an "imperialist" stronghold capable of resisting Soviet attack and consequently of use in protecting a Near Eastern base of operations against the USSR in the event of war.

Effective Communist (Soviet) control of Greece would avert this danger and facilitate the further extension of Soviet control in the Near East. Soviet domination of the Aegean would by itself prevent hostile naval intrusion into the Black Sea, regardless of who controlled the Straits. It would, moreover, extend on the west the existing double envelopment of Turkey, permitting the exertion of such pressure as might eventually neutralize that country or bring it under Soviet control. From Greek bases Soviet aircraft and submarines could endanger shipping throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Soviet aircraft could also threaten land targets in Tripoli, Cirenaica, Egypt, and the Levant. In addition to these capabilities, Communist accession to power in Greece, in defiance of the "Truman Doctrine," would have profound psychological and political consequences advantageous to the USSR, in Western Europe and the Middle East as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus the USSR has much to gain by pressing Communist revolutionary operations in Greece to a success-

ful conclusion, and much to lose by permitting the Communists to be defeated by US intervention.

The countervailing considerations, from the Soviet point of view are: (a) the necessity to avoid provoking an undesired war; (b) the greater value of Western Europe as a possible prize; and (c) the greater urgency of the situation with respect to Western Europe. In all probability the Near and Middle East will remain indefinitely unstable and vulnerable to Soviet penetration, but the postwar opportunity in Western Europe must be realized before it is lost through the stabilization of that area. Success in bringing Western Europe under Soviet domination would have a more immediate and decisive effect on the global situation than would the extension of Soviet control in any other sector of Eurasia. If the USSR were willing to accept the risk of war over Greece, it would sooner incur that risk to gain Western Europe.

In sum, the USSR would be extremely sensitive to a hostile build-up in Greece or anywhere else on its exposed southern flank, but would not take counteraction involving risk of war unless convinced that the operation constituted a real threat to the security of the USSR itself or to its control of the Satellite States. The USSR's own operations in Greece are essentially the exploitation of an especially favorable opportunity on a secondary front.

#### 5. EXPLOITATION OF OPPORTUNITY IN GREECE.

The special opportunity which the USSR is exploiting in Greece resulted from (a) the postwar exhaustion and disorganization of that naturally poor and politically unstable country; (b) its accessibility from neighboring states under Soviet control; (c) the existence, ready-made, of a Communist-led guerrilla movement, developed during the Axis occupation; and (d) the existence of a national government vulnerable to attack as "monarcho-Fascist." With covert Soviet and Satellite support, the guerrillas have grown in strength, despite all efforts to pacify or suppress them, and, by keeping the country in a turmoil, have prevented its economic rehabilitation and political stabilization. But for such assistance as the Greek Government has received from the United Kingdom and the United States, the Communists might well have already seized control of the country or of a major portion of it.

Soviet support of the Greek insurgents has consisted of (a) psychological warfare against the Greek Government and against British and US "interference" in Greece; (b) unified direction and control of operations in Greek and Satellite territory by qualified international Communists; (c) provision of secure bases in Satellite territory; and (d) Satellite provision of supplies and equipment in increasing quantity. Alien personnel, however, have not yet appeared in Greece in appreciable numbers.

Further increase in the provision of supplies and equipment to the insurgents is to be expected, including the possible provision of aircraft, tanks, and additional artillery. Foreign volunteers may also appear, particularly as required to man technical equipment. With careful regard for US reaction, however, the USSR and the Satellite States will avoid any open and inescapable commitment in Greece. No Soviet or Satellite forces, as such, will enter the country, nor are the USSR and the Satellite States likely to grant formal recognition to the Communist government, at least not until Communist control of Greece is apparently assured.

The Kremlin has no public commitment with respect to Greece comparable to the "Truman Doctrine." Despite popular identification of the guerrillas as agents of Soviet policy, the USSR retains complete freedom of action.

6. COURSE A.

If the United States were to extend and "strengthen" the present program of assistance to Greece, without employing US military power, there would be no change in Soviet policy toward either Greece or the United States. The USSR would rely upon its own increased aid to the guerrillas to balance any problematical increase in the effectiveness of the Greek Army and upon continued guerrilla activity to frustrate US efforts to achieve economic recovery and political stability. Soviet propaganda would intensify its exploitation of the theme of US "interference" in Greek internal affairs.

7. COURSE B (1).

If, in addition to extending and strengthening the present aid program for Greece, the United States should also dispatch a token armed force to that country, there would still be no immediate change in Soviet policy. The USSR would be keenly alert to determine whether the token force was the advance guard of a larger body — it might pause pending a new estimate of the situation — but when the token force was recognized as such the USSR would continue its present operations with perhaps a compensatory increase in material aid for the guerrillas. Soviet propaganda would redouble its attacks on US "imperialism" in Greece: the USSR might raise the issue in the United Nations. Provocative incidents would be arranged in order to induce US soldiers to kill innocent Greeks, for propaganda purposes. The guerrillas, however, would probably avoid the US force in their military operations.

8. COURSE B (2).

If "all presently available US armed forces" were set in motion toward Greece the USSR might well become unduly, but genuinely, alarmed. Soviet intelligence would be concerned to discover the expedition's ultimate strength and mission, and would receive exaggerated and alarmist reports on those subjects. By way of precaution Soviet and Satellite forces might be put in a state of readiness for war. The USSR would not precipitate hostilities, however; Soviet diplomacy would first explore the possibility of a peaceful solution. When it became apparent that the US force in Greece was limited in strength and mission the USSR would be reassured. It would then be content to maintain the existing ratio of Soviet to US strength in Europe, knowing that if war did come eventually it could quickly overwhelm the US force in Greece.

While not opposing Soviet force to US force in Greece, the USSR would exploit to the utmost the propaganda value of US military intervention there. Its condemnation of US "reactionary and war-mongering imperialism" might well include an indictment of the United States before the United Nations.

Soviet concern to avoid direct Soviet or Satellite involvement in Greece, as well as the effect of US military operations, would tend to curtail the amount of material aid actually received by the guerrillas. After offering such resistance as they could, most

of them would find sanctuary in Satellite territory, where they would be received as political refugees. Every effort consistent with avoidance of war would be made, however, to maintain an effective underground resistance in Greece, with a view to retarding stabilization and to a renewal of guerrilla activity if and when the US forces withdrew.

The USSR would soon appreciate that the commitment of "all available US forces" in Greece had precluded prompt US military intervention elsewhere. It might then, in keeping with its current policy (paragraph 2), intensify its subversive operations in countries of greater importance than Greece (e. g., Italy or Iran) with a view to achieving a *fait accompli* before US forces could be extricated from Greece to prevent it, or before additional US forces could be made available for that purpose.

If, however, Course B (2) were supported by Course B (4), the Kremlin might well take occasion to reconsider its current policy. The critical consideration in this case would be the Soviet reaction to Course B (4), discussed in paragraph 10.

9. COURSE B (3).

The adoption of this course would have no direct bearing on the Greek situation unless the contemplated deployment of US forces occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean. The initial Soviet reaction to a US build-up there would be as to the initial phase of Course B (2). The USSR would perceive a threat on its relatively exposed southern flank and would take corresponding precautions. When it became apparent, however, that the US forces in the Eastern Mediterranean were limited in strength and even more limited in mission than the force contemplated under Course B (2), the Kremlin would recognize that they constituted no immediate threat to Soviet security.

Supposing a continued adherence to current Soviet policy, the augmented US forces in the Mediterranean, equally available for military intervention in Italy, Greece, or Turkey, would serve as a restraint on Soviet or Communist operations against any of those countries. At the same time their presence in the vicinity would impose less restraint on Communist operations within Greece than would Course B (2). The USSR would remain free to give sufficient support to the guerrillas to prevent stabilization of the situation in Greece.

However, contemplation of US development of a strategic position in readiness out of reach of direct Soviet ground attack, yet suitable as a base for eventual US air attack on the USSR, might well cause the Kremlin to reconsider its current policy and to weigh the alternatives of appeasement or preventive war (paragraph 3). This reaction would be probable if Course B (3) were adopted in conjunction with Course B (4).

10. COURSE B (4).

The USSR would be concerned with the global implications of partial mobilization in the United States, without particular reference to the situation in Greece. Such mobilization would probably cause the Kremlin to reconsider its current general policy and to weigh the alternatives of appeasement or preventive war (paragraph 3). Adoption of Course B (2) or of Course B (3) in conjunction with Course B (4) would intensify Soviet anxiety and would tend to weight the scales in favor of preventive war. It must be stressed, however, that the Kremlin would choose war at this time only if convinced that appeasement was futile, that eventual US attack was inevitable, and that the USSR must strike first in self defense.

ENCLOSURE "B"  
CONSEQUENCES IN GREECE

1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The effective pacification of Greece is prerequisite to the economic rehabilitation and political stabilization of that country. Despite a preponderance of numerical strength in the order of 5 to 1, the Greek Army has failed to subdue the guerrillas, whose relative capabilities have steadily increased. This failure is attributable only in part to the elusive tactics hitherto employed by the guerrillas and to the foreign aid which they have received. Also involved are the adverse effect of political intrigue on Army efficiency and morale and the Army's apparent lack of will to achieve a military decision.

Political interference in Greek Army command is habitual, the consequence of the bitter factionalism characteristic of Greek politics and of the relationship in Greek experience between control of the Army and political survival. The tendency is likely to continue, even in circumstances of extreme national peril, the stake being political control of Greece if and when the situation has been stabilized.

An increasingly important morale factor is a fatalistic sense that the conflict in Greece is essentially one between the USSR and the United States the outcome of which cannot be decided by Greek effort. From this point of view it would appear that vigorous action against the guerrillas would probably result only in increased Soviet support of them, intensifying the fighting without hope of a favorable decision.

The mood of depression prevailing in Greece and stifling military, political, and economic initiative can be broken only by a conviction that the United States is firmly resolved to bring the struggle in that country to a favorable and early conclusion. Persuasion that the United States would never permit the Communists to come to power is not enough. What is needed is conviction that the United States is determined to break the existing deadlock.

2. COURSE A.

Continuation of direct US assistance to Greece beyond 30 June 1948 is essential to prevent the collapse of the existing regime and eventual Communist control of the country. A "strengthening" of the assistance program, in the sense of increased appropriations, would have beneficial effect, but would not itself produce decisive results. Increased economic and financial aid can result in effective suppression of the guerrillas, economic rehabilitation, and political stability only if the United States is able to exercise a decisive influence upon Greek political action, internal administration, and military operations without antagonizing the Greeks and forfeiting their cooperation. To accomplish such a feat would require a rare combination of force and tact, an adequate and skillful public relations program, and perfect timing. To rely exclusively upon the successful management of such an intervention would be to incur considerable risk of the operation's backfiring.

The crux of the problem with respect to Course A is whether the Greek Army, protected from political interference, increased in numerical strength, and well supplied,

equipped, and "advised" (i. e., directed) could succeed in suppressing the guerrillas without the employment of US military force. In the best case the Army might succeed in doing so, but that result is problematical. Considerable US interference in Greek politics would be required to protect the Army from Greek political interference; US political interference could be as demoralizing as Greek, or more so. Soviet propaganda would be alert to exploit actual instances of US interference to document its presently somewhat abstract case against US "imperialism" in Greece. The USSR would presumably increase its aid to the "Democratic Army," so that the relative capabilities of the Greek Army might not be decisively increased. Even in the best case, it is improbable that a military decision could be won during 1948, although the guerrilla situation might possibly be brought under more effective control. The most probable result would be a continuation of the existing stalemate. In the worst case, there might be an adverse reaction to US interference resulting in a disintegration of Greek resistance to Communism.

In short, adoption of Course A would probably result in some improvement in the Greek situation, but would be unlikely to have a decisive effect.

3. COURSE B (1).

The arrival of a token US armed force in Greece would have a momentarily favorable psychological effect, but this tendency would be reversed when it became apparent that the token force did not presage a decisive military intervention. Ultimately the presence of a US force would have no greater influence on the situation than that of the existing British token force. It would afford some assurance that the United States would not permit the Communists to gain complete control of the country, but no hope of an end to the existing situation.

4. COURSE B (2).

The employment of "all available" US armed forces in Greece would afford reasonable hope of an early pacification of the country and of consequent economic recovery and political stabilization. This renewed hope would itself contribute greatly to the accomplishment of those objectives. Curtailment of Satellite support (Enclosure "A", paragraph 8) would so reduce guerrilla capabilities as probably to permit effective suppression of the Communist insurrection, although Communist underground resistance would continue and minor *banditti* might still hold out in the mountains. Greece having been effectively pacified, its economic rehabilitation might be accomplished. The US forces could not be withdrawn, however, without exposing Greece to a renewal of Communist guerrilla activity.

5. COURSE B (3).

The strengthening of US forces in the Eastern Mediterranean, but outside of Greece, would still leave to the Greek Army the critical task of suppressing the guerrillas. As in Courses A and B (1) decisive results could not be regarded as assured. The Greeks would be encouraged by the presence of stronger US forces in the vicinity, but only to the extent that they supposed effective direct support to be at hand. The USSR would not be prevented from continuing its covert support of the guerrillas. In the

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end the failure of Course B (3) to eventuate in Course B (2) might result in more discouragement than encouragement in Greece.

6. COURSE B (4).

Partial mobilization in the United States would have little direct bearing on the actual situation in Greece. Such comfort as the Greeks might derive from an increase in US capabilities in general would be counteracted by apprehension of a general war in which Greece would surely be overrun by Soviet forces. In short, this Course would have no appreciable net effect in Greece except as it affected the general policy of the USSR (Enclosure "A," paragraph 10).

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ENCLOSURE "C"

REACTIONS ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE AND THE NEAR EAST

1. GENERAL.

All the free nations of Europe and the Near East are extremely apprehensive of further Soviet aggression, internal or external. All are keenly aware of their own present weakness and the immediate presence of overwhelming Soviet power. They realize that the only restraint on the USSR is fear of the potential strength of the United States. All are eager for evidence of a real and firm determination on the part of the United States to support their continued independence by military as well as economic means, if need be. The assurance of security which only the United States could afford them is indispensable to international stability and economic recovery. But all fear that the United States may precipitate an armed conflict with the USSR for which neither the United States nor they were prepared and in the course of which they would surely be overrun. This apprehension tempers their desire for a forceful demonstration of US determination. All would welcome, however, both a substantial increase in actual US military power and a forward movement of US forces into a strategic position in which there could be no danger of a collision with Soviet forces but from which they could render immediate support.

2. COURSE A.

Increased US economic and financial aid to Greece might arouse in other countries some jealous anxiety lest greater appropriations for Greece meant less for themselves. Other states dependent on US aid would watch closely the implementation of the US program in Greece for indications of the extent to which compromise of national sovereignty would be concomitant with acceptance of extraordinary assistance. All would be in some degree susceptible to Soviet propaganda on that point, but such propaganda could have important effect only if US interference in Greece resulted in a conspicuous forfeiture of Greek confidence, good will, and cooperation.

3. COURSE B (1).

Except as it might be momentarily mistaken for the beginning of Course B (2), the dispatch of a US token force to Greece would have little effect in other countries.

4. COURSE B (2).

The employment in Greece of "all presently available US forces" would arouse widespread fear of imminent armed conflict between the United States and the USSR. This apprehension would be relieved when war did not ensue, and as the situation in Greece was stabilized it would be succeeded by new confidence in the effectiveness of US support. Except in Turkey, however, there would be continuing concern regarding the commitment in Greece of "all available" US forces.

5. COURSE B (3).

A US strategic build-up in the Eastern Mediterranean (without the commitment of US forces in Greece) would have a generally reassuring and stabilizing effect in Europe

and the Near East, particularly so in Italy and Turkey. If, however, the forcible partition of Palestine were still contemplated, the Arab States, which would normally have welcomed the development, would necessarily regard it with misgiving. In the nascent "Western Union" there might be some regret at the commitment elsewhere of forces otherwise available for direct support, except as it was understood that from the Eastern Mediterranean they could render more effective support than they could directly. Of the three courses involving employment of US forces overseas, this course would be universally preferred, except in Greece.

6. COURSE B (4).

A partial mobilization in the United States would be welcomed by all states disposed to resist Soviet aggression, as actually indispensable, in present circumstances, to assure that degree of security essential to international stability and economic recovery.

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