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GREEK WRITER DISCUSSES GREECE'S POLICIES VIS A VIS
BULGARIA AND ALBANIA

by G. Melas

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FOREWORD

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GREEK WRITER DISCUSSES GREECE'S POLICIES VIS A VIS

BULGARIA AND ALBANIA

Following is a translation of an article by G. Melas, former Minister to Washington, in Eleftheria (Freedom), Athens 15 April 1960, pages 1 and 7_a/

Two recent events, namely the announcement of the forthcoming exchange of visits between Messrs Khrushchev and Menderes, as well as the recent debate on foreign policy in the Parliament have attracted wide attention, and justly so. Even though it is news of prime importance, the trip of the Turkish Prime Minister should not have caused a feeling of nervousness or uneasiness but instead it should be examined with complete objectivity. It has long been known that ever since Mr Macmillan's trip to Moscow reestablished contacts between East and West and ever since so much talk has been made about an international detente, these meetings have been considered useful for the relaxation of existing differences and for finding ways to solve them. Such differences had, however, been localized, especially at the meetings between the heads of the large powers, and more significantly at Camp David. These meetings will culminate with the forthcoming Summit Conference.

It is natural that besides having detailed discussions with their allies, those powers which will not participate at the Summit Conference will be interested in having direct knowledge of the views of the other party. We shall, in fact, arrive at solutions to problems only through mutually seeking the obstacles to understanding and through a joint effort to eliminate such obstacles. This is the way to arrive at peaceful co-existence which the destructive force of new weapons and "the balance of fear" imposes on all heads of state to seek with all their might. Turkey is confronted with a number of vital problems which relate to her very national existence. Being situated at the very eastern edge of the entire Western alliance and also being a member of CENTO, Turkey has long common land and sea frontiers with Soviet Russia. She lies at the very center of that ideal powerful region in which, since Czarist times, Russia has had two historic ambitions, namely an outlet to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf and an outlet through the Dardanelles and more westward to the Aegean and the Mediterranean. The problem of Iraq, of the Caucasian provinces, and of Iran, and the

entire situation of the Middle East is of importance to Turkey. In fact, the matter of the control of the Straits, and in that connection the presence of Soviet Russia in Bulgaria, which was of concern to Turkey even at the time of the signing of the Greek-Turkish agreement of 1930, was the most important reason for the guaranteeing of our common frontiers which was brought about by the signing of the Greek-Turkish agreement of 14 September 1933.

Consequently, definite reasons are influencing Ankara to come in contact with Moscow in the hope of clearing up as many of the thorny problems as possible, since there are so many matters which so decisively influence the mutual relations of the two countries.

Beyond this it is known that reasons of prestige which Turkey is systematically cultivating are making her want to appear as a big power on every occasion. Granted the importance of the problems to be discussed it is therefore not surprising that Turkey sought personal contact even with Moscow. Moreover, Turkey's position is different from that of others in this respect, namely that once she accepted the establishment of atomic bases on her soil without being influenced by Soviet threats she reached a point of defensive preparedness recognized by everyone. In fact she recently boasted of having the strongest forces of NATO. This did not prevent the maintenance of the best relations with Moscow and even an invitation to Menderes to go to the Kremlin where he is going to carry on discussions on a somewhat equal basis. Nor had it prevented an invitation to Khrushchev to pay a return visit to Ankara.

At this point, however, we must point out that the Greek politicians, who on their return from Moscow made a lot of noise against Greece's defenses being complemented with modern means since this would have aggravated Greece's position vis-a-vis Moscow, should not boast because they sought to strike panic in the Greek people and to bring confusion in the inadequate government but should instead realize that because of the forthcoming Menderes-Khrushchev visit they are in fact being contradicted by events themselves.

Menderes' trip to Moscow does not trouble the Greeks but in fact by their being linked with Turkey through the NATO and Balkan alliances we believe that every improvement in Turko-Soviet relations cannot but have edifying repercussions for our country because of the mutual Balkan interests of Greece and Turkey.

Turkey has long given the proper prime significance to her foreign policy and has always had an excellent diplomatic corps. But above all genuine realism characterizes Turkish foreign policy. A demonstration of this realism is Menderes' trip which does not change in the least Turkey's affiliation with and attachment to NATO.

I now come to the Parliament debate on foreign policy.

As is customary, the extreme left sought to agitate and propagandize on behalf of international Communism. It pleaded

with fanaticism on behalf of Bulgaria's views, and its accusations about a cold war are but propoganda unworthy of any attention.

The government, on the other hand, of course advanced certain arguments on behalf of Greek views in order to give the lie to those who intentionally attributed to Greece intentions to continue the cold war. It is known that during the cold war Greece was the victim and her critics the sacrificers. It is known that the cold war was converted into a hot one which threatened even her political independence and her territorial integrity. It is also known that if Greece -- linked from the very beginning both politically and economically with the West -- joined the strictly defensive Western alliance in 1952 through her representatives Venizelos and Kartalis she did so in order that the country might find a positive bulwerk of security against fatal threats. Her entry into this alliance was considered a national relief. However, the government failed completely in picturing Greece's attitudes -- Greece who is so definitely and basically quiet and peaceful -- as far as the detente in its broader sense was concerned. The government again left the impression that it was seized with fear -- particularly in the cultural and economic field. Because surely the interventions by the government were not very fortunate either as regards its non-political relations or as regards the exchange possibilities with the East.

Finally, the expounding of the specific reasons, which at present systematically hinder Greece as well as any other country of the Western alliance to unilaterally draw up a special Balkan or Greek-Bulgarian disarmament agreement, are to be considered as weak. Because, in view of the forthcoming Summit Conference at which disarmament will be one of the most important matters to be discussed, it would be incredible for us to split allied unity -- which must remain solid -- if we really desire to see the aim of detente and disarmament succeed.

It is for these reasons that we also disagree with the view maintained by the Liberals and the Democratic Union according to which we should have accepted the Stoyka proposal. As is well-known, this proposal, announced by the Soviet Premier a few days earlier in a threatening speech delivered at Korce, recommended the establishment of an atom-free Balkans.

In this connection, we should bear in mind the wise answer made by extremely peaceful Sweden -- even though she was not a NATO member -- to a Soviet proposal to establish a Scandinavian atom-free zone. The Swedes answered that if this were to occur the atom-free zone would have "to be extended by both sides to a great depth."

After the establishment of bases in Turkey and Italy, the question has become out-dated. In fact, it is known that Greece is atom-free. Moreover, in accordance with explicit instructions of Art 13 of the Peace Treaty, Bulgaria is clearly obligated "neither to maintain, build, or test any atomic weapons or guided missiles." Consequently there can be no question of accepting the

Stoyka proposal.

However, Bulgaria's being in a state of full armament is of great import and gives particular significance to the "peace" offensive being launched by Bulgaria on Greece. Actually Bulgaria is maintaining four times the number of forces permitted by the peace treaty and twice the number of forces of Greece, plus very heavy weapons. The supporters of Bulgaria within Greece maintain silence on this point.

Finally there remains the fact that Bulgaria owes 45 million dollars in indemnities from losses she brought through her participation in the war and her occupation of territory. This amount is payable in goods computed at 1938 prices. However, this is equivalent to 70 million dollars at present rates, payable within 8 years of the day the treaty went into effect. Since then 13 years have passed and Bulgaria has not paid one penny to date. Bulgaria did not even accept -- as a proof of her good intentions -- to pay the 6 million dollars the Greek government had asked as an advance payment of the 70 million dollars. In fact, this full amount should have been paid by now. Instead, Bulgaria offered counter-claims, all of which are inadmissible. Among such claims was the revival of the provision that Greece pay the balance of the debt provided for by the Kafantaris-Molov agreement. However, this provision had definitely been cancelled by the Neykov-Melas agreement of 11 November 1933, following the offsetting of the Bulgarian claim with the manifold debts of Bulgaria to Greece resulting from reparations of World War I. I signed this agreement with the Bulgarian delegates a year later when Hoover made his proposal to suspend inter-government debts. By virtue of this agreement we indissolubly associated the further payment of our debts to the continued payment of reparations by Bulgaria.

The decision of the Permanent Court of International Justice at the Hague on 8 March 1932 confirmed the legality of this action by the Greek government. With the suspension of further payments of Bulgarian reparations, the payments provided for under the Kafantaris-Molov agreement were also suspended. Moreover, article 25 of the Treaty abolished any possible remaining Bulgarian claims and permitted Greece "to confiscate, maintain, or liquidate all property, rights, and interests which, in accordance with the provisions of the 1947 Treaty, are located on her territory."

Despite this, Bulgaria tenaciously insisted on conforming to the original agreement. According to a statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Parliament the Greek government, in which, as he added, he did not belong, had declared that "since I am meeting with such difficulty from you to get paid and since I feel the need to reestablish diplomatic relations with neighboring countries I shall accept to discuss the matter concerning the offsetting of debts, knowing full well that I have more claims and asking simply for one advance payment. And this advance payment was asked as a proof of good intentions."

It is therefore an evident and unbelievable confession that the Karamanlis government either together with or without Mr Averoff committed this unconceivable faux pas, this enormous tactical error with regards to a spokesman of the well-known Bulgarian obstinacy.

The result of this unprincipled naivety was the hardening of the Bulgarian position up to a point of complete obstruction and an impasse.

The government faux pas is a subject of another moment and it cannot pass without having consequences. However, the need to re-examine our entire foreign policy and to objectively face up to its realistic forms demands certain major changes. Our foreign policy, the main support of the life of a nation, must cease being static but must begin to be dynamic. Events are taking place and we cannot remain slow-footed or isolated. Through positive actions we must contribute our part in all the endeavors being made. It is not possible for us to remain simple leaders of the rear guard and mere spectators in the face of vital matters concerning us.

As far as Greek-Bulgarian differences are concerned, since matters have been handled in such an unfortunate manner, we must at any rate make further efforts to try to remove the impasse.

Through direct contact with Bulgaria we must proceed to examine the existing claims, in full knowledge that the Bulgarian claims are not founded on legal bases but that in any event our own claims far exceed those of Bulgaria. The Treaty provides for reconciliation proceedings and not for a compulsory form of arbitration. Either through this procedure or another agreed-upon referral to a voluntary form of arbitration -- when neither of the two clauses of the compulsory form of arbitration of the International Court of Justice applies -- we must proceed. A bold operation is a must following the very serious national entanglement which has resulted. The Balkan policy announced by the New Political Movement at the latest Parliamentary debate imposes a radical change in the out-dated policy of the government up to now. Our "state of war" with Albania which makes us appear to those who want to slander us as harboring evil intentions against our neighbors has long since lost its relationship with reality. Only those non-serious individuals can at present talk about making an issue over territorial claims on Northern Epirus. On the contrary, by rejecting this unrealistic line we would be able, with the agreement of all the Big Powers, to succeed in finding a way to save our fortunate Brothers of Northern Epirus from complete annihilation.

If we courageously and wisely undertake those necessary initiatives even all those who for so long have attributed cold war intentions to Greece will find it difficult to deny their the initiatives contribution. All of these things will, I hope, be of benefit to the relations between them, i.e. Greece and Bulgaria, and between the Balkan states generally.

If its general weakness in foreign policy is keeping the government perplexed, let it call on the Supreme Foreign Committee as soon as possible. For many long years this committee has worked to the benefit of national interests, even at the time of that diplomatic genius, Eleftherios Venizelos.

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