

ON GREECE'S RETURN TO NATO

"What I Promised Evren"

For the first time the entire background to Greece's rejoining the military organization of NATO has been revealed - the person who played the principal role in the whole story, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Bernard Rodgers.

In an interview given to the well-known Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birad and published in "Millet" the American general reveals that he gave his word to General Evren that the famous agreement which bears his name would be implemented. He also describes his discussions with Greek Premier Andreas Papandreu and adds that he is optimistic that the means will eventually be found which can be accepted by all parties.

General Rodgers also confirms - in an indirect and diplomatic manner - that there exists a secret NATO report which states that there is no international agreement placing limitations on the arming of the Greek island of Lemnos. In answer to a question from Mr. Birad, General Rodgers admits that such a legal opinion of NATO exists, but maintains that the dispute which has arisen should be solved by the two countries between themselves.

This report, signed by the Legal Advisor of NATO R.A.E. Boyle, includes the following statement:

"Although SHAPE has no authority to rule on the interpretations of the international conventions referred to, it is my personal opinion that the Turkish interpretation is inconsistent with our understanding of the agreements involved."

Mr. Birad, reviewing developments on the issue of Greece, Turkey, NATO and the Rodgers Plan, reaches the following conclusion:

"With the Greek elections coming up in 1985, there is no possibility of a change in the Aegean at present. It is, however, of interest that General Rodgers does not rule out the idea of a second line of defense in the Aegean, nor does he say outright that Lemnos will not be included in NATO's plans for military exercises. NATO does not fully share Turkey's policy in the Aegean to the extent that we maintain that it does."

Question (Birad): Greece returned to the military wing of NATO on 15 October 1980 with the signing of the Rodgers Agreement and the lifting of Turkey's veto, but Mr. Papandreu's government has not implemented the Agreement. Today, four years later, can

we say that the Rodgers Agreement is defunct?

Answer (Rodgers): Most certainly not. First of all, the matter of the Agreement dealing with the return of Greece to the military organization of NATO was a success. The duty which we were assigned was to find a way for the return of the Greek forces to the military wing of NATO. The point at which it has not yet succeeded is over the land forces command at Larissa and the seventh ATAF.

Q: If one of the two sides which has signed the Agreement says that it will not implement one of its two parts, where the two ought to go together within the Agreement, does this not mean that the Agreement is defunct - that is cannot be implemented?

A: A basic aim of the Agreement was the return of the Greek forces to the military wing of NATO. My duty was to find the way for this return to take place.

The New Arrangement in the Aegean

Q: But that was one part of the Agreement. Turkey signed the Agreement for - the new arrangement for operational responsibility in the Aegean and in the spirit of not returning to the state of affairs prior to 1974.

A: The basic aim was to bring Greece back - and it is still in the military organization. The Prime Minister (Papandreou) has not withdrawn his forces. They remain where they are. Viewed from this angle, the Agreement continues in force and it cannot be said that because the second part has not been implemented, the Agreement is defunct.

Q: Very well, but the second part is not operating.

A: Correct. But I am optimistic. I am sure that some means will be found which can be accepted by all parties.

"You Gave Your Word to Evren..."

Q: You personally gave your word to Evren, who was then General Chief of Staff, at the time that the Agreement was signed, to the effect that it would be implemented in full and that it would not be forgotten in the return of Greece to NATO. What became of that promise?

A: Yes, I did to some extent give my word. It concerned the manner in which certain fundamental arrangements in the Agreement would be implemented by basic agreements between Turkey and the Greek Government. When I was fighting to get the Agreement accepted, I paid frequent visits to Turkey and each

time General Evren found the time for us to hold discussions. For this reason, General Evren is well aware of the history of the four paragraphs of the Agreement - because that history has a direct bearing on the language of the Agreement. They cannot be viewed separately. At each stage General Evren was involved. At the same time, I had not received permission to visit Greece. I was forced to hold discussions with whoever the Greek Government sent. Of those that I spoke with at that time, only one presently holds office in the Greek Government. For this reason there are today three men who know that history - General Evren, myself and my aide at the time, Papayiorgis.

Q: I am not aware of all the details. The way I see the situation is as follows: An agreement is signed for the return of Greece to the military wing of NATO; that is Turkey lifts its veto on condition that everything contained in the agreement is implemented. Greece returns to the military organization, but when the part of the agreement which Turkey has been waiting for - to do with arrangements in the Aegean - Greece says "Sorry, I can't implement that part of the Agreement." Now I, as a Turk, see the situation that has arisen. Turkey has been tricked and I regard it as wrong for Turkey to have withdrawn her veto. As I see it, since Greece is not fulfilling its commitment, Turkey should ask for it to withdraw again from the military organization.

A: You say that the Agreement is defunct. For me that is a mistaken assessment. Very well. In that case, what was I doing in Athens recently? Do you think it was the weather that I was discussing with the Prime Minister?

Q: Yes, I was concerned about that. I was wondering what you were doing...

A: Discussions are still going on over this matter. We are discussing the implementation in full of the Agreement. I can't go into details. I can't reveal the content of my discussion with the Greek Prime Minister.

Q: At any rate, are you optimistic?

A: If I were not optimistic, I should not still be making efforts to have the Agreement implemented in full. We have had to face situations such as the impossibility of implementation. But I am optimistic that a means will be found for its implementation which can be accepted by all parties.

Q: So, when do you expect to see some result? When will it be implemented?

A: I don't wish to give a date. The choice of a time schedule for the continuations of this contacts must be correctly made.

We must be careful because this country has an election period which may have some influence... I don't know.

Arrangements before 1984

Q: As Supreme Allied Commander Europe, do you accept that in the Aegean new arrangements are needed? This was the issue in this Agreement.

A: On this point the Agreement is not couched in clear language. In the event of war, the question of how operational control in the Aegean would be handled for its better defense by NATO and how this would be implemented will be determined by all parties. I can't predict from now what the result will be.

Q: You mean that there will be a return to the state of affairs prior to 1974? There is no need for a new arrangement?

A: The arrangements prior to 1974 will not, perhaps, be totally written off, because, when the leaders sit down to discussions, when they talk about how to settle these arrangements, it is possible that they will agree that it may be better for the arrangements prior to 1974 to stay. The commands of Greece, Turkey and my own will be represented in these discussions. Just as it is possible for it to be regarded as the best formula for the pre-1974 situation to remain, so new amendments may be made, depending on how the Warsaw Pact would attack in the Aegean. Nothing can be said from now.

The Lemnos Issue

Q: It has been stated in a Greek newspaper that in a document prepared by SHAPE mention is made of the need to arm Lemnos. Does any such document exist?

A: I can't embark upon an issue such as the bilateral disputes between Greece and Turkey and of how the islands should be armed - or not - within the framework of the Treaties of Montreux and Lausanne... The question of how those treaties are interpreted and of how the problem is to be solved must be determined by the two sides. I can't solve it myself. Comment from a legal expert cannot change anything in international agreements. But everyone should be well aware that, as Supreme Allied Commander Europe, I have the duty of protecting every inch of territory of each member-state. This includes every Greek and every Turkish ISLAND. For this reason, I guard the Greek islands as jealously as I guard German territory. No one should have any doubts about that. That is my responsibility and I have every intention of carrying it out. But I have no intention of using this responsibility to intervene in bilateral issues between Greece and Turkey and bring influence to bear or take one side or

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the other. That is my own position - and, consequently, that of all the commanders who work with me.

Q: So, in other words, Turkey ought not to show so much sensitivity about Lemnos being included in the plans for exercises?

A: My wish is for Turkey and Greece to solve as quickly as possible this bilateral dispute between them. In this way, neither of the two... I don't want to give an answer to this question. Only a formula or catalyst must be found such that neither the one nor the other withdraws from NATO exercises because of this dispute. We cannot resolve this difference within the framework of NATO. Sometimes one side, sometimes the other asks us to do something. Then later they may use our conduct to support their own interpretation. We are very careful not to do this.

Spotlight, August 15, 1984

This extract from the
interview is reprinted
from the newspaper
To Vima (a Greek daily
published in Athens),
August 19, 1984.