

## Attic Chronicle by Phocion

### How near is the abyss?

*The politicians in Athens ignore the threat posed by the Communist Party at a time of internal crisis.*

**T**he Hellenic Republic, as the post-1974 Greek state calls itself, is about to face the most critical challenge of its existence since its founding in 1827. The challenge will be associated with the ongoing disintegration of United States positions of influence throughout the Near East and Western Europe, and the unraveling of U.S. global strategic power.

The American military collapse in Beirut was in its implications more dramatic and more catastrophic than the disorderly rout of American forces from the rooftops of Saigon about a decade ago. What followed that folly in Saigon was America's expulsion from South Vietnam. What is now ensuing is America's expulsion from the entire Middle East. This is accompanied by the ongoing disintegration of NATO as per Henry Kissinger's and Lord Carrington's perspective.

As this is occurring:

- The Soviet Union has initiated installation of SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles in neighboring Bulgaria's Pirin Plain near the area where the borders of Greece, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria meet—assurances of Bulgarian interest in a Balkan "nuclear-free zone" notwithstanding.

- During the month of March, Soviet and Bulgarian military forces conducted a series of Warsaw Pact maneuvers code-named Soyuz 84 whose objective was to practice a massed land invasion of Greece and Turkey in order to bring Warsaw Pact forces to the Aegean Sea.

- The existence of a secret domes-

tic "destabilization program" was discovered and certain of its aspects were brought up for discussion in the parliament. The destabilization is to be carried out by the Greek Communist Party and its allied factions within the ruling PASOK party of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou.

A study of the rapidity with which Moscow is moving to fill the vacuum in the Arab Middle East will provide insights into how fast Moscow is planning to move in the Balkans. Moscow's pace might be accelerated, however, by two additional factors. First, the rate at which Western Europe is disengaging from the United States might speed up the timetable of Moscow's opportunities. Second, the rapid disintegration of Greek political life may force Moscow to move faster than planned.

To appreciate the latter point, one ought to take into account a few facts about the Greek Communist Party. Its entire top and middle-level leadership is made up of veterans of the 1944-49 Civil War who upon defeat fled to the Soviet Union, not to return until 1975. They are all selected, trained, and appointed by the Soviet KGB and many by the spetsnaz command of the GRU, the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet General Staff. By temperament, training, and past career, they are hardened killers.

Their subservience to orders remains to be tested. Many of them participated in decisions in the 1940s to launch a bloody civil war contrary to advice from Stalin in order to pre-empt

their masters' hand. Given the emerging strategic situation in the Near East and Europe, all they would need is an informational briefing from their Soviet superiors and they would be able to draw their own conclusions about their chances of success in any risky undertaking they might decide to embark upon.

Greece is already in the throes of a swelling strike wave and an explosive economic crisis. Yet the political mythologies perpetrated jointly by the conservative President Caramanlis and the socialist Prime Minister Papandreou prohibit any serious discussion of the prospects presented here. To accuse the Greek Communist Party of harboring such potentialities in the present fantasy-ridden atmosphere of political Athens would provoke howls of protest and ridicule.

For this there are personal reasons: Constantine Caramanlis is an old man at the sunset of his life. He is nursing the dream that he will be remembered by posterity for having founded a durable democratic system in a nation which for 150 years knew nothing but a succession of monarchies, military dictatorships, short-lived democratic regimes, and foreign occupations. In the past 10 years, Caramanlis led his country in a stable republican system which has functioned longer than any previous regime. The enterprise was based on accepting the leaders of the Greek Communist Party as one would ordinary leftist politicians.

In view of the country's past, Caramanlis's scheme might have worked to defuse political passions. However, as American political and military power disintegrates in the region and globally, the old bloody monsters of Balkan politics have now been awakened. The deluded fools in Athens are praying that it's only a bad dream. It is not.