

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft

AHEPA:
William G. Chirgotis
Peter N. Derzis
A. Steve Betzelos
John T. Pappas
Alex Demar
Mary Dinell
William P. Tsaffaras
Dennis J. Livadas
John G. Plumides
Alfred G. Vonetes
Peter L. Bell
Judge Gregory L. Lagakos

Staff:
Dr. Theodore Marrs
William Baroody
A. Denis Cliff *ADL*

TIME AND DATE: Friday, April 25, 1975
12:45 - 1:25 p.m.

PLACE: Roosevelt Room
The White House

SUBJECT: Meeting with Leadership of American Hellenic
Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) on
U.S. Policy Toward Greece, Cyprus and Turkey

(Following the President's greeting of each member of the AHEPA delegation, there was a press photo session. The President then opened the meeting.)

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~~TOP SECRET~~ - XGDS (3)
CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

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President: I am sorry we couldn't be in the Cabinet Room. We are holding a meeting there on the subject of railroad help and assistance. It's rather interesting.

First, I want to express my appreciation to all of you for being here. I fortunately had a very long period of time when in the Congress to have many contacts with AHEPA. Some of my contacts go back even further -- Alex Demar and Bill Strugis -- between them I earned my first dollar. I have a strong feeling for Americans of Greek heritage.

When I was Vice President, I recall receiving a call from the Secretary of State on the problems in Cyprus. The Secretary filled me in on the steps then being taken by the previous Greek government in trying to change, or upset, the arrangements then existing in Cyprus. Since becoming President, I have spent a good deal of time working with the Secretary, with the Congress, trying to find ways to get an answer to the Cyprus problem, to get negotiations going, negotiations bringing about the desired results. The Secretary has had several meetings with the foreign ministers of Greece and Turkey trying to arrange for negotiations, trying to get steps started toward a settlement. My friends on Capitol Hill then tried their initiative. I understand what the Congress wants to do. However, frankly, in my judgment the various actions by the Congress have been counter-productive. I have talked about this with Congressmen Brademas, Sarbanes and Rosenthal.

I think that if we are to have a solution we have to be given flexibility. I know this does not coincide with the attitude of AHEPA and your actions over the last six months. But what progress has the position that has been taken by you produced? There has been no solution on Cyprus. The Turks are more difficult and not more cooperative. I am sure you know that we have some very important and very sensitive bases in Turkey. Bases, important not only for the United States, but also for the NATO Alliance.

Turning to Greece, I couldn't have been more overjoyed by last year's Greek elections and the support of Caramanlis. But, in four by-elections last week the Greek government lost all four. This does not bode well for Greece. I was also not encouraged to see two recent incidents: What is this gal's name -- Mercouri, leading two thousand demonstrators through the streets of Nicosia; and further to read of demonstrations outside the U.S. Embassy in Athens last week.

The Secretary is confident that if there had been the necessary flexibility four to five months ago it would have been possible to get the parties together and to have avoided the difficulties we have experienced and now face.



The situation is not irretrievable, but unless we do something it will get worse and worse. Speaking for myself, any failure in this negotiation will inevitably lead to a Papandreaou government in Greece. I think that the Caramanlis government is a good government, and I don't want to see it undercut.

On other issues, the Aegean, oil rights; these can be resolved but we have to get the people together. I have been frank and I have been blunt, but I have to speak strongly in front of people I admire. We want a strong Greece and Turkey. With all the other problems we have, particularly those in the Mediterranean area, we cannot afford to have the Alliance damaged. Well, with those remarks, I would now like to hear from you, or perhaps from the Secretary.

Secretary Kissinger: As the President has pointed out, the negotiations which started in January in our judgment would have made much more rapid progress if it were not for the legislation. Even so, even with other issues such as the Aegean and oil, I think we can get the negotiations started. The problem is to see if we can use the NATO summit to get movement. Before this I will be at the CENTO meeting; the Assistant Secretary of State is presently having talks in Turkey and Athens. We are trying to get impetus for the talks resuming in Vienna, and I'll be meeting with Secretary General Waldheim on this later today.

We need flexibility to proceed. The present stalemate in our judgment, will not cause those occupying territory to leave that territory. They will only further stabilize their position. I'm a strong supporter for what the President has said. We will use our good offices even though our most effective card has already been played, namely the cut-off of aid to Turkey.

Dr. Chirgotis: Mr. President, first may I extend our sincere thanks for this opportunity to meet with you. We are concerned Americans, and this subject is of very great importance to us. Mr. Plumides and Mr. Bell are our spokesmen and I would like to ask them to speak now.

Mr. Plumides: Mr. President, we are very concerned. I am from North Carolina. I am of different political party -- a Democrat, and we hold democratic ideals very dear.

Mr. Secretary, we have sat across the table from you before. The only thing that has bothered us is that the Secretary has assured us that something would be done in Cyprus. We are doing the right thing in trying to get the refugee problem solved, but we don't see what the U.S. Government is doing.



We went to Cyprus last summer, thanks to the assistance of the Secretary. We visited the refugee camps, and we even made a film. It's a film which we have shown all over the United States. Have you seen it?

Mr. President, when you speak I know you have access to a lot more information than we do. But why has something not been done for these people? We too get information, but we have seen no indication that our government has acted to alleviate the situation, to get the Turks out of Famagusta. At the same time, we have visited Greece and the Greek government has told us of the efforts the Secretary has made.

Just today we have heard information to the effect that the Turks are increasing their forces. We hear rumors which we can't prove that the Secretary has already agreed to the permanent division of Cyprus.

Secretary Kissinger: We have never agreed to anything that we have not discussed with the Greeks.

Mr. Plumides: Mr. President, we feel that Greece is more important than Turkey, but you never speak about Greece.

President: I have spoke affirmatively about the new Greek government.

Mr. Plumides: Yes, but we feel that in your Administration Turkey is the star of U.S. foreign policy. We believe that the Turks have as they have always had an expansionist foreign policy. We as Greek-Americans cannot tolerate this.

We want to help. The Senate and the House have understood our position and that is why they have taken the position that the Turks have to give in. But we haven't heard anything from your office, not one good word.

President: The thing that worries me is that if we don't take action, if we don't do something the situation will get progressively worse. I am personally convinced that the prohibition on aid has hamstrung the negotiations. From the information available to me, you simply are not going to get an interim agreement as a result of the actions you are taking. You must work on a total agreement. The Congress has made a very serious mistake, and the situation won't get better. The Congress cannot take Turkish forces off Cyprus. The Greeks can't. United States cannot consider unilateral action. We have to negotiate.



Mr. Plumides: Do you feel this legislation ties the hands of the diplomats ...?

Mr. Bell: Mr. President, assuming the American aid to Turkey is taken off the table as an issue, name one item which the Greek side will have left as a negotiating position?

President: I would like Secretary Kissinger to answer that.

Secretary Kissinger: When I met with AHEPA in October, I said I might have more positive news. At that time there were growing indications that the Turks were putting together a package of unilateral concessions. What has happened since: the legislation in our Congress; the fall of the Turkish government; Greek elections; and indication of Greek willingness to work on a settlement; but before negotiations get underway, the aid cut-off.

Now, without the cut-off it is my opinion that the Greek and Turkish foreign ministers will be able to get together to negotiate a solution to the Cyprus crisis. We have not asked the Greeks for a single concession.

Mr. Bell: You have not answered my question. Assuming you take US aid to Turkey away from us as a negotiating lever, what do you have left to offer the Turks? Our reaction will depend on your answer.

Secretary Kissinger: Up until now, the cut-off has given the Turks an alibi.

Mr. Bell: The Turks need no alibi. This is plain from their history, and we know their history.

President: As a practical matter you have to take the legislation off the books before it will be possible to move forward.

Mr. Bell: That is a political judgment.

President: Yes, but right now the situation is getting worse and worse. The prospects for further deterioration are growing.

Mr. Bell: Why are we asked to take the Turks on good faith?

President: There is evidence of willingness on the part of the Turkish government to resolve the problem. The Turks of course would have to give the details of this.



Mr. Bell: Demirel did not speak that way.

Secretary Kissinger: The Turkish domestic situation is complicated. Demirel has the same right wing elements in his government which brought Ecevit down. We need substantial private progress toward a settlement. first, before we can accept changes in public statements.

Mr. Plumides: Have you read General Van Fleet's statement (he hands a copy to Secretary Kissinger and then to the President).

President: (Having scanned the statement) As I said at the outset of this meeting I recall very vividly last July. The Secretary called me to report the action being taken by the Greek government reinforcing the National Guard set up on Cyprus. That was tragic, the kickoff for all of this. It shocked me. Ever since then, we have been trying to find an answer.

I will be going to NATO in the latter part of May. While in Brussels I hope to see Caramanlis and Demirel, and the Secretary will be seeing the two foreign ministers before then. If I go with one hand tied, I can't be optimistic on headway.

Mr. Plumides: You are asking for some period for you to work?

President: Yes, without a date certain for aid cut-off.

Mr. Plumides: If we return to that state, we may reach a stage where the Congress will say the President hasn't done anything. Then can we compromise and resort to the aid cut-off? I also want to know if aid is resumed would there be a period during which something is done to benefit refugees and to reduce the danger of invasion by Turkey?

President: Our position is to remove the cut-off. I'll make monthly progress reports. Without the cut-off on the statute books and reporting to the Congress, if after a reasonable period of time there is no progress, then something new will have to be done.

Mr. Bell: We have already tried postponement.

President: Yes, but with a determined date.

Secretary Kissinger: Six weeks at a time. Every time a concession was proposed by either side it was done in relation to the cut-off and its effect on the cut-off.



Mr. Bell: Once the prohibition on aid is removed by the Congress we will have to admit defeat. If the Turks make a concession we will never be able to reinstate the cut-off.

President: In my judgment, the attempt by the Congress, while well-intentioned, has produced the wrong results, the opposite results, and the situation has deteriorated. Why not try something different.

Mr. Bell: We feel we did try.

President: Yes, but never with ample time. The Greek government changed, there was the period when we had no Turkish government, political difficulties in both Greece and Turkey.

Mr. Bell: The situation will continue that way in Turkey and deliberately. so.

Secretary Kissinger: I have to leave for my meeting with Waldheim, please excuse me.

President: Please go ahead; we'll continue.

Mr. Plumides: Can we meet with you sometime during the next ten days?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, get in touch with Eagleburger or Bremer.

Mr. Plumides: (To the President) There is one other thing we wish to discuss with you, Your Honor. (laughter) You'll have to excuse me; I'm presently in a murder trial. We will take what you have said into serious consideration. At the same time we feel that you as President should give encouragement in some public announcement to the Cypriots -- something encouraging to Cypriots and to Greek-Americans. You should say that you are interested in this and that you want to see a just solution. This is important to us. The democratic principle is involved. We have seen it lost in Cambodia; we are about to lose it in Vietnam. To lose it in Greece would be tragic.

President: To lose it in the Mediterranean would be tragic. We have serious problems in the whole southern tier of the Mediterranean -- Portugal, Spain, the entire area involves a potentially volatile situation. We cannot tolerate the current situation continuing between Greece and Turkey. It involves our national security.



I would assure that if we are given flexibility we will make a maximum effort. I cannot go to NATO for talks with Demirel and Caramanlis without flexibility. Such talks won't produce anything. If I have flexibility I can make headway. Brademas and Sarbanes have suggested that I use a provision in the present law to lift the embargo. I'm not going to get on that wicket (laughter); they'll lower the boom on me; I'm not going to walk down that trap. I will get it. It's a matter of principle for me. I have to be frank, nothing has bothered me more than to see this fester. We have done our darndest.

Mr. Bell: If it is possible to meet with the Secretary in the next ten to 15 days, can your Administration have one item you can persuade Turkey to accept? This might be a start. It might serve to assuage our uneasiness; it might help us to see some light.

President: There are various things:

- possibilities relating to Famagusta;
- possibilities relating to the airport;
- territory in Cyprus;
- the number of Turkish troops in Cyprus.

These are all areas which in the final analysis will have to be negotiated by Clerides and Denktash and by the Greek and Turkish governments. General Scowcroft and I will talk to the Secretary and will do all we can. It's a sad, sad situation.

Mr. Plumides: We're concerned. We don't want to embarrass the Administration nor our country. However, we need some indication. To conclude, Mr. President, we would like to offer the services of AHEPA. We have strong positions and I know you respect this. If there is anything we can do to strengthen ties between Greece and America, AHEPA would be pleased to do so. Thank you. We very much appreciated this, and we will be back in touch.

President: Nothing could please me more than to have evidence of headway and progress from Brussels.

(The President then shook hands with each member of the delegation and the meeting concluded at 1:25 p.m.)

