

SUGGESTED DRAFT 3/7/47

The President's Message to Congress  
on the Greek Situation



I lay before you today for consideration and decision a grave problem affecting our foreign relations and our national security.

The British Government has informed the Government of the United States that it will be obliged in the very near future to discontinue its program of financial and economic assistance to Greece.

The Secretary of State has received from the Greek Government an urgent appeal for financial, economic, and expert assistance from the United States.

Assistance is imperative, the Greek Government says, if Greece is to survive as a free government. Greece is today without funds to finance the importation even of those goods which are essential for bare subsistence. Under these circumstances, the Greek Government informs us, the people of Greece cannot make progress in solving

problems of reconstruction. The Greek Government therefore asks for financial and economic assistance for the following purposes:

In order to enable Greece immediately to resume purchases of food, clothing, fuel, seeds, and the like, that are indispensable for the subsistence of her people and that are obtainable only from abroad;

In order to enable the civil and military establishments of the Greek Government to import the goods necessary for restoration of that tranquillity and internal security which are essential for economic and political recovery;

And in order to enable Greece to create conditions which will make possible future self-support.



Finally the Greek Government asks for the assistance of experienced American administrative, economic and technical personnel to insure the utilization in an effective manner of the financial and other assistance given to Greece, and to

help in bringing about a healthy condition in the domestic economy and public administration.

The Greek Government expresses its determination to make Greece a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy, but states that because of dire circumstances it must have aid from the outside.

I do not believe that the American people or the Congress would wish this Government to turn a deaf ear to this desperate appeal. I therefore ask you to grant to the Executive sufficient authority to extend to Greece the assistance required by the circumstances.

The British Government has also informed us that it will no longer be in position to grant financial or economic assistance to Turkey. I also ask, therefore, -- for reasons which I shall outline -- that Congress grant to the Executive sufficient authority to extend needed assistance to Turkey.

In taking these steps I am fully aware of their larger



implications, and I wish to present some of these to you.

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was one of the fundamental issues in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries which sought to impose their will upon other nations.



In order to create conditions for peaceful development of nations free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations, which is designed to make possible freedom and independence for all its members. We will not go very far in realizing our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that the imposition of totalitarian regimes on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, saps the very foundations of international peace

and the security of the United States.

An appraisal of the present world situation shows that majorities in a number of countries of the world have had totalitarian regimes imposed upon them against their will. In recent months the Government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a number of other countries there have been similar developments.



At the present moment in world history nearly every nation is confronted with alternative ways of life. And the choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the imposition of the will of a minority upon a majority, upon control of the press and other

means of communication by a minority, and upon terror and oppression.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to give support to free peoples who are attempting to resist subjugation by armed minorities or outside forces. It must be our policy to assist free peoples to work out their own destiny in their own way.



It is imperative to our security that we help the Greek nation to preserve its free institutions. Our help must be primarily in the form of the economic and financial aid which is necessary for the creation of a stable economic structure in Greece.

The Charter of the United Nations presupposes a world of free nations. In helping such nations to maintain their freedom and independence, the United States would be giving effect to the purposes and principles of the Charter.

It would be an unspeakable tragedy if countries, such as

Greece, which have struggled so long for their independence against overwhelming odds, should lose that victory for which they sacrificed so much. Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disasters not only for them but for the world. Discouragement and possibly failure would quickly be the lot of neighboring peoples engaged in a struggle to maintain their freedom and independence. A chain reaction of this sort would very quickly undermine our national security.

The world is not static. The status quo is not sacred and unchangeable, but as Secretary Byrnes said a year ago, "we cannot overlook a unilateral gnawing away at the status quo. The United Nations Charter," said Mr. Byrnes, "forbids aggression and we cannot allow aggression to be accomplished by coercion or pressure or by subterfuges such as political infiltration".

Greece has never been a rich country. Poverty of natural resources has always required that the Greek people work hard in order to make both ends meet. This hard-working and peaceful



people has since 1940 suffered invasion, four years of cruel enemy occupation, and internal strife amounting at times to civil war.

When British forces of liberation entered Greece they found that the retreating Germans had destroyed all means of communication. Port facilities had been wrecked, roads had degenerated into a succession of pot holes, telecommunications were almost non-existent, and ninety percent of the Greek merchant marine, which had totaled two million tons before the war, had been sunk. In all Greece there remained only six locomotives and less than 100 freight cars. Railway tracks had been systematically ripped up. More than a thousand villages had been burned. Eighty-five percent of the children were tubercular. Livestock, poultry, and draft animals had almost disappeared. And inflation had wiped out practically all savings.



It is not surprising that a militant minority should have been able to exploit the frightful conditions under which the



Greek people have been obliged to live. This internal strife has generated a political instability which has made it impossible to get the country's economy on its feet.

The United States has already extended to Greece certain types of relief and economic assistance. These are inadequate. There is now in Greece, at the request of the Greek Government, an American Economic Mission examining the needs of the Greek economy. Although the investigations of this Mission are not complete, its preliminary reports, and the reports of the American Ambassador, corroborate the statement of the Greek Government as to the urgent need for further aid.

The Greek Government in power today represents eighty-five percent of the members of the Greek Parliament. The elections for the Greek Parliament, it will be recalled, were held last March under the eyes of fifteen hundred American, British, French, and South African observers invited by the Greek Government. These observers spent the two months preceding the elections observing pre-election conditions throughout Greece and



it is their opinion that the elections were fair and that the present Parliament is the true choice of the majority of voters. Certain political groups representing at most about fifteen percent of the electorate abstained from the polls, but a great majority of those eligible to vote cast their ballots.

No government is perfect. One of the chief virtues of democracy, however, is that its defects of government are always visible and under democratic processes can be pointed out and rectified. Greece's government is not perfect. It has been operating in an atmosphere of chaos and extremism, and it has made mistakes. The extension of aid by this country does not mean that this Government condones everything that the Greek Government has done or will do. We have condemned in the past and we do condemn now any extremist measures of the right or of the left. We have in the past advised tolerance and we advise it now.



The very existence of the Greek State is today threatened

by the armed depredations of several thousand political dissidents, led by Communists, who defy the Government's authority at a number of points, particularly along the northern boundaries. A Commission appointed by the United Nations Security Council is at present investigating disturbed conditions in northern Greece and reported border violations along the frontier between Greece on the one hand and Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia on the other.



Meanwhile the Greek Government is unable to cope with the situation. The Greek Army is small, and poorly equipped. If that Army is to be effective in restoring the authority of the Greek state throughout its territory, it will require supplies and equipment to permit its reorganization; and it will require a better functioning economy to support it.

If Greece is to have help in this critical situation, the United States must supply it. There is no other country to which democratic Greece can turn.

The British Government, which has been assisting Greece, has informed us that it can give no further financial or economic aid in this crisis. Great Britain finds itself under the necessity of reducing or liquidating its commitments in several parts of the world, including Greece and Turkey. It would be difficult to over-emphasize the importance of these developments to the United States and to American foreign policy.

It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation is of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon her neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Indeed, confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East.



Nor is this all. There are countries in Europe whose people are struggling against great difficulties and impediments to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they

repair the damages of war. Should Greece fail in her struggle, the effect may be far-reaching to the West as well as to the East.

The future of Turkey as an independent and economically sound state is clearly no less important. Turkey has happily been spared the disasters that have beset Greece. And during the war the United States and Great Britain furnished Turkey with very material aid. Since the war, however, Turkey has sought additional financial assistance from both Great Britain and the United States for the purpose of effecting that modernization of its defensive establishments that the maintenance of its independence requires.



The British Government has informed us that due to its own difficulties, it will not be in a position in the future to extend further financial or economic aid to Turkey.

It is therefore my opinion, that assistance should also be given to Turkey. We are the only country able to give that

help, and it is in our vital interest to do so.

The situation, in my opinion, requires immediate and resolute action.

I therefore ask the Congress to act with the greatest speed in providing authority for assistance to Greece and Turkey in the amount of \$400,000,000 for the period ending June 30, 1948. In requesting these funds, I have taken into consideration the maximum amount of relief assistance which it is contemplated would be furnished to Greece out of the \$350,000,000 which I recently requested that the Congress authorize for the prevention of starvation and suffering in countries devastated by the war.



In addition to funds, I ask the Congress to authorize the detail of American civilian and military personnel to Greece and Turkey, at the request of those countries, to assist in tasks of maintenance and reconstruction, and for the purpose of supervising the use of such financial and

material assistance as may be furnished. I recommend that authority also be provided for the instruction and training of selected Greek and Turkish personnel.

Finally, I ask that the Congress provide authority which will permit the speediest and most effective use, in terms of needed commodities, supplies and equipment, of such funds as may be authorized.



If further funds, or further authority, should be needed for purposes indicated in this message, I shall not hesitate to bring the situation before Congress. This is a time when the Executive and Legislative branches of the Government must work together expeditiously, and in close coordination, to ward off dangers which are no less certain to affect the peace, security, and prosperity of the nation because they are a step removed in time and space.