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ADDRESS BY MR. HENRY S. VILLARD, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
OFFICE OF EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN AFFAIRS, BEFORE
THE ANNUAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF THE 14TH ROTARY
DISTRICT AT CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA 8 P.M., E.S.T.
MONDAY, MAY 5, 1947.

SOME ASPECTS OF OUR POLICY IN GREECE AND TURKEY

Your kind invitation for me to speak here, I feel sure,
is a direct consequence of your interest in foreign affairs.
The title of your organization itself, Rotary International,
indicates that the scope of your thinking extends beyond your
own personal affairs and home communities and even transcends
national boundaries.

Indeed, it is obvious that American citizens generally
are showing more interest than ever before in the world about
them—and with good reason. We in the Department of State
are daily impressed with the increased awareness of our people
in regard to the importance of international affairs in the
lives of all the individuals who go to make up the United States.

The American people seem to have grasped the salient fact
that our country emerged from the recent war with vastly
greater powers and responsibilities, which in turn magnify the
duties and obligations of its officials and citizens alike.
This sobering truth has, on the whole, been accepted with
courage and resolution. Nevertheless, I am convinced that there
is need for more detailed information on the problems and
policies of the United States in the field of foreign affairs.
I believe that the people wish to have current developments
explained to them in plain and unvarnished terms so that they
may understand fully what is likely to be required of the nation,
and of them. In the vernacular, the American people want to
know what the score is.

Tonight, I propose to discuss some aspects of our current
policy in Greece and Turkey.

The President's speech of March 10 requesting aid for
Greece and Turkey produced an immediate and favorable response
not only in this country but abroad. At the same time, many
independent
independent and liberal thinkers gave expression to certain fears and doubts concerning the wisdom of this policy—a policy which has received the approval of the United States Senate by a near declarative vote. For example, the question has been asked, will it make war more likely? Some people seem to be afraid that we are turning to ruthless imperialism, intervening directly in the internal affairs of other nations. Others appear to be afraid that we are not—that we are merely supporting so-called reactionary regimes without bringing pressure to bear to introduce our own concept of democracy. Still others are unable to comprehend why the whole business of aid to Greece and Turkey, involving an appropriation of $400,000,000 for economic and military purposes, cannot conveniently be handed over to the organization of the United Nations—born just two years ago in San Francisco.

I think it is interesting to note that these arguments are precisely what has been heard on the Moscow radio and published in the Russian press. Sharp condemnation of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s policy has been the Russian reaction: it is imperialistic, it is reaction- ary, it endangers peace, it will add to world destruction. To understand this a little better, it may be useful to examine the situation more closely from the Soviet viewpoint.

You are all sufficiently well-informed, I am sure, of the state of affairs in Greece which led to the desperate appeal of the Greek Government and its people to the Government of the United States and the American people on March 3, 1947. This appeal rectified the catastrophic devastation of Greece, the devastation and demilitarization of her people, and the destruction of her economy through invasion and prolonged enemy occupation, as well as through the internal disturbances which followed in the wake of war. It set forth the urgent need for financial, economic, and expert assistance to attack the problems of reconstruction and enable Greece to survive as a self-respecting, independent nation. It said candidly that the destruction to Greece had been so complete as to put the Greek people of the power to meet the situation by themselves.

We should remember that in addition to the economic plight, the Greek Government was not still in a state of war, and an in- conclusive battle with armed bands on her northern boundaries, all of which keeps the country in a state of turmoil, predisposes the conditions on which despair and misery breed, and effectively prevents the normal post-war recovery. There is ample evidence in our possession that these armed bands are being fed by communists and supplied in part from sources across the Greek frontier.

What were we to do in this emergency?

Reports which have been received by our government from its representatives in Greece clearly indicate that unless substantial economic support can be given, conditions in that country will deteriorate to a point where the democratic representative government will be forced to succumb to the onslaught of minority peoples seeking the establishment of a totalitarian dictatorship.

Many people ask why the United States is now concerned with this situation. You know, of course, that the British Government because of its historic interest and connections in the area had been exploring the local civil and military needs until a couple of months ago, it found itself unable to do so any longer. The economic situation of Great Britain is so serious that we may well say that on February 24, 1947 the British Government informed us that
that it was no longer in a position to bear the financial responsibilities it had hitherto been carrying with regard to Greece, and that, in its opinion, unless this aid were continued, Greece could not hope to survive as an independent country. Since our own interests are involved in this matter, we have found it necessary to face up squarely to the unavoidable issue—will we or will we not help Greece.

It should be obvious that no reconstruction can take place in Greece while organized armed groups defy the authority of the State and foster economic chaos, with the ultimate objective of wresting control of the government from it. The problem confronting us, in view of the inability of Great Britain to carry on, is to so strengthen the economic structure and the internal security of Greece that it can be relieved of the danger presented by an armed subversive minority and proceed peacefully to the building up of an independent, democratic nation.

We offer no apologies for the present government of Greece. It obviously does not in certain respects conform to our particular standards of perfection, but we are satisfied as to two things. The first is that the members of its Parliament were elected fairly and freely a year ago by the people of Greece under the eyes of more than a thousand observers—American, British, French and South African—and that the present Cabinet represents at least 60% of the Parliament. It will be recalled that the Soviet Government was invited to join in the supervision of these elections, but declined to do so. The second point is that by long-standing tradition and by their heroic resistance to Axis aggression, the Greek people have earned the right to be classed among those who prefer our way of life to any other.

I should like to emphasize also that with the encouragement of the United States and British Governments, the Government of Greece during the past year has attempted on more than one occasion to broaden the base of its representation. These attempts have borne visible fruit under Prime Minister Kallikakos and it would be our policy to encourage further steps to increase the representative character of the Greek Government. On the other hand, it is obvious wherever we look that the result of totalitarian regimes is to narrow and restrict the base of representation in the government.

In his speech of March 12, the President said:

"At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one."

"One way of life is based upon the will of the majority and is distinguished by 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 will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms."

The President
The President also expressed the belief that "it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures" and that "our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes".

Our decision to aid the Greek people to maintain their way of life, of course, a humanitarian motive. We dislike to see a small country threatened by the loss of its independence through external pressure and internal disintegration. Our hearts are full of pity for helpless men, women and children who lack the means to put their own house in order and to gain their daily bread. But let's be a bit selfish about this too— we are supporting Greece because it is in our own self-interest to do so.

I say this because in Greece occupies a vital strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean. If democratic institutions in Greece should go under, a glance at the map will show that Turkey would be threatened and, in turn, the whole area of the Near East. Surely we have learned enough from our unwilling involvement in two terrible wars to know that the spread over a large part of Europe and the Near East of regimes based on the uncontrolled power of minorities would constitute an ultimate threat to the foundations of international peace— and, therefore, to the security of the United States. As the President put it, "The free people of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedom. If we fail in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation."

As I see it, this challenge presents us with only one course of action— namely, to stand on our principles and, sure of the righteousness of our cause and the strength of our economic and political structure, firmly and patiently seek to convince the rest of the world that its salvation as well as ours, lies in genuine cooperation.

The willingness of the United States to cooperate to the limit—short of surrender of our cherished principles—is written in the record of our government and the words of its spokesman. When he was Secretary of State, Mr. Byrnes said, in one of his many declarations on the subject: "We will continue to seek friendship with the Soviet Union and all other States on the basis of Justice and the right of others, as well as ourselves, to opinions and ways of life which we do not and cannot share."

The United States still desires to cooperate, but the experience of recent months convinces us that one-sided offers of cooperation are not enough. Our readiness to cooperate, to achieve results, must be accompanied by positive actions in behalf of the principles for which we stand. This course must be supported by continued strengthening of the American economy at home, as the inescapable basis of democracy throughout the world. This is essential to our national security. The United States itself.

How about Turkey? The geographic location of Turkey is even more important than that of Greece. Strategically, it bears a direct relation to the structure of international peace and security, including the peace and security of the United States. So long as Turkey is able to maintain its integrity and independence, so long as Turkey is able to maintain its integrity and independence, so long as Turkey is able to maintain its integrity and independence, so long as Turkey is able to maintain its integrity and independence, so long as Turkey is able to maintain its integrity and independence, so long as Turkey is able to maintain its integrity and independence, so long as Turkey is able to maintain its integrity and independence, so long as Turkey is able to maintain its integrity and independence. Any crack in that
in that edifice would invite the most serious consequences.

While pressure on Greece has been exerted both externally and internally, the strong internal position of Turkey has restricted the campaign against her to external pressure alone. The Soviet Government officially has concentrated its effort on attempts to obtain a favored position in supervision and control of the famous Straits of the Dardanelles. At the same time, the Russians have advanced both direct and indirect demands for the incorporation into the Soviet Union of territory in Turkey's eastern provinces -- areas which form an integral part of the Turkish State.

Historically, control of the Dardanelles, connecting the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, has always been a bone of contention. In the last two centuries, Muslims fought eleven wars with Turkey in unsuccessful efforts to gain control of that strategic prize. In recent years, the status of the Straits has been governed by the Montreux Convention of 1936, which the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union agreed at the Potšdam Conference in 1945 should be revised to meet changed conditions. The United States, which was not a signatory to the Montreux Convention, expressed a willingness to become a party to the new pact, and the Turks welcomed the calling of a revisionary conference on that basis.

The Soviet Union, however, has proposed modifications which would require Turkey to share with Russia the defense of the Straits (which run entirely through Turkish territory). This would, in effect, give Russia military bases in the Straits area. Not unnaturally, the Turks have rejected the proposal as a threat to the territorial integrity of their country.

Meanwhile, the Soviet press and radio, which of course express the government's views, have conducted a persistent war of nerves against Turkey. Territorial demands that would dismember the eastern provinces of Turkey have figured prominently in the Soviet propaganda. The plucky Turks have served notice that they will defend themselves, alone if necessary, against any aggression, and have kept a large force under arms to back up their stand.

While we are on the subject of Turkey, let me refer to a point to the charges in certain quarters that Turkey is not worthy of our help because of her neutrality during most of the war and the alleged assistance thus rendered to the Axis. To set the record straight, it was decided at the Tehran Conference in December 1943 to invite Turkey to declare war against Germany. Turkey agreed to do so, provided adequate military supplies were forthcoming from the Allies. It was not possible for us to furnish such supplies because preparations were not then under way for the invasion on the eastern front in June of 1944, and we were in no position, at that time, to undertake the additional commitment. At best, a bellicose Turkey could have served the Allied cause only by keeping Axis troops from occupying her territory -- a result achieved anyway by her continued neutrality. Moreover, the record is replete with instances in which Turkey provided aid and comfort to elements of the Allied Forces. In the opinion of the United States Government, Turkish neutrality was, in fact, of definite assistance to the Allies.

The heavy
The heavy cost to Turkey today of keeping her army mobilized and ready, and the consequent drain on the nation's economic resources, have made it necessary for the Turks to seek support from the United States for the purpose of maintaining their independence... As in the case of Greece, Great Britain has in the past afforded economic and financial support to Turkey and now finds it impossible to do so. Again, the problem has been put up to us as to whether we shall assist a free and independent country to remain such. Since it is in our own interest to do so, we now propose to implement our resources a policy which has been previously sustained primarily with British resources. The policy itself is not new.

Judging by the past, who can doubt that if an anti-democratic regime were to become entrenched in Greece and straddle the Straits, this area would become a new base for still further expansion in the Middle East, through the familiar tactics of intimidation, infiltration and propaganda?

One further question remains: Why the problem of aid to Greece and Turkey was not handled by the United Nations. In the first place, the appeal of the Greek Government in its moment of crisis was made directly to the United States, while economic and military assistance for Turkey had for some time been a matter for discussion between our Government and the Turkish Government.

But it might be objected that this is a technicality, and does not consider the broader aspects of the subject. In this respect also, I feel that our Government acted wisely. For, because of the critical and threatening situation confronting Greece and Turkey, time was of the essence. Let us ask you what might have happened if the matter had been formally referred to the United Nations -- disregarding, for the moment, the fact that the U.N. has no funds for such purposes anyway.

In the light of the record so far, can anyone doubt that a long, drawn-out debate would have ensued, accompanied by the numerous objections and procrastinating delays which we have become accustomed to expect from the Soviet delegates and their associates? Is it logical to expect that the Soviet leaders or members of the U.N. would have moved swiftly and sympathetically to consider a policy which the Soviet press and radio have charged was 'directed against democratic elements in Greece'? Is it not possible that if the issue had been brought for decision to the Security Council, we should have found ourselves at long last trapped on a dead-end street, with a veto blocking the way. What would have happened meanwhile in Greece and Turkey?

I personally believe that we can best serve the cause of the United Nations itself by assuring both the strength and the weakness of the U.N., and frankly recognizing its present limitations as well as its potentialities. I sometimes wonder if the American people have not made the mistake of regarding the United Nations as a sort of mechanical marvel, assuming it will operate automatically to produce solutions to difficult questions. The truth is, of course, that the U.N. is not a mechanism, into which we can drop problems and by turning the crank, have satisfactory answers come out the other end, unharmed by human touch.

I have said that the United Nations has no funds for assisting Greece and Turkey. While it is true that the International Bank, an affiliated organization, has financial resources
resources it is not designed to furnish money for the purpose of strengthening the security of a member country or to provide consumption goods, which are the two greatest immediate needs of Greece and Turkey. As their needs change, it is our expectation that both countries will be able to draw on the Bank to rehabilitate and develop their economy.

The United Nations, as I see it, is a human institution, and its members are subject to human fallibility; certainly the U.N. is capable of developing through experience to maturity and wisdom. I believe it can rise to heights of great moral grandeur, much as men himself on occasion can attain. But we would do the U.N., now in the formative stage, a grave injustice to expect it to undertake tasks which it is not yet prepared to perform.

Our objective is to build the United Nations into a body of healthy member states, each secure in the knowledge that it may act freely and independently without fear of outside domination or control. That is the fundamental question in the case of Greece and Turkey. The successful evolution of the United Nations into an organ of true international cooperation requires that the integrity and independence of Greece and Turkey be preserved -- and the only effective way to ensure that is by prompt American action.

I do not have to tell you that the cornerstone of American foreign policy is the maintenance of world peace. If there is anything on which the people of this country are united, it is the desire to eliminate war from the course of human existence. I am likewise convinced that this is the basic hope and aim of the peoples of all countries. Certainly it would be inconceivable for a government representing the people of the United States to take any action which in its opinion was not designed to promote the attainment of that great ideal.

It is our sincere desire to collaborate with all peoples of the world, and in that I naturally include the Russian people. Those who really know us, I am persuaded, understand fully well that it is not our wish to dominate, intimidate or threaten the security of any nation, large or small. As Senator Austin, the U.S. delegate, told the United Nations Security Council on March 30, in discussing the Greek-Turkish case, we "will support collective security for all nations -- large as well as small". The United States, Senator Austin added, respects "the right of all members of the United Nations to follow whatever way of life or system of government they choose so long as the choice is freely made without intimidation and so long as such nations do not interfere with the rights of other countries or the liberties of other peoples".

Senator Austin also told the Security Council: "The United States regards it as an obligation under the Charter, as well as a matter of elementary self-interest, for every member of the United Nations to do its utmost to bring about the peaceful adjustment of any international situation before it becomes a threat to the peace."

That, it seems to me, is the primary lesson we should have learned from the war that we have been and should still be fighting on our part, the front being (here) to draw us into a war. The best way to secure peace is by surmounting the fears of other countries that our brand of Democracy is here to stay, by showing them that our gains are not only our gains, but everyone's gains, and that we stand together with the cause of democracy. We must have the courage to come to terms with the Iron Curtain -- that we desire only cooperation and friendship with like-minded nations. Peace is the great goal, but as we see, it is not easily won. This country and its government recognize the difficulties, but these only strengthen our determination. In the cause of peace we intend to aid Greece and Turkey. We extend the hand of peace, and we believe that peace will join with us in honest labor for that same great cause.