

Attic Chronicle by Phocion

Armacost in the Aegean

The Undersecretary left U.S. ally Turkey a widow—and Turkey might well respond as an old sailors' song indicates.

Undersecretary of State Michael Armacost's activities on both sides of the Aegean Sea during Oct. 30-Nov. 2 last, reminds us of an old, old Aegean sailors' folk song, whose lyrics are constructed on the refrain:

"How much does it cost to kiss in the West?—and in the East?"

The folk song dates from the 17th century, when the sailors of the Aegean Islands used to ply their trade, East and West, in the hire of the Serenissima Republic of Venice, mistress of the seas in those days. It appears that our good Michael Armacost, and with him our State Department, has been trying to emulate the Venice of yore, and regulate the price of "kissing," political loyalties, East and West—at least East and West of the Aegean: Turkey and Greece.

The matter is as follows: Early in the last week of October, America's last remaining friend and ally in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey, opened discreet negotiations with the United States on the subject of the future status of U.S. military bases there. Turkey, correctly, pointed out that her sizable land army is very poorly equipped, too poorly in fact to be able to dispense with the added defense burdens which devolve on a nation which, while neighboring directly on the Soviet Union, provides large-scale base facilities to the United States. Turkey's reasonable proposal, therefore, is that the United States a) more than double the current levels of military assistance, b) increase the level of non-military, economic, assistance

to over \$1 billion per year, c) abandon the congressional stipulation that a 7/10 ratio be maintained of U.S. military assistance to Greece and Turkey respectively, and, d) inscribe the levels of U.S. assistance to Turkey in a treaty instrument to be independent of the vagaries of annual congressional budget reviews.

Be it noted that Turkey's highly motivated but poorly equipped army is confronted with the combined threats of three of its four neighbors, Syria, Bulgaria, and socialist Greece, while her fourth neighbor, the Soviet Union, which has just appointed an ethnic-Greek Soviet admiral to command her Black Sea Fleet, has made known her intention to scrap the 1936 Montraux Convention—which gives Turkey military sovereignty over the Straights of Bosphorus and Dardanelles—by sailing through the Straights her first, real, 78,000-ton aircraft carrier into the Mediterranean some time next year.

In short, either Turkey gets major, ironclad, mutual defense commitments from the United States during 1985, or Turkey is at the mercy of the Soviet Union in 1986.

So, the State Department, in order to preempt any reasonable American response to Turkey's needs, sent Undersecretary of Political Affairs Michael Armacost to Athens, Greece, to spend a few juicy hours with the Socialist Premier of Greece, Andreas Papandreou, and inaugurate a "new era of friendly Greek-U.S. relations," based on promises of future economic

cooperation between the two countries, and a further whiff of a promise that, eventually, Greece will get 40 new F-16 jet fighters. The Socialist Papandreou returned the compliment by reiterating his "demand" for a "nuclear-free zone in the Balkans."

Having thus alarmed and incensed the conservative, pro-U.S. Turkish leadership, Armacost proceeded, the next day, to Ankara. Once there, he dropped the bombshell that the United States "is not in a position to meet the new Turkish requests for assistance," including the requested "new levels of military assistance."

Net result of Armacost's visit to Greece and Turkey: The Moscow-controlled Papandreou government of Greece, faced with a mass strike wave and a growing revolt of its population, was given a new lease on life compliments of Armacost. The pro-U.S. government of Turkey, besieged by rivals armed to the teeth, was told in no uncertain terms that it can expect nothing from the United States except a kick in the teeth, in the same way as was done to the pro-U.S. governments of Tunisia and Egypt.

From Michael Armacost, the socialist, anti-American Greek Premier received a kiss of gratitude and friendship; the pro-American Turkish government received a Judas kiss-of-death. Our would-be Venetian game-masters at the State Department are reversing loyalties and commitments, East and West. Hence, our remembrance of the old sailors' song from the days when Venice used to play this game between West and East.

As for the price of the kiss, interestingly, the old song informs us that "the married woman's costs four; the widow's fourteen; the unattached girl's is for free." So, whereas Papandreou's non-aligned Greece might ask for the unattached price, the newly widowed Turkey should up the price.