
Book Review

Greek general: Save Europe from 'Flexible Response' and Soviet power

by Criton Zoakos

I Sovietiki Proklisi Sti Decaetia 1980-1990
(*The Soviet Challenge in the Decade 1980-1990*)
by Lieutenant General Ioannis Bratsos, H.A. (ret.)
Euroekdotiki,
(Athens, Greece), 1982. 350 Drachma 413 pages.

The author, General Bratsos, received his commission in 1939, saw combat during the Second World War in the Greek-Albanian Front in 1940, after the collapse of Greece to the Axis powers he escaped to the Middle East and joined the Free Greek Forces there, and later participated in the Allied invasion of Italy. He commanded combat units during the Greek Civil War against the communists. He later served as commander of Army Corps, the First Army, and finally as Chief of the Joint General Staff, until ousted from the ranks for political reasons.

His book, *The Soviet Challenge in the Decade 1980-1990*, written one year before President Reagan's historic March 23, 1983 speech which launched the Strategic Defense Initiative and the doctrine of Mutually Assured Survival, is one of the best pieces of strategic thinking emerging out of Western European military circles in the period of so-called "Flexible Response."

General Bratsos, in the context of his accurate assessment of Soviet strategic intentions and capabilities, rejects vehemently the entire "Flexible Response" posture of NATO, as he rejected it back in 1967 when it was first voted to become the alliance's official doctrine. He was forced to resign in 1968, one year after the doctrine was adopted.

In a manner which is unusual for a professional military man, General Bratsos does not only attack the doctrine of Flexible Response as an abstract policy, he has some vehement words to say against the particular person whom the general considers, accurately, to be the one responsible for Flexible Response, namely, McGeorge Bundy. Time and again in his book, General Bratsos identifies Bundy as one of the big problems of the Western alliance. Bundy, of course, was National Security Adviser to President Johnson when

Flexible Response was adopted as NATO doctrine. Bratsos argues that McGeorge Bundy's Flexible Response doctrine occasioned the Soviet Union to embark on a program of splitting Europe from the United States; that the Soviet Command decided to implement this strategy of decoupling by means of developing and deploying the SS-20 as the centerpiece of their West European deployment; that the Soviets have now completed this deployment; that the Pershing II and Cruise missile deployment by NATO is not an adequate response to the Soviet response to Flexible Response.

Bratsos then returns to demolish McGeorge Bundy's, McNamara's, George Kennan's, and Gerard Smith's joint proposal, published in *Foreign Affairs* magazine in 1981, to counter the Soviet SS-20 deployment by means of a NATO shift of emphasis away from nuclear weapons to "ultrasophisticated" conventional armaments. Writes General Bratsos:

"McGeorge Bundy's manner of speech, already obsolescent, was motivated by an obvious refusal to address the problem of joint defense of the unified U.S.A.-European territory, a problem which has negative implication for the Western world; if McGeorge Bundy's proposals are accepted, they would contribute to the Soviet gameplan."

For an old general to pinpoint the "elected head of the Eastern Establishment" from five thousand miles away and hit him right between the eyes is not bad aim at all. Beyond this, the book is an important contribution to the cause of defending the West because:

- a) It identifies with precision the overall strategic doctrine, posture, and course of the Soviet Union.
- b) It warns that existing known doctrine of NATO is no match for what the Soviets are fielding.
- c) It outlines the parameters within which a new Western strategic doctrine must be formulated if it is to be adequate.

The Soviet drive for domination

Bratsos' thesis is that the U.S.S.R. aims at unchallenged world domination by the end of the decade; that the scheme for domination is based on the Sokolovskii doctrine of 1962; that this doctrine excludes the Western concept of "deterrence"; that since that time the U.S.S.R. has prepared itself to "fight and win" a general nuclear war; that, in conformity

with the Sokolovskii doctrine, the U.S.S.R. is employing not only directly military means, but also economic, psychological, diplomatic, political, and social means in a centralized way; that "national liberation movements" and international terrorism are very important instruments of the Russian General Staff.

Finally, Bratsos argues that second only to their relentless buildup of strategic offensive forces, the Soviets have applied all their resources to splitting Europe from the United States *as their principal means of attaining sole world domination*. In General Bratsos' estimation, the minute Europe is lost to the United States, Soviet world domination begins. In the form of a polemic addressing McGeorge Bundy, he says the following:

"Finally, the professor must realize that his conceptions undermine the unity of NATO. . . . And as he knows better than anyone else, for he is also a professor of History, the security of Europe is vital not only for the Europeans but equally for the Americans. For it is Europe where one finds the greatest concentration of industry and the greatest economic power in the world. If the political orientation of Europe shifts in favor of the Soviet coalition, or, if it becomes occupied by the communist forces, then we can say that the United States itself will find itself in a position of great peril, in a desperate position. . . ."

That General Bratsos' proposals to remedy the situation were made at a time in which the option of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative was not known, are of historical interest. He writes:

"It is necessary to chart the course of a new NATO strategy for the defense of Europe based on closer cooperation between the U.S.A. and Europe, given the fact that Flexible Response, as we have proven, is obsolete and must be replaced by a new doctrine which, applied on European space as a whole, will provide for:

- Employment of strong conventional forces;
- Immediate employment of tactical nuclear retaliation by means of tactical nuclear weapons in addition to cruise missiles and Pershing II, hitting targets within Soviet territory;
- Employment of the neutron bomb as a complementary means of dealing with the Soviet Union's terrifying superiority in armor in the European theater."

In the context of such doctrine, he proposes in addition:

"There is urgent need for the rapid reorganization and restructuring of NATO, for the adoption of a global strategy, which can meet more fully and more effectively the present conjuncture and the present global expansionist strategy of the Soviet Union, with special emphasis on meeting the challenge of the Soviets' peripheral subversive strategy in Third World nations, a matter which may perhaps prove to be the greatest danger to the Western world when this subversion is protected by Soviet thermonuclear cover."

In this general context, General Bratsos locates the military problem and significance of Greece, Turkey, and NATO's Southern Flank. He simply identifies the fact that whether

Greece falls into the Soviet military sphere politically or militarily, the same result will obtain: Soviet or Soviet-controlled military forces will descend into northern and central Greece and European Turkey. The Soviets will become masters of the Dardanelle and Bosphorus Straits, of all the Greek islands, of Crete, and thus of the entire Eastern Mediterranean. Italy will become the "front-line state" of NATO, facing a Dalmatian coast dominated by the Soviets. Turkey will be neutralized completely by a relatively simple enveloping maneuver south of the Caucasus range (see maps). With the fall of Greece, he argues correctly, the defense of Europe will be all but over.

Many other useful arguments are presented by the competent General Bratsos, which make this book, despite the fact that it was written before the Strategic Defense Initiative had become a consideration, worth translating into English and circulating within the Pentagon.

I would like here to add a note respecting a certain possible objection to Bratsos' arguments which may come from certain quarters. The State Department, aided and abetted by certain uniformed careerists at the Pentagon, already committed to letting Greece fall to the Soviet embrace, have been privately circulating the fraudulent "intelligence" that "the Greeks have been given offers by the Soviet Union to take part in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and Turkey," that the Greek authorities, in private, know that "with the decline in U.S. defense capabilities" they cannot "count on being defended by the U.S.A. for more than seven days" and, therefore, have opted to take the Soviets up on their offer.

Therefore, the State Department argues, lying, since the Greeks have opted for the Soviets, we have no choice but to put all our eggs with Turkey. Thus, a secret memorandum was caused to be written in Washington, which Soviet Ambassador to Greece Igor Andropov is circulating to the leaders of all political parties in Athens, and which purports to describe an American policy of favoring Turkey to invade and occupy certain Greek islands in case Greece formally moves to join the Russians. Ambassador Andropov is using this piece of literature in Athens to argue that "the Americans are no friends of the Greeks," right before election day.

The problem with this specious State Department argument is this: Turkish military leaders will not feel comfortable at all to see that the United States, under present circumstances while NATO's southern flank is still alive, is not interested in defending Greece. The Turkish leaders will ask themselves: How could the State Department defend us, after NATO has collapsed in the Eastern Mediterranean, after we, Turkey, have been encircled, from the north by the Soviet Black Sea, from the south by the Soviet-controlled Syria, from the west by the Soviet-controlled Greece. Our east can be enveloped by a six-hour-long the Caucasus. The Turkish generals' reaction after the fall of Greece, will be: "Let us see what the Soviets have to offer."

Anybody at the Pentagon who thinks otherwise, should read General Bratsos' book.