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August 1964CASTELLÓRIZO (KASTELLÓRIZON) ISLAND

(Turkish -- Meis; Italian -- Castelrosso; French -- Château-Rouge)

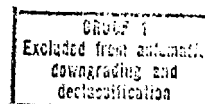
The island of Castellórizo is the easternmost of the Dodecanese Islands obtained by Greece from Italy in 1947. It is situated 70 miles east of Rhodes and about 4 miles south of the port of Andifli on the south coast of Turkey. Northern and eastern promontories of Castellórizo are less than 2 miles from promontories of mainland Turkey.

The name Castellórizo is often applied to an island complex including, in addition to Castellórizo, the following small islands nearby:

1. Nísos Ayios Yeórgios (Saint Giorgio Island), located about 3 miles west of Castellórizo.
2. Gurmenli Adasi (Marathi Island), lying 2-1/4 miles northeast of Saint Giorgio.
3. Voutzaki Rocks, lying three-fourths of a mile south-southeast of Marathi Island.
4. Nísos Ipsili (Strongilo), lying 2-1/4 miles southeast of Castellórizo and the same distance west-southwest of Tugh Burnu (Ulu Burun), which is the southern point of the Turkish mainland that forms the eastern side of the Gulf of Castellórizo. The islets between this island and the mainland are Turkish.

I. Terrain and Climate

Castellórizo has an area of about 3-1/2 square miles and is roughly triangular in shape, with its longer sides facing west-northwest and southeast. It is about 3-1/2 miles long and is 1-3/4 miles wide at its widest point. The only port (Mandráki) is located on the northeast side, between San Stephano and Cape Nífti, in a deep bay with a narrow steep valley at its head. A shorter, steeper valley descends into Limenákiá cove on the northwest coast. Coves are found elsewhere only at Návlakas (Navala) on the southeast coast and at Aprús, west of Cape Ponente in the southwest.

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The island is rocky and barren, comprised entirely of hard limestone. The higher, northern end of the island reaches elevations of 700 to 800 feet; to the south the island slopes off to 200 feet above sea level.

The coast is precipitous, except where it is dissected by valleys. On the west it descends abruptly into deep water; on the east, as far north as Cape Nifti, is a submerged platform with many small islands and reefs. The harbor and channel east of San Stephano are clear.

Castellórizo has the typical Mediterranean climate -- summer drought and warmth, and winter rain. The rainfall is very light and is unreliable. The island has no streams or springs and few wells. In dry seasons the water supplied by house cisterns is supplemented by water brought by boats from springs at Andifli. Mandráki is reported to have large reservoirs west of the town.

II. History

The ancient name of Castellórizo was Kisthene, but it was commonly called Megíste (the "largest"). Its present name derives from medieval times and comes from the red rocks used in the castle walls. The Knights of the Hospital halted here in 1306 on their way to occupy Rhodes. In 1440 the island was taken by Djemal-ed-din of Egypt; in 1450 it was retaken by Alphonso of Aragon, King of Naples; in 1471 it revolted against him and surrendered to Rhodes; later in 1471 it was taken and lost by the Turks; and in 1512 it was retaken by the Turks. A Venetian force occupied the island in 1570 on the way to relieve Famagusta; and in 1659 Venice seized it again and destroyed the fort, though the Turks recovered it. The island was peaceful until 1828, when it was occupied by the Greeks. In 1832 it was restored to Turkey with the Dodecanese Islands. In 1912 the Castelloriziotas, like the other islanders, welcomed the Italian invaders, but on 14 March 1913 they joined the Greek Kingdom and their provisional government was annexed to Samos. On 20 October 1915 disorders occurred, the Greek governor was expelled before the Greek Government could intervene, and on 28 December Castellórizo was occupied by France. In 1920 the island was ceded by France to Italy, and so became affected by the abortive Treaty of Sèvres; the 1924 Treaty of Lausanne confirmed Italian possession. By the 1947 Treaty of Paris, Greece obtained Castellórizo and the other Dodecanese Islands from Italy.

III. Population and Economy

The people of Castellórizo are of Greek stock. The population formerly was very large, but emigration reduced it to 2,218 in 1937 and to 574 in 1960. More than 8,000 persons have been recorded as emigrating to Greece,

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Egypt, South Africa, Australia, and the United States. The island probably has fewer than 100 families, since the working population is approximately 100 and some families probably have more than one working member. The number of houses shown on the attached map of the island is not indicative of the present population.

The lightkeeper on Ipsili is the only known inhabitant of the smaller islands.

The economy of the island has always been based largely on the sea. Many of the men are sailors. Others are engaged in coastal trade and in furnishing supplies to vessels touching at Castellórizo, which has one of the few safe ports between Beirut and Makry (opposite Rhodes). The island has sheep and goat herding but no commercial cattle raising, farming, fowl raising, or dairy concerns.

Trade of Castellórizo with the mainland declined with the expulsion of Greeks from Turkey after World War I, with the decline in the use of sailboats, and with the Italian administration of the island. The principal trade now consists of the export of wood, charcoal, valonia (used in tanning), and pine bark to Andifli, on the Turkish coast opposite Castellórizo. Sponge fishing, formerly extensive, has almost ceased.

IV. Transportation and Communications

The harbor of Mandráki, in the bay between San Stephano and Cape Nífti, is about 200 by 400 yards in area and 4-1/4 to 6-1/2 fathoms deep. It provides complete shelter for small steamers and sailing vessels. Port facilities, however, are few. The only town on the island rises from the south side of the harbor up a terraced hillside to a medieval castle on the ridge above. East of Mandráki in the bay is a well-sheltered anchorage for larger vessels, with several buoys for aircraft. Steamers from Rhodes call biweekly at Mandráki, and there is traffic with the mainland in small sailing vessels.

A road 11-1/2 to 13 feet wide and in fair condition leads from Mandráki to Cape Nífti. Only rough mule tracks lead to outlying patches of cultivation and to a cable landing at Cape San Stephano.

A telegraph cable connects the island with the mainland. Radio communications are available at the gendarmerie station and at the telegraph office.

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Summary and Conclusion

An offer of Castellórizo to Turkey by Greece could not be considered very generous. The island is generally barren, has no significant agriculture or industry, and supports a dwindling population. It offers a small protected harbor but is not equipped with marine repair, storage, or supply facilities. Castellórizo is not suitable for an air installation.

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ANNEX

One of the most isolated stretches of the Mediterranean coast of Turkey lies opposite the island of Castellórizo. Throughout the entire length of this Turkish coast -- about 560 miles -- formidable mountain barriers shut off the interior. Many of the harbors are unused except as anchorages, and ports are few.

Communications along the coast are poorly developed; a very thin network of good roads is filled in by poor roads, some unsurfaced and others just rough tracks. The only overland communications from the small port of Andifli are a dry-weather road leading northward through the mountains to Elmali (45 miles inland) and rough tracks to Fethiye (45 miles to the northwest) and to Finike (30 miles to the east). An extension of the Izmir-Fethiye road to Andifli is projected. Mersin and Iskenderon are the only points on the coast that are served by railroad.

Isolation has forced the inhabitants of the Turkish coast to look to the sea for a living, and while piracy flourished the population was large. When piracy declined the coastlands became depopulated and the importance of many minor ports and harbors lessened. Although recent improved methods of drainage and sanitation in some of the towns have made it unnecessary for inhabitants of the coast to go to the mountains to escape the summer fever, the Mediterranean coast is still one of the least densely populated parts of Turkey. Adverse physical conditions impede development of the coastal area.

The agricultural potential of the Turkish coast is exceedingly poor. Rainfall is slight, with a winter maximum, and unreliable. A recent survey classified the soil as Terra Rossa, the land as rough and broken. Local relief commonly is greater than 1,060 feet and occasionally exceeds 2,000 feet. Most slopes are between 20 and 40 percent.

Resources consist chiefly of timber from the mountain forests, manganese, and some chrome. The principal trees in the forests are small, unmarketable, widely scattered oaks. The closest mineral developments reportedly are 38, 45, and 58 air-miles away. There are no strategic targets in the vicinity of the Turkish coast opposite Castellórizo.

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CASTELLORIZO (KASTELLORIZON) ISLAND

August 1964
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CIA/RR GB 64-29 63.2219

(OCI for Geneva Support)

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