

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION AND GREECE, 1944-1949

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by

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To
my parents
Dimitrios and Efi Sakkas

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Am.Hist.Rev.</u>	<u>American Historical Review</u>
<u>Am.J.Soc.</u>	<u>American Journal of Sociology</u>
<u>Am.Slav.E.Eur.Rev.</u>	<u>American Slavic and East European Review</u>
<u>Int.Hist.Rev.</u>	<u>International History Review</u>
<u>J.Cent.Eur.Af.</u>	<u>Journal of Central European Affairs</u>
<u>J.Cont.Hist.</u>	<u>Journal of Contemporary History</u>
<u>J.Hel.Diasp.</u>	<u>Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora</u>
<u>J.Mod.Gr.St.</u>	<u>Journal of Modern Greek Studies</u>
<u>J.Mod.Hist.</u>	<u>Journal of Modern History</u>
<u>P.Op.Quar.</u>	<u>Public Opinion Quarterly</u>
<u>Scad.St.Mod.Gr.</u>	<u>Scandinavian Studies in Modern Greek</u>

* * *

AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AMAG	American Mission for Aid to Greece
AMFOGE	Allied Mission For Observing the Greek Elections
BFG	British Friendship to Greece
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
COS	Chiefs of Staff
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DLP	Divisional Labour Party
<u>DNB</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
DSE	Dimokratikos Stratos Ellados [Democratic Army of Greece]
EAM/ELAS	Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo/ Ethnikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos [National Liberation Front/National Popular Liberation Army]
EDES	Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Syndesmos [National Republican Greek League]
EKKA	Ethniki Ke Koinoniki Apeleftherosis [National and Social Liberation]
ELD	Enosi Laikis Dimokratias [Union of Popular Democracy]
EPON	Eniaia Panelladiki Organosi Neon [United Panhellenic Organisation of Youth]
ETU	Electrical Trades Union
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
FO	Foreign Office
<u>FRUS</u>	<u>Foreign Relations of the United States</u>
GFMU	Greek Federation of Maritime Unions
GNA	Greek National Army

GSEE	Geniki Synomospondia Ergaton Ellados [General Confederation of Greek Workers]
ILP	Independent Labour Party
KKE	Kommunistiko Komma Ellados [Communist Party of Greece]
LDG	League for Democracy in Greece
MGA	Modern Greek Archives (King's College, London)
MP	Member of Parliament
NCCL	National Council of Civil Liberties
NEC	National Executive Committee
NMLH	National Museum of Labour History
NUDAW	National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers
NUGMW	National Union of General and Municipal Workers
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
PEEA	Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Apeleftherosis [Political Committee of National Liberation]
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PNO	Panellinia Naftiki Omospondia [Panhellenic Seamen's Federation]
PREM	Prime Minister's Office Files (Public Record Office, London)
PRO	Public Record Office, London
SKE	Socialistiko Komma Ellados [Socialist Party of Greece]
SOE	Special Operations Executive
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UDC	Union of Democratic Control
UNO	United Nations Organisation
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UNSCOB	United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans
USDAW	Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
WAC	Written Archives Centre

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Every form of death was to be seen; and everything, and more than everything, that commonly happens in revolutions, happened then. The father slew the son, and the suppliants were torn from the temples and slain near them...To such extremes of cruelty did revolution go...The sufferings which revolution entailed upon the cities were many and terrible, such as have been and always will be, as long as the human nature remains the same.

Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, III 81-2

The bit of truth behind all this- one so eagerly denied- is that men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but that a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment...Homo homini lupus; who has the courage to dispute it in the face of all the evidence in his own life and in history?...Civilised society is perpetually menaced with disintegration through this primary hostility of men towards one another. Their interests in their common work would not hold them together; the passions of instinct are stronger than reasoned interests.

Sigmund Freud, Civilisation and its Discontents,
(London, 1930) pp.85-6

Preface and Acknowledgments

British public opinion and Greece, 1944-49, does not attempt to offer another account of British policy in Greece in the 1940s. This has been thoroughly investigated and systematically analysed in the last two decades by a large number of Greek and British scholars. What it mainly attempts to do is to assess the impact Greek developments between 1944 and 1949 had on the British public and the Labour movement in particular as well as their reaction to these developments.

My interest in the attitude of the British public towards Greece between 1944 and 1949 flows from my previous studies which focused on the labour and socialist movements in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. In Britain the events in the 1930s- Hitler's elevation to the Chancellorship in 1933, the Abyssinian crisis in 1935 and the Spanish civil war- and the anti-Fascist struggle during the Second World War contributed greatly to the enhancement of radical political conscience. While researching and writing on the British labour movement I had often wondered how rank and file members responded to Churchill's intervention in Greece against the resistance movement in December 1944 and to the continuation of the

coalition's Greek policy by the Labour government.

I was also led to examine the decade of the forties by my efforts to understand the origins and context of the disastrous Greek civil war of 1946-49. During those three years of bitter fighting the "passions of instinct" came to prevail. Fellow-countrymen settled old scores with unparalleled ferocity. Many lost parents, husbands, wives, daughters and sons. Others left Greece and became political refugees in the countries of eastern Europe, some in the knowledge that the ideals they had fought for were lost and betrayed. Those who remained in Greece lived their lives under a repressive regime built under the auspices of a democratically organised parliamentary state that did so much to obscure the truth of those years. Over forty years on, the Greek civil war still evokes powerful feelings.

I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Professor John Saville, for his invaluable guidance, assistance and encouragement, and for sharing with me some of his deep knowledge of modern British politics.

I would like also to thank Diana Pym who gave her time to talk to me about the character and the activities of the League for Democracy in Greece. I am greatly indebted to Marion Sarafis for her friendship, advice and information on aspects of the Greek civil war. She kindly read a portion of the thesis and

offered a number of helpful suggestions. My debt is equally great to Antonis Liakos, Professor of Modern Greek History in the University of Athens. Although he has little to say directly about the matters discussed in this project his teaching and work had a profound effect on the development of my overall conceptual approach to Labour history.

I wish also to thank the staff of the Archives Centres and Libraries that I visited during my research: the Public Record Office, the British Library, the British Library Newspaper section and the King's College Library in London, the BBC Written Archives Centre in Reading, the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester, and the Brynmor Jones Library of Hull University.

Finally I should especially thank my parents Dimitrios and Efi Sakkas. This thesis would not have been possible without their financial assistance, unfailing love and support throughout the years of my studies.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Times Newspapers Limited for permission to reproduce The Times leaders of Sept. 22, Oct. 18, Nov.22, 23, 1945 and Jan.12, 26, Feb.2, 21, Mar. 8, 1946.

INTRODUCTION

I. Public opinion

Public opinion is a peculiarly elusive and difficult object of investigation. In the words of V.O.Key "To speak with precision of public opinion is a task not unlike coming to grips with the Holy Ghost."¹ The central ideas of a theory of public opinion are very old, but the intensive cultivation of public opinion as a field of study appeared only in the last century, in an era when the masses of the people were becoming organised to express their demands, and mass opinion became recognised as a powerful force on government.²

In the first issue of the American journal Public Opinion Quarterly (Jan.1937) Floyd D.Allport made a survey of concepts of public opinion, and offered both a critique and an attempt to construct a "scientific" definition. He described public opinion as "an action or readiness for action with regard to a given issue on the part of members of a public who are reacting in the

¹Key, Public Opinion (New York, 1961) p.14.

²Speier, "Historical Development of Public Opinion", Am. J.Soc., vol.55 (1950), pp.376-88.

expectation that others in the public are similarly oriented toward the same issue.”³ Since then a number of definitions of public opinion have been offered but many questions remain still unanswered. What is the “public”? What is the usual sequence of steps in the process by which public opinion is formed? What is the relationship between public opinion and government? What is the role of the opinion leadership? Is majority opinion always right? Differences on these and similar questions have confused the concept and provoked heated controversies.⁴

Apart from defining public opinion another important question is how can historians who undertake opinion research proceed to measure public opinion. The American historian Lee Benson has suggested a specific course of action which the author of this study has attempted to follow: a)selection of a specific period for measurement b)construction of a narrative framework to describe public opinion c)selection and use of “historical opinion indicators.”⁵

³Allport, “Toward a Science of Public Opinion,” P.Op. Quar., vol.1 (1937), p.23.

⁴For public opinion see Crotty, Public Opinion (New York, 1970); Childs, Public Opinion (Princeton, 1965); Wilson, A Theory of Public Opinion (Chicago, 1962); Berelson and Janowitz (eds), Reader in Public Opinion (New York, 1953).

⁵Benson, “An Approach to the Scientific Study...”, P.Op. Quar., vol.31 (1967), pp.522-67. For the relationship between Public Opinion and History see Komarovsky (ed.), Common Frontiers (Glencoe, Ill., 1957) and Small (ed.), Public Opinion and Historians (Detroit, 1970).

The present study focuses on British public opinion from December 1944 to October 1949. The reason for the selection of this specific period is obvious. In 1944-47 Britain played a dominant role in Greek affairs. After March 1947 Greece came under American responsibility, but Britain continued to exert a significant influence in Athens.

Opinion research requires historians to develop a "chronicle of events" or "narrative framework" for the issue(s) studied. The Anglo-Greek conflict in December 1944, for example, cannot be explained without taking into account the Greek politics of the interwar years or British policy in Greece during the occupation. Similarly, the reaction in Britain to Bevin's Greek policy is closely related with the general opposition to "Bevinism" as well as with international developments.

Historians who try to reconstruct the distribution of public opinion face a serious methodological problem. What opinion indicators are most appropriate for a particular study? Under ideal conditions they might use all opinion indicators that can be extracted from their source material. But since conditions are never ideal they always must choose possible indicators and then check them against each other. In this study seven distinct types of opinion indicators have been selected and used: a) editorials, reports and articles of influential national newspapers and periodicals that represent different political perspectives: Daily Telegraph, Daily

Mail, The Times, Manchester Guardian, News Chronicle, Daily Herald, Reynolds News, Daily Worker, Spectator, Economist, Tribune, New Statesman and Listener; b) debates in Parliament, and the Labour Party and TUC conferences; c) resolutions of various political and trade union organisations; d) opinion expressed by pressure groups; e) opinion expressed by policymakers and influential personalities who have no government position and no links with the media; f) opinion expressed in correspondence to the press; g) reports and talks in the BBC.

II. Greece in the 1940s, myths and realities

The decade of the 1940s is generally recognised as a watershed in Greece's modern history. The events that took place during those turbulent years had such a tremendous impact upon subsequent Greek affairs that they continue to attract considerable interest and to provoke much controversy. In 1983, for example, a bitter row broke out in Greece when the Greek-American journalist Nicholas Gage (Gatzoyiannis) published Eleni, an interesting, though highly tendentious, account of the author's investigation of the circumstances under which his mother, Eleni, was arrested and executed by communist guerrillas in the Epirus village of Lia, in August 1948. Three years later, the so-called "Woodhouse group" in Britain and supporters of the "revisionist school" in Athens indulged in bitter recriminations

after the presentation by Channel Four of Jane Cabriel's 3-part series Greece: The Hidden War. For the best part of six months a fierce controversy raged in the columns of the Daily Telegraph and the Guardian.⁶

Until the restoration of democracy in 1974 Greek historiography showed minimal interest in the study of the 1940s. The post-war political climate - for Greece the 1950s and 1960s were a period of conservatism, nationalist paroxysm and communist phobia - the inaccessibility of source material and the emotionally charged nature of the events of the 1940s impeded scholarly investigation. Attempts to analyse the troubled decade thoroughly and objectively remained difficult, and few in number, and official explanations went mostly unchallenged.

It was not, therefore, accidental that the first historical accounts on the recent Greek past appeared not in Greece but abroad. In the United States, Professor L.S.Stavrianos published Greece: America Dilemma and Opportunity (Chicago, 1952), an analysis of the phenomenon of foreign involvement in modern Greek politics, while in France Nikos Svoronos, a post-civil war refugee, produced the first Marxist-oriented short history of Greece: Histoire de la Grèce moderne (Paris, 1953). In Britain, Colonel C.M.Woodhouse, head of the British military mission in Greece in 1943-44, presented

⁶Clogg, "A Case Study in Bias...", Encounter, vol.68 (1987), p.70.

in his Apple of Discord: A Survey of Greek Politics in their International Setting (London, 1948) the official version of Britain's wartime role in the country: that during the occupation the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and EAM/ELAS, the Left-wing resistance movement, became increasingly preoccupied with political considerations and started attacking rival guerrilla groups in order to eliminate them and acquire a monopoly of resistance as a prelude to complete political power after liberation. The British were left with no other alternative than to intervene militarily to support the constitutional government and save Greece from the communist danger.

During the following two decades Woodhouse's explanation of Britain's wartime policy in Greece was widely accepted by historians not only because it came from someone who had a first-hand knowledge of Greek politics, but also because it was the only explanation considered to be consistent with the prevailing cold-war values of militant anti-communism. At the beginning of the 1970s, however, scholars of the younger generation began to examine the now available British and American state archives and to question many of the traditional interpretations.

In his Revolt in Athens: The Greek Communist 'Second Round' 1944-1945 (Princeton, 1972), Professor John Iatrides introduced material that helped to confirm some earlier hypotheses: that the communists in Greece never intended to take power by force and that they were in

fact committed to a "strategy of legalism." A critical attitude towards British policy in Greece was taken by the German historian Heinz Richter in his well-documented accounts Griechenland zwischen Revolution und Konterrevolution (1936-1946) (Frankfurt, 1973) and British Intervention in Greece: From Varkiza to Civil War, February 1945 to August 1946 (London, 1986). Richter argues that during the war years Greece experienced a national renaissance out of the resistance fighting efficiently for a truly independent Greece. The democratic and republican goals of the Greek resistance, however, were thwarted by Britain's determination to keep Greece in her traditional semicolonial monarchical dependency and to a lesser extent by the communists' lack of a clear line of policy. The 1944 December events were not a long-prepared communist revolution but a carefully-prepared military intervention by Churchill to suppress the Left and establish a friendly regime that would safeguard Britain's imperial interests in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Recent study of British and American documents and Greek sources has led many researchers to similar conclusions. In his unpublished doctoral thesis 'The Imperialism of 'Non-Intervention': Anglo-Greek Relations 1945-1949' (Lancaster, 1990), Athanasios Sfikas points out (p.474) that "Britain's prime motivation was the neutralization of EAM." The KKE "held that a political mobilisation of the masses would enable it to impose its

reformist political programme through the parliamentary road." Professor Haris Vlavianos in Greece, 1941-49: From Resistance to Civil War. The Strategy of the Greek Communist Party (Oxford, 1992) agrees that "at the moment of liberation, the communists, deeply suspicious of the British and the Right, but confident of EAM's popular support, decided to act with moderation and to try to pursue their objectives by political and not military means." (pp.251-2).

The Anglo-Greek conflict in December 1944 ended with the defeat of EAM/ELAS and the signing of the Varkiza Agreement (February 12, 1945) which committed the Greek government to establish conditions for the reconciliation of the opposing factions within the country and for peaceful postwar development. What actually followed was a period of rightist repression against the Left. Extreme Right-wing armed bands, in collaboration with the security forces and with the toleration of the state, began to persecute all people suspected of leftist sympathies. Between February 1945 and March 1946, more than 1,000 people were assassinated, more than 6,000 wounded, more than 31,000 tortured and nearly 85,000 were arrested.⁷ Despite the presence of troops and police and military missions, the British did little to stem the tide of Right-wing

⁷Grigoriadis, Istoria tou Emfyliou Polemou 1945-49 [History of the Civil War 1945-49] (Athens, 1963), vol.2, p.630.

violence. Churchill himself opposed the adoption by the Greek government of more drastic measures against fascist and collaborationist elements. In a revealing memorandum to Orme Sargent, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in April 1945, the British Premier stated:

"It seems to me that the collaborators in Greece in many cases did the best they could to shelter the Greek population from German oppression. Anyhow they did nothing to stop the entry of liberating forces, nor did they give any support to the EAM designs. The Communists are the main foe...There should be no question of increasing the severities against the collaborators in order to win communist approval."⁸

Contrary to all expectations, the election of a Labour government in Britain in July 1945 was not followed by a reversal of the coalition's Greek policy. Like his predecessors, Ernest Bevin, the new Foreign Secretary, adhered to the thesis that Britain's preponderance in the Mediterranean and the Middle East was vital to the security of Britain's world position. Greece should remain in the British sphere of influence. This was to be achieved by strengthening the forces of the centre and by preventing the communists from coming to power. The KKE, on the other hand, continued in 1945-46 to advocate a policy of reconciliation and close cooperation with the Greek government and the British. As Professor Vlavianos has stressed "Zachariadis'

⁸FO 371/48267 R7423, Churchill to Sargent, April 22, 1945.

various public statements...and the resolutions of the Twelfth Plenum [July 25-27, 1945] show that the communists' call for a reconciliation was a genuine one."⁹ Some writers, however, have questioned the tactics and aims of the KKE during this period, arguing that at the second Central Committee Plenum of February 1946 the communist leaders took the decision to initiate the so-called "third round" of the civil war.¹⁰ Although the Plenum's actual decision is still a subject of controversy the available evidence suggests that in mid-February the KKE opted not for an armed struggle but for limited self-defence against the White Terror with a view to extracting concessions from the government.¹¹ Far from fomenting civil war, the communist leaders hoped that a limited show of strength would oblige the opposition to make a compromise which would enable the Left to participate in the elections of March 1946 with success. The fact that the KKE (and the whole Left) did not finally participate has been, not unconvincingly,

⁹Vlavianos, Greece, 1941-49, p.254. Nikos Zachariadis was General Secretary of the KKE in 1931-42 and 1945-56. After his expulsion from the Party in 1957 he lived as an exile in Siberia. He committed suicide in 1973. A highly controversial figure.

¹⁰See, for example, Kousoulas, Revolution and Defeat (Oxford, 1965) pp.231-2; O'Ballance, The Greek Civil War, 1944-1949 (London, 1966) p.122; Eudes, The Kape-tanios (London, 1972) p.259; Averoff-Tositsas, By Fire and Axe (New Rochelle N.J., 1978) pp.171-2.

¹¹Vlavianos, Greece, 1941-49, pp.171-88; Richter, British Intervention in Greece, pp.447-91. See also Richter's and Ole Smith's conflicting views on the issue in Baerentzen (et al. eds), History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949 (Copenhagen, 1987) pp.179-87 and 159-77.

attributed to Zachariadis' ideological delusions and opportunistic tactics.

The civil war of 1946-49 has only recently become a subject of academic research. In 1987 a conference was held in Copenhagen in which various questions were addressed ranging from the Bevin-Marshall dispute of August-November 1947 concerning the withdrawal of British troops to the evacuation of children from the war zone and the struggle in Greece for the creation of a 'Third Force'. The international aspect of the war has been meticulously examined by Lawrence S. Wittner in American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949 (New York, 1982) and by Peter J. Stavrakis in Moscow and Greek Communism, 1944-1949 (Ithaca, 1989). Wittner tells "a sad story of intervention in the affairs of a foreign land, culminating in war, dictatorship, and alienation" (p. 311) and demonstrates that the Americans considered the suppression of Greek dissenters, especially the Communist Party, as a requirement of the strategy to contain the Soviet Union. By contrast, Stavrakis attempts to justify America's policy of containment by putting the blame for the outbreak of the civil war on Stalin's policy of "prudent expansionism."

The cold-war myth employed by the Americans to justify their intervention in Greece that the civil war was provoked by the Soviet Union can no longer be sustained. Stalin adhered to the spheres of influence agreement reached with Churchill in 1944 and offered no

assistance, military or economic, whatsoever. Whereas the Athens government received massive foreign support, the KKE received at best promises which proved hollow.¹² The Soviets showed little sympathy for the communist uprising and even refused to recognise KKE's "Provisional Democratic Government." But whatever the reasons for the puzzling Soviet indifference to the fate of Greek communism it is Britain, and not the Soviet Union (or the KKE), that bears the main responsibility for what happened in Greece during the period under consideration. Had Churchill not intervened in December 1944 to destroy the resistance movement and had the Labour government, in its role as a protecting power, taken action to curb the Right-wing terror of 1945 and provide the necessary conditions for free elections and a return to normality Greece would have almost certainly avoided the civil war and unprecedented suffering and destruction.

¹²It seems that Stalin and the Soviet Union were opposed from the start to the communist struggle in Greece. Leaders of the KKE repeatedly approached their comrades in Moscow but their requests for financial and military assistance were unequivocally turned down. Vlavianos, Greece, 1941-49, pp.69-72. Stalin as early as February 10, 1948, told the Yugoslavs that the uprising in Greece "must be stopped, and as quickly as possible", because it was provoking the Americans and the British. Djilas, Conversations with Stalin (London, 1962) p.164. Only the Yugoslavs offered some material assistance but as Iatrides has pointed out (Greece in the 1940s, Hanover 1981, pp.212-3) "foreign supplies (from communist sources after 1945) represented no more than 10 percent of the total number of weapons in insurgents' hands."

CHAPTER ONE: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I. Greek politics in the inter-war years

When the war broke out in Europe in September 1914 Greece was still in the throes of an acute conflict which had its roots in the feuds of 1915-16, between King Constantine I and his Prime Minister, Eleutherios Venizelos, over Greece's entry into the First World War.¹ Venizelos, convinced of an eventual victory of the Entente Powers, wished to place Greece on the side of the Allies in order to realise her irredentist aspirations, especially in the Asia Minor, where the fate of large Greek communities was at stake. King Constantine, however, believed that Greece's interests could best be served by a policy of neutrality. His refusal to accept Venizelos' policy led to the latter's resignation (March 1915), an event that marked the beginning of the

¹This section of the chapter is based mainly on the following: Mazower, Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis (Oxford, 1991); Svoronos and Fleisher, I Ellada 1936-1944 (Athens, 1989); Mavrogordatos, Stillborn Republic (Berkeley, 1983); Jelavich, History of the Balkans, vol.2 Twentieth Century (Cambridge, 1983); Hondros, Occupation and Resistance (New York, 1983); Clogg, A Short History (Cambridge, 1979); Koumoulides (ed.), Greece in Transition, (London, 1977); Couloumbis (et al., eds), Foreign Interference (New York, 1976); Tsoukalas, The Greek Tragedy (Harmondsworth, 1969); Campbell and Sherrard, Modern Greece (London, 1968); Stavrianos, The Balkans since 1453 (New York, 1958).

National Schism (Ethnikos Dichasmos), the division of the country into two fiercely antagonistic camps, the Venizelists and the anti-Venizelists. In October 1916, Venizelos set up a separate government in Salonica and when the King abdicated in June 1917 he returned to Athens and brought Greece into the war against the Central Powers.

Despite Venizelos' impressive diplomatic accomplishments at the Paris Peace Conference - under the Treaty of Sèvres (August 1920) Greece was to obtain the whole of western and eastern Thrace, and to administer Smyrna and its hinterland with the provision for a local parliament which might opt after five years for incorporation in Greece- his Party lost the elections of November 1920 and a month later Constantine was restored to his throne. Instead, however, of reducing their commitments in Asia Minor as they had promised in their pre-election campaign, the new royalist government launched an offensive against Kemal's nationalist forces which ended in ultimate disaster, thus putting a full stop to a policy of irredentism and expansionism (the Great Idea), which had dominated the politics of the modern Greek state for a century since its inception. In September 1922, pro-Venizelist army officers staged a successful coup and set up a revolutionary committee. King Constantine was dethroned to be replaced by his son, George II, while six anti-Venizelist leaders, including the Prime Minister himself, were held respon-

sible for the Disaster and executed. This vengeful action embittered political life and destroyed hopes for conciliation between the two 'political worlds'.

The compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish minorities (Lausanne Treaty , July 1923) and the arrival of more than a million Greek destitute refugees from Asia Minor transformed the face of Greece. The size of the minority groups in Macedonia was reduced and thereby a leading source of friction in the Balkans was removed. The expropriation of the large estates in Thessaly, acquired in 1881, and in the new territories of northern Greece, turned the country into a nation of smallholders, a process which contributed to the further commercialisation of Greek agriculture. Moreover, the considerable number of refugees who settled in urban centres, especially in the Athens-Piraeus region and in Salonica provided an abundant supply of cheap labour which gave the decisive push to the expansion of Greek industry. These refugees of the big cities became, in the late 1920s and in the 1930s, the main source of recruitment for the Greek Communist Party and the trade union movement.²

In 1924, a plebiscite held after King George II had been expelled decided in favour of a republic. A series of weak and short-lived liberal governments culminated

²Mazower, Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis, pp. 73-100; Mouzelis, Modern Greece (London, 1978), pp.22-7; Stavrianos, The Balkans since 1453, pp.676-80; Campbell and Sherrard, Modern Greece, pp.138-44.

in Colonel Pangalos' military dictatorship (July 1925-August 1926). Pangalos was overthrown in a bloodless coup organised by General Kondylis, an opportunist republican, and a coalition government was formed. In 1928 Venizelos returned to the premiership in Greece, but mismanagement, domestic unrest, and the world economic crisis undermined the popularity of his government and in March 1933 the populists won the elections. Two years later, after the failure of two republican coups and the holding of a falsified plebiscite, King George was restored to his throne. New elections were held in January 1936 that resulted in a parliamentary deadlock between the two major political parties. On August 4, 1936, amid an unparalleled confusion and frustration and with the political leaders remaining paralysed in suspicious silence, General Metaxas, the leader of a small monarchist party, seized the opportunity and, with the approval of the King, proclaimed himself a dictator. The 'Fourth of August Regime', as the dictatorship was officially named, lasted until Metaxas' death in early 1941.³

While European fascism was a major expression of mass-politics in the interwar period and of the response to prolonged social and economic crisis, Metaxas' pa-

³Stavrianos, The Balkans since 1453, pp.663-72. For an explanation of the domestic policies and the international circumstances that enabled Metaxas and the King to establish a dictatorial regime see Cliadakis, "The Political and Diplomatic Background...", J.Cont.Hist., vol.14 (1979), pp.117-38.

terrestrial, authoritarian regime was primarily the product of domestic political tensions and instability.⁴ It never acquired a large following and its strength and prestige depended upon the support of the King who held the allegiance of the army. Its character was conservative, not revolutionary. Its doctrine was highly nationalistic and was based on the maintenance of traditional social patterns.⁵

Metaxas tried to create a corporate state similar to that of Mussolini. A Compulsory Arbitration Act declared all strikes illegal and provided for the arbitration of labour disputes by state-appointed labour representatives. A social and economic reform programme was introduced that included raising the minimum wage, defining the length of the working day, establishing health insurance and maternity benefits, and developing public works in the cities and the countryside. At the same time Metaxas, like dictators elsewhere, adopted harsh measures against his opponents: political activity was prohibited, trade union organisations were abolished, many leading politicians went into exile or were imprisoned, the Communist Party was driven underground, the press was strictly controlled and education super-

⁴Metaxas himself cited Salazar's Portugal as his model, not Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany. According to Hondros, Occupation and Resistance, p.26, "Rather than being fascist, the Regime of August Fourth is best described as a royal bureaucratic dictatorship, not an uncommon development in central and southeastern Europe between the two world wars."

⁵Hondros, Occupation and Resistance, pp.23-4.

vised.⁶

Under such an illiberal regime Greece became involved in the Second World War when Mussolini launched an attack across the Greek-Albanian frontier on October 28, 1940. Although insufficiently equipped, Greek troops held the line and even pursued the Italians back into Albania. But when the German armies swept through the Balkans in April 1941, Greece, despite her heroic resistance, was occupied and divided into German, Italian, and Bulgarian zones. General Tsolakoglou who had signed Greece's surrender became the head of a puppet government while King George II and his cabinet headed by Emmanuel Tsouderos, a Cretan of moderate republican views, established themselves in London. In March 1943, in the midst of a serious crisis within the Greek armed forces in the Middle East, King and cabinet moved from London to Cairo. Here the Greek politicians concentrated their major energies and attention on consolidating their position in the government and on resolving the 'constitutional question'.⁷

Inside Greece, guerrilla groups arose spontaneously throughout the mountain regions. In September 1941, under communist leadership, the National Liberation Front (EAM) was formed, followed a few months later by

⁶Stavrianos, The Balkans since 1453, pp.672-76; Hondros, Occupation and Resistance, pp.23-8. A fuller account of the Metaxas dictatorship can be found in Kofas' Authoritarianism in Greece (New York, 1983).

⁷Clogg, "The Greek government-in-exile, 1941-4", Int. Hist.Rev., vol.1(1979), pp.376-98.

its military wing, the National Popular Liberation Army (ELAS). EAM offered both a way to resist the enemy and a promise for real freedom and social justice in postwar Greece, and it gradually secured the active support of a large proportion of the population. It became the most significant opponent of the Germans inside Greece and succeeded in establishing a new social order in the areas it controlled.⁸ By liberation it had an estimated membership of about one and a half million and administered more than two-thirds of Greek territory.⁹

The principal resistance groups, other than EAM/ELAS, were the National Republican Greek League (EDES) led by Colonel Napoleon Zervas and the National and Social Liberation (EKKA) led by Colonel Dimitrios Psarros. They were regional in their activities, military in character, and liberal and republican in political orientation.¹⁰ Their appeal was based more on

⁸An invaluable source for ELAS, first published in Greece in 1946, is Stefanos Sarafis, ELAS: Greek Resistance Army (London, 1980). In his Apple of Discord C.M.Woodhouse admitted that EAM/ELAS gave the country "things that it had never known before...The benefits of civilisation and culture trickled into the mountains for the first time". (pp.146-7) See also Kolko, The politics of War (London, 1969), p.173; Stavrianos, "The Greek National Liberation Front (EAM)...", J.Mod.Hist., vol.24 (1952), p.26; Koumoulides (ed.), Greece in Transition, pp.72-3.

⁹For a well-balanced account on EAM/ELAS see Hondros, Occupation and Resistance and also the lucid comments on the Greek resistance movement by Iatrides in Greece in the 1940s.

¹⁰In March 1943, Zervas recanted his republicanism by declaring that he would accept the return of the King if the British government so wished even without a plebi-

the personal qualities of their leaders than on their political programmes. They did not win wide popular support and relied for their survival on British political and economic assistance, and even -especially in the case of EDES- on 'contacts' with the Germans.¹¹

II. British war-time policy towards Greece

Greek events were to be profoundly affected by the British military and political decisions. The British had long attached considerable importance to Greece's strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean. They viewed Britain's control of Greece as vital to protecting the lines of communication to the oilfields of the Middle East and to India. They were, therefore, concerned to see the establishment in Greece after liberation of a regime that would be sympathetic to British interests. Churchill and the Foreign Office -but especially the former- believed that monarchy afforded the best guarantee for Britain's postwar supremacy in Greece. Although they knew that the King was very unpopular in his country due to his association with the Metaxas dictatorship, they intended to 'sell' him to his

scite.

¹¹Iatrides(ed.), Greece in the 1940s, pp.48-60; Hondros, Occupation and Resistance, pp.104-7, 140-1, and chapter six 'Civil War and the Zervas-German Connection', pp. 171-99; Richter, "Lanz, Zervas and the British Liaison Officers", The South Slav Journal, vol.12 (1989) pp.38-65.

subjects as a democratic constitutional monarch.¹² The Special Operations Executive (SOE), however, an organisation responsible for operations in Greece and elsewhere during the war, was better informed on the general situation in Greece. SOE had developed close cooperation with the various factions within the Greek resistance and placed higher value than did the Foreign Office on EAM/ELAS, insisting that the King should agree to submit to a plebiscite on the issue of the monarchy before returning to Greece. The British government was thus faced with a dilemma: it was determined to restore the Greek King to his throne after the war but, on the other hand, it had to make use of the most powerful, though strongly anti-monarchist, resistance movement, that of EAM/ELAS, against the Axis enemy.

Initially, motivated by military considerations, the British were willing to send liaison officers for

¹²FO 371/29840 R 6258; FO 371/37203 R 6555; FRUS, 1943, vol.4, pp.126, 140; Leeper, When Greek meets Greek (London, 1950), p.11. For Churchill's obsession with the restoration of King George II see Papastratis, British Policy (London, 1984); Kofas, "Great Britain...", Balkan Studies, vol.23 (1982), pp.337-402; Sfikas, "The People at the Top...", J.Cont.Hist, vol.26 (1991), pp.307-32. The British intrigues to 'sell' the King are also well described in Iatrides, Revolt in Athens. For C.M.Woodhouse the motives of Churchill's devotion for the King were disinterested: "They sprang hardly at all from the consideration that the restoration of the King would ensure the friendship of Greece towards England...they sprang almost entirely from gratitude and loyalty to the man who had stood with us when everything seemed lost." Apple of Discord, p.50. Certainly, Churchill's motives extended beyond gratitude and loyalty to the King. The British Prime Minister saw the King as the essential guarantor of British interests in Greece.

the coordination of guerrilla operations and to offer considerable material and economic aid to the resistance groups, regardless of their ideological orientations and political leanings. Gradually, however, the Foreign Office became aware of the wide gulf between the official policy in London and the acts of SOE in Greece and by late 1943-early 1944 long term political considerations began to receive urgent attention.¹³

In August 1943, representatives of the three principal resistance organisations, EAM/ELAS, EDES, and EKKA, arrived in Cairo in an effort to obtain recognition of their status as a part of the Greek armed forces. The resistance representatives, however, raised the constitutional question and, together with the old politicians, demanded an unequivocal statement from the King that he would not return to Greece prior to the conduct of a plebiscite. After consulting with both Churchill and Roosevelt, the King refused it. As a result of this decision, a unique opportunity to bridge the gulf that had opened up between the guerrilla groups, the government-in-exile, the King and the British authorities was lost. The Cairo delegation returned to Greece with nothing accomplished and in a

¹³On the conflict between the Foreign Office and SOE on Greece see Auty and Clogg(eds), British Policy (London, 1975); Barker, South-East Europe (London, 1976); Clogg, "The Special Operations Executive in Greece", in Iatrides(ed.), Greece in the 1940s. For recent accounts on the origins and the activities of SOE in Europe see Stafford, Britain and European Resistance, 1940-1945 (London, 1980) and Beevor, S.O.E.:Recollections and Reflections, 1940-1945 (London, 1981).

disappointed frame of mind.¹⁴

Convinced that the British intended to neutralise the resistance movement in Greece, EAM/ELAS set out to consolidate its power by eliminating its rivals. Civil war erupted in October 1943 when ELAS attacked EDES, accusing it of collaboration with the Germans. The British, disturbed by the EAM's growing popularity and strength and by its violent anti-monarchist campaign, cut off all supplies to ELAS and began preparing for military intervention. On September 29, 1943, Churchill cabled General Ismay of the Chiefs of Staff Committee that 'should the Germans evacuate Greece we must certainly be able to send 5,000 British troops with armoured cars and Bren gun carriers into Athens.'¹⁵ Two months later, he asked that 'EAM and ELAS should be starved and struck at by every means in our power.'¹⁶

By late 1943 British policy towards Greece was in contrast to that pursued in Yugoslavia. While in Greece the British contemplated a complete break with EAM/ELAS,

¹⁴Myers, Greek Entanglement (London, 1955), pp.236-65; Auty and Clogg(eds), British Policy, pp.136-66; Hondros, Occupation and Resistance, pp.163-9.

¹⁵Churchill, The Second World War, vol.5 (London, 1952), p.475.

¹⁶Auty and Clogg (eds), British Policy, p.195; Sarafis, Marion (ed.), Greece: From Resistance to Civil War (Nottingham, 1980), p.36; Hondros, Occupation and Resistance, p.203. British officials in London referred contemptuously to the Greek resistance movement as 'bandits'. Harold Macmillan always uses the word 'bandits' to describe EAM/ELAS in his memoirs relating to the last years of the war. Macmillan, War Diaries (London, 1984). See also Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6 (London, 1954), p. 97

in Yugoslavia they had come to accept Tito's hegemony. The main reason for the difference *in* their policy was that Greece was considered to be strategically more important than Yugoslavia. According to Borkenau:

‘it would be wrong to say that they [the British] treated Greece as their preserve, while conceding Yugoslavia and Albania to the Russians. That was only the final result. But from the very beginning they treated and were bound to treat Greece as an indispensable element in the whole structure of British sea-power, while Yugoslavia and Albania were marginal concerns which could be discarded.’¹⁷

Another explanation for Britain's diverse policies towards the two countries lies in the fact that the partisans' military performance was superior to that of ELAS. By October 1943, Tito's forces numbered 180,000 men, and ELAS guerrillas 25,000.¹⁸ The British took also into account the exceptional strength of loyalty and devotion of Zervas and EDES to them as well as the strong pro-British feeling among the rank and file of the Greek resistance movement.¹⁹

Following the Plaka agreement of February 1944, the open conflict between the resistance groups came to an end. EAM renewed its pressure on Cairo for a government

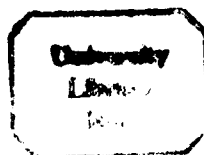
¹⁷ Borkenau, European Communism (London, 1953), p.409.

¹⁸ Barker, South-East Europe, p.167; Stavrianos, The Balkans since 1453, pp.801-2.

¹⁹ Loulis, The Greek Communist Party, 1940-1944 (London, 1982), pp.79-80. It is characteristic that when Tito's representative, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, visited ELAS headquarters in the summer of 1943, he was deeply shocked by the degree of British influence on ELAS and the way in which ELAS allowed British officers to interfere in their internal affairs. Barker, South-East Europe, p.167.

of national unity and in March 1944 it proclaimed what was in effect an alternative government, the Political Committee of National Liberation (PEEA). The new development produced a serious crisis in the Greek armed forces stationed in the Middle East. On March 31, 1944, a group of officers met Tsouderos and demanded that he recognise PEEA and broaden his government. When this demand was rejected, mutinies broke out in the army and the naval units. The British then openly intervened and crushed the uprising. A purge of leftist and republican elements was undertaken and about 10,000 officers and men were sent to detention camps in Libya, Eritrea and the Middle East. Those who proved completely trustworthy formed a new unit, the Mountain Brigade, which would return to Greece in November 1944 to confront EAM/ELAS in the crisis of December. On April 26, two days after the mutinies were suppressed, the British selected George Papandreou, a well-known opponent of EAM, to serve as Premier of the exile government.²⁰ The following month, Papandreou summoned a conference in Lebanon in order to create a broad coalition in which EAM/ELAS would be a minority political force. After much haggling EAM agreed in September 1944 (Caserta Agreement) to join the unity government and to place ELAS under the

²⁰ Fleisher, "The Anomalies in the Greek Middle East Forces, 1941-1944", J.Hel.Diasp., vol.5 (Fall 1978), pp. 5-36; Stavrianos, "The Mutiny in the Greek Armed Forces, April 1944", Am.Slav.E.Eur.Rev., vol.9 (1950), pp.302-11; Hondros, Occupation and Resistance, pp.209-15; Vlavianos, Greece, 1941-49, pp.37-9.



direct command of the British General, Ronald Scobie. Thus despite its overwhelmingly predominant military position, EAM agreed to subordinate its armed forces to British control.

From the spring of 1944 Churchill had become increasingly alarmed at the Red Army's approach to the boundaries of the southeastern European states. Extremely sensitive about the British position in the Mediterranean, the British Premier was most concerned about Greece. Hence in May 1944 he proposed to the Soviets an arrangement of three months' duration by which each would recognise the other's predominant position in Rumania and Greece. Although Roosevelt accepted this limited arrangement, it was never formally agreed. On October 9, Churchill and Eden journeyed to Moscow and concluded with Stalin the famous 'percentages agreement' which defined their respective sphere of influence in Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Rumania. Greece was to remain in the British sphere.²¹ Churchill and the Foreign Office could now

²¹The official British minutes of the meeting of October 9, 1944, are among the papers of General Ismay. A documentary record of the meeting exists in the papers of Lord Inverchapel, then Sir A.Clark-Kerr. Yergin, Shattered Peace (Boston, 1977), p.60; Sfikas, "The People at the Top...", J.Cont.Hist., vol.26 (1991), p.329 n.40. In Churchill's memoirs there is a full chapter on his Moscow trip (The Second World War, vol.6, pp.197-212). Churchill's account has been uncritically accepted by Xydis, "The Secret Anglo-Soviet Agreement.." J.Cent.Eur.Af., vol.15 (October 1955), pp.248-71, but has been completely dismissed by Kolko, The Politics of War, pp.141-7, and by Tsakaloyannis, "The Moscow Puzzle", J.Cont.Hist., vol.21 (January 1986), pp.37-55. The most satisfactory interpretation of the 'percentages

implement their carefully prepared policy of intervention. On October 12, the Germans evacuated Athens and a few days later the Greek government, accompanied by a British occupation force, entered the city.

agreement' is provided by Resis, "The Churchill-Stalin...", Am.Hist.Rev., vol. 83 (April 1978), pp. 368-87. Holdich in his article "A policy of percentages?..." Int.Hist.Rev., vol.9 (February 1987), pp. 28-47, addresses the question what happened to the agreement after the conference in Moscow and reaches the conclusion that by April 1945 there was growing realisation among the British policymakers that their moves in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Rumania had not produced the desired results. In Greece, however, they got their way, and the Soviet government made no public protest.

CHAPTER TWO: THE STORM OVER BRITISH MILITARY
INTERVENTION IN GREECE IN DECEMBER 1944

Foremost among the problems that the Greek government had to face after its arrival in Greece (October 1944) was the demobilisation issue. Under the terms of the Caserta agreement all guerrilla groups were to be disbanded, and together with the Greek armed forces from the Middle East, were to form a new national army. Papandreou proposed that for this purpose ELAS and EDES, but not the royalist Mountain Brigade, should be disbanded by December 10. The EAM leaders strongly rejected this proposal and demanded the simultaneous dissolution of all armed forces, including the Brigade. On December 2, after much protracted but unsuccessful negotiation, the EAM Ministers withdrew from the government, and their organisation called for a mass demonstration on the next day, to be followed by a general strike. During the demonstration and while the people were gathering in the centre of the capital the squad which guarded the police headquarters, a tall building overlooking the square, opened fire and killed

several protesters.¹ Shortly afterward, ELAS reserve units began attacks on police stations. Meanwhile the British were anxiously waiting for the opportunity to intervene and smash EAM/ELAS. On December 5, Churchill sent the following instruction to General Scobie:

“Do not however hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress...We have to hold and dominate Athens. It would be a great thing for you to succeed in this without bloodshed if possible, but also with bloodshed if necessary.”²

The British troops finally ‘came in’ on the morning of December 6. By the beginning of January Churchill had secured Britain’s position in Greece. His policy of intervention, however, did not go unopposed. During the vicious conflict in Athens, the British Prime Minister would encounter an unpredictable storm of popular protest and criticism from his own country which would force his government to change its tactics and take the initiative to find a ‘political solution’.

I. The Parliament

The rapid extension of the war to global

¹Two eyewitnesses give detailed account of the events on December 3, 1944. Byford-Jones, The Greek Trilogy (London, 1946), pp. 136-42 and McNeill, The Greek Dilemma (London, 1947) pp.165-71. The former was then a Major and press officer with III Corps and the latter was an American military attaché in Athens. See also Baerentzen, “The Demonstration in Syntagma Square...”, Scad.St.Mod.Gr., vol.2(1978), pp.3-52.

²Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, p.252.

proportions by the end of 1941 meant that until the autumn of 1944 Greek affairs had attracted little attention in Britain. Britons were naturally preoccupied with the global aspects of the war and much less interested in the particular situation in Greece. The press concentrated on the major events only and there was little discussion of the government and Churchill's intentions in Greece; most of the policy discussions remained within Whitehall. As a result, British political parties and politicians were not well-informed of the recent developments in the country except at the most superficial level.

Prior to the events of December 1944, Churchill had confined himself to a few statements only on the Greek situation. In November 1943, he had announced the general terms of British policy in Greece- they included little more than support for the Greek monarch until an election could be held-³ but in February 1944, he had already stated that instead of fighting the enemy EAM/ELAS were conspiring to establish themselves as the dominant political force after liberation⁴.

The first reaction to British policy in Greece in the House of Commons took place on August 2, 1944, when three Labour MPs, Aneurin Bevan, Seymour Cocks, George Strauss, and the Independent Tom Driberg, delivered a full-scale attack on the government's Greek policy of

³Hansard, vol.393, November 9, 1943, col.1080.

⁴Ibid., vol.397, February 22, 1944, cols.695-6.

supporting King George II against the wishes of the people. Bevan, in particular, embarrassed Churchill and Eden when he stated flatly that the Prime Minister "could not see a King without wanting to shore him up".⁵ On December 1, two Members of the Common Wealth Party, Richard Acland and Hugh Lawson, tabled an amendment on the reply to the King's Speech which condemned the British government for supporting reactionary movements in liberated Europe. In the debate which followed, Acland and Lawson, joined by Bevan and Strauss, blamed the government for its interference in the internal affairs of Belgium, Italy and Greece and its opposition to the new progressive forces of these countries.⁶

⁵ Ibid., vol.402, August 2, 1944, cols.1497-1500, 1511-5, 1550-3, 1562.

⁶ Ibid., vol.406, December 1, 1944, cols 246-53, 235-42, 269-70. Richard Acland (1906-1990) sat for Barnstaple in 1935-1945 as a Liberal until September 1942, thereafter as a Common Wealth Member; elected as a Labour Member in November 1947 ; resigned in March 1955 over his disagreement with the Labour Party's support for the manufacture of the hydrogen bomb. Who's who of British Members of Parliament, vol.IV, 1945-1979, p.1. Founded from J.B.Priestley's 1941 Committee and the Forward March movement in 1942 by Richard Acland, the Common Wealth Party aimed to present an alternative programme to that of other Parties of the Left. Its members advocated a confusing and often contradictory mix of christian, radical liberal and Marxist principles and goals. The party drew many of its supporters from the middle class and, in particular, from Left-wing intellectuals and the new stratum of technicians and scientists which was growing in the inter-war years. By 1944, it had 400 branches and 15,000 members and two seats in Parliament. At the 1945 election only Ernest Millington was elected for the Party; later he joined the Labour Party, becoming prominent in its Left wing. After 1945 the Common Wealth Party contested no further parliamentary elections. Prynn, "Common Wealth...",

Even at this stage the Greek issue was still not the centre of the argument. The concern felt in the Commons over the situation in Greece was shown two days after the crisis had exploded in Athens, in questions addressed to the Prime Minister, and in an attempt on the part of a few Members to secure an immediate debate. Replying to a private notice question by Haden Guest, a Labour MP, Churchill described the events which took place in the centre of the Greek capital on December 3 and stressed that until the Greek people were in a position to decide on the form of government, the British government would not hesitate to use its forces in Greece to see that law and order were maintained. His statement was not considered satisfactory by several MPs and Haden Guest moved the adjournment of the House to debate the grave situation which had arisen in Greece. The Speaker, however, refused to accept the motion.⁷

On the evening of the same day (December 5), another amendment to the Address was put down by Seymour Cocks and some other Labour and Independents. It was in the following terms:

“But humbly regret that the Gracious Speech contains no assurance that His Majesty’s forces

J.Cont.Hist., vol.7(1972), pp.169-79. See also Angus Calder, “The Common Wealth Party, 1942-1945”, D.Phil. thesis, Sussex University, 1968.

⁷Hansard, vol.406, December 5, 1944, cols 356-65. The MPs who pressed for the acceptance of the motion for the adjournment were Aneurin Bevan, George Buchanam, Neil Maclean, Richard Acland and William Gallacher.

will not be used to disarm the friends of democracy in Greece and other parts of Europe, or to suppress those popular movements which have so valorously assisted in the defeat of the enemy, and upon whose success we must rely⁸ for future friendly co-operation with Europe."

The Labour leadership was caught in an extremely delicate political situation. On December 7, after a discussion at an emergency meeting of the PLP, its executive, alarmed by the content of the amendment and anxious to avoid any direct challenge to the coalition government, framed and tabled an alternative mildly worded amendment. It ran:

"But humbly regret the situation that has arisen in Greece, and, while opposed to a dictatorship of any section, urges upon His Majesty's Government that it should endeavour to secure at the earliest practicable moment the setting up of a National Government in that country, representative of all sections of the people who have resisted the Fascist and Nazi invaders, until such time as a general election can be held."⁹

The executive wanted the debate to be raised on the motion to adjourn but it was finally forced to put the amendment for two reasons. Firstly, the party officially supported the government and, therefore, could not leave the field entirely to the promoters of the unofficial statement. Secondly, Labour thought its amendment had the additional merit of confining the issue to Greece, whereas the unofficial amendment

⁸ Ibid., vol.406, December 8, 1944, col.908.

⁹ Ibid., col.996. For the meeting on December 7 see Jefferys (ed.), Labour and the Wartime Coalition (London, 1987), p.199.

introduced the wider question of the British government's attitude towards the resistance movements in Europe. Finally, the Speaker decided to call for debate the unofficial statement.

On December 8, the Commons witnessed the first of a series of debates on Greece, "the most poignant and bitter of the whole war period".¹⁰ As Churchill recalled in his memoirs, there was a great stir in the House on that day.¹¹ Many ambassadors were present in the diplomatic galleries and Lord Cranborne, Leader of the House of Lords, was among the occupants of the space reserved for peers. The debate was opened by the mover of the amendment, Seymour Cocks.¹² His speech was for the most part restrained and founded on deep conviction. He

¹⁰Foot, Aneurin Bevan, 1897-1945 (London, 1962), p.484.

¹¹Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, p.255.

¹²Seymour Cocks(1882-1953). During the First World War he was London secretary of the Union of Democratic Control and an official of the Labour Council for the Prevention of War. In 1945 he became chairman of the Foreign Affairs Group of the PLP and in 1946 he led an all-party parliamentary delegation to Greece. He sat as a Labour Member for the Broxtowe division of Nottinghamshire from 1929 until his death in 1953. Who's who of British Members of Parliament, vol. IV, 1945-1979, p.65. Michael Foot recorded in the biography of Bevan (Aneurin Bevan, 1897-1945, p.485): "The choice for moving the motion fell on Seymour Cocks who had never previously criticised Churchill's war leadership, and who now sat up all night preparing his oration. Seymour Cocks was probably the best read man in the House of Commons. When he made a speech he polished every phrase and summoned history to his aid in a manner Churchill could hardly excel. He loved the heritage of Greece and he loved England too with a pure, burning patriotism. He had a paralysed leg and side, yet when he dragged himself to his feet, swaying on his stick, the man himself and the words he uttered achieved a perfect nobility".

denied that EAM was a communist organisation and maintained that the British government was supporting "old worn-out regimes in Europe" and was showing greater sympathy for the Greek government-in-exile than for the leaders of the resistance movement. British forces had been engaged on the side of the Greek reaction, fighting the forces of the Left. "I would rather", he cried, "this hand of mine were burnt off at the wrist, leaving a blackened and twisted stump, than sign an order to the British army to fire on the workers of Greece".¹³

Richard Acland, seconding, also accused the government of supporting reactionary regimes. He pointed out that EAM/ELAS was a genuine popular movement which had united various factions of the population and helped the allied cause by effectively fighting the enemy, organising successful strikes in the towns and administering vast areas of territory. By contrast, the leader of EDES was an "unpopular and undemocratic gentleman" who had been supported by the British against the "real people's movement in Greece." Acland believed that the British government had precipitated the crisis in Athens by insisting on the disbandment only of the ELAS forces and by bolting the door to any change in the head of the Greek government.¹⁴

Acland was followed by Churchill who gave a grim and uncompromising speech. The Prime Minister first

¹³Hansard, vol.406, December 8, 1944, cols 908-17.

¹⁴Ibid., cols 917-24.

made a great play with the phrase "the friends of democracy" in the amendment. He attempted to interpret the meaning and character of true democracy which, as he put it, "is no harlot to be picked up in the street by a man with a tommy gun." His idea of democracy was that of the plain, humble, common man who went off to fight for his country when it was in trouble and recorded his vote at elections. Churchill claimed that EAM/ELAS was not a democratic organisation but "bands of gangsters armed with deadly weapons...seeking to climb into the seats of power, without a vote ever having been cast in their favour." Particularly revealing was his attempt to praise EDES, excuse the Security Battalions- Greek military units which collaborated with the Germans-, and present Britain's interests in Greece as noble and beyond reproach. He had no word of sorrow or regret for the Anglo-Greek conflict and had nothing to suggest but the unflinching use of still more force to subdue EAM/ELAS. His speech drew protest after protest from MPs and was frequently interrupted by broadsides of interjections. It was obvious that Churchill had only partially relieved anxieties about the drift of his policy.¹⁵

¹⁵Ibid., cols 924-47. Harold Nicolson later recalled: "Winston was in one of his boyish moods, and allowed himself to be interrupted all the time. In fact, he seemed to us to be in rather higher spirits than the occasion warranted. I don't think he quite caught the mood of the House, which at its best was one of distressed perplexity and at its worst one of sheer red fury". Nigel Nicolson (ed.), Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters, 1939-1945, p.416. Churchill remained un-

Opening the debate after the Premier's speech, John Parker, a Labour MP and a moderate, while paying tribute to Churchill's fine war record, declared that the British government supported the setting up of a tyranny in Greece. The government of Papandreou could not claim to be constitutional because it had been appointed by the King. Parker was critical of Leeper and suggested his replacement "by a more adequate and less partisan Ambassador."¹⁶ Tom Driberg put the blame for the situation in Greece squarely on the shoulders of the British government and accused Churchill of having been ingenious, evasive, and unsound in his speech. He was convinced that in Greece there was not civil war but a conflict "between the bulk of the Greek population on one side and a few quislings and royalists on the other, backed up British bayonets."¹⁷

The next two speakers did not confine themselves to the Greek crisis, but they also talked about the wider implication of Churchill's policy in Europe. John McGovern, an Independent Labour MP, and Clement Davies, a Liberal, were equally critical of Churchill's black record of hostility to democracy and of his pro-fascism. They both strongly deplored his attempts to hold back

moved. The following day he telegraphed Leeper: "I do not yield to passing clamour and will always stand with those who execute their instructions with courage and precision. In Athens as everywhere else our maxim is 'No peace without victory'. Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, p.258.

¹⁶Ibid., cols 947-51.

¹⁷Ibid., cols 954-9.

the forces of change by praising men like Mussolini, Badoglio, and Franco and by interfering in the internal affairs of the liberated countries. Referring to Greece, they condemned the use of British soldiers against EAM/ELAS and accused Churchill of aiming at installing an "unwanted and discredited monarch" and an "unconstitutional government."¹⁸

Arthur Greenwood, Deputy Leader of the PLP, made a mild and conciliatory speech. He apparently wanted to avoid any direct condemnation of the military intervention in order not to embarrass the Labour Ministers in the government. He assured the House of the Party's allegiance to Parliament by refuting the charge that the Party advocated armed insurrections as an instrument of policy, declaring emphatically that Labour "repudiated the use of force as a method of attaining political power"; he expected the Labour MPs not to vote for the amendment lest it would seem that Labour desired to keep armed certain sections, and to disarm others.¹⁹

Replying to the debate, the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, notwithstanding his restraint and more persuasive tone, retreated not an inch from the position Churchill had taken up. In his detailed factual survey of the political situation in Greece, Eden pointed out that the British government was not supporting a reactionary group against the Greek people, nor did it

¹⁸Ibid., cols 966-72, 988-92.

¹⁹Ibid., cols 992-8.

seek to dictate what the government of Greece should be. Britain wanted only to prevent the Greek people from starving and to restore law and order.²⁰

In a division, the amendment was rejected by 281 to 32, including the tellers. Among the twenty-four Labour MPs opposing the government were Aneurin Bevan, Seymour Cocks, Hector McNeil, parliamentary private secretary to Phillip Noel-Baker, John Parker and George Strauss. Other anti-government voters were three Independents, Eleanor Rathbone, Vernon Bartlett and Tom Driberg, two MPs of the Common Wealth Party, Richard Acland and Hugh Lawson, the Communist William Gallacher and two MPs of the ILP, John McGovern and Campbell Stephen. No conservative or liberal votes were cast against the government. The bulk of the Labour Members followed Greenwood's advice and abstained, but twenty-three Labour MPs applauded Churchill's Greek policy.²¹

The support for the government was substantial but not overwhelming. It should be noted that the Labour Party had sent a three line whip to backbenchers but only about eighty MPs, half the strength of the Party, were present in the House of Commons.²² Although the

²⁰ Ibid., cols 998-1010.

²¹ Ibid., cols 1012-3.

²² Daily Telegraph, December 9, 1944. Both the Conservative and the Labour Parties have whips whose duty is to secure party discipline. The 'whip' is also a document posted to the Members on Fridays to inform them which divisions their Party considers important and which require attendance. Each item is underlined. One-line whip means that no division is expected, two-line whips oblige Members to attend the House but

result of the division was received as Churchill's personal victory, it revealed that many representatives of the British people in the House were sceptical and reluctant to accept uncritically the government's handling of Greek affairs. The debate itself had clearly reflected the extent of popular frustration in Britain occasioned by Churchill's foreign policy.

On December 20, the Greek situation was again debated in the House of Commons. Arthur Greenwood placed upon Churchill responsibility for mishandling the situation in Greece but he made it plain that the object of the debate was not to challenge the government on a vote of censure.²³ Percy Harris, who in 1940, on Churchill's recommendation, was sworn of the Privy Council, was somewhat more restrained. While he hinted that the government was "playing the game of power politics, endeavouring to establish a sphere of

allow them to pair, and three-line whips means that the division is very important and requires compulsory attendance. For an analysis of the disciplinary methods of the two Parties see Jackson, Rebels and Whips (London, 1968). Foot wrote about the division of December 8: "On this occasion there was no talk of discipline. The mood in the country extending far outside the ranks of the Left of the Labour Party was so hot that any attempt at it might have broken the leadership itself." Foot, Aneurin Bevan, 1897-1945, p.485. On December 9, Churchill cabled Harry Hopkins: "Do not be misled by our majority yesterday. I could have had another eighty by sending out a three-line whip instead of only two. On Fridays, with the bad communications prevailing here, Members long to get away for the week-end. Who would not?" Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, p.259.

²³Hansard, vol.406, December 20, 1944, cols 1858-64.

influence", he thought that it was following the only course open to it. However, he felt that there was deep resentment among the common people in Britain. "It is not merely", he declared, "as some people think, an agitation by the Left. All through the country, in the villages and in the towns, people who are not violently political have had their consciences stirred."²⁴

A fiery speech came from Aneurin Bevan who had not taken part in the debate of December 8 as he had exhausted his right to speech, having been called earlier in the King's Speech debate before the Greek crisis had exploded. Bevan thought that the military intervention in Greece had brought the whole of the British nation to humiliation and shame. He told the House that EAM/ELAS represented the vast majority of the Greek people and that they did not aim at the seizure of power through civil war. If they wanted to achieve a military coup d'état they could have done it long before British troops had landed. Britain, on the other hand, "had been intriguing for more than two years to get King George of Greece back on to the Greek Throne." Bevan suggested that Britain should urge for the appointment of Archbishop Damaskinos as Regent and warned that if the fighting in Greece had not ended when the House reassembled in January he and other MPs would move a vote of censure on the government.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid., cols 1866-70.

²⁵ Ibid., cols 1874-82. The most authoritative biography

British policy in Greece was also strongly criticised by Vernon Bartlett, the diplomatic correspondent of the News Chronicle and an Independent progressive MP since his victory at the by-election at Bridgwater in 1938, and by William Gallacher, the only communist in the Commons. Bartlett declared that the government should be more friendly to the resistance movements and that the diplomatic service was out of touch with what was going on in Europe. Gallacher referred to the shoals of telegrams he had received daily from mass meetings of factory workers and accused the government of having followed "a disastrous policy"

of Aneurin Bevan is that by Michael Foot, a big book published in two volumes: Aneurin Bevan, 1897-1945 and Aneurin Bevan, 1945-1960 (London, 1973). For a recent study of Bevan see Campbell, Nye Bevan (London, 1987). Born at Tredegar, a typical small South Wales colliery town, Bevan was the son of a coal miner. At the age of thirteen he left school and worked at a colliery but in 1919 he obtained a scholarship and went to the Central Labour College in London. In 1929 he entered Parliament as a Labour Member for Ebbw Vale, a seat which he retained until his death. In the early 1930s he found himself allied with Stafford Cripps whom he supported in his Unity Campaign of 1937 and as a founder of and regular contributor to Tribune, which he himself was to edit in 1942-45. During the Second World War he was the unofficial leader of Opposition to the Coalition and in the first postwar Labour government he was appointed Minister of Health and Housing. The creation of the National Health System was his finest achievement during his political career. In these years he was critical of Labour policy, especially abroad. Early in 1951, he became Minister of Labour but he resigned in April in protest against Gaitskell's budget which gave excessive priority to military expenditure at the cost of the Health Service. In 1955 he was defeated by Gaitskell for the succession to Attlee. Thereafter, he allied himself in unbreakable alliance with Gaitskell and was transformed from Labour's enfant terrible into its elder statesman. He died on July 6, 1960.

in Greece.²⁶ Replying for the government, Eden denied the charges brought against it and repeated that the purpose of British policy in Greece was to bring the present unhappy conflict to an end. He assured the House that the British government aimed to "maintain law and order and establish a Greek government broadly representative of all opinion in Greece, including EAM, and enable that government to establish its authority throughout the country."²⁷

On December 21, the Greek crisis was discussed in the House of Lords when Lord Faringdon moved that the House "regretted the policy of her Majesty's policy in Greece, which had the shameful result of military action against the Greek allies." He was supported by Lord Strabolgi who attacked Churchill accusing him of trying to fight a twentieth century war with a nineteenth century mind. "The propping up of unpopular Kings on their thrones", he stated, "is not going to keep back the march of either political or economic democracy."²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., cols 1888-95.

²⁷ Ibid., cols 1895-909.

²⁸ House of Lords, vol.134, December 21, 1944, cols 500-10, 518-28. Lord Faringdon (1902-1977) was a Labour politician. During the Spanish civil war he was a strong supporter of the Republican cause. He became an active Fabian, being an elected member of the Executive-Committee (1942-66), chairman in 1960-61, and vice-president in 1970-77. Who was who, 1971-1980, pp. 257-8. Lord Strabolgi (1886-1953). Liberal MP in 1919-26, Labour MP in 1926-31, Opposition chief whip in the House of Lords in 1928-42. Who was who, 1951-1960, p.1051. Both were to be very active in the League for Democracy in Greece, the former as vice-chairman and the latter as member of the Executive-Committee.

The motion was finally negatived.

II. The Labour movement

The events in Athens provoked not only a fierce reaction of the British representatives in Parliament but also a widespread wave of protest among the population. People of almost all the political spectrum, shocked by the savagery of fighting and the news of casualties, joined hands in condemning the intervention and demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Popular protest came from AEU district committees, trade councils, shop stewards' committees, trade union branches, factories, parties, and co-operative organisations.

On December 5, the executive council of the South Wales Miners' Federation sent resolutions of protest to Churchill and Eden, and the Birmingham council of Labour, representing the political, industrial and co-operative sections of the Labour movement, issued a statement expressing its "profound disquiet concerning the situation in Greece", regarding it as "a betrayal of democracy that British bayonets should be used to bolster up an obviously unpopular government". In London a large crowd of workers went to Downing Street to interview Churchill and express their disapproval of his speech in the House of Commons.²⁹ On December 6, a

²⁹Daily Worker, December 6, 1944.

strong demand for a complete reversal of the government's policy in Greece was conveyed to MPs by a joint deputation of 50 shop stewards representing 50,000 war workers in the London area.³⁰ The next day, the Executive-Committee of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) recorded its disapproval of the government's Greek policy and the general executive council of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) expressed its grave concern and demanded that the British government should not undertake the "backing of Right-wing parties or elements in the countries which have been liberated by the Armed Forces of the Allied Nations."³¹ On December 10, another national trade union Executive-Committee, that of the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, passed a resolution emphatically protesting against the intervention, and a few days later the London Trades Council declared:

"A shudder of horror went through the country when it became known that British bayonets were being used to bolster up a tottering system in Greece and that Athens, which we had dared the Nazis to bomb with threats of dire reprisals, should become a target for our own Spitfires...All this has been happening not merely to maintain a reactionary Premier in power, or to smash the popular resistance movement, or to place a mountebank king back on the throne, but because the strategies of a possible future war demand control of this particular sphere of influence in the Mediterranean".³²

³⁰ Ibid., December 7, 1944.

³¹ Ibid., December 8, 1944.

³² Ibid., December 11, 1944; quoted in Tate (ed.), London Trades Council 1860-1950: A History (1950), p.150.

Meanwhile Attlee, Harold Laski, Phillip Noel-Baker and Hugh Dalton had drafted an emergency resolution on Greece for the Labour Party annual conference which had been postponed from the previous May owing to D-Day landings and German V-2 attacks on London.³³ The resolution called for "an armistice without delay" and "the resumption of conversations between all sections of the people who have resisted the Nazi invaders, with a view to the establishment of a provisional national government."³⁴

The 1944 Labour Party conference was held at the Central Hall, Westminster, on December 11-15. The most important issues in the conference were the British military intervention in Greece and the question of remaining within the coalition. On December 13, Arthur Greenwood opened without enthusiasm the case for the executive in an atmosphere of excitement. As in the House of Commons a few days earlier, he avoided any word of criticism of British policy and concentrated on what steps should be taken to resolve the crisis in Greece. In the first place, he thought that the British government ought to facilitate an armistice and assist and promote discussions between all sections of the Greek people. Then, a provisional government should be formed in order to carry out a general election. "If

³³Donoghue and Jones, Herbert Morrison (London, 1973), p.330.

³⁴Labour Party Annual Conference, 1944, pp.142-3.

there are forces in Greece", Greenwood assured the delegates, "which would try to use armed might to sway the course of an election we would regard it as an unfair election." Sensing that the spirit of the delegates was condemnatory of the government, he warned them not to criticise or chastise Churchill but to keep the debate "on the level of an attempt to champion the cause of the Greek people". He wound up by asking the delegates to pass the executive resolution by an overwhelming majority.³⁵

The whole conference rallied to the raising speech of John Benstead, the railwaymen's general-secretary, and Lawrence Plover, the miners' spokesman, when they strongly attacked the executive resolution. Benstead, deploring the impossibility of getting his own union's resolution, which expressed deep concern at the action of the British government, down for debate, stressed that the trade union movement could not "be hamstrung always" from expressing its protest against a policy which was repugnant to them. This could be a "negation of democracy".³⁶ Plover regretted the bankruptcy of the movement's leadership and asked for a more drastic, down-right framing of the executive resolution. "If the tactics", he added, "which the Party has exhibited continue some of us will have to leave that Party."³⁷ Both

³⁵ Ibid., pp.143-4.

³⁶ Ibid., p.145.

³⁷ Ibid., pp.147-8.

made it clear that the vote to the resolution would be given out of loyalty, rather than conviction.

Ernest Bevin spoke on behalf of the Labour Ministers in the coalition government. It was his first major statement of the war years on foreign policy issues. As his biographer states "hunching his shoulders and sticking his hands in the pocket of his jacket" he rose "to face the concentrated hostility of the audience crowding Central Hall."³⁸ Bevin took responsibility, as a member of the War Cabinet, for the government's policy, but while neither supported nor condemned the executive resolution, he gave the fullest and most unqualified support to Churchill. He told the conference that the Cabinet had undertaken to try to start the distribution of food and to break the black market, to hold a general election and finally to organise a plebiscite on the question of a monarchy or republic. Without explaining why EAM/ELAS had had to change their attitude, he left with the conference the impression that they had dishonoured their agreement with the other parties. But Bevin did not conceal the true character of British policy in Greece: that this policy stemmed from the conviction, shared by conservative and Labour leaders, that "the British Empire could not abandon its position in the

³⁸Bullock, The Live and Times of Ernest Bevin, vol.2 (London, 1967), pp.343-4.

Mediterranean".³⁹

In his five-minute reply, Aneurin Bevan said that the only people of the world who had gone on record in Bevin's support were fascist Spain, fascist Portugal, and the majority of Tories in the House of Commons. Bevin's account had been "garbled and inadequate where it was not untruthful." Bevan did not wish to break up the coalition government. The Party, however, should condemn the government and insist that Labour's representatives "exert a more decisive socialist influence" against British policy in Greece "or else leave the Tories to do their own dirty work themselves."⁴⁰

Other speakers expressed similar views. While they did not want the break up of the coalition they suggested that the resolution might have contained words which would be a forthright condemnation of the government's action. It was one of them, Major Ashley Bramall, who best summed up the general feeling of the conference: "I agree with what is stated in the executive's resolution: the need for an armistice, for a parliamentary election, and so on, but what the people ask for from the Labour Party is a demonstration to the people of Greece that the British people are not behind this action which has been taken."⁴¹

Replying for the executive, James Griffiths,

³⁹ Labour Party Annual Conference, 1944, pp.145-7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp.148-9.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp.147-9.

underlined the real meaning of the resolution and helped to a certain extent to allay the fears of those delegates who wanted a more strongly worded resolution by assuring them that the policy of the Labour leadership was to secure an armistice and the end of the fighting.⁴²

Thanks to the trade union block vote, the executive resolution was carried by 2,455,000 to 137,000. However, there is no doubt that the vote was not an adequate reflection of the views of the conference. A number of affiliated organisations had tabled resolutions which were highly critical of the government but under the Standing Orders only the executive proposals were permitted. The executive resolution was a compromise. It regretted the tragic situation which had arisen in Greece but it did not condemn the intervention. As it was, even Churchill could have signed it. Nonetheless, the delegates felt that in such a critical stage of the war they should not imperil the national unity by obliging the Labour Ministers in the government to resign. When, immediately after the debate on Greece terminated, a resolution was moved by I. Marcouse of the Holborn Labour Party expressing admiration of the European resistance movement, the conference had no qualm about accepting it unanimously.⁴³

⁴²Ibid., pp.149-50.

⁴³Ibid., pp.150-1. The resolution was on the following terms: "This conference expresses its admiration of the resistance movements which have proved their value to the allied cause. It demands that the Government shall give on immediate pledge that, as territories are

Popular protest reached its climax on December 17, when two big demonstrations took place in Manchester and London. In Piccadilly, Manchester, more than 2,000 people listened to speakers of various political opinions. Among them were Donald Moore, prospective liberal candidate for the Moss Side Division, professor Wood-Jones, Harold Blomerley of the Common Wealth Party, and Barbara Niven of the Daily Worker.⁴⁴

In London, a crowd of about 15,000 marched to Trafalgar Square for a 'Hands off Greece' demonstration organised by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and addressed by members of the Labour, Common Wealth and Communist Parties. The protesters paraded with banners proclaiming 'Let the Greeks alone', 'The British troops for Greek fascism.' It was the biggest demonstration of Londoners since the days when they gathered to demand the opening of the Second Front. Among the speakers were John Horner, general-secretary of the FBU, Harry Pollitt, Haden Guest, Compton Mackenzie, the future president of the League for Democracy in Greece (LDG), Tony Ambatielos, general-secretary of the Greek Federation of Maritime Unions (GFMU), John Parker and Lord Strabolgi. A resolution was passed condemning the

cleared of the enemy, their administration shall be left to the democratic control of their own inhabitants with no attempts at interference or dictation by outside forces, political or military."

⁴⁴Manchester Guardian, December 12, 1944.

'disastrous policy' of the British government, and calling on the government to stop using troops against the democratic resistance forces in Greece.⁴⁵

On the same day (December 17), the Executive-Committee of the British Communist Party, in a statement on Greece, condemned the policy of armed intervention and called for immediate steps to end hostilities and open up negotiations for a settlement.⁴⁶ On December 18, the Executive of the National Council of Civil Liberties (NCCL) passed a resolution which condemned Churchill's policy in Greece, and the Common Wealth Party in its meeting at Central Hall, Westminster, demanded freedom for the Greeks to choose their own government and urged the Labour Ministers to deliver an ultimatum that they would leave the government unless changes in foreign policy took place.⁴⁷ On December 20, the Liberal Party issued a statement saying that it deplored the fact that a situation had arisen in Greece in which British troops were being used in a civil war.⁴⁸ The ILP defined its

⁴⁵ Manchester Guardian, December 18, 1944; Daily Worker, December 18, 1944.

⁴⁶ Report of the Executive-Committee of the CPGB, Sept 1944-Aug 1945.

⁴⁷ NCCL Archive, Hull University, DCL 58/2. The NCCL was founded in 1934. It works to promote the rights of the individual, to oppose racial, political, religious or other forms of discrimination and abuses of power. In 1942-47 its chairman was L.C.White (1897-1955) general-secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association and member of the board of the Daily Worker. Among its prominent members were Bevan, Victor Gollancz, Harold Laski, Kingsley Martin, D.N.Pritt; Manchester Guardian, December 19, 1944.

⁴⁸ The Times, December 21, 1944.

position towards the events in Athens on December 22, when it demanded the immediate cessation of the war against the Greek people and the withdrawal of the Labour Ministers from the coalition government.⁴⁹ The view of the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) on the Greek crisis was summed up by its statement that "the decision of the [Greek] government and the orders of General Scobie for the unconditional demobilisation of the guerrillas were a clear break of the last agreement reached in the government with EAM."⁵⁰ According to John Bailey, the Co-operative Party's general secretary, the London headquarters of the Party "received more resolutions on this than on almost any other issue which had arisen during the war."⁵¹

The degree of excitement of domestic opinion over Greece can also be gauged through the opinion polls:

October 1944

On the whole, do you approve or disapprove of Mr. Churchill as Prime Minister?: Approve 91%, Disapprove

⁴⁹Ibid., December 23, 1944.

⁵⁰UDC Archive, Hull University, DDC 5/399. The UDC was founded in September 1914 with the aim of securing a new course in diplomatic policy. It demanded the ending of the war by negotiations, no annexations, open and democratic diplomacy, and disarmament. The latter aim continued to be the guidelines of its activities in the years after 1918. In the 1930s its secretary, Dorothy Woodman, was on intimate personal terms with Kingsley Martin, the editor of the New Statesman. Their relationship, personal and political, is discussed in Rolph, Kingsley (London, 1973).

⁵¹Daily Worker, December 30, 1944.

7%, No opinion 2%.

In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government's conduct of the war?: Satisfied 81%, Dissatisfied 12%, No opinion 7%.

January 1945

In general, do you approve or disapprove of Mr Churchill as Prime Minister?: Approve 81%, Disapprove 16%, No opinion 3%.

In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government's conduct of the war?: Satisfied 72%, Dissatisfied 20%, No opinion 8%.

Do you approve or disapprove of Mr Churchill's attitude on the Greek question?: Approve 43%, Disapprove 38%, No opinion 19%.⁵²

Although these polls cannot be compared with the modern skilled scientific polling, and may not be accurate, it helps us to reach certain useful conclusions.⁵³ First, Churchill's personality was so formidable that even when the Greek crisis was at its height in January 1945 he lost an insignificant percentage of his personal popularity. Second, the government commanded less public confidence than Churchill who was regarded as being in absolute charge of the conduct of war. Third, in a

⁵²Gallup(ed.), Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain, 1937-1975 (New York, 1976) vol.1, pp.98-9, 103.

⁵³It should be noted here that the Gallup prediction of the general election result in July 1945 was accurate to within about 1 per cent.

period when the British people were, as a body, behind Churchill as a result of the desperate German offensive in the Western Front, his general attitude towards the European resistance movement was questioned by almost half the population.

III. The Media

When the struggle for Athens started the six British correspondents who were in the Greek capital at that time⁵⁴ gathered at the Grande Bretagne Hotel, in the Constitutional Square, and made its bar their informal headquarters. A few Greeks offered themselves to help them by contributing background information and spelling out Greek names. Their information about the fighting in the area surrounding them, however, was to come from briefings by British and Greek officials as well as from a communication network that they would create.

From the beginning of December until February 1945, the correspondents' freedom to tell the story of developments in Greece honestly and completely was restrained by a strict military censorship and the frequent interferences of the press attaché of the British Embassy. The terms of their accreditation to the British forces precluded them from crossing over to

⁵⁴G.Hoare-The Times and the Manchester Guardian, E. Bigio-Daily Express, Fred Salusbury-Daily Mail and Daily Herald, J.Nixon-BBC, R.Bigio-Reuters, C.Hollingworth-Kemsley press. Another British correspondent, Richard Capell of the Daily Telegraph, arrived in Athens later, on December 16.

EAM/ELAS territory while communication from EAM headquarters rarely reached them. The military censors were so determined to protect British policy in Greece against critics that sometimes they made slight changes in dispatches, such as substituting one descriptive word for another. Moreover, when the military censors felt that dispatches were out of the permitted bounds of correspondence they referred them to the British Embassy official.⁵⁵ The result was that the war correspondents could not say what they liked about the events in Greece and could not present the military and political views of EAM/ELAS as there existed a very limited contact with them.

In December 1944, the British press, for the first time, presented an almost complete unity against British

⁵⁵Byford-Jones, The Greek Trilogy, pp.155-60. See also the revealing report of Constantine Poulos of the Overseas News Agency on British censorship in Richter, British Intervention in Greece, pp.43-4, n.30. According to McNeill ("The View From Greece", p.117) "The conviction that it was morally wrong for British troops to fight against the Germans' enemies in Greece dominated the minds of most correspondents. Information doled out to them through official channels did little to alter their ingrained suspicions of British policies, which, they thought, had provoked the fighting." Churchill, therefore, did not trust them. Hansard, vol.407, January 16, 1945, col.30. At the height of the December crisis British authorities refused to allow American journalists to interview the ELAS leaders and all of them save one, A.C.Sedgwick (New York Times) petitioned for State Department intervention. On February 2, 1945, the Foreign Office gave the following explanation for the event: a) it was undesirable for persons to cross into ELAS territory b) many of the American correspondents in Greece were Greeks and ardent supporters of the Greek Communist Party "on whose behalf they have been carrying out active propaganda throughout the recent disturbances." FO 371/48233 "Press Reporting of Greek news", R 889.

foreign policy. This attitude should be primarily attributed to the fact that the war itself had, to a more or less extent, radicalised parts of the British population so that after its conclusion most newspapers were strikingly reluctant to pick up where they had left off in 1939. During the war The Times, the Manchester Guardian and other publications had been opposed to a return to the status quo ante in Europe and envisaged a new peace settlement based upon the mutual trust, understanding and cooperation of the Great Powers. When Britain was involved in the Greek affairs, they became particularly concerned about Greece because she was the most important test up to that time as to whether the British government was willing to work with the resistance movement in Greece and other countries in Europe, or whether it was seeking to shape political developments in ways most conducive to maintaining Britain's economic and imperial interests.⁵⁶

Never in its history was The Times subjected to such violent criticism as it was during the editorship of Robert Barrington-Ward (1941-48). Its treatment of the Greek crisis, in particular, stands out as one of

⁵⁶According to Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press...", J.Cont.Hist. vol.19 (1984), The Times did not take an honest libertarian line over liberated Europe but it advocated "a reconstituted concert of the Great Powers, based upon the foundation of acknowledged individual spheres of influence" (p.465). Thus the newspaper supported Soviet acts in Poland but was not prepared to trust Churchill over Greece. Foster argues that it was this inconsistency which caused so much trouble of The Times during the December events (pp. 464-6).

the most controversial episodes in its whole history. Since 1914, Barrington-Ward had been private secretary to Geoffrey Dawson, editor of The Times in 1912-19 and again in 1923-41. After his service in the Great War he worked on the Observer as Garvin's assistant editor. Rejoining The Times in 1927, he was appointed deputy editor in 1934 and finally succeeded Dawson as editor in October 1941. E.H.Carr, a well-known and much respected intellectual, had already served for twenty years in the Foreign Office when in 1936 he was appointed professor of international politics at the University College of Wales, in Aberystwyth. He had contributed to The Times since 1937 and in 1941 he became assistant editor, a post he held until 1946. During the battle for Athens Carr wrote some very critical leaders on the British intervention in Greece. However, it was Donald Tyerman, assistant editor of the newspaper, who most infuriated Churchill. The leaders of both Carr and Tyerman were based upon the dispatches sent by Geoffrey Hoare, the newspaper's special correspondent in Athens.⁵⁷

57 Robert Barrington-Ward (1891-1948), DNB, 1941-50, pp.63-4.

Edward Hallett Carr (1892-1982). Born in London Carr was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. He served in the Foreign Office from 1916 to 1936. Professor of international politics at the University College of Wales in 1936-47. As the influential assistant editor of The Times from 1941 to 1946 he advocated continued cooperation with the Soviet Union and the establishment of a new social and economic order in Britain and Western Europe. His views were trenchantly expressed in a series of books and lectures, notably Conditions of Peace (1942), The Soviet Impact on the Western World, (1946) and The New Society (1951). In the last winter of the war, at the age of

During the December events, Hoare, who suffered from deafness and general ill-health, obtained the assistance of his friend, Clare Hollingworth, a correspondent of the Kemsley press. It seems that she contributed to the writing of his reports, a fact of which The Times appeared ignorant.⁵⁸ Although a certain amount of unjustified criticism was levelled against Hoare, the real cause of all the indignation was not his or her reports but the leading articles. In February 1945 Hoare himself protested against the comments of The Times.⁵⁹ Yet, it was Hoare's dispatch on December 4 which shocked world public opinion and started the trouble in Britain, beginning with these emotive words: "Seeds of

52, he decided to write A History of Soviet Russia, which was published in fourteen volumes between 1950 and 1978. The most popular of all his post-war writings, however, is the George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures, delivered in the University of Cambridge in January-March 1961 and published as What is History? (1961). DNB, 1981-85, pp.75-6; Proceedings of the British Academy, vol.lxix(1983) pp.473-511.

Donald Tyerman(1908-1981). Gateshead Secondary school; Brasenose College, Oxford. Lecturer, University College, Southampton, 1930-36. Assistant and deputy editor, the Economist, 1937-44; deputy editor, Observer, 1943-44. Assistant editor, The Times, 1944-55. Editor of the Economist, 1956-65. DNB, 1981-85, pp. 396-7.

For the history of The Times and its attitude towards the December events in Greece see McDonald, The History of The Times, vol. 5 (London, 1984); McLachlan, In the Chair, (London, 1971); Woods and Bishop, The Story of The Times, (London, 1983).

⁵⁸Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press...", J.Cont.Hist., vol.19 (1984) pp.472-3. Kemsley newspapers was the largest of the "groups" of newspapers in Britain in that period. This group included three national newspapers, Sunday Times, Daily Graphic, Sunday Graphic, and numerous provincial publications. Camrose, British Newspapers, pp.65-72.

⁵⁹McDonald, The History of the Times, vol.5, p.119; McLachlan, In the Chair, p.255.

civil war were well and truly sown by the Athens police this morning when they fired on a demonstration of children and youths". In the following lines, Hoare gave a detailed and lively account of the demonstration arguing that the police's shooting was entirely unjustified and unprovoked:

"one section of the demonstrators, mostly girls and boys with a sprinkling of adults, started to leave the square, presumably en route for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where the Prime Minister has his office. Just as the procession was half-way across University street-almost in front of the Great Bretagne Hotel, in which British officers are staying-the police opened fire with rifles and tommy guns. The crowd immediately fell flat to escape the bullets, but the police continued firing. When they stopped the demonstrators got to their feet and started to pick up the wounded and dead, and the police then fired on them again."⁶⁰

On December 7, Carr opened the campaign in the paper's columns with an editorial, deploring Churchill's decision to send troops to support the Greek Right and stating that the British government had no right to insist "on this or that individual or group as alone qualified to conduct the government of a friendly nation".⁶¹ Two days later, a leading article written by Tyerman emphasised that EAM was not a gang of communists and bandits as Churchill had maintained in the House of Commons on the previous day, but a wide organisation

⁶⁰The Times, December 4, 1944.

⁶¹Ibid., December 7, 1944. The authors of most of the leading articles on Greece during the December crisis (Carr or Tyerman) are mentioned in McDonald, The History of The Times, vol.5.

which embraced "the whole range of opinion from Centre to extreme Left."⁶² On December 14 another leading article by Tyerman stated that the resistance movements in Europe had a significant role to play in the post-war politics of their countries:

"The national provisional government of any liberated country, in justice and expediency alike, must be built around the active and mostly turbulent resistance movement which has kept the flame of nationhood alight under enemy occupation, privation and terror. Its head must be a man accepted by and active in resistance. Its members must comprise a majority of resisters. Its policies and programme must be in time with those which have been worked out, close to realities, in the fighting underground."⁶³

When C.P.Scott left the Manchester Guardian in July 1929, he had served the paper as its editor since January 1872. Under Scott's editorship the Manchester Guardian was transformed from a provincial Lancashire Whig newspaper to an internationally known and respected Liberal journal. Yet, in the interwar period, the paper became increasingly independent and under the editorship of A.P.Wadsworth (April 1944-56) the official link between the paper and the Party became quite weak. Wadsworth joined the staff of the newspaper in 1917. In 1940 he was appointed assistant editor and four years later editor in succession to W.P.Crozier. Like Barrington-Ward, Wadsworth was very critical of Churchill, especially during the December events in Greece and

⁶² Ibid., December 9, 1944.

⁶³ Ibid., December 14, 1944.

electoral campaign in June 1945. Although he was not a member of the Liberal Party, intellectually he had much in common with liberalism but his long experience with the unions gave him a sympathetic understanding of the Labour Party.⁶⁴ However, the person responsible for most of the Manchester Guardian reports on Greece was John Pringle, one of the best leader-writers the paper had ever had.⁶⁵

During the war and in the immediate postwar years the Manchester Guardian received foreign news from three sources: its own correspondents, the agencies, of which the two principal were Reuters and the United Press, and other newspapers, mainly The Times. News from this last source was published with the attribution "The Times and Manchester Guardian Service". This arrangement with The Times ended in 1948.⁶⁶ Thus, during the conflict in Athens, both newspapers relied on the reports of Geoffrey Hoare.

Although the first leader of the Guardian appeared on December 4, just one day after the shooting in Athens, it was condemnatory of Britain's involvement in

⁶⁴ Alfred Powell Wadsworth (1891-1956), DNB, 1951-60, pp. 1016-7. For the history of the Manchester Guardian see Ayerst, Guardian (London, 1971).

⁶⁵ Ayerst, Guardian, p.584. John Pringle (b.1912). Shrewsbury; Lincoln College, Oxford. Leader writer Manchester Guardian, 1934-39. Army 1939-44. Assistant editor Manchester Guardian, 1944-48. Special writer The Times, 1948-52. Editor Sydney Morning Herald, 1952-57. Deputy editor Observer, 1958-63. Managing editor Canberra Times, 1964-65. Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 1965-70. Who's who, 1991, p.1490.

⁶⁶ Ayerst, Guardian, p.573.

the crisis. Giving particular importance to the new social forces in the liberated countries, it accused the British authorities of backing "an unpopular government against the parties of the resistance" and stressed that "if Britain was to escape the accusation of maintaining a dictatorship of the Right, an attempt had to be made to form a new government including the resistance parties."⁶⁷ In the leaders of December 5 and 6, the Manchester newspaper expressed similar views. EAM was "the most energetic and progressive section of the population" and Britain could not ignore the resistance movements in Greece and elsewhere in Europe: "It is not enough", the newspaper stated on December 6, "to support law and order; it is not enough to point to the passive majority which always supports law and order against change and revolution. Somehow we must find a way to give expression to this feeling and to give the resistance movements a share in the temporary government of their countries."⁶⁸ On December 18, another leading article argued that the British government had misjudged the situation in Greece and, as a result, Britain appeared in the eyes of the Greek people to be in pursuit of the establishment of a royalist dictatorship by force. The newspaper saw as the only solution the formation of a new government in which EAM would have

⁶⁷ Manchester Guardian, December 4, 1944.

⁶⁸ Ibid., December 5, 6, 1944.

confidence.⁶⁹

The other major daily liberal newspaper was the News Chronicle. This newspaper had a distinguished liberal pedigree being the result of a merger of the Daily Chronicle and the Daily News in June 1930. But, by the late 1930s, the News Chronicle had been transformed into a radical newspaper. It is worth noticing that in the 1930s the News Chronicle provided a platform for G.D.H.Cole's advocacy of the socialist state and featured a column by Ellen Wilkinson, Minister of Education in the first post-war Labour government.⁷⁰ According to a report prepared in 1949 by Mass-Observation, an organisation founded in 1937 for the purpose of measuring public opinion and attitudes, half the newspaper's readers were Labour supporters, one fifth conservatives and only one eighth liberals.⁷¹

The News Chronicle, which had not had its own correspondent in Athens but shared the services of the correspondents of other newspapers, adopted a much more critical stand over the intervention in Greece than the official organ of the Labour Party, the Daily Herald. This was partly due to Gerald Barry, editor of the

⁶⁹Ibid., December 18, 1944.

⁷⁰Koss, The Rise and Fall (London, 1981), p.525.

⁷¹The Press and its Readers: a report prepared by Mass-Observation, p.112. The Mass-Observation archive is now the property of its founder, Tom Harrisson, and is on loan to the University of Sussex. See Calder and Sheridan (eds), Speak for Yourself (Oxford, 1985).

newspaper since 1936. At the end of 1947 he was succeeded by Robin Cruikshank, editor of the Star, and this change signalled a shift to the right in the editorial views of the paper, especially over foreign affairs. Barry had gained an early experience on journalism as editor of two moderate periodicals, the Saturday Review and the Week-end Review. In the early 1930s he moved leftwards and in 1934, when the Week-end Review was merged into the New Statesman, he became a member of the board of the combined journals.⁷² In January 1945, impressed by the fierce fighting in Athens he took himself off to Greece and made an on-the-spot investigation of the facts. It was, however, the political editor of the newspaper, A.J.Cummings, who took an especially keen interest in Greek affairs and vigorously opposed British policy in Greece through his regular feature "Spotlight on politics".⁷³

Cummings believed that the main cause of the Greek crisis was the policy of Papandreou and Churchill's "sentimental fondness for Kings and princelings." EAM was a mass movement with the object of freeing Greece from an eight-year old tyranny; British soldiers were now

⁷²Gerald Barry (1898-1968), DNB, 1961-70, pp.75-6; The Times, November 22, 1968.

⁷³Arthur John Cummings (1882-1957), DNB., 1951-60, pp. 278-9; Andrews and Taylor, Lords and Laborers of the Press (Illinois, 1970) pp.229-42. Cummings came from a conservative family but in the 1930s he became very progressive. In the same decade he gained wide reputation as one of the most influential commentators of his time.

fighting not a gang of communist revolutionaries but the Greek people itself. Like many of his colleagues, Cummings saw the forces of the Left as the only ones to construct a decent life in Europe and wanted Britain to cooperate with and assist them: "What chiefly matters", he wrote on December 15, "is that the British Government should give no support, moral or material, to any attempt to strangle or subdue the new forces with a strong radical outlook that have arisen in almost every part of Europe under the scourge of war".⁷⁴

The conservative press, with the notable exception of The Times, stood firm behind Churchill and his government throughout the crisis. In the early 1930s Lord Rothermere's Daily Mail was one of the few publications to admit openly an admiration for Hitler and the Nazi regime. In 1940, Lord Rothermere was succeeded by his son, Viscount Rothermere (Esmond Cecil Harmsworth), an unwavering conservative who dictated the policy of the newspaper. In the period 1944-49, editors of the newspaper were S.F.Horniblow (1944-47) and Frank Owen (1947-50). However, the general policy and character of the Daily Mail and even the details of every issue were the constant preoccupation not of these faceless editors but of the new owner. The owner and editor-in-chief of the Daily Telegraph, Viscount Camrose (William Ewert

⁷⁴News Chronicle, December 8, 1944 "We are all dismayed..." and December 15, 1944 "But the brigands are veteran troops".

Berry) also held firmly the reins of his newspaper. Brought up a liberal, Camrose became a convinced conservative of the centre. He was a supporter of Churchill and one of his closest friends. Since 1924 he had put complete confidence in A.E.Watson, editor of the newspaper until 1950. Because of his close friendship with the proprietor of the Daily Telegraph, Watson had full control of the leader-page and all special articles and comments.⁷⁵

Initially, the Daily Mail was not willing to give its full support to the British government on the grounds that it had not done what it could to prevent the crisis. On December 6, a leading article on Greece stated that force should be used only as a last resort to keep Greece from anarchy and, on December 12, an article by Alastair Forbes stressed that "Britain should follow a radical foreign policy and not impede the process of change which was bringing in radical Governments all over Europe bent on introducing reforms long overdue."⁷⁶ As the crisis wore on, however, the newspaper abandoned its reservations about Churchill's policy and on December 29 went so far as to state that Churchill's purpose was not "to dictate what form any settlement should take, nor the kind of Government which

⁷⁵Camrose, British Newspapers (London, 1947); Andrews and Taylor, Lords and Laborers of the Press; Koss, The Rise and Fall. For Viscount Rothermere and Viscount Camrose see DNB, 1971-80, pp.382-3 and DNB, 1951-60, pp.95-7 respectively.

⁷⁶Daily Mail, December 6, 12, 1944.

Greece should choose" but "to settle the Greek problem in the interests of the Greek people."⁷⁷ While the Daily Mail applauded the wisdom of Churchill's actions in Greece it was sharply critical of the inadequacies of its presentation. It was a paradox, the newspaper suggested, that the British government opposed those it had praised and assisted during the occupation, giving the impression to the British people that the Greek resistance consisted entirely of champions of freedom. The government's tactic in conducting its foreign policy in a "fog of secrecy", keeping the public in the dark and thereby fomenting the suspicion that it was backing a reactionary party against the Greek people was also mistaken. The Daily Mail thought that this secretive policy deprived the government of valuable press and popular support.⁷⁸

From the start of the Greek crisis, the Daily Telegraph gave its complete support to the British government. Its special correspondent to Greece, Richard Capell, a journalist with extreme conservative views, had become interested in the Greek affairs since September 1944 when, as a correspondent of Camrose's newspaper, he accompanied the commander of the Aegean Raiding Force on a trip to the Aegean islands.⁷⁹ When he

⁷⁷Ibid., December 29, 1944.

⁷⁸See, for example, Daily Mail's editorials on December 8, 9 and 14, 1944.

⁷⁹Richard Capell (1894-1983), Who was who, 1951-60, p.

was in Egypt, in the spring of 1943, he had endeavoured to tell "the truth about a faction that was promoting civil war in German-occupied Greece and mutinies in the national army and navy". His report passed the military censors but his newspaper judged it impolitic to publish it.⁸⁰ At the beginning of December 1944 he went to Rome to see his brother and he did not take himself off to Athens until December 16. But his views on and his reaction to the Greek crisis are well portrayed in his book Simiomata, in which he describes his experiences in Greece from September 1944 until March 1945. Capell felt that his expectations had been somewhat confirmed: EAM/ELAS was a minority group which was now attempting to carry out its long-prepared plan to seize power by force and impose a communist regime. The reactions, however, of his colleagues in Athens to the crisis and especially of his friend, Geoffrey Hoare, exasperated him. He believed that the war correspondents in Greece had reported stories full of exaggerations and that Hoare had "awoken that Sunday morning from a long sleep, a sleep of months".⁸¹ He was particularly outraged by the leaders of The Times and he regarded the gathering popular storm in Britain as a "wave of lunacy".⁸²

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⁸⁰ Capell, Simiomata (London, 1948), p.93; Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press...", J.Cont. Hist., vol.19 (1984), p.458.

⁸¹ Capell, Simiomata, pp.111-2

⁸² Ibid., pp.118, 133.

The editorials of the Daily Telegraph tended to see Britain's involvement in Greek affairs as part of her duty, as an allied country, to protect Greece from the menace of a fratricidal strife among Greeks. Even when the Anglo-Greek conflict broke out the newspaper continued to stress the benevolent and disinterested character of British policy in Greece. On December 6, the newspaper described the events in Athens on the front page. Its long headline ran: "They intervened to end a battle between partisans of the Left-wing organisation ELAS and forces of the rival democratic body EDES during an attack on the latter's H.Q in Station-square". A leader on Greece claimed that Britain backed no Greek faction, but the military intervention was necessary because she was responsible for maintaining law and order in Greece.⁸³ A second leader followed on December 8, presenting Britain as the champion of democratic liberties: "The British aim is solely to create conditions in which the Greek people can freely and peaceably express their opinions...The British action is no attempt to impose on Greece either a Royalist or any other regime."⁸⁴ A few days later, the newspaper dismissed the assumption that the British eagerly took sides as "fantastic" and declared that the British intervention in Greece had been "inspired with

⁸³Daily Telegraph, December 6, 1944.

⁸⁴Ibid., December 8, 1944.

an unselfish desire for Greek freedom."⁸⁵

On December 18, the first dispatch of Richard Capell appeared in the paper. Even Churchill could not have sullied so much the aims and the reputation of the Greek resistance movement. Capell reported that within a few days after the bloodshed on Constitution Square EAM had revealed its ruthless and brutal character. The Left-wing organisation wounded members of UNRRA, kidnapped middle-class women and girls, killed foreigners, collaborated with armed Bulgarians in northern Greece, and terrorised the countryside.⁸⁶ On December 23, Capell's report reached the bounds of absurdity. Its heading ran: "Master mind directs Greek rebels-massacred 10,000 men".⁸⁷ The "master mind" was Aris Velouchiotis, the man who had become a national hero for his achievements against the Nazis during the occupation. However, Capell did not confine himself to stigmatising one of the most prominent leaders of EAM/ELAS. On December 29, much earlier than any other British correspondent, he referred to the arrests of civilians by ELAS fighters and accused "the rebels" of carrying off entire families as hostages, treating them inhumanly and letting them live under very bad conditions.⁸⁸ The Daily Telegraph seemed very satisfied with these slanderous allegations

⁸⁵ Ibid., December 12, 1944.

⁸⁶ Ibid., December 18, 1944.

⁸⁷ Ibid., December 23, 1944.

⁸⁸ Ibid., December 29, 1944.

which confirmed its belief that "but for British intervention a dictatorship would have been established in Greece".⁸⁹

The editorial conduct of the Daily Herald over the Greek crisis is of great importance because of its position as the official organ of the Labour Party. It was launched by London printers in January 1911 as a strike sheet and in 1929 it was purchased by the head of Odhams Press Ltd., J.S.Elias, later Lord Southwood. Although the newspaper was regarded as the most representative voice of Labour socialism, the trade unions, the Labour Party and the Odhams press had different views about how it should be run. In the 1930s the Daily Herald was divided on important issues like the Popular Front, the League of Nations, armaments, pacifism and policy towards Germany generally. This was mainly due to the fact that in that period the Board of Directors was dominated by Right-wing trade unionists like Walter Citrine and Ernest Bevin who wished to subdue the paper's political line to their own labourist attitudes.⁹⁰ When Francis Williams resigned in 1940 as a

⁸⁹ Ibid., December 21, 1944.

⁹⁰ For the history of the Daily Herald see Lansbury, The Miracle of Fleet Street (London, 1925); Fienburgh, 25 Momentous Years, 1930-1955 (London, 1955); Camrose, British Newspapers. It is worth noticing that the Articles of Association between the newspaper and the Odhams press Ltd., provided that of the nine directors, four should be appointed by the TUC shareholders, and five by the company. Royal Commission on the Press, 1947-1949, p.17.

result of strong criticism by the chairman of the Board, Percival Cudlipp, a convinced socialist, was appointed new editor of the Daily Herald.⁹¹

In December 1944 the Daily Herald found itself in a very embarrassing position. On the one hand, it disagreed with Churchill's foreign policy in the liberated countries and especially in Greece but, on the other, it was reluctant to condemn it because the War Cabinet included three prominent Labour Ministers: Clement Attlee, deputy Prime Minister, Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour and National Service, and Herbert Morrison, Home Secretary. The newspaper managed to escape this dilemma and to avoid any direct confrontation with the Labour Ministers by putting the blame for the Anglo-Greek conflict not so much on the national government as on Churchill personally and the Papandreou government.

Fred Salusbury, the paper's correspondent in Greece, aligned himself with most other war cor-

⁹¹The Daily Herald is an indicative example of how much an editor depends upon the proprietors of the newspaper. Francis Williams in his book, Dangerous Estate (London, 1957), p.194, states: "...and when the whole question of the editor's status and area of responsibility was directly raised by the resignation of a third (the present writer) on an issue of general principle in the early days of the war Odhams successfully maintained in face of Labour and trade union protests at the subsequent Board meeting and elsewhere that the appointment of the editor and the degree of authority allotted to him fell solely within its responsibility as commercial controller of the paper". For Percival Cudlipp (1905-1962) see DNE, 1961-70, pp. 251-2.

respondents.⁹² He placed the responsibility for the bloody events of December 3 firmly on the police and for the subsequent Anglo-Greek conflict on the British Prime Minister. His dispatch on December 4 was no less impressive than that of Geoffrey Hoare. It stated:

"There were perhaps 3,000 assembled when a column of demonstrators, some of them children and perhaps 200 strong, began to move across the tramlines towards the Palace. They may have been going to demonstrate outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They could never have been accused of disorder. But when they were 30 yards from the ramp on the west side of the Palace the police behind the ramp opened fire... Onlookers dived behind cars and through doorways and flung themselves on their faces, and the little procession flung back on itself, collapsed among its flags and its dead and wounded. It was a nightmare. Some people scrambled to their feet and moved to help the victims,⁹³ The police fired again. Someone threw a grenade."

In its first editorial article on Greece the Daily Herald expressed its dismay for the events and urged Britain not to re-enter Europe "as the champion of discredited monarchs and Right-wing regimes", but to pursue "a radical and democratic policy which accords with the mood of the liberated people."⁹⁴ On December 6, another editorial characterised Papandreou's policy and

⁹² Fred (F.G.H.P.) Salusbury (1895-1957). Born in Australia he was the son of a barrister. After the Great War he joined the staff of the Daily Express. Later he worked for the Daily Herald as a correspondent in Greece and the Middle East. Editor of the Egyptian Gazette (1952-54) and the Greek Review (1954-57). The Times, March 2, 1957.

⁹³ Daily Herald, December 4, 1944.

⁹⁴ Ibid., December 5, 1944.

utterances concerning EAM/ELAS as "hostile and provocative" and the action of EAM in declaring a general strike as "folly."⁹⁵ On December 14, the Daily Herald attacked Churchill because he held a "one-sided view of the situation", but the lion's share of responsibility belonged to the Papandreou government which had not taken the necessary steps to facilitate an armistice.⁹⁶ A few days later, the Papandreou government was again at the centre of the paper's criticism: "M.Papandreou does not want a truce; he wants a victory for his side in the civil war, won by British arms."⁹⁷

Despite the moderate tone of criticism of British policy, the Daily Herald maintained its reputation as a socialist paper in those crucial days of December through the comments of the political columnist, Michael Foot.⁹⁸ Like many of his compatriots, Foot, one of the

⁹⁵ Ibid., December 6, 1944.

⁹⁶ Ibid., December 14, 1944.

⁹⁷ Ibid., December 23, 1944.

⁹⁸ For Michael Foot see Hoggart and Leigh, Michael Foot: A Portrait (London, 1981). Born in 1913, Foot studied at Oxford University where he became the youngest president of the Oxford Union. Initially, he was a Liberal supporter but his political attitudes were being shaped and changed by his socialist friends like Anthony Greenwood and John Cripps, son of Stafford Cripps, and by his admiration for Aneurin Bevan. In 1935 he visited Liverpool, was impressed by the poverty and the bad living conditions and decided to become a member of the Labour Party. In 1937 along with A.Bevan, S.Cripps, and George Strauss he founded Tribune, a socialist journal, which later was to become a major source of Left-wing opinion in Britain. Ten years later, this time along with Richard Crossman and Ian Mikardo published a pamphlet Keep Left which urged "for more drastic socialist policy". In 1938-43 he wrote signed articles and editorials in the Evening Standard and in 1944-63

most consistent libertarian socialists in postwar British politics, believed that the future of Europe rested upon the peaceful co-existence and cooperation of the three Great Powers. He was firmly convinced, however, that the spread of democracy and political freedom in the old continent could not be achieved without the implementation of the principle of self-determination and representative democracy. While he repudiated the pursuit of selfish national advantage, the creation of sectional alliances and generally the system of power politics he gave particular importance to the role which the resistance movement in Europe could play in laying the foundations of a new social order and in promoting the common interests of the peoples in the areas of social justice and economic welfare. He saw that the whole existing order in its political, social and economic aspects was questioned by the masses of the population, from one end of Europe to the other.⁹⁹

Michael Foot put forward these views in his first article on Greece, on December 8. He stated that the shots fired that Sunday morning had killed more than

was the political columnist of the Daily Herald. Labour Member for the Devonport Division of Plymouth, 1945-55, and for the Ebbw Vale Division of Monmouthshire, 1960-83. Secretary of State for employment, 1974-76, Leader of the House of Commons, 1976-79 and Leader of the Labour Party, 1980-83.

⁹⁹For his views on the political situation in the liberated countries and on the new social forces of Europe see, for example, his article in the Daily Herald, December 19, 1944, "Was it for this that they suffered and died?".

just the handful of unarmed demonstrators. They had killed the notion that "small nations do not count in the modern world and that the big Powers alone can dictate the destiny of Europe"; the notion that foreign policy could be substituted by "a few pompous pronouncements" about the right of the peoples to decide for themselves; the notion that the war was becoming less ideological and the supposition that Britain could "retain her position in the new world without a positively democratic policy". Foot thought that Britain's foreign policy "in a new age when kings and courtiers and capitalists count for little and the people count for all" should be based on an active attempt to support, protect and assist the progressive forces in all lands. As regards Greece, his view was that EAM/ELAS had not been prepared to seize power by force, but they had attempted to defend their position against the intransigent attitude of the British and the uncompromising and militant line pursued by the Greek Right.¹⁰⁰

In his second article on Greece (December 12), Foot referred to Churchill's definition of democracy in the House of Commons. He believed that Churchill was the last man who had the right to speak about democracy: he had waged war for two years against the Bolsheviks in order to restore Tsarism; he had lavishly praised Prince

¹⁰⁰Daily Herald, December 8, 1944, M.Foot "Truth of the Greek Tragedy: Left fears a Right plot".

Umberto, Marshall Badoglio, General Franco, and King George of the Hellenes; he had not concealed his approval of Fascism in Italy when in January 1927, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Baldwin government, he told the Italian and foreign press that Mussolini's blackshirts had provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison. For a socialist like Foot, more important than the Churchillian definition of democracy as "free elections within a framework of law and order", was how and by whom democracy was put into practice.¹⁰¹

Amongst the newspapers more sustained in their criticism of government policy were the Reynolds News and the Daily Worker. Originally started by a chartist, G.W.M.Reynolds about 1850, the Reynolds News was a Sunday newspaper, owned and published by the Co-operative press company. Although its circulation was small compared with the remainder of the Sunday papers, and international affairs figured infrequently in the editorial columns, it merits inclusion in this study on the basis that it was the official organ of the British Co-operative movement and one of the most influential radical newspapers.¹⁰² While the Co-operators were not

¹⁰¹Ibid., December 12, 1944, M.Foot "Are we in Greece for war or for politics?"

¹⁰²The paper's circulation was 678,877 in 1947, smaller than any other national Sunday paper except the Sunday Times and the Observer. Camrose, British Newspapers, p.13. The idea of Co-operative community was introduced in Britain by the writings of Robert Owen and others in the early 19th century. The British Co-operative movement

known for holding Left-wing views the paper's editors and columnists were on the Labour Left. Its staff included two distinguished journalists, Tom Driberg and David Raymond. The former wrote for the Reynolds News regularly but his comments on Greece during the December events were very few and brief.¹⁰³ The latter, the paper's foreign editor, was one of the most keen and violent critics of British policy throughout the period December 1944-March 1947. Occasionally, the newspaper published articles on Greece written by the outstanding socialist journalist H.N.Brailsford, former editor of the New Leader, the organ of the Independent Labour Party which he had joined in 1907.¹⁰⁴

dates from the establishment of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers in 1844 when a group of 28 artisans, mostly cotton weavers, rented a small store in Rochdale, a town near Manchester, and started trading among themselves. In 1917 the Co-operative Party was founded and became a major component of the Labour movement. In the 1945 elections, 23 Co-operative M.P.s were returned. Pollard, "The Foundation of the Co-operative Party", pp.185-210.

¹⁰³Thomas Driberg (1905-1976). Member of the CPGB, 1920-41. In 1942 he was elected in Parliament as an Independent, took the Labour whip in January 1945 and sat until he retired in 1974. DNB, 1971-80, pp.250-2.

¹⁰⁴Henry Noel Brailsford (1873-1958), DNB, 1951-60, pp. 137-9. The Independent Labour Party, one of the various socialist groups which appeared in Britain in the last quarter of the 19th century, was formed under the chairmanship of Keir Hardie at Bradford in 1893. Hardie played a prominent role in creating the Labour Representative Committee in 1900, which became the Labour Party in 1906. After the First World War the Party began to decline and when it disaffiliated itself from the Labour Party in 1932, it dwindled to the state of a minority sect confined to London and the industrial areas of Scotland. During the December events in Greece it was represented in the House of Commons by Stephen Campbell and John McGovern. Dowse, Left in the Centre (London, 1966).

The Reynolds News was unequivocal about British involvement in Greece. The military intervention was totally unjustified and, therefore, Britain's armed forces should withdraw from Athens immediately. The British government had to choose between continuation of the war of repression or conciliation with the Greek resistance movement. The first choice would be disastrous as it would prove to the world public opinion that Britain continued to follow her pre-war diplomacy of power politics. The second choice would restore the traditional friendship between the two peoples and would create a climate of mutual understanding and cooperation which was an essential prerequisite for the democratic development of Greece.¹⁰⁵ David Raymond and H.N.Brailsford shared the newspaper's views. They were both convinced that the Anglo-Greek conflict was the result not of EAM/ELAS intransigence but of Churchill's insistence on putting King George back on the throne by handing the country over to reactionaries. They regarded the British intervention as solely political because "before British troops landed, the advance of the Red Army in the Balkans had compelled the Germans to withdraw entirely from continental Greece."¹⁰⁶

The Daily Worker, the official organ of the

¹⁰⁵Reynolds News, December 10, 1944.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., December 17, 1944, H.N.Brailsford "This could lead to World War 3"; see also December 10, 1944, D. Raymond "Greece: Democracy's gravest crisis since Munich"; December 24, 1944, D.Raymond "Why the Greeks mistrust their King".

Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), was in the forefront of denouncing Churchill's action in Greece. The editor of the paper was William Rust, "the ablest and more 'Bolshevik' of the young leaders".¹⁰⁷ During the December events the Daily Worker ran a series of critical articles on Greece written by two of its prominent journalists, Claud Cockburn, the diplomatic and foreign correspondent (pseudonym Frank Pitcairn) and Malcolm MacEwen, the parliamentary correspondent.¹⁰⁸

The Daily Worker reacted to the Anglo-Greek conflict by stating first and foremost that the British government could not escape direct responsibility for the consequences of the situation it had provoked. The paper's editorial line was that EAM/ELAS had not attempted to assert a dictatorship but had tried to secure a broad government incorporating all democratic tendencies. It had not refused to disarm but it wanted to ensure that the reactionary groups be disarmed simultaneously. The newspaper felt that the fears of Greek democrats were entirely legitimate because the Papandreou government had done nothing to create a democratic political climate. It had not reorganised the police and gendarmerie and had not purged the

¹⁰⁷Pelling, The British Communist Party (London, 1958), p.111. For the Daily Worker and its editor W.Rust (1903-1949) see Rust, The Story of the Daily Worker (London, 1949).

¹⁰⁸Claud Cockburn (1904-1981), DNB, 1981-85, pp. 90-2; Malcolm MacEwen (b.1911), Who's Who, 1991, p.1161. See also MacEwen's recently published autobiography, The Greening of a Red (London, 1991).

administrative machinery of all collaborationists and fascists.¹⁰⁹

What is worth noticing with regard to the Daily Worker's editorial line on Greece is the unexpected absence of a strong criticism of British policy towards that country. This can be partly explained if we take into account the twists and turns of the Communist Party since the beginning of the Second World War. After the declaration of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in August 1939, the Party began a campaign against the war on the ground that it was unjust and imperialist. When the German troops invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941 the Party changed its line and approved Churchill's prompt declaration of support for the communist country. In December 1944, the Party was still too deeply committed to the support of the coalition to regard it as having the main responsibility for the crisis in Greece. Besides, the War Cabinet included Labour Ministers and a strong and provocative criticism of official policy would deprive the CPGB of a future possibility of affiliation with the Labour Party and would jeopardise its prospects of further successes in the trade unions. Moreover, the Soviet Union's silence over British intervention did not at all encourage the communists in Britain.

This cautious attitude of the Daily Worker does not mean that the newspaper or the Party did not have much

¹⁰⁹ Daily Worker, December 5, 13, 1944.

to say about the suppression of EAM/ELAS. Both Cockburn and MacEwen attempted to give a Leninist interpretation of the Greek situation. The underlying cause of the crisis in Athens was the continuation of Britain's pre-war imperialist policy. Britain had much the biggest financial interest in controlling the Greek government's finance as most of the Greek loans were issued on the London market. More importantly, Britain saw Greece not as a state capable of playing a big role in the development of the new Europe but simply as a base along the route to India. It was Britain's imperialist interests which dictated the government's support of the Greek reactionaries and the King. However, this unqualified support had led to a political impasse which, unless a change in the British policy took place, would have disastrous consequences for Greece and the Anglo-Greek relations.¹¹⁰

One of the most influential British conservative periodicals was the Spectator. It was founded in 1828 but its circulation and reputation were considerably enhanced during the long editorship - more than twenty years - of Wilson Harris. The periodical reflected his personality to an unusual degree as he wrote most of the editorials and book reviews, as well as the weekly "A Spectator's Notebook" under the pseudonym "Ianus".

¹¹⁰ Ibid., December 6, 19, 1944.

Another of the periodical's features, "Marginal Comment" was contributed by Harold Nicolson.¹¹¹

The Greek crisis first appeared in the Spectator in an editorial entitled, "Governments and Disorders", on December 8. It stated that the policy of the Allies was that it was for every country to decide what form its constitution should take or what Party should form the government. An intervention was justified only when disorders and anarchy assumed a magnitude which made them a danger to the common struggle against Nazism. The leaders of the resistance movement in Greece refused to disarm their forces and attempted to overthrow the government of their country, "a process which could not be permitted in a military zone."¹¹²

The reaction of the periodical to the Greek crisis was more explicitly expressed on December 15. One can not fail to notice how little the Spectator knew or understood of EAM/ELAS and its political objectives and how mistaken it was in its judgment about the real

¹¹¹For the early history of the Spectator see Thomas, The Story of the Spectator, 1828-1925 (London, 1926). Wilson Harris (1883-1955). Plymouth College and St. John's College, Cambridge. On staff of the Daily News; joined the staff of the League of Nations Union; elected an Independent MP for Cambridge University in 1945. Harold Nicolson (1886-1968). Oxford University; entered Diplomatic Service in 1909; resigned in 1929; governor of the BBC in 1941-46; "Marginal Comment" articles in the Spectator (1939-52). National Labour MP (1935-45). In 1948 he contested North Croydon as a Labour candidate but he was defeated. Thereafter, he abandoned politics and devoted the remainder of his life to writing. DNB, 1951-60, pp. 457-8; 1961-70, pp.793-6.

¹¹²Spectator, December 8, 1944.

causes of the conflict in Athens. The Spectator thought that EAM/ELAS was nothing more than a communist organisation which sought "to create a state within a state". The publication did not question the alleged unselfishness of British purposes in Greece. It stated:

"Is it suggested that when the government, which called us in, was attacked by this strongly organised faction (armed with weapons supplied by ourselves) we ought to have withdrawn our troops and done nothing? Should we have washed our hands of all responsibility and left the usurpers to stamp out the government and to demonstrate successfully that the arms they were so anxious to retain were wanted only to impose the supremacy of their faction? That was unthinkable. We were there to bring food to the starving, to maintain order, and to serve an agreed regime who we are pledged as soon as possible to submit to the verdict of a free election".¹¹³

In the same issue, Churchill's definition of democracy induced Harold Nicolson to comment on the nature of British foreign policy and its relation to the Greek crisis. Nicolson held the view that the British foreign policy was directed constantly to the support of democracy against despotism. A democratic system should contain four safeguards: freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of criticism. In Greece, a minority gang had attempted to profit by the circumstances and impose a totalitarian regime. This had forced Britain to intervene and prevent EAM/ELAS from taking over the government and abolishing the four principles on which democracy was

¹¹³Ibid., December 15, 1944.

based.¹¹⁴

The Economist saw the Greek crisis differently. Founded in 1843, this moderately liberal weekly was largely concerned with economic and financial news but its political commentaries also commanded great attention. The editor, who had made it one of the most influential and most widely quoted papers in the world, was Geoffrey Crowther, an economist and journalist with liberal political affiliations, editor of the Economist from 1938 until 1956.¹¹⁵

The Economist was disturbed by what it described as the British government's "marked tenderness to the Right-wing forces of Europe". In a leading article entitled, "The Greek Disaster", the periodical criticised Churchill for his preference for "discredited dynasties" and his open hostility to the European Left-wing resistance movements and warned its readers that this reactionary policy would put Britain in the position of Metternich unless "British influence were used at once to restore a government in which EAM or the

¹¹⁴Ibid. Nicolson expressed similar views in his speech of December 8, 1944 in the House of Commons and in his diaries. Hansard, vol.406, cols 983-8; Nigel Nicolson (ed.), Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters, 1930-1962, p.417.

¹¹⁵Geoffrey Crowther (1907-1972). Cambridge, Yale and Columbia Universities; editor of the Economist in 1938-56. In 1956 he became chairman of the Central Advisory Council for Education which in 1959 recommended the raising of the school-leaving age to sixteen in what became known as the 'Crowther Report'. In 1969 he became chancellor of the Open University. DNB, 1971-80, pp.199-200.

liberals and the less intransigent of the Right were represented."¹¹⁶ This representative government, however, could not be formed as long as Leeper and Scobie in Athens insisted on the unconditional surrender of EAM/ELAS and the British persisted in supporting a Prime Minister whom the Greek people no longer trusted.¹¹⁷

On December 23, the Economist printed a substantial article on the internal political situation of Greece. The Greek National Liberation Front was "a bloc of the Left and of elements of the Centre" with a leadership in the hands of the liberals. Its communist following was small but its political weight was much greater than its numerical strength. EAM/ELAS stood for a "progressive Leftist Parliamentary Republic". The real issue at stake in Greece was the controversy over republic and monarchy. The Right was haunted by the spectre of a republic which might be radical and the Left feared that a monarchy would soon become a tyranny. The problem was that the Greek liberals had been too weak to bridge the gap between EAM/ELAS and royalism and this aggravated their antagonism. The periodical thought that the Right's fear of a "Red Republic" was genuine enough, but it recognised that EAM/ELAS had no intention of preparing a coup d'état or a civil war. Only the disarming of all partisan forces, the setting up of an impartial Regency and the purge of Athens police could prepare the ground

¹¹⁶ Economist, December 9, 1944.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., December 16, 1944.

for a Greek democracy.¹¹⁸

From the start, Tribune and the New Statesman, two socialist weeklies, took a strong stand against the British military intervention in Greece. In the 1936 conference of the Labour Party, at Edinburgh, the National Executive's policy of "non intervention" in the Spanish civil war had been approved by more than 3 to 1. It was then that a group of prominent socialists such as Stafford Cripps, Aneurin Bevan, Harold Laski, William Mellor, George Strauss, and a few others decided to begin the 'United Front' campaign and to launch Tribune. Cripps who was the periodical's main financial supporter became chairman of the editorial board which also included Bevan, Laski, Strauss, Ellen Wilkinson, and H.N.Brailsford. On the original staff were also Michael Foot and Barbara Castle.

Tribune's editorial line on the Greek crisis was that the Anglo-Greek conflict had come to symbolise the struggle between the forces of reaction and progress throughout the world. The periodical thought that democracy in Europe would inevitably be established through the revolutionary overthrow of anti-democratic state machines and the formation of a broadly-based alliance of the progressive forces in each country.¹¹⁹ Churchill, however, wanted to prevent the resistance

¹¹⁸ Ibid., December 23, 1944.

¹¹⁹ Tribune, December 29, 1944.

movements from changing the pre-war social status quo and to restore and prop up reactionary and counter-revolutionary groups, parties and governments.¹²⁰ While Tribune placed the ultimate blame for the crisis in Greece on Churchill, it was one of the few papers to criticise the Labour leadership for its lukewarm reaction to the intervention. In an editorial following the 1944 Labour Party conference the periodical expressed its dismay and disappointment with the Labour Party which had sacrificed its principles to save its "lethargic, incompetent and out of touch with the membership" leaders.¹²¹

Even more vociferous in its condemnation of British policy in Greece was the New Statesman and Nation. The New Statesman was founded in 1913 by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the leading figures of the Fabian Society, in order "to preach the introduction of scientific method and scientific efficiency in social management".¹²² In January 1931, Clifford Sharp, its first editor, was succeeded by Kingsley Martin and two months later the Nation, a liberal periodical, was amalgamated with the New Statesman. Under the long editorship of Kingsley Martin the New Statesman and Nation was transformed into a socialist weekly, multiplied its sales and became an

¹²⁰ Ibid., December 22, 1944.

¹²¹ Ibid., December 15, 1944.

¹²² Hyams, The New Statesman (London, 1963), p.12.

influential moulder of opinion.¹²³

The New Statesman saw the Anglo-Greek conflict as a struggle for democracy against fascism. The periodical was unquestionably shocked by this demonstration of the reactionary character of the British foreign policy. In an article entitled, "Mr. Churchill's new war", it strongly accused the British Prime Minister of supporting the government of Papandreou and of pursuing a division of Europe into two exclusive spheres of influence. It called his policy in Greece "a sinister exhibition of the cruder morals of imperialism" and "a sin against humanity".¹²⁴ Hugh Miller, a journalist of Russian-Jewish origin, who wrote satirical poems under the pseudonym Sagittarius,¹²⁵ expressed the disgust that the press felt towards such a policy in his poem of December 9. Its last verse ran:

"The Greeks know well for what they fight
No foreign force can keep the peace
And for what end and for what right
Shall Britain now dictate to Greece?
We keep the law, but who are we

¹²³For the history of the periodical see Hyams, The New Statesman; for Kingsley Martin see his two volumes of autobiography: Father Figures (London, 1966) and Editor (London, 1968) and Rolph, Kingsley. Kingsley Martin was born at Hereford in 1897 and was educated at Cambridge. He started his first job as assistant lecturer in politics at the London School of Economics in 1924. Three years later he accepted an appointment as a leader writer on the Manchester Guardian but got on bad terms with the editor, C.P. Scott and left the newspaper. In January 1931 he was appointed new editor of the New Statesman and he remained to his post until December 1960. He died in Cairo on February 16, 1969.

¹²⁴New Statesman, December 16, 1944.

¹²⁵Hyams, The New Statesman, p.200.

To teach Hellenes democracy?"¹²⁶

The New Statesman was no less adamant than Tribune in its criticism of the Labour Ministers. On December 16, it commented that although Ernest Bevin had managed to manoeuvre the Labour conference into acceptance of the resolution on Greece, the voting reflected "not the feeling of the Party or of the country, but simply the success of the executive in obscuring the real issue."¹²⁷ Kingsley Martin expressed his disappointment with the official Labour attitude when he stated that while conscience had spoken through the strength of reaction of the political press and the public opinion, it had not spoken effectively "in the hearts of Labour and Liberal members of the Government".¹²⁸

The general performance of the BBC over Greece closely resembled that of the press. John Nixon, the BBC's special correspondent in Greece, described the bloody events in Athens on December 3 as follows:

"Grey uniformed police drew a cordon round Athens' main square to prevent demonstrators entering it, and I saw British armoured cars standing by. Other police waited in their headquarters just across the street from where I was watching. And just before 11 o'clock a procession appeared in the distance, reaching towards the square. They were shouting slogans and carrying banners of the Left Parties and big flags of Greece, Britain, Russia, and the United States. When the head of the procession was

¹²⁶ New Statesman, December 9, 1944.

¹²⁷ Ibid., December 16, 1944.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

level with the Unknown Warrior's tomb, which overlooks one side of the main square, the police in their headquarters opened fire. Other police lying on the pavement in front of their building joined in, several demonstrators fell, but the rest continued to march forward, still shouting their cries, their banners streaming in the breeze. There was another burst of firing including machine-gun fire and the procession scattered...As far as I could see the demonstrators were not armed."¹²⁹

Nixon did not share Churchill's view that an armed insurrection against the Greek government was taking place. Rather, he believed that it was a clash between "rival bodies of Greeks" in which they were equally culpable. This allegation, his occasional remarks on the unwillingness of EAM/ELAS to fight or the absence of any EAM/ELAS general policy towards Britain and the prominence given by the BBC news bulletins to the speeches critical of official policy, caused a further irritation to the British policymakers and increased their uneasiness at the media coverage of the developments in Athens.¹³⁰

¹²⁹BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC), nine o'clock news broadcast-war report, December 3, 1944.

¹³⁰Ibid., December 4, 9, 1944; Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press...", J.Cont.Hist., vol.19 (1984), pp.467-8; Briggs, The History of Broadcasting, vol.3 The War of Words (1970), p.488.

CHAPTER THREE: THE DECLINE OF OPPOSITION TO BRITISH POLICY IN GREECE IN JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1945

Between December 1944 and March 1945 the British people were gradually induced to adopt a more restrained stance to official policy in Greece. In this period, political discussion was dominated by one important issue: whether there was any other course that the British government could follow in its handling of the Greek affairs. An affirmative answer was more probable, but certain sections of the press, the political world and sections of the population which had previously questioned the motives of the government's actions in Greece were now approaching the whole problem of the Anglo-Greek conflict with relative scepticism and coolness. It appeared to them that Churchill's policy was not mistaken and that military intervention was probably unavoidable.

Two factors can equally clearly be discerned as contributing towards this process. A serious problem for the critics of Churchill's Greek policy was their disadvantage with regard to information. While the government in London relied on the steady stream of reports from the Embassy in Athens, the British public

depended upon the media to inform it as to what was going on in Greece. As a result, official allegations could be questioned but they were difficult to disprove and, consequently, the impression often remained that the government had taken the right decisions. In addition, the intense and prolonged anti-EAM propaganda in Britain - stories of terrorism, hostage taking, mass reprisals, and serious repression by EAM/ELAS during the fighting - exerted a significant influence on the public, who began to believe that EAM were a band of communist murderers, aiming to seize control of Greece and being prevented from doing so by only the timely and effective intervention of British troops. This is not to say that public opinion in Britain suddenly identified itself with the official version of events in Greece. The majority of the population retained a residual support for the Greek resistance and a suspicion of Churchill's intentions in the liberated country. Despite its decline, opposition to the intervention remained significant, particularly among trade unionists and members of the Labour movement.

I. Public reaction and official response

The first official response to the unpredictable popular storm that was to sweep Britain in the coming weeks came immediately after the BBC had transmitted its nine o'clock news broadcast on the tragic events of December 3 in Athens. Anxiously, Churchill instructed his

staff to express to the Corporation his dissatisfaction with its performance because, in his opinion, the conflict in the capital was not, as John Nixon had presented it, a simple clash between royalists and republican sections.¹

The official record shows, and the memoir material confirms, however, that the press and not the BBC was the real cause of the government's embarrassment. According to Osbert Lancaster, press attaché at the British Embassy in Athens, George Hoare of The Times had been "a big disappointment...handicapped by total inability to select from a mass of facts those few which were significant."² Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, hoped someone would "tie Barrington-Ward and Carr and throw them into the Thames."³ Churchill himself was particularly angry with The Times' leaders on Greece and late on the night of December 22, he telephoned Barrington-Ward. While speaking on a different matter, he suddenly switched the conversation to Greece and said that he wanted an early conclusion to the affair "but not at the price of a humiliating skedaddle by British troops." At the request of the Prime Minister, the editor offered to come and see him after Christmas. Churchill agreed but rang off

¹PREM 3 212/10 Peck to Sendall, December 4, 1944.

²FO 371/48234, memorandum from Osbert Lancaster to W.Ridsdale, head of the Foreign Office News Department, December 21, 1944.

³Dilks(ed.), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945 (London, 1971) p.697.

without revealing to him that he proposed to go to Athens.⁴

On January 1, The Times printed a leading article by E.H.Carr which apparently infuriated Churchill.⁵ Immediately the war leader composed a "scoldish letter" to the editor, regretting that the leading article "should have darkened the pages of The Times", but after consultation with Eden, Beaverbrook and Brendan Bracken, Minister of Information, he decided not to send it.⁶ On the same day, Major Maclagan of the War Office expressed his uneasiness over the reporting of the BBC and press correspondents and suggested that they should have guidance, in order to secure a more judicious outlook.⁷ In Athens, Leeper, who generally had a low opinion of the press, shared Maclagan's feelings and thought that the poor quality of the editorials in The Times, the Daily Herald and the News Chronicle accounted for most of the misunderstanding in Britain.⁸

On January 18, Churchill opened the debate on the war situation in the House of Commons and revealed once again his frustration over the press treatment of the

⁴ McLachlan, In the Chair, p.257; McDonald, The History of the Times, vol.5, p.120.

⁵ Even Barrington-Ward found it rather fiercer than it need had been. McDonald, The History of the Times, vol. 5, p.120.

⁶ Colville, The Fringes of Power (London, 1985) p.548; McLachlan, In the Chair, p.258.

⁷ FO 371/48233 R 209, Major Maclagan to D.S.Laskey (Southern Department), January 1, 1945.

⁸ FO 371/48233 R 515, Leeper to Foreign Office, January 7, 1945.

Greek crisis. He stated:

“There is no case in my experience, certainly no case in my war experience, when a British government has been so maligned and its motives so traduced in our own country by important organs of the press among our own people. That this should be done amid the perils of this war, now at its climax, has filled me with surprise and sorrow...How can we wonder at, still more how can we complain of, the attitude of hostile and indifferent newspapers in the United States when we have, in this country, witnessed such a melancholy exhibition as that provided by some of our most time-honoured and responsible journals and others to which such epithets would hardly apply.”⁹

Listening upstairs in the gallery was the editor of The Times who was shocked by the Prime Minister's open onslaught against the paper's line on Greece. In his diary, Barrington-Ward bitterly commented: “This- a direct and obvious reference to The Times- immediately touched off the loudest, largest and most vicious-ever savage!-cheer that I have heard in the House. It must have lasted a full minute or more...It was a vent for the pent-up passions of three years, a protest against all that has, wrongly or rightly, enraged the Tories in the paper during that time.”¹⁰

In later years, Churchill and other protagonists of the Greek drama, feeling fully justified by the subsequent developments in the highly polarised European politics, neither forgot nor forgave the performance of the British press in December 1944. In his memoirs,

⁹Hansard, vol.407, January 18, 1945, col.400.

¹⁰McDonald, The History of The Times, vol.5, p.122; McLachlan, In the Chair, p.253.

Churchill complained that The Times and the Manchester Guardian had regarded British policy in Greece as reactionary, while Harold Macmillan, Minister Resident, recalled in his own war memoirs that The Times, the News Chronicle and the Manchester Guardian had been "dangerous opponents" throughout the Greek crisis.¹¹

The British policymakers were not only concerned about the impact of the fighting in Athens on domestic opinion, but they also attached considerable importance to the international sensitivity and reaction to the intervention. In France, newspapers with Centre or Left affiliations, like Combat, Libération, Humanité regarded the intervention in Greece as a further attempt of an imperialist country to contain the European resistance. In Sweden, the Right-wing press approved of the British action, but the moderate publications felt that the problems in the liberated countries could be solved after the end of the war. In fascist countries, like Spain and Portugal, the general view of the state-controlled press was that the communists had revolted against the legal government of Greece.¹² In Belgrade, the shootings on December 3 were followed by a strong criticism of British policy in speeches and radio

¹¹Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, p.255; Macmillan, The Blast of War, 1939-1945, (London, 1967), p.601.

¹²Royal Institute of International Affairs, Review of the Foreign Press, 1939-1945, no.49. pp.177-8; series B, vol.11, no.266, pp.2-3, no.268, pp.14-5, no.269, p.18.

broadcasts, while in Bulgaria press comments were, in general, in favour of EAM/ELAS.¹³

Stalin and the other Soviet leaders abstained from any public statement concerning events in Greece. According to John.W. Lawrence, British attaché in the Soviet Union in 1942-1945, the authorities in Moscow had instructed the press not to attack British action in the Greek capital.¹⁴ Accordingly, Soviet publications extensively quoted extracts from the dispatches of British and American correspondents in Athens but they refrained from carrying comments.¹⁵ At the Yalta conference, on February 8, 1945, Stalin assured Churchill that he had no intention of criticising British policy in Greece or of interfering in that country.¹⁶ Churchill later recalled that Stalin "adhered strictly and faithfully to our agreement of October, and during all the weeks of fighting the Communists in the streets of Athens, not one word of reproach came from Pravda or Izvestia."¹⁷

The British policymakers felt they had good reasons for being more dissatisfied with the United States'

¹³FO 371/48233 R 412; Xydis, Greece and the Great Powers, 1944-1947 (Thessaloniki, 1963), p.63; Wittner, American Intervention (New York, 1982), p.27.

¹⁴National Peace Council, Two Worlds in Focus (London, 1950) p.105.

¹⁵Xydis, Greece and the Great Powers, 1944-1947, p.63; Iatrides, Revolt in Athens, p.221; Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press...", J.Cont.Hist., vol.19 (1984), p.478.

¹⁶FRUS. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945 (Washington, 1955) pp.781-2; Stettinius, Roosevelt and the Russians (London, 1950) p.195.

¹⁷Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, p.255.

attitude than with the Soviet Union's. Churchill's veto of Count Carlo Sforza, as Italian Foreign Minister, and the military intervention in Greece produced virulent American press attacks. Britain was accused of pursuing anachronistic ways of diplomacy in the context of power politics in order to restore the corrupt status-quo-ante in Europe.¹⁸ In an atmosphere of high expectations for a new international conduct, the American journalists in Athens reflected the increasing anxiety of liberal opinion in their country about Churchill's machinations in the liberated countries. It is interesting that, by the end of 1944, 54% of the American public who were dissatisfied with the extent of the Big Three co-operation blamed Britain for this state of affairs while only 18% blamed the Soviet Union.¹⁹

Differences over tactics in the liberated countries between the United States and Britain became apparent when, on December 5, Edward R. Stettinius, the new U.S. Secretary of State, came out with a statement that was widely interpreted as an official disapproval of British policy in Europe. In connection with the government crisis in Italy, he declared that "the composition of the Italian government is purely an Italian affair" and "this policy would apply to an even more pronounced

¹⁸FO 371/44559, "U.S. press criticism of British foreign policy".

¹⁹Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press...", J.Cont.Hist., vol.19 (1984), p.483; Iatrides, Revolt in Athens, p.214.

degree with regard to governments of the United Nations in the liberated territories.”²⁰ This statement caused great embarrassment and Michael Wright, counsellor of the British Embassy in the United States, immediately visited Stettinius and read to him a message of protest from Eden.²¹ In fact, Stettinius had no intention of criticising British policy in Greece. His main reference was to Italy and to British opposition to a well-known Italian liberal, not Greece. Instead, the purpose of his statement was to appease domestic opinion by reassuring it that the United States policy had always been to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.²²

Communication between American officials and Churchill in December 1944 indicates that the Americans were seriously concerned about the state of domestic opinion. In a letter to Churchill, on December 13, Roosevelt stated that the United States could not officially endorse Britain's intervention in Greece because of “the mounting reaction of public opinion” in his country.²³ Harry Hopkins confirmed the President's estimation when, three days later, he cabled the British Prime Minister that public opinion in the United States

²⁰ Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, pp.258-9.

²¹ Campbell and Herring (eds), The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, JR., 1943-1946 (New York, 1975), p.191.

²² Ibid., p.192.

²³ Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, p.261.

was deteriorating rapidly.²⁴ Churchill worried about this American attitude of reticence towards his policy in Greece, but he was much more upset by the attitude of the American press, especially after the leakage by Drew Pearson of the Washington Post of his order to Scobie to treat Athens if necessary like "a conquered city". Writing at the height of the Cold War, Churchill, in his memoirs, would harbour a grievance against the "irresponsibility" of the American journalists during those critical days of December 1944:

"The vast majority of the American Press violently condemned our action, which they declared falsified the cause for which they had gone to war. If the editors of all these well-meaning organs will look back at what they wrote then and compare it with what they think now they will, I am sure, be surprised."²⁵

II. A policy of disinformation

The severity of the fighting in Athens and the mounting popular reaction in Britain and the United States played a significant role in the change of British political tactics initiated on December 25, 1944. Leeper, Macmillan and General Alexander had come to realise that a return of the King, considering the existing circumstances in the Greek capital, might prove disastrous, since it would strengthen EAM's unity, increase the fighting zeal of the ELAS men and arouse

²⁴Ibid., p.263.

²⁵Ibid., p.255.

domestic and international public opinion against British policy. They, therefore, advised Churchill to modify his original rigid course of policy in Greece and to agree to Archbishop Damaskinos being appointed Regent.²⁶

Churchill accepted the recommendations of his officials and on Christmas Eve flew to Athens. Although a political solution to the crisis was not found, Churchill succeeded in satisfying two important demands of EAM: that the King should not return in Greece until a plebiscite favourable to him took place and that the Papandreou government should be replaced by a more representative one. The British press, which had also espoused these demands, on the whole approved of Churchill's initiatives.

The Times described Churchill's decision to go to Athens as "an act of statesmanlike courage."²⁷ Carr felt, however, that progress had not gone very far and that the reason for this was the partisanship of the British representatives. A peaceful settlement was impossible so long as British troops were fighting "the largest organised group of parties in Greece". "This is no question", Carr wrote on January 1, "of prestige or of the pursuit of a victory for British arms. On this field, military victory spells only political defeat...

²⁶ Macmillan, The Blast of War, 1939-1945, pp.608-10; Leeper, When Greek Meets Greek, p.120.

²⁷ The Times, December 27, 1944.

There is no ground for pride or satisfaction in the knowledge that British troops have been engaged in house-to-house fighting in a working-class suburb of Athens.”²⁸

The liberal press which had used a violent language against the intervention was most vocal in supporting Churchill's new diplomatic moves. The Manchester Guardian congratulated Churchill for his “brave and generous gesture,” and claimed that his decision proved that his aims in Greece were not imperialist or connected with the suppression of democratic resistance forces.²⁹ The News Chronicle hailed his visit to Athens as “evidence of the Prime Minister's vigour, imagination and sense of duty.”³⁰

The conservative press welcomed with joy the new initiatives of Churchill. The Daily Telegraph thanked the Prime Minister for his “act of lofty self-sacrifice...in order to carry a seasonable message of peace and goodwill to the distracted people of Greece,” and the Daily Mail praised him for his contempt for personal danger and his political courage.³¹

The Daily Herald followed a path similar to the conservative and liberal press and described Churchill's journey to Greece as “the first constructive move

²⁸Ibid., January 1, 1945.

²⁹Manchester Guardian, December 27, 1944.

³⁰News Chronicle, December 27, 1944.

³¹Daily Telegraph, December 27, 1944; Daily Mail, December 29, 1944.

towards a settlement.”³²The Daily Worker also thought that in modifying his policy the Prime Minister had abandoned the previously intransigent position and had “taken a further step forward which, though belated, might have far-reaching results.”³³

The Spectator found Churchill’s mission of inestimable value, but Tribune and the New Statesman did not share this view.³⁴In an editorial entitled, “the plot that fooled you”, Tribune stated that Churchill had gone to Athens not to find a solution that he could have achieved long ago, but to persuade the Royalists to accept the Regency. The New Statesman called his visit “a manoeuvring” because he had not modified his original instruction to Scobie to destroy or neutralise all EAM and ELAS groups in Athens.³⁵

From the autumn of 1943, British policymakers had been highly conscious of the need to isolate the hard core of KKE from the moderates in EAM. If they succeeded, EAM would be seen by world opinion not as an anti-fascist organisation, but as synonymous with the

³²Daily Herald, December 27, 1944.

³³Daily Worker, December 27, 1944. Yet, within a few days the communist newspaper would admit that Churchill was not prepared for a genuine reconciliation. See Daily Worker, December 29, 1944.

³⁴Spectator, December 29, 1944.

³⁵Tribune, January 12, 1945; New Statesman, January 6, 1945. It should be noted, however, that both the periodicals printed their comments on Churchill’s visit to Athens when it was evident that it had not been successful.

Communist Party. In fact, two tiny groups in the resistance coalition, the Union of Popular Democracy (ELD) and the Socialist Party of Greece (SKE), broke away from EAM as late as March 1945. However, periodical disputes on post-liberation problems did actually occur, especially in the Salonica EAM. On December 1, a serious disagreement within the Macedonian EAM Central Committee emerged when EAM declined to demobilise its militia, the National Civil Guard. On December 12, ELD and SKE dissociated themselves from the protests delivered regularly by EAM to the British government in Salonica, and, on January 10, some leaders of the city's ELD and SKE visited the Greek Prime Minister, General Plastiras, and Leeper, expressing their support for the anti-EAM/ELAS policies. These unofficial initiatives were not endorsed by the Central Committees of the two EAM parties. Yet, these developments, and the fact that a Greek trade union delegation had visited Leeper and thanked the British for their military intervention, were instrumental in creating the false impression that EAM consisted merely of militant Leftists and that the Greek labour movement wholeheartedly supported Churchill's policies.³⁶

Much of the sympathy which the Greek resistance movement enjoyed in Britain in the first weeks of the

³⁶Richter, British intervention in Greece, pp.21-3; Alexander, "British perceptions of EAM/ELAS...", Balkan Studies, vol.21 (1980), pp.203-16.

conflict was dissipated by revelations about civilian hostages taking by ELAS and ELAS atrocities. Since mid-December and partially as a response to persecution and arrests of Left-wing sympathisers by supporters of the Greek Right, EAM/ELAS had resorted to the practice of taking hostages. When, in January 1945, ELAS began to retreat from Athens most of these civilian prisoners were driven northward towards Thebes on foot in bad weather conditions and many of them were cruelly treated.³⁷ This unjustified and useless practice proved to be a serious mistake: it forced the Greek Left to adopt a defensive attitude in the armistice negotiations, making too many concessions to the Greek Right and the British and it provided the British government with a propaganda weapon which it skillfully used in order to justify the intervention in Greece and to blacken EAM/ELAS in the eyes of world public opinion.

In the notable parliamentary debate on January 18/19, Churchill produced documents from Leeper, all offering detailed evidence of fearful brutalities practiced by ELAS on hostages. These documents quoted by Churchill, plus a few other reports from the Embassy in Athens and Consul-General Rapp at Salonica, were included in a White Paper published on January 31. The White Paper was divided in two parts. The first part entitled, "Treatment of hostages by ELAS", contained six

³⁷Richter, British Intervention in Greece, pp.10-1; McNeill, The Greek Dilemma, p.155.

telegrams from Leeper and three from Rapp, most of them ordered for the purpose of Churchill's speech in the House of Commons. The second part entitled, "Statements by Greek political Parties", consisted of a falsified version of EDES charter, the secession statement of ELD, the SKE's denunciation of EAM, a resolution passed at a mass meeting of Athens Right-wingers on January 14 and the alleged decision of the Macedonian socialists to secede.³⁸

The anti-EAM/ELAS propaganda campaign reached its climax with the publication of the TUC delegation report, on February 9.³⁹ As the German historian Heinz Richter has noted "How this delegation which should have concerned itself with Greek trade union problems was re-oriented by Churchill for his political purposes is a story probably unique in international trade union history."⁴⁰

When the Greek trade union delegation visited Leeper on January 10 they expressed the hope that a TUC delegation might come over to Greece to ascertain the

³⁸Documents regarding the situation in Greece, January 1945.

³⁹TUC, What We Saw In Greece, MGA/PM 73.

⁴⁰Richter, British Intervention in Greece, p.25. The British government welcomed the TUC report and arranged for Citrine to broadcast (Weiler, British Labour, Stanford 1988, p.335 n.52). It is also interesting that when in 1948 the Greek government offered the TUC money to re-issue the report they refused. Richter, British Intervention in Greece, p.42.

situation on the spot.⁴¹ The issue was discussed on January 12 and 16 between Churchill and the general-secretary of the TUC, Walter Citrine. Initially, Citrine refused to go to Athens because of his relative ignorance of Greek trade union matters but he finally accepted the Prime Minister's invitation to head a deputation.⁴² His task, as outlined by Churchill himself, was to study the country's trade union problems and make suggestions as to how these problems could be solved. He should keep clear of politics and avoid holding talks with EAM/ELAS members.⁴³ The General Council of the TUC appointed a delegation comprising Walter Citrine, George Bagnall of the Textile Workers, George Chester of the Boot and Shoe Operatives, John Benstead of the Railwaymen and Ernest Bell of the TUC's international Department as secretary.

The delegation left for Greece on January 22 and remained there for twelve days. In Athens, they saw a great many people, including the British Ambassador, General Scobie, the Regent, the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Justice, Labour, and Foreign Affairs, British and American press correspondents, and the BBC representative Ronald Matthews. They also met representa-

⁴¹FO 371/48246 R 770, Leeper to Foreign Office, January 10, 1945.

⁴²FO 371/48247 R 1053; Richter, British Intervention in Greece, p.27; Silver, Victor Feather, TUC (London, 1973) p.74; Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press...", J.Cont.Hist., vol.19(1984), p.471.

⁴³FO 371/48248 R 1415, draft of a letter from Churchill to Citrine, January 16, 1945.

tives of the Association of Greek industries and the Chamber of Commerce, and discussed the situation with officials of the government who specialised in Labour questions. But with the exception of one discussion with EAM trade union leaders on January 27, at Livadia, a town some hundred miles north of Greece, they had no contact with representatives of the Greek Left.

Forgetting Churchill's injunction not to be drawn into Greek politics, Citrine and the other British trade unionists devoted much time to the alleged EAM/ ELAS atrocities, the prisoners of war and the morale of British troops. At a cemetery in Peristeri, a suburb of Athens, they were shown the exhumed bodies of hundreds of people who, according to the Greek authorities, had been executed by guerrillas. When Citrine returned to his hotel he "was outraged to find that only a few of the correspondents of the [British] newspapers had actually visited this dismal scene of slaughter."⁴⁴ Then they interviewed a number of British prisoners of war recently released by ELAS and addressed an audience of over 500 British paratroopers detailed by Scobie. They were told that ELAS mal treated its prisoners, was fighting not the Germans but the Greek people and that

⁴⁴Citrine, Two Careers (London, 1967), p.213. According to Marion Sarafis (letter to the author, May 22, 1992), Citrine "went to Greece with a 'brief' and the Greek police duly set up some mass graves of 'atrocities' for him, with bodies they dug up from normal cemeteries." The same opinion is also expressed by Richter in British Intervention in Greece, p.28 and by Eudes, in The Kapetanios, p.220.

if the British troops had not intervened there would be wholesale massacre. Citrine accepted their version of events and made no attempt to check the truth of their allegations.

On January 29, Citrine turned his attention at last to trade union issues and organised a conference in which representatives of two groups and the Labour Minister, Sideris, participated. One group consisted of members of the original General Confederation of Greek Labour (GSEE) executive appointed by Porfyrogenis, the communist Minister of Labour in the Papandreou government, and the other of members of the new GSEE executive appointed by the Plastiras government. The latter group included mainly men who had served under the Metaxas dictatorship. The agreement reached at this conference provided for the reconstitution of the provisional executive committee of the GSEE once the country returned to normal peacetime conditions and the holding of elections, first in Athens-Piraeus and then in the whole country, under the supervision of one representative of each of the contending factions and one representative of the TUC.

The White Paper and the Citrine report were extensively commented on by the British press. The Times regarded the taking of hostages as a "detestable practice" which was, however, justified as EAM's "last

defence against wholesale victimization.”⁴⁵ In an editorial following the armistice negotiations, the publication stated on the issue of hostages:

“The taking of hostages, whether for military or political reasons, is not rendered less abhorrent or more defensible by the fact that it invariably and inevitably accompanies modern civil conflicts. The first and chief responsibility of EAM and ELAS, if they genuinely seek and expect a peaceful and democratic settlement of the political future of their country, will be to set free these unfortunate civilians. Their retention of the hostages may be proof alike of their continued mistrust of the motives of the other side, of their fear of undefined punishments and reprisals, and of the fissures in their own ranks. Explanation, however, is not excuse, and nothing can extenuate their shameful practice.”⁴⁶

The Times thought that the reports in the White Paper were based on true evidence, but it placed the ultimate blame for the ELAS outrages on the legacy of the Metaxas dictatorship.⁴⁷ With regard to the TUC delegation report, the newspaper remarked that it followed the line of the White Paper. Although the trade union mission found it difficult to segregate the issue with which it had come to deal from the prevailing atmosphere of “tension, suspicion, recrimination” and “fear of reprisals,” it neither attempted any systematic inquiry into them, nor did it make any recommendations. ELAS atrocities may have been true, but they could be fully understood in relation to the Right-wing terror

⁴⁵ The Times, January 19, 1945.

⁴⁶ Ibid., January 13, 1945.

⁴⁷ Ibid., February 1, 1945.

and the heavily polarised atmosphere created by eight years of dictatorship and occupation. "Nothing in Sir Walter Citrine's report," The Times stated on February 9, "bears, or was intended to bear, on those longer-term issues, which were nonetheless determining factors in everything that had occurred."⁴⁸

Similarly, the Manchester Guardian cast doubt on the objectivity of the Citrine report. The newspaper explained that while ELAS had indeed committed atrocities for which they should be rightly denounced, British standards could not be applied to Greece. Greece had suffered from "many years of misgovernment, of Fascism and dictatorship, of ignorance and oppression, and, above all, of the German occupation and the devilish German policy of setting Greek against Greek."⁴⁹ The other influential liberal paper, the News Chronicle, felt especially bitter about the continued detention of hostages which it described as "a relic of barbarism."⁵⁰ However, as we shall see, its editor Gerald Barry who visited Athens at almost exactly the same time with the TUC delegation, offered a more thoughtful, in-depth interpretation of the problem of hostages than Citrine and his findings were preferred by the critics of British policy in Greece over those of the TUC mission.⁵¹

⁴⁸Ibid., February 9, 1945.

⁴⁹Manchester Guardian, February 9, 1945.

⁵⁰News Chronicle, January 17, 1945.

⁵¹See, for example, the editorial of the Reynolds News on February 11, 1945: "And after reading both reports, we

The conservative press thought that the two reports had vindicated its line on Greece. The Daily Telegraph called the White Paper "a story of atrocity comparable in modern times only with the deeds of Nazidom and Abdul Hamid."⁵² The newspaper felt proud of its correspondent in Athens "whose messages from the beginning to the end of this distressing episode were models of accuracy and objectivity."⁵³ The Daily Herald commented that the practice of taking hostages was intensely disliked in Britain and that the cruel treatment of ELAS hostages turned many former sympathisers against EAM.⁵⁴ Michael Foot, however, was not one of those who had been affected by stories of ELAS atrocities. In his article of January 23, he pointed out that ELAS had committed atrocities, but this did not mean that all else had to be forgotten or irrelevant. It could not be forgotten that Britain supported the King, that the Left feared a coup from the Right, that EAM had done good services to the allied cause.⁵⁵ The Reynolds News thought that the White Paper was nothing more than "an anthology of these Leeperisms which appear to bolster up the Government's case." The co-operative newspaper deplored

say with regret that for an understanding insight into the historical and contemporary causes of the tragedy we have to turn not to the report of our own movement, but to the editor of a Liberal newspaper."

⁵²Daily Telegraph, February 2, 1945.

⁵³Ibid., February 9, 1945. See also Daily Mail, February 12 and 13, 1945.

⁵⁴Daily Herald, January 13, 1945.

⁵⁵Ibid., January 23, 1945.

the taking of hostages, but at the same time it recognised the right of Left-wing sympathizers to protect themselves from fanatical supporters of former members of the collaborationist units.⁵⁶

The Daily Worker was reluctant to accept that ELAS, facing defeat, had turned to wholesale arrests accompanied by acts of extremist violence. Rather, it regarded the atrocity stories as part of an official "malicious campaign" against EAM/ELAS.⁵⁷ The TUC delegation had found the time to obtain the views of the leaders of only one side and, therefore, its report was "heavily sprinkled with hasty political generalization reminiscent of those prejudices which were such a strong feature of Sir Walter's earlier reports on Russia and Finland."⁵⁸

III. The press: Reconsidering the military intervention in Greece

In the first two months of 1945 the British press continued to concern itself with the current developments in Greece, but after the signing of the truce on January 11 much newspaper space was devoted to general analyses of the character of the conflict in Athens and to recommendations for the period of transition.

On January 9, The Times printed an editorial by

⁵⁶Reynolds News, January 14 and February 4, 1945.

⁵⁷Daily Worker, February 2, 1945.

⁵⁸Ibid., February 9, 1945.

Tyerman which stated that EAM/ELAS still had no choice other than unconditional surrender or liquidation. Little consolation was to be found in the news that British troops were not to move outside Attica in pursuit of the anti-government forces. Any further aid to the Greek reactionaries would be disastrous:

“But at the end the civil war would remain to spring up again with the eventual withdrawal of armed British aid, and a most grave disservice would have been rendered both to Greek peace and democracy and to the British interests in the Balkans and the Mediterranean- and in the war against the common German enemy. These are not questions of ideology or partisanship, but of fact.”⁵⁹

When the controversy over events in Greece began to diminish, especially after the truce in January, The Times and some other publications came to adopt a more sympathetic attitude towards official policy. They still condemned the intervention, but they also felt that their lack of information about the internal developments in Greece during the occupation and after the liberation had induced them to be less than fair to their own government in judging motives.

On February 9, The Times claimed that “once the tragedy had culminated in the outbreak of open war between ELAS and the British troops, no other course was open to the British government than that which they pursued.”⁶⁰ At the end of the same month the newspaper

⁵⁹The Times, January 9, 1945.

⁶⁰Ibid., February 9, 1945.

praised Churchill for his contribution to the improvement of the Greek situation. It stated:

"...and Mr. Churchill's share in the achievement will be warmly acknowledged-not least by those who, at an earlier and darker stage, felt it their duty to insist that the issues, as the event showed, could not be reduced merely to the suppression of criminal violence and to press upon the British government the policy of conciliation and negotiation."⁶¹

The Manchester Guardian believed that inadequate knowledge of the facts had led to serious misunderstandings and misconceptions. EAM was a Left-wing coalition representing "the most vigorous and progressive part of the Greek nation." ELAS was not a handful of "thugs", but an army of peasants and workers. It was natural that some ELAS members had committed crimes since it was an uneven struggle and they lived in a period of Greek history in which "democracy was under constant persecution." The newspaper thought that "the cause of the civil war was the failure to give the moderate EAM the confidence of power." The British government might have saved the situation if they had supported the moderates and given them a share of responsibility.⁶²

On January 19, however, the Manchester Guardian warmly congratulated Churchill on his Commons defence of the government's foreign policy, claiming that British

⁶¹Ibid., February 28, 1945.

⁶²Manchester Guardian, January 13, 1945.

policy in Greece was inspired by honest and honourable motives.⁶³ The Manchester Guardian found itself in a very difficult position when it became known that ELAS had distributed to British forces material from its editorial columns in the hope of undermining troop morale. Its leader comment of February 9 stated: "If the British press is charged with being misinformed about the fighting in Greece, the soldiers were certainly misinformed about the British press."⁶⁴ In later years, John Pringle, the chief leader writer on Greece, would regret his original reports on the crisis: "Once again I think I was wrong though I never wrote better leaders in my life. Wadsworth fully supported me and wrote one or two himself. Of course we both relied too much on the reports of The Times correspondent in Athens whose service we shared."⁶⁵

The News Chronicle's view on the Greek crisis is well portrayed by the report of its editor, Gerald Barry.⁶⁶ At the Foreign Office's instigation, the paper decided to send out to Greece its diplomatic correspondent, Vernon Bartlett, who was generally regarded as moderate and able. In the event, Bartlett became ill

⁶³Ibid., January 19, 1945.

⁶⁴Ibid., February 9, 1945.

⁶⁵Ayerst, Guardian, p.586.

⁶⁶Barry's Report on Greece was published in the News Chronicle, in a series of three articles on February 8, 9, 12, 1945.

and was immediately replaced by the editor.⁶⁷

Barry undertook investigations on the spot from January 18 to February 1. First, he dealt with the taking of hostages. Like the TUC delegation, he visited Peristeri and interviewed many hostages. His conclusion was that by taking hostages and terrorizing the population, EAM had made two serious blunders which had cost them "an immeasurable amount of sympathy." He believed, however, that in an atmosphere of fear and intense bitterness acts of violence by both sides were inevitable. There were three reasons for the atrocities committed by ELAS. Some were acts of personal vendetta, some the result of indiscipline among the rank and file; some former collaborators had been condemned to death by military courts and had been executed. As regards the taking of hostages, Barry accepted KKE's interpretation that ELAS began to take civilian prisoners only when the number of arrests by the government side had reached high proportions. This practice was an immediate result of the "psychology of reprisals", developed during the years of occupation among people living "under the shadow of repression, lawlessness and violence, encompassed by hatred and fear."⁶⁸

Then, Barry dwelt in some detail on the causes of the Greek crisis and the refusal of ELAS to disarm.

⁶⁷Foster, "Politicians, Public Opinion and the Press...", J.Cont.Hist., vol.19 (1984), pp.473-4.

⁶⁸News Chronicle, February 8, 1945.

The Papandreou government had not fulfilled the Lebanon agreement. The "X" organisation continued to control and terrorize, while the public service and the security forces remained unpurged. The Left demanded that certain important conditions be met before ELAS troops surrendered their weapons. This demand was motivated by a rising sense of uncertainty about the country's political future and, in particular, by fears of impending royalist repression. The government, however, did nothing to disperse EAM suspicion that the Right-wing Mountain Brigade was to be used as a political counterweight. As a result, EAM lost its faith in Papandreou, its Ministers resigned and a fierce conflict broke out. Now an agreement seemed imminent, but it would be useless "unless a great many difficult things could be done to eradicate distrust, mollify hatred, and rebuild the ruined economic and moral fabric of the Greek nation."⁶⁹

Barry was impressed by the extent of mutual fear in Greek society. The Right feared communism and slavism, the Left a continuing British involvement on behalf of the Greek reactionaries. Britain should take some responsibility for helping to create this polarised political climate. Barry believed that "the problem of Greece was the problem of Europe". The Greek crisis illustrated the reluctance of the liberated countries to return to the same political, economic, and social

⁶⁹ Ibid., February 9, 1945.

institutional patterns which had prevailed before the devastating impact of the war and prolonged enemy occupation.⁷⁰

The Daily Telegraph exemplified the feelings of the conservative press when it claimed that the British people knew that their leader had done everything he could to avert the conflict. The Telegraph felt proud that it had not been deceived by the "stream of distortion" emanating from the British correspondents in Athens.⁷¹ Its own correspondent, Richard Capell, continued to provide it with his hostile anti-Left dispatches. On January 8, Capell claimed that ELAS had refrained from anti-Nazi activity because the preoccupation of EAM was with the plan to establish a dictatorship of the extreme Left.⁷² A few weeks later he repeated this view and concluded:

"What British Arms have accomplished is the checking of a revolution as retrograde as it is criminal; a revolution fratricidal beyond anything known in the country's troubled history; a revolution whose success would have been an encouragement to violence and to despair of all friends of freedom."⁷³

The Spectator also thought that the military intervention was necessary and inevitable. It would be

⁷⁰Ibid., February 12, 1945.

⁷¹Daily Telegraph, January 19, 1945.

⁷²Ibid., January 8, 1945.

⁷³Ibid., January 31, 1945.

contrary to their principles if the British rejected responsibility, withdrew from the country and left the Greeks to fight out the war to the bitter end. Britain's conciliatory policy had induced the Greek government to be moderate and ELAS/EAM to hand in their arms.⁷⁴

In contrast to some influential newspapers with conservative or liberal tendencies like The Times and the Manchester Guardian which, in January-February, took a more sober line in any criticism they might advance regarding the intervention, publications which had committed themselves to the socialist cause retained their attitude of strong opposition to official policy in Greece. They did not share Churchill's contempt for the Greek resistance movement and they were not willing to believe his propagandist libels against the Greek Left.

Tribune told its readers that the December events were a result of the past policy of the British government designed to keep Greece in the British zone of influence. The crisis could have been avoided "if Mr. Churchill had been less badly informed by his professional advisers, if he had been less blinded by his stubborn prejudices and if the King and his clique had been less exclusively concerned with their own intrigues and lust for power." Now that the conflict had ended

⁷⁴Spectator, February 16, 1945.

the British had good reasons to be satisfied with the Plastiras government which faithfully carried out Churchill's policy of liquidating the Left.⁷⁵ The Daily Worker felt that the failure of Churchill's visit to Athens, the appointment of the conservative Plastiras and the official propaganda campaign in Britain had proved that its interpretation of the December events was not wrong: the military intervention in Greece served as a warning that Churchill intended to practise an underhanded and aggressive foreign policy to get what he wanted in the liberated countries.⁷⁶

IV. The politicians, the people

The Greek crisis was again discussed in the House of Commons during the debate on foreign policy on January 18/19. Churchill opened the debate and spoke for over two hours, dividing his speech for luncheon. In the first part he referred to the Greek question and in the second he surveyed the international situation. According to Harold Nicolson, who was present, Churchill, despite his indisposition, spoke with "immense vivacity, persuasiveness and humour."⁷⁷ His speech was often accompanied by thunderous cheers from the Tory benches while the Labour Members for the most

⁷⁵Tribune, January 5, 16, 1945.

⁷⁶Daily Worker, January 13, 1945.

⁷⁷Nigel Nicolson(ed.), Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters, 1939-1945, p.429.

part were silent with the exception of Bevan who disputed Churchill's statements with bitter interjections. The Prime Minister reviewed developments since the beginning of the Anglo-Greek conflict and reiterated his well-known views on the Greek resistance. He furiously denounced EAM/ELAS, declared that they had conserved their forces for civil war instead of fighting the Germans and claimed that his policy had prevented "a hideous massacre in which all forms of government would have been set aside and triumphant Trotskyism installed." Then he attempted to substantiate his arguments and to discredit his critics inside and outside the House by devoting much of his speech to recounting the inhumanity of ELAS to its prisoners and hostages.⁷⁸

Churchill was followed by Arthur Greenwood who spoke for the non-Ministerial Members of the Labour Party. The character and the tone of his speech were barely differentiated from those of his speeches on the Greek question in Parliament before Christmas. Again, he did not utter one word of dissent from the government's Greek policy. Instead, he praised the government for the establishment of the Regency and the signing of the Armistice and condemned the retention of hostages as vigorously as Churchill had done. His eagerness not to embarrass the Labour Ministers became apparent when, alarmed by the loud applause for his statement that

⁷⁸Hansard, vol.407, January 18, 1945, cols 396-428.

there was a danger of further British interference in the Greek political life, he hastened to assure the House that he had never objected to British troops going to Greece.⁷⁹ By contrast, Daniel Lipson, an Independent of the moderate Right, expressed the anxiety felt by many people, not to be identified with the Left, when he confessed to the House that he was more in sympathy with those who criticised the government than with those who supported it. He did not doubt the good motives and intentions of the government in going into Greece, but he was concerned with the result of its policy. It had inflicted a blow on national unity, caused much criticism in other countries, particularly in the United States, and tied up in Greece large forces badly needed elsewhere. His complaint was not that the government had backed a horse of the wrong political colour, but that they had backed a political horse at all.⁸⁰

Support for the government came from Quintin Hogg who made a slashing attack on Churchill's critics. He admitted that the Labour Ministers in the coalition government and the Labour Party as a whole had adopted the proper attitude towards the events in Greece, but he was disturbed by the activities of three little cliques within the Labour movement representing "the professional agitator, the near-communists and the mere

⁷⁹ Ibid., cols 428-35.

⁸⁰ Ibid., cols 437-44.

intellectuals.”⁸¹The next speaker, Seymour Cocks, did not comment on the remarks of Hogg, but he concentrated on reducing the impact of Churchill’s atrocities stories. In order to offset the bad impression left on the House by the Prime Minister and his supporters of the Greek resistance, he read extracts from the letters of British soldiers in Greece who expressed their appreciation of his stand on the Greek question, and stressed that the taking of hostages, however horrible and abhorrent it might seem, was inevitable in conditions of civil war. The reason why EAM/ELAS were keeping hostages was their own fear of punishment. Cocks was very surprised that Churchill was now saying that ELAS forces had done nothing much against the Germans. Despite the government’s propaganda campaign his confidence in EAM/ELAS had not been shaken:

“It is not an organisation of political parties. EAM is the national resistance movement- a movement of the whole people. It is not an addition of the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the Labour and Socialists Parties and so on. They may be in it, but it is an association of people, many of whom do not belong to a political party at all. It is not a political but a national movement, and the object which it lays down is the liberation of Greece from the Axis conquest and the reorganisation of the nation and of a free people rid of all foreign domination.”

Then Cocks reviewed British policy in Greece during the occupation and made a detailed analysis of the key factors which had precipitated the Greek tragedy: in

⁸¹Ibid., cols 452-67.

August 1943, representatives of the three resistance organisations, EAM, EDES, and EKKA, went to Egypt but they failed to persuade the British authorities not to insist on the restoration of the King without a plebiscite; the Caserta agreement was a trap set by the Greek government in order to prevent EAM from obtaining control of Athens; after liberation, the government instead of arresting collaborators, demanded the demobilisation of ELAS; the final break at the end of November was made by the Right, not by the Left; nothing else could prove more clearly Churchill's determination to extirpate the ELAS bands than his order to Scobie to act as if he was in a conquered city.⁸²

Attlee wound up the first day's debate with a speech which the New Statesman described as "a painful example of psychological prestidigitation, of an honest man juggling with his soul."⁸³ It was another remarkable demonstration of the Labour leadership's conservatism. Attlee pleaded for a debate without emotionalism and in a way similar to that of Ernest Bevin in the previous December's Labour Party conference, declared that neither Churchill nor Eden but the whole cabinet was responsible for the decisions on Greece. He found the various statements in Cocks's speech "completely mistaken", but he avoided dealing with them. Instead, he attempted to bring Cocks into party line by urging him to trust more

⁸²Ibid., cols 467-79.

⁸³New Statesman, January 27, 1945.

the word of the Ministers than that of a Greek or a journalist. Suggesting that it was very difficult "to get knowledge of all the facts" he demanded that "on the record of this government, on the known opinions of this government, we have the right to be trusted to carry out the principles in which we believe." Aneurin Bevan interjected "No", whereupon Attlee countered: "I have stuck a good deal more closely to carrying out the principles in which I believe and in working with my party than has the Hon.Member opposite."⁸⁴

The debate continued the following day by Percy Harris with some criticism of Churchill's speech which he thought had oversimplified the issue with its lurid pictures of ELAS forces as outright communists. Like Cocks, Harris was of the opinion that the Greek problem could not be isolated from the general European position. The common element in all the occupied countries was the struggle between those who had acquiesced in the state of affairs or even collaborated with the enemy and those who had fought to free their country and were now anxious to have some share of responsibility in the government.⁸⁵ Stanley Holmes of the Liberal-Nationals did not agree with Harris. He believed that in Greece the communists had endeavoured to attack their own country and enslave their compatriots and hoped British policy in Greece would be

⁸⁴Hansard, vol.407, January 18, 1945, cols 487-93.

⁸⁵Ibid., January 19, 1945, cols 515-21.

continued, if necessary, in other European countries when they were liberated.⁸⁶

The most unsparing critics of British policy in Greece were again Richard Acland and Aneurin Bevan. Acland made a desperate effort to refute Churchill's propaganda about the ELAS atrocities and the role of the Greek resistance; he was only partially successful. Although he mentioned some notable ELAS successes such as the destruction of the Gorgopotamos Bridge and the widespread diversionary activities in the summer of 1943, he was unable to disprove the charge that ELAS had committed atrocities. He pointed out, however, that in conditions of civil war it was irrelevant who had committed the most cruelties. More important was which side had pushed matters to the point where the conflict became inevitable.⁸⁷

Bevan delivered one of his most violent attacks on Churchill. He told the House that there was no single politician more capable of distorting facts than the Prime Minister. He had the worst record of any British statesman for intervening in the internal affairs of other countries. In Greece, he had supported the King to the limit and had opposed the Regency, but under the pressure of his critics he had been forced to yield. His story of strong ELAS forces marching on Athens with a view to a massacre of the population was "a grotesque

⁸⁶ Ibid., cols 540-2.

⁸⁷ Ibid., cols 549-64.

piece of Churchillian rubbish." As for the atrocities, the Tories should not "conceal the truth from the people by hiding behind the bloody hands of a few assassins." Bevan saw the Greek episode as one which demonstrated the deep gulf of principles between the two major Parties: "Why should we believe that a Tory is different abroad from what he is at home? He is the friend of the City at home and the friend of Hambros in Athens. He is the friend of the landlord here, as he is there; the friend of the rich and powerful there, as he is here."⁸⁸

Eden brought the debate to an end by demanding a vote of confidence for the government's Greek policy. The House was divided on the amendment put by Acland that asked for a reduction of the vote of credit of £1 billion for war expenditure by £100. Churchill secured the vote by 342 to 9, including the tellers. The MPs who voted against the government were Richard Acland and Hugh Lawson, the Labour Seymour Cocks, William Cove, David Kirkwood, Alfred Salter and Alexander Sloan, *the Independent Labour D. M. Pritt, and W. Gallacher*¹¹² Labour Members were absent; forty-five Labour Members voted for the government including eleven Ministers and whips. Attlee, Dalton and Stafford Cripps were among those in the government lobby. Other votes recorded for the government included those of seventeen Liberal-Nationals (eleven abstentions), six Liberals (eleven abstentions), and eight Independents (two abstentions).

⁸⁸Ibid., cols 569-80.

Of the total number of 358 conservative Members ninety-seven were absent and two were "paired" with two ILP Members.⁸⁹

The result of the voting indicates, first and foremost, that the Labour Party in general and its Left-wing in particular remained unconvinced and dissatisfied with the official interpretation of the Greek crisis. It may appear at first glance quite surprising that only nine MPs voted against the government compared with thirty-two a few weeks earlier. But we must take into account three factors which led to this outcome: that during the debate on Greece the government made a further use of its propaganda sources which had a significant impact upon several MPs; that some Members who constantly criticised Britain's foreign policy like Bevan, Strauss and Stokes preferred to abstain as they felt that the government had been forced by the critics and the Labour Party conference to make substantial concessions; that the division had been staged on a war vote of credit which meant that anyone who voted against official policy could be accused of voting against the war effort. Secondly, what strikes the observer is the unwillingness of the Labour leaders to express any dissent from Churchill and his supporters. During the debate no criticism passed the lips of Attlee or Greenwood who naturally voted for the government. Finally, the result demonstrates that opposition to

⁸⁹ Ibid., cols 609-12; The Times, January 22, 1945.

Churchill's Greek policy was not confined to the Labour and Communist Parties. Even conservatives and liberals felt that some sort of injustice had been done to the Greek resistance movement. As Percy Harris put it in the Commons "it is quite a mistake to think that it is organised agitation engineered by a political section... I find both on the Right and the Left a feeling of sadness and tragedy."⁹⁰

The Greek issue flared up again and for the last time during the December events, on January 30, when Acland in the course of a further debate on British foreign policy in the Commons, questioned the integrity and honesty of Churchill and Eden. Not surprisingly, his comments provoked fierce protests and interjections from the conservative benches. In the two days' Commons debate Acland could not refute the official view on the treatment of hostages and the split of EAM. But, as he was now better informed, he made serious charges against the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. He was certain that Churchill and Eden knew when they were speaking in the House on January 18/19 that ELAS had already begun the systematic release of hostages and that the men who had split from EAM had never been members of the Socialist Party in the period before the war. Despite Hogg's attempt to interrupt him while he was speaking, Acland was unyielding:

⁹⁰Hansard, vol.407, January 19, 1945, col.515.

"I do say that this House of Commons has been deceived, and that at any time in the nineteenth century or before the last war this House would not have tolerated it but would have insisted on an inquiry to find out with whom the responsibility for deception rested."⁹¹

Before we proceed with the popular reaction in Britain in January-February 1945 it would be interesting to deal with another part of public opinion: the British armed forces in Greece. According to the TUC delegation report, EAM/ELAS had left a bad impression on British troops. When Citrine asked them about their opinion of EAM/ELAS the soldiers attacked the British press and the Left of the Labour Party and expressed their anger of the guerrillas' unfair fighting methods and of their cruel treatment of hostages. In the two days Commons debate, Churchill and Hogg read letters from soldiers in Athens which supported the Prime Minister's policy and condemned ELAS excesses. In the same debate, however, Seymour Cocks read letters which described the military intervention as a "shameful business", and when Bevan interrupted Hogg while he was speaking, he claimed that he could produce from his postbag thirty to forty letters from parents of soldiers in Greece, all condemnatory of Churchill's actions in that country. In 1946, a book was published in London which told how the intervention appeared through the eyes of Colin Wright, a soldier in Greece from October 1944 until June 1945.

⁹¹Ibid., January 30, 1945, cols 1417-22.

"I am ashamed" he wrote in a letter to his wife at the time, "terribly ashamed of the part Britain is playing here. The whole weight of British power has been thrown in, in favour of the Right against the Left."⁹²

The question as to whether or not the British soldiers in Greece believed that the military intervention was justified simply cannot be answered. Some of them thought that this was the case while others felt quite the opposite. EAM/ELAS was their enemy and, naturally, they were indignant when their comrades were shot down by guerrillas. But, at the same time, they knew that instead of fighting the Germans they were killing the heroes of the Greek resistance. As John Nixon broadcast on January 7, 1945, the British soldiers "haven't disguised that they disliked their job intensely."⁹³ It is true that most of the letters from the forces in Greece printed in the British press reveal a considerable satisfaction with the government's Greek policy and a profound sense of shame at the appalling atrocities committed by ELAS.⁹⁴ This does not mean, however, that all the soldiers or even the majority of them were behind Churchill. One should consider the nature of the conflict (the British forces fought against irregular "urban guerrillas"), the anti-EAM/ELAS

⁹²Wright, British Soldier in Greece (London, 1946) pp. 18-9.

⁹³BBC, WAC, 9 o'clock news broadcast-War report, January 7, 1945.

⁹⁴See, for example, Manchester Guardian, January 8 and February 17, 1945; New Statesman, January 6, 1945.

propaganda and the military discipline which prevented soldiers with opposite views from expressing any kind of criticism of their operations in Athens. Therefore, it would be more reasonable to argue that despite the seeming support for official policy the British soldiers were as deeply divided on the Greek issue as the civilian population in their country.

In Britain, popular reaction to events in Greece in January 1945 eased perceptibly but not significantly. Greece still occupied a position of the highest interest. On January 3, for example, a resolution was passed by the North-East Federation of Trades Councils, at its meeting in Newcastle, representing over 25,000 workers. Over the following days numerous resolutions were issued by various political and trade union organisations calling for the setting up of a provisional government of all accredited anti-fascist political parties, the supply of food to the population, assistance for the rehabilitation of the economic and social life of the country, the holding of an early general election and the evacuation of the British military personnel.⁹⁵

The appointment of General Plastiras and the announcement of his intention to carry civil war throughout Greece shocked the British people. On January 7, protest meetings were held throughout the country.

⁹⁵FO 371/48319-48321.

Seymour Cocks declared at Nottingham that Labour was fully justified in calling upon the government to reverse its policy in Greece and proclaim an instant truce. He described Churchill as a man who was "drunk with power" and declared that if the government continued to refuse to withdraw the British troops from Greece, the Labour Ministers should withdraw from "this blood-stained coalition." Harold Laski called General Plastiras' plan "a gross outrage upon every conception of decency." William Lawther characterised the British policy in Greece as "a crime" and Alfred Barnes, chairman of the Co-operative Party, declared that Britain should cease supporting Plastiras' "brutal policy."⁹⁶ At its meeting on 14 January, the National Committee of the Co-operative Party considered a large number of resolutions criticising the government's handling of the Greek crisis and, after a long discussion, a statement was issued calling for an early meeting of the leaders of the United Nations to discuss the political and economical problems of the liberated countries.⁹⁷

The attitude of the British people towards Churchill and his policy in Greece is additionally illustrated by the opinion polls:

⁹⁶The Times, January 8, 1945 (Cocks); Daily Worker, January 8, 1945 (Laski, Barnes); Reynolds News, January 7, 1945 (Laski, Barnes, Lawther).

⁹⁷Co-operative Party Annual Report, 1945, p.103.

February 1945

In general, do you approve or disapprove of Mr.Churchill as Prime Minister? Approve 85%, Disapprove 11%, No Opinion 4%

In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government's conduct of the war? Satisfied 77%, Dissatisfied 14%, No opinion 9%

Do you approve or disapprove of Mr.Churchill's attitude on the Greek question? Approve 46%, Disapprove 28%, No Opinion 26%

March 1945

In general, do you approve or disapprove of Mr.Churchill as Prime Minister? Approve 87%, Disapprove 10%, No Opinion 3%

In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government's conduct of the war? Satisfied 83%, Dissatisfied 12%, No Opinion 5%⁹⁸

For the whole period of the December events the results of the opinion polls on Greece indicate that the Greek crisis had seriously affected the British people and had decisively determined their attitudes towards their own Prime Minister and government. In one month, between December and January, Churchill and his government lost about 10% of popular support, a figure

⁹⁸Gallup, The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain, 1937-1945, vol.1, pp.104-7.

which cannot be dismissed as insignificant. When the situation in Greece began to change for the better the British people turned to the major developments on the two European fronts and both Churchill and the government regained their popularity. The figures also suggest that the anti-EAM/ELAS propaganda of January-February had no notable impact on the British public. In January, 43% of the population approved of Churchill's Greek policy whilst in February the percentage had increased by only 3%.

CHAPTER FOUR: BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION AND GREECE,
FEBRUARY 1945-MARCH 1946

The immediate and most disastrous result of the British military intervention in December 1944 was the overthrow of the existing balance of power. At the time of liberation the Left was the dominant political force in Greece but after the December events the defeat of EAM/ELAS presented the Right with an unexpected opportunity which it fully and successfully exploited. Within a few months after the Varkiza Agreement¹ Greece would be swept by an unprecedented wave of "white terror", "a one-sided civil war waged by the monarchist right against its defenceless opponents - of politically all shades"² which would eventually lead to the civil

¹The fighting in Athens ended with the agreement between the Plastiras government and EAM, signed at Varkiza, a seaside town near Athens, on February 12, 1945. It called for a full restoration of civil and trade union liberties, an amnesty for "political crimes" committed during the crisis, a purge of the civil service and the security forces, the immediate demobilisation and disarming of ELAS, and a plebiscite on the constitutional question to be followed by elections for a constituent assembly.

²George Mavrogordatos, "The 1946 Election and Plebiscite", in Iatrides(ed.), Greece in the 1940s, p.182.

war of 1946-1949.

The governments that came to power in 1945-1946 failed to carry out their obligations which ought to have consisted of the restoration of civil and trade union liberties as well as of the purging from the state machinery of fascist and quisling elements. On the contrary, their tolerance or even encouragement of Right-wing excesses paved the way to the establishment of a para-state, a power apparatus independent of the constitutional authorities, able to control the whole country and to undermine any attempt by the Greek politicians to solve the country's serious problems. It was this unofficial state which in the succeeding years would set about to dominate the armed forces, the organs of public security and the civil administration and would finally act decisively to bring about the formal abolition of democracy in 1967.

The year 1945 can be characterised as a prelude to the subsequent civil war. It seems certain that if the Greek governments of the period had been committed to establishing normal political conditions and improving the economic and financial situation the drift toward a new phase of uncertainty and violence would not have taken place. The "third round" as commonly and quite misleadingly the civil war has been called was not another attempt by the Greek communists to seize power, but a desperate reaction to the systematic and unchecked persecution of people with Left-wing opinions. Living

in an atmosphere of unbridled terror and facing the every day prospect of arrest, imprisonment or execution former resistance fighters were forced back to the mountains in order to protect themselves against hostile authorities and Right-wing gangs. These men later formed the bulk of the guerrilla bands that were to become the nucleus of the "Democratic Army".³

I. Labour in Power and continuity in British Foreign policy

The end of the war in Europe in May 1945 was followed by a general election in which the Labour Party scored a sweeping and unexpected victory, resulting in the first majority Labour government. Labour secured 393 seats against 213 Conservatives and allies and a mere twelve Liberals. There were also elected two Communists, three ILP, one Common Wealth and seventeen Independents.⁴ For the first time Labour had the power

³The reign of terror in the provinces of Greece during 1945-46 is described in detail by Heinz Richter in British Intervention in Greece, pp.125-66. Richter argues that the government authorities did not fulfill the terms of the Varkiza Agreement and permitted Right-wing elements to persecute the Greek Left. As a result, the KKE which was willing to follow the "revisionist" line of the other West European Communist Parties was pushed once again to armed struggle. Studies from an expressly Right-wing viewpoint have been inclined to minimize the significance of the royalist terror. See, for example, George Kousoulas, Revolution and Defeat, p.226 and Peter D. Stavrakis, Moscow and Greek Communists, 1944-1949 p.55.

⁴In the 1935 general election Labour won 154 seats, Conservatives 387, National Liberals 33, Liberals 21.

to embark upon the socialist project which, since 1918, had been its declared aim.⁵

Labour's overwhelming victory was greeted with joy by democratic people all over the world. It was generally hoped that the new government would follow policies completely distinct from those of the pre-war Tory governments. By the end of its time in office, however, the expectations of 1945 had faded. Although some significant reforms were carried out, such as the implementation of a social welfare scheme, the National Health Service being the most important part of it, and the nationalisation of the Bank of England and of approximately twenty per cent of British industry, the basic structure of British society remained unchanged. In the field of foreign policy, Labour's coming to power made no change for the better: in its attempt to defend Britain's traditional world role the Labour government pursued resolutely the policies inherited from its predecessors, contributing greatly to the deterioration of East-West relations and the development of the Cold War consensus.⁶

⁵Clause 4 of the new party constitution adopted in February 1918 formally committed the Party "to secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service." Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism (London, 1973) pp.60-1.

⁶The involvement of the British Labour movement- both the Labour government and the TUC- with the Cold War is analysed by Peter Weiler in his excellent study British

The election platform of the Labour Party was set forth in the famous manifesto under the promising title of "Let us face the future", issued in April 1945. The manifesto provided for a policy of far-reaching government measures in the economic sphere, the nationalisation of the Bank of England, the fuel and power industries, the iron and steel industry and internal transport, as well as a number of other progressive reforms in the sphere of health, social insurance, education, etc. The section dealing with foreign policy, however, said little and simply called for a consolidation of "the great war-time association of the British Commonwealth with the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R" and for the formation of "an International Organization capable of keeping the peace in years to come."

At the annual conference in Blackpool (May 1945), the Labour leadership tried to convey the impression that Britain under a Labour government would support progressive movements and promote world cooperation. Speaking on behalf of the executive, Hugh Dalton stressed that "a British Labour government would be more likely to create more quickly a state of confidence and mutual trust between London and Moscow than any

Labour and the Cold War. Among the best and most recent histories of the 1945-51 Labour governments are Pelling, The Labour Governments, 1945-1951 (London, 1984) and Morgan, Labour in Power 1945-1951 (Oxford, 1984). See also Sked and Cook, Post-War Britain (Brighton, 1979); Coates, The Labour Party (Cambridge, 1975); Pritt, The Labour Governments, 1945-1951 (London, 1963); Saville, "Ernest Bevin and the Cold War", Socialist Register (1984), pp.68-100.

alternative government in this country.”⁷ In the course of his speech, Bevin made the famous and much misunderstood remark that “Left understands Left but Right does not” which was commonly taken to mean that a Labour government could work out more easily and productively with the Soviets and with continental revolutionary forces than the conservatives. In fact, Bevin was referring to the leftward trend in French politics at the time and not to Anglo-Soviet relations.⁸

The approach to foreign affairs offered by the leaders of the Labour Party was not fully shared by rank and file delegates. Some of them were particularly dissatisfied with the endorsement of the war-time government’s foreign policy. Jack Stanley, of the Constructional Engineering Union, moved a resolution declaring that the policy of the British government toward certain liberated countries in Europe was “more concerned with the preservation of vested interests than for the welfare, liberty, equality or social security of these people.”⁹ “In Greece, in Belgium, and in Italy the British imperialists have shown that they will not tolerate the emergence of socialism in Europe, but that, on the contrary, they are prepared to back up the forces of reaction with British bayonets”, asserted Leigh Davis

⁷Labour Party Annual Conference, 1945, p.104.

⁸Ibid., p.119.

⁹Ibid., p.109.

of Millesden.¹⁰ One irate delegate, Trevor Pugh of Westbury, chastised Attlee for failing to apply the proper socialist analysis to the world situation and instead talking in terms "that might have been applied by a very good liberal statesman in those days of the League of Nations when people believed sincerely that a League of capitalist governments would prevent war."¹¹ Denis Healey, soon to be appointed Labour's international secretary, emphasised to the delegates that Britain's principal task in foreign affairs should be to "protect and assist the socialist revolution that had already begun in Europe".¹² At the end of the conference, Harold Laski described the coming general election as "a choice between the past and the future, between the old world which is dying and the new world which is coming to birth."¹³

In July, 1945 the British people voted for the future and the new world. But what was happening by early 1946, only a few months after Labour came to power, was a repetition of the past. In Spain and Greece Labour Britain was supporting openly or tacitly, fascist and semi-fascist regimes. In the Middle East Britain was building up an anti-communist bloc of reactionary

¹⁰ Ibid., p.112.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p.114.

¹³ Ibid.

Arab states and in South East Asia she was defending imperial interests. More importantly, she was becoming closely identified with the policies of the United States and increasingly hostile to the Soviet Union.

One should ask how the Labour government with its unique popular support came, soon after its sensational victory in the elections of 1945, to accept the continuation of the existing line in the conduct of foreign affairs that had developed during the Churchill-Eden years. Apart from the limited nature of Labour's socialist vision both at home and abroad, a phenomenon that some leading British historians have called "labourism"¹⁴, the most important factor was the personality and record of the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. Bevin was a self-made man who rose from the working class through the trade unions - first in the Dockers' Union and later in the Transport and General Workers' Union - to the hierarchy of the Labour Party. As Harold Laski, one of his colleagues in the NEC, wrote in an article published in Tribune in May 1944, Bevin's early political activities had profoundly dissatisfied the main body of Labour Party supporters.¹⁵ In the 1920s, Bevin and other key leaders of the TUC General Council showed a strong determination to avert the general

¹⁴See, for example, Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society (London, 1969); Saville, "The ideology of Labourism" in Knowledge and Belief in Politics. Edited by Benewick, R. et al. (London 1973), pp.213-26.

¹⁵Quoted in Zilliacus, I Choose Peace (London, 1949) pp. 108-9.

strike in support of the miners in the hope of reaching an accommodation with the employers and offered their support to the famous Mond-Turner talks bringing about a decisive shift toward industrial reconciliation.¹⁶ In the 1930s, they denounced the campaign for a united front of the working-class parties against fascism and defended the Tories' policy of non-intervention in Spain.¹⁷

In placing Bevin at the Foreign Office instead of Hugh Dalton, as it was expected, Attlee made the "right" appointment. The new Foreign Secretary was one of the most implacable enemies of Left-wing policies and one of the most determined to defend Britain's imperial interests. Sir Alexander Cadogan, waiting for Attlee and Bevin to arrive for the resumed Potsdam conference, noted in his diary:

"I think we may do better with Bevin than with any other of the Labourites. I think he's broadminded and sensible, honest and courageous. But whether he's an inspired Foreign Minister or not I don't know. He's the heavyweight of the Cabinet and will get his own way with them, so if he can be put on the right line, that may be all right."¹⁸

Bevin was firmly convinced that if the British Empire was to remain a world power it must hold its position in the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

¹⁶ Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism, p.135; Saville, The Labour Movement in Britain (London, 1988) p.55.

¹⁷ Pimlott, Labour and the Left in the 1930s (Cambridge, 1977).

¹⁸ Saville, "Ernest Bevin and the Cold War 1945-1950", Socialist Register (1984), p.75, quoting Bullock, Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951, p.96.

Greece was of vital importance to Britain's strategic interests: "We must maintain our position in Greece as a part of our Middle East policy", the Foreign Secretary stated in a memorandum circulated to his colleagues in the Cabinet shortly after assuming office. "Unless it is asserted and settled it may have a bad effect on the whole of our Middle East position."¹⁹

The majority of the senior members at the Foreign Office shared Bevin's concern for Britain's position in Greece. In a letter to Sir Orme Sargent - who was to become deputy permanent secretary in 1947 in succession to Alexander Cadogan - dated February 27, 1946, Leeper claimed that it was impossible for Greece to be a truly independent state in the conditions of the post-war world. One of two things would happen to her: "either she must be kept as a satellite in our own orbit, at the cost to us of military in lieu of financial and economic assistance; or she must inevitably gravitate into the Russian orbit for lack of such assistance from us." Greece was "a vital link in our system of communications and defence" and, therefore, she should remain under British hegemony. There were three possibilities for the Labour government: to go on keeping British troops in Greece indefinitely, to try to run Greece more or less on the Cromer model, or to allow an elected Greek government to become a member of the British Commonwealth. Leeper was in favour of the third solution:

¹⁹ Ibid., p.160.

"The alternative of letting Greece go would be clear indication that we had lost the will to maintain our position in the world. Have we lost it?"²⁰

Commenting on Leeper's views, Orme Sargent doubted whether Greece could acquire a Dominion status because "it was a sine qua non that a Dominion should be self-supporting and able to stand on her feet."²¹ For William Hayter, head of the Southern Department, the incorporation of Greece into the British Empire "would turn Greece not into a Dominion but into a Crown Colony."²² Hector McNeil, however, was of the opinion that Greece should be treated as a British protectorate:

"I still think that colonial treatment...is the only method which offers any hope of nursing Greece towards solvency and political stability. Dominion status is meantime impossible because as Mr. Hayter infers Greece is a backward, extravagant and irresponsible country whose vanities are made greater and whose difficulties are therefore accentuated because for both us and the USSR Greece has strategic importance."²³

The assumption of Bevin and the leadership of the Foreign Office that they could deal with Greeks as if Greece was all but part of the British Empire was unacceptable to a large section of the British population which nourished the hope that the Labour

²⁰FO 371/58678 R 3496, Leeper to Sargent, February 27, 1946.

²¹Ibid., minute by Sargent, March 12, 1946.

²²Ibid., minute by Hayter, March 8, 1946.

²³Ibid., minute by McNeil, March 29, 1946.

government would promote a new way of thinking in international affairs and proceed to implement a socialist foreign policy. Instead, the logic of "power politics" and "spheres of influence" again prevailed, though not unopposed. During the first two years of Bevin's tenure in office, the rank and file together with a large number of Labour backbenchers, opposed the policies that the Labour government pursued in Greece and elsewhere, bringing to the surface many internal party divisions which would eventually lead to a collision between followers and leaders with severe and far-reaching consequences for the British Labour movement.

II. Greece in 1945

Following the signing of the Varkiza Agreement most of the war correspondents dispersed to more active battlefronts and Greece was relegated to a less important position on the foreign affairs pages of the British newspapers. British eyes were now riveted on the military operations in Germany and only occasionally glanced at Greece. It was not until summer 1945 that the British press and public came to realize that Greece was again entering into a new phase of political uncertainty and instability.

Despite the relative optimism after the end of hostilities in Athens a frequently acknowledged anxiety

lurked at the back of even the most rational and hopeful of minds. As early as March 20, W.N.Ewer of the Daily Herald reported that EAM supporters were being systematically ousted from their jobs and that the campaign of threats grew more and more menacing.²⁴ On March 22, Geoffrey Hoare warned that "a great amount of political activity and uncertainty is to be expected in the coming weeks, for it will take Greece, accustomed as she is to revolutions, a long time to recover from the recent experiences."²⁵ A few weeks later he summed up his post-Varkiza experiences in Greece as follows:

"EAM and its followers are being penalized in a variety of ways. Former ELAS men are beaten up, arrested, and tried on trumped-up charges. Hundreds of employees of public utility companies in Athens are being discharged for what is described as "anti-national activities", which simply means membership of EAM. Many of these men worked loyally for the British during the German occupation. Thus the Varkiza Pact, which looked at the time of its signature as if it might be the means of ending civil strife, has become a dead letter, fresh strife is brewing."

With this view of the situation went the appreciation that the pendulum had swung to the extreme Right. Hoare thought, however, that a swing back to the Left was probable before long: "EAM is at present in disgrace; but in its prime it comprised a great part of the most vital forces of the Greek nation...[and] still

²⁴Daily Herald, March 20, 1945.

²⁵The Times, March 22, 1945.

commands wide support.”²⁶

The New Statesman shared Hoare’s estimation of the Greek situation. Kingsley Martin believed that in Greece “there was a deliberate campaign to penalize opponents of Plastiras.”²⁷ On April 21, the New Statesman accused Churchill of “tipping the balance in favour of a small, violent, reactionary minority” and predicted that “a renewal of civil war” might result from “the disastrous situation” which the British intervention in Greece had produced.²⁸

The Daily Worker feared that the “reactionaries will not give up their evil purposes without a struggle.”²⁹ By the end of March, it felt that its fear had been realized. The Greek government had not promoted conciliatory policies, and Right-wing excesses were steadily increasing: “the whole population was living under fascist terror.”³⁰

The post-Varkiza developments attracted much public attention in Britain. Several British philhellenes formed a society called “British Friendship to Greece” (BFG) with Cecil Lubbock, ex-Director of the Bank of England, in the chair. Among its chief sponsors were the Archbishop of York, Cyril Garbett, the Greek Ambassador in London, Athanasios Agnidis, Sir John

²⁶ Ibid., April 17, 1945.

²⁷ New Statesman, March 10, 1945.

²⁸ Ibid., April 21, 1945.

²⁹ Daily Worker, February 16, 1945.

³⁰ Ibid., March 7, 27, 1945.

Stavridi, Chairman of the Ionian Bank, the archaeologist Sir Leonard Wooley and Lord Terrington. Famous scholars such as Gilbert Murray and Sir Richard Livingstone also associated themselves with the society. The object of the BFG was to promote friendship and understanding between the peoples of Britain and Greece. This was to be achieved through enlightenment of the British public about the situation in Greece, deliveries of letters and gifts and the establishment of personal contact between individuals, families, schools and colleges in Britain and their counterparts in Greece.³¹

On May 13, the Garrick theatre, London, was crowded when a public meeting organised by the FGMU was addressed by Lord Strabolgi, Hannen Swaffer, D.N.Pritt, Arthur Horner, president of the South Wales Miners' Federation and Bert Papworth, London busmen's leader and member of the TUC General Council. A resolution was passed deploring the revival in Greece of fascist methods of suppressing freedom of speech, of the press and the assembly, and demanding that the British government, in view of its responsibility for present conditions in Greece, take the appropriate steps in conjunction with the other Great Powers to ensure the enforcement of the Varkiza Agreement.³²

³¹FO 371/58878 R3839; Letter to the New Statesman, July 19, 1947.

³²Modern Greek Archive (MGA), King's College, London, MGA/PM 51, May 16, 1945; FO 371/48322 R 8986. The Federation of Greek Maritime Unions was formed in November 1943 with the aim to improve the working and

In June, a large number of telegrams were sent to the Foreign Office and the offices of General Plastiras and Archbishop Damaskinos, asking for the reprieve of three resistance fighters who had been condemned to death "on inadequate and false evidence." Signatories to the telegrams included several MPs and leading figures in the trade union, press, literacy, and educational fields such as Seymour Cocks, Tom Driberg, John Parker, William Gallacher, Will Lawther, Hannen Swaffer, William Rust, L.C.White and Professor Benjamin Farrington.³³

living conditions of its membership and to give support to and make propaganda for the Greek resistance movement. It had its wartime base at Cardiff and its Executive-Committee had two joint general-secretaries, Antonis Ambatielos and Vasilis Vekakos. It comprised four unions: the Engineers' Union, the Navigating Officers' Union, the Wireless Operators' Union, and the Union of Greek Seamen in Great Britain. In 1944 the FGMU set up a Press Office in order to inform British public opinion more fully than had been possible hitherto on what was happening in the Greek trade union movement. Editor of the Press Office was R.G.Brown, press officer in the United Nations Information Office, and before that in the Reuter's news agency. After liberation the FGMU was officially recognised by the Piraeus Court of First Instance and moved to Piraeus, seeking unity with the conservative Panhellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO). The PNO refused and their conflict ended with the proscription of the FGMU and the imposition of death penalties on its leaders which were not carried out. Kitroeff, "The Greek Seamen's Movement, 1940-1944", J. Hel.Diasp., vol.7, (1980), pp.73-97.

³³NCCL archive, University of Hull, DCL 58/2. The three resistance fighters were two sailors of ELAN, the ELAS navy, Avgeris and Bourdis and an ELAS member, Michalis Monedas. Monedas was sentenced to death by a Court Martial in February 1945 for the murder of Eustathios Trypfonas, president of the collaborationist Railwaymen's Union, and of his uncle Georgios Monedas in September 1944. On March 7, Monedas and the other two were brought before a Criminal Court for re-trial under the terms of the Varkiza Agreement and were condemned to

By mid 1945, Greece had again occupied a position of high interest in the British media and the public. On July 13, the Manchester Guardian printed its first editorial on Greece since February. The newspaper criticised Churchill's Greek policy and asked that further and stronger action be taken to ensure that Greece was really and truly rid of fascism. Britain could not claim that she had restored democracy. Fascist guerrillas were left unmolested and were even permitted to join in the hunt for communists. People with Left-wing views were being arrested on the slightest of pretexts. Britain should invite the Soviet Union and the United States to join her "in the task of nursing Greece back to health."³⁴

The News Chronicle's Athens correspondent, Stephen Barber, reported that the Greek government had lost its power to influence events and Right-wing extremists were planning to seize power and impose a dictatorship. Acts of violence against the Left had "reached a scale almost mounting to a "white terror". The public sector had been purged of all resistance members and had come under

death. The sentences of death were confirmed by the Court of Grace on June 4 but pressure at home and from Britain averted the executions and a reprieve followed on June 11. In February 1946, the Greek Premier Sofoulis announced that the sentences of death passed in February March 1945 would be carried out. The three resistance fighters were eventually shot along with others on June 10 and 19, 1947.

³⁴Manchester Guardian, July 13, 1945. Similar views were expressed by the paper's correspondent in Athens when he visited northern Greece and exposed the "white terror" (September 18, 20, 21, 1945).

the control of the royalists while the supposedly impartial National Guard collaborated closely with royalist terror organisations.³⁵

On July 28, the News Chronicle carried an article by John Sofianopoulos who had just resigned as Foreign Secretary because he insisted on the necessity for the formation of a broad representative government. Sofianopoulos was the leader of the Left Republican Union, which was a democratic Party not associated with EAM, as well as the leader of the government delegation to the Varkiza conference. In his article, Sofianopoulos deplored the "incredible terrorism" practiced by reactionary organisations and criticised the Voulgaris government for its failure "to fulfill its elementary obligation to secure order and protect the life, honour and property of the citizens."³⁶ In a letter to the same newspaper printed on September 11, he drew the attention of the British public to the alarming developments in Greece, and warned that, unless halted, they would lead first to a new civil war, much more widespread and intense than the December events, and, secondly, to Balkan friction which might cause not only Balkan but much wider troubles.³⁷

At the time, there was another British correspondent in Athens whose reports had incurred the special enmity

³⁵News Chronicle, July 5, 25, 1945.

³⁶Ibid., July 28, 1945.

³⁷Ibid., September 11, 1945.

of the Greek royalist press. It was David Raymond of the Reynolds News. On July 15, the first of a series of weekly reports on Greece appeared in the newspaper in which Raymond claimed that the Greek government had virtually lost control over the country.³⁸ In August, Raymond visited two prisons in Athens and was impressed by the discrimination in the detainees' treatment. The Zeliotis prison was an extremely comfortable apartment where a number of Greek quislings, including the Prime Minister John Rallis, were living under guard but with visitors and food sent in and enjoying such amenities as radio sets, electrical fans, reading lamps and radiators. In the second prison, which was filled up with ELAS members, Raymond delivered a message through bars to a resistance fighter who spent his days with thirty other inmates, most of them illegally arrested and still awaiting trial, crowded into a single cell and living in "scandalous conditions."³⁹

The critical situation in the Greek provinces with a particular emphasis on prison conditions was extensively reported and commented on by other British journalists as well. In June, a special correspondent of the New Statesman undertook a journey in central and northern Greece and reached the following conclusions:

³⁸ Reynolds News, July 15, 1945. On July 22, Raymond interviewed the moderate Generals Plastiras and Othonaios. Both expressed the view that terrorism was a real fact in Greece.

³⁹ Ibid., August 12, 1945.

1.Arbitrary arrest of anti-royalists, and their prolonged imprisonment without trial, are common practices of provincial Greek "justice" to-day.
2.Civilian officers, the gendarmerie and the militarised National Guard, all of them supposed to be pacifying the country and preparing it for the plebiscite on the return of George II, are mostly pro-King, and pacifying accordingly."⁴⁰

In September, Malcolm MacEwen was sent to Greece to investigate reports of a royalist reign of terror. After an interview with Nikos Zachariadis, the communist leader who had recently returned from Dachau, MacEwen left Athens and went first to Macedonia and then to the Peloponnese.⁴¹ He was "deeply shocked" by what he saw and became "convinced that civil war was almost inevitable."⁴² In Salonica workers were persecuted by the authorities and terrorized by loyalist gangs. In a royalist rally MacEwen heard the Vice-President of the "X" organisation urge his followers to murder communists, EAM supporters and Bulgarians.⁴³ In the Peloponnese, families of ELAS members were beaten up and some murdered while royalists issued passes to peasants

⁴⁰New Statesman, June 23, 1945.

⁴¹In the interview Zachariadis told MacEwen that the British troops favoured the Right and, therefore, they should withdraw from Greece. He also pointed out that the KKE was prepared as a minimum to support a government which would give an amnesty, take measures to end the terror and hold fair elections even if it and EAM were not included. If such a government could not be obtained, KKE would abstain from the elections. Daily Worker, September 27, 1945.

⁴²Daily Worker, October 9, 1945; MacEwen, The Greening of a Red, p.141.

⁴³Daily Worker, October 2, 1945.

authorizing them to travel from village to village.⁴⁴ The conditions in most of the jails were "barbaric". In Kozani, a town in northern Greece, MacEwen found "19 men packed into a cell measuring 5 by 2,5 meters, and 21 in another the same size, where it was impossible to lie down." In Kalamata, in southern Greece, 700 prisoners were "penned like animals into warehouses and cellars-pitch-dark dungeons with no windows or electric light and with sewage leaking from a drain-pipe."⁴⁵

The accuracy of these reports was fully confirmed by other British individuals in Greece at the time as well as by the findings of the British Legal Mission. Colonel C.W.Woodhouse visited several towns in the Peloponnese in order to investigate alarming reports that ELAS was planning an armed uprising. His conclusion was that the real grounds for alarm lay in the

⁴⁴Ibid., October 16, 1945.

⁴⁵MacEwen, The Greening of a Red, p.145. In a letter to the author (May 4, 1991), MacEwen wrote that the British intervention in Greece in December 1944 was not justified: "One must distinguish, first of all, between its ostensible purpose (to save Greek democracy from communism) and its real purpose (of which there should be no real dispute) which was to restore the monarchy by putting down the armed resistance- which was by no means the same thing as communist forces." Greece could avoid the 1946-49 civil war "if the British had used their powers to hold the ring for democracy, brought the police and X-ites etc under control, allowed the coalition government to create democratic police and armed forces purged of collaborationists, and ensured free elections and a plebiscite on the monarchy on new rolls and in peaceful conditions." The British Communist Party was supportive of and unduly uncritical of the KKE: "Until the last moment we gave the impression that the resistance was winning. And for the KKE to take Stalin's side against Tito was suicide."

"obliteration" of justice by the Right.⁴⁶ Maurice Edelman, Labour Member for Coventry North, inspected a gaol in Corinth which was filled up with 580 prisoners, including about a dozen women, all of them charged with capital offences. They were without beds, bunks or mattresses, lay on the bare floor, shoulder to shoulder and head to feet and could only move through a narrow passage down the centre of the room. Edelman became convinced that "with seventeen thousand political leaders in gaols, tens of thousands proscribed or in hiding, with electoral lists suspect and boycotted, and the X-ite squads still actively beating-up the Left with police connivance" fair elections could not be held.⁴⁷ Speaking in his constituency at Slough, Benn Levy, another Labour MP who had just returned from Greece, expressed the view that the proposed election would not establish the will of the people. There existed a "white terror" and people of Left-wing persuasion went in fear of their lives. Extreme Right-wing elements had infiltrated into the police and army and could influence the result of the voting.⁴⁸

Towards the end of November, Bevin appointed a Legal Mission to visit Greece in order to investigate the character of Greek justice. The Mission, headed by

⁴⁶FO 371/48279 R 14973: "Situation in the Peloponnese." Report by Colonel Woodhouse, August 11, 1945.

⁴⁷New Statesman, October 20, 1945.

⁴⁸Daily Telegraph, October 29, 1945.

Terence Donovan, Labour Member for Leicester East and chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party's legal and judicial group, stayed in Greece from November 28 until December 19. After a thorough analysis of the Greek judicial and criminal system it presented its relatively objective report.

In theory, the procedure for arrest and preliminary hearing was satisfactory. The 1944 December events, however, had resulted in wholesale arrests of actual or alleged members of ELAS which amounted to at least 50,000. These arrests were made not merely for alleged crimes during that period, but also for acts committed during the occupation. The cases of all prisoners in Greece held for offences committed prior to February 12, 1945 had been investigated in the manner required by law. Yet, the Varkiza Agreement and Law 119 which supplemented it had not been implemented by the Greek courts⁴⁹ and a considerable number of persons who should have been released still awaited trial.

The British jurists found the various measures taken by the Greek government in August and September 1945 to speed up the preliminary examination of alleged offences satisfactory but not sufficient. Despite these measures, the number of detainees had been increased.

⁴⁹According to Law 119 offences committed between December 3, 1944, and February 14, 1945, with the exception of those unconnected with the December events, were pardoned. The detention of accused persons for unpardoned offences was not to endure longer than six months.

This was due mainly to the fact that the occupation and the events which followed had disorganised the Greek judicial system and many cases could only now be subjected to investigation.

With regard to the methods of investigation, the Mission formed the impression that they were both adequate and equitable. Although it admitted that the execution of alleged traitors during the occupation was being treated as murder and that after December 1944 a number of judges had been suspended, it thought that proceedings were properly conducted and that the juries were unbiased.

Conditions in Greek prisons were far from being satisfactory. Some of them were in a state of disrepair and seriously overcrowded. They lacked the most elementary facilities such as beds and there were hardly any sick-bays, not even for infectious diseases. Medical care was insufficient and there was no dental treatment.

The Legal Mission concluded with a list of recommendations: trials should be speeded up by establishing special tribunals and a law should be promulgated to prevent further arrests. If witnesses did not turn up and the prosecution was not able to proceed, the accused should be set free. Prison conditions must be drastically improved. The convictions and sentences passed upon persons accused of collaboration with the enemy should be reviewed by a

When Bevin made his first Commons' speech as Foreign Secretary in the Debate on the Address on August 20, 1945, it became clear that there would be little change in the conduct of foreign affairs. Bevin denied that ideology of any kind could serve as an adequate guide for the nation's affairs, refused categorically to alter the coalition's policies either toward Spain or Greece and denounced the regimes in Eastern Europe.⁵¹ When he finished there was a noticeable lack of enthusiasm on the Labour benches. Many MPs were particularly disturbed with what they had (or had not) heard with regard to Greece and Spain. Major Lyall Wilkes, who had served in Greece during the last months of the occupation, pointed out that the newly formed Greek divisions were controlled by a royalist clique who made no secret of its aggressive intentions against the country's northern neighbours. While many political internees were former resistance fighters who had been charged on account of their acts during the occupation, most of the collaborators were now employed in the army and the National Guard. Before the December crisis the British government had rightly prevented excesses against the Right. After January 1945, however, it had adopted a policy of non-intervention. Wilkes hoped that

⁵⁰British Legal Mission Report, pp.3-31.

⁵¹Hansard, vol.413, August 20, 1945, cols 283-300.

the new British government would not turn a blind eye to the increasing persecution of the Left and would take the necessary measures to ensure that the Greek state was willing to conform to the Varkiza terms.⁵² John Platts-Mills, Labour Member for Finsbury, told the House that there should be an election in Greece as soon as it was practicable, but it was not practicable while terror still hung over the lives of the people.⁵³ Another Labour MP, Dr. Morgan, said that while Spain "one of the most contemptible of despotisms" was rightly excluded from the United Nations, he failed to understand why Portugal, also a totalitarian state, was open to membership.⁵⁴

Elevated hopes about the intentions of the Labour government led some Members to unrestrained optimism. Michael Foot, for example, suggested that the change of government in Britain would involve certain changes in Britain's attitude towards Greece. The reactionary elements in Greece should be warned "that the foreign affairs of this country were no longer conducted by persons who had a vested interest in securing the return to his throne of King George of the Hellenes... which... is partly responsible for the unhappy state of Greece today."⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid., cols 305-11.

⁵³Ibid., cols 385-7.

⁵⁴Ibid., cols 347-8.

⁵⁵Ibid., cols 337-8.

The first expressions of disquiet with Bevin's Greek policy appeared very early. On August 22, Seymour Cocks asked Bevin in the Commons about the falsification of the electoral lists in Greece and whether the Yalta formula, providing for the formation in all liberated countries of provisional representative governments based on all democratic elements, were to be applied to that country.⁵⁶ Later on that day, at the PLP's second meeting since the general election victory, Major Donald Bruce expressed his concern with the statement on policy made by the Foreign Secretary two days earlier, particularly in reference to Greece, Spain and Bulgaria.⁵⁷

On September 11, The Times published a letter by Compton Mackenzie claiming that Bevin's speech had disappointed democratic hopes in Greece.⁵⁸ Three days later, the St. Pancras Borough Labour Party declared that while the Labour Party in its resolution of December 1944 had decided and pledged the formation of a provisional national government which would proceed to a free and fair election, Bevin made no attempt to implement this viewpoint of the executive. In a typical resolution, the St. Pancras BLP urged the government to reverse Churchill's Greek policy: the Labour leaders should ensure the release of thousands of political prisoners, the revival of the free democratic

⁵⁶ Ibid., August 22, 1945, cols 588-90.

⁵⁷ NMLH, Manchester, minutes of meeting of Parliamentary Labour Party, August 22, 1945.

⁵⁸ The Times, September 11, 1945.

institutions of the people in Parties and trade unions, the compilation of a genuine electoral register and the holding of elections with a secret ballot.⁵⁹

At the TUC conference in Blackpool (September 1945) an emergency resolution was passed, expressing profound concern that the Greek Minister of Labour was reported to be about to enforce a new law invalidating the recent trade union elections, and to institute new elections in their place. The General Council was asked to send a deputation to Bevin in order to get the British government to take action to ensure that what the TUC sought to achieve in Greece would be honourably accepted.⁶⁰ When the deputation met Bevin (October 30) the only reply they received was that it was not for the British government to arbitrate between different Greek trade unions or between the unions and the government.⁶¹

At the beginning of October, sixty-five MPs signed a message which was sent to the press in Greece expressing concern at the Greek government's decision to hold elections in mid-winter.⁶² The mountainous nature of the country made an election difficult in winter, the registers were defective and even forged and the majority of the parties had decided on a boycott.⁶³ On

⁵⁹FO 371/58922 R 16110.

⁶⁰TUC Annual Conference, 1945, pp. 419-21.

⁶¹FO 371/48285 R 18164, November 2, 1945.

⁶²On October 6, the Greek Premier Voulgaris had announced that the elections would be held on January 20, 1946.

⁶³Daily Worker, October 13, 1945; MGA, INFO IV, "Elections".

October 16, the CPGB produced a pamphlet entitled Crisis in Greece which called on the British government to intervene for "the formation of a new government truly representative of the democratic anti-fascist forces of the Greek nation."⁶⁴ A few days later, Laski wrote in a private letter to his close friend, the American Supreme Court Justice, Felix Frankfurter, that Bevin and the Foreign Office might prove a disaster and that Bevin "should have insisted on smashing this royalist conspiracy in Greece."⁶⁵

These expressions of disquiet with the government's Greek policy found an echo in the speeches of Labour backbenchers and in some Left-wing journals. Lyall Wilkes, for example, speaking on the Greek situation on October 15 and 19, drew the government's attention to the fact that patriots, who during the occupation had sat in judgement on collaborators or had executed them by the sentence of a Popular Court, were now accused of murders while those who had assisted the enemy were free and some of them in positions of great authority. The crisis in Greece had been precipitated by the Royalist Party which refused to participate in any government led by the Liberal Party. If the Greek Right attempted a coup d'état they should be met by the same firm determination on the part of the British army in Greece

⁶⁴Crisis in Greece, published by the CPGB, October 16, 1945.

⁶⁵Schneer, Labour's Conscience (Boston: Mass., 1988) p.54.

as was shown in December 1944.⁶⁶

Paradoxically, since the Labour Party's electoral victory, official statements on Greece had been met with considerable satisfaction by both the conservative and liberal press. The Labour Left press, however, hedged for the first two or three months, then launched a fierce attack on Bevin's Greek policy. Thus Tribune stated in October that Britain should intervene to protect Greece from another dictatorship: "Now to practice strict non-intervention...is in fact to sanction the artificial ascendancy of the Right which Mr.Churchill made possible."⁶⁷ The New Statesman concurred with Tribune. At a time when the economic and political problems in Greece were increasing catastrophically, Bevin refrained from tackling their causes. This passive policy permitted the Right to dominate the country and encouraged it to intensify its anti-communist campaign.⁶⁸

On February 11, 1946 Konni Zilliacus sent Attlee a note in which he expressed his perturbation over Labour's foreign policy. With regard to the British "occupation of Greece", he discerned a continuity of imperial policies:

"In December 1944 Mr.Bevin told the Labour Conference that we had gone into Greece because the British Empire could not abandon its position in

⁶⁶Hansard, vol.414, October 15, 1945, cols 674-6; October 19, 1945, cols 1641-5.

⁶⁷Tribune, October 19, 1945.

⁶⁸New Statesman, October 27, 1945.

the Mediterranean. To put it concretely the Admiralty have insisted from Cairo days onward that we should install a Greek government that would allow us to build a bigger and better Malta on Greek territory in order to keep the Russians out of the Mediterranean."

That, along with British policy in the Middle East and elsewhere, was "the traditional language of power politics and these are the traditional aims of British imperialism since the nineteenth century". Attlee dismissed the note as "based on an astonishing lack of understanding of the facts".⁶⁹

Meanwhile, a significant development had taken place in London: on October 28, 1945 the League for Democracy in Greece was founded at a public meeting in the Garrick theatre. The roots of this organisation can be found in the Anglo-Greek protest movement in Britain during the Second World War. In 1943 Greeks working in London formed the Greek Unity Committee with Compton Mackenzie, the well-known author and philhellene, as its chief sponsor and Fotiadis, then working in the BBC Service, as secretary. The aims of the Committee were the formation of a broadly representative Greek government and the enlightenment of British public opinion about the Greek resistance. Much of the initiation and financial support came from the FGMU. After December

⁶⁹Attlee papers (Bodleian Library, Oxford), Box 31, Folios 166-74: Zilliacus to Attlee February 11, 1946; Box 31, Folios 242: Attlee to Zilliacus, February 17, 1946.

1944 the Committee was replaced by a news agency, Maritpress, sponsored by the FGMU, and Diana Pym, a borough councillor in the St.Pancras area of London, became secretary.⁷⁰ The news agency was able to issue, from July 1946, a weekly survey of Greek news but it was closed down at the end of 1962. Seven years later it was re-opened by Tony Ambatielos and his English wife Betty.

At the inauguration of the LDG Compton Mackenzie was appointed President with D.N.Pritt in the chair. Seymour Cocks, Benn Levy, the liberal Wilfrid Roberts and Lord Faringdon were elected as Vice-Chairmen while Diana Pym moved from the news agency to undertake the duties of secretary. The following aims were adopted:

a) To rebuild and strengthen the traditional friendship between the peoples of Greece and of Great Britain on the basis of the establishment and development of democracy in Greece.

b) To enlighten the British public about the situation in Greece and to promote cultural relations between the two countries.

c) To provide relief to those Greeks who suffered for their democratic beliefs and activities and to their dependents and to the dependents of those Greeks who

⁷⁰ Born in 1908, Diana Pym became a member of the Labour Party in the 1930s. Her disappointment with the policies of the Labour leaders and the impact of the Soviet Union's war effort induced her to join the Communist Party in 1942. Secretary of the LDG, 1945-1972.

died fighting for democracy.

d) To work for a general amnesty for all Greek democrats imprisoned for political reasons; the restoration of trade union and civil liberties; the suppression of armed terrorism and the trial and punishment of collaborators.

In May 1946, Marion Pascoe joined Diana Pym in the secretarship of the League and acted as joint secretary until her marriage to General Sarafis in 1952.⁷¹ In 1950 the League was proscribed by the Labour Party but continued to mobilise public opinion, campaigning for an amnesty for political prisoners and collecting funds for relief. During the junta period (1967-1974) it was again intensely active, this time with greatly increased support. The fall of the junta in 1974 made its services no longer necessary and it renamed itself "Friends of Democracy in Greece."

The League can be included among the most important and effective pressure groups in post-war Britain. Although it was not tied to any particular political party it drew its support mainly from Left-wing MPs and trade unionists. More than 200 organisations were

⁷¹Marion Sarafis (b.1913). Oxford, degree in Classics, 1936; Post-graduate studies British School of Archaeology at Athens 1937-9; wartime work for Admiralty and War Office at Royal Geographical Society, 1941-45; Joint Hon.Secretary LDG, 1946-52; married General Sarafis 1952; work with London Greek Anti-Junta organisations, 1967-74. Book: General Sarafis As I Knew Him, Athens, 1990.

affiliated to it and there were local branches in Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester and north Staffordshire. One of its strengths was its consistent policy. Its activities were characterised by regular, steady pressure. It worked through MPs who signed protests, asked questions in Parliament, wrote letters to the Foreign Office and sometimes spoke at meetings and through organisations such as trade union branches, co-operatives and branches of political parties. It sent out speakers to address meetings at these branches, encourage them to pass resolutions, write to their MPs and national-executives affiliated to it, donate money and collect relief parcels. It held delegate conferences and public meetings in London and the provinces, it published the "Greek news" and from time to time pamphlets, folders and leaflets on various Greek issues.⁷²

III. Greece at the UN Security Council, February 1946

During the last half of 1945 war-time optimism about post-war co-operation between Britain and the Soviet Union began to decline. The first signs of Anglo-Soviet friction over aspects of the post-war settlement appeared very early. Bevin's statement in the House of Commons on August 20, 1945, that in Eastern

⁷²The Archives of the LDG are today located in the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at King's College, London.

Europe one kind of totalitarianism was being replaced by another, was taken by the Soviets as an unwarranted British interference in their legitimate sphere of influence and provoked a Soviet press onslaught on the Labour government's opposition to communism and revolution. Immense differences between the two former allies surfaced with even greater dramatic force at the September meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in London. Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer, observed in the early autumn that "already our relations with Russia, only a few months after the war, were not at all satisfactory."⁷³

The most acute problem in international affairs in the winter of 1945-46 turned out to be Iran. In 1941, the British and the Soviets had instituted a joint military occupation in that country because of the government's close relationship with the Germans. They wanted to safeguard what was the most important supply route into the Soviet Union and protect the oil fields and refinery that were vital to the war effort. In January 1942, the two powers concluded a treaty with Iran, by which troops would be withdrawn six months after the end of the war. Four years later the Iranian crisis blew up. The Soviets refused to pull out their troops, according to the war agreement, or withdraw their support from the communist separatist regime in northern Iran, in Azerbaijan. Iran took her grievances

⁷³Dalton, High Tide and After, p.57.

concerning the state of affairs in Azerbaijan to the Security Council and the Soviets retorted by making a formal complaint against the presence of British troops in Greece and Indonesia.⁷⁴

In his complaint and the supportive arguments made during the debate on Greece (February 1-6, 1946) the Soviet representative, Andrei Vyshinsky, claimed that the war was over and that there was no justification for British troops remaining in Greece. Instead of establishing law and order they were used by reactionary elements against the country's democratic forces. Bevin brushed Vyshinsky's arguments aside; the situation was exactly the opposite. Britain was trying to build a democracy in Greece by ensuring tranquillity and free elections. The British troops would withdraw the moment these objectives were achieved. The Soviet diplomat offered to drop his charges if the British would recognise the governments of Bulgaria and Rumania. Bevin forcefully rejected this trade-off but, after a compromise agreement on Iran, the issue was taken off the agenda.⁷⁵

A general survey of the reaction in Britain to the

⁷⁴On the Iranian crisis in 1946 see Amirsadeghi (ed.), Twentieth-Century Iran (London, 1977); Kuniholm, The Origins (Princeton, N.J., 1980).

⁷⁵Wittner, American Intervention, p.102; Xydis, Greece and the Great Powers, pp.163-6; Richter, British Intervention in Greece, pp.396-403; Bullock, Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951, pp.219-22; Iatrides (ed.), Greece in the 1940s, pp.278-9; Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-1948, pp.7742-4.

Anglo-Soviet confrontation in the Security Council is instructive for the light it throws on the evolution of public opinion.

The Times thought that the Soviet complaint was intended as a riposte to charges levelled against the Soviet Union by the government of Iran. Although Right-wing elements continued to regard the presence of British troops as some protection and excuse for intransigence the Labour government's principal aim in Greece was to assist the process of economic recovery and restoration of political life.⁷⁶ The Manchester Guardian also believed that Bevin had acted correctly when he resisted the Soviet accusation: "In the language of the common man, Mr. Vyshinsky asked for it and he got it." The newspaper felt, however, that the British Foreign Secretary should not adopt such a hard line towards a former ally but he should try to find some basis for friendly agreement.⁷⁷ Like the Guardian, the Economist chided Bevin for letting his indignation carry him too far:

"Mr. Bevin has won a notable victory this week. He will receive many congratulations on the forthrightness and success of his action. But what will they be worth, if his very forcefulness prevents the achievement of his wider objectives? The operation of defending British policy has been successful. But is the patient still alive?"⁷⁸

⁷⁶ The Times, January 23, 1946; February 2, 6, 1946.

⁷⁷ Manchester Guardian, February 4, 1946.

⁷⁸ Economist, February 9, 1946.

The Daily Telegraph refused to acknowledge the Soviet Union's claim that the British government endangered international peace and security by interfering in the Greek internal affairs. Whatever the past mistakes, there could be no doubt as to the disinterestedness and ultimate benevolence of British purposes in Greece. The Telegraph could find no analogy between the situation in Iran and that in Greece. In Iran, the legitimate government alleged Soviet interference while in Greece British troops were present at the invitation of the Greek government.⁷⁹ The Spectator, on the other hand, was much more disturbed by the manner in which the Soviet complaint was made to the Security Council. UNO was designed as an agency for the settlement of international disputes but the Soviet delegate had used it as a forum for fomenting an international dispute. "If these tactics were repeated", the periodical warned, "the whole structure of the United Nations would be brought to the ground."⁸⁰

Michael Foot who was regarded as a prominent figure in the Labour Left endorsed Bevin's stand and vigorously denounced the Soviet Union's policies. Describing the Soviet accusations as "fantastic", he claimed in the Daily Herald that Britain was not concerned to play power politics but to save lives, rebuild Europe and make the new international authorities work. British

⁷⁹Daily Telegraph, January 23, 26 1946; February 5, 1946.

⁸⁰Spectator, February 8, 1946.

troops stayed in Greece to secure the establishment of a government which would attempt to carry out the task of economic reconstruction and ensure fair elections. The Soviet critique in the Security Council had been motivated by contempt for Britain's democratic socialism.⁸¹

Tribune, the first of the Labour Left weeklies to sound an anti-Soviet warning, leaped also to Bevin's defence. The Soviet protest in the Security Council was "wholly unjustified and unsubstantiated". The immediate cause for Vyshinsky's demand was not the plight of the Greek Left but the Iranian demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Azerbaijan. The periodical was upset that the Soviet press and radio had so vehemently attacked the Labour government since it came to power, while no comparable attack had been launched against the United States. If the Soviet attitude stemmed from a belief in the decay of the British Empire and Labour's inability to hold it together, "then the very ardour and determination of Ernest Bevin's fighting speeches will have done a world of good." As regards Greece, Tribune felt that its criticisms of Bevin were very different from those which Vyshinsky had made at the Security Council: Tribune demanded that the British troops should be used more effectively to correct the balance of power which Churchill had weighted in favour of the Right, while Vyshinsky alleged that British troops were being

⁸¹Daily Herald, January 29, 1946, "So they blame our Big Bad Bevin"; February 5, 1946, "Why Russia accuses Britain".

used to protect the Right and, therefore, they should be withdrawn.⁸²

Tribune's views on the Anglo-Soviet relations and Greece were severely criticised by William Warbey, a former ILP activist and now a Labour Member for Luton, in a letter to the periodical on February 22, 1946. Warbey expressed the opinion that the Soviet Union had started to question British policy in Greece because the war had ended and the need for a united front against a common enemy had disappeared. The United States had not been the target of Soviet propaganda because the Soviets badly needed economic assistance which could be obtained only from America. Bevin had not defended democratic socialism in the Security Council but Britain's imperialist interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.⁸³

The New Statesman and the Reynolds News were very hesitant to take Tribune's line or to follow its conclusions. They both held the view that in their content Vyshinsky's attacks were sound and justified and that Bevin should have modified his approach to meet Soviet suspicions.⁸⁴ In an article in the Reynolds News, Lyall Wilkes agreed that Soviet criticisms of British policies in the Eastern Mediterranean were mainly justified.⁸⁵

⁸²Tribune, February 8, 15, 1946.

⁸³Ibid., February 22, 1946.

⁸⁴New Statesman, February 9, 1946; Reynolds News, February 3, 1946.

⁸⁵Reynolds News, February 17, 1946, "Is Labour's foreign

A debate on foreign policy was held in the House of Commons on February 20/21, 1946 and was marked throughout by a sense of anxiety as to the international situation in general and Anglo-Soviet relations in particular. Although it was accepted that the relations between the Great Powers were alarmingly strained there was an almost unanimous refusal, on both sides of the House, to believe that the conflict with the Soviet Union had gone beyond the point where conciliation was still possible. Most speakers conceded that Bevin had acted correctly in the Security Council, though they asked that the Foreign Secretary reach a better understanding with the Soviets.⁸⁶

IV. The Greek Elections of March 1946

In November 1945 a new Left-Centre government was formed in Greece headed by the liberal Sofoulis. The government undertook the obligation to hold elections at the latest in March 1946 as the only way out of the political impasse. First, however, certain problems urgently demanded a solution: ending the white terror; establishment of law and order; a purge of the army, the security forces and the public service; emptying the congested prisons; revision of the electoral lists. By

policy on right lines?"

⁸⁶Hansard, vol.419, February 20, 21, 1946, cols 1157-263, 1313-66.

the end of March 1946 Greece was still in a state of anarchy. Sofoulis and his colleagues in the cabinet had failed to fulfill their promises, the Left had decided to abstain and many Ministers had submitted their resignation. Greek politicians, among them Sofoulis himself, tried in vain to convince Bevin that the elections should be postponed.⁸⁷ Although the British Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Office foresaw a Right-wing victory they insisted on the predetermined election date.⁸⁸ Finally, the elections were held on March 31 and resulted, as it was generally expected, in an overwhelming victory of the Right.

The Sofoulis government had started its career under good auspices but it soon became apparent that it was unable to remedy the country's social and economic ills. As early as January 12, 1946, a leading article in The Times stated that affairs in Greece were moving again towards a new crisis. The wave of strikes which

⁸⁷ FO 371/58675 R 2633; FO 371/58678 R 3462. Sofoulis to Bevin, February 15 and March 2, 1946. On March 14, the Left-wing Parties sent a joint telegram to Bevin expressing the reasons for their abstention and asking for a postponement of the elections for two months. FO 371/58680 R 4373. On March 28, only three days before the elections, Sofoulis told the Daily Worker correspondent that "if you want my candid opinion the elections should have been postponed to at least the autumn." Daily Worker, March 29, 1946.

⁸⁸ FRUS, 1946, vol.7, pp. 117-8, 124-5; Bevin papers: FO 800/468/GRE/46/6, FO statement "Greek Elections", March 20, 1946. On February 15, Bevin discussed the issue with McNeil, Sargent and Hayter and agreed that the elections must not be delayed. FO 371/58675 R 2633; Minute by Hayter, February 21, 1946; Minute by Sargent, February 21, 1946; Minute by McNeil, March 1, 1946. FO 371/58676 R 3032.

broke out at the beginning of 1946 had paralysed the public services and almost all sectors of industry. The amnesty proclaimed by the government in mid-December 1945 had benefited only a small number of detainees while the armed forces continued to be under royalist control.⁸⁹ A few days later, the paper's special correspondent in Athens reported that the economic situation was even more desperate. The price of the pound sterling had risen from 69,000 to 172,000 drachmas in a fortnight and the note circulation had increased 50 per cent in less than two months. It was inevitably the poor people who suffered from the high inflation; the wealthy were not taxed heavily enough or they used to hoard durable goods and gold.⁹⁰ On March 8, only a few weeks before the elections, an editorial stated categorically that "it should be clear to the British government that the free elections for which it has striven and on which it has rightly based its hopes for the future of Greece cannot be held on 31 March." The newspaper's opinion was that the Labour government should make another effort to facilitate the resumption of normal political life. The success of this effort, however, depended on three conditions: EAM should use all of its influence for the maintenance of order, take full and legal part in the elections postponed to an agreed date and a representative national government

⁸⁹The Times, January 12, 1946.

⁹⁰Ibid., January 15, 1946.

should be formed to carry it through the electoral period.⁹¹

The Times' strong and insistent advocacy of full cooperation with the Soviet Union and postponement of the Greek elections outraged Bevin. On March 11, he met Barrington-Ward in his office and made an extraordinary attack on The Times. He accused it of having no policy, of being "spineless", "a jellyfish", neither for him nor against him, more pro-Soviet than pro-British. Then he brought up Greece. The editor noted in his diary:

"We also clashed over Greece. I told him I had only supported the postponement of the elections when I found that reputable and responsible Greeks considered it essential. He said "Have you ever known a reputable Greek?". Very silly. Rendis, the foreign minister, and Aghnides, the excellent ambassador in London, are as reputable as anyone I knew. But Bevin thinks that Russia has stoked up the EAM in Greece and is turning the heat on him there too."

Barrington-Ward was taken by surprise and was deeply shocked by the "crude onslaught" but he kept calm and told Bevin that The Times defended British interests as anyone else and did its best to apply reason to foreign affairs. A few weeks later, the paper's general policy was discussed by its directors, conservative to a man, but Barrington-Ward's independence as editor was confirmed.⁹²

⁹¹Ibid., March 8, 1946.

⁹²McDonald, The History of The Times, pp.138-44; McLachlan, In the Chair, pp.280-1.

Liberal reaction to the Greek elections was varied. The day Barrington-Ward met Bevin an editorial appeared in the Manchester Guardian which called for "a limited postponement" of the elections on condition that all the parties would promise to take part on an agreed date. Then the British government might convene an all-party conference at which the demands made by EAM could be discussed.⁹³ On March 27, the Guardian stated that the decision of the Greek Left to abstain was not justified. Both monarchists and communists were equally culpable for their acts of terror. The abstention would result in the establishment of an extreme Right-wing government "panting for revenge at home, for adventure abroad and, worst of all for a restoration of the Monarchy, with all that this would mean."⁹⁴ The News Chronicle thought that conditions for free and fair elections had not been created; if the elections were not postponed there would be a renewal of civil war.⁹⁵ Vernon Bartlett prophesied that if the Right came to power it would try to bring back the King at an early day.⁹⁶ The Economist, however, believed that a two months' postponement would not improve the state of security in Greece and, therefore, the elections ought to take place.⁹⁷

Unlike the liberal, the conservative press was

⁹³ Manchester Guardian, March 11, 1946.

⁹⁴ Ibid., March 27, 1946.

⁹⁵ News Chronicle, March 9, 1946.

⁹⁶ Ibid., March 27, 1946.

⁹⁷ Economist, March 9, 1946.

undivided in its reaction to the elections. The conservative publications agreed that the previously determined election date should be adhered to. The Daily Telegraph claimed that the situation in Greece was unstable but restoration of law and order would more probably be delayed by any postponement which would undermine public confidence and encourage illegal activity. On March 27, Christopher Buckley, who a few weeks earlier had replaced Richard Capell as the Telegraph's Athens correspondent, reported that postponement of the elections would not benefit Greece. Rather, it would increase public uncertainty and it would eventually bring about civil war and chaos.⁹⁸ The Spectator also believed that a boycott of the elections would bring Greece very near to the edge of civil war, particularly if the victorious Right used its success to declare for a monarchy. The periodical claimed that the elections could not be postponed because the date had long been fixed and allied observers had already arrived in Greece to see that the elections were fairly conducted.⁹⁹

The Daily Herald threw its weight behind Bevin's policy of refusing to accept any delay of the Greek elections. Its Athens correspondent, Dudley Barker, who had been sent to Greece to assess the influence of repression on the conduct of the elections, admitted

⁹⁸ Daily Telegraph, March 14, 27, 1946.

⁹⁹ Spectator, March 15, 1946.

that there was a climate of fear in the provinces of Greece but excused much of the Right-wing terrorism as merely high feelings to be expected in the first months after the release under amnesty from prison of many former EAM/ELAS members. Barber also insisted that there was no possibility of illegal and plural voting: elaborate precautions had been taken in issuing electoral books and each voter would have his finger dipped in indelible ink.¹⁰⁰ On March 28, an editorial warned that abstention from the polls would result in an overwhelming victory of the Right which would "bring further disturbance and misery to Greece". The editorial appealed to the Greek workers to vote "in full strength for those of the available candidates who are opposed to the ambitions of the extreme Right."¹⁰¹

By contrast, Labour Left and communist publications stood out against the holding of the elections. Emphasizing that conditions for a free expression of the popular will had not yet been created, they declared that premature elections would deepen the political split in the country, increase unrest and hinder the carrying out of the economic programme. The Reynolds News demanded the formation of a new all-party Greek government which would commit itself to improving conditions in the country. Tribune described Bevin's insistence on elections as "a tragic decision" which

¹⁰⁰ Daily Herald, March 25, 1946.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., March 28, 1946.

would probably result in "a victory of the Right and the establishment of a second Metaxas regime which would immediately recall the King."¹⁰²

The New Statesman was also dismayed that Bevin had disregarded Greek and British repeated demands for a postponement. With the Left not taking part in the elections, there could be no other possible result but a Right-wing dictatorship or civil war. Bevin was no longer thinking of democracy or even preventing fascism, but only of strengthening the forces of the Right in his battle against pro-Soviet elements.¹⁰³ A few days before the elections, Hugh Massingham, whose father Henry William Massingham had been editor of the Nation, cabled from Athens that a Right-wing victory would be disastrous for Greece. The populists had no economic policy, they were unable to create an efficient civil service and they could not get national unity as their policies would certainly meet strong popular opposition. Like many of his contemporaries, Massingham warned that if Britain were to connive for the return of the King, it would be almost impossible to prevent the outbreak of a civil war.¹⁰⁴ For the Daily Worker, a mere postponement of the elections would not change the situation in Greece. What was necessary was a strong and representative government, a general amnesty and the withdrawal

¹⁰²Reynolds News, March 24, 1946; Tribune, March 22, 1946.

¹⁰³New Statesman, March 16, 23, 1946.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., March 30, 1946.

of British troops. Only then could free and fair elections be ensured.¹⁰⁵

In March 1946, critics of the government's line on Greece intensified their efforts to persuade Bevin to postpone the election date. On the 10th, over eighty MPs together with A.J.Cummings, Lord Faringdon, Compton Mackenzie and others signed a statement issued by the UDC, expressing their doubts about the possibility of free elections on March 31 and urging a broadening of the Greek government to include the Left, a purge of collaborators in the state organisations, amnesty to political prisoners, and revision of the electoral registers.¹⁰⁶ The following day, Wilkes and Warbey urged postponement of the elections at question time in the Commons.¹⁰⁷ Later the subject of the election date was raised in a debate on the Supplementary Estimate providing for a loan of £10 million to the Greek government for the purpose of stabilising Greek currency. Although Maurice Edelman and Lewis Austin criticised Bevin's decision to go through with the elections, expectations of strong opposition aroused by the UDC statement were not realised. For the greater part of the debate only thirty-five Members were sitting on the Labour benches as many of the government's

¹⁰⁵ Daily Worker, February 28, 1946.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., March 13, 1946; Stavrianos, American Dilemma, p. 167.

¹⁰⁷ Hansard, vol.420, March 11, 1946, cols 747-9.

prominent critics were in the External Affairs Committee also discussing Greece.¹⁰⁸ On the 18th, Lyall Wilkes, Konni Zilliacus and Benn Levy once again pressed the government to reconsider the holding of the elections at the end of the month, but Hector McNeil gave them no satisfaction.¹⁰⁹ On the same day, the Executive-Committee of the CPGB asked Bevin to accede to the demand of the democrats in Greece that the general elections should be postponed.¹¹⁰

"The Greek electoral lists were cooked in the stinking kitchens of reaction" declared Seymour Cocks at March 24 Greek Independent Day meeting organised by the LDG in St.Pancras Town Hall. Cocks denounced the "vicious conspiracy" of the elections as the culmination of a reactionary plot which had been hatching for years. Another speaker, Leslie Solley, a barrister and member of the Labour Party for over twenty years, said that a conspiracy of misrepresentation was preventing the British people from getting the real facts about Greece, and the British government itself was getting false and inaccurate reports. The meeting adopted a resolution which declared that elections held under present conditions would make a victory for Greek fascism almost inevitable.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Daily Worker, March 11, 1946; New Statesman, March 16, 1946.

¹⁰⁹ Hansard, vol.421, March 18, 1946, cols 1505-8.

¹¹⁰ Daily Worker, March 19, 1946.

¹¹¹ Ibid., March 25, 1946.

Opposition to the holding of elections reached its climax in the last days of March. In an attempt to supply a factual background to the present situation in Greece, Solley undertook to write a pamphlet entitled Greece: The Facts. Solley contended that in the recent years Greece had been turned into a British colony. More than 40,000 British troops were in the country, military and police missions had complete supervisory powers over the Greek Army, gendarmerie and police, British representatives were working in the Greek ministries, the Greek currency was under the control of the Currency Committee on which there was a British and a United States representative. Yet, Greece continued to be in the midst of economic and political chaos.

"The number of Fascist outrages is ever increasing, while neither the military nor the police take adequate measures to meet the menace. Murders, kidnappings, the blowing up of Left-wing newspaper premises and the homes of leading Left-wing politicians, individual assaults against the leaders of the Left- all these, the authorities are seemingly powerless to prevent."

If elections took place under these conditions on March 31 there might well be civil war. Like other leftwing critics, Solley was firmly convinced that the situation in Greece was the direct consequence of British policy "favouring the forces of the Right, of Fascism and of the collaborators with the enemy."¹¹²

In the House of Commons, Labour leaders and critics

¹¹²Leslie Solley, Greece: The Facts, MGA/CIR 12.

discussed their disagreements on foreign policy in a special meeting, "the largest and longest to be held since the government came to power", of the PLP on March 27. Bevin spoke for over an hour and, after answering questions, called for a vote of confidence which he got with only six dissenters and thirty abstaining out of 300. The six had been Wilkes, Warbey, Zilliacus, Elisabeth Braddock, Emrys Hughes, and Julius Silverman.¹¹³ Bevin had emerged, as The Times put it, "with the satisfaction of having achieved something of a personal triumph."¹¹⁴ At this stage, however, only a few months after Labour had taken power no one could expect a serious challenge to "Bevinism". Future critics were determined, still, to "give the government a chance." Besides, the meeting and the voting had not been confined to the Greek elections as some Labour MPs might have hoped; British foreign policy had been considered as a whole. But whatever the reasons for the lukewarm and tepid reaction to the Labour leaders at the meeting the fact is that in the early months of 1946 Bevin had the support of the majority of the British people. According to Gallup polls organised by the News Chronicle, in December 1945 47% of those questioned had thought he was doing a good job as Foreign Secretary; by

¹¹³NMLH, Manchester, minutes of meetings of Parliamentary Labour Party, March 27, 1946; New Statesman, March 30, 1946; Bullock, Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951, p.226; Schneer, Labour's Conscience, p.105.

¹¹⁴The Times, March 28, 1946.

March 1946 the figure for approval had risen to 73% while only 12% disapproved.¹¹⁵

Despite the pressure both in Greece and Britain for a delay, the elections were held on March 31 and the royalist parties won an absolute majority of political seats (238 out of 354) as well as of vote cast (711,000 out of 1,117,500), but they failed to win the support of the majority of the electorate (only 38,4%). 20,4% of the electorate voted for the republican parties and according to the highly questionable estimates of the allied observers- mainly Americans -about 15% abstained for "party" reasons.¹¹⁶

Several British newspaper correspondents witnessed the proceedings on polling day. All of them drew their information mainly from British and official Greek sources and with the single exception of Wilfred Burchett of the Daily Express who was in Salonica, they based themselves in Athens. Their assessment of the situation was excessively optimistic. The Times' correspondent claimed that the elections had been conducted

¹¹⁵Gallup, The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain, 1937-1945, vol.1, pp.121, 126.

¹¹⁶In February Leeper had estimated that EAM would poll 25-35% and gain 100 seats in a 300-seat Parliament. A few days after the elections the new Ambassador Clifford Norton reckoned that the percentage of leftist abstention was 30%. The Central-Committee of EAM had calculated that, on account of the White Terror, they would not return more than 100-120 deputies. FO 371/ 58676 R 2918 Leeper to FO February 1, 1946; FO 371/ 58684 R 5434 Norton to FO April 6, 1946; FO 371/58677 R 3288 Leeper to FO February 23, 1946.

"with scrupulous fairness."¹¹⁷ Dudley Barber (Daily Herald) did not see "a single instance of disorder or intimidation", but he wondered what had happened to the indelible ink which "was not used anywhere."¹¹⁸ Reporting for the News Chronicle Geoffrey Hoare described these elections as "a model" of what elections should be for Greece.¹¹⁹ For Christopher Buckley (Daily Telegraph) voting had been proceeded "with the utmost regularity" and voters had been able to exercise a free choice. The amount of terrorism prevailing had been exaggerated and where it had occurred it had not been confined to one side. The Daily Mail correspondent, Alexander Clifford, found completely normal conditions in Athens.¹²⁰ Kenneth Matthews of the BBC spoke of "business-like and serious" elections.¹²¹ Three correspondents, those of the Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph and Daily Herald who apparently did their election day by reporting together, insisted on telling the same story, with minor variations, that EAM had attempted to deceive them: interviewing two young men at Eleusis, near Athens, who said that they had been beaten up by the police while bill-posting they came to realise that the marks on their bodies were so

¹¹⁷The Times, April 2, 1946.

¹¹⁸Daily Herald, April 1, 1946.

¹¹⁹News Chronicle, April 1, 1946.

¹²⁰Daily Telegraph, April 1, 1946; Daily Mail, April 1, 1946.

¹²¹BBC, WAC, 9 o'clock broadcast news, March 31 and April 1, 1946.

slight as to make the allegations appear ridiculous.¹²² Only the Daily Worker and Daily Express correspondents detected signs of intimidation and oppression. The Daily Worker correspondent reported that soldiers were parading the streets and were compelling people to vote or remain in their houses. Burchett, in Salonica, was more categorical: "Since yesterday evening there has been a wave of arrests of EAM supporters, many others fleeing into the mountains to avoid what they believe to be a reign of terror for the Leftists in the next few days."¹²³

In their general remarks the allied observers confirmed the opinion of the press that the elections were "on the whole free and fair" and that the outcome represented "a true and valid verdict of the Greek people." Intimidation was exercised by both sides and in certain districts but it was not extensive enough to affect seriously the result, though Right-wing terrorism in some areas, notably in the Peloponnese, might have influenced EAM in its refusal to take part in the elections. Although the registration lists contained irregularities there was no significant amount of illegal voting. The practice of deliberate abstention

¹²²Daily Mail, April 2, 1946; Daily Telegraph, April 1, 1946; Daily Herald, April 1, 1946.

¹²³Daily Worker, April 1, 1946; Daily Express, April 1, 1946. For Wilfred Burchett, "the iconoclast of contemporary radicalism", see his memoirs, At the Barricades (London, 1991).

did not reach large proportions.¹²⁴

Despite the sincere efforts of the British newspaper correspondents and the allied observers to depict accurately the realities of the situation in Greece, their reports cannot be accepted uncritically. Most of the correspondents and observers had only recently come to Greece and were not acquainted with the Greek conditions. Moreover, prior to their arrival in Athens, the members of the AMFOGE had been "indoctrinated" in Italy by persons who were fervent supporters of British policy in Greece.¹²⁵ During the election campaign public order was exceptionally good and on polling day itself only one serious episode occurred, at Litochoro, a village in southern Macedonia, when a gendarme station was attacked by a guerrilla band. However, the British correspondents and allied observers ought to have commented on the situation in Greece in the months before they arrived on the scene: the widespread persecution of the Left, the threats of reprisals, the opportunities for large-scale vote frauds.¹²⁶ The wave of terror that washed over Greek

¹²⁴AMFOGE report, p.24.

¹²⁵Richter, British Intervention in Greece, pp.443-5; McNeill, The Greek Dilemma, p.191.

¹²⁶Since September 1945 the US Embassy possessed "positive proof" that electoral booklets "were being widely duplicated in Athens." FRUS, 1945, vol.8 MacVeagh to the Secretary of State (James Byrnes), September 25, 1945, p.163. Later The Times (March 29, 1946) confirmed that people could easily obtain more than one booklet. The Labour MP Francis Noel-Baker received three vouchers in his own name by presenting an identity card issued by

society in 1945 had certainly influenced the election outcome, but the foreign commentators and observers reporting the elections used only a very narrow brief. The impression left on international public opinion was that thanks to Bevin's policy Greece was finally entering into a phase of political stability and economic recovery. What was really happening was the opposite.

the X organisation. Stavrianos, American Dilemma, p. 164.

CHAPTER FIVE: BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION AND GREECE,

APRIL 1946-MARCH 1947

Taking office in April 1946, the new Right-wing government headed by the populist leader, Constantine Tsaldaris, acted to consolidate the Right's political victory. "Extraordinary measures for public order" were adopted by the Greek parliament, the notorious "Security Committees" of the Metaxas dictatorship were reinstated and thousands of EAM/ELAS members and sympathisers were deported to the Aegean islands, among them Euripidis Bakirjis and Stefanos Sarafis.¹ Progressive university professors and civil servants were dismissed and EPON,

¹Euripidis Bakirjis was the first president of PEEA set by EAM in 1944. General Stefanos Sarafis was a regular officer in the Greek Army who served with distinction in the First World War. A young supporter of Venizelos he had strong democratic and republican sympathies which brought his army career to an abrupt end when the monarchy was restored. After an unsuccessful revolt in 1935 he was deprived of his rank and exiled. During the occupation he took to the hills and organised a rival organisation to ELAS, but in early 1943 he joined ELAS and became its Commander-in-Chief. In 1946, he was deported with other ELAS leaders and interned in Macronisos. Later he was elected a parliamentary deputy of the left-wing EDA party. On May 31, 1957, he was killed by a US serviceman's car. It was said to be an accident. The Times, June 1, 1957; Eudes, The Kape-tanios, pp.50, 52, 54-7, 257-8, 363-4.

EAM's youth organisation, was dissolved. Military tribunals were established and condemned prisoners were executed within a few hours of judgement. Despite Britain's commitment on the 1948 date, the plebiscite on the monarchy was held on September 1, 1946 and resulted in a very substantial vote for the restoration of George II.

In January 1947, in an atmosphere of political polarisation and extreme violence, Tsaldaris resigned and was succeeded by Dimitrios Maximos, an elderly populist and ex-governor of the National Bank, who formed a cabinet including moderate politicians like Papandreou and Kanellopoulos as well as extreme Rightists like Napoleon Zervas, initially Minister without Portfolio, later Minister of Public Order. The following month the British conceded their position in Greece to the Americans. With the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine on March 12, 1947, Greece came under the area of American responsibility.

I. Labour foreign policy and the reaction to "Bevinism" June-November 1946

In spite of the Labour government's assurances that it was endeavouring to carry out the principles of foreign policy held faithfully by the Labour Party for so many years, many of Labour's own supporters by mid-1946 had come to regret the government's activities abroad. They believed that instead of tolerating

reactionary regimes in Greece, Spain and elsewhere, and seeking intimate ties with the imperialist United States, the task of a socialist government should be to assist the radical movements in Europe and try to gain the confidence of the Soviet Union. Some of them were particularly attracted to the idea of a Third Force: Britain should detach herself from both the Soviet and American blocs and develop a Third Force which would bridge the East-West antagonism and offer an alternative to American free enterprise and Soviet totalitarianism.²

When Bevin made a detailed and lengthy report on the first session of the Council of Foreign Ministers during a debate in the House of Commons in June 1946, he faced a more critical audience than ever before. Francis Noel-Baker complained about the policy of non-intervention in Franco Spain, Solley about the continuing support for the Greek regime, and Vernon Bartlett about the absence of any constructive policy in

²For the Third Force movement see Schneer, Labour's Conscience; Schneer, "Hopes Deferred or Shattered...", J.Mod.Hist., vol.56 (1984), pp.197-226; Gordon, Conflict and Consensus (Stanford, 1969); Epstein, Britain-Uneasy Ally (Chicago, 1954). By that time, the British public had already begun to take a less favourable attitude toward both the Super Powers. According to a Gallup poll (September 1946), 61% of those questioned agreed that international cooperation had disappeared (24% it had not disappeared, 15% don't know) and 41% felt less friendly than a year ago towards the Soviet Union (8% more friendly, 41% same, 10% don't know). Gallup, The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain 1937-1945, vol.1, pp.137, 139. The attitude toward the United States was also becoming more critical. See Harrison, "British opinion...", P.Op.Quar., vol.2 (1947), pp.327-41.

the British zone in Germany.³ It was Britain's alliance with a Right-wing American government and a free-enterprise system, however, that most deeply worried some Labour backbenchers.⁴ Even Tom Horabin, then a Liberal, affirmed that "if the peace is to be saved, it is vital that Britain should take up a stand independent of both the United States of America and Soviet Russia. I believe we are being too subservient to the United States."⁵

At the 1946 Labour Party conference which met at Bournemouth early in June, almost all the resolutions concerning foreign policy which appeared on the final agenda were critical of the government's past record. The chairman of the conference himself, Harold Laski, accepted for the Labour Party grave responsibility for the situation in Spain and Greece:

"As a Socialist Party, we must regard it as a tragedy in which our responsibility is grave, that Spain is still crushed beneath the ugly tyranny of Franco...What is true of Spain is also true of Greece. For us, as Socialists, the return of the King would be a sorry end to the brave struggle of a nation which first taught the world the significance of freedom. And I desire to say with blunt emphasis that we should place no confidence in a regime led by a King who has not only already broken the Constitution he was pledged to observe, but behind whom, also, crouch old and evil vested interests whose sole concern is to equate their private enrichment with the public welfare."⁶

³ Hansard, vol.423, June 4, 1946, cols 1880-5 (Noel-Baker), 1889-1896 (Solley), 1908-1914 (Bartlett).

⁴ Ibid, June 5, 1946, cols 2064-71 (Warbey).

⁵ Ibid., col. 2054.

⁶ Labour Party Annual Conference, 1946, pp.105-6.

The delegate J.W.Kagan from South Hendon DLP expressed the anxiety of many within and outside the ranks of his party when he observed:

"Up and down the country, in workshops, in Trade Union branches, in local Labour Parties, and so forth, two questions are being asked: (1) is there a difference between the policy of the Labour Government and of former governments? and (2) is the policy sufficiently socialist?"

Successive motions criticised Bevin for his policies in Palestine and Spain, for continuing Churchill's policy of hostility towards the Soviet Union, for failing to recruit socialists to the Foreign Office and for making himself, in Zilliacus' phrase, "the white hope of a Black international."⁸ Bevin defended himself strongly against these charges and won a sweeping victory. "Clearly", Tribune bitterly commented, "the delegates had assembled with the firm intention of praising Caesar and the whole Senate."⁹

However, in the following months, dissatisfaction with Bevin's policies increased even more. In an attempt to provide an explanation of the current deadlock in foreign affairs, Michael Foot, writing in Tribune (July 7, 1946), criticised the Labour government for its failure to adhere to its principles and called for a socialist departure in British foreign policy. Although he was wholly out of sympathy with the

⁷ Ibid., p.151.

⁸ Ibid., p.160.

⁹ Tribune, June 14, 1946.

continual Soviet belligerence, he felt that the hostility which the Soviet Union exhibited toward Britain was "not a reason for abandoning our Socialist objectives; it is rather a reason for pursuing them all the more boldly."¹⁰ A more searching analysis of Britain's foreign policy was provided by the New Statesman during August and September in a series of four articles entitled "Reorientations". The series charged that Bevin had been converted to anti-Communism and had permitted himself to become unduly influenced by his officials at the Foreign Office. As a result, "during Mr. Bevin's first year at the Foreign Office, we have witnessed a complete reversal of Labour foreign policy." The New Statesman feared that the spirit of cordial cooperation between the three great powers no longer existed. The suggested alternative to the rapidly widening split between East and West was for Britain to regain a central position between the blocs and to help to establish confidence.¹¹

In the debate on foreign affairs in the House of Commons on October 22/23, 1946, several Labour MPs took the opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction with the government's policy abroad. Lyall Wilkes, for example, said "that so far as Greece, Palestine, Spain, and other countries are concerned, British foreign policy at the moment is suffering from paralysis and failing to

¹⁰ Ibid., July 7, 1946.

¹¹ New Statesman, August 31, September 7, 21, 28, 1946.

perform the function which we hoped it would perform.”¹²
John Platts-Mills complained that Bevin’s policy “is to seek out in every land where his writ runs that party which for certain will oppose the Soviet Union and the communists and he backs that party to the hilt”.¹³
Stanley Tiffany and D.N.Pritt accused British foreign policy of being that of the Foreign Office and the Tory Party.¹⁴

Rank and file trade union functionaries were also disturbed by the fact that Labour’s foreign policy was just the sort of policy the Tories desired. In the concluding stages of the TUC annual conference on October 25, a significantly large vote (2,444,000 in favour-3,577,000 against) was cast for a strongly-worded resolution proposed by the ETU, criticising the government’s policy toward Greece, Spain and Germany as well as toward the Soviet Union.¹⁵ That this was a Pyrrhic victory for the supporters of Bevin’s policy immediately became apparent when another resolution demanding the severance of economic and diplomatic relations with Franco was put to the vote. The resolution was carried, against the recommendations of the General Council, by an overwhelming majority, 4,500,000 votes being cast in

¹²Hansard, vol.427, October 22, 1946, col.1594.

¹³Ibid., col.1543.

¹⁴Ibid., October 23, 1946, cols 1758, 1690.

¹⁵TUC Annual Conference, 1946, pp.469, 473.

favour and 1,400,000 votes against.¹⁶ The result of these two votes clearly indicates that support of the government's foreign policy among representatives of the Labour movement had been considerably narrowed. Although the majority still supported this foreign policy in almost all questions, a substantial minority was already coming out against the reactionary line of the government's foreign policy.

On October 29, twenty-one backbenchers, including Michael Foot, R.H.S. Crossman, Sydney Silverman, Lyall Wilkes, Benn Levy, Donald Bruce, Bevan's private secretary, Barbara Ayrton-Gould, a member of the Labour Party Executive, sent Attlee an open letter condemning Labour's international policy and proclaiming the idea of the Third Force.¹⁷ Having failed to receive a satisfactory answer to their letter by Attlee, a deputation from the twenty-one MPs saw McNeil on November 12, the day Parliament began its second session, Bevin being in New York for the conference of Foreign Ministers. Afterwards, they tabled an amendment to the Address from the Throne, which was eventually signed by fifty-seven MPs, calling on the government to recast its conduct of international affairs so as to "provide a democratic and constructive socialist alternative to an otherwise inevitable conflict between American capitalism and

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.473-4.

¹⁷ For the text of the letter and the list of signatories see the Manchester Guardian, November 16, 1946.

Soviet communism.”¹⁸The six sponsors of the amendment were Foot, Crossman, Silverman, Benn Levy, Mark Hewitson and Joe Reeves. Among those supporting it were Donald Bruce, J.P.W. Mallalieu, George Wigg, John Haire, Barbara Castle (all parliamentary private secretaries to Ministers) as well as Jennie Lee, Woodrow Wyatt, Tom Driberg, Maurice Edelman, Lyall Wilkes, Ian Mikardo. On November 13, at the PLP meeting, Attlee and Morrison rebuked those who had tabled the amendment and asked for it to be withdrawn, threatening that standing orders to maintain party discipline might now be reimposed. The critics insisted that the amendment should be moved although an undertaking was given that it would not be pressed to a division. Five days later, the amendment was called by the Speaker during the debate on the King’s speech.¹⁹

Moving the amendment Crossman made a vigorous attack on the government’s “drift into the American camp”.²⁰When the debate concluded, Crossman asked leave to withdraw it, but the two remaining members of the ILP, John McGovern and Campbell Stephen objected, thus

¹⁸Twenty-three of the fifty-seven who signed the amendment had come to Parliament from the services, eleven were journalists, eight lawyers, three teachers, six trade unionists and Co-operative officials, five technicians and engineers and one was a farmer. Tribune, November 22, 1946.

¹⁹Keesing’s Contemporary Archives, 1946-1948, p.8275; Daily Telegraph, November 14, 1946; News Chronicle, November 14, 1946; Manchester Guardian, November 14, 1946; Schneer, Labour’s Conscience, pp.58-9; Harris, Attlee, p.301.

²⁰Hansard, vol.430, November 18, 1946, col.527.

compelling the Speaker to refuse leave and put the amendment to the vote. 353 voted for the government (those of the Labour MPs who were against the amendment plus a number of Tories, Liberals and Independents) and about 90 Labour MPs deliberately abstained.²¹

Despite the defeat of the amendment, the revolt represented the most serious critique of Bevin's foreign policy ever to come from within the Parliamentary Labour Party. It was a demonstration of a faith, which extended beyond the Labour Left, in the possibility and desirability of a democratic, socialist Britain independent of both the Super Powers. Michael Foot, one of the protagonists of the revolt, explained in Tribune and the Daily Herald that the amendment reflected the fear of many Labour MPs and of the rank and file that the government had not as yet broken with the past in the field of foreign affairs. The amendment was not suggesting that there were not actions and statements by the Labour government deserving the most enthusiastic support - he brought as an example India and the socialisation of the German industries - or that Britain "should bow before the slanders against us which have poured forth from Moscow", but it echoed the general belief that the government should execute a socialist

²¹The Times assessed the number of those deliberately abstained at 122 (November 20, 1946); the Daily Herald at 94 (November 20, 1946); Tribune at 82 (November 22, 1946). According to the New Statesman (November 23, 1946), "at least a third of the Labour backbenchers felt unable to endorse the government's foreign policy unreservedly."

foreign policy "as an independent power, unsuspected of any drift towards an exclusive alliance."²²

However, the importance of the revolt must not be overemphasized. Most of those who supported the amendment were moderate backbenchers who had never before showed any tendency to attack their leaders. Their loyalty to the party leadership was beyond doubt. Even Sydney Silverman, one of Bevin's most vociferous critics, told the House during the debate that "so far from wanting to defeat the government, we want it to continue, and to go on not merely for this term, but for another term."²³ As Tribune put it "the Labour party has never been endangered by genuine socialist rebels. The threat has always come from the Right - never from the Left."²⁴

Like the trade union and parliamentary Labour Left, the Left in the constituencies condemned the government for its failure to apply socialist principles to foreign affairs. One of the most violent attacks upon the government's international policy came from Spelthorne

²²Tribune, November 22, 1946, Michael Foot "Rebellion with a difference"; Daily Herald, November 15, 1946, Michael Foot "Foreign Affairs: Why I sign the amendment". See also Wyatt, Dangerous World (London, 1952) p.140. According to Ian Mikardo (Back-bencher, London 1988, p.100) the amendment and the debate on it "dramatically opened the division between the socialists and the pragmatists in the Labour Party which has persisted ever since."

²³Hansard, vol.430, November 18, 1946, col.571.

²⁴Tribune, December 6, 1946.

in the form of a statement marked "private and confidential" and circulated to divisional Labour parties, trade unions and Labour MPs. The authors of the Spelthorne protest stated that the foreign policy of the Labour government in general was a gross betrayal of the Labour cause and of democracy throughout the world. In Poland and other countries bordering on the Soviet Union, Britain consistently opposed progressive measures and supported reactionary minorities. In Greece, she had helped to suppress the trade union movement and to establish a fascist regime. In the Middle East, she opposed labour and nationalist movements and, in Indonesia and Indochina, she used her troops to restore the power of allied imperialism. Britain stood between the imperialism of the United States and the socialism of the Soviet Union. If she continued to line up with the Americans she would sooner or later be driven into a position of economic and political dependence on them. On the contrary, an alliance with the Soviet Union would assure Britain's advance toward her socialist goal. It was the duty of the Labour movement to work for and insist on a socialist foreign policy.²⁵

By the autumn of 1946, reaction to Bevinism had come to a head. Although Left-wing backbenchers and the rank and file of the Labour movement would continue to

²⁵Daily Worker, December 20, 1946. The Labour Party replied to the Spelthorne statement by issuing a four-page pamphlet written by Morgan Phillips, its new secretary and chairman of the Socialist International. Daily Herald, December 17, 1946.

press for a change, within a year or two the third force policy would lose most of its appeal, even to those who had supported the November revolt. General Marshall's speech at Harvard in June 1947 and the events in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 would put an end to the demand that Britain maintain an equal distance from both the Super Powers and drive most of the government's critics into support of Ernest Bevin.

II. The LDG delegation to Greece, April-May 1946

On April 13, 1946 the LDG received a cable from General Othonaios "inviting a delegation of British personalities, preferably deputies, to visit Greece."²⁶ The League accepted and three members of its Executive-Committee, the Labour MPs Leslie Solley, Stanley Tiffany and Norman Dodds, were nominated to go, together with Diana Pym who was to act as secretary of the delegation.²⁷ Being aware of the effect which the

²⁶FO 371/58893, General Othonaios to the LDG, April 13, 1946.

²⁷Leslie Solley(1905-1968). A barrister by profession, he took a science degree at the University of London before deciding on Law. He took a deep interest in foreign affairs and participated in many delegations to foreign countries. He was Honorary Treasurer of the LDG. He was expelled from the Labour Party in May 1949 for his strong opposition to Bevin's foreign policy but later he was readmitted to the Party. Stanley Tiffany (1908-1971). An electrical engineer. He was elected for the Peterborough division of Northamptonshire in 1945 and sat until 1950, when he was defeated. Norman Dodds (1903-1965). A publicity manager. Member for Dartford, 1945-1955, and for Erith and Crayford from 1955 until

delegation's report would have in Greece and on the British public the Foreign Office tried unsuccessfully to delay or even prevent the visit of the three MPs by refusing to sponsor the applications for visas on the ground that the visit was of a private nature and did not constitute an official obligation.²⁸ To the dismay of the Foreign Office, however, the Greek Embassy authorised the granting of visas. Bevin and McNeil had earlier complained to William Whiteley, the Labour chief whip, that a delegation was going to Greece "which would tend to represent not the point of view of the House as a whole, but of only a portion of it."²⁹

The delegation arrived in Athens on April 26 and stayed until May 9.³⁰ They spent a few days in the Greek capital and the surrounding country and then they visited other areas. Solley and Tiffany examined conditions in southern and central Greece, at Patras, Volos, and Larissa, while Dodds and Pym visited Salonica and many Macedonian villages. In spite of the brief time allotted to them, they succeeded in holding talks with politicians of nearly every tendency such as Sofoulis, Sofianopoulos, professor Svolos, General Othonaios, Canellopoulos, Tsaldaris, Theotokis, Minister

his death. The Times, August 23, 1965, January 8, 1968 and March 20, 1971; Who was who, 1961-70, pp.309, 1055, and 1971-80, p. 795.

²⁸FO 371/58893 R 6046.

²⁹FO 371/58893 R 6322.

³⁰For the visit of the delegation to Greece see its report Tragedy in Greece, MGA/CIR 12.

of Public Order, George Mavros, Minister of Justice, Zachariadis, Partsalidis as well as with Charles Wickham, head of the British Police mission in Greece, Colonel Gordon, the British police adviser, Edward Peck, the British Consul in Salonica, leading trade unionists, local MPs, people's committees from towns and villages; only the extreme Right was not represented in their interviews. They visited police stations, prisons, hospitals, the British Embassy, offices of various political and trade union organisations and spoke at May Day demonstrations.

Within a few hours of their arrival, they went to the Kalithea prison in Athens to investigate the case of two members of the Pan-Hellenic Federation of Democratic Clubs who alleged that they had been taken to prison and beaten up by the police for collecting dues and distributing leaflets. The MPs found that the allegations were correct. They also found that the gendarmes "were actually taking the lead in beatings-up and terror. The victims were almost invariably democrats ...If a Rightist was murdered, arrests of democrats were made for miles around; if a Leftist was murdered, the assassins frequently remained at liberty and armed."

The following day (April 27), after hearing reports of incidents at the Hatjicosta prison, they went there but the director refused to admit them. Only after personal approaches to the Minister of Justice was permission granted. Within ten minutes the director had

given instructions for the transfer of forty resistance prisoners to the island of Aegina. On hearing this, hundreds of prisoners protested, so the director sent for their committee only to shut them up in dark cells. The jail itself consisted of a series of very large rooms round a big courtyard. 250 of the over 500 detainees in the prison had not been sentenced and some had been there as long as 15-17 months.

On April 28, an official reception by the Othonaios' Federation was given in their honour in Athens. Then Solley and Tiffany departed for Patras to attend the trial of the Peloponnesian leaders of ELAS charged with fighting against collaborators with the enemy. At the trial the president of the court and his two fellow judges admitted to them that they had been functioning as judges throughout the occupation and had received salaries from their Nazi overlords. After returning to Athens for the May Day demonstration, the two MPs went to central Greece. Here Right-wing repression and excesses were at their worst. EAM members were relentlessly persecuted and from time to time Left-wing papers and trade union offices were raided and shut down. In the area of Larissa, Right-wing terrorism was so intense that out of sixteen candidates put forward by Sofoulis only one was able to continue with his candidature.

Meanwhile, Dodds and Pym were visiting the women's prison in Salonica (May 2). As Dodds stated at a press

conference in London on May 13 "I didn't believe anything like this could be found in the civilised world." Twenty-eight women aged between sixteen and sixty were crammed into a small room almost entirely filled with two-tier bunks. These women had taken part in the resistance movement and were charged with murdering quislings during the occupation. Although they had been in jail from four to twelve months, only one of them had been tried and sentenced. A young woman of twenty-three had been so badly pushed about and punched by the guard that it had brought her baby on prematurely. Another woman was in the last stage of tuberculosis spitting blood and incapable of getting up off the bed.³¹

Two days later Dodds and Pym visited Sohoh, a

³¹In her diary, Diana Pym wrote about these two women: Haventidou, Olga - Baby 10 days. They k[illed] her brother...In [prison] 8 m[onths]. Taken to hospital ill fr[om] beating 7-4-46...by guard. In Hosp[ital] 8 days then back to prison. No spec[ific] diet for baby (v[ery] poorly). Man she's accused of k[illing] was k[illed] 4-11-44 in battle betw[een] ELAS [and] S[ecurity] B[attallions] and gen[darmes]. She is EAM. Never fought. 23 r[emains] quiet. She was hit by guards with hands on back. She asked for a visitor. Latsarnaki Eleni, TB - spitting blood - 3 days on stretcher in yard - even in rain.Charged illegal posses[sion] of arms.

Dodds referred to that women's prison in his speech in the House of Commons a few months later: "I found diabolical conditions. There were women there with evidence of their bodies of recent and old brutalities. I shall never forget one woman holding a tiny baby. She had commenced labour pains within a few hours of the brutal treatment, and the baby was born long before its time. There was another woman in the courtyard who had been arrested for being in possession of arms. She was in the last stages of tuberculosis, and for three days and nights had lain out in the open." Hansard, vol.428, October 29, 1946, col.578.

village about thirty miles from Salonica. Civilians who supported EAM were constantly beaten in the gendarmerie post. The magistrate admitted that no action had been taken by the Greek state in his area to punish those responsible for crimes and murders. He himself had been repeatedly threatened by gendarmes.

On May 6, Clifford Norton met the delegation and tried to persuade it that Britain aimed at securing parliamentary democracy in Greece and impartial administration of justice.³² The delegation, however, remained unmoved and shortly after it had returned to London it published its report entitled Tragedy in Greece which eventually became a two-editions best-seller circulating in more than 40,000 copies. The three Labour MPs had reached the following conclusions:

"Greece is rapidly becoming a fascist state. Under the facade of democracy, there exists a unilateral civil war, the war of the extreme Right against all democratic elements who dare to disagree with the government. Murder, illegal imprisonment, brutal assault and intimidation are the fate of thousands of victims. The gendarmerie and police are fascist and rotten to the core and take a foremost part in the criminal activities and openly collaborate with the 'X'-ites- the fascist terrorists. If a Greek citizen has the temerity to complain about the conduct of the police he is immediately beaten up and imprisoned, frequently without a charge being made against him, or sometimes on a trumped-up charge.

The premises of Republican and Left-wing newspapers, Trades Union organisations, Youth Clubs, etc. are illegally raided in all parts of the country and are shut down. For instance, one hospital in Athens which was largely attended by wounded Resistance fighters, but which nevertheless, gave aid to all, has been closed.

³²FO 371/58893 R 6894, Norton to Foreign Office, May 7, 1946.

The judiciary works hand in hand with the gendarmerie and is viciously reactionary. Those judges who refused to collaborate with the Germans no longer hold their posts. On the other hand, the judges who received their pay from the quisling governments are still in office, and, as in the trial now proceeding at Patras, sit in judgement against the heroes of the Resistance Movement.

The Security Committees which did such infamous work for the Metaxas dictatorship, are now being set up again as an instrument for breaking up the Labour movement and imprisoning and deporting political opponents of the present regime.

Just as happened in Nazi Germany, anybody who disapproves of the present Government is immediately dubbed a "Communist". Even the Right wing Liberals, the party of Mr. Sofoulis, are characterised as Communists, as Mr. Sofoulis himself told us.

British prestige and moral standing is falling rapidly in Greece. The presence of British troops on Greek soil is regarded as an unwarranted intervention by one ally in the affairs of another allied country. Indeed, the Greek people talk about their country being "occupied" by the British."

Although the LDG delegation consisted exclusively of MPs who belonged to the Labour Left and who strongly opposed the British sponsored terror in Greece there can be no doubt that their conclusions on the general Greek situation were correct. They were for the most part repeated by the British all-party parliamentary delegation which went to Greece three months later, in August 1946. Yet, the real significance of the three MPs' visit lay elsewhere. Their report which was widely read in Britain as its high circulation suggests, offered the British public an alternative source of information about what was happening in Greece to that of the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Athens. The delegation was able, as Solley pointed out in the

Commons, "to come to grips with the Greek scene, not from the Ritz bar in the best hotel in Athens, nor from the splendid reception rooms of the British Embassy, but from the humble cottage of the workers and from the trade union centres in the towns it visited."³³

In addition to the publication of their findings, Solley, Tiffany and Dodds undertook further initiatives to enlighten the British public about the appalling conditions in the Greek provinces. On May 13, they spoke of their experiences in that country at a press conference held by the LDG.³⁴ On May 16, Solley wrote in the News Chronicle that Greece "was rapidly becoming a fascist state." The article was accompanied by a cartoon showing Greek democracy as a sheep between two butchers, Metaxas and the royalist government of 1946, and bore the caption "You may now change your butcher."³⁵ At the end of May, Solley, Tiffany and Dodds met other Labour MPs in the House of Commons and discussed the general situation in Greece. Some of the MPs expressed their disagreement with the findings of the delegation. There were a number of hostile questions notably from Francis Noel-Baker who gave it as his opinion that Greece was progressing towards democracy since the

³³ Hansard, vol.427, June 4, 1946, cols 1890-1.

³⁴ MGA, CHRON I, "Delegates to Greece, 1946".

³⁵ News Chronicle, May 16, 1946. A similar article by Tiffany had appeared in the Reynolds News of May 12, 1946.

elections.³⁶

During the debate on foreign affairs in the House of Commons on June 4, 1946 Solley summed up the delegation's experience in Greece:

"Our conclusion was that the government in Greece today is 90 percent fascist, and will be 100 percent fascist tomorrow. We found examples of murder, assault, intimidation and illegal arrests, all perpetrated against the Left by the Right. Whenever we went, we found that the working class people were being battered, that their trade union premises were being set on fire; we found that their meeting could not take place properly; that there was every symptom of fascism. The gendarmerie was fascist and rotten to the core,³⁷ and the same thing applied even to the judiciary."

In the debate of October 23 in the Commons, Tiffany suggested that the ultimate responsibility for the tragic course of events in Greece rested with the Labour government and the British police mission. They were tolerating the brutality of the gendarmerie, the armed forces and the monarchists against democrats and were giving moral support to the extreme Right.³⁸ A few days later, Dodds who was clearly disturbed by the abrogation of civil liberties in Greece, put the blame on Britain in a more explicit way:

"I am convinced from what I have seen in Greece that there is being created in Greece a neo-fascist state. I am convinced that unless there is a change of policy, we cannot point our fingers at other countries or states and say they are doing wrong. I believe that in Greece we are "ganging up" with all these elements who are opposed to the

³⁶MGA, INFO IV, "EAM 1945-1947".

³⁷Hansard, vol.423, June 4, 1946, col.1891.

³⁸Ibid., vol.427, October 23, 1946, cols 1754-62.

democracy which we believe.”³⁹

III. Greece in the summer of 1946 Plebiscite, “emergency measures” and trade union problems

In spite of the internationally recognised “free” elections of March 1946 the situation in Greece went from bad to worse in the following months and by the time King George returned to his throne civil war had already got under way. In Britain, Greek developments continued to attract public attention mainly because of the presence of British troops and missions in the country and Bevin’s hands-off policy and passive support for the organised terror that the royalist Right was waging against all Left forces. Among the Greek issues which were discussed and commented in Britain in the summer of 1946 were the plebiscite, the adoption of the first legislative measures against the Left after the war and the state intervention in the Greek trade union movement.

The Times initially hoped that the country’s travail had finally come to an end. It expected the populist leaders to rise above their narrow party interests, concentrate on restoring conditions of normal tranquillity and re-establishing an ordered economy, and refrain from forcing a premature decision on the issue of the monarchy.⁴⁰ Within a few weeks, The Times was

³⁹ Ibid., vol.428, October 29, 1946, col.580.

⁴⁰ The Times, April 13, 1946.

stripped of these comforting delusions about Greece's new government. Tsaldaris and his colleagues in the cabinet were incapable of carrying through the social and economic reforms which the country urgently needed. Instead of becoming the promoter of reconciliation, they encouraged their followers in the persecution of the Left. At the same time, royalist deputies wished to impose the King on the country in a hurry by means of a crooked plebiscite. The Times thought that the only possible and salutary solution for Greece was the formation of a broadly-based government which would command general confidence.⁴¹

According to the Manchester Guardian, the electoral results demonstrated how much more acceptable the populists had recently become as even republican Greeks were now voting for them. The newspaper attributed this to the fact that the Greek voter was haunted by "the thought of the EAM rebellion in the winter of 1944 and the memory of the many dead during those days and the knowledge that EAM was still a rebellious and insurrectionary movement."⁴²

As early as April 6, the Economist had expressed the hope that among the first priorities of the new Greek government would be the formation of a coalition with the Centre parties and the introduction of measures

⁴¹Ibid., May 21, 1946.

⁴²Manchester Guardian, May 22, 1946.

to get the economic crisis under control.⁴³ By the end of May, the Economist was troubled by what might be in store for Greece as it thought that the populists did not intend to give their whole attention to the urgent task of reconstruction. It, therefore, predicted that "discontent, unrest and open opposition would continue in violent terms."⁴⁴ With regard to the British troops in Greece, the Economist thought that the best choice of the Labour government would be to maintain them in Greece but only on the condition that the populist leaders devoted all their energies to the solution of the country's deeply rooted problems.⁴⁵

The Daily Telegraph was happy with the announcement that the plebiscite was to take place on September 1. The newspaper believed that after the plebiscite passions would run less high and the Greeks would finally turn their attention to fiscal and economic matters.⁴⁶ Writing about the British troops in Greece, the Telegraph's military correspondent in Athens, Lieut-General H.G.Martin, claimed that their withdrawal might result in the fall of Greece to the communists or in an invasion from her northern neighbours. Martin was satisfied with Bevin's Greek policy: "thanks to that policy Greece now lives and breathes."⁴⁷

⁴³ Economist, April 6, 1946.

⁴⁴ Ibid., May 18, 1946.

⁴⁵ Ibid., April 6 and May 18, 1946.

⁴⁶ Daily Telegraph, May 14, 1946.

⁴⁷ Ibid., May 27, 1946.

The Spectator did not share the Daily Telegraph's optimism. The populist leaders had failed to persuade the Centre and the Liberals to join in a coalition government and, therefore, there was no ground for predicting unity and settlement in Greece.⁴⁸ On the issue of the monarchy, the periodical's remarks were contradictory. At the beginning, it had insisted that a postponement of the plebiscite would be a wise and encouraging decision. A few weeks later, it changed its mind and stated:

"But Greece is as much entitled to have a king, and a particular king, if it wants one as Great Britain is, and it is at least arguable that to postpone the plebiscite till Greece has settled down would be the one certain way to prevent it from settling down at all. Till the plebiscite is taken political, propaganda and intrigue is bound to be rampant."⁴⁹

One of the most interesting articles on British policy in Greece which appeared in the British press immediately after the Greek elections was that which Tribune printed under the headline "Sowing the wind". Its author claimed that the election results had clearly demonstrated that the Greek people wanted neither a communist dictatorship nor the establishment of a reactionary and pro-fascist regime. But while the people of Europe detested communist despotism they were determined "once and for all to rid themselves of the

⁴⁸ Spectator, April 5, 12, 1946.

⁴⁹ Ibid., April 5, 26, 1946.

pre-war past, which, in the majority of the countries concerned, came to be identified with ultra-reactionary and inefficient regimes, semifascist kings, corrupt officials and intolerable extremes of wealth and poverty." By encouraging and aiding social reaction in Greece and elsewhere, the author went on, the Labour government was driving the progressive forces into the arms of the communists. Of course, this was not Bevin's intention but it was the inevitable consequence of his policy. The British Foreign Secretary had failed to create a strong Centre in Greece and, contrary to his expectations, the people had turned either to the communist Left or to the monarchist Right. Britain's position was now very difficult because she should either withdraw her troops and acquiesce in the establishment of a monarchist dictatorship or keep her forces being exposed herself to the charge of imperialist domination.⁵⁰

In Greece, meanwhile, the royalist government was establishing a police state by taking a series of harsh measures against its Left-wing opponents. On May 3, it revived an old legislation which authorised the creation of the "Security Committees" of the Metaxas dictatorship and, on June 6, it introduced in Parliament the "Extraordinary Measures" Bill which set up summary courts empowered to pass the death sentence, established the death sentences for anyone generally acting against the

⁵⁰Tribune, April 5, 1946.

state, imposed imprisonment to those attending assemblies forbidden by law, empowered the police to search private dwellings without warrant and impose a curfew at night.⁵¹ At the end of June, the Council of State invalidated the degrees of 1945 which had the legal base for the GSEE elections, thus rendering illegal the Executive-Committee elected at the Eight GSEE Congress in March 1946. The Greek government appointed a new executive in which the reformists and other Right-wing members had a majority.⁵²

These developments in Greece did not pass unnoticed in Britain. On August 7, The Times' correspondent in Athens dismissed the attempt of the Greek government to control the trade union movement as "an old rivalry between the left-wing, headed by M.Theos and the moderate or reformist section led by M.Makris." The

⁵¹MGA, INFO V, "Emergency Measures Act 1946"; Iatrides (ed.), Greece in the 1940s, pp.220-8.

⁵²MGA/CIR 12 Greek trade unions in chains; Jecchinis, Trade Unionism (Chicago, 1967) pp.96-105; ILO Report, pp.236-44. It is interesting that Bevin and the Foreign Office did not oppose the actions of the Greek government. In August they sent to Greece W.H.Braine, the British Labour attaché in Rome, who proposed a new provisional executive of seven from the elected executive and five from the government appointed executive. The elected executive, on the recommendation of the WFTU accepted this compromise, but the Greek government and the Right-wing faction refused to cooperate. According to Weiler (British Labour, p.147) Braine's proposals "aimed to integrate the communists as a minority into a reorganised trade union movement. As Braine indicated, his proposal would not provide a right-wing majority but 'could be adjusted to put [the] communists in the minority', presumably by creating a situation where the socialists could ally with the right instead of the communist left."

Council of State invalidated the election and "the government had no choice but to act on it."⁵³ The correspondent of the Manchester Guardian described the Greek government's action as "paradoxical". He thought, however, that the trade union leaders were not blameless and that they should put greater emphasis on the industrial or "trade union" activities and allow their political preoccupations to fall into the proper place.⁵⁴ The Economist criticised the Greek government for its intervention in the trade union movement and accused the Labour leaders of having abandoned all attempt at controlling "the Frankenstein monster presented to them by the Greek elections."⁵⁵

Calling the suspension of the elected trade union executive and the arrest of its members "an act of provocation" against the workers of Greece and the WFTU, Tribune severely condemned the decrees and actions of the Greek government against the republican Centre and Left.⁵⁶ The New Statesman was also disappointed by the repressive policy of the Greek government and feared that if the Labour Ministers remained silent before the return of terror and the TUC or the WFTU ignored the suppression of the Greek trade union movement, a fully-fledged dictatorship would be established in Greece.⁵⁷

⁵³ The Times, August 7, 1946.

⁵⁴ Manchester Guardian, September 13, 1946.

⁵⁵ Economist, June 29, 1946.

⁵⁶ Tribune, August 9, 1946.

⁵⁷ New Statesman, August 3, 1946.

The Daily Worker placed the blame for the events in Greece squarely on the British government, claiming that its hands-off policy was encouraging the Tsaldaris government to go ahead with its policy of repression.⁵⁸ The communist newspaper was equally concerned with the attitude of the British trade unions: "Had such an event occurred in another country in the world the British trade union movement would have protested most emphatically. Why is it so slow in reacting on this question?"⁵⁹

On August 1, a statement issued by the Executive-Committee of the CPGB expressed its horror at the new wave of terror which was sweeping throughout Greece, accused the Labour government of supporting the "Tsaldaris dictatorship", and demanded that the Labour government immediately uses its influence in Greece to end the terror and bring the troops home.⁶⁰ At a meeting of the Executive-Committee of the NCCL, on August 12, a resolution was passed for submission to Attlee, Bevin and the TUC, protesting against the actions of the Greek government and calling upon the Labour leaders to insist upon the release from prison of the victims of these acts and the reinstatement of the trade union organisations which had been suppressed.⁶¹ A few days later, the

⁵⁸Daily Worker, July 29, 1946.

⁵⁹Ibid., August 1, 1946.

⁶⁰Report of the Executive-Committee of the CPGB, Dec.1945-Nov.1946; Daily Worker, August 2, 1946.

⁶¹NCCL Archive, University of Hull, DCL 73/A(a), Civil Liberty, vol.7 (Sept.1946).

Tobacco Workers' Union and the Association of Scientific Workers asked the TUC to exert its influence upon the British government to force a reversal of its Greek policy, and the London Telecommunication branch of the Civil Service Clerical Association demanded the intervention of the British government to bring about the release of the arrested Greek trade union leaders.⁶² The same demand was also expressed by other trade union branches throughout the country.⁶³

In the midst of this wave of protest, there arrived in Greece (August 16) a British all-party parliamentary delegation under the leadership of Seymour Cocks. It consisted of three Labour MPs, Leslie Hale, Walter Monslow, Evelyn Walkden, two Conservatives, John Maude and W.M.R.Vane, and the Liberal E.R.Bowen. Another Labour MP, John Parker, was originally included on the list but dropped out for health reasons.⁶⁴

The delegation undertook to examine the country's political and economic problems on the spot and made

⁶²Daily Worker, August 15 and 23, 1946.

⁶³Ibid., August 15, 1946. In summer 1946, the Foreign Office received a large number of letters from MPs and trade unionists, protesting against the policy of the Labour government in permitting the abrogation of civil and trade union liberties in Greece. Among the letters were those of Leah Manning (7/7/46), Benn Levy (26/7/46), Ralph Morley, president of the National Union of Teachers (7/8/46) and George Thomas (9/8/46). FO 371/58922.

⁶⁴For the visit of this delegation see Maude, "The 1946 British Parliamentary Delegation...", J.Hel.Diasp., vol. 10 (1984), pp.5-24. The delegation's full report is in MGA/PM 73.

every effort to ascertain the views of as many people as possible. After spending some time in the capital, it split up to visit other places: Patras, Corinth, Tripolis, and Sparta in the Peloponnese, Larissa in Thessaly, Salonica, Edessa and Kavala in Macedonia, and the island of Crete.

The British MPs found the political state of the country "very distressing". The Greek people was in danger of falling into ruin by rushing into extreme and violent courses, by neglecting compromise and by failing to follow a policy of moderation and generous reconciliation. In parts of Macedonia, there was proceeding a miniature civil war between Left-wing bands and the gendarmerie. These bands included many Left-wing supporters "who had fled to the mountains to escape terrorism exercised by the extreme Right." In Thessaly, Right-wing bands terrorised the villages and exacted blackmail from any one rich enough to pay it. In the Peloponnese, the Left's charges were more numerous and detailed than the counter-charges of the Right which were "vague and general" and the Right had far more opportunities of intimidating the Left than the Left had of intimidating the Right.

The state of the Greek economy was also grave. The majority of the people lived in conditions of great hardship and they could only survive thanks to UNRRA assistance. In Athens and Piraeus there was an extensive black market and the small class of wealthy people

in those areas lived in great luxury side by side with the appalling poverty. Direct taxation of the wealthy was not existent and the bulk of taxation was raised from the poor.

The presence of British troops had no adverse effect upon the Anglo-Greek relations. There was, however, a strong case for their withdrawal in view of the danger that they might be involved in civil discords.

In a separate memorandum on "Trade Unionism in Greece", Monslow and Walkden confirmed that the Greek government sought to control the workers' organisations. It dismissed elected officials, imprisoned leading members and filled the various executives with people who hold Right-wing ideas.

In their report which was not published until January 1947, the British MPs included a number of recommendations which they asked the Greek government to consider.⁶⁵ The first step was a reconstruction of the government on a broad basis to include not only the official opposition parties but also the Left-wing parties which had abstained from the elections with the possible exclusion of the Communist Party. This new government should declare a general amnesty for all

⁶⁵The main report was signed by all members of the delegation, but W.M.R.Vane added a rider in which he accepted the administrative recommendations wholeheartedly, but suggested that the report was less than fair to the Greek government and tended to judge it too far by western European and too little by eastern European standards.

political offenders, cancel its special security laws, bring the deportees back to their home and restore constitutional liberties. New elections on an up-to-date register should be held at an early date and new elections under the supervision of the WFTU for the trade union posts. With regard to the economic situation there was a need for an immediate programme to replace UNRRA and for the negotiation of an international loan for reconstruction, the plans being worked out with the help of the International Bank.

The all-party parliamentary delegation attempted to present as clear and objective a picture as possible of the problems confronting Greece in the summer of 1946. It hoped that its report would contribute to the improvement of the Greek conditions by making the extent and nature of the problems better understood both in Greece and in the world outside and by focusing attention on the measures which might be taken to deal with them. Had its recommendations been applied, this could really have brought about a fundamental change in the Greek situation. Political rivalries would diminish, law and internal security would be restored and the economy would begin to recover. The Greek government, however, was not willing even to consider them, let alone to carry them out. Thus, another opportunity for political compromise and return to peaceful conditions was lost.⁶⁶

⁶⁶When the report was published EAM and the KKE gave it a

On the eve of the plebiscite on the monarchy Greece appeared again in the headlines of almost every major British newspaper. The British press viewed the event as one of considerable importance as its outcome might determine whether Greece would be saved from a further drift into civil war.

The Times, in an editorial entitled "Plebiscite in Greece", stated clearly that since the elections the Greek government had employed all the resources of official propaganda to secure votes for the King's return. Over most of the country the state of public order was satisfactory, but in northern Greece conditions necessary for a fair plebiscite did not exist. The newspaper thought that many Greeks would vote for the return of King George II not because they had sympathies with the parties of the Right but because they feared a repetition of the events of December 1944.⁶⁷

To Christopher Buckley it was obvious that the plebiscite would result in a large majority for the return of the King. In the recent days opinion had

warm welcome and proclaimed their readiness to accept its recommendations as a basis for an all-party agreement and a new deal. For the Right the report was a misfire. In an official protest to Seymour Cocks, Tsaldaris charged that the British delegation had made "no attempt whatsoever...to investigate into the original causes which account for them." FO 371/67017 R 399 Norton to FO January 9, 1947 and R 835 Tsaldaris to Cocks January 8, 1947.

⁶⁷The Times, August 21, 1946.

hardened strongly in his favour because of the "carefully synchronised Slav attacks upon Greece." Many Greeks would vote for the King in the hope that his return would lead to the restoration of social stability and the satisfaction of Greece's territorial claims.⁶⁸

Stephen Barber reported that for the majority of Greeks the plebiscite had become a "political symbol, whether Greece sides with the Western powers or the Eastern."⁶⁹ For Malcolm MacEwen, the restoration of the King by fraud and terror was an essential part of a plan by which Greece was to serve as a reactionary outpost for Anglo-American domination in the Mediterranean against the Soviet Union.⁷⁰

Despite the participation of the republican parties

⁶⁸Daily Telegraph, August 31, 1946. In August Greece's relations with her northern neighbours and the Soviet Union precipitously deteriorated. The Yugoslav and Soviet Ambassadors departed from Greece and the Yugoslav and Bulgarian press began to agitate about the future of Aegean Macedonia. On August 24, Dmitri Manuilsky, the Foreign Minister of the Ukrainian Republic, presented his complaint to the Security Council against the policies of the Greek government which endangered international peace and security and against the presence of British troops in Greece. The Council considered the complaint for over three weeks (August 28-September 20), but no decision was reached.

In June 1946, the Greeks had been awarded the Dodecanese islands but they hoped that their claims in Northern Epirus and Bulgaria would also be accepted. Tsaldaris tabled the Greek claims at the Paris peace conference and at the Council of Foreign Ministers when it met in New York, but even Britain and the United States showed little enthusiasm to support them. For a detailed account on the Ukrainian complaint and the Greek territorial claims see Xydis, Greece and the Great Powers, 1944-1947, pp.267-84, 335-59.

⁶⁹News Chronicle, August 30, 1946.

⁷⁰Daily Worker, August 29, 1946.

in the plebiscite 68% of the electorate voted in favour of the King. In the provinces, where terrorism reigned unbridled, the majority for the monarchy was overwhelming, but in the cities and bigger towns the republic won a majority varying between 50% and 70%. The Allied Mission for the Observation of the Greek Elections which had remained in Greece to observe the plebiscite admitted that "the party representing the government view exercised undue influence in securing votes in support of the return of the King."⁷¹ According to the report of the all-party parliamentary delegation to Greece, "the utilisation by the Government of all available means for Monarchist propaganda...and the fact that, owing to the Nomarch system, all local officials were supporters of the Government and all the machinery of provincial administration was in their hands, inevitably handicapped the Opposition."⁷²

As in the elections of March 1946, many British correspondents came to Greece to report on the plebiscite as well. The Times' correspondent visited

⁷¹"Report by Messrs. Richard T. Windle and Leland Morris, Chiefs of the Allied Mission to Observe the Greek Elections: Report on the Observation of the Greek plebiscite", September 7, 1946, FRUS, vol. 7, 1946, pp. 204-7. The report stated that conditions for a fair plebiscite were far from satisfactory. In a number of polling stations there were irregularities which gave advantage to the supporters of the government. In some cases the elector was allowed to take only one ballot paper, and the way he voted would, therefore, be known. There were also indications that influence was used by the authorities to prevent representatives of the Opposition from functioning.

⁷²MGA/PM 73.

nearly twenty polling stations in Athens and was impressed by the "perfect calm and order". The result was truly representative of the Greek people's will. The actions of EAM during the occupation, the excesses committed during the December events, the people's suspicion that the communists were ready to start a civil war and the failure of the liberal-republicans to form a strong Centre party under one leader had brought about the change of popular feeling in favour of the King.⁷³ Christopher Buckley reported that the voting took place "under conditions of exemplary order and calm", while for Alexander Clifford it was "one of the quietest polling days in the country's history."⁷⁴ Derek Patmore of the Spectator visited polling stations inside and around Athens and found that voting had been held "in well-organised and extremely fair circumstances." He attributed the large majority for the return of the King to the fear of the 'Slav bloc', the Soviet attacks on Greece at the Security Council, and the almost religious belief in King George's power to restore peace and stability.⁷⁵ Like Patmore, Fred Salusbury discovered no evidence of provocation by either the Right or the Left.⁷⁶ Kenneth Matthews, who toured the voting centres of Athens and Piraeus, reported that despite a few minor

⁷³ The Times, September 2, 3, 1946.

⁷⁴ Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail, September 2, 1946.

⁷⁵ Spectator, September 6, 1946.

⁷⁶ Daily Herald, September 2, 1946.

incidents in the provinces there seemed to be much less tension than during the general election in March.⁷⁷ The correspondent of the Reynolds News, however, reported that the plebiscite had been conducted "under conditions in which violence, exerted in combination with subtle fraudulency, surpassed anything yet seen in the country"; his colleague in the Daily Worker also spoke of a "whole sale forgery in Greek plebiscite".⁷⁸

For two of the British journals, Tribune and the New Statesman, the question of whether the plebiscite had been held under normal conditions or whether its outcome had been a valid expression of the people's will was both disputable and irrelevant. What really mattered was that the King would return in a country which was on the abyss of a civil war. On September 13, Tribune printed an article by its correspondent in Greece entitled "Greece puts the clock back", in which he made a detailed analysis of the Greek situation. In spite of Britain's policy of support to the weak Centre, the correspondent claimed, the Royalists were triumphant. This was due to the excesses of the Left and the fear of communism as well as to the fear of Slavic expansionism. But the return of the King would not automatically bring about either restoration of law and order or any improvement in the country's relations with

⁷⁷BBC, WAC, 9 o'clock news bulletin; Kenneth Matthews' reports on September 1, 2, and 3, 1946.

⁷⁸Reynolds News, September 1, 1946; Daily Worker, September 2, 1946.

its northern neighbours. What was astonishing was that the Greek government had permitted fascist, quisling and chauvinistic elements to control the state machinery: "What form of state", the Tribune correspondent wondered, "are such individuals, with their *saue qui peut* mentality, likely to create and of what value is the stability resulting from the plebiscite which is to guarantee them their authority?"

The correspondent went on to point out that the effort of two years of British influence on Greece was disappointing. Britain's attempts to support first non-party governments and finally a Centre government had been proved futile mainly because no organised Centre movement could be found in Greek politics and the Greek socialists were "still in the Fabian stage of the nineties with no hold on the masses and no alliance with the unions." But in view of the explosive situation in Greece and the increasing tension in her northern frontiers, Britain had no other alternative than to continue to support Greece's moderate forces.⁷⁹

The correspondent's views on Greece were in accordance with those of his journal. An editorial printed a week earlier had stressed that the consequences of the King's return would inevitably be tragic and might even become catastrophic. It would encourage the Right-wing terrorists to further outrages and, as a result, the gulf between the extremes would

⁷⁹Tribune, September 13, 1946.

become wider and deeper. For this state of affairs British policy bore the most direct responsibility.⁸⁰

The New Statesman strongly criticised the Labour government for being "the architect of this political achievement whose foundation Churchill had laid." It stated:

"The relevant point to-day is that a Labour Government, elected a year ago to carry out a Socialist policy abroad as well as at home, has ultimately connived at the restoration in Greece of a reactionary King by a government tainted with collaborationists and as repressive in its attitude to the working class in Greece as it is chauvinistic in its behaviour towards neighbouring countries. Had this result of Labour Foreign policy been prophesied at Labour meetings on the eve of the general elections, the prophet would have been laughed to scorn. Yet, it had happened."⁸¹

IV. Greece towards a full-scale civil war The Truman Doctrine

After the plebiscite, British and American officials intensified their efforts to isolate the Greek Left through the incorporation of Centrists into the Tsaldaris government. However, this strategy of forging a Right-Centre coalition failed largely because of the Liberals' declining to join a cabinet under the populist leader.⁸² The government's reorganisation under Maximos early in 1947 brought no improvement in the Greek state

⁸⁰Ibid., September 6, 1946.

⁸¹New Statesman, September 7, 1946.

⁸²For the efforts of the British and American officials as well as of King George II to persuade Tsaldaris to broaden the cabinet by the inclusion of representatives of other parties in order to isolate the communist Left see Alexander, The Prelude (Oxford, 1982) pp.216-20.

of affairs while the activities of the guerrilla forces became increasingly widespread in Thessaly, Macedonia and other areas, leading to heavy fighting with government troops.⁸³

At the beginning of December 1946, with the full knowledge and encouragement of Britain and the United States, the Greek government appealed to the General-Secretary of the United Nations, Trygve Lie, claiming that the whole guerrilla movement was receiving substantial support from countries adjacent to Greece's northern boundaries and that guerrillas were being trained, organised, and armed in foreign territory before being sent to Greece. After a three-weeks discussion on the Greek memorandum, the Security Council unanimously voted to send a commission, representing all member -States on the Council and authorised to conduct investigations on the frontiers between Greece and her northern neighbours. The commission carried out its task between January 30 and May 23, 1947. The majority of its members reached the conclusion that Yugoslavia,

⁸³On October 28, 1946, the creation of the Democratic Army was announced by the guerrillas' leader Marcos Vafiadis. On November 13, the first strong guerrilla attack took place at the village of Skra, near the Yugoslav border forcing the Greek government to admit that it did not have full control of the area north of mount Olympos. At the beginning of March 1947, more than 500 Left-wing sympathisers were arrested and deported to the Aegean island of Icaria on charges of aiding the guerrillas in the north by plotting to recruit members for them and to dispatch arms and ammunition. A few weeks later, Zevgos, a member of the KKE Central-Committee was shot dead in a Salonica street. Woodhouse, The Struggle, pp.191, 202; Eudes, The Kapetanos, p.274; O'Ballance, The Greek Civil War, 1944-1949, p.128.

Albania and Bulgaria had been supporting guerrilla warfare across the Greek frontier.⁸⁴ The Soviet Union and Poland, in a separate report, attributed the tension in the Balkans to the actions of the Greek government. In the following months, the commission's report together with reports of a Subsidiary Group were discussed at the Security Council but on September 15, 1947, on a motion by the United States delegate, the Greek question was taken off the agenda.⁸⁵

The worsening situation in the Balkans as well as within Greece attracted considerable attention in Britain. On October 6, 1946, John Sofianopoulos addressed a conference at Beaver Hall organised by the LDG and supported by the NCCL and London Trades Council. The conference which was attended by 316 delegates, representing 206 trade unions and organisations, with a membership of 697,350, passed a resolution calling on the British government to withdraw British troops from Greece immediately. It also demanded that the British government uses all its influence on the Greek government to restore civil and trade union liberties and to form a broad and truly representative government. The conference was also addressed by Solley and Dodds who

⁸⁴ France did not subscribe to the majority conclusion on the grounds that only the Security Council could reach such specific conclusion. Belgium and Colombia expressed the reservation that it was not for the commission to decide the degree of responsibility of Greece's northern neighbours.

⁸⁵ Iatrides (ed.), Greece in the 1940, pp.281-5.

reiterated that British policy had led directly to the establishment of the only fascist government in Europe except Spain.⁸⁶

The position of trade unionism in Greece was the subject of an outspoken debate at the 1946 TUC conference at Brighton. Most of the delegates who took the floor objected to the General Council's approval of official policy in Greece, as expressed in its report and in the supplementary report prepared during the conference, and demanded that this policy be strongly condemned. F.Foulkes of the ETU declared that his union was extremely disappointed at the present situation and bewildered by Bevin's policy and assured the General Council of every support if it would bring pressure to bear on the government to change its policy in Greece.⁸⁷

J.R.Scott of the Engineers' Union spoke of the persecution of the Greek trade unions and complained that the General Council's supplementary report made no declaration of hostility toward the authorities in Athens.⁸⁸ The delegate from the Distributive Workers' Union, R.B.Seabrook, accused the Labour government of endorsing the policy of the Greek government in banning

⁸⁶Daily Worker, October 7, 1946. A few days earlier the LDG had protested in a letter to The Times "against the action of the Greek government in exiling to the Aegean islands, without any sort of trial, a total of 86 resistance officers and, in the last days, five generals, including General Sarafis, C-in-C of the ELAS forces." The Times, September 27, 1946.

⁸⁷TUC Annual Conference, 1946, pp.435-6.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp.436-7.

the democratic unions, and asked: "Is the job of our movement to provide the beds which will make the chains of reaction on the Greek people a little less burdensome, or is it not the job of our people to smash these chains entirely?" Although the delegation of his union had not yet decided as to how its vote would be cast, he himself hoped that the General Council would decide to withdraw its report.⁸⁹ Robert McLennan, an ETU delegate, gave the essence of the General Council's attitude when he said that it was trying to ride two horses going in opposite direction. The General Council was trying to keep in step with the WFTU and, at the same time, it was endeavouring not to embarrass the Labour government.⁹⁰

The delegate from the Boot and Shoe Operatives, John Crawford, pleaded for the Congress to have confidence in the Labour government's handling of the Greek question. L.C.White agreed that Congress should not try to embarrass the government but, on the other hand, the government should not embarrass the trade union movement.⁹¹

The spokesmen for the General Council condemned the measures of the Greek government to smash the trade unions, but they proposed that the Congress approve the report of the General Council, assuring the delegates that the General Council fully supported the declaration

⁸⁹Ibid., p.439.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp.439-40.

⁹¹Ibid., pp.440-1.

of the WFTU on Greece. Furthermore, Arthur Deakin stated at the Congress that a deputation from the General Council had seen Bevin and was assured by him that proposals had already been submitted to the Greek government which would result in the restoration of full freedom to the Greek trade unions. Only after receiving these assurances did the Congress endorse the General Council's reports.⁹²

While in Britain Greek trade union problems were being discussed at the TUC conference, in Greece, British correspondents were touring the provinces reporting on the civil war and the explosive situation near the country's northern frontiers.

The Times' correspondent visited the troubled areas of Macedonia and Thrace and was impressed by the tremendous harm done by the civil war and the unanimous demand among the people for unity and appeasement. He found that in the recent months the strength of the guerrillas had increased considerably. This was due to the harsh measures adopted by the Greek government and the extensive and sometimes forced mobilisation carried on by the partisans in the areas chosen as favourable for guerrilla activity. The correspondent believed that the activities of the guerrilla bands enjoyed some degree of support from across the northern frontiers: "Should such help be withdrawn and the door of retreat closed, it is doubtful whether the bands could continue

⁹²Ibid., pp.438, 441-2.

to exist, and still more doubtful whether they could maintain their present numerical strength." He thought, however, that the Greek government had not treated the internal part of the problem in an appropriate manner. A coalition including all parliamentary parties which would adopt a policy of conciliation would do much to solve the internal problems.⁹³

In early autumn 1946, Christopher Buckley travelled in a jeep through the towns and villages of Western Macedonia in order "to discover the truth". His report stated that although the "bandits" were grouped into small units and lacked permanent quarters there were indications of a developing central control and organisation. Their objectives were two: to establish a belt of "free-territory" which would isolate the northern part of the country for the benefit of the Macedonian autonomist movement and to maintain a war of nerves against the Greek government in the hope of wearing out the resistance and bringing about the collapse of the Athens regime. Buckley found that conditions in the Security Committee prisons were "appalling". Men were crammed in cave-like cells, sitting huddled on the floor in semi-darkness throughout the day and using only one tap for their ablutions. He expressed, however, no regret for them: "Rural Greece is a very poor country, and the Security Committee prisons reflect much of the general level of life outside them."

⁹³The Times, January 7, 1947.

Similarly, the widespread arrests of democrats and the deportation of even children made no impression on him: the Greek government had no other choice than to fight "one of the most subtle and ruthless fifth columns that had ever existed" to the bitter end.⁹⁴

Another British correspondent, Ian Bevan of the News Chronicle, also visited Greek prisons and found the same conditions. Gaols were so overcrowded that "in some cases prisoners had no room to lie down." Schools, warehouses and other buildings had turned into gaols. In the royalist Macedonian town of Kozani 533 prisoners were detained in a former school, accused of aiding armed bands. They were confined indoors without sanitary facilities except for two daily exercise periods of ninety minutes each. Some women had babies which were breast-fed.⁹⁵

Stephen Barber wondered how the average Greek managed to live. Around Athens or any moderate-sized town in Greece shops were full of food but, "except for a handful of new rich", no one could buy any of these things if he was to balance his budget. There were areas in Greece where the peasants were reduced to eating grasses. The proportion of the family budget allocated to food swallowed an ever-increasing part of the family income and the huge gap between income and expenditure compelled the average Greek to search for a

⁹⁴Daily Telegraph, September 26 and October 8, 1946.

⁹⁵News Chronicle, October 14, 1946.

second job. But even when he managed to find one he was still in debt.⁹⁶

At the end of January 1947, Barber together with his wife and John Fisher of the Daily Mail visited the village of Drosopigi, "the stronghold of the Democratic Army." They saw the headquarters of the Vitsi command, some 150 guerrillas, including sixteen women. Barber reported that their morale was high and their discipline exemplary. There was no evidence that they were receiving assistance from abroad: "I looked hard for signs of weapons of Russian or other distinctively Slav origin, but did not see any."⁹⁷ In his own report, Fisher, who was also impressed by the guerrillas' morale and discipline, placed some of the blame for the situation in northern Greece on the Greek government, claiming that a policy of reconciliation had not been carried fully into effect.⁹⁸

Among the British correspondents who visited northern Greece after the plebiscite was Kenneth Matthews. In October 1946, he took the decision to drive "into the mountain country beyond Salonica, hoping to make the mysterious raids comprehensive."⁹⁹ In his broadcast of October 20, he stated that the situation was too bad to be dismissed as a series of local

⁹⁶ Ibid., October 28, 1946.

⁹⁷ Ibid., January 31, 1947.

⁹⁸ Daily Mail, January 31, 1947.

⁹⁹ Matthews, Memories, p.132.

incidents. The armed bands controlled the whole mountain area in the same sense as the partisans controlled large areas during the war. The guerrillas numbered about 5,000, they were reasonably disciplined and coordinated, and they had some supporters both in the towns and among the army. The prospects of reducing the rebel bands by military measures were extremely unpromising.¹⁰⁰

In January 1947, the National Union of Students, the Students' Labour Federation and the British Youth Coordinating Committee asked the young teacher and Labour MP for Cardiff Central, George Thomas, to investigate the conflict between the Greek government and the students at Athens University and to observe the

¹⁰⁰BBC, WAC, K. Matthews' dispatch on October 20, 1946; 9 o'clock news broadcast, October 21, 1946. A brief reference to other British correspondents who paid snap visits to the troubled areas of Greece between October 1946 and March 1947 should also be made. A correspondent of the Economist travelled through the northern areas of Greece, in early October 1946, and found that a state of civil war existed only in Western and Central Macedonia. Fred Salusbury reported for the Daily Herald in January 1947 that "in Greece today the cheapest thing is human life." When he visited Lamia, a town 120 miles north-west of Athens, he found that the guerrillas' behaviour was "correct". The following month, a correspondent of the Manchester Guardian toured Western Macedonia and concluded that Britain should take responsibility for some of the violence which the gendarmes had been displaying ever since the populists came into power. In March, Alan Moorehead of the weekly Observer foresaw at least four months going by before the civil war was over. Economist, October 12, 1946; Daily Herald, January 8, 1946; Manchester Guardian, February 17, 18, 22, 1947; Observer, March 23, 30, 1947.

trial of EPON members.¹⁰¹

Thomas arrived in Greece by mid January and remained for a little over a month. During that period he held talks with Maximos and other Cabinet Ministers, saw a large number of judges, professors, students, trade unionists and spent five days with Marcos and his guerrillas at the general headquarters of the Democratic Army, in Thessaly. He was the first parliamentarian of the West Marcos had ever met. At a press conference organised by the Greek news agency in London on February 20, Thomas declared that Greece had all the marks one would expect to find in a fascist state. People could be tried only for the "crime" that they disagreed with the government. Athens had an uneasy atmosphere, but things were worse in the provinces: "Outside of Athens I could only meet the Left in the dark, secretly, as though Greece was still occupied by the Nazis."

By contrast, Thomas had gained an impression of real freedom in the territory controlled by the guerrillas and was not surprised to find Marcos a popular hero. The guerrillas' rank and file were essentially shepherds and peasants, though there were teachers, doctors, lawyers, and priests, earnest in their desire for freedom. Their movement was not a communist but a popular one: "a movement of revolt against

¹⁰¹George Thomas (b.1909). A schoolmaster from 1931; member of the executive of the National Union of Teachers (1940-1945); a Cabinet Minister, 1966-1970, Speaker of the House of Commons, 1967-1983. Viscount Tonypany since 1983. Who's who, 1992, p.1866.

tyranny - and if there was such tyranny within Britain, the British people would also go to the mountains." From his own observations and talks with all types of political leaders and trade unionists, Thomas had come to the conclusion that a new government should be formed under the liberal Sofoulis in which the Left would participate.¹⁰²

Between September 1946 and February 1947 several British newspapers and periodicals printed editorials in which they discussed the causes of the Greek civil war. The Daily Telegraph spoke for most of the conservative press when it stated that Britain could not withdraw its troops so long as the risk of chaos persisted. The Telegraph feared that an early end of British assistance to Greece would throw her "to the wolves".¹⁰³ The Times attributed the disorders in Greece not so much to "foreign influences" as to the failure of the Greek government to broaden its composition and produce a

¹⁰²MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", Thomas' interview at a press conference organised by the Greek news agency (February 20, 1947); News Chronicle, February 20, 1947. After returning from Greece, Thomas confided to Leslie Hale that he was being followed by an agent of MI5. Schneer, Labour's Conscience, p.110. Thirty-eight years later, in his memoirs, Thomas repented of his being to Greece and of being "manipulated" by the communists both in Greece and Britain: "When I think back at what happened, I am ashamed at my gullibility...The whole Greek episode was a major political blunder on my part, and I was fortunate that Clem Attlee understood that my behaviour was due to naivety rather than malice." Thomas, Mr Speaker (London, 1985) pp.62-5.

¹⁰³Daily Telegraph, December 27, 1946.

constructive social and economic programme.¹⁰⁴ The liberal press was also disappointed with the performance of the Greek government and apprehensive about its plans for the future. The Manchester Guardian, in particular, was critical of the role the British played in Greece:

"If Britain's original purpose in entering Greece was to prevent a dictatorship of the Left, we should make it equally clear that our troops are there to protect the interests of the Greek people as a whole, not to grant immunity for the dictatorial behaviour of the Right."¹⁰⁵

The New Statesman and Tribune believed that the guerrilla war was not being instigated by forces outside Greece, but it was a result of the crisis inside Greece. The guerrillas had taken to the mountains because they preferred fighting the Greek government and gendarmerie to being imprisoned or deported to the islands. According to the editor of the New Statesman, Greece illustrated that "if instead of a positive socialist policy you make it your objective to defeat communism, you usually find yourself supporting something in the nature of fascism."¹⁰⁶

Commenting on the outcome of the plebiscite in its

¹⁰⁴The Times, November 23, 1946. Other editorials on Greece: October 14, 1946, November 5, 23, 1946, January 7, 1947.

¹⁰⁵Manchester Guardian, September 27, 1946. See also Manchester Guardian, January 4, 6, 1947; News Chronicle, October 28, 1946, March 6, 1947; Economist, November 9, 1946, February 8, 1947.

¹⁰⁶New Statesman, November 9, 1946; Tribune, February 7, 1946.

editorial "The kingdom of Bevin", the Daily Worker denounced Bevin's policy of non-intervention in Greece. It stated:

"Democracy in Greece has been murdered and the assassin is the Labour Government in London. The return of the King symbolises the triumph of the Fascists-Monarchists who have been deliberately placed in power by Mr. Bevin, Foreign Secretary and former trade union leader, who even connived at the destruction of the Greek trade unions. The land that might have been a democratic Republic has become the Kingdom of Bevin. Greece is no longer an independent country; it is a British colony where a ruling clique, containing a large number of quislings, has been installed in office by the occupying Power."¹⁰⁷

On October 11, 1946, the Daily Worker printed an article by Harry Pollitt which called for a change in the government's foreign policy and for British troops to withdraw from Greece. The article concluded that the real culprit for the trouble in Greece was not the communists or the Slavs but "Greek Fascism, revived with British aid."¹⁰⁸

Since mid-1946 officials in London had realised that the burden of continued economic and military support for Greece was too great for Britain. Dalton

¹⁰⁷ Daily Worker, September 3, 1946.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., October 11, 1946. In February 1947, the annual Congress of the CPGB passed a resolution demanding the complete withdrawal of all British troops from Greek soil and the complete cessation of all support to the royalist forces in Greece. It also extended its warmest sympathy to the "heroic guerrillas" and pledged itself to do all in its power "to win the support of the entire Labour movement in Britain on behalf of the democratic people in Greece." Annual Congress Report, CPGB, February 22-24, 1947.

and the Treasury were conscious of Britain's financial predicament and wished to see an early withdrawal of British troops from Greece.¹⁰⁹ Attlee had also strong doubts about Britain's capacity to prolong her commitments to the countries of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.¹¹⁰ The military and the Foreign Office, however, feared that if Britain withdrew entirely the Greek government would collapse and the country would fall victim to Soviet aggression. Turkey would subsequently be threatened and the whole strategic position in the Middle East altered to the Soviets' advantage.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Correspondence between Treasury officials and the Foreign Office, October 3, 1946, FO 371/58768 R15437. Dalton viewed Greece as a poor investment for Britain's stretched post-war resources and persistently complained about "our endless dribble of British taxpayers' money to the Greeks". Attlee papers, Box 49, Folios 86-91, Dalton to Attlee January 20, 1947; Dalton, High Tide and After, p.207. On February 11, 1947 Dalton addressed a memorandum to Attlee asking for an end of all British assistance to Greece on March 31. FO 371/67032 R 2443.

¹¹⁰"I do not think", Attlee wrote to Bevin in December 1946, "that the countries bordering on Soviet Russian's zone viz Greece, Turkey, Iraq and Persia can be made strong enough to form an effective barrier. We do not command the resources to make them so." FO 800/475/ME/46/22 Attlee to Bevin December 1, 1946.

¹¹¹In mid-November 1946 the British Chiefs of Staff advised Bevin to postpone the withdrawal of the troops in Greece. FO 371/58658 R 16257. Informed of the reluctance in London to contemplate further aid to Greece Bevin cabled McNeil on December 5, 1946, that "the policy of the Government has been based hitherto on the assumption that Greece and Turkey are essential to our political and strategical position in the world...Am I to understand that we may now abandon this position? I really do not know where I stand" FO 800/468/GRE/46/40 Bevin to McNeil December 5, 1946. For a detailed examination of the British documents at this time see Alexander, The Prelude, chapter 6.

At the cabinet meeting of January 30, 1947, the issue of further aid to Greece was discussed, and it was concluded that Britain should approach the Americans "with a view to ascertaining what part of the burden they would be willing to bear."¹¹² In late February, the British requested US aid and, on March 12, Truman announced his famous Doctrine.¹¹³

The prospect of American interference in Greek affairs brought Greece back into the centre of political discussion in Britain. On March 5, four Labour MPs, Driberg, Warbey, Leah Manning and Phillips Price fired a barrage of questions in the House of Commons pressing for a guarantee that the withdrawal of British troops from Greece would not delay as a result of the financial aid made by the United States. But Christopher Mayhew, Bevin's parliamentary under-secretary, gave no such guarantee on behalf of the government.¹¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the British Left condemned the

¹¹²Wittner, American Intervention, p.65; Frazier, "Did Britain start the Cold War?..", The Historical Journal, vol.27 (1984), p.720.

¹¹³For the Truman Doctrine see also Pogue, George C Marshall: Statesman 1945-1959 (New York, 1987); Jones, The Fifteen Weeks (New York, 1955); Xydis, "The Truman Doctrine in Perspective", Balkan Studies, vol.8(1967), pp.239-62. Bevin's intention to withdraw the remaining British troops (5000) by September 1947 was strongly opposed by the American administration. See FRUS, 1947, vol.5, pp.268, 273-5, 313, 330-2, and Frazier "The Bevin-Marshall dispute of April-November 1947 concerning the withdrawal of British troops from Greece" in Baerentzen (ed. et al.). the Greek Civil War 1945-1949, pp.249-61. The last British combat troops did not leave Greece until January 1950.

¹¹⁴Hansard, vol.434, March 5, 1947, cols 455-7.

Truman Doctrine most emphatically. Thomas described it as "the most depressing statement that has been made since the war." For Laski and Zilliacus it was a deliberate attempt on the part of the United States government to suppress European socialism while for J.Silverman it intended "to strangle the Greek people's fight for liberty."¹¹⁵

The Executive-Committee of the CPGB condemned the Doctrine proposed by the American president as "a challenge to the democratic forces of the world."¹¹⁶ At its conference in Llandudno, the Co-operative Party passed a resolution declaring that the Doctrine was "a menace to world peace and a negation of democratic principles."¹¹⁷ At the conference of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, held in Blackpool in April 1947, a proposition was carried which called upon "the British government to repudiate Truman's statement, and to extend its energies on bringing about a strengthening and unification of world democratic forces." The mover of the proposition, a delegate from the Ilford branch, stressed that in Greece and Turkey the United States aimed to bolster up anti-working-class governments as bulwarks against the spread of socialism and Left-wing governments in Europe. Another delegate from the London Co-operative branch saw behind the American act "the oil

¹¹⁵ Daily Worker, March 14, 1947.

¹¹⁶ Report of the Executive-Committee of the CPGB, February-November 1947.

¹¹⁷ Co-operative Party Annual Report, 1947, p.176.

companies of America setting up their domain as far as they can reach in the Middle East.”¹¹⁸

A hint of the government's reaction to the Truman Doctrine was given in the Commons on March 14 by Hector McNeil during a debate on a sum of £19 million to be granted to the British government for a contribution to the cost of the Greek armed forces and for a gift to the Greek government of certain civilian goods. It was to the effect that such aid could be best given by the United Nations. The matter arose from a speech by Francis Noel-Baker, in which he discussed alternatives for dealing with the situation in Greece brought about by Britain's inability to continue her commitment there.

Anxiety about the position was expressed from both sides of the House. Civil war on a big scale was feared leading perhaps to another world war and it was suggested that the matter should be discussed at the conference of the Foreign Ministers in Moscow to relieve the tension. Conservative MPs expressed the hope that Britain would support the present Greek government in order to enable it to restore peaceful and normal conditions and devote its attention to economic reconstruction. From the other side, it was protested that Britain's only friends in Greece were quislings and “hangers-on of the most discredited monarchy in

¹¹⁸ New Dawn, (the official journal of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers), 1947, pp.56.

Europe.”¹¹⁹

George Thomas, fresh from his recent visit to the Greek guerrillas, thought it would be a tragedy to vote the £19 million. He told the House that when he was in Greece he met an officer of the Greek army who had saved the lives of thirteen English servicemen by killing a Greek traitor. That man was now under sentence of death for his action. The regime in force in Greece made that of Franco look like a Sunday School party. It was something not worthy of support from Britain. Warbey supported Thomas saying that the House was being asked to vote money for foreign “Black and Tans”. It was a disgrace that instead of placing an embargo on arms to the Greek government they were voting money in order to help them to prosecute their war.¹²⁰

The declaration of President Truman received a remarkable degree of support from the conservative and liberal press. The Times described it as “a historical document”, defensive in character, which sprang from the pressure of events. The newspaper was glad that the United States had at last decided to play a more drastic role in international affairs: “The greatest danger has

¹¹⁹Hansard, vol.434, March 14, 1947, col.1790.

¹²⁰Ibid., cols 1766-80. On March 17, Labour MPs again bombarded the Minister of State with questions about Truman’s policy in Greece and Turkey. S.Silverman expressed the view that the American aid, if not accompanied by proper political conditions, would be a catastrophe. Tom Driberg described the Truman Doctrine as an “invasion of South Eastern Europe by dollar imperialism.” Ibid., vol.435, March 17, 1947, cols 17-8.

always been not that the United States would use its great strength to pursue an unjust policy but that it would not use it at all."¹²¹The Daily Telegraph welcomed the President's message as a great step for the restoration of the Greek economy and the maintenance of world peace and freedom.¹²²The Manchester Guardian was likewise pleased with the speech as it could see no political "strings" attached to the American promise for economic and military assistance to Greece and Turkey.¹²³

For the Left-wing press, the Truman Doctrine was an official confirmation that American diplomacy was nothing but power politics. According to the editors of the Reynolds News, Truman had made

"clear beyond any shadow of a doubt that the men who rule America are determined to go to any length to stop the development of Socialism, and to open up the world as a vast colonial area for American capitalism. To these able, unscrupulous and basically ignorant men any form of communal enterprise which extends beyond the ownership of the local tramway system is Communism and must be stopped."¹²⁴

The Daily Herald and Tribune thought that the American aid would bring no benefit to the Greek people unless it was made conditional upon real reform and democratisation, with the full restoration of trade union liberties and the holding of fresh elections at

¹²¹The Times, March 13, 27, 1947.

¹²²Daily Telegraph, March 15, 1947.

¹²³Manchester Guardian, March 14, 1947.

¹²⁴Reynolds News, March 16, 1947.

the earliest opportunity.¹²⁵ The New Statesman feared that the United States was going to use its power to limit the growth of Soviet influence in Europe and to contain Soviet communism. The best choice for Britain was an Anglo-French alliance which would create "a new European group whose interest it would be neither to belong to an American nor Russian bloc."¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Daily Herald, March 13, 1947; Tribune, March 21, 1947.

¹²⁶ New Statesman, March 15, 1947.

CHAPTER SIX: THE BRITISH PUBLIC AND THE GREEK CIVIL WAR,
APRIL 1947-OCTOBER 1949

After the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, the United States became increasingly involved in the political, economic, and administrative life of Greece. In mid-summer 1947, an American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG) headed by Dwight Griswold, a former Republican governor of Nebraska, arrived in Athens charged with the administration of the US assistance funds. Within a few months the Mission assumed control over virtually all major aspects of Greek public affairs.¹ In November 1947, a joint Greek-US Army Staff was created and, in February 1948, General James Van Fleet was appointed to command a Joint US Military Advisory and Planning Group in Greece (JUSMAPG) which had been established to provide high staff advice to the Greek armed forces and to place US advisers with Greek military units.²

¹In May 1948, George McGhee, the coordinator of the Greek-Turkish aid programme, informed the Under-Secretary of State that AMAG "exercises advisory functions vis-a-vis the Greek Government in relation to almost all phases of the economy as well as governmental administration and military operations...Decisions by the Mission as to utilization of American aid do in fact determine most important decisions of the Greek Government." FRUS, 1948, vol.4, p.88.

²FRUS, 1947, vol.5, pp.361-3, 375-7, 384-6, 480.

In the summer and autumn of 1947 the civil war assumed large-scale proportions. Despite the massive injection of American aid and the arrival of American advisers, the Democratic Army strengthened its hold on the countryside, especially in the northern region. Its attacks, however, on towns and villages met with little success. In July and again in December 1947 powerful guerrilla forces made a determined attempt to capture Konitza, a town near the Albanian frontier, apparently with the aim of making it their capital and assuming enough terrain in which governmental authority could be established. Both the operations failed miserably and, when a radio report from the guerrilla headquarters announced the formation of the 'Provisional Government of Free Greece' headed by General Marcos (December 24, 1947), no one recognised it, not even the communist countries.

Meanwhile, in Athens the government had adopted sterner measures against the Left. Between July 9 and 14, 1947, thousands of persons were arrested nationwide and deported, without trial, to the island concentration camps after the discovery of an alleged plot for a communist uprising.³ In September, the Greek Prime Minister resigned and a coalition government was formed headed by Sofoulis. An amnesty was offered to the guerrillas but when this failed new repressive laws were

³Woodhouse, The Struggle For Greece, p.209; Wittner, American Intervention, p.138.

passed. Communist newspapers were closed down (October 18, 1947), the right to strike was abolished (December 7, 1947) and the Communist Party and all groups associated with it were dissolved (December 27, 1947).⁴

In summer 1948, the government forces launched a major offensive in the Grammos mountains, in north-west Greece, with the object of destroying the Democratic Army's main bastion of defence. After relentless artillery and air bombardment - American napalm bombs were used for the first time - the guerrillas were forced to abandon their positions and retreat to the surrounding area. Despite their heavy losses, the problem of finding new reserves, the inadequate assistance from the communist states to the north and the internal dissent in the Communist Party over the Tito-Kremlin split and the conduct of the war, they continued to fight the government army for almost a year. In August 1949, however, they suffered another heavy defeat, this time at Mount Vitsi, and, on October 16, Radio 'Free Greece' announced a 'cease fire'. The civil war was over.

I. Labour foreign policy and the reaction to "Bevinism", 1947-1949

After the Parliamentary 'revolt' of November 1946 British foreign policy came again under severe criticism

⁴MGA, INFO. V, "Emergency Measures Act, 1946"; Iatrides (ed.), Greece in the 1940s, pp.220-8. The KKE was to remain outlawed until September 1974.

early in May 1947 when a group of Labour backbenchers who had taken part in the November 'revolt' produced a 47-page pamphlet, Keep Left, drafted by Crossman, Foot, and Mikardo. In their chapter on foreign policy, 'The Job Abroad', the authors stressed that the task of the Labour government was to opt out of the ideological war between the United States and the Soviet Union, and seek to develop an European policy designed ultimately to create an independent and united Europe. The division of the world into Western and Eastern blocs had squeezed democracy in Europe:

"The most tragic example is Greece. Our feeble attempts to create a democratic socialist regime in Athens failed miserably; and the Greeks are now divided into a Right ready to accept American money and a Left which intends to impose a communist-controlled regime."

A socialist Britain must try to heal the breach between the two super powers. It should also reduce its overseas commitments and armed forces, repudiate the Truman Doctrine, withdraw completely from Greece and the Middle East, and take action for the integration of Germany into a planned European economy.⁵

⁵The pamphlet Keep Left was published by the New Statesman. Miliband (Parliamentary Socialism, p.296) sums up the Keep Left approach as one, which, whilst paying tribute to the government's achievement, "urged greater boldness at home and denounced the fallacy of collective security against communism". According to Woodrow Wyatt, one of the signatories of the pamphlet, "Keep Left was not very Left. This might have been expected from a group which contained five future life peers and eight future more or less respectable Labour Ministers". What's Left Of The Labour Party (London 1977) p.35.

At the Labour Party conference in Margate (May 26-30, 1947), the Keep Left group anxious to avoid a direct confrontation with their leaders did not take part in the discussion on foreign policy but concentrated on issues of minor importance such as manpower and the size of the Armed Forces. A composite resolution moved by Zilliacus contained the most serious criticism of Bevin's policies, even though it was couched in the mildest terms. It urged that Britain base her international relations on the UN Charter and that Britain collaborate more closely with the Soviet Union and the other socialist nations of the world.⁶ Another critical composite resolution dealt with Greece. It contained the essence of a number of resolutions put forward by DLPs in the preliminary agenda.⁷ It regretted "the policy in Greece which had resulted in putting and maintaining in power a reactionary government", expressed the hope that the British government would withdraw its troops from the country, and deplored the endorsement given by Britain in the UN Security Council to American interference in Greek and Turkish affairs. In moving the resolution, S.H.Hassell of the Orpington

⁶Labour Party Annual Conference, 1947, pp.141-2, 160.

⁷For example, the Chelsea, Worthing, and West Willesden DLPs, had tabled resolutions demanding that all British troops be withdrawn from Greece immediately. The resolutions of four other DLPs, Epping, Gateshead, Holborn and Spelthorne, were concerned with the consequences of the American policy in Greece. MGA/PM 52, 'Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48', May 2 and 23, 1947.

DLP told the delegates that the policy adopted with regard to Greece was of Tory origin and had failed. Labour Britain was now creating the impression that it intended to 'hold a ring fence round Russia' until the Americans were prepared to hold it themselves: "Ordinary people are worried over this issue of Greece, because they see in it what we can easily fall into if we follow the American line or create the impression that we are following the American line".⁸ Following the general debate, in which Bevin received tremendous applause, all resolutions hostile to the government's foreign policies were swept away without any call for a card vote.⁹ Despite their failure to influence the conference, the critics refused to surrender and turned to the press to voice their dissatisfaction. Foot in Tribune insisted that no serious debate on the principles of British foreign policy had taken place at Margate.¹⁰ Crossman in the New Statesman complained that Bevin had tied all "his critics together in an untidy bundle, labelled 'stab in the back'", and pushed them "over the white cliff of Party loyalty."¹¹ Zilliacus in the Daily Herald promised that the "fight goes on, in spite of spell

⁸Labour Party Annual Conference, 1947, pp.162-3.

⁹Zilliacus wrote afterwards in his book I Choose Peace (p.373): "Mr Bevin got his vote of confidence by a crashing majority - only about a dozen hands were raised against him. That was a disgrace to the Labour Movement and gave the full measure of the political immaturity of the party in world affairs".

¹⁰Tribune, June 6, 1947.

¹¹New Statesman, June 7, 1947.

binding at Margate."¹²

The division in the parliamentary Left had its counterpart in the trade union movement. The Left in the TUC posed a somewhat more serious threat to the government since it contained communists as well as Left Labourites. After mid-1947, however, the government's extensive propaganda campaign against communism and changes in the international political climate enabled the Right in the unions to win increased support for its positions.¹³ At the 1947 TUC conference a motion calling for renewal of trade negotiation with the USSR in order to release Britain from the pressure of 'dollar diplomacy' was heavily defeated. A similar fate overtook resolutions demanding a stronger British policy against the repressive regimes in Greece and Spain.¹⁴ When trade union delegates met at Margate for their next annual conference there was no major opposition to Bevin's foreign policy.

Non-communist left-wing organisations such as the LDG also suffered from cold-war developments. In March 1948, Lyall Wilkes, who was particularly energetic and active on issues relating to trials of former Greek resistance fighters, withdrew his support from the

¹²Daily Herald, June 3, 1947.

¹³In December 1947, Morgan Phillips, Secretary of the Labour Party, openly called for a campaign against communist influence in the unions and, in March 1948 Attlee began a purge of the civil service. See Weiler, British Labour chapter 6, 'Manufacturing Consensus', pp.189-229.

¹⁴TUC Annual Conference, 1947, pp.484-91, 494-508.

League. In a letter to Diana Pym he explained the reason for his decision:

"At the same time I doubt if all League for Democracy in Greece members care very much for democracy, since it seems to me to be rather a League for Communism in Greece. I do suggest to you that what is required is an organisation led and controlled by people who really do care for Democracy in Greece, and elsewhere, instead of by persons who are only too anxious to support executions and repression in Eastern Europe whilst fighting the same evils in Greece...It is this entirely one-sided attitude which, I believe, will lead to the League for Democracy in Greece fast losing support. I do, therefore, hope that you will reconstitute your Society on a proper basis before it suffers too drastically from a falling off in support. Until that is done, and re-organisation of some sort takes place, I do not wish to be associated in any way with the activities of the present League."¹⁵

Almost a year later, George Thomas resigned his position as vice-chairman of the LDG because the League supported the Democratic Army which "was dominated by communists who pursued the Cominform line."¹⁶

In January 1948, Bevin put forth in the House of Commons his proposal for a 'Western Union' as part of an anti-Soviet bloc. It was greeted with enthusiasm by the Tory benches and by almost all Labour MPs. Churchill welcomed the broad outlines of Bevin's speech and congratulated him particularly on the Greek question for continuing the policy of the Coalition government and "preventing the vast majority of the Greek people from

¹⁵MGA, CORRESP.VIII, "Lyall Wilkes", March 15, 1948.

¹⁶MGA, CORRESP.VI, "George Thomas", April 6, 1949.

being conquered and enslaved by a communist minority.”¹⁷ Seymour Cocks and John Haire were glad that the government had taken the lead in the movement for European unity, but they had some reservations about its policy in Eastern Europe.¹⁸ Crossman paid tribute to Marshall for producing a plan “without ideological conditions.”¹⁹ Francis Noel-Baker and the conservative A.R.W.Low concentrated on the Greek question and demanded the sending of an international expeditionary force to Greece to seal her northern frontier.²⁰ Zilliacus was the only Labour Member to make a severe but constructive criticism of the government’s foreign policy. He refused to concur with Bevin’s estimate of past Soviet behaviour, condemned British policy in Greece and warned that Britain’s attempts to make a success of the Marshall Plan would prove a “dangerous and disastrous failure”, unless accompanied by a different attitude towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.²¹

¹⁷ Hansard, vol.446, January 23, 1948, col. 551.

¹⁸ Ibid., January 22, 1948, cols 461-71; January 23, 1948, cols 600-6.

¹⁹ Ibid., January 22, 1948, cols 561-9.

²⁰ Ibid., January 22, 1948, cols 449-55; January 23, 1948, cols 529-36.

²¹ Hansard, vol. 446, January 22, 1948, cols 434-47. Konni Zilliacus (1894-1962) was born in Japan and educated in Sweden, Finland, England, and the USA. In the 1914-18 War he served in the Royal Flying Corps and as an intelligence officer with the British military mission in Siberia. Between the wars he was a member of the information section of the League of Nations Secretariat. In the Second World War he worked at the Ministry of Information and, in July 1945, he was elected

Zilliacus hoped that the 'march of events' would make it clear to the Keep Left group that the Soviet Union could not be excluded from a European Union. The communist takeover in Czechoslovakia at the end of February 1948, however, and the Soviet blockade in Berlin from June onwards convinced the vast majority of the Labour Left that no agreement was possible with the Soviets and that Bevin's foreign policy in the main must be accepted. A third force in world affairs was no longer necessary. As Benn Levy told the House in May 1948:

"Today our concern must be to save the world from war and our country from devastation. There is no longer a third choice. We must travel the Russian road or the American road...But if there are only two choices, which choice are we to make?...For better or worse, the choice is made. We are

a Labour MP for Gateshead by a 19,000 majority. In the following years he found himself in frequent disagreement with Bevin's conduct of foreign affairs and particularly with his attitude towards communism and the Soviet Union. In 1948, he supported Tito in his conflict with Stalin, and in September 1949 he admitted in Tribune that there was 'much that was harsh, ugly, and violent in these [East European] regimes.' In May 1949, he was expelled from the Labour Party and with four colleagues (Platts-Mills, Solley, D.N.Pritt, Hutchinson) he formed the 'Labour Independent Group' in the Commons. In 1952, he rejoined the Party and three years later was returned for the Gorton division of Manchester. In March 1961, the NEC decided on his suspension from the parliamentary Party, this time for writing in the World Marxist Review an article which was critical of Right-wing Labourites. However, Gorton remained loyal to him giving him a majority of more than 4,000 in 1964 and nearly doubling it in 1966. A man of boundless energy, polyglot and encyclopedic, Zilliacus produced a large number of articles and pamphlets and numerous books on political topics, among them The Origin and Structure of the League of Nations, Mirror of the Past, Mirror of the Present, I Choose Peace. The Times, July 7, 1967; Schneer, Labour's Conscience, pp. 118-26.

committed to Western Union.”²²

Despite the withdrawal of several of Bevin's critics from the Third Force movement a number of Labour MPs still refused to embrace Bevinite anti-Communism and persisted in demanding a change in British foreign policy. In February 1948, Zilliacus, Driberg, and several others met at Tom Braddock's flat and prepared a draft resolution which repudiated "the policy and strategy of a Western defence bloc under Anglo-American leadership directed against the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, as inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations" and urged the government "to refer the Greek situation to the Security Council, at the same time giving notice of a definite and early date for the withdrawal of British troops, police and military missions from Greece."²³ On April 17, thirty-seven Labour Members sent a personal telegram of good wishes to Pietro Nenni, the Italian socialist leader, for success in the coming elections. The Labour leaders who supported a smaller anti-Communist group led by Saragat repudiated their action and within a week they decided to expel John Platts-Mills from the Party as an 'example' to the other troublesome backbenchers.²⁴ In a year's time Zilliacus, Solley, and Lester Hutchinson were to share Platts-Mills' fate.

²²Hansard, vol.450, May 4, 1948, cols 1135-6.

²³Schneer, Labour's Conscience, pp.108-9.

²⁴Ibid., pp.111-18; Jackson, Rebels and Whips, pp.65-9, 202-5.

At the 1948 Labour Party conference (May 17-22), Bevin faced a 900-word amendment in which Zilliacus called on him to reduce the armed forces abroad, withdraw British troops and missions from Greece, co-operate with the working class leadership of Europe, terminate the Anglo-American Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, and insist on the nationalisation of basic industries in Germany. When put to vote, the amendment received only a quarter of a million votes against over four million.²⁵

By now Bevin had secured the support of most of the leading left-wingers in the Labour Party. Crossman favoured both the Marshall Plan and Western European Union, while Foot and Tribune supported Britain's close working relationship with the United States in opposing the Soviet Union. The movement for a democratic, socialist Third Force had disintegrated. The remaining few voices which still resisted blaming the Soviet Union for the breakdown of Great Powers relations were too weak and isolated to influence events. Thus, when the North Atlantic Treaty came before the House of Commons in May 1949, only six Members cast their votes against it. Seven out of the fifteen original Keep Left members endorsed the formation of NATO. At the height of the Cold War Bevin's vision of Britain's role in world af-

²⁵Labour Party Annual Conference, 1948, pp.185-6.

fairs had come to prevail.²⁶

II. Greece from April 1947 to May 1948

After the announcement of the Truman Doctrine Greece was relegated to a less important position on the foreign pages of the British press. Most of the quality newspapers without ignoring the social and political context of the evolving civil war tended to concentrate on its international dimensions. The popular press, on the other hand, dropped Greece almost altogether. Weeks would go by with no mention whatsoever of Greek events, only to have them suddenly burst into print. It is surprising how much space was devoted to news stories that no longer seem important but which dominated the front pages then, diverting British attention away from the debate on the Greek crisis. For instance, the wedding of Princess Elisabeth and Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten in November 1947 monopolised the newspaper columns for weeks, leaving less concern for the atrocities committed by the Greek royalist forces in Greece at the time.

Two of the most interesting editorials on Greece which appeared in the British press in the summer of 1947 were those of the Economist and The Times printed

²⁶Hansard, vol.464, May 12, 1949, cols 2127-30. Opposing the motion were: Tom Braddock, J.Platts-Mills, D.N. Pritt, Zilliacus, Emrys Hughes, Ronald Chamberlain, Gallacher and Piratin. The seven Keep Lefters were: Michael Foot, Donald Bruce, Benn Levy, Leslie Hale, Ronald Mackay, Woodrow Wyatt and J.P.W.Mallalieu.

on July 5 and 15 respectively. The editorial in the Economist, entitled 'Knife Edge in Greece', stated that the guerrilla movement was not entirely the work of the Soviet Union or Greece's northern neighbours but it was rooted in Greece itself. It was clearly nourished by the futility and the savagery of the Greek government, and the creation of a more able and representative cabinet was one of the essential preliminaries to domestic pacification.²⁷ The editorial of The Times also stated that the crisis in Greece was primarily an internal affair:

"So long as the Greek opposition, whether political or military - and both are aspects of the same republican conviction - is treated merely as the paid agent of powers outside Greece, no settlement may be expected. It is no doubt true that many bandits still walk the hills of Attica, but it is no less true that the bulk of guerrilla forces with whom the Greek army has tried to come to grips since April are not bandits but men who believe that they are fighting for the same just cause which inspired them during the war...A calm judgment on these matters can only support the view that a radical change of policy by those in power at Athens will alone bring the fighting and all its attendant horrors to an end."²⁸

The editorial in The Times aroused a storm of controversy in the paper's correspondence columns. Leading the defence of the Greek government were the Lords Long of Wraxall, De L'Isle and Dudley, and Vansittart, Osbert Lancaster, press attaché at the British Embassy in Greece in 1944-46, Panagiotis

²⁷ Economist, July 5, 1947.

²⁸ The Times, July 15, 1947.

Pavlakis, Director-General of the Greek Ministry of Labour, and two officials of the Greek Department of Information in London, A.A.Pallis and S.L.Hourmouzos. On the other side were Terence Donovan, E.Athanassoglou, D.Kolios, General-Secretary of the FGMU, and Th.Doganis, London correspondent of the EAM press.²⁹ Francis Noel-Baker, in his own letter, expressed the view that the Greek civil war was both a domestic and an international problem and, therefore, its solution demanded both a new policy in Athens and a fresh international action. "It would be sad", wrote the Labour MP, "if the British government - which has borne so large a responsibility for Greek affairs in recent years - were now to seem anxious to wash its hands of the whole question."³⁰

The mass arrests in Greece in mid-1947 caused a wave of horror in Britain. The press, with the exception of a few extreme conservative publications,³¹

²⁹Ibid., July 17, 1947 (Long of Wraxall, Hourmouzos); July 18 (De L'Isle and Dudley, Doganis); July 19 (Hourmouzos); July 22 (Lancaster, Athanassoglou); July 23 (Pavlakis); July 24 (Kolios, Donovan); July 26 (Doganis); July 28 (Pallis); July 29 (Vansittart); August 2 (Athanassoglou); August 6 (Vansittart); August 30 (Athanassoglou).

³⁰Ibid., July 25, 1947.

³¹The weekly Time and Tide, for example, claimed in its editorial comment of July 19, 1947, that what was happening in Greece was an international communist intervention and that the Greek communists were nothing but "a fifth column in active conspirational connivance with the enemy." Time and Tide was founded by a wealthy woman, Viscountess Rhondda (1883-1958) in 1920. Its circulation in the immediate post-war years was about

clearly disapproved of such actions. It disliked the violations of individual liberties in Greece, and it disliked the brutality which accompanied it. The Times doubted whether the Greek authorities really wanted to win the support of those sections of the Left which were willing to compromise.³² The News Chronicle severely condemned the arrests and criticised the Greek government for lack of compromise and tolerance. The arrests were no credit to Britain and America: "We cannot hope to nurture democracy by condoning the acts of those to whom it means nothing but an excuse for reaction."³³ Tribune was sure that the Greek government had taken such a violent action in order to destroy the Communist Party.³⁴ The New Statesman likewise suspected that the government was "seeking the complete liquidation of all opposition and the creation of a naked dictatorship living on American charity."³⁵

The events in Greece dismayed and bewildered many progressive people in Britain. Julius Silverman, Ernest

40,000.

³²The Times, July 11, 1947. On the same day, however, the paper's new correspondent in Athens Lt-Col. Frank Macaskie, whose political affiliations, according to C.M.Woodhouse (Apple of Discord, p.38), "were rather to the right of the centre", reported that "any suspicion that the Greek government had invented an imaginary plot as an excuse for putting away political opponents appears to have been removed by the fact that only the extreme left has disapproved of yesterday's mass arrests in Athens."

³³News Chronicle, July 12, 1947.

³⁴Tribune, July 18, 1947.

³⁵New Statesman, July 19, 1947.

Millington and William Gallacher, in exclusive interviews to the Greek news agency, forcefully denounced the exile and imprisonment operations in Athens and expressed their regret that the Labour government had acquiesced to "this final blow of what is left of Greek democracy."³⁶ On July 16, fifty-two delegates representing co-operative and youth organisations, trade union committees and councils, together with a number of prominent individuals, attended an emergency conference organised by the LDG at Caxton Hall with Lord Faringdon in the chair. The main speaker was Colonel A.W. Sheppard, former chief of the British economic mission in northern Greece, who gave much valuable evidence particularly as to the brutal treatment, denial of all rights and proper trial, of thousands of political prisoners.³⁷ On July 28, a deputation from the LDG called on V.Mostras, the Greek chargé d'affaires in London to protest against the executions, arrests, exiling without trial and conditions of the deportees. The deputation included Lord Faringdon, Lawther, Stanley, Hannen Swaffer, Dodds, Thomas, Sheppard, L.C.White, and Diana Pym.³⁸ On the same day, Mayhew was given an uncomfortable time in Parliament when he was closely questioned on the

³⁶MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", July 11, 1947.

³⁷MGA, CORRESP.V, "Sheppard, Col. A"; NCCL archive, Hull University, DCL 73/A(a), Civil Liberty, vol.7 (August 1947), p.7.

³⁸MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", August 1, 1947; MGA, CHRON.I, "Executions Campaign, 1946-48"; Daily Worker, July 29, 1947.

arrests by Francis Noel-Baker, Benn Levy, Wilkes, Tiffany, and Gallacher.³⁹ In mid-August an appeal signed by eighty-six Labour MPs was sent to King Paul through the LDG. It read as follows:

"We Labour Members of the British House of Commons beg you to believe that a profound sense of horror is spreading through the British people at what is happening in Greece today. We appeal to you in the name of humanity to exercise your Prerogative and save the lives of the 1300 former resistance fighters now under suspended sentence of death; to stop the executions of men and women sentenced to death by the Courts Martial for alleged political offences and to use your influence to secure the release of the thousand of deportees suffering such anguish on the islands of exile."⁴⁰

The position of the workers in Greece was the subject of a long debate at the Southport TUC conference on September 4, 1947. Stanley moved a resolution which demanded that the British government review its whole policy towards Greece and bring immediate pressure on the Greek government to remedy the present state of affairs. The following two speakers, P. Belcher and A.E. Sumbler (AEU) supported the resolution, but it was J. Hammond of the mineworkers who most vividly expressed the deep anxiety felt by the Congress at the government's Greek policy:

"It is astonishing and bewildering that, with a Labour government in power and the influence we are able to exercise, reaction should be allowed to continue in Greece and perpetrate horrors on the

³⁹ Hansard, vol. 441, July 28, 1947, cols 33-35.

⁴⁰ MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", August 22, 1947.

people of Greece that were never exceeded by Adolf Hitler and world fascism.”

At the end of the debate Vincent Tewson proposed that the resolution be referred to the General Council. This was strongly opposed by delegates who considered that it was right and proper for the Congress itself to go on record on the Greek issue. Finally, the resolution was put to vote and was referred to the Council by a majority of 3,951,000 against 2,984,000.⁴¹

The reaction engendered by recent events in Greece reached its climax in November-December 1947. In an attempt to enlighten the British public about the nature and effect of British intervention in Greece, the LDG published a pamphlet Britain in Greece, written by Colonel Sheppard and with a forward by George Thomas.⁴² Colonel Sheppard had a first-hand knowledge of Greece. He first went there in 1941 with the Australian Imperial Forces. He returned to Greece after her liberation from the Germans as a member of the UNRRA mission and remained there up to March 1947. His account is particularly valuable because of his seven-month participation in a British mission which helped him to gain close knowledge of Greece's problems and of the

⁴¹TUC Annual Conference, 1947, pp.494-500.

⁴²A.W.Sheppard, Britain in Greece, (London, 1947). The pamphlet was later translated in several European languages.

work of 'British officialdom' in the country.

The pamphlet began with a very brief statement of the economic position which was followed by a description of the activities of the British Embassy and the role of the British troops in Greece. Sheppard wrote that the Embassy exercised actual supervision over the entire Greek governmental machinery and directed its activities in the struggle against the Greek people and Greece's northern neighbours. E.H. Peck, British Consul in Northern Greece, was engaged in transporting across the frontier individuals hostile to Albania and Yugoslavia and systematically published slanderous reports about the Democratic Army. The British troops, on the other hand, were "deployed in such a way as to release the maximum possible number of Greek soldiers to fight against the rebel army." But they did not confine themselves to garrison duty. British units were often dispatched to battle areas to 'show the flag' and frighten the guerrillas.

Sheppard dealt in some detail with the economic conditions in the country. Two and a half years after her liberation from the Germans, Greece was worse off economically than on the day the Germans left. In May 1947 the total output of the mining industry was 13 per cent of pre-war, in the metallurgical industry 25 per cent, in the cement and building materials industry 32 per cent, and in edible oils and fats 15 per cent. Communications had deteriorated until they were practi-

cally non-existent. Unemployment had reached menacing dimensions (29 per cent by May 1947) and inflation had struck the entire country. Economically, Greece was heading for the abyss, and the British economic mission had "done nothing to improve the situation."

A chapter was devoted to the trade union movement. The author did not dwell on the general background to suppression of Greek trade unions since this had already been set out in the pamphlet Greek Trade Unions in Chains published by the LDG. Instead, he concentrated on the machinations with the help of which the Greek government was striving to undermine the trade union movement. Open elections to trade union bodies had resulted in the victory of Left-wing parties. The authorities therefore had disbanded the lawfully elected executive of the Greek Confederation of Labour and appointed their own executive made up of government agents. Most of the Greek trade union leaders were now in exile or in prison.

In the following two sections dealing with the political conditions in Greece, Sheppard described his experiences in the Greek courts-martial and security committees. The courts-martial in Greece were not restricted to trying soldiers charged with military offences; the 'evidence' presented to the court-martial was made up by the prosecutor; the accused learned of the charges levelled at him only when he appeared in court. The security committees sentenced Greek citizens

to exile without presenting any charges whatsoever. In theory the accused had the right to appeal to the governor-general, but as Sheppard remarked "I have seen the Governor-General of Central Macedonia dealing with such appeals. It was like the machine in the Post Office marking a postal stamp on a letter."

Turning to the rebel movement, Colonel Sheppard refuted the allegation that the guerrillas were receiving aid from abroad, emphasised the national liberation character of the struggle waged by the Democratic Army against the tyrannical regime in Athens, and expressed the view that even in Britain a similar rebel movement would be formed "were we ever faced with the same tyranny and terror as has been the lot of all people in Greece with democratic political views who have not been willing to stifle their consciences for fear of losing their comfort."

Meanwhile, the situation in Greece had received wide coverage in the British press. On October 31, 1947 the Daily Worker published on its front page three revealing photos of the execution of forty-seven people in Salonica.⁴³ The following day, in a survey of food conditions in liberated Europe, the Picture Post devoted a feature article to Greece in which it described the complete economic dislocation reigning in the country and the appalling poverty of the people.⁴⁴ On November 10,

⁴³Daily Worker, October 31, 1947.

⁴⁴Picture Post, November 1, 1947. The Picture Post was

three and a half million readers of the pro-Labour Daily Mirror were horrified to see on the front page of their paper pictures of Greek soldiers in British battledress, mounted on horseback, carrying the cut-off heads of Greek guerrilla fighters. The photos were supplied to the Daily Mirror by ex-Corporal Harry Starr who described how they were taken by his friend Sergeant Alfred Kings, and drew a vivid picture of the police terror which he himself had witnessed again and again when stationed at Trikala, in central Greece.⁴⁵

Starr's report and the photographs caused a sensation in Britain. On November 11, the News Chronicle published an interview with Starr and an editorial which questioned the purpose of keeping British troops in Greece.⁴⁶ Two days later the Daily Mirror printed eleven letters most of them endorsing the report. One reader wrote characteristically:

“That these atrocities should be perpetrated in Greece by Greeks with British equipment, and while British troops are stationed there, is a disgrace to a socialist government, and a true indication that Labour's foreign policy is indeed a continu-

founded in October 1938 and ceased circulation in June 1957. In the 1940s its editor was the left-wing journalist Tom Hopkinson. Its sales in 1947 were over a million and a quarter copies a week. Hopkinson, Picture Post, 1938-1950 (London, 1970).

⁴⁵Daily Mirror, November 10, 1947. The Daily Mirror began on November 2, 1903, as a daily newspaper for women. In the 1930s it swung to the Left and after the war it hailed with enthusiasm the new social measures of Attlee's government. Edelman, The Mirror: A Political History (London, 1966).

⁴⁶News Chronicle, November 11, 1947.

ation of Tory imperialism.”⁴⁷

British officials also found the pictures in the Daily Mirror particularly disturbing and Clifford Norton was instructed to draw the Greek government's attention to the British press reports of guerillas' decapitations. The Minister of Public Order, Constantine Rendis, justified this practice on the ground that “a price had been put on many brigands and it had always been the custom to produce the head on which a price had been placed.”⁴⁸ In the House of Commons Mayhew came under heavy fire when Thomas, Platts-Mills, Warbey, Charles Smith and James Carmichael asked him about the ‘barbaric conduct’ of the Greek royalist forces trained by British personnel. The Labour MPs declared that in view of the revelation made by Starr of the atrocities committed by the Greek police, it was time British troops were withdrawn. Meyhew rejected this demand alleging that the British military and police missions were “effectively helping the Greek people to stand on their own feet.”⁴⁹

The LDG used this important breakthrough into the press to launch a ‘Quit Greece’ campaign supported by many ex-servicemen and relief workers with Greek experience. On December 12, it organised a meeting at Kingsway Hall, in London, attended by several hundred

⁴⁷Daily Mirror, November 13, 1947.

⁴⁸The Times, November 14, 1947.

⁴⁹Hansard, vol.444, November 17, 1947, cols 813-7.

people. Solley, the chairman, declared that the purpose of the meeting was "to protest publicly against the fascist regime and atrocities now being committed in Greece" and to support actively a 'Quit Greece' campaign. Hannen Swaffer reminded the audience that at the Labour Party conference in 1944 it was Bevin who had persuaded delegates to support Churchill's Greek policy "and that policy is the policy of today." Other speakers such as Tom Braddock and Ray Innes, general-secretary of the Association of Scientific Workers, spoke on similar terms. At the end of the meeting a resolution was passed with two dissentients calling upon the British government "immediately to withdraw British troops and military and police missions, the presence of which strengthen the position of the Greek government."⁵⁰

The announcement on Christmas Eve 1947 of the formation of a 'Provisional Democratic Government' and the prospect of its recognition by the communist countries was given much attention by the British press. The Times printed an editorial in which it suggested that the guerrillas could not have achieved their present strength and formed their own government without "the backing of a considerable section of the people." This statement was sharply criticised in the paper's correspondence columns by Charles Mott-

⁵⁰MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", December 12, 1947.

Radclyffe, Lord Vansittart and Francis Noel-Baker who claimed that the guerrilla movement was not based upon a spontaneous popular support but was instigated from abroad.⁵¹

In contrast to The Times, the Manchester Guardian saw in the rebel announcement the beginning of a new and serious attempt by the Soviets to bring Greece under their domination. The Manchester newspaper did not believe that a more liberal and progressive government in Greece would alter the situation. The solution to the Greek crisis rested on the United Nations which should take the initiative "to make Russia realise that she cannot annex one nation after another to the communist empire in the vain pursuit of security but that in resisting communist aggression we do not wish to threaten Russia herself."⁵² The News Chronicle concurred with the Manchester Guardian that only the United Nations could deal effectively with the Greek problems. "Guns alone", the newspaper stated, "have never solved anything."⁵³

The Economist's comment was that the formation of the rebels' government was "only one aspect of the measures the Russians believe necessary to ensure the failure of the Marshall Plan." Having failed to halt

⁵¹The Times, December 27, 1947; January 3, 1948 (Mott-Radclyffe), January 8 (Vansittart), January 9 (Noel-Baker)

⁵²Manchester Guardian, December 31, 1947.

⁵³News Chronicle, January 2, 1948.

the plan by economic sabotage, trade union action and general political agitation, the Russians had decided to take stronger steps to destroy it. Greece therefore was a test case not only for the survival of Greek independence but for the success throughout Europe of the Marshall Plan. The Economist thought that the United States should clear out the rebels, even if military action was necessary, but at the same time it was imperative that the Greek government be widened and liberalised.⁵⁴

The conservative press saw no reason why Britain should appease the Soviets by exerting pressure on the Greek government to change its policies. The conservatives were firmly convinced that what the Greek communists really wanted was not reforms but to seize power with foreign help. The Daily Telegraph expressed the thinking of these publications when it stated that Greece had "become the stage for a conflict between the true conception of liberty...and a false and foreign conception of tyranny."⁵⁵

The left-wing press did not share any of these conservative positions. It feared, however, that a

⁵⁴Economist, January 3, 1948.

⁵⁵Daily Telegraph, January 9, 1948. See also the editorial comments on the guerrilla announcement in the Spectator (Jan.3, 1948) and the Time and Tide (Jan.3, 1948). Two interesting articles on Greece appeared in the conservative press at the time. In the Daily Telegraph of January 1, 1948, Buckley described the aims and tactics of the guerrillas and in the Spectator of January 23, 1948, Norman Kirby analysed the Greeks' 'political psychology'.

recognition of the Marcos government would put in danger international peace and security.⁵⁶ The New Statesman in particular believed that in Greece as in Spain in the 1930s the civil war was being transformed into a struggle between Great Powers. Both the Soviet Union and the United States had committed themselves to a struggle for power in which the welfare of the Greek people had almost been forgotten. The New Statesman did not think that Britain had the power to decide for the future of Greece, but it did think that she could use her influence against the spread of war and for a settlement of the matter in the UN Security Council.⁵⁷

On January 13, 1948, the eccentric (and later alcoholic) Labour Member for King's Norton, Raymond Blackburn, left London for Greece on a visit of about three weeks to the frontier areas where fighting was taking place. In Athens he received a warm welcome. He dined with the populist leader Tsaldaris, held talks with two spokesmen of the moderate Labour Right, Patsantzis and Kalomiris, and was briefed by government officials on what was happening in northern Greece. During his tour he visited more than twenty 'rebel-stricken' villages and saw the Greek army in action. When he returned to Athens he stated at a press

⁵⁶New Statesman, January 3, 24, 1948; Tribune, January 2, 1948.

⁵⁷New Statesman, January 3, 1948.

conference that the communist rebellion could be crushed only if Greece's northern neighbours ceased to help the guerrillas. He was satisfied from his talks with captured guerrillas that this outside help was extensive. The Greek army and air forces were fighting well but were not large enough to prevent the rebels "with terror as their chief weapon from creating havoc and destruction."⁵⁸

In Britain, the LDG maintained a busy schedule. On January 20, 1948 twenty-one British soldiers, including five captains, signed a declaration issued by the League supporting Starr's allegations of Greek atrocities. The soldiers, most of whom had themselves witnessed atrocities similar to those described by Starr, believed that the continued presence of British troops in Greece encouraged the Greek government to suppress civil liberties and constituted a serious danger to world peace. They demanded that the Labour government withdraw its forces, dissociate Britain from the reactionary Greek authorities and use its influence for the restoration of full democracy in the country.⁵⁹ On

⁵⁸The Times, January 23, February 3, 1948. Blackburn was a passionate opponent of communism and among the first on the Labour benches to call for an Anglo-American alliance against the Soviet Union. In a statement to the Commons in September 1950 he proclaimed his enthusiasm for a national government headed by Churchill. Blackburn, I am an Alcoholic (London, 1959), pp.121, 134; Hansard, vol.478, September 13, 1950, cols 1159-69.

⁵⁹MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", January 23, 1948. The previous day the British Communist Party had issued a 'Hands off Greece' call signed by Harry Pollitt. Daily Worker, January 20, 1948. On

February 28, forty-one delegates representing 50,000 workers met at Cardiff and demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Greece, and on March 23 a protest at the threatened execution of 1,300 resistance fighters signed by thirty-seven British MPs and a number of trade union officials was sent to Sofoulis.⁶⁰

Bevin's Greek policy was also condemned at the Co-operative Party conference at Newcastle (March 28). Delegates shouted down A.V. Alexander, Minister of Defence, when he attempted to reply to three Labour MPs, Dodds, Tiffany and Fred Longden, who had supported a resolution urging the government to 'consider the factual statements made on behalf of the left-wing and democratic sections of the Greek people during this past twelve months and take immediately steps to reverse the present policy towards Greece.' Eventually the delegates passed the resolution by an overwhelming majority.⁶¹ A few days later the delegates at the annual meeting of Britain's third largest union, the Shop,

February 23, the National Congress of the Party adopted a resolution which condemned "the continued support by the British Labour government for the fascist regime" in Greece, demanded "the immediate withdrawal of British troops and all other aid", warned the British people of the "serious danger of British troops being involved in the fighting in Greece as mercenaries of American imperialism", welcomed the formation of the guerrilla government and called for all possible "material and moral support" to the rebel movement. Report of the National Congress of the CPGB, February 1948.

⁶⁰ Daily Worker, March 1, 1948; MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", April 2, 1948; MGA, CHRON. I, 'Execution Campaign, 1948'.

⁶¹ MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", April 2, 1948; Daily Worker, March 29, 1948.

Distributive and Allied Workers, in Blackpool, adopted a resolution declaring that British trade unionists were appalled at the "terror and barbarity" in Greece and calling for the immediate release of imprisoned Greek trade union leaders.⁶²

On April 17, another "Quit Greece" conference was held by the LDG at Beaver Hall. It was attended by 206 delegates from 8 national, 46 district and 109 local organisations with a membership of over a million. The chairman of the conference, Harry Adams, president of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trades Workers, told his audience that since trade union leaders and members of the British government were reluctant to take any action to remedy the situation in Greece, rank and file members of organisations should take up the issue. The next speaker, Solley, declared that he was proud of those Greeks who believed in freedom and fought for it and ashamed of those in his Party who defended the reactionary Greek government. Lewis Austin, another Labour MP, said that the Labour Party should be holding a demonstration on Greece at Albert Hall and not leaving it to a small organisation like the League. Papworth urged that more should be done to show the British people their responsibility for the Greek situation. The Rev. Stanley Evans, chairman of the Anglo-Soviet Society, moved a resolution of protest, unanimously

⁶²MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", April 2, 1948; Daily Worker, March 31, 1948.

adopted, against the death sentence on Beata Kitsikis, wife of Professor Kitsikis, president of the Greek-Soviet Society.⁶³ The conference itself adopted a resolution calling upon British people and organisations to campaign for the immediate withdrawal of British troops and missions from Greece and the ending of all foreign intervention; the ending of the political executions; the restoration of trade union freedom and release of the exiles; the sending of supplies to the exiles and all those striving to establish democracy in Greece; and for the international Red Cross to intervene to secure the human treatment of prisoners and exiles.⁶⁴

On May 1, Eustratios Moutsoyannis, allegedly a member of OPLA, the communist police organisation, murdered the Greek justice minister Ladas. Immediately

⁶³ Beata Kitsikis was arrested in February 1948 and on April 10 she was sentenced to death by a Greek military tribunal. In mid-April, a telegram protesting against the death sentence imposed on her was sent to the Greek Ambassador in London signed by 200 leading members of the British Labour movement. A week later, in a letter to The Times, Charles Trevelyan, president of the Society for Cultural Relations between the Peoples of the British Commonwealth and the USSR, and its chairman, D.N.Pritt, draw the attention of the paper's readers to this recent example of "draconian measures" taken by the Greek government "against prisoners and suspects". Other protests came from the women's committee of the Anglo-Soviet Society, local trade unions, and individuals. Daily Worker, April 19, 24, 1948; The Times, April 22, 1948. Finally, Beata Kitsikis was granted a pardon by Queen Frederica and was not executed.

⁶⁴ MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", April 23, 1948; MGA, CHRON.I, "Quit Greece Campaign, 1947-48"; Daily Worker, April 19, 1948.

the Greek government, with American approval,⁶⁵ ordered the mass execution of 2,961 resistance fighters who in early 1945 had been sentenced to death for alleged civil crimes prior and during the December 1944 upheaval. Within a few days more than 250 were executed. The excuse given by Greek officials in Athens was that these executions had been agreed to by the cabinet before the death of Ladas and that they had no connection with the latter's assassination.⁶⁶

The executions aroused worldwide protests. The French, Danish and Norwegian governments made representations to the Greek government expressing the concern of their peoples at the recent developments in Greece and requesting information concerning them. The Soviet government expressed its indignation at the "mass executions of Greek democrats". Churchill complained to Queen Frederica and the Foreign Office instructed Clifford Norton to convey the British government's opinion to the Greek government in the strongest terms.⁶⁷

The massacre of Greek democrats provoked in Britain a reaction of public opinion unknown since the end of the war. From the press, the political parties, the universities, the co-operative movement, the unions, the factories, the workshops, from every walk of life, protests flew to the British and Greek governments.

⁶⁵ See Wittner, American Intervention, pp.145-8.

⁶⁶ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-48, pp.9342-3.

⁶⁷ Ibid.; Wittner, American Intervention, p.146; Sulzberger, A Long Row of Candles (London, 1969), p.354.

The press took a strong position against the executions in Greece. The Times stated that the execution of communists long held in prison had harmed the Greek government's cause in Western eyes.⁶⁸ The Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph which rarely criticised the Greek government admitted that the executions looked "more like vengeance than punishment".⁶⁹ The Manchester Guardian commented that "the Greek government's decision to execute 151 communist prisoners by way of reprisal fills one with shame and dismay."⁷⁰ The Daily Herald declared that if the Greek government persisted in these practices it would deeply shock world opinion and further harm the prospects of unity at home.⁷¹ An unsigned article in Tribune stated that Bevin had missed his chance in Greece and his failure "would go down in history as one of the blackest chapters in the annals of the Labour government".⁷² The Daily Worker editorially condemned the "Murderers in Athens", reminding its readers that these men "own their power to British support, they are propped up by British troops and rely upon American dollars."⁷³

On May 5, in the course of a debate on foreign

⁶⁸The Times, May 6, 1948, "Greek executions".

⁶⁹Daily Mail, May 7, 1948, "Stop the Blood"; Daily Telegraph, May 7, 1948, "Advice to Greece".

⁷⁰Manchester Guardian, May 6, 1948, "Revenge".

⁷¹Daily Herald, May 7, 1948, "Why more killing?"

⁷²Tribune, May 14, 1948, "The Greek Moloch".

⁷³Daily Worker, May 5, 1948, "Murderers in Athens".

affairs in the House of Commons, Zilliacus pointed out that the result of Bevin's policy of anti-Communism was "to restore in Greece a corrupt, violent, bloody and horrible dictatorship of the very fascists and quislings that we fought the war to put down". Astonishingly, Mayhew, in his reply, expressed little sorrow for the oppression and injustice in Greece and claimed that the communists had no moral standing for criticising the Greek government.⁷⁴ To the distress of Mayhew and other British officials, public opinion did not coincide with their own. On the same day (May 5) the Tobacco Workers' Union from their Reading headquarters cabled the British and Greek Prime Ministers registering their protest and calling for an immediate cancellation of all death sentences, and the Constructional Engineers' Union wrote to Clifford Norton asking for intervention to save the Greek democrats. L.C.White, Lawther and Stanley also sent cables of protest to Bevin and Sofoulis. The NCCL issued a statement calling "on the British government to intervene to prevent the further threatened mass executions and to ensure that the presence of British troops is not used to defend a travesty of justice which is alien to every decent standard of humanity."⁷⁵

On May 6, hundreds of East Londoners along with entire factory committees went to Parliament to tell

⁷⁴Hansard, vol.450, May 5, 1948, cols 1329, 1390-1.

⁷⁵MGA PM/52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", May 7, 1948; NCCL archive, Hull University, DCL 58/2; Daily Worker, May 6, 1948.

their MPs what they thought of Bevin's policy in Greece. Later most of the deputations visited the Greek Embassy, where an official refused to let them in. They stayed there for some time, shouting "stop the murderers in Greece" and "release the resistance fighters".⁷⁶ The next day the London Trades Council representing 750,000 workers sent letters to the Greek government and the Greek Ambassador in London condemning the executions, and representatives of over 100,000 South Wales miners meeting at their annual conference in Cardiff called for an end to "the horrible death-dealing machine" and appointed a deputation to protest to the city's Greek consul.⁷⁷ On May 8-9, protest meetings took place in several British cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. In London, thousands of people attended a meeting at Montague Place addressed by Harry Pollitt, Papworth and Doganis.⁷⁸

The LDG issued the following statement:

"When we remember the clamour that has arisen over single executions in other countries since 1944, it is surely time that progressive people in this country called for an ending of the mass slaughter for which the Athens authorities still supported by the British and American governments are responsible."

Appended to this statement were the signatures of Harry Adams, H.N.Brailsford, Maurice Dobb, Stanley

⁷⁶Daily Worker, May 7, 1948.

⁷⁷Ibid., May 8, 1948.

⁷⁸Ibid., May 10, 1948.

Evans, Professor B.Farrington, Professor J.B.S.Haldane, Will Lawther, John Mavrogordato, D.N.Pritt, Hannen Swaffer, Professor George Thomson, T.E.M.McKitterick, Lord Strabolgi and L.C.White.⁷⁹

In the House of Commons, however, Labour front-benchers still insisted on whitewashing the shootings in Greece. Replying to questions by George Chetwynd, Major Bing, Blackburn, and Piratin, McNeil asserted that the reports of mass executions were "misleading" and declared that it was quite unjustifiable to call them "judicial murders...the figures...do not add up to that." This cynical statement infuriated Ronald Chamberlain who asked the government to consider withdrawing all financial and military assistance from Greece.⁸⁰ Maurice Edelman commented in the New Statesman that McNeil "had left the Labour benches in no doubt that what had taken place in Greece was a Balkan butchery."⁸¹

The men in charge of British foreign policy also heard some bitter truths at the Labour Party conference when, on May 20, delegate Kenneth Glyn from the St.Pancras South-West DLP moved a resolution asking the British government to cease supporting continued military intervention in Greece and demanding that Bevin's "repeated pledges to withdraw our troops completely from

⁷⁹ Ibid., May 11, 1948; The Times, May 11, 1948.

⁸⁰ Hansard, vol.450, May 10, 1948, cols 1718-21.

⁸¹ New Statesman, May 15, 1948.

Greece be carried out without fail within the next three months." Supporting the resolution, R.Haines, an ex-officer who had taken part in the 1944 December events in Greece, confessed his shame because the Labour government had, by its "negative" policy, "so completely disillusioned" the progressive forces of Greece. T.E.McKitterick, chairman of the St.George's (Westminster) DLP and a member of the LDG's Executive-Committee, spoke of the recent executions in Greece and urged the government and the Labour movement to "insist on the withdrawal of our troops immediately, so that we, as a movement, may wipe this bloody stain from our conscience." The resolution was finally defeated in favour of the adoption of a report from the NEC, embodying a rather timidly worded resolution:

"The National Executive Committee of the Labour Party condemns the horrors being perpetrated in Greece in raiding villages, killing non-combatants, abducting children and rendering homeless peaceful citizens. The Committee has noted with approval that His Majesty's Government have made representations to the Greek Government regarding the recent executions in Greece, expresses its abhorrence of reprisal measures, and calls upon the Greek Government in spite of all provocation not to resort to any but legal measures. The Committee therefore calls upon all sections of democratic and socialist opinion in Greece to condemn the resort to civil war by minorities and the use, as political weapons, of assassination, the taking of hostages, wholesale executions by way of reprisals and all other terrorist methods."⁸²

⁸²Labour Party Annual Conference, 1948, pp.189-90, 192-3, 198-9.

In the following days the voices of other trade unions were added to the rising tide of protests. The Electrical Trades Union, the Association of Scientific Workers, the Association of Building Technicians, the National Union of Railwaymen, and a special delegate meeting of the USDAW passed resolutions condemning the executions. At its monthly meeting (May 26) the National Council of the TUC also recorded its "emphatic protest".⁸³

The LDG was in the forefront of the campaign against the executions. It held many meetings all over Britain, encouraged MPs to ask questions in the Commons and political and trade union organisations to send letters of protest to the Greek and British governments, and organised a three-day (May 25-27) parliamentary lobbying programme: representatives of thousands of workers met their MPs and expressed the rank and file's deep concern over the atrocities of the Greek government. Thanks to this campaign and the response in Britain and elsewhere all 2,961 members of the resistance except the 250 who were executed soon after Ladas' murder were reprieved.

III. Greece from June 1948 to October 1949

An issue that was given particular publicity in Britain in mid-1948 was the evacuation of Greek

⁸³Daily Worker, May 14-28, 1948.

children. In March 1948, a Balkan Youth Conference, meeting in Belgrade, decided that children between the ages of three and fourteen years living in "Free Greece" should be taken away to the countries of Eastern Europe to escape bombardment and to preserve them from starvation during the period of scarcity resulted from the government-imposed blockade on all food supplies to guerrilla-held territory. This evacuation scheme, corresponding in its aims to the evacuation of Spanish republican children after 1936 and of British children to Canada and the United States during the Second World War met with cries of boundless indignation in Greece and abroad.

In Athens the evacuation of children was characterised as "paedomazoma" and "creation of Janissaries".⁸⁴ The government reacted by approving an emergency plan for the removal of children from guerrilla-threatened areas to southern Greece to save them from "abduction".⁸⁵ Tsaldaris sent a message to Trygve Lie charging that "totalitarian communism" was carrying out "a diabolical

⁸⁴The term "Janissaries" derives from the Turkish "yenicheri" or "new force". "Paedomazoma" means "the gathering up of children". Janissaries were a body of Turkish infantry, constituting the Sultan's personal guard and the main part of the standing army. This body was first organised in the 14th century and was composed mainly by forcibly recruited Christian youths between the age of ten and twenty.

⁸⁵The Times, March 10, 1948. Eventually about 20,000 children were evacuated from rebel territory and transferred to "children's towns" in southern Greece. Queen Frederica of the Hellenes, A Measure of Understanding (London, 1971), p.135.

international conspiracy to kidnap tens of thousands of Greek children", and Queen Frederica called on all Greeks to join in an effort to "get the children before the communists did".⁸⁶ December 29, 1949 was observed throughout Greece as a national day of mourning: all citizens were asked to keep the shutters of their houses and shops closed for half an hour, special services were held in the churches, and all newspapers appeared with black mourning borders.⁸⁷

Britain joined the Greek government in turning the issue into useful anti-Communist propaganda. At the 1948 Labour Party conference Bevin condemned the practice of "kidnapping children" and, a month later, the government issued a statement calling on the countries of eastern Europe to return the children because their protracted retention in those countries was "contrary to the accepted moral standards of international conduct."⁸⁸ In the House of Commons, two conservative MPs, Henry Strauss and Charles Mott-Radclyffe raised the issue and asked for the immediate return of the children to their parents.⁸⁹ At the same

⁸⁶ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-48, p.9342; United Nations Bulletin, vol.4, 1948, p.344; Queen Frederica of the Hellenes, A Measure of Understanding, p.137.

⁸⁷ The Times, December 29, 1949.

⁸⁸ Labour Party Annual Conference, 1948, p.139; Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1948-50, p.9605.

⁸⁹ Hansard, vol.453, July 14, 1948, col.1175. Parliamentary questions on the issue were also asked on July 26, 1948 (vol.454, cols 908-9), June 1, 1949 (vol. 465, cols 2091-2), June 27 (vol.466, cols 754-6), July 20 (vol.467, cols 1356-7) and November 16 (vol.469, col.

time, officials in the Greek government Department of Information in London and well-known British conservatives began to bombard the press with letters claiming that Marcos had contrived a plan to transform innocent Greek children into bloodthirsty Reds.⁹⁰ In November 1948, the Duchess of Kent, Phillip and Irene Noel-Baker, Woodhouse and many others attended a concert in London organised by Queen Frederica's "Fund for Greek refugee children", and in March 1949 and January 1950 Dr. Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, called for prayers for these children in churches throughout Britain.⁹¹

Official reports, however, suggest that these children were evacuated from Greece under different circumstances and for different reasons. On February 27, 1948, UNSCOB was officially asked to investigate the claim that Greek children were being abducted to the communist countries. After extensive investigation, UNSCOB drew up a special report which was adopted on May 21. Its observation groups found some evidence of coerced removal, but they also found adequate evidence

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⁹⁰Manchester Guardian, June 2 and 11, 1948 (Hourmouziou); Spectator, June 25, 1948 (Pallis), July 30 (Canon R.W.Howard), August 27 and September 10 (Hourmouziou), September 17 (Keith Butler); The Times, April 6, 1949 (London, president of the Anglican and Eastern Churches); May 2 (Woodhouse); Daily Mail, June 13, 1949 (Major F.M.Bennett). See also F.A.Voigt's talk in the Third Programme of the BBC in the Listener of September 27, 1948, Woodhouse's article in the Spectator of October 22, 1948, and Hugu Seton-Watson's article in the Manchester Guardian (November 2, 1948).

⁹¹The Times, November 22, 1948; March 19, 1949; December 30, 1949.

that many of the children particularly in the Slav-speaking area of West Macedonia were taken with the consent of their parents. The report listed three reasons why parents agreed to the evacuation of their children: sympathy with the case of the guerrillas, poverty and lack of schooling, desire to escape the dangers of war.⁹²

When the matter came to the General Assembly of the United Nations in November 1948 a French amendment which would have described the children as having been taken away from Greece without the consent of their parents was supported only by France and Greece. Instead, a resolution was adopted recommending "the return to Greece of Greek children at present away from their homes when the children, their father or mother or, in his or her absence, their closest relative, expresses a wish to that effect."⁹³ In January 1949, the International Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies were requested to arrange the repatriation of the children involved. After visiting several centres in which Greek

⁹²MGA/CIR 12, The Case of Greek Children (1951); MGA, CORRESP.VI, "Union of Democratic Control"; Jones, "The Diplomacy of Restraint...", J.Mod.Gr.St., pp.71-2. It is noteworthy that the UNSCOB observation groups did not include representatives from the communist countries and that during their investigations they were being provided with published material emanating either from the Athens Ministry of Information or from its agencies. More importantly, UNSCOB's conclusions were usually framed by the State Department. MGA, CHRON.I, "Evacuated Children 1948-1955", A.W.Sheppard, The Evacuated Greek Children; Wittner, American Intervention p. 256.

⁹³Yearbook of the United Nations, 1948-9, pp.242, 244.

children were housed, in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia, they sent a report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations dated October 5, 1949, in which they stated that requests had been received for the return of 6,239 children out of 28,000. By the end of 1952, only a few hundred had been repatriated to Greece, all of them from Yugoslavia.⁹⁴

Although UNSCOB observers were unable to enter communist countries, several individuals, including British, received permission to visit homes for the Greek children. Kenneth Matthews visited a Greek children's hostel in the town of Plovdiv, in Bulgaria. 170 children lived there whose age ranged from two to fifteen. They were well looked after and their health record was excellent. They were surrounded entirely by Greeks and all lessons were conducted in their language.⁹⁵ D.N.Pritt and his wife spent some time with more than 350 Greek children at Banki in Bulgaria and at Sadska Lazna in Czechoslovakia. The children were housed in recently reconstructed hotels and they all looked healthy and well cared for. The Greek language was used and there was no attempt at either

⁹⁴Baerentzen (et al.), the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949, pp.145-8. Although repatriation on a small scale got under way in the early 1960s most of the political refugees returned to their homeland after the downfall of the Colonels' dictatorship in 1974.

⁹⁵BBC, WAC, May 30, 1948, nine o'clock news bulletin; Matthews, Memories, pp.180-3. Similar views were also expressed by Homer Bigart in the New York Herald Tribune of July 26, 1948.

indoctrination or denationalisation.⁹⁶ The journalist J.Allan Cash who also went to Banki found that the children "were simply but adequately dressed, very well fed, and cared for by a number of professional nurses."⁹⁷ Charles Ringrose, chairman of the Workers' Music Association Singers, visited Greek refugee children in Budapest and left with the impression that they had everything they desired.⁹⁸

The LDG did what it could to counter the 'paedomazoma' propaganda. It sent letters to the press, organised successful film-shows with Yugoslav and Czech films of Greek children, and published an illustrated folder, The True Story of the Greek Children (1948) and a pamphlet , The Case of the Greek Children (1951). Its position on the issue was that the evacuation was a "vast humanitarian enterprise aimed at saving thousands of helpless children's lives" from war, cold and starvation. In some cases, especially in "hostile" villages, Democratic Army recruiters and over-enthusiastic teachers might have used very intensive persuasion, but generally speaking, most of the children had been removed with the consent of their fathers who were members of the guerrilla army.⁹⁹ In Britain, allegations

⁹⁶ Marie Pritt's letter to the Spectator (October 1, 1948); Pritt, Brasshats and Bureaucrats, pp.212-4.

⁹⁷ Manchester Guardian, January 17, 1950.

⁹⁸ Ibid., January 4, 1950.

⁹⁹ For letters in the press see: Manchester Guardian, May 27, 1948 (J.Mavrogordatos), June 5 (Lambrides); Spectator, August 20, 1948 (Lambrides), September 3 and

of "child abduction" made very little impression on public opinion. This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the British people themselves had experienced the need to evacuate children from danger areas during the Second World War.¹⁰⁰

In April 1948, the Greek National Army (GNA), stiffened in morale and equipment by American aid and the tough exhortations of General Van Fleet, began its spring offensive against 2,500 guerrilla fighters in south-central Greece. By mid-May the region had been cleared and the GNA was preparing to proceed toward the guerrilla stronghold to the north. Marcos and the communist leaders were in an extremely desperate position. Their forces had suffered grave losses in recent months, their government had not been recognised and promises of assistance from the eastern Bloc had not materialised. Moreover, Tito, their main ally and

17 (P.Sloan), October 1 (Marie Pritt); New Statesman, February 18, 1950 (Athanasoglou). MGA/CIR 12; Pym and Sarafis, "The League for Democracy in Greece and its Archives", J.Hel.Diasp., vol.11 (summer 1984), p.78. According to Helle Lambrides (letter to the Spectator, August 20, 1948), the LDG received scores of letters from British citizens who would gladly have Greek children share their homes, but the Foreign Office refused to allow these children to be brought over in Britain.

¹⁰⁰Letter to the author from Marion Sarafis, June 3, 1992; for the case of Greek children see also Chiclet, "The Greek civil war 1946-1949" in Sarafis and Eve(eds), Background to Contemporary Greece, pp.213-4 and the article of Kenneth Spencer, observer with the UN Commission in Greece, in the New Statesman of January, 14, 1950.

supporter of their cause, was already in bitter dispute with Moscow.

On May 31, Marcos announced that his government was ready to discuss proposals for the pacification of Greece provided the "democratic" life of the people was unreservedly secured and the country's independence was "insured without any foreign interference."¹⁰¹ The Greek government and American officials decisively rejected the offer. Sofoulis declared that the Greek government had made an amnesty offer last September but it had received little response from the rebels. Now the state would use all its strength to end the struggle.¹⁰² Karl Rankin, the US chargé d'affaires in Athens, hoped that the State Department would not consider the Marcos proposals because "it would be fatal if we were to show any sign of wavering...it is essential in our view that first phase of this campaign be terminated by crushing defeat of bandit forces and not through appeasement or conciliation". Criswold also believed that "there should be no contact between the Greek government and the 'Marcos Government' bilaterally or on an international political level."¹⁰³

The LDG welcomed the offer describing it as "the

¹⁰¹FRUS, 1948, vol.4, pp.100-1; Marcos made further conciliatory statements on June 2 and July 14, 1948. For the text of these statements see Documents on International Affairs, 1947-1948 (London 1952), pp.324-6.

¹⁰²Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-48, p.9342; The Times, June 2, 1948.

¹⁰³FRUS, 1948, vol.4, pp.101-2, 105-8.

most hopeful feature in the present situation" offering once more "the possibility of a peaceful and democratic solution to the tragic problem of Greece."¹⁰⁴ On June 4, it asked Bevin to receive a deputation to discuss Marcos' terms for a settlement in Greece. The proposed delegation consisted of Compton Mackenzie, Swaffer, Belcher, McKitterick, Pritt, Sheppard, Stanley, and W.A. Wooster of the Association of Scientific Workers. Bevin replied to the effect that he saw no purpose in receiving the deputation, but in response to a second letter urging a reconsideration of his decision he invited the LDG's Executive-Committee to submit its views in writing. The LDG sent him a memorandum in which it urged the British government to call for negotiations between the two Greek rival sides. Bevin, however, ruled out mediation in Greece. In his reply received by the LDG on August 13, he pointed out that assistance to Greece by her northern neighbours should end and the cessation of this support should precede any possibility of a settlement. As for the guerrillas' announcements, they "contained no concrete proposal and much vituperative abuse of the democratically elected and internationally recognised government of Greece, with whom the rebel leaders profess a desire to negotiate."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ MGA, PM/52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", June 4, 1948.

¹⁰⁵ MGA, CORRESP.II "Foreign Office". The British press regarded the Marcos announcement of May 31 as a sign of

Marcos did not give up his efforts at reconciliation and, in mid-October, addressed a memorandum to the United Nations declaring his Government's willingness to accept any initiative aiming at a democratic peace and the end of foreign intervention.¹⁰⁶ When the situation in Greece came up for discussion in the Political Committee of the General Assembly (Oct.25), a Yugoslav proposal that the Marcos government should be invited to send a representative was rejected by forty-five votes to six with two abstentions. After more than two weeks' debate the Political Committee adopted by forty-eight votes to six a strongly-worded resolution presented jointly by Britain, the United States, France, and China, upholding the findings of UNSCOB and calling on Greece's northern neighbours to cease their intervention in the internal affairs of Greece. It also carried a resolution moved by the Australian delegate, Colonel Hodgson, empowering the president of the Assembly, Herbert Evatt, to convene immediate Balkan talks in Paris for the purpose of seeking a solution of the Greek conflict.¹⁰⁷

The significance of these developments in the United Nations was not lost on the British press. The Times and the Manchester Guardian expressed the hope

weakness. See, for example, The Times, June 2, 1948; Economist, June 5, 1948; Spectator, June 11, 1948.

¹⁰⁶MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", October 22, 1948.

¹⁰⁷MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", November 5, 1948; FRUS, 1948, vol.4, pp.277-8; Campbell, "The Greek Civil War", p.58.

that the representatives of Greece and her northern neighbours, uninfluenced by the Great Powers, would succeed in reaching some agreement.¹⁰⁸ The Daily Telegraph and the Spectator, however, feared that there was not the slightest possibility of reconciliation in Greece and that the Balkans talks would eventually lead to nothing.¹⁰⁹ The Economist believed that the discussions in the General Assembly would "leave the Greek question where it was left last year." Only an international force working under the authority of the United Nations and an intelligent political warfare by the Western Powers in the northern Balkans, and especially in Yugoslavia, could put an end to the civil war in Greece.¹¹⁰ The New Statesman commented that Colonel Hodgson was "surely right in urging that the contestants should be persuaded to sit down together and seek a settlement in which ideological self-righteousness gives place to a concern for the Greek people."¹¹¹

On November 26, a declaration of policy on Greece, sponsored by the UDC and signed by 108 leading British personalities, including seventy-five MPs, all but two being members of the Labour Party, and five Labour Lords, was sent to Attlee and Bevin. The declaration

¹⁰⁸ The Times, November 1 and 11, 1948; Manchester Guardian, November 12, 1948.

¹⁰⁹ Daily Telegraph, November 13, 1948; Spectator, November 12, 1948.

¹¹⁰ Economist, November 13, 1948.

¹¹¹ New Statesman, November 20, 1948.

took the form of a request to the British government to propose in the United Nations the dispatch of a mediator or a mediating commission to Greece with a view to securing an armistice in the civil war and bringing about the formation of a government in Athens willing and able to reconcile the forces in conflict. The declaration pointed out that the time was opportune for such a move, in view of the influential support that had been given to the peace talks between Greece and her northern neighbours initiated by Evatt.¹¹² The British government, however, unhesitatingly turned down the request on the ground that the Charter of the United Nations precluded interference in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of any state. Confronted with British as well American apathy and indifference, Evatt failed to secure the agreement of Greece to a proposal for recognition of the existing Greek-Albanian frontier, although some progress was made, especially as to the possible establishment of mixed frontier commissions and the drafting of frontier conventions.¹¹³

Evatt was more successful in his attempt to save

¹¹²UDC Archive, Hull University, DDC 5/401; The Times, December 1, 1948.

¹¹³Hansard, vol.459, December 6, 1948, col.23; Campbell, "The Greek Civil War", p.58; Howard, "Greece and its Balkan Neighbors (1948-1949)", Balkan Studies, vol.7 (1966), pp.4-8. Evatt was unpopular both in London and Washington. British and American officials were particularly disturbed by his attempts to mediate over Greece and Berlin and so weaken the West's position in these strategically important areas. See Wittner, American Intervention, pp.257, and 395 n.6; Bullock, Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary 1945-51, p.676.

the lives of ten Greek trade unionists, members of the FGMU, who had been condemned to death on November 4, 1948, including Ambatielos, Bekakos, and Galatis, secretary of the FGMU in Alexandria and editor of the seamen's paper Naftergatiki Foni (Seamen's Voice). After a particularly scandalous trial, they were found guilty of assisting the rebellion against the state by sending money and recruits to the insurgents.¹¹⁴ On November 7, the day before the sentences were due to be carried out, Evatt sent a telegram from Paris to King Paul and Sofoulis asking them to suspend the death sentences passed on the seamen's leaders. The same evening, it was announced in Athens that the executions had been postponed until the "Council of Mercy" had examined individual cases.¹¹⁵

The news of the death sentences smashed through to the headlines and shocked the conscience of the world. In the United States, the State Department received within a few days more than 150 messages of protest from

¹¹⁴The trial was not properly conducted: the defence lawyers had only two opportunities collectively to study a single copy of the 57-page long indictment; during the trial the presiding judge Mahairas constantly asked witnesses and accused whether they were communists; four days of the trial were occupied by four prosecution witnesses whereas the twenty defence witnesses were given only three hours in which to present their case. It is noteworthy that the Greek government refused to grant a visa to the Haldane Society, the organ of socialist lawyers, to send a legal observer on the ground that the visit had been planned at the instigation of the LDG. MGA, CHRON.I "Seamen's Trial, 1948-49".

¹¹⁵Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1948-50, p.9619; MGA, CHRON.I "Seamen's Trial 1948-49".

trade unions and individuals.¹¹⁶ In Britain, a campaign for the suspension of the sentences was launched by the LDG, MPs, and trade unionists.

Shortly after the pronouncement of the verdict in Athens, the LDG published a pamphlet entitled They shall Not Die which became another two-edition "best-seller". It consisted of a series of letters on the trial written by Betty Ambatielos, and had a brief preface by D.N.Pritt.¹¹⁷ On November 3, a number of MPs pressed Bevin to answer questions about the trial. Benn Levy asked him whether he had received any reports from his representatives instructed to observe the conduct of the trial. Initially, Bevin denied that any British representative had been instructed to attend, but when Levy persisted he was forced to admit that he was expecting a report from the Ambassador in Greece. After a brief interchange between the Speaker and John Rankin and a question from Sidney Silverman about the government's lack of interest in the Greek executions, Gallacher joined in demanding a strong reply from Bevin about the observers' reports. The Speaker then ruled him out of order and closed the discussion declaring that "a trial in another country had nothing to do with us."¹¹⁸

Two days later Driberg raised the matter on a point of order, disclosing that he had attempted to ask a

¹¹⁶Wittner, American Intervention, p.389 n.91.

¹¹⁷MGA/CIR 12.

¹¹⁸Hansard, vol.457, November 3, 1948, cols 851-3.

private notice question to Bevin, but the Speaker adhered to his ruling that this was out of order. Driberg was supported by Pritt and Solley who argued that the Foreign Office should answer the questions because Greece was virtually governed by Anglo-American troops and missions. The Speaker refused to allow the question, but as the business of the House finished earlier than had been expected, it became possible for some MPs to raise the matter on the adjournment.¹¹⁹

When Solley opened the debate only ten Members were present, one conservative, eight Labour, and one communist, most of them having gone away for the weekend, and no representative of the Foreign Office was there to reply.¹²⁰ Solley pointed out that the House and the government were morally and politically responsible for what was happening in Greece. The seamen's trial was a disgrace to any conception of justice. The next speaker, Piratin, regretted that both Bevin and Mayhew had refused to take any action to save the Greek trade unionists and reminded the House of the resolution moved at the 1948 TUC conference urging the restoration of democratic rights in Greece. Zilliacus said that the reason for the death sentences was political; it had nothing to do with justice. One little word from the Foreign Secretary would suffice to stop "this bloody murder". Lester Hutchinson supported the other speakers

¹¹⁹ Ibid., November 5, 1948, cols 1135-7.

¹²⁰ Manchester Guardian, November 6, 1948.

and concluded:

"I am also surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for King's Norton (Mr. Blackburn) is also absent, because he was very concerned about the execution of the late Mr. Petkov and made a great deal of fuss about it. But where is he today, when 10 trade unionists are being done to death? Where, in fact, are all the trade union members of our party today? It is scandalous that there is no representative of the Foreign Office to listen to our protests."¹²¹

Although the House and the lobbies were almost deserted, within a few hours twenty-two MPs had signed a telegram to King Paul begging him to exercise Royal clemency and relieve the trade unionists. On November 7, a similar telegram was sent to King Paul on behalf of a number of leading British personalities such as Lord Faringdon, H.N. Brailsford, the professors George Thomson, B. Farrington, and John A. Ryle, the writers Jack Lindsay and Pamela Hansford Johnson, the artist Leslie Hurry.¹²²

The trade union movement played a crucial part in this campaign. Between November 5 and 8, a deluge of messages, telegrams, letters and resolutions from workers, trade union leaders, trades councils, trade union branches and national unions fell upon the Foreign Office and the Greek Embassy in London. On November 7, a deputation of London trade unionists, accompanied by about 100 supporters visited the Greek Embassy to

¹²¹Ibid., cols 1230-40.

¹²²MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1947-48", November 12, 1948; MGA, CHRON.I "Seamen's Trial, 1948-49"; Daily Worker, November 9, 1948.

protest against the sentences. They found it closed and their written protest was put through the letter box. Then they walked to Grosvenor Square where Papworth, L.C.White and Betty Harrison, organiser of the Tobacco Workers' Union, addressed the crowd.¹²³ On November 15, L.C.White, Papworth, Stanley, John Elton, president of the Haldane Society, H.N.Brailsford, Warbey, Pritt and Sheppard addressed a meeting at Caxton Hall. A resolution was passed demanding the reprieve of the condemned Greek trade unionists and the implementation of the recommendations of the British all-party parliamentary delegation to Greece.¹²⁴ On December 18, delegates representing over 40,000 members of working-class organisations in South Wales, meeting in Cardiff, demanded the release of the Greek trade union leaders and the withdrawal of British troops from the country. The conference was held by the LDG and George Thomas was in the chair.¹²⁵

Early in 1949, the Greek government decided to bring to trial three of the men who had already been sentenced to death, Ambatielos, Bekakos, and Timoyiannakis, on the "fresh charges" that they organised communist self-defence units to carry out acts of terrorism and raise

¹²³For protests see the Daily Worker, November 6, 8, 9, and 10, 1948; The Times, November 8, 1948, and Daily Worker, November 9, 1948.

¹²⁴MGA/PM 52 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1948-49", November 19, 1948; Daily Worker, November 13 and 16, 1948.

¹²⁵Daily Worker, December 20, 1948.

money and recruits for the rebels. News of their impending re-trial caused another wave of protest in Britain. The LDG sent a cable to Evatt urging him "to intervene to stop horrible cat-and-mouse game with these condemned men and secure definite reprieve."¹²⁶ The UDC organised a well-attended London meeting. Its main speaker, Seymour Cocks, said that he found the fact that men already condemned to death were to be re-tried "an abomination against which all civilised people should protest." The least Bevin could do was to see that those trials were not continued. A policy of mediation should be adopted but this would mean "a complete reversal of British foreign policy - a policy which has ended in failure and despair in Athens." The meeting passed a resolution protesting at the decision to re-try the three trade unionists and calling for the formation of a new government "pledged to social and economic reform and a policy of reconciliation, aimed at bringing the civil war to an end by peaceful means." Copies of this resolution were sent to the Foreign Office and the Greek Ambassador in London.¹²⁷ In the House of Commons, Cocks, Warbey and Sidney Silverman, drafted a letter to be sent to Sofoulis, expressing their dismay at the re-trial of the three trade unionists and urging the Greek government to withdraw the charges against them and to

¹²⁶MGA/PM 53 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1949-50", January 28, 1949.

¹²⁷Ibid., February 4, 1949.

grant reprieve to all ten of the condemned. The letter was signed by fifty-seven MPs.¹²⁸ Finally, in February 1949, the public prosecutor declared that the charges were not fresh and Ambatielos and Bekakos were acquitted. Timoyiannakis, however, was again sentenced to death.

Not surprisingly, the TUC leadership who shared the anti-Communist goals of the Labour leaders opposed the campaign on the Greek seamen. In spring 1949, it published a booklet entitled What the TUC is doing. The section dealing with "The situation in Greece" maintained that the FGMU had been declared illegal because it was a communist controlled organisation that aimed to undermine the security of the state and that the trials of its leaders had been conducted with all the usual safeguards of justice. The FGMU responded by addressing a letter to the TUC, protesting against the allegations and inaccuracies contained in the booklet. The letter stressed that the seamen's union had been outlawed not because it was communist, but because "its trade union activity was and continues to be for the benefit of the seamen attacked by the Greek shipowners who are supported by the Athens regime and the government-sponsored Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation."¹²⁹

While the civil war was entering its last phase,

¹²⁸ Ibid., February 11, 1949; Daily Worker, February 10 and 11, 1949.

¹²⁹ MGA, INFO. XIV 'Trade Unions, 1947-49'.

Greeks of almost all political parties indicated their desire to put an end to the conflict. Liberals, socialists and independents, of such standing as John Sofianopoulos, General Plastiras, and the representatives of the ELD asked for mediation of the Great Powers, or of the United Nations, so as to arrange an armistice and to prepare conditions for a general election which should give the country a new government.¹³⁰ On April 21, the spokesmen of the guerrillas announced in a radio broadcast from Bucharest that the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece was willing to negotiate cease-fire terms and that it would welcome UN mediation. Miltiades Porphyrogenis, who served as "Minister of Justice", offered to go to New York to assist in the conciliatory effort.¹³¹

These proposals received the backing of the head of the Soviet UN delegation, Andrei Gromyko. During the course of unofficial discussions at Lake Success with Hector McNeil and Dean Rust, the Assistant Secretary of State for UN Affairs, in April-May 1949, Gromyko

¹³⁰In an interview with Alexander Werth of the Manchester Guardian (May 26), John Sofianopoulos pointed out that international mediation was the only alternative to anarchy in Greece. General Plastiras supported the formation of a Center government which would proclaim an amnesty and ensure that it was honestly observed, and smooth the way for a new general election. He planned to go to Paris to press his views upon the Foreign Ministers but the authorities in Athens refused to grant him an exit permit. The Times, June 6, 1949; O'Ballance, The Greek Civil War, 1946-1949, p.191.

¹³¹FRUS, 1949, vol.6, p.305; Howard, "Greece and its Balkan neighbors (1948-1949)", Balkan Studies, vol.7 (1966), pp.10-3.

suggested that the three Powers should agree jointly to influence the two sides in Greece to make peace on the basis of the Greek guerrillas' peace declaration.¹³²

The unexpected Soviet mediating intervention occupied considerable space in the editorial columns of the British press. Most of the publications doubted the sincerity of the Soviet peace offer. They believed that the tide was running in favour of the Greek government and that the Soviet objective was to undermine the morale of the Greek army by pressing for peace talks and obtaining a promise of premature withdrawal of western support from Greece.

The Times described the Soviet terms as "a Trojan horse in its twentieth-century form." The newspaper believed that the Soviets did not genuinely desire to collaborate with the West on the Greek question. The proposal that the Greek government should be superseded for the purposes of new elections, by an authority in which the guerrillas would be represented was inadmissible. Other proposals, however, deserved to be

¹³²FRUS, 1949, vol.6, pp.301-9, 320-1; Bullock, Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary, p.680; Wittner, American Intervention, pp.275-7; Howard, "Greece and its Balkan neighbors (1948-1949)", Balkan Studies, vol.7 (1966), pp.12-3. In addition to the guerrilla proposals (cease fire, general amnesty and new elections in the administration of which the guerrilla forces would participate), Gromyko presented the following points: first, the Soviet Union would be willing to participate with the Great Powers in the supervision of a new Greek election; second, the Soviet Union would be willing to join with the Great Powers in a commission to "control" the northern frontier of Greece; and third, all foreign military assistance, both material and personnel, would have to be withdrawn from Greece.

considered:

"While the Soviet terms have to be rejected as a whole, and while there can be no thought of bringing the rebel leaders back into political partnership, the Government and the western powers might well think that there are some points in the terms- such as the suggestions for supervised elections and for a watch on the frontiers- which might be more carefully examined. As military successes increase it becomes the more important that the Greek government should show beyond all doubt that there is a place in Greek life for those disillusioned by the rebel cause."¹³³

The Daily Telegraph suspected that the Soviet offer had "been inspired by the realisation that it would be impossible to take over Greece by direct action, and that new tactics were required."¹³⁴ The Manchester Guardian commented that if the Soviets really desired peace in the Balkans they should exert pressure upon Greece's northern neighbours to cease offering military assistance to the rebels.¹³⁵ The Economist claimed that the peace proposals should be rejected because otherwise "they would only increase the chaos by undermining the Greek government's confidence and confusing still further the mind of the Greek people."¹³⁶ Tribune, however, thought it would be "criminal" if "even the smallest chance of early peace" was neglected.¹³⁷ The New Statesman also felt

¹³³ The Times, June 9, 1949.

¹³⁴ Daily Telegraph, May 21, 1949. Other conservative publications such as the Spectator (May 27) and the Time and Tide (May 28) also took a strong stand against mediation.

¹³⁵ Manchester Guardian, May 21, 1949.

¹³⁶ Economist, May 28, 1949.

¹³⁷ Tribune, May 27, 1949.

that the western powers should seize the opportunity and take the steps that might lead to a permanent peace in Greece:

"The only saving thing that the Western Powers can now do is to cap their long and regrettable interference in Greek affairs by one more act of interference- by supporting mediation through the United Nations or some other qualified body."¹³⁸

As in November 1948, the LDG, this time with the cooperation of the UDC, initiated action toward making mediation in Greece a part of British policy. On May 13, seventy-four distinguished people of progressive views, including fifty MPs, signed a statement circulated by the UDC appealing to the Labour leaders "to endorse in the UN the proposal which was conveyed to Dr. Evatt that the UN should now seek means to end the civil war in Greece and to facilitate free elections which the UN should then supervise." A few weeks later, another letter, also circulated by the UDC and supported by many MPs, was sent to Bevin asking him to bring up the question of UN mediation at the Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers.¹³⁹

To these requests Bevin replied that he could not "intervene in the internal affairs of Greece."¹⁴⁰ With still no move towards restoration of peace by the

¹³⁸ New Statesman, May 28, 1949.

¹³⁹ UDC Archive, Hull University, DDC 4/33; MGA, PM/53 "Weekly Survey of Greek News 1949-1950", May 20 and June 10, 1949; Daily Worker, May 14, 1949.

¹⁴⁰ UDC Archive, Hull University, DDC 4/33.

British government, the Executive-Committee of the LDG, meeting in London on July 6, passed a resolution welcoming the various initiatives to promote an immediate end to the civil war in Greece, deploring that these efforts had been rejected by the Greek government, and appealing to the British government to modify its view and to urge the regime in Athens to end the conflict by peace negotiations.¹⁴¹ The British government, however, persisted in turning a deaf ear to all appeals for mediation. The official line apparently was that the Greek government was sovereign in its own country and should be left to work out its own salvation, no matter what the cost in lives and property. "Let the Greek government be master in its own house and allow it to run these elections [those which Greeks in favour of mediation had asked UNO to supervise], or do what it wants to do to clear up its own affairs" Bevin declared at the Labour Party Conference on June 9, 1949.¹⁴²

In the last months of the civil war the LDG turned to its campaign on the Macronisos concentration camps. The camps on Macronisos, a long, bare island a few miles from Lavrio, were organised by the Minister of War, George Stratos, in 1946, with the aim of converting "communist elements" into "good citizens". More than

¹⁴¹MGA, CHRON.I "Seamen's Trial, 1948-49", Greek News, vol.4, no.1 (September 1949).

¹⁴²Labour Party Annual Conference, 1949, p.190.

30,000 persons passed through the gates of these camps from 1946 to 1949, the majority of whom were conscripts of doubtful reliability and peasants who were forcibly evacuated by the army from guerrilla areas and deported to the island "for protection".

Many of the detainees in Macronisos - among them women and old men - experienced appalling hardships. They were deprived of sleep, food and water, they were taken out to work at the mercy of winds and weather until they were exhausted, they were beaten up for hours and repeatedly. Those who resisted "rehabilitation" were severely tortured in the ravines and if they protested against their treatment they were shot. On February 29, 1948, for example, guards fired on detainees who had declared a sit-down strike in protest against the treatment administered to one of their members. The next morning, while detainees were filing along the seashore a heavy machine-gun from a boat opened fire killing and wounding several of them. But for the Macronisos administration it was not enough merely to isolate or destroy objectionable people. It had to crush their will, humiliate them, force them to repudiate their principles and sign a prepared statement of "repentance". Most of the prisoners in the camps could not endure the terror and the humiliating psychological pressure and signed the statement. Some, however, withstood the most refined tortures and did not

sign anything.¹⁴³

The Greek authorities attempted to conceal from domestic and foreign public opinion what was really happening on the island by talking about a "New Parthenon" and by emphasizing the "re-educational miracles" performed in the camps. They also took special pains to ensure favourable comments by foreign visitors. Visas were usually granted only to those who had not much sympathy with the Left; a few days before their arrival, "unrepentants" were removed to the ravines, inmates were instructed how to behave, and conditions in the camps were suddenly improved; on their arrival, they were besieged by officers and members of the special Macronisos police force (alphamites) who undertook to accompany them and guide their inspection.¹⁴⁴

Thus, it is not surprising that several British commentators and intellectuals tried to defend Macronisos. The Athens correspondent of the Daily Mail reported that the whole experiment in Macronisos had been met with "undoubted success". Most communists

¹⁴³For Macronisos see: MGA/CIR 12, I Accuse (1950), a translation of Manolis Proimakis' testimony from the island; Fourtouni, Greek Women in Resistance (New Haven, 1986); Birtles, Exiles in the Aegean (London, 1938); Warner's novel, Men of Stone (London, 1949); Eudes, The Kapetanios, pp.301-2, 315-6, 357-8; Woodhouse, The Struggle for Greece, pp.215-6; Wittner, American Intervention, p.141; Mavroede, "Macronisos Journal", J.Hel. Diasp., vol.5 (Fall 1978), pp.115-28; Margaris, Istoria tis Macronisou [History of Macronisos], 2 vols (Athens, 1966).

¹⁴⁴Mavroede, "Macronisos Journal", J.Hel.Diasp., vol.5 (Fall 1978), pp.115-28.

turned into good nationalists and loyal soldiers through self-instruction and open discussion.¹⁴⁵ Talking about "Greece after nine years of war" in the Home Service of the BBC, Kenneth Lindsay noted that in Macronisos you could hear "one of the best male voice choirs in Europe".¹⁴⁶ F.A.Voigt spent a day at the island "with a Greek friend" and found that conditions in the camps were excellent. The detainees were completing "a model of the Parthenon". They had their own printing press, newspaper, wireless station, choir and orchestra. They had built a theatre and performed two plays a week. They were not subjected to propaganda or indoctrination. A process of a "simple" re-education was practised which resembled that in the English public schools.¹⁴⁷ The distinguished and liberal-minded scholar Steven Runciman visited the island twice and reached the conclusion that "In Macronisos the old spirit is being reborn, vital, eager, and full of faith and hope."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Daily Mail, April 5, 1949.

¹⁴⁶ Listener, July 28, 1949.

¹⁴⁷ Spectator, April 22, 1949. See also Voigt, The Greek Seditious (London, 1949), p.22. F.A.Voigt (1892-1957). Foreign correspondent of the Manchester Guardian (1920-1940) and editor of the Nineteenth Century and After. DNB, 1951-60, pp.1015-6.

¹⁴⁸ Manchester Guardian, August 17, 1949. In a letter to the author (July 29, 1992), Runciman explained that at the beginning conditions on Makronisos were fairly severe, but when he was there in 1948 he found "a rather pleasant atmosphere." He was accompanied by Stratos' wife, Dora, and allowed to go wherever he liked. A few years later he suggested another visit but he was informed that conditions had deteriorated: "From what I have learnt I would certainly not had written with any sympathy about Macronisos in its later days. But I stand

The Greek government's propaganda on Macronisos met with relative success probably because only a few knew at the time the real scale of terror on the island. One of them, Basil Davidson, visited Macronisos at the end of 1949 and when his report appeared in the New Statesman of January 7, 1950, it alerted Greek and foreign opinion. The ban on books and papers was lifted and French and Swiss papers sent correspondents who exposed the inhuman character of the camp regime. Davidson found that life on the island was a nightmare. The detainees were not only subjected to beatings and systematic brutality, but they also passed through a process of nationalist indoctrination. They were forced to repeat the national anthem and chauvinistic slogans and songs, to listen to speeches and lectures on "the virus of communism", to address their friends on the errors of the past and their conversion to nationalism.¹⁴⁹

On October 16, 1949 the guerrilla radio issued a proclamation in the name of the "Provisional Government of Free Greece" announcing that the guerrilla forces had

by what I wrote in 1948."

¹⁴⁹New Statesman, January 7, 1950. The Greek authorities did not want to agree to letting Davidson visit the island but they did not refuse permission lest he should expose this in the New Statesman. One can only presume they thought it better to let him in, give him the "conducted tour" - he was accompanied by the military commander of the island - and hope he would be deceived like previous visitors. Letter to the author from Marion Sarafis, July 30, 1992.

ceased operations in order to avoid the "complete annihilation" of Greece. At the same time the proclamation declared that the Democratic Army had not been defeated but it had been forced to retreat in face of the enormous superiority caused by foreign aid and supported by Tito's defection and treason.¹⁵⁰

The guerrilla announcement was regarded with scepticism by most British publications. The Times commented that the announcement did not increase the security of the Greek people. What was urgently needed now was effective control of guerrilla movement across the frontier and the disbandment of the guerrilla camps in Albania and Bulgaria. Then, the newspaper suggested, "the Greek government could wisely turn to the real work of pacification at home, to new elections and a wide amnesty." The Spectator also believed that the victories in last August were "very far from putting an end to the troubles of the Greek government." The Manchester Guardian recommended to the political leadership in Athens that it should display moderation and grant an amnesty to its opponents. The Economist agreed with the Manchester Guardian, adding however that:

"there can be no question of allowing the communists and their fellow-travellers back into any position from which they could launch another attempt to seize power...Democracy must be given a chance to fire, if necessary, on five cylinders instead of six; but it is better that it should do that than fail to run at all."

¹⁵⁰ Documents on International Affairs, 1949-50, p.235.

The Daily Herald stressing that a communist danger still existed in Greece concluded that "the best safeguard against it is not a repressive system which can easily become indistinguishable from dictatorships but a genuine democracy and enlightened social policy." Tribune showed little inclination to take the guerrilla announcement at its face value, but expressed the hope that the Greek government would now cease suppressing any kind of Left-wing opposition and independent labour movement. Tribune thought that a special responsibility for the continuation of the civil war rested on Bevin. The Foreign Secretary should recognise "that policy no less than arms was needed to bring peace to Greece." The New Statesman did not believe that the civil war had ended. After a short interval the partisan groups would filter back across the frontier of Albania and the stage would be set for another year of hostilities. The "vengeful and corrupt oligarchy" in Athens was incapable by itself of restoring normality. The proper organisation to sponsor and supervise conditions of peace in Greece was the United Nations.¹⁵¹

At its meeting on October 19, the Executive-Committee of the LDG adopted a resolution which welcomed "the announcement that the main forces of the Greek Democratic Army have not been in action since the end of

¹⁵¹The Times, October 19, 1949; Spectator, September 2, 1949; Manchester Guardian, October 19, 1949; Economist, December 31, 1949; Daily Herald, October 19, 1949; Tribune, October 21, 1949; New Statesman, October 22, 1949.

August, as this makes possible an armistice and the full restoration of democratic liberties in Greece." It warned, however, that if such an armistice and the restoration of civil liberties were not granted, a revival of large-scale fighting was inevitable. It, therefore, urged the British government, the UN Assembly and the Greek government to take all possible measures to suspend all executions forthwith, to end the state of emergency in Greece without delay, to restore trade union liberties and to grant a general amnesty.¹⁵²

¹⁵²MGA/PM 53 "Weekly Survey of Greek News, 1949-50", October 21, 1949.

CONCLUSION

The British military intervention in Greece at the beginning of December 1944 and the subsequent battle for Athens aroused the passions of many people in Britain to a quite remarkable extent. That British troops should have fired on men who were their allies was an unbelievable thought. Initially, British reaction to the Anglo-Greek conflict was an increasing uneasiness and criticism of Churchill's foreign policy. By mid December, it had been transformed into a popular storm that began to question the continuation of the coalition government.

The events in Athens occupied a prominent position in the foreign affairs coverage of the British press, while a great debate was carried over onto the editorial pages. Most of the foreign correspondents, leader writers and columnists agreed on their reaction to the Greek crisis. Feeling sympathetic to the European resistance movement and suspecting the intentions of the British government many strongly condemned the intervention. It was argued that instead of trying to reimpose the illiberal and autocratic pre-1939 regimes, Britain should place herself by the side of the new

progressive forces that had emerged in the occupied countries of the continent. E.H.Carr and Donald Tyerman of The Times, A.G.Cummings of the News Chronicle, Michael Foot of the Daily Herald, Malcolm MacEwen of the Daily Worker and Kingsley Martin of the New Statesman were among the most trenchant critics of British policy throughout the crisis.

In the days before television the radio was the other major source of information about foreign affairs for most of the British public. Between 1939 and 1945 radio-listening increased considerably, mainly because of the wartime black-out and the rationing of space in newspapers, magazines and books. The 9 p.m. news bulletin "became in most households an institution almost as sacrosanct as family prayers are said once to have been".¹ The BBC took a keen interest in the events in Greece but neither supported nor condemned the intervention. Nevertheless, its comments on the impact of these events on British public opinion and the discreetly pro-EAM reports of its correspondent, John Nixon, caused a lot of embarrassment to the Prime Minister and his advisors.

In the House of Commons Churchill's action in Greece was subjected to severe criticism. Two general assumptions appeared to command widespread support from the critics during the course of the debates. The first

¹Briggs, The BBC: The First Fifty Years (Oxford, 1985), p.188

viewpoint, commonly expressed in the speeches of various MPs, was that the Greek crisis could have been avoided if Churchill had not insisted on the restoration of the monarchy at the moment of liberation and before a free plebiscite could be held. A second assumption, not shared by nonsocialists but common on the Left Wing, was that EAM/ELAS was not a communist-controlled organisation but a genuine mass popular movement which should be represented in any future all-party government.

The debates on Greece in the House of Commons and at the 1944 Labour Party conference brought to the surface the widening gulf separating the Labour leadership from the rank and file. Throughout the crisis the Labour leaders refrained from criticising the policy followed in Greece. Their unwillingness to take a firm position on the Greek question disappointed gravely their supporters and gave comfort to their political opponents. It is interesting that Churchill, in his memoirs, claims that the whole cabinet supported him "like a rock" while Attlee, in his own book of memoirs, As it happened, makes no reference to the conflict in Athens.² Although disturbed by the course of events in Greece, the Labour leaders saw no reason to adopt a different attitude from that of the British Prime Minister. For them the Greek crisis was a passing episode, not of any particular importance. But for the

²Churchill, The Second World War, vol.6, p.255; Attlee, As It Happened (London, 1954).

rank and file it was another illustration of the urgent need of the Labour movement for a responsible leadership.

After the end of hostilities in January 1945 British public attention was distracted from Greece. The opposing Greek political forces managed to reach a workable compromise and prospects of a peaceful development seemed to have been assured. The various post-Varkiza governments, however, did not respect their obligations and did nothing to prevent the establishment of the parakratos. By summer 1945, the situation in Greece had again become very critical. British correspondents on the spot assessed the situation accurately but their comments and warnings had a limited impact on the British public which at the time was totally preoccupied with the general elections.

The Labour government that took office in July 1945 continued the conservative policy of supporting the Greek Right and suppressing the resistance movement. In consequence, as we have seen, the government aroused much opposition among its own supporters. As early as the autumn of 1945, Labour backbenchers expressed their disquiet with Bevin's handling of Greek affairs, and a pressure group, the League for Democracy in Greece, was formed to campaign for a change of policy. Later, in March 1946, the LDG, with the support of various organs of moderate and Left-wing opinion, brought pressure to

bear upon the British government to postpone the Greek elections. However, Bevin proved implacable and proceeded with them.

Greece continued to be one of the most important foreign policy issues in Britain even after the holding of the 1946 elections and the coming to power of the Right-wing Tsaldaris government. Two parliamentary delegations visited Greece and investigated the situation, many oral and written questions were asked in the House of Commons, numerous reports and leading articles appeared in the British press, several meetings took place and many resolutions were issued by political and trade union organisations.

The two British delegations reached almost the same conclusions. They put the blame for the internal disorders in Greece not on the country's northern neighbours or on the guerrillas but on the reactionary politicians in Athens and recommended the formation of an all-party government and the holding, after a suitable period of time, of new elections based on up-to-date electoral registers. Unfortunately, these recommendations were not carried out and by spring 1947 civil war raged in full intensity.

In Britain, there was a small but vocal group of Labour MPs who thought that Bevin and the Foreign Office should share responsibility for the state of affairs in Greece. MPs like Solley, Tiffany, Dodds, Wilkes and Warbey constantly registered their discontent with the

government's Greek policy either during debates on foreign affairs or in their oral questions. Outside Parliament, political and trade union organisations vigorously protested against the infringement of civil and trade union liberties in Greece and at the 1946 TUC conference Left-wing delegates severely attacked the Greek government and British support for it.

In the summer of 1946, the worsening of relations between the Big Three and the accompanying controversies dominated the British press. Except for some comments on the Greek economy or on the Greek government's oppressive measures, the press tended to ignore Greece in favour of events that were more dramatic or closer to home. But the plebiscite on the monarchy and the beginning of the civil war in autumn 1946, pushed Greece back onto the front pages of Britain's publications.

Conservative newspapers and journals, with the notable exception of The Times, while praising Bevin's Greek policy, tried to steer their readers' attention away from the actions of the Greek government by insisting that the activities of the guerrilla bands in Greece were entirely due to foreign inspiration. The Times and the liberal press were more sceptical of Tsaldaris' intentions and less willing to blame Greece's northern neighbours. Without overlooking the tensions between Greece and the communist countries in the Balkans they were anxious to see the Greek Prime Minister broaden his cabinet, effect reconciliation and

restore order. The Labour Left and communist press strongly criticised Bevin's defence of the Greek regime. It thought that by remaining a silent spectator Bevin encouraged the authorities in Athens to pursue an even more intransigent line towards the Left. The suggested alternative for the British Foreign Secretary was to condemn the actions of the Greek government and to intervene forcefully in favour of the country's democratic forces.

After the middle of 1947 the adoption of anti-communism at home and the polarisation of politics abroad enabled the Labour government to carry through its foreign policies with little dissent from its supporters. There were occasional demands for a "socialist foreign policy", criticism of the government's handling of relatively narrow questions, like that of Palestine, and sporadic calls for a revision of Britain's attitude toward the eastern Bloc, but those hardly constituted a serious challenge. The Labour Left was successfully tamed, generally accepting the government's foreign policy, while the communist Left which had considerable influence on the Labour movement in the first peace years suffered from the 1948 purges in the state and the trade unions and was marginalised.

The American involvement in Greece and the deterioration of the Soviet-American relations induced the British media and public to divert their attention

away from Greece and focus on issues of greater importance such as Germany, the Near and Middle East and West European Union. Greece was now viewed not as a strictly local (and British) affair but as one of the most important episodes in the paroxysm of the cold war. Only the LDG, along with a small section of the British Left which was not swept into the anti-communist and anti-Soviet stream, continued to regard Greece as a central issue in Labour's foreign policy and to protest against the foreign intervention and the policies of the Greek government.³

In winter 1947, a "Quit Greece" campaign was launched demanding the withdrawal of British troops and missions and the formation of a new Greek government. In May 1948, the overwhelming public outcry against the "act of revenge" in Athens forced the Foreign Office and the American Administration to intervene and put an end to the executions. In November 1948 and February 1949, popular protest prevented the Greek government from carrying out the death sentences imposed on the seamen. The LDG and its supporters did not of course change Bevin's Greek policy. They could not change it given the Cold War and Bevin's insensitivity to opposition from his own movement. Through their campaigns and appeals, however, they succeeded in keeping that policy

³On the eve of the 1948 Labour Party conference, Ian Mikardo asserted in Tribune (May 14, 1948) that "Apart from Franco, there is no foreign affairs issue on which the Party feels so strongly as on Greece."

under a constant glare of criticism, countering official propaganda, and saving the lives of hundreds of Greek democrats.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A Brief Description of The Archives of the League for Democracy in Greece and A List of the main body of the League's Filing-Boxes

The Archives of the LDG cover mainly the period 1945-1975, with a small amount of material for the periods 1943-45 and 1975 to the present day. The main body of the League's Filing-Boxes is arranged by subject matter, by correspondent and chronologically covering the various campaigns. There are also other boxes that contain equally important material. Box PM 73, for example, contains all the official reports on Greece (TUC-Citrine, Legal Mission, March 1946 Election Observers, All-Party Parliamentary Delegation), while Box CIR 12 includes a large number of leaflets, folders and pamphlets published by the League. The Weekly and later Monthly Surveys of the Greek News Agency constitute another useful source of information about the League's history and activities. The Surveys that cover the period of the civil war (Boxes PM 52 and 53) have been used quite extensively in this study (see chapters five and six).

The Archives further contain a large collection of press-cuttings covering the British and some Foreign Press and of Hansard (Parliamentary) references to Greece. They also have the reports of the UN Commission for Observing the Balkans, unusual publications of the

Greek Left, material from similar organisations in other countries and from the Greek Refugee Committees, and material relating to conditions in prisons and concentration camps. In addition, there is a card-index of junta victims, a photographic collection in eighteen albums and a Czech film of Greek children.

MODERN GREEK ARCHIVE

A. Information Files

INFO I	Ambatielos Case Angelis Visit Oct. 1971 Aspida Case BBC Beloyannis Case 1951-52 Bing Report 1972 British Military and Police Missions, 1945-47 Censorship 1967-68 Centre Union Party Chapman Case CIA Civil Service Civil War Conscientious Objectors 1949 Co-operative organization
INFO II	Concentration Camps: Greece 1947-72 Italy Mid.E. 1945-46 Council of Europe
INFO III	Courts Martial 1946-73 Cyprus December 1944 Democratic Defence 1967-74
INFO IV	Deportation Doctors. Persecution of Dodecanese 1945 EAM 1945-47 Ecclesiastics Economic Situation EDA (United Democratic Left Party Education

Elections

INFO V

Emergency Measures Act 1946
Flountzis Case 1955-61
Gavriilides 1952
Glezos Case 1950-59
1960-70
Glezos Case Legal Dossiers

INFO VI

Gorgopotamos Case 1964
Greek Anti-Dictatorship Committee
>> >> >> >> 1969-74
Greek European Movement
Greek Social-Democratic Mov. (Protopappas)

Greek Social-Democratic Mov. (Someritis)
Human Rights Movement
International Association of Democratic
Lawyers
International Commission of Jurists
International Labour Office
International Red Cross
Anti-Junta Movements 1967-74
Junta 1967-74

INFO VII

Junta: The Second Coup and the Poly-
technic. BBC Material
Justice
Karayeorgas Case 1970
Karamanlis
Katraki, Vaso 1967-68
Kefallinos, T.
KKE (Greek Communist Party) pre 1968
KKE Official
KKE Interior

INFO VIII

Kotsakis Case 1965-66
Kyriazis, P. 1948-50
Labour Party
Lambrakis Case 1963
Lambrakis Youth
Law 509
Lawyers. Persecution of
Law 375
Marathon Peace March
Marinatos
Military Issues
Minorities

INFO IX

Monarchy
Monedas Case 1946-47
Municipal Elections
Neo-Fascist Organizations
New Democracy Party
Nuclear Disarmament. Greek Society for
Pacification Measures 1952
PAK

PAM(Ext.)
 PAM(Int.)
 Panagoulis Case

INFO X Papandreou,A.
 Partsalides Case
 PASOK
 Passalides Case
 Pesmazoglou Case 1972
 Pavlidou Case
 Plebiscite 1946
 Political Parties
 Press
 Printers Trial 1966
 Prisons 1945-67

INFO XI Prisons 1945-67 Individual Dossiers
 >> 1967-74
 >> >>
 Prisoners, Political. Release Campaigns
 1972-74

INFO XII Prisoners, Families
 Refugees
 Refugee Committee 1951-55 Correspondence
 >> >> KEPPE (Bucharest)1968-74
 >> >> >> (Budapest) >>

INFO XIII Refugee Repatriation Committee 1979-83
 Leaflets, Minutes etc
 Material for projected pamphlet
 Press cuttings
 Repentance Statements
 Sartzetakis Case
 Siganos Case
 Socialist International
 Stringos Deportation Case
 Students

INFO XIV Theodorakis
 Torture
 Trade Unions 1945-46
 >> >> 1947-49
 >> >> 1950-66

INFO XV Trade Unions 1967-76
 >> >> ESAK
 >> >> >> Bulletins
 >> >> FGMU-EASKEN
 >> >> 1968 Meetings Reports

INFO XVI Trade Unions- Tobacco Workers
 Tsirimokos
 Tsitselas Campaign Dec.1953
 Tuberculosis
 Universities
 >> (Placing of Junta Refugees in)

UNRRA
Wartime History
Women
Women's Prisons
Women Prisoners Individual Dossiers
Writers
Zevgos, Yannis

B. Correspondence Files

CORRESP I

ACTAT
AEU
American Correspondence-Personal
American Committees 1946-67
 >> >> 1967-74
Amnesty International
Athanasopoulos
Athanassoglou
Australian Correspondence
Austrian Organisations

CORRESP II

Belgian Committees
Birmingham Branch LDG
Bulgarian Embassy
Bush, Alan
Canadian Committees
Cardiff LDG
Cocks, Seymour MP
Co-operative Organisations
Danish Committees
Democratic Clubs
Dodds, Norman MP
European Atlantic Action Committee
Edinburgh LDG
Faringdon, Lord
Finnish Committee
Flemming, Lady Amalia
Foreign Office

CORRESP III

French Committees
German Organisations
Greek Committees Abroad
Greek Committee against Dictatorship
Greek Embassy
Haldane Society
Hungarian Red Cross
International Red Cross
Irish Organisation
Italian Committees
Labour Lawyers, Society of
Labour Party
Levy, Benn MP
London Groups for Restotation of De-
mocracy in Greece

Mackenzie, Compton
Macmillan, Malcolm
Manchester LDG

CORRESP IV

Moore, W.
Morris, E
Myers, Brigadier Eddie
National Council of Civil Liberties
Netherlands Committee
Norwegian Committee
NUM
Parliament, Members A-J
 >> >> K-Z
Peace Organisations
PEN
Personalities

CORRESP V

Police
Polish Committee
Pritt, D.N. MP
Rights of Man, Organisations
Rose, Paul
Russell, Bertrand
Salonika Correspondence
Sarafi, Marion
Sheppard, Col. A.
Socialist Medical Association
Solicitors
Solley, Leslie MP
Soper Lord
Sorensen, R.
Soviet Correspondence

CORRESP VI

Spanish Committee
Strabolgi Lord
Student Organisations
Svolou, M.
Swedish Committees
Swiss Committee
Thomas, George MP
Tiffany, Stanley MP
Tobacco Workers Union
Turkish Embassy and Organisations
Trades Councils (alphabetical)
Trade Unions (alphabetical)
Union of Democratic Control (UDC)
United Nations Association

CORRESP VII

United Nations Organisation
US Ambassador
Warbey, William MP
Wilkes, Lyall MP
Women's League for Peace and Freedom
Woodhouse, C.M.
World Federation of Democratic Youth
Youth Organisations

C. Chronological Files

- CHRON I Inauguration 1945
 Delegates to Greece 1946
 Executions Campaign 1946-47
 Patras Trades Council Campaign 1947
 Quit Greece Campaign 1947-48
 Executions Campaign 1948
 Paris Conference 1948
 Seamen's Trial 1948-49
 Evacuated Children 1948-55
 Executions Campaign 1949-50
- CHRON II British Elections 1950
 Macronisos 1950
 Beloyannis Campaign 1952
 Correspondence and Campaigns 1953
 >> 1954
 >> 1955
- CHRON III Correspondence and Campaigns 1956
 >> 1957
 Glezos Campaign 1958
 >> 1960-61
 >> 1962-63
 Karamanlis, Royal Visit 1961
- CHRON IV Paris Conference 1962
 International Conference 1963
 Conference Follow Up 1963
 Conference 1967
 Correspondence and Campaigns 1967
 Meetings and Reports 1967
 Campaigns 1968
- CHRON.V Conference 1968
 Anti-Tourist Campaign 1968
 Meetings 1969
 Campaigns 1969
 European Athletics Campaign 1969
 Relief Conference 1970
 Campaigns and Meetings 1970
 International Conference 1970-71
 Independence Anniversary Campaign 1971
 Paris Conference I 1972
- CHRON.VI Paris Conference II 1972
 Correspondence and Campaigns 1972
 European Security and Cooperation
 Conference Brussels 1972 I
 >> >> >> II
 Students Campaign 1972
- CHRON.VII Greek Anti-Dictatorship Committee 1972

Dianna Pym Presentation 1972
 Correspondence and Campaigns 1973
 Byron Anniversary 1973
 World Peace Conference, Moscow 1973

CHRON.VIII

Correspondence 1974
 Greek solidarity in Germany 1974
 Correspondence 1975
 Cyprus Conference 1975
 Correspondence 1976
 Miscellaneous Membership Correspondence
 1947-73
 Letters to the Press 1946-73
 Draft Articles 1944-74

CHRON IX

Greek Committee against Dictatorship
 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972,
 1973, 1974

CHRON.X

Campaign for Release of Pol. Pris. in Gr.
 >> >> >>
 >> >> Committee Minutes
 >> >> Correspondence
 British PAM: Documents 1969-73
 Intellectual Human Rights Appeal 1968
 British PAM: Correspondence
 >> >>: Committee Minutes

CHRON.XI

PAM. British Section Accounts
 Patriotic Front Publications, 1969
 British PAM: EAS
 >> >> : Eleftheri Ellada
 >> >> : KKE Interior London
 >> >> : Rigas Ferraios London
 North London Group for the Restoration
 of Democracy in Greece

CHRON.XII

Eur. Atlantic Action Com. on Gr.: Eur.Mov.
 >> >> >>: NATO
 >> >> >>: Bulletins
 >> >> >>: Inaug.of Com.
 >> >> >>: Funds
 >> >> >>: US Congress

CHRON.XIII

>> >> >>: US Cong. Record
 >> >> >>: Sign. to Declar.
 >> >> >>: Corresp.1971 In
 >> >> >>: >> 1971 Out

CHRON.XIV

>> >> >>: >> 1972 In
 >> >> >>: >> 1972 Out
 >> >> >>: >> 1973 In
 >> >> >>: >> 1973 Out
 >> >> >>: >> 1974 In
 >> >> >>: >> 1974 Out

GREECE

LETTER AND
EIGHT LEADING ARTICLES

REPRINTED FROM

THE  TIMES

September 22, October 18, November 22, 23, 1945,
January 12, 26, February 2, 21, March 8, 1946

LONDON :

THE TIMES PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED

PRINTING HOUSE SQUARE

E.C.4

PROSPECTS IN GREECE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—First, as a Greek democrat, I wish to put on record the debt we owe to you for your unbiased articles and accurate reports on the Greek situation, and the regret that your warnings concerning the crisis last December were not heeded. Otherwise my country might have been spared those tragic events.

Recently you published Mr. Harold Nicolson's letter in which he repudiates Mr. Compton Mackenzie's imputation that the British Government are responsible for Greek affairs. If not the British Government, who then, may we ask, is responsible for Greece? It is not in a spirit of criticism so much as in gratitude that we ask this. Mr. Nicolson himself says in his letter that the new Greek police who are relieving the National Guard are showing an attitude "which is greatly to the credit of the Government which raised them." Is it not to the British Government we look for the establishment of order and economic repair until a genuine Greek Government elected by the Greek people be put in power? Was it not the British Government who put under arrest 12,000 of the Greek armed forces who rebelled against their reactionary Government in 1942, and who are still held captive in

Egypt? A significant fact also was the resignation of Admiral Voulgaris when the results of the British elections were announced, and that it is by reason of the insistence of the British Foreign Office that he still remains Prime Minister of Greece.

Therefore Mr. Compton Mackenzie is logical in addressing his plea for Greece to his Majesty's Government rather than to any appointed member of the Greek Government. By his letter he is showing what he has always shown—a true sympathy with the Greek people and comprehensive knowledge of their affairs. Bearing these facts in mind, is it strange that we wish earnestly to put our faith in the justice of the British Government to deal as severely with the terrorism of the right-wing X organization as they did with the extreme left wing last December? Mr. John Sofianopoulos, lately the Greek Foreign Minister at San Francisco, described (in a letter to the *News Chronicle* lately) the situation in Greece as being so grave that not only a Balkan war but a European war might be precipitated.

Yours truly,

E. H. ATHANASSOGLOU.

15, New Street, Bishopsgate, E.C.2.

THE TIMES, October 18, 1945

TO END A DEADLOCK

The decision of ARCHBISHOP DAMASKINOS, Regent of Greece, to form his own Government is a courageous and dramatic move in a situation which has threatened once more to harden into deadlock. After striving for ten days to persuade party leaders to combine in a coalition Government, and after seeking other non-party men who would form a broadly representative Government, he has had to fall back upon the Ministers of the late "caretaker Government." He has himself taken ADMIRAL VOULGARIS's place at its head. He is fully aware of the old Government's unpopularity, but he is no doubt convinced that no other choice lay open to him. He is seeking to give the Ministers a new sense of direction, and retrieve the situation, by the unrivalled prestige and force of his own personality. It is a course which

has its risks, because lately the REGENT has been exposed to political attacks from the extremists on both wings; but the risks are a measure of the need which he has undertaken to meet.

It would still be unwise to assume that a way can be found, even under the direct authority of the REGENT, to substitute co-operation for the conflict which, in another form, has persisted since British arms brought the civil war to an end. Steady pressure has come from the extreme factions among those associated with support of the monarchy, including both industrialists and militarists, for the consummation of their "victory" in the civil war by way of discrimination against the members and the policies of other parties, and resistance from the same quarter has frustrated every attempt to follow the rigorous economic policy which, in the present distressed

TO END A DEADLOCK

state of Greece, is indispensable. In their turn, the opposing groups, embracing far more than the core of violent figures who dominated the fighting last December, have decided and proclaimed that in these conditions the preparations for free and fair elections cannot be accepted as impartial or satisfactory. Four times in a week the REGENT has tried without success to form a Government on some new basis. Each time the refusal of one set of politicians to share the power and influence which they regard as theirs by right of conquest has remained unshaken; and with

equal consistency the other parties have shown deep distrust of any projected combination, whether of men, measures, or parties. The REGENT has now lent the unrivalled weight of his personality to the task of leading the temporary administration in the hope of saving the country from economic chaos and destitution while the attempt to restore even-handed justice and an uncoerced political choice is renewed. The task remains immensely difficult. If it is possible at all, the ARCHBISHOP alone can achieve it; and his efforts demand the unstinted support of all friends of Greece.

THE TIMES, November 22, 1945

NEW MEASURES IN GREECE

The REGENT OF GREECE, to whom his country owes a mounting debt, has set on foot yet another venture to break the political deadlock which for so long has rendered economic recovery impossible. The experiment of successive "caretaker" Governments has clearly failed, even though ARCHBISHOP DAMASKINOS himself took up the office of Prime Minister last month; and the proof of failure has been the inability to secure acceptance of the drastic measures of financial regeneration upon which the salvation of Greece must entirely depend. The REGENT accordingly called together former Prime Ministers for the purpose of creating a new and representative Government capable of governing. The administration which M. SOPHOULIS, the aged Liberal, is now setting up is the outcome. It is intended to be a Government of national unity, with both Communists and Populists, on the extreme wings of Greek politics, left out. Its central figure will be the General Economic Co-ordinator, M. TSOUDEROS, who will begin talks at once with Greek and British experts on economic reconstruction, "the most important problem for Greece and the mass of the Greek people." He will have the full cooperation of the British Government.

Ever since the civil war began almost a year ago, it has been widely believed both in Greece and outside that the one conceivable way out of economic chaos and barely suppressed political strife might be the attempt to form a representative Government on the broadest national basis. This is now the task of M. SOPHOULIS. It has become increasingly apparent since order was restored by British arms against the Left extremists that the alternative of temporary administrations, without party support, could not provide the stability or control required to bring the

extremists on the royalist side into line with the requirements of national policy. Success is far from certain. While considerable satisfaction has been expressed by the more moderate groups of the centre, the monarchists have already expressed disappointment and indignation. From London the KING of the HELLENES himself has denounced as breaches of faith both the purposes of the new Government and the part played in its formation by MR. HECTOR MCNEIL on behalf of Britain. The KING contends that economic recovery is not possible until the question whether Greece is to be a republic or a monarchy has been settled by plebiscite, now to be postponed until 1948. He calls the British terms for financial assistance, as represented by the Sophoulis Government and its policy, "an insult to the Greek people," and reserves complete freedom of action for himself in future.

The KING claims truly that the Greek people alone have the right to decide their future. No doubt they will themselves determine the validity of his charges of yesterday in the "early elections under equitable conditions" which it will be the essential duty of the new Government to bring about. While the first steps from material destitution and dislocation are being taken, it is in the interests of Greece, in spite of the royal protest, to avert the head-on collision and renewed strife which by itself the issue of the régime would surely provoke. It is scarcely possible for the KING to deny the competence of the REGENT'S latest initiative, as he seemed to do yesterday. The new Government will not be judged by any partisan test. There is before it what may be the last opportunity of substituting cooperation for civil war in the critical mission of restoring livelihood and liberty to a great nation.

GREEK DISCORDS

Until yesterday morning the news from Greece remained confused and contradictory. Even now, as MR. EDEN urged in the Commons debate, a full statement of all the facts of the crisis is urgently needed. But it appears that the REGENT, seeking perhaps the broadest coalition possible, asked for the inclusion of M. PAPANDEOU and M. KANELLOPOULOS in the Cabinet of the Centre and moderate Left which M. SOPHOULIS had succeeded in forming and was even prepared to support their demand for the portfolios of the Army and Navy, which would have put the control of defence into their hands. The colleagues of M. SOPHOULIS rejected this condition. The ARCHBISHOP, who had already spoken of resignation, was also confronted by the KING's protest against the further postponement of a plebiscite on the constitution, and determined to resign. It is not yet known whether he will persist in his decision or will respond to the new Cabinet's appeal to him to withdraw it.

At the end of the civil war, with violence from the Left put down, the British Ambassador, SIR REGINALD LEEPER, forecast that the next danger would be violence from the other side. Hitherto the Populists, feeling themselves victorious in the civil war by British aid, have been content to bide their time and to intimidate and hamstring the succession of temporary administrations set up by the REGENT. Open resistance was threatened only when the attempt was made to form a more popular Government, based upon the parties of the centre and with a definite and far-reaching economic programme. It was to counter this threat of forcible revolt, ostensibly directed against the swearing-in of the new Government by the out-going Prime Minister, M. KANELLOPOULOS, that the REGENT with-

held his resignation until M. SOPHOULIS and his Ministers were constitutionally established. More information is needed about the reasons which moved the ARCHBISHOP to support the claims of M. PAPANDEOU and M. KANELLOPOULOS. The hope is that he will agree to continue with the coalition which M. SOPHOULIS has formed. But if he persists in his resignation, and the Cabinet takes over the Regency in accordance with the constitution, the threat will undoubtedly be renewed.

There is in fact a cleavage of opinion on the form of the Greek State amounting to suppressed civil war. Only the presence of British troops has prevented the clash from being resumed much sooner. The KING contends that the issue should be faced in an early plebiscite to choose monarchy or republic, and he would be within his rights to claim, as MR. EDEN pointed out yesterday, that a postponement for as long as three years cannot be reconciled with previous agreements. But any attempt to reach a constitutional decision at this stage would not restore stability as the KING suggests. It would finally destroy it and would make open strife certain. It is for this reason that M. SOPHOULIS has described the KING's abrupt intervention as "an incitement." The only way of putting Greece on her feet again is the policy which the REGENT, who represented the Crown but was also accepted by the republicans, has attempted to pursue. His untiring purpose has been to seek a Government capable of carrying through a programme of recovery without splitting Greece immediately into irreconcilable factions. This, moreover, has been the only policy which could effectively discharge the obligations assumed by Britain, as well as by the REGENT, almost a year ago.

THE TIMES, January 12, 1946

TROUBLED GREECE

Once more affairs in Greece are moving towards a crisis. Economically the state of the country is desperate. An economic mission headed by the deputy Prime Minister, M. TSOUDEROS, and accompanied by MR. MABEN, who is in charge of Unrra's work in Greece, arrived in this country on New Year's Day to obtain official British support for a programme of aid going beyond the stabilization of the drachma, attempted—as events

have shown, too optimistically—in November, 1944, a month after the country's liberation. MR. MABEN has stated that not more than 5 per cent. of the Greek people are living well, and this general under-nutrition, combined with the malaria from which a third of the population is suffering, has left the nation too much enfeebled to rehabilitate itself without strong external support. The provision of agricultural machinery and of motor lorries

TROUBLED GREECE

would give an exhausted people heart for a further effort, and it is understood that a joint Anglo-Greek request has been made to the United States, which alone is in a position to supply these vehicles. The strikes which have broken out in Athens and elsewhere during the past few days are evidence of the unhappy plight of wage-earners who find their paper money dropping in value before they can spend it, and the economic disorder is naturally affecting the position of the Government. The present administration was formed by M. SOPHOULIS, the Liberal leader, in November last when the ARCHBISHOP-REGENT consented to withdraw the resignation which he had tendered after his failure to secure a more broadly based Government. It is a Left-Centre Ministry, and new political complications have been introduced by offers of cooperation, provided, of course, that their opponents are excluded, from both Right and Left wings.

The Left wing, E.A.M.—whose leaders, however, have not always been able to answer for their followers—is prepared to enter the Government in return for a general amnesty, a revision of the electoral lists, and the removal from the gendarmerie and armed forces of collaborationists and members of the security

battalions recruited by the Germans. It is argued that the amnesty proclaimed a month ago does not benefit more than a tenth of the 18,000 persons at present detained and quite fails to deal with the much greater number—150,000 is the estimated figure—who have taken to the hills and refuse to return home for fear of arrest. It is also claimed that the great majority of the officials responsible for the electoral lists are avowed royalists, as are also 100 officers of the Army and 300 of the gendarmerie. The approach made by the Right has had a melodramatic consequence. M. SOPHOCLES VENIZELOS, who has acted as leader of the Liberal Party since the aged M. SOPHOULIS became Prime Minister, has signed an agreement with the chief of the Populists. The postponement till 1948 of the plebiscite on the monarchy has supplied the nominal ground for an alliance which is really a combination of middle-class elements against the Left. M. VENIZELOS's faction has been repudiated by his chief and is likely to disrupt still further a party some of whose members have already gone over to E.A.M. The situation excludes a fully representative Government, but the REGENT's statesmanship may yet achieve a substantial broadening of the present combination.

THE TIMES, January 26, 1946

RECOVERY IN GREECE

The Anglo-Greek financial and economic agreement announced by MR. BEVIN in the House of Commons yesterday has two purposes: to contribute to the rapid reconstruction of the Greek economy and to cement the ties of friendship and cooperation between Great Britain and Greece. Subject to the approval of Parliament, the British Government will advance to Greece a credit of £10,000,000, repayable without interest over a period of ten years beginning in 1951, for the purpose of stabilizing Greek currency. They will also waive repayment of the war loan of £46,000,000 granted to Greece in 1940-41, this being the only rational and equitable way of dealing with a financial transaction which was in fact not an ordinary loan but a contribution to the common effort in a war jointly waged against the Axis. Great Britain will provide Greece immediately with consumer goods to the value of £500,000, and take various steps to furnish, or to assist Greece to obtain, the materials and the technical assistance which she requires for major works of capital reconstruction, notably for the rebuilding of communications. In return the Greek Government undertake to stabilize Greek currency, to cut down non-productive expenditure, to establish a system of price control, and to

take measures to restore agricultural and industrial production.

This agreement should clearly not be judged either as an ordinary financial or commercial agreement, or merely as a series of measures for the relief and reconstruction of a heavily stricken country. British policy in the years since 1941 has been inspired by the view that common strategic as well as economic interests unite the two nations; and, while the methods adopted in carrying out this policy have sometimes been a matter of controversy in this country, the policy itself has not. This policy has been exemplified by the maintenance of British troops in Greece since the moment of liberation in order to secure the restoration of orderly democratic government and the holding of elections in which the Greek people may be able to make their choice freely between conflicting parties and forms of government; and though the British occupation has been challenged this week in the Soviet appeal to Uno, there is no sign that any substantial section of the Greek people would view with satisfaction the consequences of its immediate withdrawal. If, however, the authority of free and democratic government is to be re-established in Greece, far-reaching measures of economic reconstruction are imperative.

RECOVERY IN GREECE

Political anarchy is the inevitable concomitant of the condition of economic chaos and material distress which, in the absence of such measures, threatens to become endemic in Greece.

The test which the present agreement has to pass is, therefore, severe; and it is in the light of this test that doubts may be felt whether it goes far enough, or whether it puts all the emphasis in the right place. Stabilization of the currency is eminently desirable; and, while the balancing of the Budget may be neither immediately attainable nor even desirable in a country in so grave an economic plight, an increased yield from taxation and the reduction of non-productive expenditure are elementary requirements. What, however, is more important to emphasize is that these measures of financial rehabilitation can be maintained only if they are supported and made possible by a restoration of production and trade on a large scale. Failing this condition, which Britain alone cannot fulfil, they will break down and the financial assistance afforded from abroad to effect them will have been of only immediate help. On the importance of restoring production and trade the agreement can speak only in general terms. No full employment policy is proposed, no planned programme of investment is stipulated, and no conditions are laid down for ensuring that the resources of the country in materials and man-power will be harnessed to those enterprises which are most urgently vital to national recovery. It is possible that the Greek Government have in fact worked out such a policy and are preparing to embark on it. But the experiences of the last six months have been far from encouraging; and it may be seriously doubted whether, without the strongest support and pressure from outside, any Greek Government will have the courage to undertake the drastic measures of

reform and control which such a policy requires. It is this doubt which makes the lacuna in the agreement somewhat disconcerting.

Another serious omission will strike all who study the agreement carefully; and since MR. TSOUDEROS specifically drew attention to it in his formal speech of thanks it can scarcely have been accidental.

We are sure [he said] that, in the interest of our two countries, our economic and trade collaboration will continue, and that in the British Commonwealth and the United States Greece will find markets for her goods which, during the pre-war period, we saw with fear being absorbed for the greatest part in enemy countries.

This is indeed the vital key to the restoration of Greek trade. Greece is a country dependent, like Great Britain, on extensive imports of food and materials; and in order to pay for these imports—not to mention the repayment of the present loan from 1951 onwards—she requires an ample market for her exports among which tobacco and currants have hitherto had pride of place. In the long run therefore Greece will be obliged to cooperate most closely, both economically and politically with whatever country provides this market for this is the prime and indispensable condition of a revival of the national economy. In the years before the war Germany obtained a commanding position in several countries of south-eastern Europe almost entirely through her readiness to conclude large-scale long-term contracts for the purchase of their products; she became, in fact, their principal and most reliable customer. If Great Britain desires to maintain close relations with Greece, the placing of Greek products on British markets is a necessary condition. The machinery of bulk purchase agreements is well known and well tried. No other single step would do so much to cement Anglo-Greek cooperation and to fulfil the admirable purposes which the framers of the present agreement had in mind.

THE TIMES, February 2, 1946

MR. BEVIN'S REPLY

Yesterday's dramatic session may have confronted the Security Council with much the biggest test so far of their procedure and authority. There could be no plainer proof than the frank exchanges between MR. VYSHINSKY and MR. BEVIN of the inescapable fact that the United Nations will stand together or fall apart in proportion to the trust or lack of it which prevails between the great Powers. The occasion of the meeting was the Russian motion for the Council to consider the British troops in Greece as a threat to peace. MR. VYSHINSKY attributed the continued chaos in Greek affairs to the shelter afforded by the

presence of these forces to reactionary groups opposed to reform. MR. BEVIN'S retort in the most vigorous terms was to cite the agitations of Soviet and Communist propaganda directed against friends and allies, as the greatest real threat to peace.

Thus the discussion, which was adjourned until next week, after the spokesman of Greece had made a dignified contribution touched suddenly upon the core of Anglo-Russian relations. It was not hard for MR. BEVIN to rebut charges against British conduct drawn from extremist sources, and the British Government had already made clear their willingness to see the allegations fully discussed

MR. BEVIN'S REPLY

and the facts on the spot fully examined. It is certainly true, though by no fault of recent British policy, that right-wing and monarchist elements in Greece have continued to regard the British occupation as some protection and excuse for intransigence. But the record clearly shows, since the chapter of errors which preceded the lamentable episode of the civil war, that the British endeavour has been to assist the process of economic recovery in Greece and the restoration of political life. These are the plainly limited purposes of the occupation, and it has quite evidently been the intention to remove the troops as soon as possible. These facts are readily capable of proof and afford a sufficient answer at the bar of the Council against any indictment. Mr. BEVIN's blunt indignation yesterday was caused by no anxiety about the counts advanced or about his Government's motives. Instead, he challenged the motives of the Russian Government in making this appeal. With a robust deliberation he raised the decisive issue of confidence and cooperation between the Powers on which the whole structure of the United Nations depends.

There can be no doubt that, immediately, the Greek question was raised by the Russians as a diplomatic reply to the appeal against Russian conduct by the Persians. The Russian view is that the criticism and cross-examination

of great Powers in open forum can make cooperation impossible, and the case of British action in Greece was plainly put forward as a gesture in support of this standpoint. It is not surprising that MR. BEVIN should decide to speak his mind so strongly about a move so patently disingenuous, and about the campaign of Press and wireless recrimination which has accompanied it. In so doing the FOREIGN SECRETARY has in effect asked the Soviet Government straightly whether they have the requisite faith in and respect for their pledged British ally. It is a question which must be answered by events. It involves the no less important question, which MR. VYSHINSKY may return, of whether there exists in Britain and the United States the necessary friendship for and understanding of Russia. Deeds, again, will decide. It will not be the function of the Security Council to offer or demand the answers. The peremptory demand of MR. VYSHINSKY for the "immediate and unconditional" withdrawal of British troops from Greece is before them, and their next task will be to determine whether or not a case for further action by them has been made out, and to recommend procedure. It is in the counsels and the policies of the great allies themselves that the larger and decisive issues of motive and intention will be settled.

THE TIMES, February 21, 1946

THE GREEK ELECTIONS

The decision to hold elections on March 31, announced on Monday by M. SOPHOULIS, leaves the Greek Government six weeks in which to reach an understanding with the parties of the Left, which have been demanding postponement under threat of boycott. It barely gives time to take the necessary administrative measures, let alone to consider ways of making concessions to the political demands of E.A.M., which are not all unreasonable or impracticable. These elections will disappoint all the hopes that have been set on them, both by the Greeks and by their allies, if they take place without the active participation of all political groups and without general confidence that the political changes which must follow them can be carried through without leaving a sense of unappeasable bitterness and frustration in the losers. Moreover, it is every one's hope that a representative Greek Government will soon feel itself free and confident enough to command from the people a concerted effort to overcome the poverty, malnutrition, and distress that hold so many Greeks to the brink of despair. But effective elections, followed by the creation

of a representative Government and political pacification, can hardly be expected unless these six weeks ahead are used by the Government of M. SOPHOULIS to broaden, so far as possible, the basis of agreement. A wider amnesty which would bring hundreds out of prison and thousands down from the hills, and a firm hand with the terrorist organizations of both political wings—these are possibilities which present themselves as not unreasonable and as likely to make it easier for Government and E.A.M. to meet half-way. E.A.M. must also be ready for concessions if it is not to expose itself to the charge that it is deliberately holding back for fear of the election results.

Three weeks ago a British economic and financial agreement with Greece was announced which aims at assisting her recovery. It followed closely the grant of a large credit by the United States Export-Import Bank for the purchase of essential supplies. On Tuesday the AMBASSADOR OF SOVIET RUSSIA in ATHENS suggested negotiations between the two countries for a commercial agreement, which would furnish indispensable markets for Greek products. But the condition of Greek recon-

THE GREEK ELECTIONS

struction, in which the three allies have a common interest, is internal pacification, a damping down of passions, the exercise of restraint and conciliation by the parties which have struggled for power. If conciliatory measures by the Government of M. SOPHOULIS involve risks to security and order which cannot be accurately assessed, then it is surely better that these risks should be taken while the presence of British troops ensures that order will be maintained impartially. The same assurance is offered to the parties of the Left, who complain of the threat of Right-wing terrorists, and might well encourage them to measure again the distance which divides them from their opponents. If it is legitimate to ascribe to the presence of British troops this reassuring influence—and the views of the great majority of Uno delegates suggest that it is—then it would be unfortunate if Greek party leaders should feel that a date

has been fixed for the withdrawal of British troops which allows them insufficient time to attempt, test, and consolidate new agreements among themselves. The essential condition of any delay in withdrawal, which otherwise would be, without excuse, is that the time gained should be effectively employed by the Greek Government in seeking such broad agreement by every means, including especially a wider amnesty. If the next few weeks show any solid grounds for believing that a more widely based Government is possible in Greece, as a result of mutual concessions in policy and attitude between M. SOPHOULIS'S Government and the parties of the Left, then postponement may still be worth consideration. If it is, the natural and reasonable desire of the British Government not to prolong the term of military occupation should certainly give way to the claims of stability and concord in Greece.

THE TIMES, March 8, 1946

NEW CRISIS IN GREECE

M. TSOUDEROS, deputy Prime Minister in the somewhat narrowly based coalition Government which the Liberal leader, M. SOPHOULIS, formed last November, is the third Minister to resign in protest against the decision to hold elections at the end of this month. With British troops maintaining order in the country and with allied officers present at the polling booths there was reason to hope that the latent tension of Greek political life would be so far eased as to permit the ballot-boxes to register the national will and so enable the occupation force to be withdrawn. Recent outbreaks of extremist terrorism have combined with the slow progress made in the restoration of the country's shattered economy to undermine that hope. M. SOPHOULIS has now realized that his weakened Ministry lacks the authority to call the country to the polls, and it should be clear to the British Government that the free elections for which it has striven and on which it has rightly based its hopes for the future of Greece cannot be held on March 31.

Unconditional postponement, however, would but prolong indefinitely the situation in which the presence of British troops alone

prevents a further outbreak of civil war. The time has come for yet another effort to attain such a measure of Greek unity as would facilitate the resumption of normal political life. If the demand of E.A.M. for a postponement is to be satisfied, as it should be, E.A.M. must be prepared to make its contribution to the general welfare. First and foremost it must undertake to use all its influence for the maintenance of order. Like the Right, it has its extremists who are not amenable to control, but even in Greece, where discontented elements readily take to the mountains, good will on both sides can assure tranquillity in the towns and in the more closely cultivated areas of the countryside. Secondly, E.A.M. should make it clear that it will take a full and legal part in elections postponed to an agreed date, and accept their verdict. Thirdly, a concerted effort must be made by all parties to give the country the representative national Government which it needs to carry it through the electoral period. Nothing but a resolute and general truce to the spirit of faction—the inherited curse of Greek politics—will enable democracy again to function in the land of its birth.

WHAT ARE WE BRITISH DOING

BRITISH troops stationed in Greece are standing by compelled to witness cruelties and atrocities which are taking place around them.

The atrocities are committed by the all-powerful Greek police and by Greek soldiers in police and army barracks where some of our men are stationed.

Although our men have protested against these inhumanities, they have not been able to stop them. They have carried on, sickened at heart, with their job of training Greek soldiers, but have protested to their officers.

Ex-Corporal Tells of Beatings

Here is the statement of a man who has been demobilised from Greece. The "Daily Mirror" has checked the facts and is fully satisfied that they are a fair and even moderate statement about a terrible situation. Ex-Corporal, Stephen Harry Starr, aged thirty-two, was demobilised in August last, as a character, "Exemplary trustworthy and thoroughly reliable," from the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire). He writes: "I was stationed at Trikala, Thessaly, last June as a member of Section 'E' British Liaison Unit of the British Military Mission in Athens.

On the way back from collecting stores we saw a crowd and Greek soldiers crossed in British battle dress uniforms mounted on horses.

They were carrying human heads of bandits, or rather, Communists, killed in a clash between the Greek Army and the guerrillas.

"I pulled up my lorry, and Sergeant Alfred Kings, our unit's chief clerk, took pictures. On this particular morning there were nine heads on view eight men and one woman.

"Gestapo Methods"

We were not Communists, but we knew that it was God's job if it was known you had Communist sympathies! You may be shot, beaten up or deported to one of the barren isles off the coast of Greece.

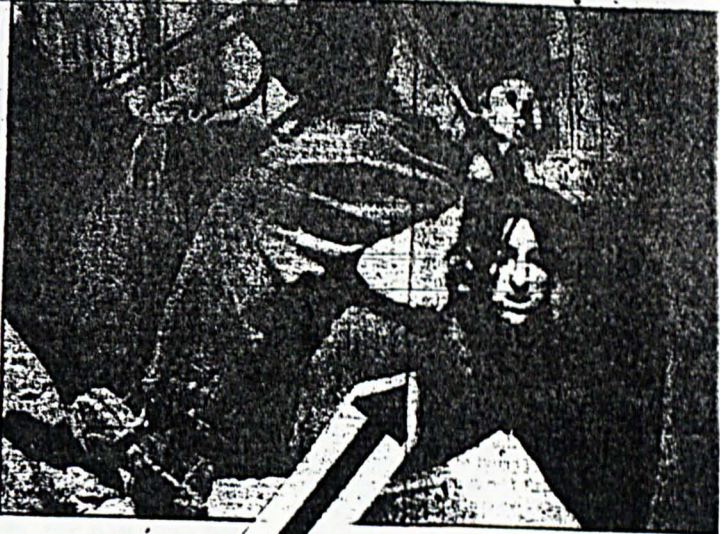
"I served with the British Military Mission in Greece for just over two years and I have yet to read an account of the Greek situation which gives a true, unbiased account of life in Greece today.

The police are all-powerful and their methods are those of the Gestapo at their worst.

Then there were the inhuman beatings. One of these victims nearly led to armed warfare between our lorry and the Greek troops.

It was at Trikala, near Larissa. I was

**Heads
are
cheap**



The head of a young Greek is paraded through a village street by an armed man on horseback. Corporal Starr says he saw nine such heads in the parade at which these pictures were taken—eight were men's and one a woman's.

HERE?

IN Greece today, according to the latest available figures, there are between 5,000 and 6,000 British troops.

Commanding them is Major-General E. E. Down, who succeeded Lieutenant-General Kenneth Crawford in March this year.

British troops of liberation returned to Greece in October, 1944.

A British Military Mission went there in 1945 and under Major-General S. B. Rawlins organised and armed a small army of three corps.

A delegation of British M.P.s of all parties who had visited Greece said in a report published more than ten months ago:

"Subject to considerations of strategy and high policy, British troops should be withdrawn at an early date."

Referring to the fighting between the opposing factions, the M.P.s said:

"Though it is claimed that the object of some of the Right Wing bands is to prevent the spread of Communism, the fact is they never engage the Communist bands in battle, but devote themselves to terrorising the villages."



The end of a Greek villager with a beard. Some of the Greek soldiers fighting the guerrillas wear uniforms supplied by Britain.

one of twenty-five British Tommies and five officers stationed in the Greek Army barracks there, which was shared with Greek troops under instruction.

They began to beat up men and women in this barracks one day while motor-cycle engines were revved up to drown their screams.

About thirty women were beaten up on this occasion. One of them was a cripple girl, hobbling on crutches. At least one other woman was pregnant.

They took the cripple girl's sticks away from her and asked her repeatedly across the face and stomach with them. All of the women were injured when they had finished with them and were in a state of collapse.

When they were left in a compound under a boiling sun, they received no medical attention until we complained to our British officers, who brought the C.O. to the scene.

We knew most of the women by sight because they had been in the village and we talked to them every day as we sat in the village square drinking wine.

I had seen the cripple girl scores and scores of times.

The boys were terribly angry with the Greek troops, who were armed with tommy guns.

Some of the boys said: "Let's take our tommy guns and do them!"

But the Q.M.S. Sergeant Scott, ordered us not to

India takes over a State

THE Government of India, "at the request of the Junagadh Prime Minister," yesterday took over the administration of the State of Junagadh, which last month acceded to Pakistan.

Indian troops with medium tanks entered Junagadh city, the capital.

Pandit Nehru, Indian Premier, informing Pakistan of the move, added that India did not want permanent control and urged a plebiscite to decide whether the State should join India or Pakistan.

Pakistan's Premier, Liaquat Ali Khan, said last night: "If India is determined to force war on us, we will not show the white flag."

The Nawab of Junagadh is a Moslem, but 50 per cent. of his 500,000 subjects are Hindus.



Ex-Corporal S. H. Starr

Advertiser's Announcement

Look your best in
Windmoor

Continued on Back Page

What Three M.P.s Saw in Greece

"It is rapidly becoming a Fascist State"

By **L. J. SOLELEY, M.P.**

The world has heard with anxiety the reports of growing terrorism in Greece since the election there. In Southern Greece, at all events, the current evidence is that Monarchist bands are almost entirely responsible. A delegation of British Labour M.P.s to Greece has now returned home. Here one tells what he saw on his visit.

GREECE is rapidly becoming a Fascist State. That is the unanimous conclusion of Norman Dodds, Stanley Tiffany and myself after we three M.P.s had spent two weeks investigating conditions in that country.

Tiffany and I visited Larissa, Patras and Volos, while Dodds went to Salonica and Macedonia. We all visited Athens.

Within two hours of our arrival we heard that two members of the Democratic Association (which was acting as our host) had been beaten up by the police and taken to the Kallithea prison in Athens for the "crime" of collecting subscriptions. We investigated and found the allegations to be correct.

Dossier of murders

At a meeting with the Executive of the Greek T.U.C. we were presented with a detailed dossier of the murders of 86 trade unionists and other democrats since the election. In many cases the murderers, who were all members of the monarchist "X" organisation or the gendarmes, were known. But not a single arrest had been made.

We were asked to investigate every allegation personally. This was quite impossible. But Tiffany and I chose a number

of cases for personal investigation. Here is one example.

I was personally told by Mr. Kourvissianos, an eminent Athenian lawyer, the following:

A Liberal leader

"I and my family have frequently been threatened by 'X'-ites that we would be murdered. My brother, Anastasios, who was also a lawyer, and was the leader of the Liberals at Larissa, was on April 6 illegally arrested by two 'X'-ites, gendarmes and the chief of police and taken to the police station. His coat and shirt were removed and he was stabbed three times in the back and killed.

"The murderers are free and the police chief is still at his post." Mr. Kourvissianos produced sworn affidavits of witnesses of this outrage.

In Patras, while Tiffany and I were attending a trial of Resistance fighters, we saw a man rush into the court shouting that he had been beaten up by the "X"-ites. He was covered with blood.

We found that he had been beaten by "X"-ites and police when distributing May Day leaflets, and this is the first next day he was sentenced to one month's imprisonment for "assaulting a gendarme."

His defence counsel said to me: "The judges do not act on evidence here. If a man is a



YOU MAY NOW CHANGE YOUR BUTCHER

LETTERS Lift ban on Food Parcels!

EVERY day now as one reads one's morning correspondence one is filled with an increasing sense of impotent despair. Here are extracts from a letter just received from an address in London:

"I am a German-born British subject—my husband being an Indian—and was until the outbreak of war resident in Berlin. My parents, both over 70, are still living in Berlin. My mother is in very poor health—she is 82 and has only one wish—to see me, her only child. My hopes to ease my parents' lot by sending food parcels which I easily could have afforded out of our ration have also proved futile. . . . I have

the feeling that I cannot win so much as I desire to help them. I beg that you will exercise my interest in my terrible worries as regards them."

As you are aware, it is still impossible to send food parcels to Germany or anywhere else on the continent of Europe. If this month after month it will end by destroying us all. Whatever be the rights or wrongs of the public policy, that the private charity would be liberally dried up is an outrage. I believe many of your readers would agree. Cannot then someone of them write to the Prime Minister (Mr. Dowding, Surrey, London), today in protest?

Surely they might succeed in the raising of a fund and energy involved. If the result would be to ease an intolerable situation.

VICTOR POLLACK
14, Henrietta Street,
London W.C.2

[Many refugees, with relatives and friends in Germany, have written to the same effect.]

Killing a film

WE, the undersigned, a group of airmen who appreciate craftsmanship, beauty and social consciousness of the French cinema, wish to protest against the tragic fate that awaits France's great film "Le Jour et la Nuit".

The fact that such an important work of art can be destroyed by a pre-emptive concern is a disgrace to all thinking cinema-goers and public opinion united, now in order that other great classical films may not suffer a similar fate.

We are all familiar with the average Hollywood renditions of classical films, knowing that the prime motive in the producer's mind is profit, and not the furtherance of art in the cinema. It was enough to see such great artists as Renoir, Clair, Duvivier, Stroheim, and Gabin frustrated and crushed by the commercial and censorship laws of America to make one realise the immense difficulties that face the true artists of the cinema in Hollywood.

It is for us, the cinema goers, to make our demands heard by writing to the Press, the film makers, the cinema managers etc. For only in this way can we hope to see the cinema survive, or for that matter even be made.

A. C. TICKNER and four others
Henley, Berks.

democrat he is automatically guilty of anything with which the police care to charge him."

Even Mr. Mavros, Minister of Justice under Sofoulis, said to me: "Justice does not exist in Greece for any democrat. Ninety per cent. of the judges belong to the extreme Right, and are so fanatical in their political outlook that they will stop at nothing to return a verdict in favour of the Right or against the Left. The State machine is in the hands of the Right, who work hand-in-hand with the judiciary and the police."

Mr. Mavros is a Liberal member of the present Parliament.

Biased judgment

At the Patras trial of Elias fighters charged under the decree which dealt with collaboration with the enemy—the president of the court admitted to me that he and his two fellow judges had received their salaries during the German occupation and had continued to work as judges! His bias against the defendants was painfully manifest, both in private and at the trial.

Incidentally I was told by the leading defence counsel that for the first time the prisoners had been brought into court without manacles—because I was there.

In the report which my colleagues and I shall issue shortly it will be seen that such stories are not exceptions but typical of all Greece. The persecution extends to the Red Cross of the Resistance Movement.

Hospital closed

We know, for example, that their hospital at 6, Metsevou Street, Athens, was on May 2 given precisely 24 hours in which to close down, with no other accommodation available. I shall never forget the crowd of out-patients outside the hospital on the morning when the police took it over.

The house, incidentally, had been requisitioned by the Sofoulis Government, having been used as a gambling house during the occupation.

I spoke to Mr. Sophonopolous, ex-Foreign Minister, Professor Svolos, leader of the Socialists and nearest to our own Labour Party, Gen. Othoneos, former Premier, and leading trade unionists. All declared that the presence of British troops is, in fact, giving moral strength to the forces of the Right.

"Worse than ever"

The ex-Premier, Mr. Sofoulis, described the position in Greece as being now worse than ever: "The Right are provoking the Left, all democrats including Liberals are their victims."

As regards the plebiscite he said: "We were informed by Mr. Bevin in November, 1945, that by the plebiscite being held in 1948 there would be an opportunity to restore order and

economic reconstruction so that the people could make their decision in an atmosphere of calm."

"I agreed to the holding of elections on March 31, against my own wishes, and on the representations of Mr. Bevin, but I did so on the express condition that the plebiscite would not take place until 1948, and only then if tranquillity was restored."

"Mr. Bevin agreed to that condition. But if he now gives his approval of an early plebiscite, then a situation of civil war between Right and Left is the only possible outcome."

These words of the leading Greek Liberal, the ex-Prime Minister, Mr. Sofoulis, were borne out by everything seen and heard by our delegation while in Greece, except for the views of the extreme Right.

ELIZABETH FRANK'S SHOW NEWS Ballet Who?

THE name of Serge Lifar appears as Maitre de Ballet on the programmes sent in advance to Jay Pomeroy, who is bringing over the New Monte Carlo Ballet to the Cambridge Theatre on June 17. Pomeroy says he doesn't know whether Lifar is coming or not and does not seem greatly interested; but it is more than probable.

His recent receptions in France have not been encouraging. The stage staff at the Paris Opera went on strike when he was to give his first recital there, after exonerations from the stigma of collaboration, and, as I mentioned in an earlier column, he had a somewhat sticky time in Monte Carlo to begin with.

The company is Franco-Russian and two of the leading dancers appeared in the film "Le Mort de Cygne"—Janine Charrat, who played the hero-worshipping little girl, and Yvette Chauvire.

They are presenting a repertoire of 20 ballets including "Giselle," "Laocede," "Cyrus," "Petrushka" and "Prince Igor," arranged by Lifar, three of them to the music of Honegger.

For his opera season at the Cambridge Theatre, Jay Pomeroy has commissioned the help of the veteran Alexandre Benoit, the great Russian artist who was responsible for so much of the decor in the Diaghilev ballets. He is nearing 80 and is coming to London from Paris for the opening on June 12.

Benoit is the great-uncle of Peter Ustinov.

H. M. TENNENTS are indulging in a general shuffle of titles and theatres. Terence with Evelyn Williams, Angela with Emily and Frank, comes to the Lyric Theatre on May 23. "Private Lives" transfers to the newly released Fortune Theatre on June 10.

"A Portrait in Black" with Wynward, Ronald Williams

hope of repairs for many years to come, and every probability of the site being taken over by the ground landlords for the building of offices.

We cannot help the accidents of war, but surely something could be done with the help of the Theatre Managers' Association and the L.C.C. to prevent London's few remaining theatres from being acquired for other purposes than those for which they were originally intended.

DAVID STOKES, who was responsible for the charming decor of "The Thracian Horses" at the Lyric, Hammersmith, was a Japanese prisoner of war for three and a half years. During captivity Stokes, who was trained as an architect, was forced to design and help construct a Buddhist temple on the Singapore golf course.

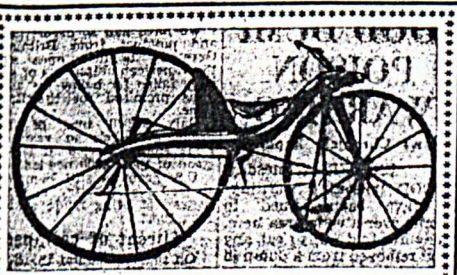
Before the war he designed the scenery for Maurice Evans' productions of "Hamlet" and "Richard III" in New York.

NAUSEA department: During the shooting of "Odd Man Out" in a street in Hurlingham last week hundreds of Londoners gathered to gaze and gape. One Jamie was smoking a cigarette during a rest when called on the set. A girl, who put it in her make-up compact with loving care.



A FLYING START!

Here's the future world international hop-scotch champion seen practising outside her home. Notice that she wears Startrite shoes with the famous heels. Her mummy knows that they keep her ankles straight, and the new Startrite last design gives extra room for growing feet.



He put the world on wheels

WHEN a party of tough old gentlemen, mostly directors of bicycle, tyre or equipment making firms, set out next Sunday to ride from Dumfries their legs—worth at least 15,000,000 on the capital basis of the industry—will carry them over the banks and braes for 15 miles to the doors of Courthill Smithy.

Along with members of the National Committee on Cycling, who are organising the show, they will gather round a wall tablet. Unveiled seven years late, it will say:

1939
The Centenary of the Bicycle
The National Committee on Cycling honours the memory of Kirkpatrick MacMillan, the inventor of the bicycle. He Built Better Than He Knew

In point of fact, MacMillan, the Courthill smith who is thus to be honoured, built the world's first bicycle not merely well, but was so secretive about it that not until three years later when he was haled before Gorbals Court for knocking down a child (fine 5s) did anyone know anything about it.

His bicycle (shown above) was built from a dandy-horse (frame and wheels propelled by pushing along the ground with the feet). Adding cranks, pedals and driving rods, he terrified the countryside for years as he flew along at 8 m.p.h.

Un-Scottish, he failed to commercialise the invention, and died a poor man.

Stanley Baron

FOREIGN OFFICE

REPORT OF THE
BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY
DELEGATION TO
GREECE

AUGUST

1946

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LONDON: HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

1947

BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO GREECE

REPORT

At the invitation of the Greek Government a British Parliamentary Delegation visited Greece in August 1946. The Delegation consisted of Mr. Seymour Cocks (leader), Mr. E. R. Bowen, Mr. Leslie Hale, Mr. John Maude, K.C., Mr. W. Monslow, Mr. W. M. R. Vane and Mr. Evelyn Walkden. Mr. John Parker, originally included, was unable, owing to illness, to accompany the party.

The Delegation (with the exception of Mr. Brown and Mr. Walkden, who arrived two days later) reached Athens on 16th August, and left on 29th August. They spent six days in Athens and the Piræus. During the other six days, various members of the Delegation visited, amongst other places, Patras, Corinth, Tripolis and Sparta in the Peloponnese, Salonika and Edessa in Macedonia, Larissa in Thessaly, Kavala, Xanthi, and the Island of Crete.

During the course of their visit, the Delegation had the honour of being received by the Regent, His Beatitude Archbishop Damaskinos. They had interviews with members of the Council of Ministers and with the leaders of various political parties, including M. Soufoulis (Liberal), M. Papandreou (Democratic Socialist), M. Kannelopoulos (Unity Party), M. Sofianopoulos (Republican Left), M. Tsirimokis (Socialist E.L.D.), M. Partsalides (E.A.M.) and M. Zachariades (Communist K.K.E.). They met the elected executive of the General Confederation of Labour, and also the new provisional executive appointed by the Government, as well as many representatives of trade unions, workers' associations and professional, industrial and political organisations. They visited prisons, hospitals, factories and various public institutions. They had conferences with Mr Maben, the American Chief of the U.N.R.R.A. Mission, Lieutenant-General Clark and Sir John Nixon of the British Economic Mission, Sir Charles Wickham, head of the British Police Mission, Major-General Rawlins, Chief of the British Military Mission, and Lieutenant-General Crawford, Commander-in-chief, British Land Forces, Greece, and received much help from all of them. They desire to thank the British officers and officials they met for their valuable co-operation.

The Delegation also wish to thank the Greek Government for their generous hospitality and uniform kindness. They are satisfied that they were given every facility by the Government to investigate conditions in Greece. They were able to go where they liked, and to see whom they wished. At the same time, the fact that they were the guests of the Government had its disadvantages as well as its advantages. When visiting the Provinces they were accompanied by Government representatives who acted as their hosts, and at each town they were received by the local Nomarch, a Government official. This, although perhaps unavoidable, had its obvious drawbacks, and no representatives of the Left made their appearance either at Sparta or Edessa.⁽¹⁾

But having said this, and bearing in mind the shortness of their stay, the fact that they were only able to see a small part of the country, and the very great handicap of having to rely on interpreters, the Delegation feel they were

(1) Since their return, the Delegation have seen statements in the Greek Communist press alleging that at Corinth and Larissa certain Left-wing supporters were prevented from seeing them. They have no means of testing the truth of this. But they saw many Left-wing representatives at other places.

able to obtain valuable information and to form a fair impression of the general state of the country. They have endeavoured to state their views as clearly and objectively as possible.

Political State of Country

The political state of the country is very distressing.

Whilst the bulk of the people—perhaps 85 per cent. of the population—only wish to live a peaceful life, extremists on both sides are engaging in acts of violence and terrorism to the great disturbance of civil order.

Although the feelings of hatred, fear, revenge and discontent resulting from the events of December 1944 have by no means died away, it is clear that acts of violence by both sides have considerably increased since the advent of the present Government.

In parts of Macedonia and the mountainous areas of Thessaly, especially around Mount Olympus, there is proceeding what almost amounts to a miniature civil war between Left-wing bands and the gendarmerie.

It is said that some of these bands receive aid and encouragement from the other side of the frontier, and it is probable that this is the case.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the activities of these bands are entirely due to foreign inspiration.

There is evidence that amongst these bands are many Left-wing supporters who have fled to the mountains to escape terrorism exercised by the extreme Right.

On the other hand, many Right-wing partisans have been shot by the Left, and this has given rise to acts of retaliation and revenge.

Unofficial statistics are unreliable and it would be impossible without prolonged investigation on the spot to estimate the degree of culpability to be attached to the respective sides.

Members of the Delegation who went from Salonika to Edessa were escorted by a strong armed guard.

In Salonika some nervousness was displayed as to the possibility of an actual foreign invasion from the North, and there was talk of a movement having for its object the formation of an autonomous Macedonian province or State. The Delegation do not think there is much popular backing for such a movement at present, although they were informed that in commercial circles discontent had been aroused by the alleged over-centralisation of authority at Athens.

At Larissa

In some parts of Thessaly, especially in the Larissa-Volos-Pharsala triangle, armed Right-wing bands are operating with the utmost audacity. One day in August a notorious Right-wing bandit named Sourlas actually entered the town of Larissa, headquarters of the 2nd Greek Army Corps, and remained there for some time without being arrested. On another day the political correspondent of the communist newspaper *Rizopastis*, a journalist named Vidalis, was taken out of a railway train near Volos by bandits and shot in the presence, it is said, of gendarmes. As far as the Delegation know, no arrests were made.

These armed bands are apparently tolerated by the authorities and no attempt is made to suppress them. Although it is claimed in certain quarters that their object is to prevent the spread of communism, the fact is that they never engage the communist bands in battle but devote themselves to terrorising the villages and exacting blackmail from any one rich enough to pay it. In the area south of Lamia, we were told, the Right-wing bandit leader levies a toll of one per cent. upon the production of the district. Although it is unlawful to bear arms this law is only

enforced against members of the Left. In certain districts in Thessaly the Government are supplying arms to their civilian supporters. British officials are disturbed at the possible consequences of this.

The Peloponnese

In the Peloponnese the peasants are traditionally Monarchist and the Left-wing allege that, being in a minority, they have been subjected to violent persecution and terrorism exercised by X-ites and armed bandits, with the connivance, if not the actual co-operation, of the gendarmerie. They state that as a result of this persecution thousands of Left-wing supporters have fled from Laconia and Messinia and taken refuge in Athens, Tripolis and other towns. An E.A.M. delegation, seen at Tripolis, stated that although there had once been a strong Republican party in the port of Kalamata it was now impossible to send any E.A.M. leader there for fear he would be killed on the way. The staff of their newspaper had recently been arrested and the journal had ceased publication. It was alleged that no one who had taken part in the Resistance movement was safe.

The Delegation were given a detailed list of a large number of alleged "beatings-up" and acts of violence by X-ites and gendarmes in the villages of Arcadia. They were also given the names of 38 inhabitants of Messinia who, it was alleged had been murdered by X-ites since 1st July. They also heard from Right-wing organisations counter-allegations to the effect that Monarchist supporters in the villages were afraid of being attacked by Left-wing gunmen.

The head of the gendarmerie, Lieutenant-Colonel Pappas, an officer of 28 years' service, whose bearing impressed the Delegation, stated that when, as had happened in a few instances, members of the gendarmerie got out of hand, he personally investigated the cases and the men were punished.

Whilst the Delegation were at Tripolis an ex-E.L.A.S. officer was shot dead outside the headquarters of the gendarmerie. It was suggested that this man had been murdered by his own side in order to convince the Delegation that a state of violence existed in the town. Although the Delegation cannot say that this is an impossible explanation, they do not feel that it is a very probable one.

At Sparta no one representing the Republican or Left-wing point of view made an appearance. Members of the public, questioned on the subject, stated that the number of Left-wing sympathisers in Laconia was very small and that their leaders had recently been recalled to Athens. Later in the day, the Delegation met some of these leaders in the local prison. The town appeared to be peaceful.

During their brief visit to the Peloponnese the Delegation had no opportunity of verifying the accuracy or otherwise of the various charges and counter-charges made by the delegations which came to see them. They can only say—

- (1) That the charges made by the Left were far more numerous and detailed (names and dates being given in many cases) than the counter-charges made by the Right which, on the whole, were vague and general.
- (2) That as the Right appeared to be in a large majority and had behind them the coercive powers of the security committees and the gendarmerie, they had far more opportunities of intimidating the Left than the Left had of intimidating the Right.

The Delegation are of the opinion that these opportunities have not been entirely neglected.

Athens

In Athens, comparative order and security prevailed. But the Delegation received many complaints of intimidation being exercised at night by armed gangs in the suburbs and cases of political murders were reported. Efforts to trace or apprehend the authors of these outrages did not seem to have met with much success.

The Security Measures

The Government have taken exceptional measures to deal with a gravely abnormal situation.

Security committees have been set up in every province and under the regulations people can be arrested, put in prison and detained indefinitely without trial.

Under the 1924 Law against bandits which the Government have again put into force, the security committees also have the power of deporting people to the islands on the grounds that "they are dangerous to public order." It may well be that by now over 1,000 persons have been deported and these include members of E.A.M. local committees and the editorial staffs of Left-wing newspapers. They also include women, some with children.

Allegations have been received to the effect that some of these islands are arid and barren, with scanty water supplies.

In addition to these committees, courts-martial have been set up in Macedonia, Thrace, Epirus and Thessaly. (The operation of these courts-martial has now been extended to cover the other provinces of Greece.) These courts-martial have the power in certain cases of inflicting the death penalty which is frequently carried out within a week of the sentence.

The Trade Unions

The Government have also taken exceedingly drastic measures in connection with the trade unions.

Following on a Judicial decision they have displaced the elected executive committee of the General Confederation of Labour and the elected executives of many trade unions and trades councils and have replaced them by Government nominees.

The Government have also seized trade union offices and records and arrested many of the leaders.

The Delegation have received many complaints of alleged acts of violence by the police against trade union leaders. This question is dealt with more fully in another section of this report.

The Plebiscite

It was obvious to the Delegation that the plebiscite would result in a large majority for the return of the King and that many Republicans would vote for this.

This was due to three main causes: First, the desire of the majority of the people for peace and order and the belief that the return of the King would lead to the restoration of social stability.

Second, the almost universal belief, fostered to some extent by Right-wing propaganda, that the British Government desired such a result and that a vote against the King would be a vote for Russia against Britain and for Balkan aggression against Greek integrity.

Third, a great fear of communism, and a repetition of the events of

The Delegation feel that these three factors *alone would have been* sufficient to ensure a Monarchist victory.

But persons of considerable responsibility endeavoured to make it clear that the Government intended to take few chances in the matter and that in many ways the scales were weighted against the Republicans.

For example, Liberal deputies complained that owing to Right-wing banditry they were unable to get to their constituencies⁽²⁾ and one former Liberal Cabinet Minister stated that if he went outside Athens he was afraid he would be shot.

They also said that if they held meetings in certain districts people would be afraid to come to them. The Delegation noted, however, that in parts of the highly troubled area of Macedonia members of the Opposition seemed to be enjoying freedom of speech.

The arrest and deportation of hundreds of local E.A.M. leaders prevented them from taking part in the plebiscite campaign.

Government action against the trades unions (discussed in another part of the Report) had disorganised the machinery of the workers political trade union organisation.

It was alleged that many thousands of Left-wing supporters had been driven from their villages by intimidation and dared not return to vote.

Seven Republican provincial daily newspapers (six E.A.M. and one Liberal) had suspended publication owing to alleged intimidation. It was also alleged that Republican newspapers published in Athens were frequently destroyed by Monarchists on their way to the provinces.

It was alleged that the device of giving each voter two or three ballot-papers would facilitate intimidation—especially in the case of Civil Servants and members of the armed forces who might be required to produce the papers they hadn't used in order to show how they had voted.

The utilisation by the Government of all available means for Monarchist propaganda, including the radio and the display of posters in every Government department, the presence of an active pro-Monarchist gendarmerie, and the fact that, owing to the Nomarch system, all local officials were supporters of the Government and all the machinery of provincial administration was in their hands, inevitably handicapped the Opposition.

Whilst these factors were not decisive they rendered the Monarchist victory less impressive than the published figures indicated, and they may have had the effect of deepening the resentment with which sections of the community regard the Government.

The Delegation, however, do not dispute the fact that a majority vote for the return of the King was in accordance with the present mood of the Greek people. Whether that mood will change—and it may change rapidly—depends on future events.

British Responsibility

There is a widespread belief in Greece—not confined to the extreme Left—that everything the Greek Government does is in accordance with British wishes. For any mistakes the Greek Government makes and for any unpopular action it takes the British Government will be blamed. On the other hand, if the Greek Government acts wisely and justly and in accordance with democratic principles British prestige will thereby be enhanced and the British Government will receive due praise. The Delegation submit that the implications of this perhaps somewhat embarrassing and undesired situation call for very serious consideration.

(2) It is only fair to say that a Populist deputy for the Olympus area said that he was unable to get to his constituency either.

A POLICY OF RECONCILIATION

The Delegation interviewed a number of prominent politicians representing non-governmental parties and ranging from the Centre position to the extreme Left.

From these interviews and from other sources they formed the opinion that there was a growing desire in responsible circles in Greece for the adoption of a policy of reconciliation.

The principal suggestions made to them were:—

- (1) That an All-Party Government should be formed embracing all sections except the extreme Left, which should have the moral, and perhaps the practical, support of the British Government.
- (2) That this Government should proclaim a general amnesty or at any rate a policy of clemency towards political offences.
- (3) That the special security measures should be repealed and ordinary constitutional law re-established and that this would cause the refugees to return to their homes.
- (4) That the new Government should devote its attention to re-establishing law and order and to the economic reconstruction of the country.
- (5) That after a period new elections should be held on an up-to-date register.

The E.A.M. Central Committee informed the Delegation—this was before the plebiscite—that if such a Government were formed they would support it.

The Delegation suggest that the return of the King might well afford a golden opportunity for strongly attempting the formation of such a Government and for rallying the widespread popular desire for peace and security to its support.

The bitterness and long-standing divisions of Greek political life, however, must make the formation of such a Government a matter of the utmost difficulty.

Friendship for Britain

The Delegation were greatly impressed by the feeling of friendship and admiration for Great Britain that existed everywhere in Greece. This friendship is of a long-standing and deep-seated character and pervaded all classes. Even those who blamed the British Government for their alleged support of the Right stated that for the British people they had the warmest affection. There is no doubt that in Greek eyes Britain stands for those ideals of freedom and democracy which the Greek people cherish themselves.

British Troops in Greece

There was no evidence that the presence of British troops in Greece had had any adverse effect upon Anglo-Hellenic relations. Their standard of conduct has been high and the Regent described their behaviour as "perfect." Their withdrawal was demanded by the Communist Party, by E.A.M. and by the Left-wing generally, but the Delegation met certain Socialist groups who were not opposed to their presence. Their value as a moral support to Greece in the present difficult international situation, particularly in view of possible threats from the North, was appreciated by many Republicans.

Nevertheless, in view of the danger, should civil disorder increase, of British troops being involved in matters which should be settled by the Greeks themselves, the Delegation feel there is a strong case for their early withdrawal from Greece.

The Delegation realise that a decision on this question may involve considerations of strategy and high policy which are outside the scope of their enquiries:

Because of these same considerations they make no comment of their own on the suggestion that Britain should guarantee the present frontiers of Greece, but merely state objectively that a declaration to that effect would gratify the Greek people and remove many of their anxieties.

Local Government

The Greeks are ardent politicians but their opportunities of taking part in the practical affairs of administration are limited.

Under the present Greek Constitution the 40-odd Provinces or Nomes are governed by Prefects or Nomarchs appointed by the Government.

The Nomarch represents in his area virtually all the Government ministries except the Ministry of Justice.

He governs by delegation, controlling the gendarmerie commanders and appointing the mayors and headmen of the town and villages.

When the political complexion of the Government at Athens changes the Nomarchs are changed also and all the sub-functionaries as well.

Thus, although the Greeks are democratic by nature, their system of local government is undemocratic or authoritarian.

The Delegation believe that in any country democracy should be built up from the bottom and that in Greece the natural way of doing this would be to create democratically elected local councils, rural, urban and provincial, which would give the Greek people the opportunity of governing themselves and of gaining experience in local administration.

But for this to happen the Greeks would have to change their Constitution. To suggest such a thing to a sovereign State would be a matter of extreme delicacy, and it is only because the Delegation feel that such a change is fundamentally desirable that they mention it at all.

Position of Women

The Delegation noted with some interest that the position of women in Greece appears to be much the same as it was in the days of Pericles. Greek women have not yet obtained the vote and very few women were present at any of the public receptions and formal banquets given to the Delegation. There seems to be no reason why the franchise in Greece should not be extended to women, and the Delegation suggest that in any future Parliamentary mission to Greece a woman Member of Parliament might be included.

Over-Reliance on Britain

Greek friendship, already referred to, has led in many quarters to an almost helpless reliance on Britain to help Greece out of all her financial and economic difficulties. Conversations with leading statesmen made this point perfectly clear. In some cases political leaders have got so much into the habit of looking to Britain to put their country on its feet, that they have almost lost sight of the imperative need of doing their utmost themselves to put their own house in order. If, in the end, Britain proves unable to provide all the material assistance they expect and require, there may arise a wide-spread feeling of disillusionment almost amounting to despair.

Material Conditions

Greece has suffered terribly from the war and from civil disturbances. It is estimated that nearly 900,000 lives have been lost and these include many young men and skilled workers. Partly due to this, and partly due to under-nourishment, the productivity of labour has fallen to 50 per cent. of pre-war level.

227,000 houses have been damaged or demolished and 2,000 villages partly or wholly destroyed. There is much overcrowding and there are many homeless people.

The main railway line from Athens to Salonika is out of action, tunnels and bridges have been blown up, and it is estimated that it would take a first-class British firm eighteen months to restore the system. By Greek standards the minimum might be five years.

Some of the other railways have been repaired but there is an acute shortage of locomotives and rolling stock. Rail charges and fares are extremely high.

Roads are atrocious. Of the 10,000 kilom. of class A highways, only 5 per cent. are in good condition, 35 per cent. are usable but the remaining 60 per cent. are almost impassable. One out of every three vehicles employed by U.N.R.R.A. needs repair after one journey. It takes 22 hours to travel by jeep from Athens to Salonika, a distance of 220 miles.

Transport charges are exorbitant. It costs about £3 10s. a ton to bring cotton 60 miles into Athens: it can be brought from India for the same cost. These charges bear hardly on the farmer and check industrial recovery. There is a great shortage of road repairing machinery and little is being done to mend the roads.

The Corinth Canal is blocked up and the harbours are badly damaged. The port of Salonika is obstructed by sunken shipping. Repairs have not yet been started in any of these cases.

Over three-quarters of the Greek merchant fleet has been sunk, mainly in the service of the Allies, and the Greek Government have been unable to obtain ships from Great Britain. Negotiations for the purchase of vessels from the United States have been opened but difficulties about payment have arisen and negotiations have been slow.

The fishing industry is inadequately developed and provides scope for substantial expansion. Less than 2 per cent. of the population of a country with 2,500 miles of coast-line was employed in fishing prior to the war. The development of a fish-canning industry should be considered.

Factories lack spare parts and machinery has deteriorated through lack of maintenance. Otherwise damage to industrial plants has not been excessive. Employment is up to 80 per cent. of pre-war, but productivity is down, working conditions are bad, there is much discontent and the Government's attitude towards the trade unions is not likely to increase the cheerfulness or output of the workers. There are no reliable statistics relating to unemployment but the number of people unemployed is certainly considerable. There is an almost overwhelming shortage of raw materials.

Hand-work industries, such as hand-weaving, copper-work and silver-work, should be encouraged and the possibility of developing hydro-electric power considered.

Unless production is increased the danger of inflation will be ever present. A Geo-physical survey of the country is badly needed to ascertain how far deposits of iron-ore, manganese, chrome, lead and other minerals can be profitably developed.

Agriculture

Greece is mainly an agricultural country: 65 per cent. of the population, chiefly peasant proprietors and their families, live upon the land. War caused great devastation. Over 400,000 draught animals were slaughtered or stolen by the Germans. Olive trees and vineyards were destroyed. Villages were burnt down and hundreds of thousands of peasants displaced. Nevertheless great progress has been made. The Greek farmer is hard-working and his whole family helps him in the field. It is anticipated that the production of olives, wheat, cotton, nuts, tomatoes, rye, oats, dried fruits and citrus fruits in 1946 will amount to 90 per cent. of pre-war production. The production of dried beans will show a considerable increase but there will be a substantial fall in eggs, meat and milk.

The tobacco crop—half of which was formerly bought by Germany—has fallen to less than one-third of its pre-war level. Much of this has been hoarded by the growers owing to their dissatisfaction with the prices offered by the merchants and their distrust in the stability of the drachma. Britain has just purchased £10 million worth of Macedonian tobacco.

From the earliest times Greece has been a wheat-importing country and normally she imports 600,000 tons of wheat annually. This requires much foreign exchange. It has been suggested that less foreign exchange would be needed if Greece grew potatoes instead of cotton. A large proportion of the 70,000 tons of seed now imported could be produced at home. Canning factories should be set up in tomato growing areas. Timber is scarce and expensive, as in all Eastern Mediterranean countries, but there is no reason why the existing forests should not be very greatly improved and extended provided goats are ruthlessly excluded from grazing in all forest areas. Greece is a dry country and large scale irrigation would produce enormous benefits: in fact, the Director of the U.N.R.R.A. Mission said that it might make her another California. Although peasant co-operatives exist there is need for an improved marketing system to enable the peasant to get a better price for his products and to free him from exploitation by middlemen.

It is self-evident that a programme of reconstruction is urgently needed by Greece in which perhaps the International Bank for Reconstruction could help. Estimates of the cost of repairing war damage alone, without embarking on long-term schemes of development, vary greatly. Some put the figure at £325 million; others at £1,000 million. In any case the amount must be a very large one. Only £5 million is allotted for reconstruction in the current budget. This is ludicrously inadequate, but, owing to the fear of inflation, it is the limit imposed for the time being by the British Economic Mission.

The Delegation interviewed the appropriate ministries with a view to obtaining some detailed plans for reconstruction. No such plans appeared to be in existence.⁽²⁾

Economic and Social Conditions

The economic position of Greece and of a large proportion of the population is, by British standards, appalling.

Greece is a poor country and the majority of the people live in conditions of great hardship.

This hardship is greatly accentuated at the present time by the extraordinary high prices which everywhere prevail.

⁽²⁾ It has since been reported that a Reconstruction Board has prepared a five-year plan for reconstruction, the finances for which will be met, it is hoped, by a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction.

Bread is rationed but there is no general system of rationing or price control. Nor does the machinery exist to work such a system.

Retail prices have gone up to 150 times their pre-war figure and more than that in some cases.

The price of wheat has been stabilised at 140 times pre-war.

It is estimated that the cost of living has gone up 80 times.

Wages have only gone up 60 times or less.

A good general wage for a worker in the towns is 48s. to 54s. a week and many earn less than that.⁽⁴⁾

But the minimum cost of maintaining a family of four is about 96s. of which 58s. is the cost of food.

Greek workers have the habit of taking work where they can find it and not confining themselves exclusively to their own trades and this may help them to earn a little more in certain cases.

In some industries attempts have been made to increase wages by paying the workers their wages in advance in the form of loans.

But such a system cannot last and unless conditions are altered it would seem that industry must eventually be brought to a standstill.

The peasant has always been poor but he can keep alive on the food he produces.

In the towns it is a different matter and it is obvious that without the free U.N.R.R.A. supplies many thousands of workers and their families would already have died of starvation. There is no system of public assistance.

If, as has been announced, U.N.R.R.A. supplies are to come to an end, something will have to be put in their place or great masses of people will starve to death.

Greece's claims for food allocations should be strongly and competently pressed before the International Emergency Food Council which is to take the place of U.N.R.R.A.

The Greek Government has not yet formulated its wheat policy and it is not known whether the importation of wheat is to be a Government monopoly or whether importers are to be allowed to bring in whatever they can. But it has been stated generally that it favours private enterprise and wishes to reduce State interference with trade and industry to a minimum.

The Delegation, however, consider that, in the present exceptional and critical situation, a vigorous attempt should be made to introduce further price regulation and a system of rationing.

The Black Market

There is an extensive black market in Athens and Piræus. Goods from U.N.R.R.A. and N.A.A.F.I. are hawked about the streets and sold in the shops. There seems to be a grave deficiency in the law in respect to these matters.

The Civil Service

Far too large a proportion of the urban population is engaged in non-productive work and this constitutes a problem which requires earnest attention.

It is stated that the number of people employed in the public services alone has doubled since 1939.

(4) It is difficult to speak accurately of an average wage since wages in different occupations have risen unequally; for example, a dock worker, textile worker or motor driver in Athens may earn 12s. to 15s. a day, whilst a skilled worker in some other trade may earn only half of this.

Note.—The rate of exchange is 20,000 drachmae to the paper pound and 137,000 to the gold pound.

There is a large and badly paid Civil Service which is crying out for improvement.

A Government clerk is only paid £2 a week with family allowances up to 25 per cent. of salary.

Other grades are paid proportionately. The highest paid regular official of the State, the President of the Supreme Court, receives in salary and emoluments some £400 a year.

A Civil Service half as large and adequately paid, with greater independence and personnel selected for individual merit rather than for political opinions, would render a far more efficient service than the present body.

The British Economic Mission has advised the Greek Government to set up a Public Services Commission for recruitment to Government service. The Delegation agree with this recommendation but are of the opinion that a complete reorganisation of the Civil Service is required.

The Tax-Free Rich

Although there are no titles or social distinctions in Greece—and the natural atmosphere of equality that prevails is one of the most pleasing features of Greek life—there is a small class of wealthy people chiefly residing in and around Athens. Members of these families live in great luxury. They have gold pounds at their disposal, each of which can be exchanged for 137,000 drachmæ (£6 17s. 0d.) and so are indifferent to the high cost of living, and, as there is no income tax in the British sense, they live practically tax-free.

The lavish hospitality dispensed by these wealthy people, coupled with the display of expensive goods in the shops in Athens, is apt to give the visitor a false impression of the true financial state of the country.

This state is critical.

Budget Unbalanced

Greece cannot pay for the imports she needs and her budget is unbalanced.

This year the budget provides for an expenditure of £51,000,000 against a revenue of £30,000,000.

This deficit of £21,000,000 has been reduced to £8,700,000 by adding to the revenue various non-recurring items such as proceeds from the sale of stores, which will not be available in future years.

Less than £9,000,000 is being spent in health, welfare, agriculture and education but £12,500,000 has been allotted to the armed forces (in addition to the cost of equipment, which is partly paid by Britain) and £6,000,000 to public security.

On the revenue side only £4,600,000 is raised by direct taxation or 10s. per head, and £21,500,000 by indirect taxation or approximately £2 10s. per head.

If the budget is ever to be balanced in the future it is obvious that methods of taxation must be revised and taxes must fall primarily upon those best able to pay.

" Members of the wealthy class should no longer be exempt from substantial direct taxation.

The possibility of raising an internal savings loan should be considered.

There appears to be no such Government official as the Auditor-General. Attention should be paid to the establishment of improved business routine in Government departments, to the strict scrutiny of estimates and an equally strict auditing of accounts.

Balance of Trade

Greece has always had an adverse balance of trade, but in the past the difference has been made up by:—

1. Earnings of Greek shipping.
2. Remittances from Greek emigrants abroad.
3. Receipts from tourist traffic.
4. Foreign loans.

The first two are heavily down and are likely to remain so for some time to come. The third does not at present exist and only the fourth, the prospect of which is hypothetical, remains.

Greek exports in 1945 only amounted to £71,000. This year they are expected to reach £6,250,000, of which amount more than half will be represented by tobacco.

But Greece requires to import large quantities of food, iron, steel, machinery, coal, petrol and raw materials, and Mr. Maben, head of the U.N.R.R.A. Mission, estimates that when U.N.R.R.A. supplies cease there will be an adverse exchange balance of £25,400,000.

Yet imports cannot be cut down materially without further lowering the standard of living and reducing the chances of any revival of industry.

Exports must be increased but Mr. Maben's view is that for this to be done the drachma must be devaluated by almost 40 per cent. unless export subsidies are to be granted.

The Delegation were disappointed to find that none of the political leaders of parties seemed to have any concrete plans for dealing with these problems. The prevailing view can be summed up, not unfairly in a phrase "England will have to help us."

The British Missions

The British Economic Mission has done an important and successful job and has still more difficult tasks ahead of it. The Mission believes that Greece, with help in personnel and money, could, in a matter of 10 years or so, become a country with a balanced budget and a balanced trade.

It may be that the powers of the Mission will have to be widened in order to achieve complete success. It is, perhaps, worthy of remark that M. Zachariades, the Secretary of the Communist Party, stated that he was in favour of the Mission remaining and that he thought economic collaboration between Greece and Britain could last 100 years.

The impartiality of the Greek gendarmerie has been questioned in many quarters, and as it is now actively engaged in fighting pitched battles with Communist and Leftist bands it has naturally taken on the character of a partisan force. The British Police Mission and conditions of the prisons are referred to elsewhere in this Report.

The British Military Mission is doing first-class work in organising and training the Greek Army. The Naval and Air Missions are living up to the high traditions of their respective services.

Conclusion

The Delegation have drawn what is perhaps a depressing picture of the Greek situation. They have endeavoured to set out what they have seen and heard in an objective and impartial way.

They have seen a country where the degree of political disagreement can be measured by the number of political parties that exist and the degree of political animosity can be shown by the continuance of

atricidal strife at a time when Greece needs the united efforts of all her sons and daughters to repair the damage caused by the War and to overcome economic dangers and difficulties of the most critical and pressing character.

They have seen in Greece, as in classical days, a great and gifted people in danger of falling into ruin by rushing into extreme and violent courses, by neglecting to compromise and by failing to follow a policy of moderation and generous reconciliation.

Yet the people of Greece are a gallant, gay and attractive race and after the miseries they have endured during the last five years they deserve to have some prospect of a brighter, more prosperous and happier future.

The Delegation believe there is an opportunity of achieving this if a wise policy is adopted.

Realising the immense influence which the British nation can exercise over Greek opinion they put the following suggestions—in addition to the recommendations made in the body of this Report—before His Majesty's Government, and trust that they may be found worthy of serious consideration.

Recommendations

1. That the opportunity given by the return of the King should be used to initiate an entirely new policy in and towards Greece.
2. That an All-Party Government should be formed, with the support of Great Britain, to include all sections with the possible exception of the extreme Left.
3. That this Government, should it not be practicable to declare a general Amnesty, should at least adopt a generous policy of clemency towards political offenders.
4. That the first object of this Government should be the establishment of law, order and internal peace, and the restoration of constitutional liberties.
5. That the special security decrees should be cancelled and all persons who, by order of the security committees, have been exiled to the islands for political reasons should be allowed to return to their homes.
6. That all persons surrendering their arms by a given date should be freed from the penalties attached to the illegal possession of arms.
7. That further steps should be taken to improve the conditions in the prisons.
8. That after a certain defined period new elections should be held on an up-to-date register.
9. That subject to considerations of strategy and high policy the British troops should be withdrawn at an early date.
10. That the action of the Government in appointing a new General Council of Labour and nominating new trade union executives should be rescinded and that pending new elections the former elected representatives should be allowed to return to their duties.
11. That as soon as possible new trade union elections should be held under the supervision of the T.U.C. or the W.F.T.U. and that the good offices of the latter organisations should be utilised to amalgamate the 2,225 small trade unions in Greece into larger units.
12. That it is urgently necessary that some plan should be devised to meet the situation which will be created when U.N.R.R.A. ceases to operate at the end of the present year, and that the Greek Government should be pressed to appoint a representative to press Greece's claims for food allocations before the International Emergency Food Council.

13. That concrete plans for reconstruction, with priority for harbours, railways and roads, should be adopted and pressed forward with the possible help of the International Bank for Reconstruction.

14. That any future loans to Greece should only be granted on condition that the powers of the British Economic Mission are strengthened and that it be advisable to ask the Greek Government to accept the appointment of a British Financial Adviser with the duty of recommending a drastic reform of the present system of taxation.

15. That a system of price regulation and rationing is urgently needed.

16. That a drastic re-organisation of the Civil Service is called for and that, if possible, a British Civil Service Mission should be sent to Greece to assist in the work.

17. That every possible assistance should be given to enable Greece to replace her merchant ships which were lost in the war.

18. That the Greek people should be more closely associated with the work of local administration and government.

19. That the establishment in Greece of any régime which resembled a dictatorship would have fatal consequences.

In conclusion the Delegation feel that the friendship which exists between the Greek and British peoples has a precious and unique character, that nothing should be done to weaken it and that it should grow even closer with the passage of Time.

(Signed)

SEYMOUR COCKS.

E. R. BOWEN.

LESLIE HALE.

JOHN C. MAUDE.

W. MONSLOW.

W. M. R. VANE.

EVELYN WALKDEN.

10th October, 1946.

Rider by W. M. R. Vane, M.P.

While I do not wish to disagree specifically with the facts set out in any particular chapter of the report and while I accept the administrative recommendations whole-heartedly, I do feel that over the political field the general emphasis should be placed somewhat differently. As it has been drafted, I feel that the report is less than fair to the present Greek Government and tends to judge it too far by Western European and too little by Eastern European standards. With all its faults, and they are many, it is endeavouring, in my opinion, to co-operate loyally with the British Missions, although under great provocation it is failing to resist the tradition of retaliation against political opponents in which Eastern Europe has been educated.

I feel, too, that the report under-estimates the after effects of the rebellion of December 1944 and January 1945 and the suspicions that the Communists and some of the E.A.M. leaders are in close contact with foreign countries and are not only disloyally organising the Left-wing bandits but also preparing to repeat their larger revolutionary experiment when opportunity offers. These suspicions may not be entirely well founded but they are widely believed.

Finally, I feel that too much hope should not be placed on the possibility of re-forming the Government as a very wide coalition. The recent elections gave a majority to the Populist Party, whose claim to form a Government can hardly be disputed. Although, under present circumstances, it would clearly be an advantage if some other groups now in Opposition would co-operate with the present Government, there is a great danger of introducing new weaknesses and intrigues if the coalition is made too wide.

(Signed) W. M. R. VANE.

ANNEX A

Memorandum on Conditions of Law and Order in Greece

By LESLIE HALE, M.P., AND JOHN C. MAUDE, K.C., M.P.

(1) *The administration of the ordinary criminal law*

(a) The Delegation had no opportunity of witnessing a criminal trial, because the Courts were not able to sit to hear cases during the weeks preceding the plebiscite owing to the fact that the judicial officers were needed for work in connection with the supervising of the plebiscite. This interruption in the ordinary work of the Criminal Courts led to added congestion of the lists of cases awaiting trial which, at the time of our visit, was formidable.

(b) The Judiciary are clearly held in high respect by the people of Greece, and we found nothing to arouse any doubt as to the accuracy of the finding of the British Legal Mission to Greece that Greek methods of investigation and public trial are adequate and equitable.

(c) It is clearly extremely difficult to speed up trials, because the salaries of the judges are so low that it is virtually impossible to get a busy practising lawyer to act in the sort of capacity that members of the Bar in England do when they go as Commissioner of Assize. It seems that the highest judicial salary with bonuses, family allowance, and service pay amounts to a sum in the neighbourhood of £400 per year.

(d) It was not possible to make any extensive investigation to find out whether persons accused of political banditry were able to find lawyers to defend them, but we are inclined to think that on occasions this is probably difficult.

(2) *The abnormal state of civil disturbance in Greece*

(a) It is not easy in the course of a short visit to obtain a clear view of the extent of the wave of violence which was prevailing in certain districts of Greece at the time of our visit.

There is, however, no doubt at all that a condition of lawlessness prevails in certain areas which justifies the taking of exceptional measures by the authorities to prevent and punish murders and other acts of grave violence.

(b) In certain areas outrages have been committed by bandits who are generally designated as of the extreme Left, whilst in other areas similar outrages are attributed to bandits of the extreme Right. For instance, in the Peloponnese there appears to be an overwhelming predominance of the Right, and this area has been by no means free from disturbances, while in the neighbourhood of the Albanian, Yugoslavian and Bulgarian frontiers there is a marked predominance of the Left where many murders have taken place. The Government allege that arms for the Left are constantly

smuggled over the northern frontier, and that Left-wing bandits are able, when pressed, to take refuge across the northern frontier. There can be little doubt that many of the allegations made by both sides of cruelty and atrocity are either grossly exaggerated or wholly without foundation, but there are wide areas in which lawlessness of great gravity is almost a daily occurrence.

(c) The members of the Delegation were not warned by the Greek Government that it was dangerous to go out and walk about the towns at night, nor were they apparently given any sort of police protection in the towns which they visited. We do not consider that such protection was necessary for the members of the Delegation, but the authorities thought that it was wise to afford the members of the Delegation who drove from Tripolis to Sparta one evening the added protection of a small body of gendarmes, which followed the motor cars of the Delegation; on one occasion in Tripolis, after being assured by the local Chief of Police that absolute calm prevailed in the district, Mr. Hale took a walk and found a man of some 35 years of age, a former E.L.A.S. Officer, lying murdered within a few yards of the local police headquarters. It was not established during our stay in Greece who had committed the murder. Attacks on gendarme posts were frequent in Northern Greece, and during the evening before the Delegation left Salonika some seven gendarmes were murdered, at a distance of about 80 miles from the city. On arrival by air from Salonika at Larissa in Thessaly, the British and Greek authorities reported to us that fighting was going on between the police and a small body of bandits on the edge of the plain of Thessaly at no great distance from Larissa.

During our stay in Athens, the Delegation were petitioned by the mother of a man who had been murdered the previous day, after being taken out of a holiday camp in the suburbs of Athens at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

(3) *The Special Powers taken by the Government to deal with the Crime Wave*

(a) The Greek Government have taken powers that are not dissimilar to our 18B procedure during the war. Under the procedure as set out in the regulations, a suspect is arrested on a warrant issued by the local Public Prosecutor, who himself prepares the case, and interviews the witnesses. After arrest, the prisoner has no right to apply for bail, and indeed the Court is specifically prohibited from granting bail. There is nothing to prevent his being detained indefinitely without his case being heard, and no doubt there is considerable delay. Where conditions of lawlessness prevail, it is sometimes extremely difficult to get witnesses to attend a hearing, and these hearings have to be adjourned very often for such causes. The Minister of Justice explained to the Delegation that the accused always had the option of attending the hearing of his case, but that he need not go unless he wished.

We were of the opinion that it was unsatisfactory that the Prefect of the district should be a member of, and preside over, the Security Committee, as well as, (except in Athens), the Second Degree Public Security Committee, which is a Court of Appeal for such cases. There is no objection in our view to the formation of the Committee in any other respect, but we do consider it unfortunate that the Committee should not be a judicial body entirely divorced from the executive. Powers of this kind can only be justified by conditions which are completely and deplorably abnormal. It is somewhat difficult to reconcile the suggestions that at one and the same time the condition of a country is so peaceful as to

warrant the holding of a plebiscite, and at the same time so troubled as to necessitate the abrogation of much elementary liberty.

(b) When we visited the prison in Sparta we gained the impression that a large proportion of the prisoners were detained by order of the Security Committee; many local Left-wing leaders were imprisoned, including the editor of the local newspaper, the President of the Agrarian Left Party, a local teacher, a local barrister, and so on. Accordingly we called for some statistics about the inmates of the prison; which showed that in Sparta prison there had been a total of 49 prisoners detained whose cases had been considered by the local Public Security Committee; all of these appealed, with the result that 19 were released; two had been informed that the decision to deport them stood, and twenty-eight were awaiting the result of their appeals. Information was supplied to us that a further fifteen prisoners were also detained in the Sparta police station cells awaiting the result of their appeals.

We were further supplied with figures which show that, since the commencement of the working of these Security Committees up to 10th August, 1946, 573 prisoners had been deported, and 1,385 were awaiting the result of their appeals against deportation.

(c) The Delegation asked for figures in connection with the sentences passed by the special military tribunals which have recently been active in Macedonia and Thrace. Up to 21st August, 1946, 34 death sentences had been passed, 33 sentences of life imprisonment, 21 heavy sentences of 30-10 years, 22 medium sentences of 10-3 years, and 87 light sentences under 3 years. As against this total of 197 convictions, the Delegation thought the number of acquittals—55—impressive. Murders in the provinces of Northern Greece during the period January-June 1946, that is to say Western Macedonia, Central Macedonia, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, totalled 143. An analysis of the killings during the three months of May, June and July for Central Macedonia, including Salonika, show figures for May of 15, June 30, and July 48, and of this total 14 were gendarmes, 4 rural guards, and 16 soldiers.

(4) *The British Police Mission*

This very small Mission has clearly done admirable work. We noticed that relations were excellent between the officers of the Police Mission and the officers and men of the Greek Town Police forces, as well as the gendarmerie.

The Police Mission has done a great deal to promote efficiency of the Greek police, and we found it to be the subject of no sort of hostile comment by opponents of the Government.

(5) *Conditions of Prisons*

In addition to visiting the prison at Sparta, visits were paid to the two main prisons in Salonika and to two Police Stations in Athens, in both of which convicted prisoners were serving short sentences. At the Aslerove prison in Athens, where the majority of prisoners were members of the E.L.A.S., it was stated that of the 300 prisoners accommodated in one section, none had been tried, and some had been there for considerable periods. Conditions here were primitive, but there was no sign of physical deterioration amongst the prisoners. At the Casteros prison in the Piræus, there was gross over-crowding and strong evidence of physical deterioration; the attention of the Minister of Justice was called to these conditions, and he declared that he would make an immediate investigation.

The conditions in all the prisons visited were found to be primitive, but we are satisfied that the Greek Government are anxious to improve both prison conditions and the prison system in general. It seems impossible, in

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view of the shortage of materials and labour, as well as an absence of trained personnel, that any rapid improvement can take place. The prevailing system is quite unlikely, in our opinion, to have any sort of reformatory effect.

The present staffs at the gaols which we visited undoubtedly treated their prisoners humanely and with understanding; this opinion is founded upon many private conversations which we were able to have in prisons with individual prisoners of both sexes.

(Signed) LESLIE HALE.
 JOHN C. MAUDE.

ANNEX B

Memorandum on Trade Unionism in Greece

By W. MONSLOW, M.P., AND EVELYN WALKDEN, M.P.

We found a state of crisis of recent development existing in the trade union movement in Greece. The work performed by Sir Walter Citrine and his T.U.C. colleagues from January 1945 onwards, had resulted in the holding of elections for Trade Union Executives, leading to the National Congress held on 1st March, 1946. The Congress was attended by W.F.T.U. representatives, including Mr. G. H. Bagnall, of the T.U.C., who formally stated their satisfaction with the elections and with the composition of the Congress. It seemed at that time that a large measure of Trade Union unity had been achieved and that elections could thereafter be held annually, or as required for the renewal of the various executives.

But the legality of the position was challenged by the Greek High Court at the instance of a representative of the Right-wing Reformist Group. It should be appreciated that under Greek law there is detailed legal definition of trade unions and their activities. The decision of the High Court was such as to invalidate for legal purposes the National Congress and the elected trade union executives. It is important to realise that this invalidation was not due to allegations of improper conduct of elections, of interference or of undue pressure. It rested solely upon the apparent breach of the constitution arising from the issue, by one of the many Ministers of Labour (Zakkas), of a proclamation designed to provide representation of minority movements on various executives. Further, when it became apparent that this proclamation was likely to be challenged, M. Louis Saillant, who was then present in Athens, obtained the agreement of the leaders of the four Groups to withdraw their appeals and in fact they each signed a statement giving the necessary undertaking. The undertaking was not honoured.

It is obvious that the Minister of Labour had no option but to endeavour to legalise the position of the trade unions as soon as possible, since any common informer could have challenged their actions and their existence. The steps that he took, however, disposed of all argument, because a co-ordinated attack on each and every union centre soon followed. Records and papers were seized and all non-Nationals ejected. The Minister nominated individuals to serve as provisional executives of the General Confederation and the sixty workers' centres, and he was proceeding to nominate provisional executives for the 2,225 trade unions. In making these allocations he did not re-appoint the former duly elected members, nor did he appoint members on a basis proportionate to the representation of the various Groups arising from the elections. He took the opportunity of filling the

~~Group executives~~ entirely with right-wing (Reformist) members.⁽³⁾ It was this Group which did not honour the undertaking to refrain from challenging the earlier Minister's proclamation and it was this Group which, by abstaining from participation in the Congress, minimised the extent of trade union unity which was so far secured.

In the substitution and ejection of the elected executives there were incidents which led to the arrest of four leading members who are now under suspended sentences of imprisonment. But others, like the Bakers' Union President in Salonika, were and are still imprisoned for disturbing the peace or for security reasons.

The elected members naturally claim that they are the rightful representatives of the workers. They have appealed to W.F.T.U. and M. Joubaux (France) has brought their case before that body. It is no exaggeration to say that this process of elimination is a distinct and definite purge of all trade union branch officials who hold Left-wing ideas. It is in keeping with the same process of elimination of anti-Royalist and Left-wing opinion in the armed forces, the gendarmerie and the Civil Service.

In addition to the immediate short-term action which is called for, there is a need to comment upon the general position for which long-term remedial and educative action appears to us to be advisable.

During the course of our visit we met at Athens, Patras and Salonika representatives of the various trade union groups and we have formed the impression that politics are the dominating motive in trade union activities, to the detriment of the conduct of the proper business of such bodies, namely, the cultivation of industrial relations, the development of wage negotiations and the improvement of the condition of the workers in the various industries. In the Patras area wholesale arrests of so-called agitators (two from each village) were openly admitted by the Nomarch. It was abundantly clear that most of the persons now imprisoned for security reasons in this area are ex local trade union Centre leaders. Of 57 so imprisoned, 51 were former active trade unionists in their respective villages. At the moment there does not appear to be any collective bargaining machinery with employers as recognised in Great Britain. On the one hand there are various Government orders regulating wages, but nevertheless there appear to be negotiations conducted mainly on a day to day pressure basis.

There is evidence that, in the not too distant past and, indeed, in many areas at present, the dominating trade union influence is communist. We came to the conclusion, however, that this does not represent the real feelings of the worker, of whom not more than 25 per cent. can be considered to be of communist sympathies. This should become evident as soon as properly conducted elections can be held, and it is the more essential that the current crisis referred to above should be quickly solved, if only to enable proper expression of the workers' feelings to be given. But if duly conducted elections are held and if the resultant trade union executives concern themselves mainly with industrial problems, it is immaterial which political Group happens to predominate. Indeed, in view of the breakaway and disruptive tendencies shown by the Right-wing (Reformist) Group, in the trade union world, it is the more essential that not too much emphasis should be laid upon political tendencies.

We think that it is important that when elections have been held the recognition of the resultant bodies should be a matter for the W.F.T.U., in addition to the legal establishment of their position inside Greece. Following

⁽³⁾ To be strictly accurate he appointed a new G.C.L. executive consisting of seventeen Nationalists and five members of the previously elected executive, but the latter refused to serve.

such recognition we express the view that the future of trade unionism in Greece depends upon the measure of its concentration upon purely industrial activities, i.e., a programme of working conditions should be prepared, industry by industry, and be made the target for its future work. Steps should be taken to get national machinery established and we feel that competent persons in Great Britain, experienced in the structure of trade unions (we would suggest not more than three), might be utilised in building such machinery. If this suggestion is adopted these persons should work in close collaboration with the responsible Labour Attaché at the British Embassy in Athens.

Finally, there is no hope for the trade union movement in Greece, in our opinion, unless there is a desire on the part of the workers of Greece to concentrate on industrial movement for improved economic conditions and not, as at present, to be subordinated solely to political machinations and intrigues.

(Signed) W. MONSLOW.
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