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# Greece in the 1940s

## A Nation in Crisis

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Edited by

*John O. Iatrides*

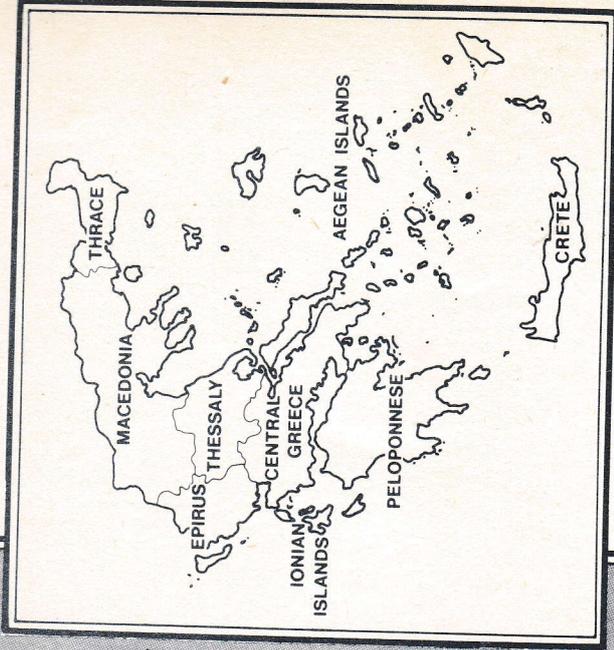
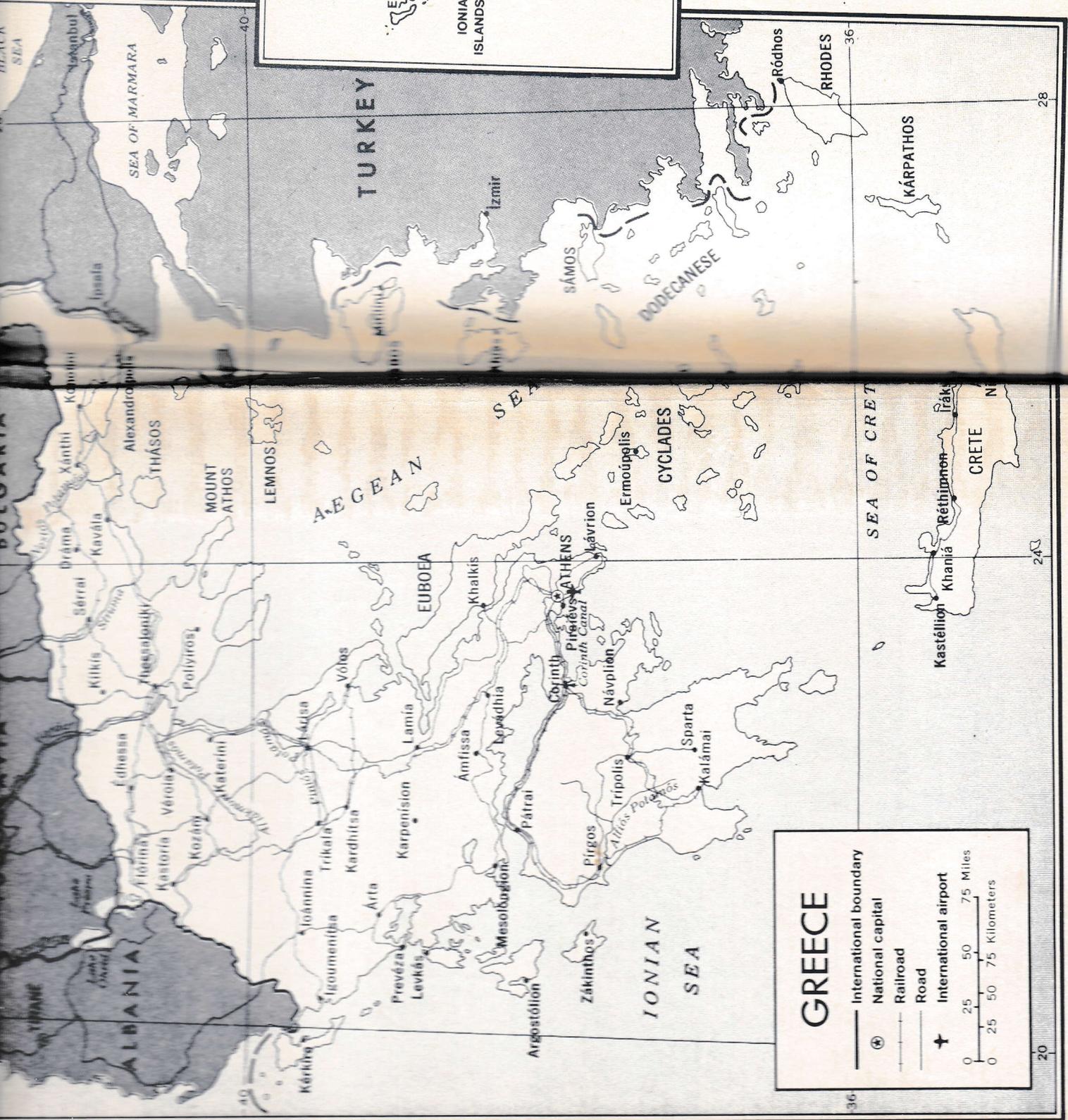
Editorial Committee

*Peter Bien · Julia W. Loomis · A. Lily Macrakis*

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# The Varkiza Agreement and the Origins of the Civil War

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*Heinz Richter*

This paper aims to refute one of the most tenacious myths of Greece's contemporary history: that the Greek Communist party (KKE) began to plan the "Third Round," that is, the civil war of 1946-1949, as early as February 1945 when the peace agreement putting a legal end to the "Second Round" of December 1944 (the so-called Δεκεμβριανά) was signed between the Greek government and the National Liberation Front/National Peoples' Liberation Army (EAM/ELAS) at Varkiza. Similarly, this is the myth that a democratic state became the victim of pre-meditated communist aggression.

In this paper I shall try to show, by analyzing the actual events, that this myth is a piece of Cold War propaganda based on erroneous facts and improper analogies. In order to refute the myth definitively, it is necessary to examine the full details of both the external and internal affairs of the period. This I have done elsewhere, in a research study for the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*. In this paper I shall confine myself to a summary of the most important internal developments. This course is justified by the fact that, during the period under consideration, external factors influenced Greece's history only in a very limited way. Logically, the starting point for the present analysis is the Varkiza Agreement.

## The Varkiza Agreement

The Varkiza peace agreement, signed on February 12, 1945,<sup>1</sup> was not a relatively noncommittal agreement like the National Bands Agreement of 1943, or the Agreement of Myrofyllo and Plaka of 1944. It was, rather, an official pact between representatives of the Greek state and leaders of the leftist resistance organization. Not only the bargaining that led to its signing but also the text itself was closely supervised if not actually dictated by British officials in Athens. In this way the British government shouldered serious responsibilities in Greece. The significance of this

agreement is even further corroborated by the fact that on March 23, 1945 not only its text but also the programmatic declarations of Foreign Minister John Sophianopoulos and of the secretary of the Central Committee of KKE, George Siantos, were published in the *Government Gazette* as *Συντακτική Πρόαξη* No. 23 [Constitutional Act 23].<sup>2</sup> Such publication made both texts part of the living fundamental law of Greece—not just of ordinary law.

The aim of the Varkiza Agreement was twofold: first, to put an end to the civil war that had begun on December 3, 1944, and had temporarily ceased with the truce of January 15, and, second, to establish conditions for the reconciliation of the opposing factions within the country and for peaceful postwar development. The first aim was realized; the second was not. A little more than one year later, Greece was more split than ever before, a new outbreak of civil strife was slowly building up, and the Varkiza Agreement had proved to be no more than a scrap of paper. The causes for these developments are certainly not to be found in the text; the wording of the Varkiza Agreement was as good as that of any other similar pact of such importance. If both sides had fulfilled their obligations, a peaceful development might have been possible.

This leads to two questions: What were the causes for the failure of the Varkiza Agreement and who was ultimately responsible for its failure? Or, to phrase these questions in a different way: What were the deeper causes of the new civil war and who was responsible for pushing developments beyond the stage where discussion and reconciliation were still possible?

For many years it has been argued that the culprits were the Greek communists. Two main arguments have been advanced to support this: one, that the general secretary of the Central Committee of KKE, Nikos Zahariadis, himself said (I quote D. George Kousoulas<sup>3</sup>), "The Varkiza Agreement was . . . merely the termination of the second round and a respite for the regrouping of the popular democratic forces, in view of the new decisive confrontation which is inevitably coming;" and, two, that the communists did not give up all the weapons they had in their possession but hid considerable quantities.

To begin with, the latter is an undisputable fact. As we learn from the memoirs of Giorgis Blanas (Kissavos)<sup>4</sup>, and from a telegram of Yannis Ioannidis published in KKE's *Επίσημα Κείμενα* [*Official Texts*],<sup>5</sup> immediately after the signing of the Varkiza Agreement the KKE Politburo ordered that part of the weapons should be hidden. The reasoning, however, that because the communists hid some weapons they were therefore preparing the "Third Round" is anachronistic: it explains the communist motives of February 1945 by means of events that occurred more than a

The same is true with the argument concerning the words of *Stavros*.<sup>6</sup> He made his statement in 1950, when once again he was *trying to* justify the party line a posteriori. Both arguments are therefore *invalid* for 1945. There is not the slightest doubt that KKE, as well as every other party of the country, had the aim of taking over the Greek state. The question, however, is how and when this was to occur. As we shall show later in this paper, in 1945 KKE did not aim at taking over power directly and certainly not by force. The purpose of the above-mentioned arguments was to distract public attention from the true sequence of events.

The Varkiza Agreement consists of nine articles. Of these, only two contained obligations for the Greek left. Article 4 stipulated that EAM/ELAS was to free its hostages (they were called civil captives); this obligation was fulfilled by the left. Article 6 required the demobilization of the armed forces of the resistance, which was done as well. Thus, except for the fact that not all weapons were handed over to the state, the Greek left fulfilled its obligations. The other seven articles, and to a certain degree even the two articles pertaining specifically to the left, contained obligations for, and guarantees by, the Greek government. By their publication in the *Government Gazette*, these obligations and guarantees became law.

### Freedoms

The Greek government promised in Article 1 a full restoration of civil liberties, especially freedom of the press and trade union liberties. Prominent among the government's promises was the pledge to repeal certain illiberal laws of the past, for example, the notorious law of 1929 that made agitation against the existing social order a crime. The government-in-exile had repealed this law, but because this repeal was not published in the *Government Gazette* in Athens, the law remained in force and judges continued to apply it.<sup>7</sup> In addition, notoriously illiberal laws of the Metaxas period continued to be valid.<sup>8</sup> Only a few of the more than four thousand laws of the various collaboration governments were repealed, and many of them remain in force to this day.<sup>9</sup> This meant that the antidemocratic legal system of the Metaxas dictatorship and of the occupation still existed and was applied by a supposedly democratic government.

The provisions of the Varkiza Agreement guaranteeing freedom of the press were applied in a "tricky" way. It is true that until 1947 not one newspaper of the left was prohibited or officially suppressed. The methods used to hamper the freedom of the leftist press were more subtle. At the time of the country's liberation there had been EAM newspapers in

almost every provincial town of reasonable size. In 1946 only Ριζοσπάσ-της and Ἐλεύθερη Ἑλλάδα still appeared on a few newsstands. In the provinces national guardsmen, gendarmerie and other sympathizers with the extreme right had smashed the printing presses and had "convinced" leftist editors by intimidation that it was better to have only two newspapers that were printed in Athens.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, readers were threatened even if caught reading liberal newspapers such as Ἐλευθερία<sup>11</sup>. Thus circulation of the leftist press was considerably reduced, if not halted altogether. Another method of suppressing leftist newspapers in the provinces was to hamper transport from Athens to the provinces; the buses that were to take the leftist newspapers to the provincial towns had "unfortunately" departed already. To reduce the circulation of the leftist press even in Athens, the government supplied leftist newspapers with only the "correct" quota of the rationed newsprint. Progovernment newspapers on the other hand, were amply supplied by the "gray market."<sup>12</sup> Thus the various Greek governments could prove to the world that freedom of the press existed in the country even though freedom of reading and freedom of newspaper circulation were almost nonexistent.

#### Trade Union Liberties

Similarly, the restoration of trade union liberties proved to be an equal farce. Since details of the Greek trade union movement are not generally known, we must supply some background information.<sup>13</sup> Before the Metaxas dictatorship, the General Federation of Greek Labor (GSEE) had been a feeble movement of more than fifteen hundred small unions engulfed in party disputes and open to constant governmental interference. Under Metaxas, the GSEE was "welded" into one organism modeled after the German *Arbeitsfront*. During the occupation, a new syndicalist organization, the National Workers' Liberation Front (EEAM), came into being. EEAM, the workers' EAM, attracted the overwhelming majority of the Greek working class and efficiently frustrated plans by Fritz Saukel, Hitler's minister of labor, to conscript forced labor in Greece. After the creation of the Political Committee of National Liberation early in 1944, the EEAM Central Committee declared the extant official (and collaborationist) GSEE leadership under Hatzidimitriou deposed and constituted itself as the new provisional executive of the GSEE. After the liberation, the minister of labor in the Papandreou cabinet, Miltiades Porphyrogenis, officially recognized the new executive by virtue of the 1942 law of the Tsouderos government,<sup>14</sup> which had repealed the illiberal, antisindicalist legislation of Metaxas and had obliged the minist

of labor to help in the reorganization of the GSEE. The officially recognized GSEE executive began to prepare union elections for a national congress. A few days later, however, the "Second Round" broke out in Athens and the GSEE leadership found themselves on the wrong side, that is, on the EAM side. Hatzidimitriou<sup>15</sup> and a few other collaborationist union leaders of former days (nineteen altogether) who had stayed in Athens took advantage of this opportunity and induced the new minister of labor to recognize them as the real GSEE executive. Hatzidimitriou became general secretary.

Thus at the time of the truce in January 1945 there were two GSEE executives: one representing the majority of the Greek workers—as even C. M. Woodhouse, no friend of the Greek left, has stated in his book *Apple of Discord*<sup>16</sup>—and the other representing no one, yet having the authority of the government behind it. Both claimed to be the official leadership. The rivalry was ended by Sir Walter Citrine of the British Trades Union Congress (TUC). Though he knew that the law on the basis of which both leaderships had been appointed was not valid because it had not been republished in Athens in the *Government Gazette*, out of anticommunist motives he accepted the Hatzidimitriou group as the acting GSEE leadership. In the so-called Citrine Agreement,<sup>17</sup> he sanctioned state intervention into trade union affairs and artificially revived the old system of tiny competing unions by obliging the union leaders to accept a new GSEE executive in which *all* fractions of the Greek trade union movement would be represented. At the same time he destroyed the unity of the working class and rehabilitated the small clique of collaborationists and former adherents of Metaxas.

The following months were characterized by repeated state interventions in favor of these right-wing union leaders. In the union elections the former EAM unions, which had created a new organization, the Workers' Antifascist League (ERGAS), always won a majority. The right-wing unions, however, had the help of the state and of the courts, and by constant intrigues their new leader, Photis Makris, was able to stay in power. In the end, the left succeeded in gaining the majority of the representatives to the National Congress of Labor in March 1946, and a new leadership of GSEE emerged that had the official blessing of the World Federation of Trade Unions. But again the state intervened. The Council of State ruled that the legal basis of the elections had been contrary to the constitution and the new minister of labor appointed a new GSEE executive giving the Makris clique a majority. From then until the 1960s, Makris remained the uncontested leader of the Greek trade union movement.

## Amnesty Misapplied

Under Article 3 of the Varkiza Agreement the government had promised a far-reaching amnesty for crimes committed during the "Second Round," excluding common-law crimes against life and property which were not absolutely necessary for the achievement of the political crime concerned.<sup>18</sup> However, the courts made a travesty of justice out of this clause. The judges, most of whom had served under Metaxas and the occupation, did not confine themselves to trying those charged with a crime during the "Second Round," but extended their charges to crimes committed at the time of the occupation as well. Thus, persons who had collected taxes for the wartime PEEA (that is, suppliers for ELAS) were charged with robbery and looting. Others who had executed collaborators, following trials by courts set up by EAM, were now charged with murder. Former judges of such courts were also charged with murder on the grounds of moral responsibility. Former ELAS commanders—Stephanos Saraphis was not exempted<sup>19</sup>—were held morally responsible for all sorts of crimes. Even the killing of a German or Bulgarian by a member of the leftist resistance movement was considered a crime. The jurors who passed the sentences belonged exclusively to the propertied class. In December 1945 the British Legal Mission stated that the courts were in fact disregarding certain laws. Between January and April 1945, more than forty thousand people were put in jail; by April, twenty-nine thousand had been set free again.

In August the Greek government passed a law that prohibited arrest without a warrant and that ordered the release of those who had been in jail for more than six months without having had their cases examined.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, between September and November some six thousand people were released, but the number of the newly arrested still surpassed that of the released. In November 1945 more than eighteen thousand people were incarcerated, of whom fewer than three thousand served a sentence. Warrants had been issued against eighty thousand persons.<sup>21</sup> Before the war the normal population of the Greek prisons had been less than eight thousand. Moreover, conditions in the prisons were far from satisfactory. By November the overcrowding had assumed such serious proportions that the government was forced to publish a law for the decongestion of the prisons, by virtue of which the prison population was reduced by March 1946 to fourteen thousand<sup>22</sup>—the lowest number in many years. A general amnesty, which would have been the only practical remedy, was not, however, considered.

### Creation of a New National Army

In Article 5 of the Varkiza Agreement the Greek government had promised to create a national army to which even former ELAS members would be admitted. Instead of this, the army was welded into an anti-communist weapon. From the lower ranks to the top commands, the army was filled with royalists, anticommunists, and former members of the wartime Security Battalions.<sup>23</sup> The General Staff was controlled by a secret, extreme right-wing organization called League of Young Officers (SAN), which had come into being in the Middle East and which, after the liberation, changed its name to the Sacred League of Greek Officers (IDEA).<sup>24</sup> The purge of the armed forces, which the Varkiza Agreement had called for, did not take place: they were purged of all democratic elements.

### Purge of Fascists and Collaborators

The same thing happened with the provisions of Article 7 (purge of civil service) and Article 8 (purge of security services, gendarmerie, and city police). Instead of purging the civil service of former fascists and collaborators, the government applied one of Metaxas's laws and purged thousands of civil servants who had joined the resistance, on the ground that they were members of "anti-national organizations."<sup>25</sup> Men of the gendarmerie who had joined ELAS during the occupation were prosecuted for desertion.<sup>26</sup> Former agents of Constantine Maniadakis, Metaxas's minister of security, continued to serve in the Ασφάλεια ("secret police"). University professors were fired because of their membership in EAM.<sup>27</sup> Even the church got rid of its "undesirable elements." In March 1945, at a meeting of the Holy Synod presided over by the notorious wartime collaborator Bishop Spiridon of Ioannina, former EAM-connected bishops were removed from their sees.<sup>28</sup>

### Treatment of Collaborators

In his opening speech at the Varkiza conference, Foreign Minister John Sophianopoulos promised that the government would bring the collaborators to trial. There were three distinct categories of collaborators: one, former ministers of the quisling cabinets, two, members of the police, gendarmerie, and the Security Battalions, and three, common criminals such as black marketeers, speculators, agents of the Gestapo, informers, and Greek Nazis. Only the last category was prosecuted

seriously, some of them being sentenced to death (but only a few being executed). In the second category only a few notorious torturers were prosecuted. The others were left unmolested when they argued that they had not collaborated with the enemy but had fought communism. There was even a tendency to reward them, as is shown by the posthumous promotion of one of the main organizers of the Security Battalions.<sup>29</sup> Many prominent figures of these battalions found their way back into the armed forces.

The great trial of the occupation ministers was a farce.<sup>30</sup> On the very first day of the trial the court decided that any sentences imposed would be subject to ratification by the future parliament, which was expected—by fraud and intimidation—to be controlled by extreme rightists.<sup>31</sup> Quisling Prime Minister John Rallis's comment on this decision was characteristic: "He was now confident that the Good God had granted him several more years to live."<sup>32</sup> Another decision of the court was equally "delicate:" it ruled that there would be no official minutes of the trial and that the unofficial stenographic ones were to be destroyed after six months—a clear travesty of justice.<sup>33</sup> The trial itself was strange indeed. Almost all of the prosecution witnesses, even the liberals, tended to minimize the guilt of the accused.<sup>34</sup> The defense witnesses tried to prove that practically the whole political world of Athens had been accomplices of the accused, who, it was alleged, had not collaborated, primarily, but had fought against communism.<sup>35</sup> This strategy of the defense was successful. The sentences were relatively mild and the prison in which the convicted served their sentences until they were pardoned soon afterwards was a kind of gentlemen's prison. Thus Greece was the only country in Europe where collaborators were practically exempt from punishment and where communism was a worse "crime" than collaboration.<sup>36</sup>

#### Reasons for the Violations of Varkiza

These few examples of violations of the Varkiza Agreement show that the obligations that the government had assumed were not fulfilled at all. To explain and interpret the reasons for these violations, together with all the necessary background, is sufficiently complicated, since so many factors contributed to them. The simplest explanation for the actions of the various postwar governments of Greece is their irreconcilably anti-communist character, which made them relatively insensitive toward infringements against the left by subordinate authorities. They considered such illegal actions to be the natural aftermath of what they called a "red conspiracy." Some ministers deliberately closed their eyes towards these

infringements; others openly encouraged them; only few tried to stop them. Another explanation is the government's lack of control over subordinate authorities. None of the postwar governments succeeded in establishing full authority over the secondary governmental organs, which were still in the hands of former Metaxists and collaborators. Only by a thorough purge could adequate control have been reestablished. But to initiate such a purge would have exposed the various governments to the accusation of being procommunist, a thing that they abhorred. Anticommunism and executive weakness are thus the main contributing factors, on the government side, for the violations of the Varkiza Agreement.

### The Emergence of the Παρακράτος ("Parastate")

To make matters worse, the lack of control favored the development of an independent power apparatus of the extreme right which successfully competed with the authority of the state. The nuclei of these new power centers had already existed during the occupation. So-called nationalist organizations had been created in direct opposition to EAM. As early as the autumn of 1943, these organizations had been united in the Panhellenic Liberation League (PAS). In 1944, close contacts with the extreme right-wing organization in the armed forces, SAN (which, after liberation, became IDEA), were established. After the unrest in the Greek armed forces in the Middle East in the spring of 1944, a leading figure of SAN became commander-in-chief of the Greek army, as well as chief of the General Staff. The armed forces were purged of all "antinational" elements, and members of SAN were eased into key posts. Meanwhile, in occupied Greece, Colonel George Grivas created another rightist anti-EAM organization, the notorious "X." After the "Second Round," these right-wing organizations succeeded in packing the army, gendarmerie, and police with their members. In addition, they created armed bands which, in close cooperation with the National Guard and later under the benevolent eyes of the gendarmerie, began at a constantly increasing rate to terrorize their political opponents.

All this leads us to conclude that the communists were not entirely wrong when they spoke of a unilateral civil war. Toward the end of 1945 these right-wing organizations controlled large parts of the state and were able successfully to frustrate any attempt of liberal politicians to improve the political climate. The country was no longer controlled by its constitutional authorities but by this competing power apparatus which the Greeks call παρακράτος ("parastate").

## Economic Crisis

The political climate was further worsened by a rapidly deteriorating economic and financial situation. In October 1944 there had been general enthusiasm among workers and peasants, who were ready to undertake the reconstruction of their country with their own hands. Thousands of young men voluntarily repaired roads and rebuilt demolished bridges.<sup>37</sup> EAM, which had been the soul of the resistance against the Axis occupiers, became the promoter of reconstruction; the majority of the population was ready to join in the reconstruction efforts. But this initiative from the grassroots was destroyed by the "Second Round", which restored the old economic and financial oligarchy that was closely connected with the political oligarchy. From now on, reconstruction was the responsibility of this oligarchy and the majority of the population became indifferent and apathetic. The result was complete chaos. The industrialists did not open their factories. The government had no revenues. Speculators earned fortunes on the black market. Inflation ruined everyone who had no gold sovereigns. Corruption was omnipresent.<sup>38</sup> Tens of thousands were out of work and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was able only to keep people alive. When, as in the case of Kyriakos Varvaressos, deputy prime minister and minister of supply, there was an effort to improve the situation, the oligarchy in power sabotaged this effort. Strikes were numerous. Slowly, when the mass of the population was almost starving, apathy turned into hatred. Thus at the beginning of 1946 the political climate was characterized by fear, oppression, hopelessness, want, desperation, and demoralization.

## British Policy

Although responsibility for these developments rests to a great extent with the Greek government, British policy makers were equally responsible for the outcome.<sup>39</sup> In December 1944 they had intervened to save Greece from an alleged communist danger. In 1945, when a counterrevolutionary tide hit Greece, sweeping away everything the resistance had built up and bringing back the old structures, the British reacted with great hesitation. The trouble with British policy toward Greece in 1945 was not so much intervention as inconsistency. There were political spheres under total British control and others where the British were totally uninterested. There were inconsistencies between the two different levels of British policy making, one center being in Athens and the

other in London. Within a single year British policy changed from total penetration to hands off, and then back again to intervention. At one time British policy makers actively overthrew a government (Nikolaos Plastiras's) and at another time they passively watched the petering out of another (Petros Voulgaris's). In October they rejected the economic program of the government of Panayiotis Kanellopoulos only to accept this same program in slightly modified form two months later. On the one hand they intervened in the tiniest details of internal affairs while on the other hand they failed to ensure the Greek government's compliance with its obligations under the Varkiza Agreement. At one moment they were depriving one Greek government of its authority and at another moment expecting another government to act responsibly. No wonder, then, that the *παραιρέτος* was able to assume actual control. In short, British foreign policy toward Greece in 1945 showed the same symptoms of incoherence as it had during World War II. There was, however, a decisive difference. Whereas until the end of 1944 the various British interventions had influenced, but not totally altered, the course of Greek history, by their intervention in December 1944 British policy makers brought a line of development to an abrupt end. From then on they were responsible for the course of events. Unfortunately this was not understood in London. Ultimately, therefore, British policy makers—Tories as well as Laborites—were responsible for the rapid deterioration of the situation in Greece.

#### Policy of KKE

To complete this review of the origins of the Greek civil war, we must add a few remarks about the policy of KKE during this period. Immediately after signing the Varkiza Agreement, George Siantos, secretary of KKE's Central Committee, answered questions put to him by foreign correspondents. Among many other things, he said that KKE's aim was now to become a legal party and to pursue a policy within the constitutional framework.<sup>40</sup> In other words, after Varkiza, KKE's aim was integration into the country's parliamentary system. The decision of the KKE Politburo to hide some weapons does not contradict this policy. It was a defensive measure against unforeseen eventualities, not a strategic move for the preparation of the "Third Round." For KKE the Varkiza Agreement meant the end of the armed struggle and the beginning of its integration into the parliamentary system. This is further proved by a series of theoretical articles published in *Κομμουνιστική Επιθεώρηση* [*Communist Review*] after Varkiza, all of which show KKE's readiness for reconciliation. How serious the communists' desire for reconciliation and

integration was shown by their treatment of the opponents to this policy within their own ranks, as for example the wartime ELAS leader Aris Velouhiotis. The 11th Plenum of the Central Committee, which met early in April 1945, emphasized that the KKE had fought for national liberation, not for power. A development analogous to that in Yugoslavia was excluded in express terms: Greece's geographical position prohibited such a development. The only mistake of the past, it was argued, had been that KKE had not tried hard enough to arrive at an understanding with Great Britain. The "Second Round" had been the tragic result of a misunderstanding.<sup>41</sup>

This course was not changed even when General Secretary Nikos Zahariadis returned from Dachau. On June 1 he flatly denied that KKE had ever fought for a social revolution out of a minority position, claiming instead that the aim of the party was to win over the majority of the people. Only Trotskyites, anarchists, and idiots, as he put it, believed in a forced transition to socialism against the will of the majority of the people. Moreover, since 1934 KKE had striven for the erection of a bourgeois democratic republic. Zahariadis then stated that KKE's course was identical with the line taken by the French communists,<sup>42</sup> a line which was later criticized by the Cominform as "revisionist." In other words, KKE still stuck to the line of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern (1934).

A few days later Zahariadis analyzed Anglo-Greek relations. In his famous "two poles theory" he officially recognized British hegemony in Greece and implicitly accepted the view that any social change in Greece would need the prior blessing of Britain<sup>43</sup>—a theory shared by the Italian Communist party. In other words, Zahariadis continued the Anglophile course that KKE had pursued during the war. His words and acts had two aims: one, to signal to the bourgeois parties that there was no danger of a communist revolution; and, two, to make Britain understand that KKE accepted her leading role in Greece. But neither of the two groups to whom Zahariadis had addressed his speeches was interested in his offers; both gave him the cold shoulder. The 12th Plenum, which took place during the last days of June, brought no change in KKE's political line, which continued to be "revisionist." The only new item was the decision to offer resistance to the constant persecutions by the right by organizing a mass "self-defense movement" (*μαζική αυτοάμυνα*). The weapons of this self-defense were to be mass strikes and demonstrations, but *not* armed resistance.<sup>44</sup> A few days later KKE's newspaper *Ριζοσπάστης*<sup>45</sup> spoke for the first time of the "new occupation"—that is, the British occupation—but even this was not the sign of a radical change in the party line. This verbal radicalism echoed similar excesses on the part of

the bourgeois parties against the worsening political situation. Even when, in an outburst on August 24th, Zahariadis spoke of a possible civil war, this too was not a sign of a new course.<sup>46</sup> It was again a verbal excess provoked by the frustration of his offers for reconciliation.

However, the Seventh Party Congress (October 1945) did bring about a shift in the party line. From then on the party's ideological orientation would no longer follow the ideological conceptions of the French and Italian communist parties. It would, instead, be modeled on that of the eastern European communist parties. The term "people's democracy" now meant a regime in the Soviet sphere of influence. It was hinted that a violent transition to socialism could not be excluded.<sup>47</sup> A panhellenic military committee was established to study a possible armed clash.<sup>48</sup> But even this did not mean that Zahariadis had decided to lead the party toward an armed uprising. The new development was once more a measure taken against unforeseen eventualities, and it served far more to calm the more militant members of KKE than to prepare for the civil war, as is shown by the fact that the panhellenic military committee only met twice.<sup>49</sup> What happened was simply that the course of the party became tougher and more militant, that the party was no longer ready to be passive in its acceptance of the persecutions by the right, and that it was preparing for all eventualities. But Zahariadis still tried to leave all options open. Just as during the occupation and throughout the year 1945, KKE did not act but instead reacted to the persecutions by its opponents. The initiative rested with the government. Not even in 1946 was there a decision to start a full-scale civil war. The 2nd Plenum in February of that year did not decide to begin an armed uprising; it merely permitted armed resistance against the rightist terror in the countryside.<sup>50</sup> The civil war did not come as a result of the decision or the acts of KKE; it was rather the outcome of a process set in motion by the terrorist acts of the extreme right.

### Conclusions

At the beginning of this paper I stated that its aim was to refute the myth that from the time of the Varkiza Agreement KKE was planning the "Third Round," the myth that the democratic state of Greece became the victim of communist aggression. I hope that I have succeeded in showing, one, that there was no such plan, and, two, that Greek society was far from being democratic. But if the communists did not aim at civil war, who then wanted the civil war? The various Greek governments? Certainly not. The British? Not at all. Who then? It is my firm conviction that except for former fascists and collaborators, and other die-hard

rightists, no one directly wanted the civil war. But fear of the communist danger was omnipresent and was played up by the extreme right. The nation's politicians suffered from a pathological hatred of communism, and this made them incapable of offering a conciliatory alternative to the left. They were afraid that each conciliatory move would be interpreted by the communists, as well as by the right, as a weakness. Thus they opened the field to the extreme right, which offered nothing but the alternatives of unconditional submission or armed clash. The origins of the civil war are thus to be found primarily in the political climate, in factors such as the terrorism, want, desperation, and hopelessness, which were the result of the past and of the rule of the *παράνομος*. In order to have broken this rule a major effort to purge the state of all its extreme right-wing elements would have been necessary. But not one of the post-war Greek governments was ready or able to undertake such a purge, which could only have been done with the help of Britain—and Britain did not offer this help. Thus ultimately the responsibility for the creation of this climate rests with Britain's *laissez faire* policy.

I also argued in the introduction that I considered this myth to be part of the Cold War propaganda. Within the Soviet sphere of influence in eastern Europe the communist parties of these countries successively took over control of the respective states with the help of the Red Army and subsequently purged their opponents. In Greece things happened the other way around. There is no doubt that these parties acted on orders from the Kremlin. But it would be wrong to assume that the parties outside the Soviet sphere of influence had received similar orders. In 1945 the communist world was on its way toward becoming polycentric and the various parties outside the Soviet sphere had started to follow lines of their own. The Kremlin, uninterested in their fate, preferred that they not create any trouble for the Soviet Union. The result was the "revisionist" line of the French, of the Italian, and, originally, of the Greek communists. We have shown how and why the Greek communists abandoned this line and followed a tougher course. But there was a decisive difference between the conditions in France and Italy and those in Greece. In France and to a lesser extent in Italy, fascism and collaborationism had been uprooted or at least had lost all influence. In Greece it was the other way round. Greece became the living proof that Bertolt Brecht's warning was only too true—the warning that the womb out of which this monster, fascism, had crept was still fertile. However, according to the propaganda of that time, fascism had been defeated and the new danger to freedom was now communism.