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**Selective Diplomacy: Greece and its World War II Enemies
at the Beginning of the Cold War**

During World War II, Greece came under triple occupation by the German, Italian, and Bulgarian forces. When Athens was liberated in 1944, relief reigned that the nightmare of the war was finally over and that better days were ahead. These hopes however would soon prove to be futile. Already in 1943, in the middle of World War II, a bitter, civil conflict had begun to develop in Greece, as the National Liberation Front (EAM), which was primarily controlled by the Greek Communist Party (KKE), and its military branch ELAS were fighting both the Germans and other Greek political parties, with the purpose of covering the power vacuum that arose after the withdrawal of the occupation forces.

At the same time, the beginnings of the global Cold War were becoming increasingly evident. During the Fourth Moscow Conference in October 1944, Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin divided Eastern Europe and the Balkans into spheres of influence between the West and the Soviets, which saw Greece coming massively under the British influence. Still, the British would soon find out that, after the occupation forces' withdrawal from Greece, the EAM had gained control of most of the country. British attempts to organize a coalition government, the gradual integration of ELAS into the Greek army, and the complete disarmament of the communists failed, leading to the Dekemvriana, when the Greek National Army, along with British units, defeated ELAS. The defeat was verified by the Varkiza Treaty signed in February 1945, which however was not end of the controversy but rather its resurgence. Former ELAS partisans, having the KKE's support, by 1946 had organized the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE), which aimed to fight for the "People's Democracy."¹ Stalin, unwilling, and Tito, willingly and eagerly, along with the other two neighboring communist states, Alba-

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¹ Nikos Zachariadis, "The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Greece," *Revolutionary Democracy* 27, no. 24 (December 1948).

nia and Bulgaria, offered logistical and general support to the DSE, much to the dismay of the Greek government. The civil war that followed between the DSE and the Greek national army lasted from 1946 to 1949, turning Greece into the first Cold War theatre.²

The Greek Civil War was the first tangible manifestation of the Cold War, being the first of a series of proxy wars that unfolded during an era of global bipolarity. As a result, the official authorities in Athens were faced with multiple fronts: the handling of the civil war, the alleviation of the leveling consequences that the country and its people had suffered as a result of World War II, and the recovery of the shattered Greek economy and monetary system. Added to this of course, there was also the issue of navigating Greek foreign policy and the country's international relations in the murky waters created by the Cold War and the emerging new status quo, with the Greek authorities trying to find and consolidate Greece's position on the global political scene. While Greece's relations with its World War II allies were easier, albeit not free from tensions and difficulties, its relations with its three former World War II enemies, namely Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria, posed obstacles and serious challenges, deriving not only from the war past and the Greek war claims, but also from the new reality that the Cold War was now creating.

This article will examine Greece's relations with its three former occupying powers, Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria, during 1946-1949, try-

² Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War. A Global History* (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 75-6. For the Greek Civil War see among others: Philip Carabott–Thanasis D. Sfikas (eds.), *The Greek Civil War* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2004); Lars Bærentzen–John O. Iatrides–Ole Langwitz Smith (eds.), *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1987); David H. Close (ed.), *The Greek Civil War 1943-1950: Studies of Polarization* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993); Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *The Struggle for Greece, 1941-1949* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018); George Margaritis, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Εμφύλιου Πολέμου 1946-1949* (History of the Greek Civil War 1946–1949) (Athens: Bibliorama, 2001); Fillipos Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος–Η εμπλοκή του ΚΚΕ* (The Greek Civil War–The KKE Involvement) (Athens: Themelio, 2004); Michalis Limperatos, *Στα πρόθυρα του Εμφύλιου πολέμου: Από τα Δεκεμβριανά στις εκλογές του 1946-1949* (On the Brink of the Civil War: From Decemvriana to the 1946-1949 Elections) (Athens: Bibliorama, 2006).

ing to explore the impact the Greek Civil War, and by extension the Cold War, had in the selective diplomacy that Athens decided to adopt.

Greece and Germany

As paradoxical as it may sound, Germany was the country that occupied Athens the least during the first post-war period. This was largely due to the fact that Germany was now under quadruple occupation by the Allies. The Greeks participated in the Allied Control Council for Germany, but their aspirations were limited to the settlement of the issues that the war had caused and mainly the payment of the German war reparations.³ However, as the relations between the Western and the Soviet participants in the Allied Control Council began to deteriorate and rivalries between the Allied and the Soviet occupation zones of Germany increased, things began to change.

The change became more obvious after the founding of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands—SED) in the Soviet occupation zone on April 21/22, 1946. On April 23, 1946, the official party published the first issue of the newspaper *Neues Deutschland*. Only days later, on May 9, 1946, the first article on Greece entitled “Monarchist Terror in Greece” appeared.⁴ It was the beginning of the newspaper’s intensive preoccupation with developments in Greece, which was gradually becoming a field of special interest for the USSR and the European communists, as the civil war was already unfolding.

One of the first issues the newspaper dealt with throughout 1946 was the USSR and Ukraine appealing to the UN Security Council against Greece.⁵ The two countries noted that the presence of British troops in

³ On World War II reparations and the Great Powers policy see Despina-Georgia Konstantinakou, *Πολεμικές οφειλές και εγκληματίες πολέμου στην Ελλάδα. Ψάχνοντας την ηθική και υλική δικαίωση μετά τον Δεύτερο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο* (War Debts and War Criminals in Greece. In Search for Moral and Material Vindication after World War II) (Athens: Alexandria, 2015), 40-68.

⁴ “Monarchistische Terror in Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 9-5-1946.

⁵ See “Griechenland vor dem Sicherheitsrat,” *Neues Deutschland*, 25-8-1946; “Griechenland auf der Tagesordnung des Sicherheitsrates,” *Neues Deutschland*, 5-9-1946; “Fall Griechenland vor dem Sicherheitsrat,” *Neues Deutschland*, 7-9-1946; “Zusam-

Greece, even though World War II had long since ended, was a blatant interference in the country's internal affairs, causing extraordinary tension with great consequences in terms of maintaining peace and stability, as the presence of these troops "had been used by reactionary elements against the democratic elements of the country." Therefore, "the quick and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Greece" was imperative.⁶

A series of articles supporting the allegations appeared in *Neues Deutschland* concerning the presence of British troops in Greece and the need for their withdrawal. The articles even reproduced reports from the British newspaper *The Manchester Guardian* calling on London to change its policy of "supporting right-wing terrorism" in Greece, as well as the French newspaper *Humanité*, which stifled "British involvement and the daily terrorism against Greek people."⁷ Statements made by a member of the British delegation to the Security Council that British troops would remain in Greece "until the Greek government is able to take full responsibility for law enforcement" were also published, along with warnings made by the General Secretary of the KKE, Nikos Zachariadis, that if the British "surrender their weapons to the monarchists as requested, they will find the entire Greek people against

menstoß im Sicherheitsrat," *Neues Deutschland*, 18-9-1946; The Greek Question, Consideration of the communication from the USSR dated 21 January 1946, *United Nations, Official Records of the Second Part of the First Session of the General Assembly, Supplement No.1, Report of the Security Council to the General Assembly covering the period from 17 January to 15 July 1946*, New York, 1946, 28-33; Marjorie M. Whiteman, *Digest of International Law*, vol. 5 (Washington D.C.: Department of State Publication 7873, 1965), 611; "Russians ask UNO to act on British in Greece and Java," *The New York Times*, 22-1-1946.

⁶ The Greek Question, 28-30; The British representative to the Security Council denied the allegations, arguing that the Greek government had invited British troops to remain in the country to "assist in obtaining order and economic reconstruction," a move that neither violated the UN Charter nor endangered peace. On the contrary, "the danger to world peace had been the incessant propaganda from Moscow against the British Commonwealth." The Greek Question, 31-2.

⁷ "Britische Politik Griechenland gegenüber," *Neues Deutschland*, 21-9-1946; "Die Tragödie in Griechenland," *Neues Deutschland*, 27-9-1946; "Die britischen Truppen in Griechenland," *Neues Deutschland*, 23-11-1946; "Eine Pariser Stimme," *Neues Deutschland*, 23-11-1946.

them.”⁸ The newspaper was also intensely concerned about the possibility that the British troops stationed in Greece would be joined by American troops, given that according to “semi-official news from Thessaloniki” broadcasted by the *France Presse* news agency “15,000 US troops were expected to be sent to Greek Macedonia.”⁹

Greece’s attendance at the 1946 Paris Peace Conference and more importantly its territorial claims regarding Northern Epirus were also covered. Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov’s strong reaction was especially described in detail. Molotov accused Greece, which had been “ravaged by terror,” of attempting to “provoke tensions” against Albania which was “a peaceful democratic state that was friendly towards the USSR” in a part of Europe where peace prevailed. In his opinion however, this was to be expected from a country where “democratic elements cannot breathe.”¹⁰

Internal developments were also of interest to *Neues Deutschland*. On September 1, 1946, a referendum was held on the return of King George II to Greece, who had left the country after it was occupied by German forces in April 1941. The referendum’s result, namely 68.4 percent being in favor of the king’s return, was commented on by the newspaper in an article entitled “Terror Victory in Greece,” which included a thorough analysis of the quantitative characteristics of the vote, as “in Athens about 60 percent of the electorate, in Salonika 65 percent and in rural districts an even higher percentage have voted for the king.”¹¹ The newspaper also reported on the position of the KKE and the other “democratic forces” which strongly questioned the referendum, attributing the result to “monarchist intimidation methods,” even referring to “bloody incidents in various places.”¹² From the end of 1946, as the civil war intensified, the newspaper also provided detailed coverage of the outcome of the battles between the DSE and the government forces, noting that “although the government forces had care-

⁸ “Britische Truppen bleiben in Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 10-9-1946; “Die Bewaffnung der griechischen Royalisten,” *Neues Deutschland*, 31-10-1946.

⁹ “Amerikanische Truppen für Griechenland?,” *Neues Deutschland*, 23-11-1946.

¹⁰ “Molotow über Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 31-8-1946.

¹¹ “Terrorsieg in Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 3-9-1946.

¹² “Der griechischen ‘Volkentscheid,’” *Neues Deutschland*, 5-9-1946.

fully prepared their actions against the units of the Democratic Liberation Army, they were unable to achieve any victories.”¹³

The development however that forced the Eastern Bloc, and consequently *Neues Deutschland*, to focus sharply on Greece, was the US aid announcement regarding Greece and Turkey in March 1947. From this point onwards, the Greek Civil War and the global Cold War became inextricably linked. A few days before US President Harry Truman’s speech, in which he proclaimed his famous doctrine, the newspaper reported that Truman would address the Congress requesting the approval of a 250-million-dollar loan for Greece. The information proved largely accurate, the only mistake being the loan amount. On March 12, 1947, Truman addressed a joint congressional hearing seeking approval for up to 400 million dollars for immediate US financial and military assistance to both Greece and Turkey, which would receive 300 and 100 million dollars respectively. During his speech, the US President stressed that “the very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the government’s authority.”¹⁴

The Truman doctrine provoked a strong reaction from Moscow. *Pravda*, the official CPSU newspaper, described the aid as “imperialist expansion” that violated “Greece’s and Turkey’s sovereign rights” through the “direct imposition of American domination” with the sole purpose of “strengthening reactionary elements in Greece,” thereby endangering peace and security.¹⁵ At the same time, the Moscow radio station also stressed that the US aid for Greece would be used “to stifle the democratic movement,” given that “US capitalist circles sought to

¹³ “Die Kämpfen gehen weiter,” *Neues Deutschland*, 23-11-1946; “Schwere Kämpfe in Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 9-3-1947; The newspaper even incorrectly conveyed the information that the DSE General Commander, Markos Vafiadis, had been killed in a battle in the Olympus area: “Schwere Kämpfe,” *Neues Deutschland*, 9-3-1947.

¹⁴ Westad, *op.cit.*, 92.

¹⁵ *Pravda* also labeled the US aid to Turkey as inexplicable, given that the country was “not affected by the war”: “Η Πράβδα για το Διάγγελμα του κ. Τρούμαν” (*Pravda* on Mr. Truman’s Speech), *Eleutheria*, 16-3-1947.

turn Greece into a colony.”¹⁶ The *Neues Deutschland* coverage of developments in Greece would henceforth move along this wavelength, even though the newspaper viewed the information received by “official American circles” that “the President’s emergency aid program for Greece would not consider either the withdrawal of British troops or the use of US troops in Greece” as a silver lining.¹⁷

The initial relief that prevailed from the information that American troops setting foot in Greece was not expected subsided quickly. Two weeks after Truman’s speech, *Neues Deutschland* observed that “the proposed US ‘aid’ to Greece and Turkey looks more like a lavish transaction by American defense industries.” Both the US Secretary of War Robert Patterson and the Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal had “lifted the veil before the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs that had previously hung over the intended million-dollar loan. A flashing arsenal of weapons became visible as, according to Patterson, the Greek government is to be provided with aircraft and other war material on a large scale.”¹⁸

Skepticism was further exacerbated by Truman’s statements about sending US political and military missions to Greece to oversee the financial aid distribution. *Neues Deutschland* noted that the US military mission would be in charge of supplying the Greek army and training Greek soldiers in the use of American equipment. The Greek government had already expressed its desire to acquire amphibious vehicles, tank landing boats, personnel carriers, and other marine vehicles. Turkey had also made a similar request. Regardless, the effects of the Marshall Plan were already apparent, as according to reports reaching the newspaper “the elements for which the aid was intended had intensified terrorism against the freedom movement.” The result of this intimidation was the assassination of thirty-three prisoners in Gythio, Laconia, “because of their democratic spirit,” and most importantly the assassi-

¹⁶ “Η Μόσχα διά το διάγγελμα του κ. Τρούμαν” (Moscow on Mr. Truman’s Speech), *Eleutheria*, 25-3-1947.

¹⁷ “Dollarmillionen nach Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 9-3-1947.

¹⁸ “Die ‘Hilfe’ für Griechenland und die Türkei,” *Neues Deutschland*, 27-3-1947.

nation on March 20, 1947, of the KKE and EAM high-ranking member Giannis Zevgos in Thessaloniki.¹⁹

Throughout 1947, frustration with US aid remained rampant in *Neues Deutschland* publications. The newspaper spoke about the “Middle Ages” that prevailed in the “Greek colony” and hosted statements by British Labor MPs Konnie Zilliacus and T.G. Thomas who argued that “in Greece, judgments are passed without trial and people are beaten to death and beheaded, exactly as in the Middle Ages.” This situation was solely a consequence of the US aid, given that “the overthrow of Greece’s current rulers could be completed within a week if no help came from abroad.”²⁰ The newspaper also focused on the economic situation in Greece, which was described in the darkest possible terms, whereby the Americans were accused of interfering in the drafting of the Greek state budget, by imposing taxes to fund further military spending and increasing the prices of basic living products such as bread, which rose by seventy-five percent. In fact, “in order to secure military spending, certain ministries had to cut their spending by 1.2 billion drachmas, while the War Department’s budget was not cut.”

¹⁹ “Die ‘Hilfe’ für Griechenland und die Türkei,” *Neues Deutschland*, 27-3-1947; On April 4, 1947, the General Secretary of the KKE, Nikos Zachariadis, moving along the same lines as the *Neues Deutschland* article, wrote in the party’s organ *Rizospastis*: “The ‘spring campaign’ has begun. The murder of Zevgos, the massacres in Gythio [...] are just a few examples. [...] This is an easy bloodshed at the expense of the peaceful population. [...] President Truman’s imperialist involvement in our internal affairs, with the hundreds of millions of dollars that accompany it, has emboldened and unleashed monarcho-fascism and its government.” “Αβυσσος ἀβυσσον επικαλείται” (Abyss calls out to Abyss), *Rizospastis*, 4-4-1947. Decades later, *Rizospastis* continued to call Zevgos “The first victim of the Truman Doctrine.” *Rizospastis*, 23-3-1997.

²⁰ The British MPs’ statements were made in Belgrade on their way to the Russian city of Sochi, where they met with Stalin on October 14, 1947. The MPs criticized the Marshall Plan “as designed to start an economic and diplomatic war in Europe and split Europe under Wall Street tutelage.” “Mr. Zilliacus in London,” *The Times*, 18-10-1947 and “Stalin on the Cominform and Trade with Britain,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 24-10-1947. In 1949, Zilliacus was expelled from the Labour Party for voting against the signing of the NATO Treaty.

“Economic chaos” now prevailed in Greece “due to the United States’ continuous interference in the country’s internal affairs.”²¹

Suddenly, at the end of 1947 and for most of 1948, *Neues Deutschland* not only reduced its reports but essentially stopped publishing articles about Greece. This change is explained by the fact that at the end of December 1947 the formation of the Provisional Democratic Government (PDG) was announced, following a decision taken by the KKE Politburo a few weeks earlier. Markos Vafeiadis, the General Commander of the DSE, was appointed Prime Minister. The Greek communists expected the PDG’s immediate recognition by the People’s Republics, a move that would give greater prestige and consolidate support for the DSE struggle. Such hopes were however dashed, as neither the USSR nor any of the Eastern Europe People’s Republics recognized the PDG. They didn’t want to further aggravate their deteriorated relations with the US and most importantly confirm the accusations made by Athens concerning the active support provided by the neighboring Balkan states to the DSE.²²

The refusal to recognize the PDG was a resounding slap in the face of the Greek communists. The prevailing frustration inevitably affected the Greek Communists’ relations with the rest of the People’s Republics at least until the autumn of 1948, when the Yugoslav representative to the UN raised the representation of the PDG issue in the debate held on the “paidomazoma” problem.²³ The SED also moved along the same lines. After all, it could not have recognized Markos’ government as an independent East German state had not been created yet.²⁴ *Neues Deutschland* began to deal with Greece again, when in the autumn of 1948 the SED Central Secretariat, confirming the thaw in relations, decided to proceed with the establishment of an Assistance Committee for

²¹ “Mittelalter in Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 8-10-1947; “Kolonie Griechenland,” 31-10-1947.

²² Andreas Stergiou, *Im Spagat zwischen Solidarität und Realpolitik: Die Beziehungen zwischen der DDR und Griechenland und das Verhältnis der SER zur KKE* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2001), 31; Nikos Marantzidis–Kostas Tsivos, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος και το Διεθνές Κομμουνιστικό Σύστημα* (The Greek Civil War and the International Communist System) (Athens: Alexandria, 2012), 112.

²³ Marantzidis–Tsivos, *op.cit.*, 114.

²⁴ Stergiou, *op.cit.*, 31.

Greece. The committee was set up in early November, with the newspaper announcing the development in an article entitled “Help for Democratic Greece,” noting that “the main task of this committee should be to support democratic Greece with monetary and material donations, especially medicines and medical material.” To this end, a public appeal was made to the East Zone’s people to contribute to the committee’s aims.²⁵

Up until that point, the Greek authorities had been following the reports on Greece published both in *Neues Deutschland* and in other East Zone newspapers, without however paying much attention. The establishment of the Assistance Committee, however, would prove to be the turning point that forced Athens to change this attitude. The SED had stepped up its game and from the simply commenting on what was happening in Greece through its official organ, it was now taking active action that could have an impact on the civil war’s outcome. Tangible assistance to Markos’ government was perceived as a serious threat by the authorities in Athens, with the Greek military mission in Berlin now sending extensive reports on everything written in *Neues Deutschland* regarding Greece.

Athens’ fears were fueled even more by reports that gradually began to appear in newspapers and magazines published in the Western occupation zones with an extensive article in *Der Spiegel*, published in Hanover, in the British occupation zone, further alarming the Greek authorities. The article, which contained multiple inaccuracies, outlined the assistance provided by the USSR to the DSE, most importantly how the “involuntary volunteer” SS-doctor Werner Göstring whilst being held

²⁵ “Hilfe für das demokratische Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 10-11-1948; *Neues Deutschland* also published the Committee’s appeal to the public, which stated the following: “The moral and material support of the Greek democrats and freedom fighters is an essential contribution to the defense of world peace. With the same unyielding determination shown by those who fought against fascism during World War II, the democrats and anti-fascists of Greece are fighting today against the fascist-monarchist minority government and the crushing embrace of American imperialism. A movement is developing all over the world against the fascist regime in Greece, for peace, for security and for the freedom of democracy. We join this movement and support the freedom struggle of the Greek democrats.” “Hilfe für das demokratische Griechenland,” *Neues Deutschland*, 10-11-1948.

in Silent Camp (Schweigelager) 81 in Omsk, Siberia, was evaluated as an “extremist” by the Soviets and, along with other Germans and foreigners, was sent to Greece to fight alongside Markos. According to *Der Spiegel*, Göstring received “People’s Republic of Greece” citizenship, participated in the catalytic battle of Konitsa and remained with Markos in Greece until almost mid-December 1948, when he managed to escape to Trieste.

“In August 1946, a high-ranking Soviet visitor appeared at the Bulkes camp.²⁶ General Popovic, coming from a secret meeting between General Markos and Politburo member Zhadnov in Petrich. [...] Popovic then took Göstring and about a hundred other Germans with him to three new camps on the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border where German legionnaires should set up the cadres of the new Markos units. [...] Göstring and the other German and foreign legionnaires were soon distributed amongst the Greek rebel units. On 30 October 1946, they lined up for the first time to receive orders from General Markos. It was the proclamation of a ‘Greek Democratic Army.’ The legionnaires were sworn in to their new commander and thus automatically became citizens of the ‘People’s Democracy of Greece.’ [...] In the spring of 1947, on orders from the Kremlin, Markos launched the famous attack on Konitza.²⁷ Here on the Albanian border, he wanted to set up the seat of his government and prepare the fatal blow to Athens. [...] Göstring had accompanied Markos for two months, holding the rank of a Greek major as a ‘Sanitation Inspector.’ [...] At the edge of a cliff, Markos worked out the plan for blowing up the Grammos ring with his Russian and German general staff. [...] When Werner Göstring added up the dead, wounded and missing in his diary after twenty months of guerrilla warfare, he calculated approximately 38,000 fallen Greeks, 6,500 fallen foreign legionnaires, including 450 Germans, 55,000 wounded and 25,000 missing. Their ideals had not benefited Markos’ nearly 75,000

²⁶ Bulkes in Yugoslavia was the best-known guerrilla training center in the Balkans.

²⁷ The battle of Konitsa, which took place at Christmas and not in the spring of 1947, as the author of the article erroneously states, was a decisive battle of the Greek Civil War in which the DSE tried but failed to occupy Konitsa, aiming to make it seat of the Provisional Democratic Government.

heavily armed men. The 15,000 foreign legionnaires had never had any ideals anyway.²⁸

The *Spiegel* article was no standalone event. The *Deutscher Pressedienst (dpd)* news agency, also based in the British-occupied zone, broke the news that Volkspolizei units were being sent to the Greek border to fight alongside the Greek guerrillas. Thirty of those men had however fled to the British zone in order to avoid being sent to Greece.²⁹ The newspaper *Der Sozialdemokrat*³⁰ also confirmed that Volkspolizei members were in Greece, going so far as to raise their numbers to 1,200 men in addition to the 8,000 men from the Greek German brigade already based in the city of Tyrnavos, near Larissa.³¹

The reports caused Athens' immediate reaction, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordering for investigations in both Greece and Germany to take place in order to verify whether East Zone Germans formed part of the DSE's ranks. The Greek consul in Hamburg, Dimitris Nikolareizis, visited the East German refugee camp in Uelzen, Hamburg, in an attempt to ascertain whether any of the refugees there had left the East Zone in order to be sent to fight in Greece. The Army General Staff also conducted "persistent investigations" between the army units to determine whether Germans had been spotted in the rebel ranks and whether German citizens were among those arrested by the national army.³² In both cases, answers were negative. Despite their extensive investigations, the Greek authorities failed to substantiate the publications' validity.³³ The opinion that the reports were exacerbated figments of imagination was also shared by the Foreign Office, which was aware of the circulating rumors regarding the DSE reinforcement with German

²⁸ "Wir lieben Extremisten," *Der Spiegel*, 26-3-1949, 3.

²⁹ Nikolareizis to Military Mission in Berlin, 21 May 1949, Service of Diplomatic & Historical Archives of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs [hereafter YΔΙΑ], K.Y. 1949, 25.2.

³⁰ Newspaper of the Social Democratic Party of Germany published in Berlin's British sector between 1946 and 1949.

³¹ Greek Military Mission in Berlin to Foreign Ministry, 24 October 1949, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1949, 25.2.

³² Army General Staff to Foreign Ministry, 17 August 1949, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1949, 25.2.

³³ Ibid; Nikolareizis to Military Mission in Berlin, 21 May 1949, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1949, 25.2.

fighters and even their passage to Grammos and Vitsi. British diplomats made no secret of their “serious doubts about the information transmitted regarding a German mission” in Greece, which aimed much more at impressing both German and Greek public opinion.³⁴

Athens’ relief however would not last long. While all the information seemed to confirm that no Germans were assisting the guerillas, a new article in *Der Sozialdemokrat* in mid-July 1949 became a new source of agitation. The newspaper claimed that Walter Ulbricht, founding SED member and later leader of the German Democratic Republic, had personally arrived at the Greek-Bulgarian border in an effort to boost the DSE fighters’ morale. This time, however, Greek authorities did not have to launch a new investigation, as only days later, Ulbricht himself rushed to refute the rumors, attributing them to the Western press’ attempts to cover the “weaknesses” of the West “through angry hate propaganda:” “For example, the gentlemen [of the opposing press] found out that I was on vacation in Saxony. They immediately fabricated the report that I was no longer in my position and that instead I was active on the Bulgarian-Greek border. They only invented the latter to distract the people of Berlin and West Germany from the fact that Hitler’s old generals were already busy with military issues in West Germany on behalf of the USA and its German accomplices.”³⁵

In October 1949, as the Greek Civil War was coming to an end, with the communists announcing the temporary suspension of hostilities, *Neues Deutschland* sided with Moscow’s and the KKE’s official line that the failure of the Greek communists was the result of “Titos’ Clique’s” betrayal, which “encouraged the Anglo-American imperialists in their determination to hold on to Greece at all costs.”³⁶ The “Monarcho-Fascists” had indeed won but “the imperialists’ hopes of crushing the democratic movement in Greece would remain just an illusion,” as they had suffered “great losses and in the following years they would be forced to spend 3 billion drachmas for military pur-

³⁴ Foreign Ministry to Ministry of the Army, 1 August 1949, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1949, 25.2.

³⁵ “Jetzt kommt die Zeit der Erfolge,” *Neues Deutschland*, 26-7-1949; Greek Military Mission in Berlin to Foreign Ministry, 26 July 1949, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1949, 25.2.

³⁶ Nikos Zachariadis, “Titos Clique fällt dem volksdemokratischen Griechenland in den Rücken,” *Deutschland*, 7-8-1949.

poses.” Still, the newspaper itself “openly admitted” that “the democratic movement’s situation in Greece has deteriorated. And the blame for the fact that thousands of democrats have lost their lives again [...] lies solely with the traitor Tito, who let himself be bought by the Anglo-American imperialists for their own selfish ends.” What was certain, however, was that the guerrillas had not said their last word. *Neues Deutschland* warned that “sooner or later people will hear again about the activities of the Democratic Army.”³⁷

Diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, the legitimate successor of the German Reich, were restored in 1950, with the Greek side maintaining an extremely cordial attitude that surprised even the German diplomats themselves. On the contrary, it took decades for Athens to resume diplomatic relations with the East German state, when in May 1973, the Colonels of the Junta officially recognized the German Democratic Republic.³⁸

Greece and Italy

Following the German troops’ departure from Greece in October 1944, Italy launched a new attack on Greece. This time, however, it was a friendship attack. In November 1944, Ivanoe Bonomi, the Italian Prime Minister appointed by the Allies, sought a meeting with the Greek representative on the Allied Advisory Council for Italy, Georgios Exintaris, in an attempt to sound him out about the possibility of a bilateral relations resumption. Bonomi considered the resumption of relations as “easy over time,” since Italy no longer had any aspirations on the Dodecanese, given that the country had “finally ceased its expansionist policies,” as evidenced by the US, Britain, and the USSR’s decision to restore political and diplomatic relations with Rome.

Exintaris, following the instructions received from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, treated the Italian Prime Minister with “imposed restraint,” ruling out any possibility of an immediate relations resump-

³⁷ “Wie sieht es heute in Griechenland aus?,” *Neues Deutschland*, 16-9-1949.

³⁸ Siegfried Bock–Ingrid Muth–Hermann Schwiesau (eds.), *DDR-Außenpolitik. Ein Überblick. Daten, Fakten, Personen* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010), 157.

tion.³⁹ Athens' position differed from that of the three powers, as Greece had suffered Italy's unprovoked and unjust attack. Before any serious rapprochement attempt, "the ground would have first to be prepared and a conducive environment would have to be created." This could only materialize if Italy proceeded to tangible moves that would testify to its sincere repentance beyond all doubt.⁴⁰ Internally, Athens had even drawn up a minimum set of prerequisites: the first and most important request was the Dodecanese's integration back into Greece without any reservation on Italy's part. Furthermore, Rome would have to condemn Mussolini's imperialist and expansionist policies and accept –without raising any objection or protest– all measures that the Greek government intended to take in order to "eliminate the bad Italian past in Greece," including the expulsion of "undesirable Italians,"⁴¹ the escrow of Italian property, and the closure of Italian schools. Rome would also have to lift all measures taken against Greek interests in Italy, compensate Greek citizens for the damages they had suffered as a result of the Italian aggression and restore all Greek religious, educational and legal institutions. These were necessary steps that could eventually facilitate a change in the prevailing negative attitude towards Italy, which Greek public opinion considered as the aggressor, who bore sole and entire responsibility for all of the country's subsequent sufferings.⁴²

Indeed, the sentiment for Italy in the Greek press and consequently in public opinion was extremely negative, with Rome's real desire to renounce and shake off its fascist past being heavily questioned. An article published in the newspaper *Eleutheria* in June 1945 was hugely

³⁹ Instructions by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were clear: "If the Italian delegates ask to visit you, you can receive them informally, after informing them in advance that you will not be able to reciprocate their visit [...] you will show them the restraint imposed by the relations of formal acquaintance." Foreign Ministry to all embassies, n.d., YΔΙΑ, K.Y.1945, 13.1.

⁴⁰ Exintaris to Foreign Ministry, 5 November 1944, YΔΙΑ, K.Y.1945, 13.1.

⁴¹ For the Italian community expulsion see Despina-Georgia Konstantinakou, "The Expulsion of the Italian Community of Greece and the Politics of Resettlement, 1944-52," *Journal of Contemporary History* 55, no. 2, (2020): 316-38.

⁴² Foreign Ministry, Note on Greek-Italian relations, 16 December 1945, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1945, 13.1.

indicative of this opinion as it scolded Italy for trying to convince “the whole world that the twenty years it has tolerated, strengthened, admired and practiced fascism are irrelevant and that the Italian people were foreign to the regime and deeply imbued with democratic ideals,” while also calling on Italians to “have the self-respect of the defeated and not whimper in disguise. Because they cause other peoples’ and especially the Greeks’ infinite disgust.”⁴³

The Greeks might have adopted a tough stance, but the USA and Britain were pushing for rapprochement. Already since the summer of 1945, the Americans were making it clear that the Greek-Italian relations resumption was at least “desirable.”⁴⁴ At the same time, the Italians had addressed the Foreign Office asking for “the British government’s good offices” in their effort to “normalize” relations with Greece.⁴⁵ London promised to exert its influence in Athens but pointed out that Rome should also take steps towards normalization. To this end, the Foreign Office suggested that Rome should postpone the recognition of the Albanian provisional communist government proclaimed in October 1944 by Enver Hoxha, which the Western allies were about to recognize with the understanding that free elections would be held,⁴⁶ given that Greece considered Albania as its fourth occupier during World War II and the state of war between the two states was still in force.⁴⁷ The Italians took the British advice, making of course absolutely sure to let Athens know of their “friendly move,” which endangered the “huge Italian interests” in Albania and burdened the already

⁴³ “Οι Ιταλοί” (The Italians), *Eleutheria*, 29-6-1945.

⁴⁴ Greek Embassy in Washington to Foreign Ministry, 26 July 1945, ΥΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1945, 13.2.

⁴⁵ Migone to De Gasperi, 11 December 1945, *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* [hereafter *DDI*], Decima Serie, vol. III, Doc. 3.

⁴⁶ “Enver Hoxha, Mastermind of Albania’s Isolation,” *The New York Times*, 12-4-1985.

⁴⁷ See Office Nationale Hellénique des Criminels de Guerre, *Les atrocités des quatre envahisseurs de la Grèce. Allemands, Italiens, Bulgares, Albanais* (Athens: 1946); Following Italy’s annexation of Albania in April 1939, Albania entered into a “personal union” status with Italy and passed a law in June 1940, under which the Kingdom of Albania would be at war with the states also at war with the Kingdom of Italy. Respectively, after the declaration of war with Italy, Greece declared Albania as a hostile state: *Efimeris tis Kyverniseos* (Official Greek Gazette), 379, I, 10.11.1940. The formal state of war between the two countries is legally still in force today.

“precarious position of Italian citizens” residing in the country. Internally, of course, they noted that they could not postpone Hoxha’s government’s recognition indefinitely because “that could cause reactions in Yugoslavia and indirectly in Moscow, which, in the circumstances we are in, we should avoid.”⁴⁸

Despite the Allies’ interventions and the Italians’ friendly gestures, the Greek authorities remained unmoved. This resulted in the greater involvement of the Allies who, seeing the Cold War intensify, sought the immediate normalization of bilateral relations between two members of the Western coalition. The State Department undertook to put further pressure on the Italians, complaining that they had not done enough to improve relations with Greece, while also stressing that it was absolutely essential the bilateral relations resumption “take place as soon as possible.” Rome, however, complained that its efforts clashed with the Greeks’ “intransigent refusal.”⁴⁹ The British on the other hand dealt with the Greeks, expressing their “eagerness” for positive developments in Athens–Rome relations, in view of the information reaching the Foreign Office that Yugoslavia was ready to restore its relations with Italy. The Greek-Italian rapprochement had become urgent, as it would be, at the very least, “unfortunate if the Greek government adopted a tougher stance than the Yugoslavs.”⁵⁰

The Greek government however remained reluctant, as it could not ignore the public opinion’s strong anti-Italian sentiments. At the same time, it also acknowledged that the resumption of diplomatic relations with Italy could give Tito the perfect excuse for further tightening his ties with Bulgaria and Albania, thereby creating a narrow front of the three states that could intensify the protection and assistance they offered to the Greek Democratic Army, significantly influencing the civil war’s outcome. Developments would soon force Greek officials to abandon their hesitations. In the spring of 1945, Tito recognized the Hoxha government and re-established Yugoslavia’s relations with Bulgaria. These moves scared Athens, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

⁴⁸ De Gasperi to Migone, 14 December 1945, *DDI*, Decima Serie, vol. III, Doc. 19.

⁴⁹ Tarchiani to De Gasperi, 23 January 1946, *DDI*, Decima Serie, vol. III, Doc. 109.

⁵⁰ Foreign Office, Note, 20 December 1945, *ΥΔΙΑ*, K.Y. 1946, 54.1; Konstantinakou, *Πολεμικές οφειλές*, 218.

emphasizing that the restoration of relations with Italy should not be further postponed, as this could “curb Tito’s momentum, taking into account the concerns that he had always had in the past with the idea of a possible reconciliation between the Greeks and the Italians.”⁵¹

The change in Athens’ course of action was also dictated by the forthcoming conference for the signing of the Peace Treaties with Italy, Bulgaria, and the other Hitler satellites, scheduled to begin in July 1946, which would judge the issues that bore importance for Greece, such as the Dodecanese and war reparations. The time was up for Athens. If the Greek government wanted Anglo-American support, it had to meet their demand, which aimed to strengthen Italy’s international position and at the same time isolate Yugoslavia.⁵² In June 1946, Greece re-established direct diplomatic relations with Italy, initially by appointing representatives. Full diplomatic relations would then be restored after the Peace Treaty’s signing.⁵³

This development marked a new era in relations between the two states, which were now focused on overcoming the difficult war past. At the same time, of course, it provided the Italian authorities with the opportunity to closely follow internal developments in Greece, with the influence of the Cold War becoming absolutely obvious. Italian diplomats noted the special position that American policy now attached to Greece, a fact that was also certified by the Truman Doctrine and the financial assistance provided by the Marshall Plan. While Italy received one of the largest sums from the Marshall plan aid, amounting to twelve billion dollars,⁵⁴ officials in Rome however were in the process of continuously trying to find ways to further assist the Italian economy’s growth and penetration in Europe, and Greece was the perfect candidate. During the Peace Conference, it had already been agreed upon that Italy would pay 105 million dollars in war reparations to Greece through contracts with Italian companies that would undertake to de-

⁵¹ Foreign Ministry, Note on Greek-Italian relations, 16 December 1945, ΥΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1945, 13.1.

⁵² Note, 26 November 1945, The National Archive, FO 371/48404.

⁵³ “Αποκαθίστανται αι σχέσεις μεταξύ Ελλάδος και Ιταλίας” (Relations between Greece and Italy are being restored), *Ελευθερία*, 25 June 1946.

⁵⁴ Francesca Fauri, *Il Piano Marshall e l’Italia* (The Marshall Plan and Italy), (Bologna: Mulino, 2010).

liver products and services to Athens.⁵⁵ Rome believed that the Marshall Plan created even better prospects for Italian industries in Greece, given that Athens intended to implement a national reconstruction plan, in which Italy could participate through third party arrangements.⁵⁶

However, the Marshall Plan and US policy towards Greece created not only opportunities but also significant risks. Italian officials observed that the US' attitude in Greece resulted in making "Moscow's politics in Mediterranean basin increasingly sensitive."⁵⁷ In this context, Italian diplomats in Athens closely followed the civil war's developments, with their interest focused on the effect that the communists' potential prevalence could have on Athens' policy towards Rome. With that being said, the Italian authorities did not seem to lose too much sleep over such a possibility. As Italy's representative in Athens Guidotti complacently noted, "all democratic parties in the Greek Parliament" supported the "sober and gradual reconciliation between Greece and Italy." The only party which continued to maintain a "violently hostile" stance were the communists. Guidotti, however, appeared convinced that this attitude was the result of tactics, commenting that "if there was a revolution, something that is impossible to imagine today, and the KKE came to power, its policy towards Italy would rapidly change. They would definitely send us an invitation for cooperation."⁵⁸

The confidence expressed by the Italian diplomatic authorities in Athens regarding the tangible improvement of bilateral relations was not exactly shared by the Greek authorities. The Peace Conference had relatively positive results for Greece. The Peace Treaty signed on February 10, 1947, had met the basic Greek claim for the Dodecanese integration. However, the 105 million dollars in reparations that had been awarded were assessed as extremely low, with Foreign Minister Panagis Tsaldaris expressing strong complaints about the "Allies' leniency, who in their efforts to protect the Italian economy had awarded Greece only a 'pittance' instead of adequate war reparations for the damages." Public reactions were equally intense, with Greek newspa-

⁵⁵ Konstantinakou, *Πολεμικές οφειλές*, 226.

⁵⁶ Guidotti to Sforza, 11 July 1947, *DDI*, Decima Serie, vol. VI, Doc. 177.

⁵⁷ Carandin to Sforza, 9 August 1947, *DDI*, Decima Serie, vol. VI, Doc. 296.

⁵⁸ Guidotti to Sforza, 10 September 1947, *DDI*, Decima Serie, vol. VI, Doc. 402.

pers even going so far as to write about a fascist revival in Italy.⁵⁹ A “Justice for Greece” rally was also planned to allow the public to protest about “the injustice done against Greece by the Peace Conference.” The Ministry of Public Order, however, banned the rally on the back of “information about the disturbance of public order due to incendiary slogans, which would be used during the rally by EAM supporters.”⁶⁰

Resentment which arose from decisions made at the Conference along with the resurgence of anti-Italian feelings in Greek public opinion forced Athens to freeze the rapprochement process. The two states had agreed that following the Peace Treaty signing, they would make the necessary arrangements for diplomatic relations to be upgraded and for representatives to be replaced by ambassadors. Still, Athens did not seem willing to proceed as planned. At this point, the USA decided that the time for their intervention had come in order to end the stagnation and put the Greek-Italian relations back on track once and for all. It was after all clear that the Western alliance could not afford two of its members states in one of the most sensitive and important areas of the world to continue their feud. The Cold War was spiraling, the Greek Civil War was at a critical juncture and the inability of both Athens and Rome to find a scheme for their postwar cooperation obstructed America’s plans to form a Mediterranean coalition.

During Tsaldaris’ trip to Washington in the summer of 1947, US officials arranged for a meeting between the Greek minister and the Italian ambassador, during which the Americans would be “kept informed” of all exchanges. Upon his return to Athens, Tsaldaris stopped at Rome Airport, where his counterpart Carlo Sforza rushed to meet him. At the one-hour meeting, the two ministers agreed on the immediate exchange of ambassadors. In his statement to the press, Tsaldaris underlined that “the restoration of friendly relations with Italy is one of the main points of Greek foreign policy and takes place within the framework of the general policy pursued by the Great Powers.” He also made sure to hint that the decision was not the result of the Greek government’s will but of American pressure, implying that the “Greek initiative to restore friendly relations with Italy has been influenced by US policy, which

⁵⁹ “Φασιστικά Εκδηλώσεις” (Fascist Manifestations), *Eleutheria*, 29-10-1946.

⁶⁰ Konstantinakou, *Πολεμικές οφειλές*, 223.

seeks to expand the circle of states attached to the sphere of American cooperation.”⁶¹

The US’ intervention was obviously a catalyst. From this point on, rapprochement accelerated with the two countries reaching economic and political agreements aimed at strengthening their cooperation. As part of this newly founded friendship, the Greek government decided in early 1948 to leave the bitter past behind and facilitate the “complete detoxification” of Greek-Italian relations, waiving the prosecution of Italian nationals accused of war crimes in Greece.⁶² The decision, which was initially kept secret, was made public by Tsaldaris in November 1948 during the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, which regulated settlement issues for Greek and Italian nationals, enabling them to “freely enter the territory of the other Party, to leave, travel, settle on the territory and reside there.” The change in the Greek attitude towards Italy was also evidenced by the fact that the Greek press welcomed the waiver announcement and the signing of the agreements, presenting them as a springboard for the new beginning of Greek-Italian relations.⁶³ The Greek authorities after all freely admitted that their decisions were imposed by the “full understanding” shown by Rome “on matters concerning the insurrection and Greece’s international position in general,” as “the Italian government willingly agreed to provide 800,000 missiles and other war materials provided by the Italian army, in order to facilitate us in our fight against the rebels.”⁶⁴

Greece and Bulgaria

Rapprochement efforts with Bulgaria proved extremely difficult, given that the two countries belonged to different spheres of influence. Differences were further exacerbated by both Greece’s claims for realigning its northern frontiers and by the help the Bulgarians provided to the

⁶¹ “Ἦρχισαν Συνομιλῖαι Ἑλλάδος καὶ Ἰταλίας” (Greek-Italian Discussions have begun), *Ἐλευθερία*, 20-8-1947.

⁶² Despina-Georgia Konstantinakou, “The ‘Complete Detoxification of Greek-Italian Relations’: The Prosecution of Italian War Criminals in Greece and the Cessation of Justice,” *Ricerche Storiche*, XLIII, no.2 (2013): 339-64.

⁶³ Konstantinakou, *Πολεμικές οφειλές*, 511-2.

⁶⁴ Kapsalis to Pipinelis, 19 January 1948, ΥΔΙΑ, Rome Embassy, 1953, 15.

DSE.⁶⁵ On December 3, 1946, the Greek government submitted a complaint to the Secretary-General of the UN accusing Bulgaria, along with Albania and Yugoslavia, of providing the Greek guerilla movement with substantial support. A few days later, the UN Security Council established an investigation commission to ascertain the validity of the Greek allegations.⁶⁶

The commission report was signed in May 1947 and found by a majority vote that Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia had given assistance to the Greek guerillas. However, during its deliberations in the summer of 1947, the Security Council was unable to reach a decision on the issue and on October 21, 1947, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 109. The Resolution called upon Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia to “do nothing that could furnish aid to the said guerillas” and to cooperate in a dispute settlement. In this regard, the General Assembly recommended that Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, and Greece “establish normal diplomatic and good neighbourly relations amongst themselves as soon as possible.” Furthermore, a special committee was established with the aim of observing compliance and the implementation of the recommendations by the four governments concerned.⁶⁷ The special committee named the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (UNSCOB) held its first meeting in Paris on November 21, 1947, and consisted of representatives from Australia, Brazil, China, France, Mexico, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the UK, and the USA, while seats were held open for Poland and the USSR.⁶⁸

In compliance with the Resolution, the Greek government called on Sofia to resume bilateral relations following the ratification of the peace

⁶⁵ For Greece’s claims see Basil Kondis, “Greek National Claims at the Paris Peace Conference of 1946,” *Balkan Studies* 32, no. 2 (1991): 309-24.

⁶⁶ Report of the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (UNSCOB), General Assembly, Official Records: Third Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/574), Lake Success, New York, 1948, 7.

⁶⁷ Resolution 109 (II) Threats to the Political Independence and the Territorial Integrity of Greece, in United Nations, Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly, Resolutions 16 September-29 November 1947, Lake Success, New York, 12-4.

⁶⁸ Report of the UNSCOB, 8; Amikam Nachmani, *International Intervention in the Greek Civil War: The United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans, 1947-1952* (New York: Praeger, 1990).

treaty that Bulgaria had signed in February 1947. Athens' move was not only intended to show that it respected and complied with UN decisions. Improving bilateral relations could secure the 45-million-dollar reparations awarded by the Peace Conference, while Athens also hoped that it could make it more difficult for Bulgaria to provide support to the Greek communists. The Bulgarians avoided responding, even when Athens repeated its request.⁶⁹

In reality, Sofia had indirectly already given its answer by intensifying aid provided to the DSE. The Greek authorities could not hide their annoyance as reports reached the ministries about Sofia's continued assistance to the guerillas. The Foreign Ministry even directly accused Bulgaria of allowing "the guerrillas to use Bulgarian territory to a large extent" and of "assisting guerrillas to enter Greece when it serves their purposes." Furthermore, "the Bulgarian frontier authorities provided shelter to Greek guerrillas when they were pushed to the border by Greek forces and allowed Greek guerrillas to cross from Bulgarian territory into Greece to attack Greek forces," while also providing "logistic assistance in large numbers to the guerillas."⁷⁰

Suddenly, six months after the initial Greek rapprochement, Bulgaria, on the eve of the UN General Assembly, conveyed to the UN Secretary-General that it was willing to re-establish relations with Greece, but under certain conditions. First and foremost, Sofia demanded guarantees from Athens that it would not claim Bulgarian territory. Greece would also have to refrain from interfering in Bulgaria's internal affairs and compensate all Bulgarian citizens who had been affected by the "atrocities" committed by the Greek border authorities. Athens, refusing "to be carried away by the immoral Bulgarian's compromise," vehemently rejected Sofia's demands.⁷¹

The sudden shift in Bulgaria's stance troubled both the Greek authorities and the other Western governments, which were trying to identify the causes of this change. The opinions expressed varied. Greek authorities attributed the "superficial conciliation attempts" to the victories claimed by the government forces against the guerillas as well as

⁶⁹ Foreign Ministry, Note, 28 June 1948, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1948, 116.1.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

to the UNSCOB action. Athens could not hide its distrust, stressing that the Bulgarian proposal was aimed at “neutralizing the Balkan commission and everything that the UN had done since December 1946 on the Greek issue.”⁷²

The Foreign Office observed that “Russian friendship attacks on the West” had intensified in recent years, with the aim of changing the western perspective of the Eastern Bloc, which would allow communist regimes to consolidate their hold. Sofia’s approach, in particular, was the result of the interest shown by the UN on the Greek issue combined with the Bulgarian authorities’ awareness that any attack against Greece “would create a very serious situation for them.” However, British diplomats did not hide their concern about Bulgaria’s “astute” move, warning that Athens would have to carefully decide upon how it would react, as both an acceptance or rejection of the Bulgarian proposal could lead to significant risks: by restoring Greek-Bulgarian relations, Sofia would be able to downplay Greece’s accusations of the guerrillas’ support from its Soviet-influenced neighbors, which would inevitably lead to the UN no longer dealing with the issue effectively, making the UNSCOB irrelevant. The rejection would also allow Bulgaria to propagandistically exploit the negative response to Greece’s detriment.⁷³

Similar assessments were shared by the United States, which linked Bulgaria’s sudden shift to Moscow’s and Sofia’s desire to neutralize the UNSCOB and its impact. The State Department observed, however, that another important factor motivated Bulgaria’s newly founded flexibility: the “psychological preparation” for Bulgaria’s and Albania’s application to join the UN. The opening to the Western world attempted by the socialist democracies, and especially Bulgaria, and the desire to join the UN was attributed to the attempt to limit the Western majority in the Organization’s Assembly and was not bound to the attempt to reach out to Greece but even aimed at the signing of an Italian-Bulgarian friendship pact. Italy was not at all averse to the idea, with Athens closely monitoring the discussions between Sofia and Rome, unable to

⁷² See Kyrou to Foreign Ministry, 20 June 1948, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1948, 116.1.

⁷³ Greek Embassy in London to Foreign Ministry, 22 June 1948, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1948, 116.1.

hide its resentment.⁷⁴ This resentment was further fueled by the information that reached Athens that the new Bulgarian ambassador in Rome, during a meeting with Italian officials, had placed sole responsibility for the lack of Greek-Bulgarian diplomatic relations on Athens, which refused to recognize “the common borders of the two states.”⁷⁵

Only France expressed a different view on Bulgaria’s motives, maintaining that Sofia’s actions actually hid a sincere desire for reconciliation. Paris, after all, put greater pressure than the Anglo-Americans on the Greek authorities to water down their negativity and try to find common ground with the Bulgarians. The French ambassador in Sofia even expressed his belief that Sofia’s initiative should not be attributed to an explicit request from Moscow but rather to the restriction of Soviet interest in Greece, which gave the Bulgarians greater freedom to pursue an independent foreign policy. The Greek authorities, however, were far from embracing France’s opinions, arguing that Paris was in no position to make an educated assessment as “French diplomacy was fully absorbed in the German question and the problems it creates for France; it therefore only displayed a theoretical interest in Balkan issues without following them with due diligence.”⁷⁶

Regardless of the Bulgarian motives, the UN firmly believed that Sofia with its proposal had taken a first step towards Greece, thereby creating an opportunity not to be missed. Pressure therefore was put on Athens to take a seat at the negotiating table. Athens resolutely refused, as it considered the conditions set by Sofia as completely unacceptable, demanding the unconditional restoration of bilateral relations. The Greek stance annoyed the UNSCOB, with the Australian and Pakistani representatives even going so far as to openly accuse Greece of obstructing any reconciliation. In a last attempt to persuade Athens, the UNSCOB suggested that the Greeks should also set their conditions for Bulgaria. The Greek government, realizing that a negative response would automatically make it solely responsible for the failure of the relations resumption, accepted the proposal as proof of its desire not to

⁷⁴ Kyrou to Foreign Ministry, 10 August 1948, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1948, 116.1.

⁷⁵ Greek Embassy in Rome to Foreign Ministry, 14 August 1948, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1948, 116.1

⁷⁶ Raphael to Foreign Ministry, 18 June 1948, YΔΙΑ, K.Y. 1948, 116.1.

“lose even the most improbable hope for the restoration of relations with Bulgaria, which under the current circumstances would have a serious international and domestic significance.” The main condition set by the Greek officials was Sofia’s immediate commitment that it would stop providing assistance to the DSE, which would have to “be verified by UNSCOB observers to be accepted on Bulgarian territory.” They also called for a mutual declaration by Bulgaria and Greece that the borders as set out in the February 1947 Peace Treaty would be respected.⁷⁷

Sofia rejected the Greek terms. However, continuing the blame game between the two parties, the Bulgarians tried to deny any responsibility for the collapse of the rapprochement attempts, with the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Vasil Kolarov, informing the French ambassador in Sofia that Bulgaria would be content with a statement from Athens renouncing all territorial claims it had presented at the Peace Conference. Then, Sofia would not insist on its other terms. The French ambassador saw Kolarov’s position as the basis on which rapprochement could be built and happily informed the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in turn hastened to inform the Greek ambassador in Paris about the “compromise” Bulgaria demonstrated, urging Greece to do the same. The Greek ambassador, however, made it clear that Athens did not see any compromise on the part of Bulgaria, given that Sofia did not appear willing to give up its own claims on Greek soil.⁷⁸ It was now clear that the attempt to resume Greek-Bulgarian relations had failed. Bilateral relations stalled with renewed efforts following Stalin’s death in 1953, when, at the urging of the USSR, the two countries signed an agreement in 1954 to restore their relations.⁷⁹

Conclusions

The end of World War II found Greece already involved in a new conflict, the civil war, making Greece the first Cold War theatre. The new

⁷⁷ Foreign Ministry to UNSCOB, 6 August 1948, ΥΔΙΑ, Κ.Υ. 1948, 116.1.

⁷⁷ Greek Embassy in Paris to Foreign Ministry, 10 August 1948, Κ.Υ. 1948, 116.1.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Konstantinakou, *Πολεμικές οφειλές*, 311.

balance formed inevitably influenced Greek foreign policy during the period 1946-1949. Amidst the turbulence, Athens sought to consolidate its position in the international system and redefine its relations with both its allies and its enemies. Greece's former World War II enemies joined different spheres of influence, with authorities in Athens trying to navigate their new post-war policy taking into account Athens' position, challenges, and needs in the new era. In the case of the Allied-occupied Germany and most importantly Italy, the policy of rapprochement was chosen, which was dictated by both Greece's accession to the Western sphere of influence and the country's urgent need to gain support, given its sensitive geographical position, its volatile financial situation, its claims, and the fear of spreading USSR influence. On the contrary, the Soviet occupied part of Germany, which, along with Bulgaria, remained Greece's enemies. Any efforts that could place the bilateral relations on a new footing constantly failed as the suspicion shown by all parties involved and the tactical moves imposed by the Cold War left no room for conciliation, rendering avoidance as the only possible option. The beginnings of the Cold War proved to be a key factor in Greece's decisions in terms of making new friends and maintaining old enemies.