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3rd Place Research Paper: The Descent Unseen: Greece's Unappreciated Place in British Political History

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3rd Place Research Paper: The Descent Unseen: Greece's Unappreciated Place in British Political History

Comments

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Kenneth Schneider

The Descent Unseen: Greece's Unappreciated Place in British Political History

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History 498-01: Integrated Senior Seminar II

Professor Robert Slayton

From 1815-1915, the empire of Great Britain enjoyed a one hundred year period of uninterrupted economic and political prosperity known as the *Pax Britannica*.

However, just a few decades after this time of hegemony, the same nation underwent a drastic change that would alter the reality of its international influence. This realization did not occur due to a loss of a colony from peaceful pressure, like India, or violent revolutions, like in Egypt. Instead, the response to events within Greece between December 1944 and June 1945 signaled the beginning of a British acceptance of their position in world politics as a secondary player, and one that shied away from the imperial mindset of old to recognize its place given the rising status of the United States and the Soviet Union. The identification of this trend had noticeable implications on British political history. The aforementioned rising stature of the United States and the Soviet Union forced Great Britain to alter its policy course in Greece, and therefore symbolized the decline of British political power.¹

British interest in Greek affairs did not begin during Prime Minister Winston Churchill's term, but rather originated more than a hundred years prior. With the beginning of the Greek War of Independence in March of 1821, the powers of Europe recognized the degenerative state of the Ottoman Empire, and the need to position themselves appropriately for the benefits of supporting a successful revolution. In recognition of the fact that a settlement could never be reached, British Foreign Secretary George Canning told the Turks that he would honor the friendly relations between them in exchange for assurances that Christians who resided within the empire would not be harassed. By 1824, leaders of the Greek Revolution took out loans from British fund-

¹ Andrew Porter, Alaine M Low, and William Roger Louis, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 322.

holders, which, in effect, made London a sponsor of the revolution and inspired the creation of the 'British' political party in Greece. After this [point](#), Great Britain, along with nations like France and Russia, provided military assistance to the First Hellenic Republic at battles such as the naval Battle of Navarino (1827), where an Allied fleet of British, Russian and French warships defeated an Ottoman armada. British interjection persisted after the revolution, such as during the debate over monarchial succession after the deposition of King Otto in 1862.²

During World War II, several nationalist factions throughout Greece arose in resistance to the German Army, [similar to groups in South-East Asia in response to the Japanese Army](#). As with many similar movements, some of these allied themselves with the communist mindset, while others chose a more republican ideal. The *Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Syndesmos*, or EDES (National Republican Greek League), originated as grassroots resistance to the Germans and the communists. In June of 1944, [a liaison officer of the British Army](#) referred to within telegrams as Major Bathgate, submitted a report to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs classifying the different Greek nationalist groups. He described the EDES as a movement mainly kept going by a few officers, such as Napoleon Zervas and his ally Major Agoras, and most of his officers were pro-monarchy. According to this report, Zervas was a capable leader, but his organization's shortcomings in combat could be narrowed down to five reasons: poor discipline, bad communication, no system of patrolling, no knowledge of infiltration or

² Carl L. Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous Game*, (New York: I.B.Tauris, 1984), 52.

lines of battle, and long, useless typewritten orders on topics such as regimental construction.³

On the other hand, the communists within Greece generally fell under the *Kommunistikó Kómma Elládas* or the KKE (The Communist Party of Greece). By September of 1941, during a meeting of the KKE, the *Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo* or EAM (National Liberation Front) was formed and become one of the most organized resistance groups in World War II. The EAM's militant wing, *Ellinikós Laikós Apeleftherotikós Stratós*, or the ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army) would become infamous to republicans and royalists alike; British War Cabinet communications described it as a “well organized gang of terrorists”.⁴ For example, Major Bathgate told of how middle-aged men and women were forced to carry *kalamboki*, or maize, for days across mountains and deep snow to feed the soldiers of the ELAS. Additionally, a boot manufacturer in the town of Volos was threatened by the ELAS to increase his leather supplies in order to supply additional forces, or else risk physical violence. Ares, the leader of the ELAS, had a reputation of being responsible for many murders and an overall pattern of ruthlessness. Despite these clear signs of ELAS aggression, Churchill would later say to the House of Commons that he clearly underestimated the power of the group. Churchill looked only at the ELAS's efficiency and goals fighting the Germans, but not their actions towards fellow countrymen. He would later realize their more

³ “Greek Guerilla Movement”, as found in the British National Archive, reference CAB 66/50/45.

⁴ Ibid.

sinister goal of transforming Greece into a Communist State with a totalitarian liquidation of all political opponents.⁵

The communist sentiment of groups such as the ELAS also began to take hold in Greeks outside of the country. The individuals most vulnerable to this dissention were the military stationed to protect the controversial King George II, ruling in exile in Egypt. The success of the ideological infiltration resulted in dissention amongst several army and naval units. The Egyptian Mutiny, in April 1944, was a quintessential early demonstration of the deep-seated animosity between the Communist and Republican elements of Greek military and political institutions. This conflict arose from the desire of the communist elements within the Greek government and citizenry to force King George II to call for a plebiscite, in order to organize a new government for the nation while he was still in exile. The king was not supportive of their efforts, he believed that he was pressed to include them in his government. However, what was seen as seditious efforts were also attempts by his Prime Minister, Emmanouil Tsouderos, to get a widely popular archbishop appointed as regent through the Constitutional Act. According to Tsouderos, not only was the king's delay in signing the act, 'destroying unity' within the exiled government, but also amongst the politicians in Athens. George II's stubborn attitude towards his rebellious constituents drew the ire of his British allies. Reginald Leeper, ambassador from Britain, telegrammed the British Foreign Office that the king was

⁵ Ibid; "Typescript speaking notes for speech on the War Situation, 18 Jan 1945 - subjects covered include fighting in the Ardennes, the Soviet advance in Germany..." The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%209%2F167#image=0> (accessed 23 Oct 2013).

“playing with a fire”, as he was endangering the interests of both the monarchy and his country as a whole.⁶

The EAM realized the danger of a united front between politicians in Athens and the Greek government in Cairo and acted in an attempt to take advantage of the lack of communication between the exiled government and the one still in Athens. However, if the remnants of Greek monarchial and republican power in the homeland could be coordinated with the exiled monarchy in Egypt, the communists’ mission in Northern Greece would ultimately fail. Therefore, an easy way to assure its success was to infiltrate an organization with power and a population sympathetic to the cause: the Greek Army. The attempts to counter this strategy became prevalent in the months to come, and also became a constant consideration by skeptical republicans during negotiations. One of the most affected units of EAM’s early infiltration was the Second Field Regiment, in which a number of officers and over 200 men declared their support of the Political Committee of National Liberation. Though members of the Ninth Army removed these men from the camp, the downfall of a regiment showed the potential power of the EAM to create dissention. For the immediate days following, Greek politicians and ministers at several levels of government concurred with the idea that communist infiltration was to blame for the discipline problems in the army.⁷

Mere days after the initial discoveries of the seditious presence, additional groups allied with the communist cause began taking action. On April 5, 1944, 300 soldiers

⁶ “The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Telegram No. 121), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47; The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Telegram No. 198), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47.

⁷ The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Telegram No. 202), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47; The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Telegram No. 207), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47.

occupied the office of the Greek Provost Marshal in Cairo, and only an overwhelming presence by British Forces and Egyptian police convinced the soldiers to evacuate.

Additionally, a Merchant Marine seaman named Karayiannis barricaded himself, along with thirty supporters, inside his own home and defied demands by police to disperse.

Troubled by these developments, Churchill discussed [this issue](#) with General Henry Wilson. [One](#) idea called for a Greek Brigade to be sent without vehicles to assist in the Allied offensive in Italy, as the Balkan soldiers were incredibly vulnerable to contamination by revolutionary elements. The efforts made by the Greek communists did not go unseen to the rest of the world, as the Soviet Union spoke well of the EAM-ELAS efforts, as well as condemned Zervas for being the instigator of the civil war and [an obstacle to](#) any agreements or negotiations on topics like a united command.⁸

By April 8, 1944, the situation had deteriorated, [with](#) the first individual Greek Naval ship [refusing](#) to obey operational orders. Several reports confirmed that soldiers from the Greek Brigade had taken up defensive positions around their camp and showed no signs of letting up without force. As the British realized the extent by which the dissention had spread throughout the ranks, General Wilson warned Churchill that dispatching Greek units to Italy would be a risk to other elements in the Allied forces, like the Polish and Yugoslavs.⁹

⁸ The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Telegram No. 211), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47; The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Special Unnumbered), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47; The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Telegram No. 218), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47.

⁹ The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (CCL/392), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47; The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Special Unnumbered), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47.

Four days later, Greek and British authorities began to contemplate stern action in an effort to curb the subversive behavior. One idea was to take violent steps to quell the Mutiny, but the War Cabinet concluded that United States media outlets would view this less favorably. The same officials stipulated an idea to issue a joint statement from all three of the World War II Allies in support of Great Britain, but it did not amount to much progress. Finally, by April 14th, the lack of supplies had taken its toll on the barricaded soldiers and resistance grew less resolute with the passing days, and Churchill himself rejected assistance from the Americans or Soviets. In other words, the Prime Minister still believed that Great Britain possessed the ability to dictate policy independent of the other World War II allies. To prevent these kinds of events from reoccurring, Churchill went as far as telling his Commander-in-Chief of Mediterranean forces to fire on mutineers whenever necessary, as no officers or sailors had any right to meddle in the formation of the new government. It did not prevent every case, as infantry and tanks were needed as late as April 23 to capture Greek posts on the high ground of camps that had been supplied with heavy weapons.¹⁰

However, since the root of the protests in Greece was the unwillingness of the king to act in support of his people's republican aspirations, Prime Minister Tsouderos believed that this rebellion was Republican in nature, though communist in motivation. By the end of the ordeal, George II caved to pressures and created a new government. Nonetheless, this chaos unveiled the true lack of control both King George II Churchill's

¹⁰ "The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944," (Telegram No. 249), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47; "The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944," (Telegram No. 145), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47; "The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944," (Personal and Top Secret), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47.

government had over the political turmoil that would plague the Greek people for [the](#) coming years. Churchill called for his Allies to help in the countering of the internal strife that gave aid to the EAM after this lack of control was realized. Great Britain, in defense of their Greek ally, assured nations like the United States that King George II [still](#) represented and served his people. While this mutiny in Egypt did not cripple the ability of the British government to execute its goals in the Middle East, the Greek Crisis was an early indication that the British would not be able to accomplish their goals without any resistance. Additionally, the diversity of people within Egypt sympathetic to the communist cause foreshadowed the larger problem that would occur in Greece mere months later. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that German forces began to retreat from their Greek holdings, the militant wings of the Communist Party remained, and succeeded in becoming a dangerous hindrance to the political will of Churchill. However, it was evident that Great Britain still maintained the political will to execute its own ideals, as others did not view this incident with any level of grave importance. By December, when the chaos of Egypt would transfer to the Greek homeland, this British feeling of control would start to be replaced by foreign council, and in the [following](#) months, intervention.¹¹

Despite the successful conclusion of the April Crisis in Egypt, tensions between the communists and republicans remained. Their disagreements remained in the political arena, as continued requests were made by the KKE and EAM to be included in a new Greek government. As German forces withdrew from Greece, the ELAS began to take

¹¹ The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Telegram No. 215), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47; The Greek Crisis: April 1-25, 1944,” (Telegram No. 648), as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/49/47.

control over large areas of the countryside while the British settled into Athens with the Papandreou government. On December 3, 1944, the situation erupted into a period of violence, known as the Dekemvriana, which became the central focus of Allied efforts inside the nation. By the time British forces counteracted this violence, the damage to their mission had been done, as dissent from international and domestic sources had a greater influence on the future of Greece than before.

In the months that led up to the violence, an important focus of the Papandreou government was the disarmament of communist partisans. Domestic guerillas like the Sacred Band and the Third Mountain Brigade were exempt from this, a policy that provided a quandary for the leadership of the EAM. While some of the KKE, which included the EAM and ELAS, viewed the British as liberators, they raised concerns in regards to the perceived lack of protection that communists would have against armed right wing militias. A counterproposal was devised by the KKE that called for the complete disarmament of all paramilitary groups in Greece, right and left leaning alike. Papandreou rejected this plan, and British General Ronald Scobie, in charge of the British forces in Greece, called for an immediate end to the ELAS. The KKE immediately called for the organization-wide resistance, as the control of the ELAS represented a great source of strength for the Greek communist party. To the Allies, the British reaction confused them, given all the British had done to ensure Greek prosperity in the future. In the months prior they had forced out the German army and provided food, clothing, supplies, and a limited, friendly military presence. Churchill saw these efforts as supporting the UNRRA, or United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, to ensure the nation's rehabilitation. Additionally, at a time when tensions were at their

peak, Panpadreou's government included willing parties from all ideologies of the political spectrum.¹²

Nevertheless, the frictions which divided pro-monarchy and anti-monarchy factions became irreconcilable. To many within the communist and labor parties, the favoritism shown towards right leaning groups, despite their history of violence, put leftist ministers and leaders at a severe disadvantage. Additionally, the British officials displayed this same bias, which left few alternative solutions. Attempts to finalize disarmament resulted in the retirement of six government ministers who associated with the EAM. The Greek communist party then decided to move away from Athens into the north of the country. After he conceded to internal pressure, Scobie allowed a demonstration to be held in Athens on December 3, 1944. About 200,000 people filled the streets and gunshots were fired without warning. According to Geoffrey Hoare of *The Times*, "Seeds of civil war were well and truly sown by the Athens police this morning...the police opened fire with rifles and tommy guns. The firing was wild and savage and continued sporadically for nearly an hour."¹³ On the other hand, some British individuals believed that EAM agitators purposely fired on the protesters in order to

¹²“Typescript speaking notes for speech on the War Situation, 18 Jan 1945 - subjects covered include fighting in the Ardennes, the Soviet advance in Germany...” The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%209%2F167#image=0> (accessed 23 Oct 2013).

¹³ As referenced by Henry Maule, *Scobie: Hero of Greece*, (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1975), 108.

organize the Greek people against Scobie, and by extension the monarchy. At the end of the initial shooting, more than 25 civilians were dead and hundreds injured.¹⁴

Most of the fighting that occurred during this period centered around Athens and its surrounding areas and ports. On the night of December 4th, British army officials became aware of advancing ELAS forces through a series of telegrams. One such communication informed the army staff that communists came within one hundred yards of the Greek center of government early in the violence. Considering these grave circumstances, Churchill sent a message to his general on the best ways to counter this threat. First, he stated that the British soldiers should resist the armed, male fighters, but be wary of the women and children used to cover their retreats at times. Also, the armor advantage possessed by Scobie should be utilized frequently as an intimidation tool. Ultimately, the telegram ended with the stern message, “We have to hold and dominate Athens. It would be a great thing for you to succeed in this without bloodshed if possible, but also, with bloodshed if necessary.”¹⁵

Although they possessed the advantage in training and technology, the British and Greek defenders were caught off-guard and were unable to halt the initial advances of the ELAS. According to British sources, almost all of the police stations in Athens and the Piraeus had been occupied or stormed by ELAS forces. Additionally, they had seized most of Athens and surrounded the city center, which left a condensed area by which

¹⁴ Winston S Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1953) pg. 288; Maule, *Hero of Greece*, 108.

¹⁵ “Typescript speaking notes for speech on the War Situation, 18 Jan 1945 - subjects covered include fighting in the Ardennes, the Soviet advance in Germany...” The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%209%2F167#image=0> (accessed 23 Oct 2013); Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*, 289.

allied soldiers could rally for a counter-attack. Despite the ELAS' progress, the EAM made up the larger portion of resistance. Churchill wrote to Harry Hopkins, "I never knew EAM would be so powerful".¹⁶ In response, Scobie transferred elements of the 4th Infantry Division from Italy to help repel the EAM from Athens. Even by December 11, more than a full week after the outbreaks of violence, Field Marshall Alexander reported that not only were his men exhausted, but lacked a foothold in the city as well as the Piraeus harbor and airfield, preventing the distribution of much needed supplies.¹⁷

As the fight for the capital continued, a new factor complicated Great Britain's efforts: America's influence. While the Soviet Union kept to its agreement from the previous months, the United States press shifted public opinion against the British. As early as December 10, Churchill wrote concerned telegrams to President Roosevelt with the observation that, if there was validity to the claims that the United States condemned British action in Greece, the resistance against the EAM organization would be severely hampered. To the dismay of the prime minister, these fears were partially realized when Roosevelt responded three days later that he was anxious to help in the situation, but acknowledged the relative power of public feeling and opinion. While later action by the United States involved a more hands-on approach in the future of Greece, this example had an equivalent effect. Although communications during this period of the

¹⁶ Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence. The Alliance Declines* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 452.

¹⁷ "Typescript speaking notes for speech on the War Situation, 18 Jan 1945 - subjects covered include fighting in the Ardennes, the Soviet advance in Germany..." The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%209%2F167#image=0> (accessed 23 Oct 2013); Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy*, 290; Warren F. Kimball, ed., Churchill and Roosevelt, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 452; Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy*, 298.

Dekemvriana demonstrated a separation in interests between two allies, it also placed Great Britain in the position of reliance. Above many other factors, the Churchill's government felt besieged by the media, and American assurances to the global community of the justness of their policies in Greece would remove politics as an obstacle. At this point, the requests did not reach the level of material intervention, yet public support had the ability to yield similar benefits. While Scobie alone could win the mission of communist expulsion, the idea that Churchill and Britain wished for American help was one that would reappear many times.¹⁸

The British soldiers in Greece understood the turn of public opinion against them, and attempted to convince others of the misrepresentations in the press. In the Censorship Summary for the Week ending on December 16, an unnamed general remarked that despite the criticisms, he and his men were “full backing up...of Mr. Churchill's policy”.¹⁹ However, American sources, such as *The New York Times* confirmed that Aneurin Bevan and Seymour Cocks of the British Labor Party threatened a major divide within British society if support against “Greek Patriots” resumed. An unidentified NCO on the ground urged the recipient of his letter to not draw any conclusions from the papers, as the Prime Minister possessed a greater understanding of the situation than any reporter. An additional officer echoed a valid concern about the press, as he identified the fact that communists who were in combat with the British believed that American popular opinion was on their side, which increased their motivation. The label of freedom fighters could not be justified when they used young

¹⁸ [Warren F. Kimball, ed.](#), Churchill and Roosevelt, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 454; Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*, 300-301.

¹⁹ “Censorship Summary for Week Ending 16th December, 1944”, as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/60/16.

children in the front of protests as shield, echoed a different officer.²⁰ These sentiments were not isolated feelings, as almost three dozen separate statements of similar sentiment were collected in one week alone, which displayed a level of uniform agreement between the officers and the enlisted that the story reported in periodicals like the *Times* were different than what individuals on the ground experienced.²¹

Another issue that emerged from the Dekemvriana concerned the plebiscite and future of the Greek government. With George II in Egypt and the Papandreou government unable to maintain civic order, British authorities began to look for alternatives that would facilitate a stable transition to peace. Ministers such as Ronald Leeper and Harold MacMillan opted for the appointment of center-left Archbishop Damaskinos as regent, who garnered wide support from all parties, including the communists. Nevertheless, George II was not convinced of the popular choice of the archbishop as the head of the regency and cited a lack of reliability in MacMillan's findings. While this issue was far from resolved by the end of violence in January 1945, the intensification of these discussions at this point signaled part of the British strategy to rebuild Greece, not in their image, but by the desires and for the benefit of the people.²²

With the ceasefire on January 15, 1945, a great drain on the resources of the British Army ended, and its effects were to be felt for months to come. First, the fight

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Censorship Summary for Week Ending 16th December, 1944", as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/60/16; Daniel, Raymond. "Eden Denies British Seek to Impose Will on Greece." *New York Times*, December 20, 1944; "Censorship Summary for Week Ending 16th December, 1944", as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/60/16.

²² Warren F. Kimball, ed., Churchill and Roosevelt, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 466; "Copy of a Letter dated 14th December 1944, from His Majesty King George II of Greece to the Prime Minister", as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/59/41.

against the ELAS-EAM impacted other World War II fronts, as 75,000 soldiers needed to fight the remaining German Army had to be deployed to Athens. Additionally, the portrayal of the Communists as sympathetic freedom fighters in the press handicapped Great Britain's ability to call upon the United States for aid. Conversely, another side effect of the increased exposure of Greece to the American public was the greater attention of President Roosevelt and his government to the situation, a fact that became more important in the following months. Ultimately, the Dekemvriana represented the beginning of challenges for the British in terms of their ability to continue to shape Greece in their singular vision.²³

Besides the failure of the British government to contain the military potential of the EAM and ELAS, the intrusion, or perceived intrusion, of foreign interests in the region created a powerful obstacle for Winston Churchill and his advisors. Several decisions highlighted the potential for foreign influence to dictate or alter the policy in Greece and put the British Prime Minister in a difficult position. There was little precedence in British foreign policy on how to address and work with the suggestions of more powerful nations, as well as dealing with multinational scrutiny. As had been the case in the several preceding decades, the Soviet Union was consistently a consideration when it came to Eastern European affairs. Given the geographical proximity of Greece to the Balkan nations, as well as the nature of communist expansion that followed the Red Army triumphs in World War II, Churchill would be forced to heed the potential of the Soviet Union to create turbulence in the region. With the ending of the war becoming

²³ Maule, *Scobie: Hero of Greece*, 271.

more inevitable, Britain began to notice how the different spheres of influence were taking shape.

As the spread of Russian form communism affected many nations throughout the Balkans, the development of the ideology in Greece differed from their neighbors. Organizations like the EAM, though communist, did not receive the assistance from Soviet sources to "communize" the peninsula. Instead, the Russians preferred to utilize the Yugoslavian, Albanian, and Greek movements in order to gain ideological influence in [Southeastern](#) Europe. The general hesitancy of the Soviet Union to publicly support groups like the EAM ended in August of 1944, as they came out backing the Greek communists and criticizing British policy in the region. Churchill and his staff realized that despite agreements of the Lebanon Conference, which helped absorb EAM and other communists into an all-party government, many things could go wrong and allow the Soviet Union to return. Alternative plans included partnerships with communists hostile to the Soviets, like Tito in Yugoslavia. While the constant fight for political positioning was not unique to this time period, Great Britain's ability to bargain with Russia was directly hampered by their decline in political power; a position largely unfamiliar to the British of the previous hundred year period.²⁴

As the Dekemvriana took its toll on British confidence, Churchill voiced his disdain and fear over the growing communist sphere to Field Marshall Smuts. [Churchill](#) wrote, "If the powers of evil should prevail in Greece, as is quite likely, we must prepare for a quasi-Bolshevized Russian-led Balkans peninsula, and this may spread to Italy and

²⁴ "Soviet Policy in the Balkans," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/51/4. Winston S Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*, 311.

Hungary.”²⁵ Despite reports from sources in the previous months that the Russians maintained little interest in the region, even to the extent that the Greek Communist Party was not given representation in Moscow, Churchill was not convinced that this guaranteed the cessation of Russian interference. Instead, he cited the fact that the Communist and Left Wing within the nation had begun to garner the sympathy of the international community, including the American media.²⁶

However, by February of the following year, the British government believed that the need to feel threatened by Soviet influence was gone. The British cabinet reported, “Premier Stalin had most scrupulously respected his acceptance of our position in Greece...He understood that the emissary sent to the U.S.S.R by the Greek Communists had first been put under the arrest”.²⁷ The spirit of mutually assured cooperation continued, as the idea of spheres of influence returned to the negotiations. To ensure a lack of interference by the Russians in Greece specifically, the British agreed to allow Soviet influence to assume control over other British interests in the region, such as the nations of Bulgaria and Romania. Nevertheless, part of the negotiations included that Joseph Stalin could send observers to the region in order to confirm that an anti-communist leader, like the right leaning General Plastiras, could not establish a right wing dictatorship.²⁸

Despite the fact that the Soviet Union had less influence in the Greek affairs than in other parts of Europe by the end of March 1945, Churchill and his advisors remained

²⁵ Winston S Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*, 311.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “W.M. (45) 22nd Conclusions, Minute 1: Confidential Annex,” as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/22.

²⁸ Ibid.; “W.M. (45) 26th Conclusions, Minute 5: Confidential Annex,” as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/26.

suspicious. For instance, the British Foreign Secretary felt that the easiest way for a prolonged civil war to emerge in Greece would be for the USSR to back a claim for the ELAS to have an equal say in the formation of the Greek Army. Churchill, who sent a letter to President Roosevelt that asked if it was prudent to include the Russians on the economic missions, also spoke to this suspicion. More important than the content of the request by Churchill was that he had to consult another superpower in order to both validate his country's concerns, as well as seek approval for future actions. Nonetheless, cooperation with a power destined to be adversarial for decades suggested a feeling of disparity and uncertainty by the British, a feeling that can be attributed to a newfound realization of secondary status.²⁹

While the threat of Soviet sway over Greece seemed to diminish, the United States consistently attempted to insert their ideas into the rebuilding of Greece, from proposed political changes to the reorganization of the army. Nonetheless, the fact that Churchill was forced to consider the American position on many aspects of Greek organization he found important was an indicator of the increasing levels of influence others had on the reconstruction of the British ally. While this became evident as soon as the Egyptian Mutiny in April, the events of the Dekemvriana polarized opinions abroad on the correct manner to handle Greece. Communications between Churchill and President Roosevelt on the topic of Greece followed the British decision to intervene in the affairs of their ally, and Churchill and presidential advisor Harry Hopkins debated on American assistance as early as December 10. Concerned with the prospect of fighting

²⁹ "Prime Minister Minute to Secretary of State No M.276/5," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/531; Warren F. Kimball, ed., Churchill and Roosevelt, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 606.

the communists alone, Churchill wrote, “If it can be said in the streets of Athens that the United States are against us, then more British blood will be shed and much more Greek.”³⁰ Despite the fact that the American media had been sympathetic to the ELAS cause, the leaders of Britain needed unity with their powerful ally in order to avoid further devastation of military and political capital. The next day, a private letter from Churchill to Hopkins further pleaded for America to support Great Britain.³¹

Relief came in the form of a telegram from Roosevelt, which reassured Churchill that the friendship between the two nations still existed. However, while Roosevelt had sympathy for the situation in Greece, the power of pressing circumstances, such as the sway of public opinion, prevented a suitable intervention. Besides negative reactions in regards to the ELAS, rumors of Britain giving territorial concessions in Poland to the Soviet Union caused protests as well. It is at this point that American representatives voiced some of the first calls for King George II to establish a regency.³²

Despite Roosevelt’s hesitancy to act, Churchill continued to write about the military challenges that faced Greece, only resisted by the British. According to a telegram written on December 17, at a time when primary focus was recapturing the port of Piraeus and the city of Athens, British General Staff Intelligence found that after more than a week of fighting, no more than 12,000 ELAS remained, but they took a heavy toll on the civilian population.³³

As the violence dissipated, the discussion between the United States and Great Britain shifted from assistance on the military front to more political ideals. By December

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 451, 452.

³² *Ibid.*, 456.

³³ *Ibid.*, 467.

26, [Churchill](#) assured Roosevelt that with the violence lessening, it must always be understood that he, and the country, sought nothing from Greece, in territory or advantages. Nevertheless, the need for Churchill to justify the validity of his country's actions suggests that their allies were beginning to take a larger and more vocal role in Greece's future, which still had British troops on the ground. As discussions began in regards to the appointment of a regent due to the lack of a plebiscite, Churchill made the British position clear. First, he supported Archbishop Damaskinos and urged Roosevelt to agree with his thinking, especially given the fact that Damaskinos's rapport with the EAM had the potential to lead to quick negotiations and forgo civil war.³⁴

With agreements signed by Communist and pro-Republican representatives in February, the British began to heavily focus on rebuilding Greece into a stable power. These decisions, which included the reformation of [the](#) Greek army and the extent of economic aid, consistently included discussions that analyzed the American perspective. For example, in a War Cabinet conclusion from March 12, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that General Scobie was hesitant of informing the United States government of goals to reduce the military commitment to Greece. Primarily, Scobie was concerned that the Americans would decide to inject themselves in that role of Greece's savior, and take the credit for their rescue. However, the Secretary became less skeptical of cooperation in terms of financial and economic aid. These kinds of considerations were typical of this period in Britain's relationship with Greece, as many discussions regarding the economics of Greek restoration increasingly involved American aid or

³⁴ Winston S Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*. 315. 320.

resources as at least a factor, if not the driving force behind the different plans to be implemented in the coming months.³⁵

The distrust of the Soviet Union became apparent in the debate over the American role in the economic recovery effort. In his April 3 correspondence with Roosevelt, Churchill suggested a joint Anglo-American committee for the benefit of the Greek government that would allow for two advisors from each nation to have close proximity to the Greeks. Nonetheless, a central idea seemed to be that the British did not want American interests, especially business, to be left unchecked. Despite the suspicion, [Churchill](#) urged the assistance of Donald M. Nelson, former executive vice president of Sears Roebuck. Later, Roosevelt confirmed that the Greek government had informally approached the US about a similar idea, but he was going to reject it at that time, as the preferred group for the UNRRA was better equipped for this task. [It](#) was not increasingly clear by this point in Churchill's administration, the power the British had over the future of their ally seemed contingent on the ideas and preferences of the United States..³⁶

While the potential influences of the Soviet Union and United States had an undeniable effect on the course of British intervention in Greece, there were certain [internal](#) issues throughout this period that became significant to the British and the Greeks. [The](#) conclusion of the Dekemvriana allowed for a relatively uninterrupted opportunity to act on specific goals, originating from needs that became apparent when sections of Athens were under siege. First [of all](#), Churchill realized that the political origins of the tensions within Greece could be addressed through [satisfying](#) the popular

³⁵ "W.M. (45) 29th Conclusions," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/49/29.

³⁶ [Warren F. Kimball, ed.](#), Churchill, Winston, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 606, 618.

demand of a plebiscite and free elections. Additionally, as the problems of relying on militias became apparent, a debate emerged as to the extent that the British army would be involved in the country. Though the need for a governmental alternative to King George II and his minister began as early as the previous April, the Dekemvriana brought to the attention of many within Churchill's government the need for a plebiscite. It became clear that in order to avoid a similar outbreak of violence in the future, a leader had to be elected that would speak to a wider array of people, not just British interests, while the king remained in exile. An early nomination by the British for the new government was Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens, despite the vocal protests of the existing Papandreou administration. The main apprehension was the comfort the Archbishop had with members of the EAM, an asset some feared would be used against the existing ministers. Nevertheless, an early compromise initially explored was the formation of a regency of three, which would consist of Damaskinos as the figurehead.³⁷

Both the Greeks and British understood that the appointment of a regent needed to be tolerated by George II. Initially, this task proved to be difficult, as the Greek king vehemently disagreed with the notion that Damaskinos constituted a wish of the people. In fact, he referred to the potential of the Archbishop's appointment as, "An abandonment of the struggle," and would create confusion on the front to the extreme left.³⁸ In addition, the Greek Constitution stated that in the event that the king could not be present in the country to rule within his government, the Crown Prince would be

³⁷ Winston S Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*, pg. 302; "Athens telegram No 613. Message from Papandreou to King of Greece," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11B/368.

³⁸ "War Cabinet: Copy of a Letter from his Majesty King George II," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/59/41

appointed regent. In a letter to Churchill, the Greek monarch stated, “I have never solicited anyone’s help to safeguard my Throne and you know...how wronged I am by those who think I would wish to rely on anything other than the will of my people”.³⁹

Members of [the Greek](#) government, such as Minister A. Alexandris, believed that the internal conditions of Greece did not make the appointment of the [regency](#) necessary, as the consequences would result in a victory for the [otherwise](#) dilapidated [communists](#).

This position became a contentious issue, up to the eventual capitulation by George II in the upcoming weeks.⁴⁰

The submission by the King came due to the accumulated weight of political pressure by the British, as well as representatives within Greece. An early example came from prominent centrist Greek politician Themistoklis Sofoulis, who sent a telegram, with support of many politicians, that not only endorsed the appointment of the

Archbishop, but strongly advised the King to agree. [Additional](#) pressure came from Churchill himself, who, in a communication with President Roosevelt, [commented that](#)

he “had to tell the King that if he did not agree the matter would be settled without him and that we should recognize the new government instead of him”.⁴¹ The threat of the instillation of a government against the wishes of the nation’s ruler harkened to an imperial mindset of Britain, the very threat of which motivated George II to act against

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid; Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*, 303; “War Cabinet: Copy of a Letter from his Majesty King George II,” as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/59/41; “War Cabinet: Greece,” as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/60/11.

⁴¹ [Warren F. Kimball, ed.](#), Churchill and Roosevelt, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence. The Alliance Declines*. 480.

his own beliefs. However, this display of British power and influence would not be replicated in this fashion many more times during Churchill's administration.⁴²

The politics evolved as violence in the capital began to subside. An egregious error was printed by the Greek press soon after the New Year, which stipulated that not only was the Archbishop unwilling to allow EAM representation in the new government, but he would also lend a willing ear to the ideas of the king. The repercussions of this statement had grave potential, with a misunderstanding with the United States being the most troublesome of all. Eden and Leeper argued that the Papandreou government was responsible for the misrepresentation, and urged the king to not share any communications of that caliber with anyone but the regent. The Greek monarch's lack of enthusiasm continued to be a hindrance for Churchill's government, yet their faith in the potential of Damaskinos allowed them to continue in their goal for a democratic Greece.⁴³

Nevertheless, progress was made and the popularity of the temporary government spread. The success prompted ideas of additional plebiscites in liberated areas, even in the north, where a conceivable attempt could be made by the ELAS to seize power through a democratic process. While the British did not perceive the success in a similar manner as the Greeks, Leeper and Churchill encouraged a potential plebiscite of confidence in the Archbishop's government in all the liberated areas. A successful display of confidence could reinforce the authority of Damaskinos, and by extension,

⁴² "Athens telegram No 613. Message from Papandreou to King of Greece," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11B/368; [Warren F. Kimball, ed., Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence. The Alliance Declines.](#) 480.

⁴³ "1st Conclusions, Minute 6," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/1; "Foreign Office Dispatch to Athens No. 8," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/406.

legitimize the goals of the British. From this point in January until the end of Churchill's time as prime minister, the continuation of free elections was an issue of paramount importance, as it symbolized a large victory over communist forces.⁴⁴

The success of British policies in the country partially relied on the ability of soldiers to ensure a repeat of the Dekemvriana did not occur. During the month long period of violence, the British army had to divert much needed resources to combat the communists, a luxury not available if a similar situation emerged. Additionally, Republican forces, such as the EDES, were controversial for their extreme methods and therefore could not be solely relied upon. George II recognized the sacrifice of the Englishmen who defended his country, and agreed that the majority of them should be allowed to withdraw from Greece as soon as Athens became secure. However, the accomplishments of General Scobie could not remain if the Greek army became unable to preserve the newfound peace. By January, as the violent communist resistance died down, a discussion arose as to how to pursue the goals of a self-sufficient Greece when the national armed forces were woefully unprepared to counter another potential uprising. Churchill and the British believed that the first step lay in the ability of the Greeks to defend their own nation. According to Cabinet Minutes from January 8, "It was clear that by our action we had prevented a massacre. It was now for the Greek Government which had been established to raise the necessary National Forces."⁴⁵ Since these goals were accomplished, the next step, according to Field Marshal Alexander, was to establish a

⁴⁴ "Conclusions of a Meeting of the War Cabinet," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/49/6; "Foreign Office to Athens," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/431.

⁴⁵ "W.M. (45) 2nd Conclusions, Minute 5," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/2.

military infrastructure to assist in defense, such as a corridor linking the commercial port areas of Patras with Athens. These improvements came with a proposed truce by Alexander that would ensure peace through a forced and complete disarmament of all irregular forces within Greece.⁴⁶

Despite the formal signing of the cease-fire at Varkiza in February, the army and national defense remained an issue into April and June. In spite of the hope to have a majority of British soldiers withdrawn months' prior, Scobie still possessed the responsibilities of advisor to the Greek government, as well as commander of the British garrison. However, a communication between Churchill and Roosevelt on April 3, 1945, conveyed the hope that that the "operational phase" of the Greek involvement was over, which would allow for the UNRRA to assume responsibility for aid distribution instead of the army. Additionally, at this point Churchill welcomed the "continued collaboration" of the United States Embassy in Athens. As April became June, the need to solidify a system in preparation for an eventual British departure from Greece persisted. The theme of these discussions had not changed, as many encouraged a minimal presence of British soldiers while native forces were being prepared. According to the Cabinet, the single area in which British council could have the greatest impact was in regards to the military. However, as the resources available to the British for Greece lessened, the more economics began to factor into army decisions. This was reflected in the advice to train

⁴⁶ Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 460; "W.M. (45) 2nd Conclusions, Minute 5," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/2; "Telegram from Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander to WSC commenting on the terms for a truce" The Churchill Papers (CHAR 20/210/82), Churchill Archives Center, Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%2020%2F210%2F82#image=0>.

and maintain a national defense force that could only guarantee internal security, which would allow neighboring nations like Yugoslavia to possess more imposing forces. A commonality in those austerity measures was that American aid helped dictate to what extent the rebuilding could occur, even if the British military was in control of the organization, administration, discipline and training. However, these measures would diminish the economic and military drain on Great Britain's resources, theoretically allowing them to maintain some semblance of control over the resources left in the country. By settling matters early, the British would also be able to keep the interested USSR and USA from intervening for a while longer. Despite the need for British involvement as advisors, the definitive goal was clearly defined as Greek governmental autonomy.⁴⁷

While the goals of free elections and military sovereignty were ideas of the British from the earliest periods of their involvement with Greece, an increasing theme became the insertion and consideration of American capabilities. As the debates, which surrounded the formation of the Greek army, largely occurred at the end of Churchill's term as Prime Minister, the gradual increase of American considerations into the debates was a sign for things to come after Churchill's departure. The plebiscite had a similar trend, as a main goal of the British was to appear democratic in the face of media scrutiny that saw groups like the EAM as democratic movements of the people.

⁴⁷ [Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 606-607](#); "Prime Minister Minute to Secretary of State," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/587; "Cabinet Memorandum: Greece," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/66/24; "Greece: Sir A. Cadogan Minute to PM," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/600.

Every factor previously discussed, from the Dekemvriana to the intervention of American interests, helped to dictate the course of British policy in Greece. The development of these specific interests over the six-month period from December 1944 to June 1945 demonstrated a distinct transformation in the nature of Churchill's decisions, reflecting an overall decline in the influence of the British nation. The month of December became particularly significant due to the fact that many debates over the subsequent months originated specifically during this period. Of the many topics that took center stage, the three most significant were the implications of the Dekemvriana on international relations, the extent of the British military mission in the country, and the future of a democratically elected Greek government.

The outbreak of the Dekemvriana shocked Greek and British officials alike, as it left them generally unprepared for the assault on Athens and Piraeus. The beginning of the ELAS assault on the capital signaled the moment when Churchill took direct control of the situation, and Greek preservation became a top priority. In the name of that control, Churchill did not wait to consult most of the Cabinet, as the time spent would have potentially delayed the assistance Greece needed. In other words, Winston Churchill made it abundantly clear that the security of the Balkan nation was not only a national issue, but one of personal importance as well. However, even as early as December 5 1944, United States Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr. began to make observations on the different policy approaches to Greek preservation by the United States and Great Britain.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Winston S Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*, pg. 288; Warren F. Kimball, ed., Churchill and Roosevelt. *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence. The Alliance Declines*. pg. 443.

At the same time as the statement by Stettinius, Churchill addressed the House of Commons on the events that had developed in recent days, as well as the clear goals and aspirations of his government. This speech was published in the *New York Times*, as the American public had begun to take interest in what was happening in Greece. According to Churchill, the civil war was just one facet of the hardships facing the nation, which included economic and financial problems that the United States and Great Britain together would work out. This statement's importance stemmed from the fact that although Greece had been an interest of British, the inclusion of American support was now needed to convince some of the Greek cause. Nevertheless, the greatest obstacle became the extent force would be used to correct the woes of civil strife. Churchill urged the House of Commons that in these violent times, the burden fell on the Allied military sphere to use force in order to prevent greater bloodshed. The armed force would be dependent on the Greek government, since private armies owed allegiance to an ideology.⁴⁹

Although this British position was theorized earlier than the publication date, The *New York Times* published a cable on December 17 that identified the American position on Greece at the time. According to the United States War Department, the US military would be strictly limited to relief and rehabilitation. In addition, "American personnel assigned to Greece...are not authorized to participate, directly or indirectly, in any

⁴⁹ "Text of Churchill Statement on Greece in House of Commons." *New York Times*, December 5, 1944.
<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/106815575/CB9F149D59444116PQ/5?accountid=10051> (accessed March 9, 2014).

operational phase.”⁵⁰ American combat soldiers within the vicinity of wartime operations were told to refrain from any activity that could be conceived as intervention, an unpopular idea in the United States. This idea would continue to be important in the Anglo-American relationship, as the place for Allied troops in a country like Greece would remain a subject of debate between the World War II allies.⁵¹

Many in the United States did not embrace the case for British intervention. The same day that the text of Churchill’s speech was published in *The New York Times*, an article appeared on page 11 advocating for a strong US intervention in spite of the efforts by Great Britain. Basil Vlavianos, head of the Greek section of the International Editorial Board of the Free World Association and editor of the Greek Newspaper, *The National Herald*, wrote, “Monarchist forces wanting the return of King George are behind the present effort to divide Greece and unfortunately they are backed by the British.”⁵² To Vlavianos, the British support of the hereditarily related monarch symbolized the policy’s effect on the spheres of influence. These spheres were responsible for the potential of reactionary forces, like the EDES, supported by foreign interests who wished to master the situation. Therefore, the postulation that the resistance movements were solely communistic in nature was a farce. Outspoken criticism of Greek intervention from the United States grew as the fighting in Athens continued. The collective domestic criticism had a noticeable effect on the United States government, as Roosevelt wrote to Churchill

⁵⁰ "U.S. Role in Greece Limited To SUCCOR ." *New York Times*, December 17, 1944. [http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/106884077/fulltextPDF/\\$N/1?accountid=10051](http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/106884077/fulltextPDF/$N/1?accountid=10051) (accessed March 09, 2014).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² "U.S. Intervention In Greece is Urged." *New York Times*, December 5, 1944. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/106834874/1E557B4A4CF84924PQ/3?accountid=10051> (accessed March 9, 2014).

that while he would have liked to assist public opinion in the nation made that prospect unlikely.⁵³

In many of the criticisms of Churchill's policy, a common question regarded the political future of Greece, including the selection of a group to replace the unpopular Papandreou government. By December 1944, the threat of non-inclusion for communists in the post-Nazi government led some to question the true democratic nature of Greek leadership, and any role Great Britain would play in its selection. According to Churchill, "Whether the Greek people form themselves into a monarchy or republic is for their decision. Whether they form a government of the right or left is for their decision."⁵⁴ The job of the British at the time was to ensure, through deployment of the Army, that law and order could be maintained. The assurance of stability would allow for the people of Athens, and Greece as a whole, to be more prepared to vote on their future. This stance was believed to garner the support of the majority of the Greek population. Churchill declared that Great Britain, under the proxy leadership of General Scobie, would take care that the government would not attach itself to any specific faction.⁵⁵

However, the use of British force to ensure free elections led to many objections in the House. One of the voices of dissent came from Laborite F.E. Pethic Lawrence, who asked if Churchill could assure the House that, if the armed forces of Britain and the Allies supported the government, they would enforce the need for governmental change

⁵³ Ibid; Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 454; Churchill. *Triumph and Tragedy*, 456.

⁵⁴ "Text of Churchill Statement on Greece in House of Commons." *New York Times*, December 5, 1944.

<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/106815575/CB9F149D59444116PQ/5?accountid=10051> (accessed March 9, 2014).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

and not just preserve the status quo with European military backing. This question addressed two key issues of the time, the place of free elections as well as how the presence of the military could influence the future of Greece. Towards the conclusion of the speech, Lawrence challenged the prime minister to assure members of Parliament that his government would remind the Greeks that, despite present hostilities, all political identifications needed to be included in the elections. Ultimately, the concerns within the dissenting members originated from a fear that increased intervention would resemble an imperial mindset, a course the country would be unable to pursue, due to both economic restrictions, as well as unwillingness from public opinion. In the coming months, especially after the Treaty of Varkiza, the issue of communist inclusion would resonate for survivors of the December violence and became a contentious issue for the emergent government. For both, their December introduction to members of Parliament displayed the level of importance the administration assigned to this issue.⁵⁶

As the violence continued throughout December, different statements were made as to how to classify the British military response. Papandreou stated, according to the minister in charge of Greek Information Services, Nicholas Lely, that he was against the use of force as much by the Right as on the Left. However, what that statement did not convey was any view of the 5,000 soldiers within the country as intervention. According to Papandreou on December 7, 1944, "British assistance to us is not intervention. Intervention exists when it takes place in free nations where public sovereignty functions... When a people, however, have not gained political liberty... it is not

⁵⁶ "Text of Churchill Statement on Greece in House of Commons." *New York Times*, December 5, 1944.
<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/106815575/CB9F149D59444116PQ/5?accountid=10051> (accessed March 9, 2014).

intervention; it is then liberation.”⁵⁷ Therefore, if Greece possessed an army that did not consist of factions of conflicted interests, the sacrifice of the Allies would not have been necessary. Nevertheless, the leader of the recently liberated Greek nation confirmed the ideas perpetuated by Churchill: the British army’s role was not of an occupying force, but to liberate and ensure the democratic process could continue uninhibited.⁵⁸

The last month of 1944 held great significance for the development of British political power. Violence and anarchy in the streets of Athens caused many of the core ideals of the Greek protection to be questioned by foreign media, as well as by the local government. Nonetheless, many of the issues raised would reappear consistently throughout the next six months. Some, like the place of the British military, remained contentious throughout the remainder of Churchill’s time as Prime Minister. Others, such as the place of free elections and sovereignty, became a staple of the United States policy towards Greece, as their voice in the matter became stronger and more influential.

As the debates on the future of Greece continued, influenced by factors such as the media and political pressure, the month of January 1945 proved to be one in which Churchill was able to make his ideas and convictions on these discussions known.

Through [his](#) speeches, such as his address to the House of Commons, the [prime](#) [m](#)inister was able to address his critics and give them all reason to support the continual effort to ensure the safety of the Balkan nation. The discussions on improvement were paired with noticeable progress in many of the controversial areas that generated criticism, such as

⁵⁷ "Ley Defends British in Greece; Lays Civil War to Communists." *New York Times*, December 17, 1944.

<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/106885181/6C816C1D3C64828PQ/7?accountid=10051> (accessed March 9, 2014)

⁵⁸ Ibid.

the persuasion of King George II over the plebiscite issue and the formation of a truce to end the violence within the capital. Nevertheless, the negotiations and steps taken during this period would become unique, as they represented an end to the time when Greece was shaped under the sole vision of the British.

With the arrival of the New Year, the formulation of a truce between government and communist forces became imperative. For Churchill, success of this goal would have the potential to turn opponents in both the media and Parliament over to his side. As early as January 2, 1945, American media sources began to notice the efforts of the British Prime Minister to facilitate a cessation of the month long fight. According to the anonymous author of a *New York Times* article entitled “Greek Regency”, Churchill’s interventionist strategy revealed the advantages of “grasping the Greek nettle firmly.”⁵⁹ The grasp referred to the initiative taken in order to ensure the beginning of talks between many of the warring party leaders, excluding the remnants of royalist forces. However, the success of the future of negotiations depended on the skills of Archbishop Damaskinos to facilitate a representative administration. The initial reports presented by this media source did not yet show a willingness of the EAM or ELAS to negotiate with Scobie, but initial progress was clear.⁶⁰

At the same time, the debate surrounding the plebiscite continued, as King George II remained a key obstacle for unilateral support of the Archbishop and his government.

As previously mentioned, a problem arose with the release of misleading documents from the Greek government, that amongst other inaccuracies, stated that Damaskinos, “Did not

⁵⁹ "Greek Regency." *New York Times*, January 02, 1945.
<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/107319135/9D6FD07F2F104EC1PQ/19?accountid=10051> (accessed March 10, 2014).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

intend to allow E.A.M to be represented in the New Government, and that the Regent would be in close contact with the King.”⁶¹ An additional misnomer from this release was the supposed relationship the regent sought with the king, which meant that the monarchy would wield considerable influence in future decision making. For members of the communist groups, their contempt for the king was not the only reason why this prospect concerned them. With a cessation of violence in the relative future for Greece, a concern arose as the possibility that, despite their role in the violence, they would not be extended an invitation to join the new government.⁶²

In congruence with Winston Churchill’s disdain for and confusion over the situation, Minister Anthony Eden identified a crucial problem. Prime Minister Papandreou leaked the telegram, against the clearly expressed wishes of Damaskinos, who decided that he had to carry out the king’s previous discussions. However, progress seemed to have been made, as Eden continued to state in the telegram to Leeper that George II admitted the inaccuracies within the leak, as well as the fact that the blind loyalty of Papandreou seemed odd. In his effort to ease the job of the Archbishop, Eden recommended that the King be given explicit instructions to not send messages to anyone but the Regent, and, “It must be of a character to help him in his task and not hinder him.”⁶³ For Churchill, Eden and the rest of the Cabinet, a small victory in this power

⁶¹ “1st Conclusions, Minute 6,” as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/1

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Foreign Office Dispatch to Athens No. 8,” as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/406.

struggle came when George II of Greece understood and agreed to not deliberately stand in the Archbishop's way, though he held little enthusiasm.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, by January 07, under political pressure, the British sponsored Georgios Papandreou resigned and was replaced by 62-year-old Liberal Party's Nicholas Plastiras. He pledged that his new government would, amongst other things, impose legal order, punish the collaborators of the German occupation, and assist in food and shelter distribution. Despite Plastiras' attempt to distance himself from the British, ELAS leaders at the time did not accept a ceasefire due to Scobie's failure to confirm the Government's intent to disarm right wing militia groups at the same time as the communists. The hesitancy over potential favoritism persisted despite the fact that one or more EAM members were invited to take leadership positions at newly elected posts in the Cabinet. Additionally, unease still centered on the British idea to maintain a stable and strong military presence within Greece until a national defense force could be raised. However, the estimated time for withdrawal was still four months away, according to Churchill. Though the retreat of ELAS forces hinted at the beginning of serious negotiations, several sources, including the *Manchester Times*, questioned the motives of both Plastiras and the British in the request for a ceasefire, as speculations were made from sympathetic onlookers that the ELAS would not continue to fight if not for "a powerful cause."⁶⁵

Although Churchill wrote that he believed the ELAS was driven off by force of arms, it was the resolution of an issue within the conflict that led to great headway and

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Hope for Greece: Premier Chosen Assaying the Hopes." *New York Times*, . <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/107120002/B3DBE7EF921E43C8PQ/4?accountid=10051> (accessed March 10, 2014); "Prime Minister's Personal Minute" as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/415

an eventual ceasefire; the release of communist hostages. In his speech to Parliament more than a week later, the prime minister highlighted the grave situation for many. At the conclusion of the Greek section of the speech, he told the story of a British officer named Colonel Morrow. He described a column of hostages being led away from Athens on Christmas Day, with individuals dying every day on the march from starvation and exposure. When these prisoners finished the journey to the ELAS-controlled camps in the north, no one provided food. After a considerable time, some of the soldiers raised a hundred dollars, which bought only a half loaf of bread. Additionally, the Colonel heard stories about political prisoners who were being shot and robbed, as were protesters.⁶⁶

The address was not the first time the Prime Minister's administration addressed the issue of treatment of political hostages. However, by January 12, close to the signing of the truce between the Communists and the British, British negotiators believed that this singular issue could not be the hindrance to a lasting peace. This revelation was made to the concern of both the regent and General Plastiras, as the Archbishop informed the ELAS representative of his profound shock. General Scobie urged the Greek leaders that their anger over the issue was not ignored, as British civilians were also taken during the violence. As Leeper and other members of the War Cabinet wished for the cessation of violence to come, a recommendation was released which stated, "The release of these hostages should be accompanied by some guarantee of immunity in the case of persons...who were not guilty of acts contrary to the rules of war."⁶⁷ Despite this

⁶⁶ "Hansard report of WSC's speech on the War Situation" The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167/87-95) Churchill Archives Center, Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%209%2F167%2F87-95>.

⁶⁷ "5th Conclusions, Minute 1" as referenced in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/5.

announcement, some discussed the amnesty of General Ares, leader of the ELAS, for the sake of national unity, though officials such as the British Foreign Secretary equated it to blackmail. Ultimately, despite the terms signed by representatives of the ELAS and British, His Majesty's government made it clear that the agreement could not endure into peace unless hostages had been safeguarded or released.⁶⁸

The formulation of the truce, including an agreement for the gradual release of hostages, set the stage for Prime Minister Churchill to champion the cause within the House of Commons. Though it covered many wartime concerns on both fronts of World War II, it included a lengthy discussion about the history of the Greek conflict, as well as the progress being made. Firstly, the Prime Minister gave an in-depth background on the conflict, as well as a reminder that the origin of the British presence in the country was to expel the Nazis. When the British returned to help rebuild the liberated nation, both the EDES and EAM alike invited them, and despite the writings of American newspapers, went in with "Good gifts in our hands; stability and assistance to the all-Party Greek Govt."⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Churchill stated that even before the outbreak of violence, he knew not to discount the communist directed ELAS and their ability to cause chaos. As violence erupted, the Prime Minister reminded his audience that the communists within Greece had tried both political and military means to achieve power, as the entire situation was a struggle for power.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "Hansard report of WSC's speech on the War Situation" The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167/87-95) Churchill Archives Center, Churchill Archive,

<http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%209%2F167%2F87-95>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

In spite of Great Britain's hubris, Churchill proudly stated that the eventual victory in Athens was the key to the preservation of Greek freedom itself. As part of that freedom, the appointment of the Archbishop was allowed to occur relatively unimpeded, with strong anti-communist General Plastiras as Prime Minister. According to the speech, these governing efforts were the first step of many to eliminate the rampant backstabbing and back dealing between many members of power within the Greek government. An additional challenge, according to [Churchill](#), would be the integration of former [communists](#) back into the government of the Greek people, as many within the nation itself wished for no amnesty or forgiveness. Most importantly, Churchill reinforced for all those who witnessed this address the answer to the question of what Britain wanted from Greece. While some speculated the involvement of the nation was a move of 'power politics', Churchill cleared any misconceptions with a powerful proclamation: "I repeat, we want nothing for Greece but her friendship, and to earn it and to deserve it we have to do our duty." [For](#) hundreds of thousands of men, women and children [to](#) live without fear of murder or pillaging, prosperity [approached](#), [though at a deliberate pace](#).⁷¹

By the conclusion of the speech, the British representative body voted 340-7 in support of the goals for the reconstruction. [These goals included the ending of violence within Athens and the surrounding country, as well as the solidification of the Archbishop's position and a government loyal to the people as opposed to the monarch.](#) This symbol of support for the goals of Churchill within Greece was the high point for the British, as foreign governments and media interests had not forced them to abandon their overall goals for freedom and sovereignty in the Balkan state.

⁷¹ [Ibid.](#)

While Churchill enjoyed nominal political success during the month of January 1945, the following three months became a time when the British ideas of Greece's future were established. This solidification began as the violence that had consumed Southern Greece for over a month officially ended with the Treaty of Varkiza on February 12, 1945. However, as different policies were envisioned, the influence of outside actors, such as the United States and the Soviet Union, became more pronounced. Therefore, the discussions and debates within the British government began to reflect less on the British desires for Greece, and more on the increasingly influential place their World War Two allies would have.

Although an armistice had been reached by January 11, 1945, a formalized ceasefire between the Greek Government and the EAM was not finalized until a month later at Varkiza, a suburb of greater Athens. The Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, supported by the British, met with the Secretary of the Greek Communist Party, and among the many aspects of this treaty was a guarantee of free elections throughout the country. According to Article IX, a popular plebiscite would occur within the year in order to amend any problems within the Greek Constitution, and thus create a constituent assembly that would, in turn, draft a new organic law. Additionally, both signatories agreed that the World War Two allies of Great Britain would send representatives to verify the elections. Equally important was the disarmament of EAM-ELAS, which they agreed to on the condition that the new national army would be one without any bias, left

or right. Within the next few days, the ELAS surrendered over a hundred different pieces of artillery, mortars, machine guns and radios.⁷²

The establishment of peace garnered praise from many Allies within the country. On February 14, 1945, Prime Minister Plastiras addressed a crowd and said, "On behalf of Greece, the Government expresses their deep gratitude to her Great Allies and especially to yourself, Mr. Prime Minister...her great friend and supporter."⁷³ In a manner usually reserved for heroes, Plastiras described Churchill as the voice that strengthened the Greek people's resistance against the barbarians and animated its fortitude and hope. On the same date, the Archbishop praised Winston Churchill for his presence in the country. According to Damaskinos, "The presence...of the British Prime Minister among us...giving thus, one more proof of the lively interest of his great country for her friends, Greece."⁷⁴ Specifically, the Regent of Athens recalled the personal visit of Churchill, during the violence of the Dekemvriana, in an attempt to bring about a ceasefire. This personal investment conveyed a guarantee to the Greek people that England would honor its commitment to the country, despite the hard times ahead.⁷⁵

⁷² Stephen G Xydis, "Greece and the Yalta Declaration," *American Slavic and East European Review*, 20, no. 1 (1961): 7-8; Stefanos Sarafis, *ELAS: Greek Resistance Army* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), p. 525; Heinz Richter, *British Intervention in Greece: From Varkiza to Civil War*, (London: Merlin Press, 1986), 50.

⁷³ "Typescript of Speech of General Plastiras, February 14", The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%209%2F169#image=0>

⁷⁴ "Typescript of Speech on the future of Greece...with text of speech by Archbishop-Regent Damaskinos", The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%209%2F169> (accessed 23 Oct 2013)

⁷⁵ "Typescript of Speech of General Plastiras, February 14", The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167); "Typescript of Speech on the future of Greece...with text of speech by Archbishop-Regent Damaskinos", The Churchill Papers (CHAR 9/167).

Following his negotiations at Yalta, Churchill reported to The House of Commons on the various decisions and how they applied to each country with British interests. In regards to Greece, Churchill referred to his trip to Athens as the high spot of the whole journey. He described his trip with Damaskinos through the city center, as crowds of cheering people clogged the streets, which created the greatest protests of its kind ever witnessed by Churchill personally. The sight would have been unbelievable to many who had followed the events of the nations through the American media, as Churchill stated that there had not “been any on which greater prejudice and misrepresentation have been poured out against them in the United States.”⁷⁶ This prejudice described had the undesirable effect of providing enthusiasm for the enemy, like during the violence of the Dekemvriana, when American media sources depicted the communist forces as fighting for the freedom of the Greek people. Nevertheless, Churchill declared that in spite of this obstacle, the Greek people would look for the job to be done, both militarily and politically.⁷⁷

Despite praise from the leaders of the nation he labored to help, Churchill recognized the need to finalize the place of Britain’s allies in the rebuilding process. As previously mentioned, the Soviet Union represented a potential obstacle to Greek national unification, as Balkan nations such as Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria began to identify with the communist cause. Despite this, negotiations with the Soviet Union went better than anticipated, as Stalin’s dislike of the Greek Communists mirrored Churchill’s.

⁷⁶ "The Text of Churchill's Report to the House of Commons on the Allies Decisions at Yalta." *New York Times*, February 28, 1945.
<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/107064075/8833856C93274B2CPQ/5?accountid=10051> (accessed March 10, 2014).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

As previously mentioned, a Cabinet minute from February 19th revealed that the emissary from the Greek Communists to the USSR was put under house arrest and sent back [to Greece](#). However, as curious as the Soviet's abandoning of the region was, the fact that the expulsion of a communist representative from Europe occurred without any noticeable criticism from the Russian media peaked Churchill's curiosity.⁷⁸

As February became March, the view of Soviet inclusion in Greece by the British did not change, but the American's began to have their own input. In order to ensure the continued cooperation of the Soviet Union, Great Britain agreed to give up [their](#) influence in Romania and Bulgaria in exchange for the lead in Greece. Roosevelt questioned this decision, as the Soviet Union at this time began to go back on many agreements discussed during the TOLSTOY accords, otherwise known as the Fourth Moscow Conference, in which the post-war division of the Balkans became a primary discussion point. Nevertheless, the American president proposed the idea of including the Soviet's Commissar for Foreign Trade, Anastas Mikoyan, to assist in the consultation on Greek economic potential. Despite this move, British and American politicians alike agreed that the Russians could not have any influence in the formation of the new Greek national army, as the opposite would result in the resumption of civil distress at the hands of the ELAS. April [held similar](#) debates, [and](#) discussions between the Soviet Union and Great Britain ended with similar results; [the](#) British defended their ideas of Greek elections and economy, even though the potential of Soviet intervention persisted.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ "W.M. (45) 22nd Conclusions, Minute 1: Confidential Annex," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/22.

⁷⁹ [Warren F. Kimball, ed.](#), Churchill and Roosevelt. *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence. The Alliance Declines*. pg. 545; "From Foreign Office to Washington," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/528;

March 1945 also signified a time in which the economic consequences and role of Great Britain in Greece would be examined. According to Secretary Macmillan, the extent to which Britain had dedicated resources to the reorganization of Greece would require heavy financial and economic commitments for many years to come. Initially, Churchill saw the arrangements and actions perpetuated by the United States before the Yalta Agreement as justification for a lack of trust in their ability to help. However, Cabinet Minutes from March 6, 1945 asked to consider the Yalta Agreement as the superseding document to base the relationship off of, one in which the American word initially proved to be reliable. Finally, by March 12, Secretary Macmillan agreed that in order for the British vision of Greece to be realized, an increase in military presence would be called for, although it would be paired with the beginning of the US government's involvement in terms of financial and economic matters. For the benefit of the Churchill, Macmillan assured that the American inclusion into Greece would parallel British policy thus far.⁸⁰

One of the more popular ideas for the financial recovery of Greece was to send a multi-national team of advisors. The United States representative would be Donald Nelson, who had just completed a similar non-political mission to China, as well as

Prime Minister Minute to Secretary of State No M.276/5," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/531; "Telegram from WSC to Marshal Stalin marked "Personal and Top Secret," The Churchill Papers (Char 20/216/104-109), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/page?id=CHAR%2020%2F216%2F104-109> (accessed 23 Oct 2013)

⁸⁰ "Memorandum by the Secretary of State For Foreign Affairs," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 66/62/43; "W.M. (45) 26th Conclusions, Minute 5: Confidential Annex," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/51/26; "W.M. (45) 29th Conclusions," as found in the British National Archives, reference CAB 65/49/29

Oliver Lyttelton and the previously mentioned Soviet Commissar of Foreign Trade Mikoyan. According to President Roosevelt, this mission would have the added affect of reinforcing a positive world opinion of the British effort. Evidence of world involvement was seen in the American media, as The *New York Times* ran articles that called for monetary donations for the people of war-torn Greece. Churchill had mixed views on the potential of this project. On one hand, the inclusion of the Soviet Union and the United States, including free access to their newspapers, would allow the responsibilities Britain once had to Greece to be largely discharged within a matter of months. The American monetary resources would account for such an accelerated time frame. However, the Prime Minister foresaw the United States taking the credit for the success of Greece, despite all Great Britain's work.⁸¹

Despite this hesitancy about the United States, Churchill wrote to President Roosevelt in the early days of April to confirm his hopes for the future of Greece. First, the Prime Minister acknowledged that not only did he not wish to include the Russians in the previously discussed economic missions, but also described their potential inclusion as a purely political gesture. Therefore, he proposed the formation of an Anglo-American Committee of British and American experts. Among those potential experts, Churchill urged Donald Nelson to participate. Ultimately, the benefit of the American partnership

⁸¹ "Telegram from President Roosevelt to WSC marked "Personal and Top Secret." The Churchill Papers (Char 20/213A/21), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore.page?id=CHAR+20%2F213A%2F21> (accessed 23 Oct 2013); "To Send Money to Greece." *New York Times*, March 13, 1945. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/107157091/3BB75215DDE64FEBPQ/2?accountid=10051> (accessed March 10, 2014); "Prime Minister's Personal Minutes," as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/538.

would be the ability of the British to gradually pass the responsibility for Greece onto another in the upcoming future.⁸²

The months of February, March and April thus signified a transitional period of British policy in Greece. While the ultimate goal of a democratic Greece remained vital for Churchill and his administration, the way by which this was to be achieved differed. Instead of allies being used as tools for Britain's ultimate gain, communications within the British government began to describe potential aid from the United States, and the Soviet Union, as capable of replacing the contributions of Churchill's government. The Prime Minister himself acknowledged that it would cause British advisors and military to remain in the country for far less time. In turn, correspondence from Roosevelt became increasingly valued council; the amount of time before the Americans could potentially resume responsibilities in the Balkan nation lessened by political pressure from a primary power onto a lesser one.

The months of May and June signified the final full months of Churchill's term as Prime Minister. Therefore, it was appropriate for the debates that surrounded the Greek nation to involve both Britain's legacy in the nation as well as what the Greeks had to do in the future in order to assure success. Though the Cabinet minutes and telegrams from the time did not suggest an immediate withdrawal of the British, discussions occurred as to the ability of the Greek government to assume roles previously assisted by their European friends. Nevertheless, as the interests and potential contributions of the Allies became more pronounced, the Churchill administration's role became increasingly

⁸² Warren F. Kimball, ed., Churchill and Roosevelt, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 606-607.

marginalized. This different position epitomized Great Britain's descent from a primary power into a secondary one.

One factor that needed to remain a constant for the successful rebuilding of Greece was a stable government. While support for the Archbishop remained a constant, the Prime Ministers remained volatile in terms of support of the public and regent. In the month prior, General Plastiras was forced to resign after he released a letter that favored German intervention in 1941. Even after the letter caused an uproar in the country, Plastiras refused to step down. With advice from ministers of every party, Damaskinos appointed an individual he believed could garner the support of the divided people, as well as guarantee a successful plebiscite within three months, Admiral Petros Voulgaris. The British relationship with the admiral was strengthened by the fact that he was credited with the halt of the mutinous Greeks in Egypt from April of the previous year. It did not take long for many within the British government to realize that Voulgaris represented the best option for a stable Greek government thus far. In a telegram to Churchill on May 5, 1945, Leeper stated that little friction existed between the Admiral and the British government during their consultations, a notable rarity. In the face of other issues that troubled Greece at the time, a stable government would allow future goals to be accomplished without the turbulence common in the previous months. Voulgaris, according to Leeper, had every chance of success, as he possessed great admiration for the British.⁸³

⁸³ "Premier of Greece Ousted by Regent." *New York Times*, April 08, 1945. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/107131559/6490D92ECDD647FBPQ/1?accountid=10051> (accessed March 10, 2014); "Telegram from Reginald Leeper to WSC" The Churchill Papers (CHAR 20/217/121), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive,

However, this telegram also held the beginnings of a discussion about an important factor of the Greek issue, the British legacy. As economic hardships hampered the Balkan nation, Leeper wrote to his Prime Minister that, “good government publicity is the best way for the Greek Government to capture public confidence.”⁸⁴ More specifically, even a loan of a good public relations officer for a few months could capture the volatile public confidence, to convince both British and Greek citizens alike that various government economic and control policies ultimately benefit the people. With this in mind, Leeper reminded that, “His majesty’s Government can hope justifiably, to get credit for producing order out of chaos; enabling free election to be held, and lifting a very shattered Balkan country onto a higher level than it has known.”⁸⁵

One of the clear signs that the British legacy was a successful one depended on the ability of the Greeks to assume the task of nation building. On June 2, 1945, Churchill sent a telegram to Admiral Voulgaris that discussed the arrival of Kyriakos Varvaresos, chief officer of the Bank of Greece, to Athens in assistance to the Greek government in the face of economic and financial problems. Within the telegram, Churchill praised the nation as a whole, as he continued to be “encouraged by the improvement which has taken place in the political situation,” for which Admiral Voulgaris should have received credit.⁸⁶ Though he showed pride in the progress made by all within the country, Churchill urged the people to put aside the passions that lead to civil strife in order to

<http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore.page?id=CHAR+20%2F217%2F121> (accessed 23 Oct 2013)

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ “Telegram from WSC to Admiral Voulgaris” The Churchill Papers (CHAR 20/220/67), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchives.com/explore.page?id=CHAR+20%2F220%2F67> (accessed 23 October 2013)

assure the improvements would be maintained, and that democratic principles would be firmly re-established.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, all the social cohesion could not solve the rapid deterioration of the financial situation in Greece. For British Ministers such as Harold Macmillan, the time had come to transfer a major portion of the responsibility from General Scobie and to the British embassy in Athens. Yet, with the exception of a limited scope of accessible imports, the problem could only be solved by efforts within the nation itself. According to Macmillan, “an external loan would be of no assistance, since the Greeks have enough foreign exchange...and a long, or even a money gift, would not affect the currency circulation within Greece itself.”⁸⁸ The root of the problem was that the amount of money, which circulated throughout the country, was increasing much more rapidly than the supply of goods that could be bought. The austerity measures needed to correct this economic course could have been undertaken by the British, and would have if not given the political and economic state of their own nation at the time. In addition, the Cabinet agreed that British interference with the Greek government would only create additional unrest within the country. Great Britain did not possess the necessary available military or economic resources to take control of the Balkan nation, a condition directly connected to their descent from primary power status.⁸⁹

This telegram from Minister Macmillan held additional instances of British hesitation to further involve themselves in Greece. For example, Macmillan insisted that, “the bulk of the supplies which will be provided during the next six or twelve months

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “Memorandum By The Minister of Education”, as found in the British National Archive, reference CAB 66/66/24

⁸⁹ Ibid.

must come from U.N.R.R.A.”⁹⁰ For programs that could not be covered by this kind of aid, such as railway reconstruction, the assistance of Great Britain, and more significantly the United States, would allow for the Balkan nation to import the materials necessary and slowly reduce the risk of inflation. In addition, despite the need for a sustainable and stable Greek armed force, the mostly American aid would only allow for a hundred thousand man civil defense force, which would mean that “for some time Greece must be inferior in military power...and she would not be in a position to defend the country from external attacks.”⁹¹ In both the economic and military arenas, Churchill’s inability to dedicate tangible resources, as well as the consistent move to rely on American relief, clearly displayed the actions of a power well on its way to decline.⁹²

Further examination of the nature of American aid occurred in a telegram from Sir Desmond Morton, the Personal Assistant to the Prime Minister, to Churchill, as well as a Cabinet minute from June 20, 1945. While Morton urged the Prime Minister to remember that the Britain must commit to aid both Italy and Greece to achieve a reasonable standard of life, he also clarified a key source of this aid. According to this source, the integral aid would come from their American allies, as long as the internal politics of the country would allow them. The Cabinet minute reinforced this idea when it advocated for, “an Anglo-American Production mission to be sent to Greece to advise the Greeks how they could best help themselves.”⁹³ Another advantage of this mission would be the invaluable expertise the two nations could provide to increase industrial

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ “Cabinet Minutes 45: Conclusion 10,” as found in the British Archives, reference CAB 65/53/10.

production, as well as increased imports, and the U.N.R.R.A would respond to requests for supplies and shipping.⁹⁴

However, the one aspect of British intervention that both countries agreed on was the continuation of British assistance with the military, despite earlier communications that hoped for a withdrawal of the army's resources. Prime Minister Voulgaris stated that Great Britain's leadership could make for a more time-efficient mission completion. In addition, fear still persisted within the country's leadership that only through the utilization of a third party, such as Great Britain, could it be assured that no political advantages or activities would taint the rebuilding process. This decision was tempered with the official statement that Greeks should be the head of the military mission. Ultimately, Leeper and General Scobie reached an agreement at the end of June to include the Greek government in the assumption of powers over the Greek Army, including appointments, promotions, dismissals and discipline. The combination of Greek and British interests together would be known as the Supreme War Council. If at any point the Greek authorities believed the British council was not acting in their best general interest, the dispute would be taken to the diplomatic level between the two nation's embassies.⁹⁵

In the six months since the outbreak of violence in Athens, the nature of British involvement in Greece underwent a distinct change, as did their stature in the

⁹⁴ "Telegram from Sir Desmond Morton [Prime Minister's Personal Assistant] to WSC" The Churchill Papers (CHAR 20/221/62-3), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchives.com/explore.page?id=CHAR+20%2F221%2F62-63> (accessed 23 October 2013); "Cabinet Minutes 45: Conclusion 10," CAB 65/53/10.

⁹⁵ "Prime Minister", as found in the British National Archives, reference FO 954/11C/600; FO 954/11C/603.

international community. While the establishment of a democratic Greece remained the goal throughout this period, the method by which Britain attempted to accomplish this varied throughout, and became a symptom of their place amongst world powers. Even though negotiations between Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt were common, Churchill's talks were not for the sake of political positioning, but political survival. Especially given the economic resources of Britain at this time, the inclusion of the Allies into Greece was necessary for their vision of the Balkan nation to persist after an inevitable European withdrawal. As important as the economics were to the future of Greece, the debate developed into something more complex. While well-aware of the growing power of the United States and Soviet Union, Great Britain continued to fight for hegemony in an old sphere of historic influence. Whether as a result of quick successes, like the defeat of the Egyptian Mutiny, or prolonged debates, such as over the plebiscite, each trial for Churchill exposed a different fundamental weakness in the British political state.

Ultimately, the admittance of these shortcomings cemented Great Britain's role as a secondary consideration, as it would not be long until the financial weight of the United States, and the political influence of the Soviet Union took assumed control over this conflict between communism and democracy for themselves, leaving Great Britain as an ancillary spectator in future Cold War forums.