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Lord Byron and the politics of the Greek Revolution (1823-1824)*

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When Byron went to Greece, so the often-told story goes, to take part in the Revolution against Ottoman rule, in 1823, he could not have chosen a worse moment. The standard narrative goes like this.

When Byron arrived in Cephalonia in August 1823, a stalemate had been reached in the war against the Turks. The Greek cause was threatening to fall apart in civil conflict. What has since become known as the "first civil war" of the Revolution began at the end of the year and continued until June. A second would break out a few months later and it was only the devastating Ottoman counter-attack, led by Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt, in 1825 and 1826, that forced the quarrelsome Greeks to patch up their differences. Against such a background, what could Byron have done, even if he had lived longer? At the time when he was in Greece, there was relatively little fighting going on against the Turks. In any case, despite the paraphernalia of the pseudo-Homeric helmets commissioned in Genoa, and the military uniform he wore to step ashore at Missolonghi, Byron knew

* The talk on which this paper is based was given at Cambridge in November 2011. Earlier versions were given at the British School at Athens (Visiting Fellow lecture, December 2010) and at the Charles University, Prague, in March 2011. It represents work in progress towards the second half of my book, *Byron's war: Romantic rebellion, Greek revolution*, to be published by Cambridge University Press in 2013. *Dates*: all dates in the main text have been harmonised to New Style. Old Style dates (in use in Greece throughout the nineteenth century, and twelve days earlier than New Style) are indicated in the notes by the initials OS in square brackets, followed by "/" and the equivalent New Style date.

perfectly well that he had no training or experience as a leader of fighting men. The war was on hold, the Greeks were in a state of internal chaos. The only thing left to Byron was to die, which he obligingly did. As Harold Nicolson epigrammatically summed it up, in a book written for the centenary of his death and still the most recent full-length treatment of the subject: "Lord Byron accomplished nothing at Missolonghi except his own suicide; but by that single act of heroism he secured the liberation of Greece."[1]

On this view, which remains the prevailing one, Byron ended up like one of the heroes of his own poems: a heroic failure. And as that tendentious word "suicide" must be meant to imply, this is as much as Byron ever meant to do, or in the circumstances could possibly have done.

But it was not like that at all.

Historians in Greece have recently been taking a fresh look at the civil wars of 1823-1825. Through the work of Vasilis Panagiotopoulos, Lysandros Papanikolaou, Nikos Rotzokos, Petros Pizanias, and others, this period of internal conflict is now coming to be understood as a "necessary, unavoidable, a *defining* stage" of the Revolution, in the words of Papanikolaou, in that sense comparable to the period of the Terror in France.[2] According to this new perspective, the two civil wars of those years, whose origin coincided with Byron's arrival in Greek waters in August 1823, were the crucible in which the future political shape of independent Greece would be forged. It was the civil wars that brought into the open the different *political* forms that the Greeks' newly acquired liberty might take in the future, and forced the

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[1] Harold Nicolson, *Byron: The last journey*, new edition with a supplementary chapter (London: Constable 1940 [1924]), pp. ix-x.

[2] Lysandros Papanikolaou, *Η καθημερινή ιστορία του Εικοσιένα* (Athens: Kastaniotis 2007), p. 229; cf. Anemon Productions, *1821* (Athens: Skai TV 2011), DVDs 4 and 5; Vasilis Kremmydas, *Από το Σπυρίδωνα Τρικούπη στο σήμερα: Το Εικοσιένα στις νέες ιστοριογραφικές προσεγγίσεις* (Athens: Parliament of the Hellenes 2007), pp. 72-80; Petros Pizanias (ed. and introduction), *Η ελληνική επανάσταση του 1821: ένα ευρωπαϊκό γεγονός* (Athens: Kedros 2009); Nikos Rotzokos, *Επανάσταση και εμφύλιος στο Εικοσιένα* (Athens: Plethron 1997).

issue of deciding among them. These wars were closely fought, and the outcome was by no means a foregone conclusion.

To simplify a complex situation greatly, these wars were fought between centralisers, or modernisers, on the one side and local warlords on the other. The first group were political rather than military leaders, educated either in the Ottoman system, or in the West, or both, and inspired by the ideas of the Greek Enlightenment and emerging nationalism and liberalism. The second were the military chieftains, the klefts and local leaders that at the time and since have always captured the popular imagination in Greece: simple and direct in their manners and speech, often without much education, but with a strong local power-base and a political understanding based on tradition and localism. During the time that Byron was in Greece, the chief protagonist of the modernisers was Alexandros Mavrokordatos; of the warlords, Theodoros Kolokotronis (the Old Man of the Morea).

According to this new understanding of the civil wars, it was the eventual victory of the modernisers that made possible the recognition of Greece as a sovereign nation-state according to the London Protocol of February 1830, and also determined the nature of the country's political system as it has been ever since.[3]

On this way of looking at things, the very months when Byron was in Greece become the crucial ones that determine the whole *political* outcome of the Revolution. Although the Greek historians mentioned above have not yet made this link, there was everything for Byron to play for, arriving just when the political impasse was coming to a crisis. Far from being the wrong time to come, the years 1823 and 1824 were perhaps the only time in the whole course of the Revolution when the kind of contribution that

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[3] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Service of Historical Archives, *The Foundation of the Modern Greek State: Major treaties and conventions (1830-1947)*, ed. Ph. Constantopoulou (Athens: Kastaniotis 1999), p. 30; Roderick Beaton, "Introduction", in: R. Beaton and D. Ricks (eds.), *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the uses of the past (1797–1896)* (Farnham: Ashgate 2009), pp. 1-18 (pp. 1-2).

Byron was actually qualified to make could really have counted. And it did.

* * *

To see how this came about, we need to look in parallel at the dates and events that define Byron's brief career in Greece, and the dates and events that define the first civil war of the Revolution. The coincidences that result are truly extraordinary. Nobody can be credited with creating these: that was simply the way things fell out, history in the making. But given these coincidences, a context suddenly emerges in which a newly arrived and largely unsuspecting Byron could seize the opportunities as they arose. At the same time, even without him necessarily even being aware of it, Byron's very presence in Greece and his repeated insistence that he would give everything in his power to what he called the "Cause", in these circumstances was bound to carry enormous political weight in the finely balanced internal struggle for power between the modernisers and the warlords.

Byron's decision to go to Greece came surprisingly late. In February 1823, almost exactly two years after the outbreak of the Revolution, a Committee was formed in London to raise money and organise political support for the cause. One of the Committee's first actions was to write to Byron, to solicit his support. Then on 5 April, a delegation from the Committee called on him in Genoa, where he was living at the time. Byron responded with cautious enthusiasm. Five days later, on the east coast of the Peloponnese, the second National Assembly of the Provisional Greek government would convene at Astros. Its deliberations would soon lead to the political impasse that ushered in the first civil war.

1823		*BYRON*	*GREEK REVOLUTION*
April	5	GENOA: Visited by representatives of London Greek Committee	
	10		Second National Assembly begins at Astros, near Nafplio; beginning of slide towards civil war
June	± 10	Final decision to go to Greece	
	14		New Provisional Government appoints commissioners to raise loan in London
	22		Mavrokordatos writes to British Foreign Secretary George Canning
July	16	Sails from Genoa	
	21	Arrives off Livorno	
	22	Off Livorno	TRIPOLITSA
	23	Takes delivery of letters from Bishop Ignatios for Mavrokordatos and others	Mavrokordatos elected president of Legislative Body, to strong objection from Kolokotronis
	24	Sails from Livorno for Cephalonia	Clash between Mavrokordatos and Kolokotronis
	26		Kolokotronis threatens Mavrokordatos and orders him out
August	3	Arrives in Cephalonia	
	9		Legislative Body leaves Tripolitsa for Salamis

1823		***BYRON***	***GREEK REVOLUTION***
October	27	At Metaxata, CEPHALONIA	Government mandate to Mavrokordatos to direct operations at Missolonghi
December	12	At Metaxata, Cephalonia	Mavrokordatos arrives at Missolonghi
	29	Departs Cephalonia for Missolonghi	
1824 January	4	Arrives at MISSOLONGHI	Two rival governments established in Greece, Legislature at Kranidi, Executive at Nafplio
	18		Complete break between Legislature and Executive; the latter moves to Tripolitsa
	23		Deputation from Greek government arrives in London to negotiate loan
February	15	Suffers seizure	
	17		Agreement for loan signed in London
March	22		News of loan reaches Greece
April	2		Government forces regain Acrocorinth
	9	Goes riding in rain, catches fever	
	15		Government forces regain Tripolitsa
	19	Dies	
June	5		Government forces regain Nafplio. End of 1st civil war

Byron's decision to involve himself personally in the Greek Revolution was taken on or about 10 June 1823. Again within days, and again without any causal connection, the new Greek legislature in Tripolitsa (modern Tripoli) had determined to send a deputation to London to seek to raise a substantial loan from British banks and private subscribers. It was the first practical step towards internationalising the Greek conflict, and one of its prime movers was Alexandros Mavrokordatos. Also within days, Mavrokordatos took a further step towards widening the struggle by appealing directly to Great Britain: he wrote long letters to the Foreign Secretary, George Canning, and other public figures, including Byron, though Byron would be in Cephalonia before this letter reached Genoa.

Byron set sail from Genoa for Greece on 16 July. On the way he stopped off at Livorno. There he took on board a set of letters of introduction, written for him in Greek by the former Bishop of Hungary and Wallachia, Ignatios, who while living in Pisa had become the spiritual mentor of Mavrokordatos and others in Greece who thought like him.[4] Leaving Livorno on the twenty-fourth, he arrived in the Ionian Islands, then under British rule, on 3 August. While Byron was at sea and heading, as he hoped, for the seat of the Greek government, that seat was being violently rocked by Kolokotronis. In a series of confrontations over three days, just as Byron was leaving Livorno, Kolokotronis accused Mavrokordatos of plotting to sell out Greece to foreign interests, and finally threatened him to his face. As Kolokotronis' words were later reported to Byron: "if he found him again intriguing he would mount him on a donkey and have him whipped out of the Morea".[5] Within days of Byron establishing himself temporarily

[4] National Library of Scotland: John Murray Archives (George Gordon, Lord Byron, Correspondence and Papers) Ms. 43550, subfile 1, nos 13-18 (all dated 21 June [OS /3 July] 1823).

[5] National Library of Greece, Athens (Papers of the London Greek Committee, file K5): [James Hamilton Browne,] "Substance of a conversation held with Colocotroni in his palace", enclosed with Browne to Byron, 13 September 1823; cf. idem, "Narrative of a visit, in 1823, to

in Cephalonia, the entire Legislature abandoned Tripolitsa to Kolokotronis and his supporters, and decamped to Salamis. Mavrokordatos himself was spirited out of the town and took refuge among the ship-owners of Hydra.

By the end of 1823 Greece had in effect two governments, one based at Kranidi in the northeast Peloponnese and made up of modernisers and their sympathisers, and a rival dominated by Kolokotronis and Petrobey Mavromichalis at Tripolitsa. Mavrokordatos by this time had been given a mandate by the Kranidi government to return to his former power-base of Missolonghi in west Greece and direct operations there.[6] Mavrokordatos arrived at Missolonghi on 12 December and almost immediately sent a boat to Cephalonia to fetch Byron to join him. In the event, Byron arrived at Missolonghi on 4 January after a hair-raising voyage involving near-capture by the Turks and shipwreck. During the same days, the Kranidi government formally stripped the members of its rival government of office, and was duly defied from Tripolitsa. The civil war had begun.

Also in January, the deputation sent by the government, before the split had become irrevocable, to raise a loan in London belatedly arrived there. A deal was concluded in February. On 22 March news reached Greece that the stupendous sum of 800,000 British pounds had been subscribed and would shortly be on its way. Byron was named as one of three commissioners responsible for its disbursement. In anticipation of this news, the Kranidi government had already gone on the offensive against its rivals in the Peloponnese. During April 1824, while Byron was dying of fever at Missolonghi, first Corinth and then Tripolitsa surrendered to government forces. By early June, the first civil war was at an

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the seat of war in Greece", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 36, no. 226 (September 1834) 392-407 (p. 404).

[6] *Μνημεία της Ελληνικής Ιστορίας, τόμ. Ε΄: Ιστορικόν Αρχείον Αλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου*, fascicles I-IV, ed. E. Protopsaltis (Athens: Academy of Athens 1963-1974), III 552, no. 848: Legislative Body to Byron, 15 [OS /27] October 1823 (translation in Nicolson, *Last journey*, p. 172).

end. The government had come through this first, crucial round. Greece once again *had* a government. It would not all be plain sailing from there, far from it. But today it is becoming possible to see those months while Byron had been in Greece as a turning point – in the internal, political struggle for dominance that would determine the outcome of the Revolution.

How far did Byron himself contribute to this outcome? What were his considered objectives for Greece, once he had begun to understand the true situation there? How did these objectives fit with those of the Greeks among whom he was determined to serve? And how, finally, did some of the leading players among the Greeks react to this saviour in their midst – *at the time*?

Byron's policies for Greece

The first thing to be said about Byron's political ideas for Greece is that he was utterly serious. He was serious about Greece in a way that he never quite was about the Italian revolutionary movement that he had become involved in, a few years before. That had ended in fiasco. Now, his letters from the time that he left Genoa show a changed man. Most of them are *about* Greece – about Greece and about money. A great many of them are written to bankers (Byron was almost always good friends with his bankers). The money was needed for the cause. And the "Cause" (with a capital letter) begins to appear in Byron's letters as something almost sacred:

> I mean ... to serve the *Cause* if the patriots will permit me – but it must be *the Cause* – and not individuals or *parties* that I endeavour to benefit.
>
> As I have embarked in the Cause I won't quit it, – but "in for a penny in for a pound" – I will do what I can – and all I can – in any way that seems most serviceable...
>
> I cannot quit Greece while there is a Chance of my being of any (even *supposed*) utility – there is a Stake worth millions such as

> I am – – and while I can stand at all – I must stand by the Cause.[7]

When he decided to go to Greece, in June 1823, Byron effectively gave up writing poetry. His great comic epic masterpiece, *Don Juan*, was left untouched, sixteen stanzas into its seventeenth canto. After that he wrote only one short poem that he completed, and a smaller number of drafts and fragments. Byron in Greece was no longer a poet, but a man of action. Remarkably, for someone of so changeable and inconstant a nature (a shortcoming of which he was well aware), Byron suddenly throws all his energies together behind a single purpose, and sticks to it. Many of his friends, and some who were not really his friends, such as the shrewd Bishop Ignatios in Pisa, doubted whether he *would* stick to it, and feared what might happen then. Had he lived longer, all this might have turned out differently. But as it was, for the last ten months of his life Byron was more consistent and serious about the cause of Greece than he had ever been about anything – except poetry.

Byron never set out his political ideas for Greece in a systematic way. But a careful reading of his letters and of the extensive records of his conversations at Missolonghi that were published in English soon after his death, allows a remarkably coherent programme to emerge.[8] It can be summed up in three fundamental principles:

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[7] *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, vol. XI (London: John Murray 1981), pp. 42, 76, 131: Byron to John Cam Hobhouse, 6 October 1823; Byron to Charles Barry, 11 December 1823; Byron to Samuel Barff, 10 March 1824.

[8] For the letters, see previous note. Conversations reported in Pietro Gamba, *A narrative of Lord Byron's last journey to Greece*, [trans. from Italian by John Cam Hobhouse] (London: John Murray 1825), and William Parry, *The last days of Lord Byron* (London: Knight and Lacey 1825).

1. A free Greece must be a centralised state, united under a constitutional government, in effect what today we would call a nation-state;
2. The government must secure and responsibly disburse the economic support from outside that a successful revolution will require;
3. The government must reach an accommodation through diplomacy with the Great Powers of the day, without which true independence will never be possible. Great Britain must be persuaded that a free and strong Greece, with an economy based, like Britain's, on maritime trade, will be a far more reliable bulwark against Russian expansionism than the "putrefied" Ottoman empire.[9]

To these pragmatic ends, Byron is prepared to compromise, at least in the short term, principles held dear by fellow-liberals: freedom of the press, a republican constitution.

This is not the Byron that generations of admirers of his poetry have come to know and love – or hate. Even on the importance of unity, the least controversial topic, his position is not what might have been expected. When Byron talks of "uniting the factions", as he often does, it is always and only in the service of a strong, centralising government. Even before he left Cephalonia, he had decided to reject the claims of the warlords – against the advice of his own friends, Hamilton Browne and Trelawny, whom he had sent to Tripolitsa to reconnoitre on his behalf. Later, he would continue to hold this line at Missolonghi, even after some of his own closest associates had transferred their allegiance to Odysseus Androutsos in Athens.

This is the more surprising, in that characters such as Kolokotronis and Odysseus were more or less made in the mould

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[9] Conversation reported as taking place on 11 March: "The English government deceived itself at first in thinking it possible to maintain the Turkish empire in its integrity: but it cannot be done; that unwieldy mass is already putrefied, and must dissolve. If any thing like an equilibrium is to be upheld, Greece must be supported" (Gamba, *Narrative*, p. 214).

of the typical "Byronic hero". Could the creator of the Corsair, the Giaour, Lara and many more – archetypal warlords all – really be indifferent to these legends that were being created around him? Indeed, it is likely that the "Byronic" type of hero had been to some extent inspired by what Byron had learned, during his earlier travels in Greece, about men like these and the songs of the klefts that extol their values and way of life. For all his no doubt genuine belief in the need for unity, there is no question of Byron being even-handed in his dealings with the factions. Once he knew that Mavrokordatos was on his way from Hydra to Missolonghi with a squadron of ships that he, Byron, had paid for, he threw in his lot with Mavrokordatos and the government party.

At the beginning, there may have been personal, as well as political, reasons for this choice. Mavrokordatos, while he had lived in Pisa, had enjoyed the confidence of Byron's friends Percy and Mary Shelley. Shelley, and particularly the fact of the poet's accidental death a month short of his thirtieth birthday, had played a significant part in making up Byron's mind to commit himself to Greece. But essentially Byron's decision was a political one. Mavrokordatos, he had decided, was the nearest Greece had or was likely to have to a figure like George Washington or the Polish patriot Tadeusz Kościuszko. It no doubt helped that Mavrokordatos was still at this time known by the courtesy title of "Prince", the legacy of his service to his aristocratic uncle in the Ottoman service at the semi-feudal court of Bucharest from 1812 to 1818. Later, Byron would become impatient with Mavrokordatos, but he never abandoned him, or said anything against him in writing.

Byron believed that the Greek Revolution had the potential to bring into the world an entirely new kind of politics. The revolutionary movements in western Europe troubled him because, as an aristocrat, Byron could never wholeheartedly throw in his lot with the oppressed multitude. In Italy he had had a glimpse of a new ideology (as we would say today), that of the nation, which was at once revolutionary because it would do away

with the old, decayed order, but did not necessarily involve replacing one ruling class with another. In the new, emerging, ideology of the *nation*, there would be a role for all classes, including his own. Byron, in short, saw a free Greece as the first of a new kind of state in Europe, free of the old monarchical, feudal order, and based on the idea of the nation. In Greece, he saw the means to put into practice the political vision that he had articulated in lines written for *Don Juan* in the summer of 1822, within days of the death of his more radical friend Shelley:

> And I will war, at least in words (and – should
> My chance so happen – deeds) with all who war
> With Thought...
>
> It is not that I adulate the people;
> Without *me*, there are Demagogues enough ...
>
> I wish men to be free
> As much from mobs as kings – from you as me.[10]

These, then, are the political ideas that Byron brought to Greece. How did they fit with the political world of Greece at the time?

The politics of Mavrokordatos and his circle

The short answer is that they fitted remarkably well. So well, indeed, that we have to ask, are they even Byron's? Unity under a centralising government was of course already the chief pre-occupation shared by Mavrokordatos, Bishop Ignatios in Pisa, the wealthy primates of Hydra who for the time being held the fig-leaf of a central government in place, and many, but not all, phil-hellenes. What is noteworthy is not that Byron insisted on unity, but what he meant by it in practice, which coincided very much with Mavrokordatos' ideas too.

On the economic issue, Byron was in a better position than most people in Greece to understand this dimension of the

[10] Byron, *Don Juan*, canto IX, lines 185-7, 193-4, 199-200.

Revolution, its demands and prospects. He knew that his own resources would only go so far, and at an early stage threw his weight behind the campaign to raise a loan in England. His fame undoubtedly helped to bring in subscribers, and by March 1824 the loan was oversubscribed. That must be due in some part to the "Byron effect". But the actual policy of seeking sources of income abroad, and persuading foreign investors that Greece had a future worth investing in, had already been adopted by the Provisional Government in the immediate aftermath of the assembly at Astros – at the very time when Byron was finally making up his mind to go to Greece. So Byron had no part in that decision by the Greek government.

On foreign relations, the situation is more complex. That Greece would need foreign support if it were ever to win its independence was an idea that went back at least to the Russian-Turkish war of the 1770s. In 1821, most Greeks had still looked for that support to Russia. An Orthodox power and a traditional enemy of Turkey, Russia must be persuaded to intervene and guarantee Greek independence. But Russia under Tsar Alexander did no such thing – even though for a time the direction of foreign policy lay in the hands of a Greek nobleman from Corfu, Ioannis Kapodistrias. Perhaps as early as 1820, Mavrokordatos and Ignatios in Pisa were beginning to contemplate a different scenario: the very one that Byron would later espouse. According to this scenario, the Ottoman empire was in terminal decline, and the western European states would need a new buffer to protect them against future expansion by Russia (even though officially they were all together in the Holy Alliance). That buffer would be a strong and independent Greece, which the western powers might therefore be persuaded to support.[11]

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[11] Alexandre Mavrocordato, "Coup d'oeil sur la Turquie" [1820], in: A. Prokesch von Osten, *Geschichte des Abfalls der Griechen* (Vienna: Gedold 1867), vol. III, pp. 1-54; cf. Georgios Theodoridis, *Ο Αλέξανδρος Μαυροκορδάτος και η δράση του (1791-1821)* (Athens: Neohellenic Research Foundation 2011).

One of the things that tipped the scenario from the old one of looking to Russia to the new one of looking to the West was the phenomenon of philhellenism. By the end of 1821 it was becoming clear that the most potent link to foreign sensibilities was not the expected one of Orthodox Christianity, but the heritage of the classical Greek past, that was mobilising popular support throughout western Europe and as far away as in the USA.

By 1823 the geopolitical situation had radically changed. In Russia, Kapodistrias was out of office. A Russian proposal made the next year for Greece to be partitioned provoked horror in Greece when it became known. By contrast, in Britain, the new Foreign Secretary, George Canning, in March 1823 went so far as to recognise the rights of the Greeks as belligerents. The British government still maintained an official policy of strict neutrality. But Canning's step was the first sign of recognition by a foreign power that the Greek revolutionaries had some legitimacy. It was now that Mavrokordatos set himself by all possible means to woo the British interest – through lobbying Canning and the British government, through seeking a loan in London, and, as soon as Byron's involvement became known, through enlisting the most famous Englishman of his day to the side of the beleaguered Greek government.

So it is impossible to tell how far Byron's ideas for a strategic alliance between Greece and Britain, based on common interests, were really his own or merely reflected what Mavrokordatos already thought. It does seem likely, though, that Mavrokordatos' fortuitous acquaintance first with the Shelleys in Pisa and then with Byron at Missolonghi had some impact on his own political thinking.[12] It was only later, at least a year after Byron's death, that Greek politics began to develop along the lines of parties

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[12] Vasilis Panagiotopoulos, "Κάτι έγινε στην Πίζα το 1821", *Τα Ιστορικά* 3/5 (1986) 177-82 (pp. 180-1); Christos Loukos, "Οι «τύχες» του Αλέξανδρου Μαυροκορδάτου στη νεοελληνική συνείδηση", in *Η Επανάσταση του 1821* (Athens: Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism 1994), pp. 93-106 (p. 106, n. 37).

aligned to the rival Great Powers. Mavrokordatos, from then and for the rest of his long life, would become the leading figure in the English party.

The Greeks' view of Byron

How did the Greeks view Byron, while he was alive among them? For Mavrokordatos and his immediate circle, of course, Byron was an ace in their hands, to be held on to at all costs. For almost everybody else, access to his money and his person was a goal to intrigue for. The exception was Kolokotronis. Kolokotronis never so much as mentions Byron in his later memoirs. At the time, he greatly surprised Byron's emissary Hamilton Browne by stating that he objected to the principle of a foreign loan, which he complained would only be used to prop up Mavrokordatos and his associates. Even if it succeeded, according to Kolokotronis, the loan would bring with it dependence on a foreign government.[13]

More typical, and revealing of the way in which Byron's presence was beginning to break down traditional, localist politics in Greece, was the reaction of Georgios Sisinis, the primate of Gastouni in the northwest Peloponnese. Sisinis during those months was trying to keep in with both sides, with the deeply traditional aim of trying to protect the people of his own region from plunder, extortion, and violence. Sisinis wrote several times to Byron, and at one point thought he had succeeded in persuading him to disembark first in his own power-base of Eleia. Once Byron was at Missolonghi, Sisinis kept up the pressure, sending messengers to Byron but also to Mavrokordatos' enemies within the town. Byron, no doubt schooled by Mavrokordatos, responded with consummate diplomacy – with perfect manners promising nothing.

Shortly before Byron's death, Sisinis' frustration broke out in a remarkable display of self-awareness. This letter to a political

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[13] Browne, "Narrative", p. 404. This part of the conversation with Kolokotronis does not appear in the report that he sent to Byron at the time (see note 5).

friend and supporter is touching in its candid recognition that, thanks to Byron and Mavrokordatos, the old structures of power in the Morea can never be the same again:

> Our own policy is crumbling from the foundations... If it was only a matter of making up to the Milord, that I could take. But then I see Mavrokordatos too, whose intentions are evil and you should know it. And all the time I keep thinking that the only thing I can do is to abandon my own policy and adopt a new one, and of such a sort, with such fine manners, that maybe that way we can further our old policy [after all]. And this disaster has come upon us because of the loans, because the Milord is going to give it all to the people at Kranidi and that is the basis of their power.[14]

Of all the warlords who plotted to attract Byron and his wealth to their side, the one who came nearest to success was Odysseus Androutsos in Athens. Odysseus successfully won over Byron's associates Stanhope and Trelawny (who would later marry Odysseus' under-age sister). By the second half of March 1824, Odysseus had succeeded in persuading both Mavrkordatos and Byron to join him in a summit meeting of the leaderships of Eastern and Western Greece at Salona (modern Amphissa).

The meeting was postponed several times, as rains made the Fidari (Evinos) river impassable and effectively cut off Missolonghi from the rest of Greece by land. In the end, neither Mavrokordatos nor Byron went to Salona, because Byron became ill on 11 April and died just over a week later, on the nineteenth.

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[14] "... το εδικόν μας σύστημα πέφτει από τα θεμέλια... Αν ήτον να αγκαλιάσω τον Μιλόρδον μοναχά, υπομονή· πλην βλέπω και τον Μαυροκορδάτον, όστις θρέφει κακούς σκοπούς και να το ηξεύρης· μ' όλον τούτο πάντα στοχάζομαι, ότι δεν ημπορώ να κάμω αλλέως αλλά να αφήσω το σύστημά μου και να ενδυθώ το νέον και τοιαύτης λογής, με τρόπους εύμορφους, ημπορούμεν να βοηθήσωμεν και το παλαιόν μας σύστημα· και αυτή η συμφορά έχει να έλθη πλην εξ αιτίας των δανείων, επειδή και ο Μιλόρδος έχει να δώση όλα των Κρανιδιωτών και αυτή είναι η βάσις της δυνάμεώς των" (*Μνημεία* [see note 6], IV 283-4 no. 1156: Georgios Sisinis to Konstantinos Dragonas, 26 March [OS /7 April] 1824).

Mavrokordatos, through an extraordinary combination of bad luck and an excess of political ingenuity, had lost his ace after all.

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In the short term, Byron's death was a disaster for Greece. It was the principal reason for the delivery of the first instalment of the English loan to be delayed by almost six months. The promise that the money was on its way was sufficient for the government to rout the rebels in the Peloponnese and restore its authority throughout Greece by early June 1824. But the delays occasioned by Byron's death held up the actual payment until the end of July. As a result, the Greek cause suffered catastrophic losses, that might otherwise have been averted: the crushing of the revolt in Crete and the destruction of the island towns of Kasos and Psara. As one of the negotiators for the loan bitterly put it, writing from London to the President of the Executive in Greece, when the first instalment was finally paid over: "How I curse fate for not having left Byron in the land of the living for fifteen days more, until you could have got the money."[15]

But that was in the short term. In the long-term *political* history of the war, Byron's presence, his alignment with Mavrokordatos, and his role in promoting the British loan, were all significant factors in the closely fought struggle for dominance between the modernisers and the warlords. If that struggle had gone to Kolokotronis and the warlords, then Greece, or more probably several separate regions, might have achieved the same kind of *de facto* independence as did Serbia from 1815 until 1878, or Samos until 1912, while still remaining nominally under Ottoman rule. As it was, Greece instead became the first new state

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[15] "... πόσον αναθεματώ την μοίραν, οπού δεν άφησεν ακόμη δέκα και πέντε ημέρας με τους ζώντας τον Μπάυρον, έως να λάβετε τα αργύρια..." (*Αρχεία Λαζάρου και Γεωργίου Κουντουριώτου*, vol III, ed. Antonios Lignos (Athens: Sakellarios 1920), p. 63: Ioannis Orlandos to Georgios Koundouriotis, 28 July [OS /7 August] 1824).

in modern Europe to win full legal sovereignty – the first of the modern type of nation-state that has since become the norm throughout the continent and much of the rest of the world. The Greece that Byron fought for – the Greece that came into existence by international treaty in February 1830 – in that sense is a cornerstone of what today we call modernity.

For Greece itself, that achievement came at a price. Because Kolokotronis also had it right: acceptance of a foreign loan really did mean that foreigners ever afterwards would have a say in running the country. The landmark achievement of sovereign independence in 1830, *de jure*, was never quite that *de facto*. The fault-line in Greek society that Byron tried to bridge in 1824 is still there today – manifested in the continuing consequences of the economic and political crisis that broke over the country in 2010.

The End of an Affair: Anglo-Greek relations, 1939-55

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In her memoir *An Affair of the Heart*, published in 1957, writing about her return to Athens in 1945, and still harbouring the "remembered magic" of pre-war days, Dilys Powell conjured up her uneasiness at that time, even the consciousness of a threat. "There was nothing to which one could point," she wrote. "Occasionally a sullen face, perhaps; sometimes a blank [stare] instead of the old eagerness of manner... It was ... like a faint drum-beat in the air... I was horrified to find myself beginning to dislike my friends."[1] It may be that Powell was here transposing on to her memories of 1945 tendencies that had by 1957 become more explicit because of recent Cypriot events. But in the years after the appearance of Powell's book any widespread remembrance, either British or Greek, that there ever had been "an affair of the heart" between the two countries more or less dissolved. When the then British Ambassador went to Corfu Town in May 1964 for the centennial celebrations of Ionian accession to Greece, he was disappointed to find that there was little if any token that it had been a *British* cession in the first place; nor was there seemingly any recognition of a special historical tie between Britain and Greece.[2] And if we leap further ahead to the current trauma within the eurozone, there is almost no vestige in British public debate that Greece is a nation with which the United

[1] Dilys Powell, *An Affair of the Heart* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1957), pp. 39-40.
[2] R. Murray to R. Butler, 25 May 1964 FO371/174838, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter TNA).

Kingdom had enjoyed over a long period an intimate, if always ambivalent, connection.

Powell's "remembered magic" of the 1930s need not be taken too much at face value. It was the magic of the expatriate archaeologists – her husband had been the Director of the British School at Athens – and in these circles engagement with anything other than ancient pots and pans in host societies can sometimes be limited. Anglo-Greek relations had often been anything but magical. After the Asia Minor disaster of 1922 there had been a strong reaction. Still, there had been something of a revival towards the end of the 1930s. The retiring British Ambassador in Athens, Sir Sydney Waterlow, when writing his final despatch on 31 May 1939, credited a recent strengthening in Britain's standing, as he saw it, to the fact that it was no longer firmly tied to the faction of Eleutherios Venizelos.[3] The British had been careful not to extend any sympathy to Venizelos' botched coup in 1935, even though his usual Cretan sympathizers had signalled a willingness to "raise the British flag".[4] Ambassador Waterlow also noted the benefits from the cultural endeavours of the newly founded British Council, for which Greece, and the Mediterranean in general afforded an early focus. Great Britain now being equally popular, he claimed, with the two hostile camps in Greek political life, Waterlow concluded: "... there seems nothing in the situation to cause uneasiness as to the future course of Anglo-Greek relations. Their foundations are broad and firm ... nothing but our defeat in battle is likely to shake them."[5]

But of course the British were to be defeated in battle in Greece during the spring of 1941. The American Ambassador, Lincoln MacVeagh, attributed the surprising resilience of Greece in responding to Mussolini's attack across the Epirus frontier after October 1940 to the effects of "national intoxication", a people

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[3] Sir S. Waterlow to Viscount Halifax, 31 May 1939 CAB21/1912, TNA.

[4] James Barros, *Britain, Greece and the politics of sanctions: Ethiopia, 1936-1936* (London: Royal Historical Society 1982), p. 119.

[5] Waterlow to Halifax, 31 May 1939 CAB21/1912, TNA.

united in "one party, one class, one purpose".[6] The phenomenon bore some similarities to Britain's own collective apotheosis in the Blitz. But there was a resemblance rather than any lasting tie between these two experiences. In British diplomatic and military circles, the idea of diverting troops from the hard-pressed front in Egypt to Greece from the end of 1940 found many doubters. Such critics felt that the Greeks, like the Yugoslavs, must be left to their fate if and when German forces descended in overwhelming strength to make up for Italian feebleness. General Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, was instinctively opposed to his army being stripped for Greece's sake.[7] The decision to send a British Commonwealth expeditionary force (mostly Australian and New Zealand formations) to Greece was essentially political. Churchill said that it was necessary for Britain to "share Greece's ordeal".[8] But Anthony Eden's role as Foreign Secretary in this new intervention in Greece stands out just as significantly. More than any other British leader from the mid-1930s he had been committed to defending the country's stake in the Mediterranean. Eden's marked sympathy with Greece was consistent with that commitment. This is worth underlining because the gradual disintegration of Anglo-Hellenic friendship in the early and middle 1950s was to be closely linked to Eden's own person; his attitude then to Greece was often to be characterized by biting sarcasm, albeit tinged by a certain fond nostalgia.

But what did "sharing Greece's ordeal" mean for the British? It did not really mean saving Greece from Germany. Nobody thought that was actually possible. It was a moral, rather than immediately practical, argument, but moral in an inevitably subtle sense. Only by making its own blood sacrifice on Greek soil could

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[6] J. O. Iatrides, *Ambassador MacVeagh reports: Greece, 1933-1947* (Princeton: 1980), p. 286.

[7] Ronald Lewin, *The Chief: Field-Marshal Lord Wavell, commander-in-chief and viceroy, 1939-1947* (London: Hutchinson 1980), p. 61.

[8] Charles Cruickshank, *Greece, 1940-41* (London: Davis-Poynter 1976), p. 112.

the British Empire legitimate the later restoration of its influence in the southern Balkans if and when Germany should be defeated in other, more decisive, theatres. There were good reasons for the Greek leadership to doubt whether the "saving" they were being offered in all those heated conferences with the British in Athens during February and March 1941 was really worth it. Going over yet again all those differences about troop dispositions, and whether the concentration should be on the Aliakmon Line or further to the north – "haggling at an oriental bazaar", as it seemed to British participants – there is a constant implication that the subtext was more telling than the text.[9]

The real test of the British commitment to Greece was the size of the expedition sent. This was enough to share Greek travails but not enough to seriously resist Hitler's "Operation Marita". Suggestively, and in contrast to what happened some months later when Japan attacked Malaya, once things went badly wrong Churchill did not send an order to General Wilson at the head of the expeditionary forces in Greece to make a last stand. It had been enough, symbolically, to go there in the first place. The story of the highly improvised, dispersed and varyingly successful evacuations in 1941 – things went very badly wrong at Kalamata – are well known. Some 58,000 troops got away. It might be easy for those of a cynical disposition to write off the frequent anecdotes of British and Anzac troop carriers passing through the villages of Thessaly and the Peloponnese, strewn with flowers by local inhabitants amidst calls to "come back soon", as self-serving inventions to cover a catastrophic defeat, were it not that the evidence for such displays of local feeling are so numerous.[10] But the psychology of the end-game in Greece during the spring of

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[9] Ibid., p. 109. See also [Lord] Henry Maitland Wilson, *Eight years overseas, 1937-1947* (London and New York: Hutchinson 1950), pp. 69-72.

[10] See, for example, "Personal diary of Captain Oliphant" in CAB 106/555, TNA describing experiences of the Australian Imperial Force during the retreat and evacuation.

1941 was extremely complicated, and its shadow was to hang over almost everything that came later.

Greece itself almost disappeared from British minds for some while thereafter. Insofar as the British kept a stake in Greek affairs, this was purely external. The role of the exiled Greek government from May 1941 was little more than to authorize the use of its national forces under British command in the Middle East. Greek politicians who left the country were helplessly subordinate to British civil and military authority, notably in Cairo, and one suspects that the petty humiliations then endured led to a hankering later on for a pay-back time. A British observer at Allied Forces Headquarters in the Mediterranean, perhaps as a female all the more astute in picking up purely personal vibrations, noted the growing mental distance between the British and counterparts from those countries undergoing physical occupation.[11] In the Greek case this had a special relevance.

Still, had the Anglo-Americans done what many anticipated and, after occupying Sicily in mid-1943, launched a full-scale *Balkan* offensive, subsequent events would surely have been very different. With a clearly superior force on Greek soil the Allies could have successfully imposed a new order of their own. This would have been extremely messy regarding governance and rehabilitation, probably even more so than the fairly dire experience of Sicily, but no local forces – not even the Communists (KKE) – would have dared to actually launch a counter-challenge. Instead the Allies got bogged down in mainland Italy from September 1943. Greece, admittedly, became an obsession with Churchill himself, though even for the British Prime Minister Greece would have quickly taken a back-seat had he ever succeeded in his vision of getting Turkey to become a belligerent on the Allied side. (Turkey entered the war, and then only nominally, in February 1945.) The disastrous operation in the Dodecanese in the late summer of 1943 – one very much imposed

[11] Hermione, Countess of Ranfurly, *To war with Whitaker: the wartime diaries of the Countess of Ranfurly, 1939-1945* (London: Heinemann 1994), p. 242.

by Churchill on his military advisers – had about it the air of 1941: another sharing of the ordeal by a force too small and vulnerable to sustain a strategic lodgement. By this time very few in Whitehall were party to Churchill's enthusiasm for the Aegean. The disillusionment about, and marginalization of, Greece was capped by the mutinies amongst the Royal Hellenic Forces, climaxing in April 1944. Richard Capell's scathing references recorded in his *Simiomata* to the formation of the Greek Mountain Brigade – later to have a notable fighting record in Italy – as being driven by the need to expiate the shame of the mutinies in Egypt was typical of the sharp feelings amongst soldiers in the field.[12]

Against that background, we can see that what happened inside Greece after 1941, including the resistance, or what passed for a resistance, including the role of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), was decidedly obscure so far as most Britons were concerned. SOE itself in this setting was a half-cock exercise run from Cairo with much bluster and what seems also to have been a degree of personal peculation, just when the Egyptian capital was being relegated in the wartime hierarchy: a backwater within a backwater. The British themselves, of course, were also being relegated within the wartime Grand Alliance, second-class players behind the Americans and Soviets. C. M. Woodhouse could still recall how "In the name of the British" resonated with significance on Greek mountainsides, especially when lubricated by gold sovereigns.[13] Similarly, Richard Capell discovered on Chios the sentiment "Dear England, you are beloved! ...Your name spells hope", whilst on hungry Andros the islanders dreamed of British rule. But touching and comprehensible though this might be, it was equally testimony to just how hermetically sealed off from the outside world Greece had been for four years whilst so much elsewhere had drastically altered.[14] The reconnect

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[12] Richard Capell, *Simiomata: A Greek note book, 1944-1945* (London: Macdonald n.d.), p. 13.
[13] C. M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord* (London: Hutchinson 1948), p. 25.
[14] Capell, *Simiomata*, pp. 16, 38.

was bound to be fraught with miscalculations and false, even fatal, steps.

The constrained and highly tentative nature of British re-intervention on the Greek mainland after September 1944 – Operation Manna – flowed from much of this, as did a large degree of confusion amongst Greeks as to what was actually intended. This fresh expedition was little more than 8,000 troops at first, and not all of those were combatants. It had no heavy artillery. The overall force was very naval – "a small Anglo-Greek armada" in one description[15] – and had the distinctly old-fashioned feel of a nineteenth-century limited pacification, a bit like the partial occupation of Crete by the local fleets of the Powers in 1897. Its very quaintness was one reason why the Americans regarded it with such disdain. The US Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral King, sarcastically remarked that the exercise being embarked upon "does not appear to be part of a war in which the United States is participating".[16] This was indeed the point. Churchill's new intervention in Greece had little to do with events which we today lump together as the Second World War.

Who was actually responsible for the bloodshed in Syntagma Square on 3 December 1944, and for the wider breakdown thereafter, is now beyond meaningful reconstruction. The British were not going to let themselves be written out of the script for Greece's future, especially once they had already been ejected from elsewhere in the Balkans. Likewise the Communists were not going to have prised from their grasp a leading place, perhaps the leading place, in the government of Greece, especially given their leading position in what sporadic resistance there had been to the occupation by the fascist states. Compared to these two actors, everybody else – including Papandreou, Zervas, the King, et al. – were just bit-part actors. On the face of it, there was, or should have been, plenty of scope to make uncomfortable but workable

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[15] C. M. Woodhouse, *The struggle for Greece, 1941-1949* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon 1976), pp. 100-1.

[16] Quoted in Robert Holland, *The pursuit of greatness: Britain and the world role, 1900-1970* (London: Fontana Press 1991), p. 192.

entirely smoothly.[21] On the other hand, British Army surplus – clothing, equipment, guns – was almost universal, and for most of the following period the Greek National Army looked like the British Army, as did some parts of its enemy, the Democratic Army. Amidst the chaos of the *Dekemvriana* the priority was large-scale emergency recruitment into Greek Government forces to bring them up to an operational level, necessarily with little regard to any real training.

At least after Varkiza the goal of creating a "new model" Greek Army could make some modest progress. After October 1945 the British Military Mission was able to withdraw from operations proper into the advisory and logistical role that had been intended in the first place. The onset of real civil war, however, in mid to late 1946 brought about a further reversal of functions. Thereafter, for some time British officers were present at both brigade and corps levels, though scrupulously kept junior in rank to the Greek officers to whom they were attached. Because the *gendarmerie* under current Greek conditions played a military rather than strictly police role, the British Police Mission could hardly get on with its intended job of reform. All it could do was exercise a loose supervision over Government prisons, though these responsibilities did not extend to the political detention camps. Obtaining secondments to Greece from British Police Forces, including the Royal Ulster Constabulary – the long-time Head of the Mission in Greece, Sir Charles Wickham, was predictably an RUC man, a reprise of that Force's established role in underpinning the Palestine Police – always proved difficult.[22] Still, of all these activities, the British Police Mission in Greece was arguably the most effective and left the most distinctive legacy.

Suggestively, the work of these various British agencies was subject to a ban on any official news reporting back in the United

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[21] "The work and achievements of the British Military Mission to Greece, 1945-49", in FO371/87754, TNA.

[22] P. Reilly to D. S. Laskey, 21 February 1946 FO371/58684, TNA.

Kingdom.[23] No official communiqués were issued at any point. The reasons were political. British actions in late 1944 had been intensely controversial at home, especially in the Labour Party, whose party conference at the time was as preoccupied with this matter as with the vision of a New Jerusalem at home.[24] This engagement with Greece, however, soon faded, and – to the bitter disappointment of the Greek Left – Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary in the Labour Government after July 1945 continued Churchill's policy on Greece without triggering a revolt in party ranks. But this did not mean that the moral and ideological rancour associated with Greece amongst leftists and progressives in Britain evaporated. As a result, the last thing the Labour Government wanted was to trumpet the effort being made there. The blackout policy on news continuing to the end of the civil war therefore arose from the need to keep embarrassments to a minimum. One subsidiary effect was that no British military service medals were issued for service in Greece, in considerable contrast with American practice after 1948, where such medals abounded. The lack of any recognition caused resentment among British personnel. Such service in Greece certainly did little for individual preferment and careers; often quite the reverse, since to be out of sight was also to be out of mind.[25] Overall, in the British domestic setting, Greece quickly lost the transient salience it had possessed in late 1944 and early 1945. This contrasted keenly with Spain's civil war ten years before, which had made such a lasting impact on highly polarized British imaginations and ideals. In

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[23] A. Rumbold to Brigadier Hamilton, 25 May 1948 WO32/15547, TNA.

[24] Andrew Thorpe, "'In a rather emotional state: The Labour Party and British intervention in Greece, 1944-5", *English Historical Review* 121 (2006) 1075-1105.

[25] D. McCarthy minute, 12 November 1945 FO371/67052, TNA. In fact these special rules meant that not even the Head of the British Military Mission in Greece, Major-General E. Down, on leaving the post in 1949, received any mark of distinction. He had to make do with a letter thanking him for his services.

effect, Greek affairs were tucked away in an obscure corner, and covered over with a drape.

The British Information Services (BIS) – in which Osbert Lancaster was prominent, evoked in his *Classical landscape with figures*[26] – offered another aspect of intervention. It evolved out of the Allied information machinery (the Anglo-Greek Information Service, or AIS) with its wartime military intelligence bias, and the transition to a civilian role was never complete. After "liberation" the local press was in disarray, and the only place that ordinary Greeks (certainly outside Athens) could get substantial printed new matter was often in BIS and British Council provincial offices. Distribution of scarce newsprint was one means of encouraging a press of the "moderate" sort that the British keenly wished to see. Articles were planted in "friendly" papers. The BIS was also instrumental in establishing a national broadcasting authority, supposedly on the BBC model. What followed was a microcosm of the wider British experience. The capacity for detailed management or control soon disintegrated, and British oversight was withdrawn as a hopeless exercise. When Osbert Lancaster wrote an extended review for Whitehall of the BIS's work in mid-1946, his conclusion was that it had already failed in its political aim.[27] He advised that the whole thing should be scaled down to the narrower goal of promoting Anglo-Greek cultural ties, and the activities of the British Council and British Institutes (the latter concerned with English-language instruction) over the next few years followed naturally, until the Cyprus issue came along and made their work almost impossible.

Certainly during 1945-6 anything British was still very much *en vogue* in Athens. There was even a new Chair of British Life and Thought at the University of Athens. The fact that the appointee was an English academic with hardly any credentials did not seem to matter ("obviously not first class", it was

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[26] Osbert Lancaster, *Classical landscape with figures* (London: John Murray 1947).

[27] Account of the British Information Services in Greece, December 1944-May 1946 FO924/424, TNA.

remarked in the Foreign Office).[28] In this the semi-farcical elements in Olivia Manning's portrayal of high-brow British propaganda in the Balkans, *Friends and Heroes*, had a post-war expression. In Anglo-Greek context high-brow also meant high-class. In the Foreign Office the Anglo-Hellenic League was scathingly termed as "run by Mayfair for Mayfair", and was thought to have squandered an opportunity to break out of its narrow circles both in Athens and London.[29] Contemporary accounts and memories of the period – Capell's *Simiomata* has already been mentioned, and Mary Henderson's sometimes moving *Xenia: a memoir*[30] – bring out something of this flavour. Such a constraint has perhaps never entirely gone away, as the mini-cult around Patrick Leigh Fermor – with perhaps rather frozen conceptions of what both Britain and Greece were actually about as societies – also suggests.

The political narrative after Varkiza hinged on the elections of April 1946 and the ensuing September's plebiscite on the monarchy. By the start of that year the Labour Government began to look around for an elected Greek Government on to which responsibility could be shoved. Having thereafter pushed through the elections, boycotted by KKE, the British were not well placed to delay the plebiscite. Arguments at the time and since that further delay would have been preferable leave out of account the constraints operating on the British. Had the parliamentary elections provided for the ideal British outcome – a rough balance between the Right and the ostensibly Republican Left-Centre – they might have had the sort of equilibrium needed to secure their own purposes. But the dynamic unleashed proved far too strong for the British to manipulate in one direction or another. "As usual," Harold Caccia at the Foreign Office commented, "we are

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[28] British Council to Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office, 25 February 1946 FO924/424, TNA.

[29] Kenneth Johnstone (British Council) to W. Montagu-Pollock, 19 February 1946 FO924/424, TNA.

[30] Mary Henderson, *Xenia – A memoir* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1988).

faced with a choice of evils."[31] There could not be much doubt which was the preferred evil in the circumstances. In making that choice, however, the abject dependence of the Greek Right on the British came to be offset by a degree of British dependence on the Greek Right – assuming, that is, that the British still wished to stay in the Greek arena at all.

The motif of a "choice of evils" at this time regarding Greece is striking to anybody acquainted with the making of British policies regarding Cyprus a few years later. By the middle of 1958, as events span out of control in that island, the need to make a "choice of evils" became central to the formulation of British dilemmas.[32] Such a convergence of language and metaphors is perhaps logical, since the same officials were often involved, Sir Harold Caccia included. Just as one seemingly had to choose between repugnant Communists and only slightly more acceptable Rightists in Greece in 1946-7, so one had to choose between obdurate Greek-Cypriots and obstreperous Turks in 1958-9. In each case, the choice was purely theoretical, because it could only go one way under prevailing conditions. One is left wondering to what extent British images and formulations embedded in the Greek Civil War got transposed on to Cypriot developments later.

Meanwhile, to return to 1946 as it unfolded in Greece, Britain's standing with both the Left and the Right became subject to erosion. On the Left a basic paradox between a residual desire for British patronage and a deep resentment arising from recent events, gave way to outright hatred. Yet although the Right might *profess* strong attachment to the traditional British connection, more equivocal feelings existed there also and, after parliamentary elections and the plebiscite, these sentiments came more into the open. The British could be blamed for getting in the way of a draconian and swift liquidation of rebellion. It was in this milieu

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[31] See the chapter "A choice of evils", in G. M. Alexander, *The prelude to the Truman Doctrine: British policy in Greece, 1944-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1982), pp. 109-39 (p. 129).

[32] See Robert Holland, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus, 1954-1958* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998), pp. 236-62.

that Grivas, at the head of his "Chi" militia, began to develop strong anti-British traits. Already in 1947 Osbert Lancaster could point out that, although the British position in the country remained exalted thanks, as he expressed it, to "Byron and 'all that'", it was rather less secure than most people seemed to imagine.[33] If Sir Sydney Waterlow had been able in 1939 to find comfort in the fact that Britain had become equally popular with *both* mutually hostile camps in Greece, one aspect of the later 1940s was that the British were compromised whether they looked to the Left or to the Right, though the implications of this were not to be transparent for a few more years yet.

Questions of irredentism offered one expression for such unstable tendencies. In 1944-45 this was more than offset by the fact that Britain offered almost the only guarantee of keeping existing Greek frontiers intact, let alone expanding them. Nor did this factor altogether disappear afterwards. But British abstention on Greek claims concerning northern Epirus at the Paris Peace Conference during 1946 constituted an early turning point. In Salonica local people, both on Left and Right, stayed at home in mass protest.[34] The British were conscious that one way to make absolutely sure of Greek goodwill was to hand over Cyprus. Cretan autonomy after 1898 offered one possible model to adopt in this case.[35] But it did not take much discussion for the dominant view to form that the Greeks had a long way to go before becoming reliable recipients for such a new gift. Although the ex-Italian Dodecanese were handed over in stages during 1947-8, this was only because Turkey remained as yet still in the doghouse. It was axiomatic that the cession of the Dodecanese represented the last such extension of Greek territorial sovereignty, not a mere payment on account, as the Greeks hoped and believed.[36] British

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[33] Lancaster, *Classical landscape*, pp. 36-7.
[34] Chandler, *Divided land*, p. 174.
[35] J. R. Colville minute, 3 November 1947 FO371/58761, TNA.
[36] Robert Holland and Diana Markides, *The British and the Hellenes: Struggles for mastery in the eastern Mediterranean, 1850-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), pp. 194, 203.

attitudes to what were designated as "Hellenistic-Byzantine" ambitions got more sarcastic than ever.[37] The edginess over Cyprus on both sides by the end of the 1940s evolved in this setting, though in February 1950 the British Embassy in Athens could still feel that "the average Greek is too much concerned with the internal situation ... to work up much excitement over Cyprus".[38]

Irredentism offered just one aspect of the basic problem at the heart of British engagements with Greek public affairs: a search for the ever-elusive grail of "moderation" and the "middle ground". Geoffrey Chandler, with wide personal experience of northern Greece in the 1940s, later provided an assessment in *The Divided Land: An Anglo-Greek tragedy*. From his position as a field officer in Macedonia, he had sent a series of pleas to the Embassy to come out more actively in favour of a Left-Centre coalition. They – and similar pleas by other British personnel out in the country – went unheeded. The enigma of the British presence was summed up in the contemporary anecdote, recalled by Chandler, that in London it was assumed that the Embassy had a policy without ever saying quite what it was, whilst the Embassy complained that London had a policy which it failed to communicate to anybody.[39] Suggestively, essentially the same anecdote was circulating at the same time in Palestine.[40] In Greece, as in Palestine, there was no policy. But then for a policy you need raw materials to make one. Hector McNeil, the Labour minister, noted in March 1946 that "The Centre [in Greece] have squandered every chance we have given them", and it is the case that "moderates" – nice and cuddly though they may be made to appear to outsiders - are not necessarily or indeed usually any less

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[37] Sir Charles Norton to C. H. Bateman, 15 July 1948 FO371/72349, TNA.

[38] Athens Embassy to Southern Department, Foreign Office, 31 January 1951 FO371/78344, TNA.

[39] Chandler, *Divided land*, p. 159.

[40] These frustrations in Palestine are expressed in Motti Galani (ed.), *The end of the British mandate for Palestine, 1948: The diary of Sir Henry Gurney* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2009).

venal or politically toxic than other contending factions.[41] In fact dependence on outside forces often make them the least effective partners in building sustainable positions for the future.

"Our [British] duty," the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Orme Sargent, said of Greece on the eve of renewed civil war, "is to hold the ring and see fair play, not to take part in the battle ourselves."[42] But the response of people like Chandler, then and in retrospect, was that the British had taken part in the battle over a long period, and most notably during the events of December 1944. There was no point, it seemed to some, in pretending otherwise. To act as the British had done, and then to draw back and claim just to "hold the ring", as opposed to acting decisively to encourage and even impose a balanced approach to internal divisions, was to adopt the worst of all halfway-house policies. Had the British done nothing in the first place to stop an ELAS drive to power, at least an equilibrium with at least some semblance of representing Greek society as a whole might eventually have come about, albeit no doubt with victims along the way, but avoiding the extremities that subsequently occurred.

The variables here, however, could go round in endless debate. But the key fact regarding the evolution of British policy was that by mid-1946 the essential context had changed from eighteen months before. In late 1944 Greece had still seemed an important stake in British regional strategy. As such, London was still prepared to pay the price of finding scarce resources to intervene, however tentatively. From mid-1946, however, Greece increasingly counted for little in British Mediterranean calculations – and least of all with Prime Minister Attlee, sceptical towards all Mediterranean and Middle Eastern engagements.[43] Willingness to stump up hard cash was fast evaporating. As the Cabinet Secretary summed up to Attlee the financial pressures surrounding the Greek commitment, "the time has come to stop

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[41] Note by Hector McNeil, 1 March 1946 FO371/15876, TNA.
[42] Quoted in Alexander, *Prelude to the Truman Doctrine*, p. 142.
[43] Holland, *The pursuit of greatness*, p. 205.

this drain".[44] Hugh Dalton – who as Minister of Economic Warfare a few years earlier had been against any easing of the wartime blockade on enemy-occupied Greece – now as Chancellor of the Exchequer pressed for a limit of 50,000 to be put on the strength of the Greek National Army, a number that could only mean defeat. "Holding the ring", with all its failings, was in fact the utmost that the British had ever been willing to do, and even that was coming very much into question.

The British would soon have got out, bag and baggage, from Greece, as they eventually did in Palestine, if the Americans had not pressed them to stay, and then accepted much of the financial burden themselves under the Truman Doctrine. But the usual narrative that the Americans effectively replaced the British in Greece needs qualification. American marines did not arrive till the end of 1947, and they never did come in large numbers. The emphasis of the American effort throughout was on economics and reconstruction. Their achievements, especially in reviving the infrastructure of transport, were considerable. But this priority had its limitations, and both the British and the Greeks came to share a concern that, strategically, Greece was regarded in Washington as a mere "holding operation" in the nascent Cold War.[45] By early 1949 there was even anxiety that at the first opportunity General Van Fleet, the US Commander, and his men would "weigh anchor and sail away" as soon as the chance arose.[46] This explains why Greek reliance on the British had such an after-life, principally as a kind of insurance policy, even when its material base had largely disappeared.

The modus operandi of the British and American Missions is important. The Greek authorities had no direct access on supply questions to London or, much more importantly from 1947, to Washington. The Greeks had to plead with the Missions for whatever they wanted, and if convinced the Missions then argued

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[44] Sir Norman Brook to Prime Minister, 29 January 1947 PREM8/797, TNA.
[45] Sir Charles Peak minute, 3 March 1949 FO371/78481, TNA.
[46] G. Wallinger minute, 1 June 1948 FO1110/61, TNA.

the Greek case with their own governments. This process was a key feature of the "disabled" nature of Greek governance, and partly explains why genuine responsibility only developed in a partial and distorted manner. The British and American mission commanders were represented on the main Greek defence organs, and not much could happen without their concurrence. Much chafing arose, and on becoming Commander-in-Chief during January 1949 General Alexandros Papagos insisted on more autonomy for his own decisions.

Significantly, however, the British and American Missions were by no means integrated, leaving some limited room to Greek ministers for playing off one against the other. General Van Fleet was adamantly opposed to any Anglo-American integration.[47] Co-ordination was patchy at best. At Ambassadorial level things were generally cordial. US Ambassador Grady had come from Delhi, where he had enjoyed good, if still guarded, relations with the Mountbattens.[48] But Van Fleet himself – who had learned his trade under the egregious Anglophobe General George Patton during the war – was "universally disliked" in the British Military Mission.[49] Greece in the later 1940s offered a connecting stage in prickly Anglo-American relations in the wider Mediterranean from Operation Torch in North Africa during November 1942 through to Suez in 1956, and indeed beyond.[50] Greek beliefs in the seamlessness of "Anglo-American" aims and ambitions in the region are invariably illusory, though in many ways an understandable expression of Greece's own recurring vulnerability.

British and American assessments of Greece and its prospects, nonetheless, certainly came to overlap, above all in their uniform direness. British Ambassador Norton's comment in June 1948 that

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[47] Peak minute, 24 January 1948 FO371/78481, TNA.

[48] Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten: The official biography* (London: Collins 1985), p. 467.

[49] Brig. Hamilton to Peak, 28 January 1949 FO371/78481, TNA.

[50] In this context Greece enters interestingly into the article by Dionysios Chorchoulis, "High hopes, bold aims, limited results: Britain and the establishment of the NATO Mediterranean Command, 1950-1953", *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 20.3 (2009) 434-52.

"nothing in Greece is quite as bad or as good as it appears on the surface" was about as sympathetic as things got.[51] Greek politicians and the Greek officer class were particular butts of opprobrium. An insidious threat to the survival of a democratic Greece was seen to be the basic failure to give the ordinary footslogger in the National Army a real reason for fighting.[52] Most Athenians, and that meant most politicians, in these years hardly ever set foot outside a tight circle around the capital, making any real empathy with the sufferings of the countryside limited at best. Against this background even seemingly good news was usually interpreted by outsiders as something else. The repulse of the "rebel" attack on Florina in February 1949 was described as "more depressing than a defeat".[53] Politically, the ministerial crisis at the start of that year sparked a fresh wave of disillusionment, and introduced what Norton termed "the shadow of a sort of dictatorship" that perhaps never entirely lifted before the Junta arrived eighteen years later.[54] Nor did the Communist defeat in the summer of 1949 lead to any revision of this pessimism, since it could be argued that henceforth the Communists might prove even more dangerous back in "civvies" than they had been as ragged insurgents.[55]

By 1949, anyway, the British Army was on the sidelines of operations in Greece, whilst the Greeks themselves were "quite capable of running their own show".[56] By this time it was British military personnel who were driving around in bashed-up Second World War troop carriers, and their Greek counterparts who

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[51] Norton to Sir Orme Sargent, 23 June 1948 FO1110/62. TNA.
[52] Norton to Bateman, 22 December 1948 FO371/78393, TNA.
[53] Athens Embassy to Foreign Office, 19 February 1949 FO371/78357, TNA.
[54] Norton to Southern Department, Foreign Office, 8 January 1949 FO371/78341, TNA.
[55] Embassy (Athens) to Foreign Office, 4 September 1949, FO371/78359.
[56] "Work and achievements of the British Military Mission", FO371/87754 (5), TNA.

instead possessed shiny new American transporters.[57] On the other hand, if it was not inconceivable that in some sudden crisis Greece might still need Britain, Britain no longer really needed Greece. This was not because the British had forsaken the broader regional stake underpinning the original re-intervention of 1944-45, but its shape had changed, and essentially disengaged from the Balkans. British Mediterranean, and increasingly Middle Eastern, interests were serviced through other partners – with Turkey gaining new salience – eventually to take shape in the Baghdad Pact of the mid-1950s. In this setting the Aegean itself slipped to the margins of British strategic cartography. Almost as soon as the Communist rump on Mount Grammos was liquidated, the War Office in London was keen to get British troops off Greek soil once and for all. They had for some months been planning to divert part of the garrison in Greece to Malta, where they would be far better placed for redeployment in any regional emergency.[58] Nor were the Greek authorities at all reluctant. On 19 November the Minister of War hosted a farewell dinner for the British Military Mission at, inevitably, the Hôtel Grande Bretagne, attended by Marshal Papagos himself.

The following, gloriously sunny, day the British military departure from Athens was accompanied by an appropriate ceremonial, the Commander of the 1st East Surreys laying a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, after which King Paul inspected the troops.[59] There were, inevitably, many references to 1941 and to December 1944, whilst Queen Frederika told Mrs Norton that she felt like crying (tears were always part of the emotional armament of Anglo-Hellenism). "It was felt," Ambassador Norton reported, not able to squash altogether a negative vibration, "that this was the end of a chapter, and though the immediate future of Greece looks rosy so long as American help

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[57] Visit by Mr Reilly to Central Macedonia and Salonica, 27 September 1948 FO371/72327, TNA.

[58] E. Peck minute, 3 March 1949 FO371/78481, TNA.

[59] "Departure of British troops from Greece", Norton to Bevin, 2 December 1949 FO371/78485, TNA.

continues on the present scale, this solemn and memorable celebration has caused a good deal of heart-searching, coinciding as it does with ... social and economic problems, not to mention the clouds on the northern horizon" (the latter being an allusion to Greece's exposed northern borders).[60] But the final British military withdrawal came in a freezing cold Salonica on 5 February 1950 when the 1st Battalion Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment similarly departed; several Greek women were said to have collapsed at the saluting base on the occasion.[61] Taken together, these events might be said to have encapsulated the authentic end of the Anglo-Hellenic phenomenon with all its accompanying rituals and symbols.

This, however, did not mean the end of a British Mission to Greece entirely. It could be, and was, argued that the real challenge of institutional modernization in the still crippled country was only just beginning. This had particular relevance for the Police and Prisons Mission, whilst as usual the British Naval Mission sought to position itself as having a long-term role immune from other developments.[62] Yet although the Greek Government was not going to turf these foreign agencies out, its own enthusiasm for their continuance was underwhelming, and expressed itself in growing resistance to meeting the bulk of their local costs.[63] For some while too there had been a growing feeling that the Missions were themselves pointless if the Greek Government consistently refused to follow any advice tendered to them.[64] In the end, after several extensions the Police Mission was terminated, somewhat reluctantly in some quarters, in June 1951. The British Naval Mission hung on till September 1955 but fell into dormancy after the disastrous Tripartite Conference on Cyprus in that month. The effective end of a permanent British naval pres-

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[60] Ibid.
[61] H. Wolstan-Weld to Norton, 3 February 1950 FO371/187754, TNA.
[62] See the discussions on the future of the Naval Mission in ADM116/6330, TNA.
[63] D. Murray minute, 15 August 1951 FO371/95141, TNA.
[64] J. McCourt minute, 16 February 1949 FO371/78495, TNA.

ence was taken as a blow to Britain's special position in Greece, but if Admiral Selby, the commander stayed, it was felt "he would be exposed to non-cooperation and even insults".[65] Selby was brought home, allowing Prime Minister Eden to comment with what had become his habitual spite towards Greece, "... we don't want to spend money on unwilling Greeks".[66] Still, vestiges of an old naval tie continued even into the era of the Greek Colonels after 1967. The Greek regime was by no means happy, for example, to see the end of a permanent British naval presence in the Mediterranean in 1968,[67] whilst subsequent visits by Royal Navy ships to Greek ports was one facet of the residual official links thereafter maintained between London and Athens. The cancellation of the visits to Greece by Her Majesty's Ships Tiger and Charybdis in March 1974 following the formation of a new Labour Government in Britain was one minor indication of the wider crisis in the eastern Mediterranean shortly to lead to the implosion surrounding Cyprus a few months later.[68]

Writing to his friend, George Seferis, in May 1956 Patrick Leigh Fermor stated that the first volume of his projected trilogy, that on the Mani, would soon be in the press. "Although it is an extremely pro-Greek book as you can imagine," he said, "I tremble to think of the sneers and jeering and hatred that lie in wait for me in the columns of the Εστία, the Ακρόπολις and the Απογευματινή. ... I could write them myself. I know it so well", adding that the cheap English press was no better.[69] "One of the many gloomy aspects of the present bloody situation," Leigh Fermor went on, "is that it seems to have turned both Greece and

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[65] Foreign Office to UK Delegation at United Nations, 28 September 1955 ADM116/6330, TNA.

[66] Minute by Prime Minister, 24 October 1955 PREM11/914, TNA.

[67] Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, p. 334.

[68] Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (eds.), *The Southern Flank in Crisis, 1973-1976* [Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Vol. V] (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2006), p. 25

[69] Fotis Dimitrakopoulos and Vasiliki D. Lambropoulou (eds.), *Γιώργος Σεφέρης, P. L[eigh] Fermor & J. Rayner: Αλληλογραφία (1948-1971)* (Nicosia: Kentro Epistimonikon Erevnon 2007), pp. 94-5.

England into enlarged caricatures of everything that their worst enemies have always pretended they were and both seem at the moment odious."[70] These caricatures were set to become even sharper over time. But perhaps part of the problem was that what in 1956 Patrick Leigh Fermor thought was pro-Greek was, in Greek perceptions, only pro-Greek in a very old-fashioned, fuzzy and largely unhelpful sort of way; certainly reading Mani, readable though it remains, conveys something of that sense today. The truth was that by the mid-1950s neither Britain nor Greece had anything special to offer each other, and the gradual dawning of this fact was characterized by a disillusion that anyway had never been entirely absent from their interaction.

Cyprus indeed was to offer a medium through which this process worked itself out. Here, however, we arrive at a basic conclusion of our discussion. The conventional version is that it was the Cyprus issue after 1955 which progressively destroyed – to use Venizelos' old phrase – "the traditional framework of Anglo-Hellenic friendship". This seems to put the cart before the horse. Cyprus itself was never the determining factor in that relationship. What happened is that the Anglo-Greek relationship itself went into a sort of reverse by about 1950, giving the subsidiary Cyprus issue the room to breathe it had never hitherto possessed. It is important to get the sequence in perspective. For their part, Greek-Cypriot radical protagonists of *enosis* after about 1950, watching other events in and around the Mediterranean, saw only a gathering British weakness, and thought that events were playing into their own hands. Thereafter they disdained negotiation that compromised their ideals. In this regard they fatally misjudged the leverage that they possessed.

This discussion, however, should end with Greece itself. It is impossible, in going back over the story of the 1940s, with a weakened and partially un-sovereign Greece, not to be struck in some respects by echoes of Greece's position today. Reading the official British records dealing with the years of civil war, one is

[70] Ibid., p. 95.

struck by tics of analysis and commentary recurring much later. Underlying that analysis was the perceived statelessness of Greece. But perhaps most striking of all was the observation made by Ambassador Norton in December 1948 when things still looked decidedly bleak. He dismissed widespread talk of defeatism surrounding the Greek Government. A much greater danger, Norton felt, however, was the "feeling of hopelessness" amongst all Greeks as they confronted a seemingly unending stream of difficulties. This despair threatened to overcome the natural resilience of the people. No doubt, Norton said, Greeks could do more to help themselves; but it was also up to Britain and America not to let them down when it mattered most. Today Britain has become irrelevant to the future of Greece. But many of the same dilemmas and pitfalls in that country's relationship with the United Kingdom, often in dire circumstances, are still at play in altered contexts; and lack of hope remains the deadliest enemy in overcoming contemporary challenges, including its capacity to divide Greek from Greek.

Pseudo-Hegelian contrivances: the uses of German Idealism in the discourse of the post-Civil War Greek state

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...with twisted and distorted concepts inspired from Hegel.
Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, 1951

We all know it. But we fail to notice that most of the times when we speak about the Greekness of a work of art, what we are speaking about are the buildings of the Academy.
George Seferis, 1938

Among the most salient features of Greek anti-communist discourse from the Civil War of the 1940s to the Colonels' coup of 1967 has been its firm refusal to engage with the ideas of the Greek Marxists. This lofty approach, which overturned the tendency of interwar bourgeois writers to criticise their left-wing colleagues, became a typical attribute of the official discourse which developed after 1945 around the key notion of *ethniko-frosyni* (national mindedness). Thereafter, a growing volume of official and semi-official books, articles, pamphlets and speeches began to turn their attacks against an abstract version of communism without naming the particular individuals or arguments which they were targeting. This approach, of course, reflected the highly charged environment created by the Civil War and the aggressive type of politics which developed around it. From 1947 to 1974, the Communist Party of Greece was outlawed, while

thousands of its members and supporters were executed, imprisoned, or exiled, either in concentration camps inside Greece or in refugee settlements in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Once they had been labelled "traitors", "bandits" and "miasma" (Tsoucalas 1981: 330; Papadimitriou 2006: 216, 218-19), it would have been unthinkable for *ethnikofrosyni* to suddenly start acknowledging Marxist intellectuals as worthy opponents with whom it could engage in public dialogue. Instead, its leading politicians, like the professor of philosophy and twice prime minister Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, would publicly denounce them *en bloc* as "a crowd" of "malicious [...] mediocrities" whose "petty minds are ruled by cowardice and calculation" (Kanellopoulos 1951: 187-8).

Meanwhile, however, *ethnikofrosyni* could not perform the task for which it was primarily invented without frequently speaking about communism or, to be more precise, without making regular statements against it. According to the French philosopher Michel Foucault, discourse cannot exist without making continuous references to its object. As he explains in his seminal work, the *Archaeology of knowledge* (1969), discourse is "a group of relations" formed to "speak of this or that object". It is, he says, a "body of rules" by which "various objects [...] are named, described, analysed, appreciated or judged" (Foucault 2006: 51, 53, 36). In this respect, *ethnikofrosyni*, as a power discourse intended to discredit communism, was caught in a serious dilemma: How could it speak against Greek communism when it was so reluctant to publicly name its intellectuals and discuss their specific ideas? Writing in a different context, the sociologist Nicos Mouzelis has argued that in modern Greece political discourse tends to deal with similar "problems of disarticulation" through the use of what he calls practices of "political and cultural formalism". These, he maintains, operate as "displacement mechanisms" which shift attention away from substantive issues through the use of "verbalism" and "various abstractions and lofty ethical principles". The ultimate goal, he adds, is to enable the dominant groups to conceal an array of

"particularistic interests and personal ambitions" which they usually aspire to achieve (Mouzelis 1978: 134).

Ethnikofrosyni was steeped in the type of formalism aptly analysed by Mouzelis. As a result, its solution to the problem of how to speak against Greek communism without naming its thinkers and ideas was based on the following displacement mechanism: they claimed that their principal moral and strategic task was not to verbally attack the Greek communists, but Marxism itself as a materialist philosophy and global ideology because, allegedly, this was the main source on which Greek communism fed. Constantine Tsatsos, another philosophy professor and senior politician, outlined this particular strategy in 1952 in a book chapter entitled "Words dedicated to an *ethnikofron*":

> We must realise this very deeply. Without forgetting the ills of modern Greek communism, we, for the sake of Christianity, for the sake of the national idea, for the sake of the Greek idea, for the sake of Greek civilisation, are fighting against the idea of historical materialism, the principle, the theoretical and political principle of communism. In this direction we should cast our arrows. Therein lies the root cause of evil for anyone able to see beyond his nose (Tsatsos 1952: 33-4).

The expected outcome of such an approach was the development of an idiosyncratic anti-communism that appeared more concerned about exposing the theoretical failings of Marx and Engels a century after they wrote their works than about responding to the specific criticisms of the Greek left in the 1950s and 1960s. A mere glance at the titles of some the anti-communist books from that period reveals the near cosmic proportions which their verbalism began to acquire as a result of their quest for theoretical abstraction: *Between the two worlds* (1949) by Nicolaos Louvaris; *The twentieth century: The struggle between humanity and inhumanity* (1951) by Kanellopoulos; *The philosophical consideration of our time* (1961) by Ioannis Theodorakopoulos, and so on.

An interrelated trend, which emerged as a result of this verbalism, was the desire to construct a theoretical model that could be set against dialectical materialism as a rival and superior alternative. Of course, within the framework of a "nationally minded" discourse like *ethnikofrosyni*, such an alternative could not be disconnected from the immutable notion of "Hellenism", a term which refers to a certain view of Greek national history and culture, but not to a particular philosophy or theory that could be juxtaposed to Marxism. To overcome this obstacle, a group of *ethnikofron* intellectuals began to construct a theoretical frontage to the notion of "Hellenism" using concepts and ideas from a modern system of philosophical thought that was deemed capable of both rivalling Marxism and of appealing to the sensibilities of Greek nationalist feeling. For reasons that will become apparent further below, this system of thought was none other than the philosophy of German Idealism, while the main concepts and analytical categories which were imported from it were chiefly those developed by the last of its great philosophers, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

On a primary level, the present article seeks to expose the hitherto unexplored connections between the discourse of *ethnikofrosyni* and the crucial influence wielded upon it by a debased version of German Idealism. In so doing, the aim is not to produce a belated analysis of post-Civil War intellectual practices from the neo-Marxist perspective of the dependency school. Although there is an intrinsic value in exposing the non-Hellenic sources of a political discourse that based its authority on the claim that it – and it alone – epitomised the authentically Hellenic and nationally sound principles of post-war Greece, the aims of this inquiry stretch beyond this limited end. Of greater importance in this regard is to show how German Idealism and especially a number of key Hegelian concepts were systematically appropriated, distorted and domesticated in order to furnish Greek anti-communist discourse with the semblance of both intellectual rigour and national authenticity. In other words, inasmuch as the ensuing discussion is about recovering the German sources of *ethnikofrosyni*

it is also about the intellectual practices of manipulation and concealment which made Hegelian thought enter Greek public discourse in the post-war era as a set of debased concepts.

Setting the context: Why Hegel?

If we were to follow the contextualist approach proposed by the Cambridge historians of political thought, then the importing of Hegel to the discourse of *ethnikofrosyni* must be linked in part to the training of its main proponents in the philosophy of German Idealism. Kanellopoulos, Tsatsos and Theodorakopoulos, who have been aptly described as "the three musketeers of bourgeois thought" in post-Civil War Greece (Mathiopoulos 2000: 372-3), became friends as philosophy students at Heidelberg in the 1920s. Although the first two never met there, they were all nurtured by what their tutor and former minister, Gustav Radbruch, famously called the "Heidelberg Spirit" (Strassmann 2006: 97). All three were also taught by the same professors, including the neo-Kantians Heinrich Rickert, Ernst Hoffmann and Radbruch himself, the existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers, the Nietzschean Friedrich Gundolf and the legal philosopher Alexander Graf zu Dohna (Tsatsos 2001: 127-30 Kanellopoulos 1985: 25-6; Theodorakopoulos 1980: 28-43, 73-187).

Although neo-Kantianism was the dominant school at the Faculty of Philosophy at the time, one of its members, Alfred Weber, believed that Hegel's philosophy was "the most comprehensive and complete synthesis ever attempted by the human mind" (Weber 1897: 532; Theodorakopoulos 1980: 47-8). Furthermore, in 1924, the future Nobel Laureate, Albert Schweitzer, gave a guest lecture at Heidelberg on the philosophy of history and this had such an impact on Theodorakopoulos that much later he recalled having been "unable to sleep" that night and sitting "for at least two hours to read Hegel's *Philosophy of history*" (Theodorakopoulos 1980: 45). In addition, Hegel's own brief stay in Heidelberg in 1816-18 carried both a symbolic and an intellectual influence among the University's philosophy students, who were apparently able to trace the lineage of professors who

occupied his chair all the way down to Rickert. According to Theodorakopoulos, "from 1862 to 1932, when Rickert died, Hegel's Bacchic figure shone among the University's youth" (Theodorakopoulos 1980: 27-8, 51; Tsatsos 1933: 361). Hegelian philosophy, moreover, was a *sine qua non* in the canon of neo-Kantian classics and was studied as part of the movement of German Idealism which starts with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 and progresses through Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Schlegel and others, before ending symbolically fifty years later with Hegel's death in 1831 (Kanellopoulos 1929: 183-9; Tsatsos 1931: 362).

Soon after their return to Greece, Kanellopoulos and Tsatsos joined the prestigious Law Faculty at the University of Athens and by 1933 had been appointed full professors, while in the same year Theodorakopoulos also became professor at Thessaloniki. Since 1929, the three had also begun to publish the quarterly journal *Archive of Philosophy and Theory of Science*, which became a famous forum of idealist thought until the outbreak of the Greco-Italian War in 1940. According to Theodorakopoulos, who acted as director, the journal's aim was to "juxtapose idealism and historical idealism to historical materialism", while Tsatsos remarked later that the journal was a forum for "idealist philosophy as founded by Plato and continued later by the great classical figures of German Idealism" (Theodorakopoulos 1940: 2; Tsatsos 2001: 226). Although the *Archive of Philosophy* projected a neo-Kantian bias (for instance, Rickert's name featured on the cover as the leading member of the editorial board), one of its earlier issues hosted an article by George Gratsianos entitled "Hegelians in Greece" (Gratsianos 1932: 227). A year earlier, Tsatsos himself had published an article entitled "The work of Karl Larens and Hegelianism in Law", which, for a declared neo-Kantian like him, was alarmingly close to some core Hegelian positions. In an attempt to resolve these tensions, Tsatsos advanced an interpretation of neo-Kantianism which claimed that this school now stood, not so much with Kant, as somewhere between Kant and Hegel. In particular he argued that:

> despite the severe attacks by Schelling and especially Hegel against Kant, the two [versions of idealism] must be considered as two necessary landmarks along the same intellectual path. Neither is Kant as opposed to metaphysics as the neo-Kantians believe nor does Hegel move that far from the "Critique of the Power of Judgement". From this deeper unity of Idealist thought one can explain the birth of Hegelianism from the womb of Kantianism (Tsatsos 1931: 364).

In this important, yet overlooked text, Tsatsos distinguishes between the "old"/"orthodox" neo-Kantians, among whom he places his teachers, and the "new" school, in which he places Theodorakopoulos and himself. The latter, he says, "have moved to a point that lies beyond neo-Kantianism" and implies that this "beyond" is essentially Hegelian. "In this way", he explained, "one hundred years later, the movement from Kant through to Fichte and Schelling and mainly Hegel is being repeated" (Tsatsos 1931: 363-4).

Later evidence suggests that the loosening of the connections with Kant and the growing proximity to Hegel was not a passing phase for this generation of unorthodox neo-Kantians. More than fifty years later, in his posthumously published autobiography, Tsatsos suggested in a startling revelation that he might have not been a neo-Kantian at all.

> In this country, if they happen to stick a tag on you, you can never get it off. Neo-Kantian. [...] Right-wing. In the funeral speeches that will be given as they bury me, with these slogans they will either praise or chastise me. Yet, how inappropriate these characterisations are for me; in themselves foolish (Tsatsos 2001: 308).

Elsewhere in the book, however, he states emphatically: "I am a descendant and disciple of Kant and a distant one of Plato. I combined, with the help of Theodorakopoulos, Kantianism and especially neo-Kantianism and Platonism" (Tsatsos 2001: 587, 602). What these statements show is that Tsatsos maintained a

highly equivocal position towards the competing strands of German Idealism and especially the tensions between Kantian and Hegelian philosophy. Moreover, on crucial questions of political philosophy, he distanced himself from the Kantian ideals of world government and sided with Hegel's theory of the state, which he credited for having "influenced, above every other, the political theory and praxis of the previous century" (Tsatsos 1931: 264-5). Finally, another aspect which his early articles illuminate is that the esoteric Theodorakopoulos did not object to being described in the journal which he directed as sharing a similar detachment from orthodox neo-Kantianism.

Around the same time, Kanellopoulos also displayed the same discreet sympathies towards Hegel. As early as 1928, in an essay entitled *Critique of Historical Materialism*, he defended Hegelian dialectics as both a more refined and a more consistent theory than that expounded by Engels (Kanellopoulos 1928: 21-4). In his article "German Idealism and the Historical Sciences", published in the *Archive of Philosophy* in 1929, he portrayed the controversy between Hegel and Friedrich Carl von Savigny as essentially unimportant (Pinkard 2000: 541) and stressed that both men rejected the doctrine of natural law championed by the Enlightenment philosophers, including Kant, and embraced a historicist view of jurisprudence. Kanellopoulos then praised Savigny for "turning the eyes of studious humanity towards history" and Hegel for endeavouring to "vindicate this turn with his grandiose post-rationalist assertion that only through history can the mind, reason and spirit be discovered" (Kanellopoulos 1929: 200). Again, in 1933, in a critical review of a book by the then Marxist Theofylaktos Papaconstantinou entitled *Introduction to Dialectics*, Kanellopoulos showed a complex understanding of Hegel's dialectics and an impressive familiarity with the philosopher's works which deal with different aspects of it (Kanellopoulos 1933a: 458). In 1935, however, he was dismissed from the University because he declared his republican views and in December of that year he formed the National Unionist Party on a platform that sought to reconcile the conflict between right-wing royalists and

liberal Venizelists. For the next fifty years Kanellopoulos would remain a professional politician and a prolific writer, but the scholarly rigour of his essays in the 1920s and 1930s soon gave way to a less disciplined style of writing that aspired towards grand syntheses and abstract theorisations.

An important ally of the editors of the *Archive of Philosophy*, and author of an important anti-communist book in 1949, was the professor of the history of religion at the University of Athens, Nicolaos Louvaris. In 1933, Louvaris published his two-volume *History of Philosophy* which exhibited his good knowledge of modern philosophical currents and especially German Idealism, which he came to know well during his studies at the University of Leipzig from 1911 to 1914. His Hegelian sympathies come across in the second volume of his otherwise dispassionate *History of Philosophy*, where Hegel is described as "the greatest philosopher of the idealist period" (Louvaris 1933: 166). For some months in 1936, Louvaris served as Education Minister under the government of Ioannis Metaxas, but when his prime minister proclaimed a dictatorship he resigned his post. Similar doubts, however, did not deter him from accepting the same post again, this time under the Nazi collaborationist government of Ioannis Rallis. When Tsatsos found himself expelled from the University for giving a patriotic speech in the first months of the Occupation, it was Louvaris as Education Minister who managed to reinstate him two years later. As Tsatsos recalled in his autobiography, "my friend Louvaris, this noble and tragic person, reappointed me at the end of 1943" (Tsatsos 2001: 286-93, 230). After Liberation, he was imprisoned for six years on charges of collaboration and was still serving his sentence when his book, *Between the two worlds*, appeared in the bookshops as a notable contribution to the canon of *ethnikofrosyni*. After his release from prison he was reinstated as professor at the University of Athens and in 1960, together with Theodorakopoulos and a year after Kanellopoulos, he was honoured with membership of the Academy of Athens.

Monopolising reason: the denigration of opponents as "romantics"

Already before the outbreak of the Civil War, the editors of the *Archive of Philosophy* sporadically strayed from their strictly scholarly pursuits in the texts of German Idealism in order to engage in debates about topical issues in Greek public life. A notable trend in some of their interventions was their penchant for introducing concepts from German idealist philosophy in order to analyse problems relating to literature and linguistics in the specific setting of twentieth-century Greece. Moreover, in contrast to their scholarly writings, their involvement in public debates outside the bounds of their main disciplines (which were philosophy, history, law and politics) was usually marked by a tendency to conceal their sources and use concepts in a simplistic and reductionist manner. In this context, a regular theme in their interventions was the deployment of the Hegelian categories of "classical" (rational) versus "romantic" (irrational), to prejudice the debate in a manner implying that their views always reflected the voice of Reason, moderation and tested knowledge, while those of their opponents represented the irrational, superficial and extremist. Although these categories were used by Hegel in the context of an aesthetic theory of art, as well as in connection to a forgotten third concept, that of "symbolic art", the editors of the *Archive of Philosophy* tended to apply them indiscriminately and always reduced them to a simple binary model.

An early intervention which deployed this schema was Kanellopoulos's 1933 article "The language question and intellectual currents in Greece", which dubbed the nationalist faction of demoticists led by Alexandros Delmouzos as "romantic" because it failed to organise an effective struggle to further its otherwise commendable cause (Mackridge 2009: 292-3; Tziovas 1989: 27). A noticeable feature of this unexceptional essay is Kanellopoulos's attempt to portray the Greek language question as in some way connected to a worldwide cultural phenomenon in order to justify the use of Hegelian concepts which were originally conceived as "universal" analytical categories. As he

explained in the opening paragraphs, the article's aim was "to attempt, on the basis of the criterion of the opposition between rationalism and romanticism, to place our linguistic currents under certain, almost globally exhibited categories and currents of spiritual life" (Kanellopoulos 1933b: 265-6). Although diglossia is indeed a worldwide phenomenon, the global currents which the article discusses are not sociolinguistic, but purely philosophical, and these relate chiefly to debates between rationalists and romantics in nineteenth-century Germany.

The same analytical categories were used a few years later, when Tsatsos became involved in the celebrated "Dialogue on Poetry" with the poet George Seferis, a duel that developed into a major cultural event in Greece in 1938-40 (Beaton 2003: 165-9). During this dialogue (whose name itself is derived from the title of a famous book by the philosopher Friedrich Schlegel), Tsatsos denounced the avant-garde poetry of the so-called "Generation of the 1930s" because it ostensibly removed the "rational" element from its compositions and embraced irrational, subjective forms. Instead, he called for a return to classical forms that are "objective", desirous of "the eternal in beauty" and, paraphrasing Hegel, a poetry that is directed towards "the inner essence of consciousness, the realisation of its initial point" (Seferis–Tsatsos 1988: 6, 7, 10, 11). Although he never revealed the source of his categories – at one point he mysteriously asked his readers to assume that these were devised "by a third person [...] someone who relied only on pure thought" – even the definition of poetry which he adopts during the debate is fundamentally Hegelian (Seferis–Tsatsos 1988: 39-40; Stace 1955: 477-8; Beiser 1993: 371). In his memoirs forty-seven years later, Tsatsos admitted that during this famous dialogue he had been "engrossed by the spirit of German Idealism", but always remained silent about the striking parallels between his own arguments and Hegel's views on poetry and classical art (Tsatsos 2001: 152, 193, 592-3).

Shortly after Greece's Liberation from the Axis Occupation, Theodorakopoulos produced two anti-communist pamphlets in which he used the same binary division of "classical/romantic" to

depict the post-War conflict between Hellenism and communism. Although the first publication, entitled *Greece as an Idea* (1945), suggested that "romanticism" is perhaps too mild an accusation for the "philistinism" and "criminality" of the communists, it still found a way of using the term against them. Communist intellectualism, it said, "is not at all romantic", but this was followed by a qualifying sentence in which Theodorakopoulos added: "unless one wishes to call romanticism the political sentimentalism which [...] organises crimes" (Theodorakopoulos 1945a: 16). In the second pamphlet, however, such indecisions were removed. In *The Spirit of modern Hellenism and the changing times* (1945) Theodorakopoulos called for an immediate response to the onslaught of ideologies by a Hellenic spirit that is rational and stressed that this should be also purified from "foreign elements and romanticism". Elsewhere he spoke about the importance of classical values and developed the core *ethnikofron* principle that in the post-war era the only answer to ideologies is to "go back to the classical texts and to know their beliefs" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 33-4; Kazamias 2013). In this context, the pamphlet goes on to recommend a textualist and literalist approach to reading the Greek classics, which he presents, again, as the method of the "modern Greek spirit and reason" that "reads things exactly as they are, without romanticism" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 49-50). So deep, in fact, is his distaste for all things romantic, that in the chapter on the Greek War of Independence Theodorakopoulos struggles to find a formula that would enable him to say a word of praise for the Philhellenes. His solution to the problem is to claim that, in contrast to Europe at that time, the Greek War of Independence "was free from the emotional burden and dark forces that accompanied romanticism" and this, he adds, enabled the Greeks to free the Philhellenes from their own romanticism! In a remarkable reversal of historical roles, this is the *ethnikofron* version of what happened in 1821:

> The Greeks [...] liberated their romantic friends who came here to help in the struggle. [...] The Greeks [...] turned the Philhellenes, solely with their classical experience [...], into

> true Hellenes; they liberated them from the romanticism of the North. This is how those who really loved the Greeks saw them, as teachers of the classical (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 16).

A few years later, Tsatsos used the same categories again, although this time not in connection with avant-garde poetry, but in an effort to prop up the notion of *ethnikofrosyni* and vilify dialectical materialism. In his book *Nation and Communism* Tsatsos argued that the ontological principle espoused by "the classical world" holds that "in the beginning was the word", whilst materialist philosophy, which proclaims that "in the beginning was the deed", supposedly represents "the position of the romantic world" (Tsatsos 1952: 41-2). Of course, in assigning an ontological meaning to these cultural and aesthetic Hegelian concepts, Tsatsos ended up advancing two indefensible propositions. The first is that materialist philosophy is ostensibly alien to the classical Greek world; and the second is that materialism – rather than a certain strand of idealism – provides the philosophical basis of romanticism. Still, in another part of the book, we find the same categories used again, this time in connection to an argument about the better prospects for social justice in the Western world.

> The romantic method of extreme and staggering actions, the light-headedness of revolution, all these seductive things of course would be missing. [But] they would be replaced by the cold reason of classical European spirit, combined with the most socialist theory of the world, Christianity (Tsatsos 1952: 13).

Notwithstanding the "extreme" and "staggering" methods with which Tsatsos associates Marxism, later on in the book we find that, after all, he does not think they are so terribly "romantic"! At this point he accuses communism of representing a rather "pale romanticism" and labels its supporters "the rootless people" because they ostensibly lack knowledge that is based on classical Greek values (Tsatsos 1952: 60-1). After a certain point the manner in which the term is used is very difficult to follow, as we

can also find communism defined elsewhere a "romantic scientism" or as "a political organisation founded by romantic ideologues overexcited by Slavic passion" and so forth (Tsatsos 1952: 61, 13). At any rate, the relegation of this delicate and important concept to a convenient term of abuse was totally alien to the manner in which Hegel used it in his *Lectures on aesthetics*, that is as a type of art whose origins go back to early Christianity (Hegel 1994: xxvi, xxxii, 86-7; Beiser 1993: 370).

The eternal nature of the Hellenic Spirit

Since the middle of the 1940s, leading *ethnikofron* writers had begun to redefine the notion of Hellenism around the Hegelian notion of *Geist*. In making the concept of the Greek nation practically synonymous with that of the Hellenic Spirit (έθνος = ελληνικό πνεύμα), *ethnikofrosyni* was pursuing two fundamental objectives. The first was to divest the nation of its materiality (as an organised society of eight million people, with its state, institutions, etc.) and portray it instead as a pure idea in which the communists, by virtue of their materialist beliefs, could not participate. This aim was essential insofar as a core theme of Greek anti-communist propaganda was the claim that the nation never debarred the communists, but it was they who abandoned it. On this basis, concentration camps like Makronisos could be presented not as prisons and places of torture, but instead as "rehabilitation centres" aiming to reintegrate the communists into the body of the nation which they had left. The second key objective which the notion of the "Hellenic *Geist*" served was the construction of a less ethnocentric model of Greek nationhood compared to that of the Metaxas period in the late 1930s (Petrakis 2011: 133; Kazamias 2013). Insofar as Hegel's philosophy of history focused on the contribution of the National spirit (*Volksgeist*) to the historical development of the World-spirit (*Weltgeist*) (Hegel 1975: 52-3; Taylor 1975: 387), the notion of the "Hellenic *Geist*" could replace the older introverted conceptions of Greek nationalism with an extrovert concept that stressed its connections to a universal system of values. During

the Cold War, the much criticised influence of the United States in Greek affairs could therefore be confronted through a revised nationalism which presented the Greek nation as an integral part of Western civilisation and the ideological principles of the Atlantic Alliance.

In this context, leading anti-communist writers began to revise parts of the traditional narrative of Greek national history with the aim of recasting them from the perspective of the Hellenic spirit's contribution to the World-spirit. An early attempt in this direction was Theodorakopoulos's previously mentioned pamphlet *The Spirit of modern Hellenism and the changing times* (1945), which was written at the start of the Civil War. There, the former director of the *Archive of Philosophy* set out to defend the superiority of the Hellenic *Geist* over the "invading alien spirits who declare war" upon it, namely the political "ideologies" of the post-war era (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 3, 60-4). Despite his earlier reserve towards Hegel's philosophy, Theodorakopoulos offered here an outline of modern Greek history based on the use of numerous Hegelian concepts. For example, the Hellenic spirit, like the Hegelian *Geist*, is shown as ultimately desiring "its freedom", which is the attainment of "self-consciousness" through a process of "objective development" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 5, 23, 17). Moreover, like its Hegelian counterpart, the Hellenic *Geist* of Theodorakopoulos follows the laws of "necessity", constantly "renews its spirituality", moves "dialectically" and "passes on [its] spirituality to other peoples" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 5, 63; 19, 22; 6; 11). The list is longer, but apart from one unreferenced quote from a "great historian", which is probably a misquotation from the *Lectures on the philosophy of history* (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 15; Hegel 1975: 58), the pamphlet never acknowledges any Hegelian influences at all.

In later years, other *ethnikofron* writers used the notion of the Hellenic *Geist* in a similar fashion. For example, in *Hellenism and Communism* (1949), a manual for police officers by the professor of the Military Academy, Eleftherios Prokos, we find that since antiquity the Hellenic *Geist* "partakes in the character of the

absolute", a concept originally developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher and later, more famously, by Hegel himself (Prokos 1958: 55; Dorrien 2012: 191-2, 217-19). Similarly, in 1966 Kanellopoulos defined ancient Greek education as the moment when Hellenism acquired a "self-conscious spirit", another idea transplanted from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Kanellopoulos 1980: 159; Taylor 1975: 148-70). As for Tsatsos, he sometimes managed to produce these concepts in pairs and triplets! Here is an interesting example of how the Hegelian concepts of "self-realisation", "*Momente*" and "dialectics" are all skilfully compressed in one tiny sentence: "Spirit realises itself through time 'in moments' which might even be dialectically connected with one another" (Tsatsos 1952: 49; Stace 1955: 109, 90). Like other *ethnikofron* writers, of course, Tsatsos is also referring here to a Hellenic *Volksgeist*. "Spirit", he remarks, "displays itself differently in every nation", and echoing Theodorakopoulos's pamphlet of 1945, he presents the Hellenic Geist as the antithesis of modern ideologies and especially of communism (Tsatsos 1952: 51).

Despite their substantial dependence on virtually every key concept that Hegel used in the *Lectures on the philosophy of history*, pamphlets like Theodorakopoulos's *The Spirit of modern Hellenism* or Tsatsos's *Nation and Communism* are evidently not Hegelian texts. This is the case mainly because, even when they use Hegelian concepts faithfully, their correlation in a "system of discursive meanings" (White 1990: x) leads to conclusions that do not accord with fundamental Hegelian positions. This deviation is nowhere more obvious than in the central *ethnikofron* argument that, in contrast to the ostensibly ephemeral nature of modern ideologies, the Greek *Volksgeist* is eternal and, thereby authentic, more enduring, glorious and intellectually indisputable. This central hypothesis is clearly supported by Theodorakopoulos when he refers to the "eternal youth" of the Hellenic spirit, its ability "to perpetually renew its spirituality" and the capacity of Greek freedom to remain "a spirit that stands outside the bias of epochs" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 12, 22). The same holds for

Tsatsos when he speaks, in the context of the Hellenic *Geist*, about "Greece, which exists [...] for the totalisation of the human race", or about the Greeks as being "immortal and beautiful" (Tsatsos 1952: 66). Similarly, the idea of the eternal nature of the Hellenic spirit is present in Kanellopoulos's confident assertion that the Greek nation, as the bearer of spirit since antiquity, will go on "for another three thousand years, until the end of the world" (Kanellopoulos 1980: 168).

Of course, the incompatibility between these metaphysical outbursts and Hegel's theory of the national spirit could not be more striking. As the philosopher Theodor Adorno remarked in the mid-1960s, the national spirits in Hegel's philosophy are entities predestined to die:

> Because of their limited nature, the national spirits are fallible and finite. They wither and die, deserving their ruin because of their limited nature. The world spirit – more precisely, the absolute – consists solely in their ruin. [...] Hegel speaks of the natural death of the national spirits as one might speak of the death of individuals (Adorno 2006: 102).

Indeed, when we turn to Hegel's *Lectures on the philosophy of history*, we find precisely this idea expressed in plain and unequivocal language. This is what Hegel says:

> The period in which the spirit is still active is that of the nation's youth, its finest stage of development [...]. When the spirit of the nation has fulfilled its function, its agility and interest flag; the nation lives on the borderline between manhood and old age. [...] It then lives on with the satisfaction of having achieved its end, falls into fixed habits which are now devoid of life, and thus moves gradually on towards its natural death. [...] Thus both individuals and nations die a natural death (Hegel 1975: 59).

Nevertheless, the *ethnikofron* intellectuals stringently maintained that from antiquity the Greek people is "a worthy bearer of the absolute because it has the fortune of being a creative people, a

people that can offer more than the others works of truth, beauty and virtue" (Tsatsos 1952: 44-5).

In 1980, in the candid memoir of his student years, Theodorakopoulos recalled a dramatic conversation with Constantine Tsatsos's brother, Themistocles, who was fascinated at the time by Hegel's philosophical system. Theodorakopoulos, who was older, shared these sentiments and revealed that he had gone through a similar phase himself a few years earlier, but was finally compelled to distance himself from Hegel because his views about the national spirit sharply contradicted his own feelings about the destiny of the modern Greek nation. His critique, he recalls,

> focused on one crucial point for us Greeks. This was Hegel's dictum that a people plays an important role in history only once and then hands over the torch of the spirit of history to another. In essence, history uses each people once as an instrument and then marginalises it. According to this principle of Hegel's, the struggle of modern Hellenism for freedom was something unimportant, because the Greeks had given what they had in antiquity. Hegel's theory removes from every people and every individual their absolute and irreplaceable value and turns them into a simple instrument for its goal. [...] The history of Hellenism itself falsifies Hegel's theory (Theodorakopoulos 1980: 262-3).

This is only to show how clear the *ethnikofron* philosophers were about what Hegel did and did not allow them to say and how they knowingly ignored this boundary in order to redeem his thought as they wished.

Perverting the Hegelian Dialectic

One of the earliest, and in many ways atypical, works of *ethnikofrosyni* was Nicolaos Louvaris's *Between the two worlds* (1949), written during his imprisonment after the War on charges of collaboration with the Nazi Occupation. The uncharacteristic element of the book in relation to other *ethnikofron* works is its detachment from the notion of Hellenism and emphasis on portraying the crisis of the post-war world from a Christian perspective as a

conflict between German Idealism and historical materialism. As Louvaris summed it up, the book's aim was to "make the Greek reader conscious of the dilemma" and of "the choice" between "the 'luminous' worldview of idealism and spiritocracy [...] in contrast to the 'dark', 'nocturnal' worldview of physiocracy and materialism" (Louvaris 1949: 331-2). Although the influence of Hegel on this work is both significant and diverse, the importance accorded to the German philosopher is certainly greater than that. Louvaris considers his death in 1831 and the break-up of German Idealism after him by the atheist young Hegelians, especially Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx, as the real beginning of the crisis which troubled the post-war world in the late 1940s (Louvaris 1949: 25-6; Towes 1980: 327-55).

To account for the perceived decline of the World-spirit after Hegel's death, Louvaris turns, rather unimaginatively, to the theory of the great master himself. The cause of this crisis, he says, must be sought "first in the rhythm which the movement of spirit presents as a whole and which recalls the triple rhythm of Hegel, the thesis, antithesis and synthesis" (Louvaris 1949: 25). In the remaining three hundred pages of the book he tries to show how, from the 1840s, materialism, physiocracy, positivism and psychoanalysis emerged and posed an antithesis to the major advances of the spirit under German Idealism. Despite this gloomy narrative – from the viewpoint of Louvaris – the book nevertheless concludes with a perfectly happy ending. Its final part is entitled "The interest in religion" (meaning the revived post-war interest) and this triumphantly announces the impending victory of the World-spirit in a final synthesis. Nevertheless, what renders this analysis evidently pseudo-Hegelian is its reliance on an arbitrary use of Hegel's dialectic. To be exact, the historical synthesis which Louvaris envisages is not based, as Hegel's concept necessitates, on a certain fusion of elements from the thesis (German Idealism) and the antithesis (the materialist/physiocratic reaction) (Stace 1955: 106-7; White 1975: 409). Although at one point he acknowledges that "the removal of the opposition between spirit and nature [will occur] through the construction of

a wider unity", in the next sentence he proclaims that this essentially "means the total annihilation of materialism". In other words, what his analysis suggests is a one-sided resolution, not a Hegelian synthesis (Louvaris 1949: 251-2).

Many years later, Kanellopoulos also tried to implant the concept of the dialectic in a historical grand narrative developed from the perspective of *ethnikofrosyni*. On 27 September 1966, in Nicosia, he gave one of the most famous speeches of his career, a lecture entitled "The historical meaning of the Greek nation". At the time he was leader of the main opposition party ERE, and only six months away from his second premiership, which he clearly expected to last longer than eighteen days (Kanellopoulos 1985: 184-9). His visit to Cyprus was an attempt to reconcile president Makarios with his arch-rival George Grivas and, in so doing, Kanellopoulos also intended to project himself as a national leader capable of uniting all *ethnikofron* Greeks (*Kathimerini*, 27.9.1966: 1, 9; 28.9.1966: 1; *Eleftheria* 27.9.1966: 8; 28.9.1966: 8). In this context, his lecture on the subject of Greek history from Homer to EOKA was part of his wider effort to send a message of national unity in times of political crisis.

At the same time, however, Kanellopoulos's talk was not just another familiar reaffirmation of the standard narrative of Greek nationalism about the continuity, uniqueness and greatness of the Greek nation. Although on the one hand his 7,000-word lecture intended to do just that, on the other it was given to a select audience at the Pedagogical Academy of Cyprus, the island's most prestigious educational institution, and the speaker approached his subject using an academic style. From the outset Kanellopoulos explained that the aim of the talk was "to explore the meaning of the 'Hellenic' [...] to approach through Reason the great meaning of that [...] which was never defeated for at least three thousand years". Building on the body of rules established by earlier *ethnikofron* texts, the lecture assumed that "Hellenism" was understood by everyone as a Hegelian national spirit (Kanellopoulos 1980: 150, 153, 157), while near the end the audience discovered, rather predictably, that the historical

meaning of the Greek nation boils down to two interrelated elements. The first is that the Greeks are the first nation to convert "spirit into a source of education", especially into an "education of freedom"; and the second is that they always "obey the spirit and not material experience" (Kanellopoulos 1980: 167). By now it should be clear that the first conclusion reiterated the standard pseudo-Hegelian view about the eternal nature of the Hellenic *Geist* and its development as an advancement of "freedom" and "self-realisation". In other words, there was nothing new so far in relation to previous formulations of *ethnikofrosyni*.

Kanellopoulos's second conclusion, however, was certainly based on a novel conception of the Hegelian dialectic, a concept on which he had written competently as a scholar in the 1930s, but was now handling in a distinctly different manner. In an attempt to rewrite world history from the viewpoint of the conflict between *ethnikofrosyni* and communism, he reinvented the Hegelian dialectic as an eternal clash between a Greek-led world-spirit and barbaric matter. This is how he described it:

> With Greek Reason, with Greek Education, the violence of history was forced to inaugurate its great dialectical dispute with the spirit. In essence, only since then has there been true history. Everything else is prehistory. True history is the antagonism between Violence and Spirit, Matter and Reason. In this dialectical contest, the Greeks – a handful, weaker as matter against almost all other peoples – kept standing on the track (standing even when defeated) with their spirit, with their ethos, with the power of their soul (Kanellopoulos 1980: 160).

Although the number of arbitrary definitions and associations contained in this passage is staggering, to illustrate the point it would suffice to mention a couple. The first is the logically unsustainable equation between matter and violence, which is analogous to equating water with sinking or language with verbal abuse, that is to confuse an undesirable act with the material used to carry it out; the other is the naïve association of material power with the demographic size of a nation instead of relating it to a people's economic, technological and military capabilities.

Far more striking, however, is Kanellopoulos's idiosyncratic theory of the historical dialectic as an eternal struggle between spirit and matter. Even if we were to assume that a dialectical relationship between spirit and matter lies at the centre of human history, what Kanellopoulos proposed in this lecture was a conception of history that is more akin to a Manichaean than a Hegelian or Marxist viewpoint. To put it plainly, the concept of the dialectic, whether in Hegel or Marxism, is founded on a developmental view which requires a three-stage process in order to function: a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis. The developmental element rests precisely on the dynamic generated by the third stage in the chain, the synthesis, which resolves the conflict between the thesis and antithesis – it "sublates it", according to the relevant jargon – and moves history forward to a new stage of development (Singer 2001: 102; Stace 1955: 106-9). In Kanellopoulos's dialectic, however, the notion of the synthesis is totally removed. The battle between the Hellenic Spirit and Matter is presented as a conflict that emerges at the beginning of time and is foretold to continue until "the end of the world" (Kanellopoulos 1980: 160, 168). In other words, the struggle is never resolved and history never moves to a higher stage of development. The philosophical basis of this dualist view of history is none other than the ontology of Manichaeism which conceives the cosmos as governed by a unending struggle between 'good' and 'evil'. Nonetheless, in positing as a dialectical interpretation of history with a sharp bias towards the ultimate triumph of spirit, Kanellopoulos's theory should probably still be described as predominantly pseudo-Hegelian.

Conclusion

In his posthumously published autobiography, Tsatsos repeatedly admitted that he had been "immersed in the German spirit" and specifically "the spirit of German Idealism" (Tsatsos 2001: 152, 193). At the same time, even after serving as president of the Third Greek Republic in 1975-80, with the Communist Party legalised for first time since the Civil War, he continued to speak

proudly about his "intransigent" anti-communism, which had led him in the past to accuse the Greek communists of "bringing us foreign idols, foreign to our historical conditions, to our spiritual traditions" (Tsatsos 1952: 60). Of course, in contrast to confident *ethnikofrones* like Tsatsos, the Greek communists could never easily confess, even when facing their torturers, that they were "immersed" in German Materialism or Soviet Marxism, despite the fact that this was true in the case of many of them. Such confessions, to begin with, would instantly incriminate them as foreign agents and dangerous enemies of the nation. As a result, those who disclosed their dependence on non-Greek influences were the same individuals who claimed to be articulating the only authentically Greek ideas; while those who refrained from making them, were blamed for "bringing foreign idols".

Of course, the main aim of the preceding analysis was not to demonstrate just how dependent the *ethnikofrones* were on a philosophical system whose influence on their writings they desperately tried to conceal. Criticisms of this kind have been made long ago by the proponents of the neo-Marxist dependency school, although, apart from a few exceptions (Tsoucalas 1981), these focused on the political rather than the intellectual practices of the post-Civil War state. However, because the approach adopted here is not imbued with the ethnocentric undertones of the dependency school, equal, if not greater, attention has been paid to the disfigured and mutilated manner in which Hegelian philosophy was brought to Greece, especially after 1945. In this regard, the article has tried to show that the primary reason for this problematic translation was the continuous adaptations and adulterations to which Hegelian philosophy was subjected in order to conform to the established doctrines of Greek nationalism. Indeed, it would seem almost impossible to understand why a tradition of pseudo-Hegelian thought developed in Greece around the Civil War, without grasping not only the dependence of Greek intellectual practices on European currents, but also the extent to which nationalist stereotypes and aspirations created resistances

that drained the vigour of the imported ideas in the process of their domestication.

In the end, the leading philosophers of *ethnikofrosyni* failed to introduce Hegel in an open and systematic manner that might have enabled the Greek centre-right to reinvent itself ideologically and develop in the direction of post-War Christian Democracy. At the same time, however, despite some affected claims to the contrary, neither Theodorakopoulos nor Tsatsos could simply bypass German Idealism in order to construct a purely Greek theory of Hellenism, directly drawn from Plato and the Neo-Platonists. Instead, what they produced, despite their intention, was a hotchpotch of disfigured Hegelian notions across a set of revised nationalist themes.

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The year 2011-12 at Cambridge

Students

Although there were no candidates taking Modern Greek language papers in Part II of Modern and Medieval Languages Tripos in 2012, a number of students offered scheduled papers in Modern Greek, several with conspicuous success. Three students took Paper Gr. 7, "The history and structure of Modern Greek". One of them, Katherine Hodgson, was awarded a starred First in Part II of the Linguistics Tripos.

Seven students took Paper Gr. 3, "Introduction to Modern Greek language and culture", five as candidates for Part II of the Classical Tripos and two for Part IB of the MML Tripos. Four of the classicists graduated with Firsts: Marina Constanti, Rosalind Cowan, Evie Monnington-Taylor and James Wakeley; and Robert Castledine was awarded a First in Part IB of the MML Tripos.

Three candidates took the examinations for the Certificate in Modern Greek. Tim Ellison and Adam Gibbins passed with marks of Distinction.

Grace Bayley, Callum Humphries and Lucy Kitching spent their year abroad in Athens, attending lectures at the University of Athens and working on their year abroad projects. They return to Cambridge for their Part II year in 2012-13.

PhD students Semele Assinder and Eleni Lampaki are in the closing stages of their research. Semele has been awarded the Macmillan-Rodewald Studentship at the British School at Athens for 2012-13. Eleni has been appointed as a secondary-school teacher by the Greek Ministry of Education.

Teaching staff

Dr Regina Karousou-Fokas taught the language part of the paper "Introduction to Modern Greek language and culture" and also co-taught the paper on "The history and structure of Modern Greek", with Professor Holton. Dr Liana Giannakopoulou made a major contribution to the teaching of prescribed texts and topics for the

"Introduction" paper. Dr Evangelia Ronga taught the Certificate in Modern Greek, and courses for beginners. Ms Semele Assinder taught translation from Greek for the Certificate course in the Lent Term.

Visiting speakers

The 2011-12 programme of lectures by invited speakers was as follows:

20 October. Dr James Ker-Lindsay (London School of Economics): *Does a Cyprus solution still matter?*

3 November. Dr Pantelis Michelakis (University of Bristol): *Greek tragedy and film genre: the cases of Michael Cacoyannis and Woody Allen*

17 November. Professor Roderick Beaton (King's College London): *Byron's war: the politics of the Greek Revolution (1823-1824)*

24 November. Professor Margaret Kenna (Swansea University): *Picturing Anafi as it was? Photographs and memories*

2 February. Dr Anastasia Bakogianni (The Open University): *Electra as modern Greek survivor: the reception of the tragic heroine in the poetry of Yannis Ritsos*

16 February. Dr Alexander Kazamias (Coventry University): *The Ancients and the Cold War: the political use of the classical past in post-Civil War Greece*

1 March. Dr Klearchos A. Kyriakides (University of Hertfordshire): *Pleading for justice, voicing dissent and dancing around the law in post-1922 Greece*

8 March. Professor Maria Kakavoulia (Panteion University, Athens): *Second-person narrative in 19th- and 20th-century Greek literature*

3 May. Professor Robert Holland (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London): *The End of an Affair: the unravelling of the Anglo-Greek tie, 1940-1953*

Graduate Seminar

The Graduate Seminar held four meetings in the course of the year. Semele Assinder and Eleni Lampaki acted as convenors, and

papers were given by: Daniel Macarthur-Seal, Eleni Lampaki, Dr Ioanna Sitaridou, and Liz Cohen.

Alumni events

On 12 July 2012 we held an informal gathering in London for former students of Modern Greek. It was interesting to note the range of careers being followed by those present: in universities (teaching, research, administration), school-teaching, the civil service, the law (solicitors and barristers), banking, strategic planning, translating, publishing, and consultancy. An alumni dinner in Cambridge is being planned for Saturday 18 May 2013. Further information will be available from Professor Holton (dwh11@cam.ac.uk).

Visiting scholars

Dr Kostas Yiavis spent three months in Cambridge, from February to April 2012, during his tenure of a Humboldt Research Fellowship, for which he was attached to the University of Hamburg. Dr Maria Athanasopoulou, Lecturer in Modern Greek literature and theory of literature in the School of Drama, University of Thessaloniki, spent the month of July in Cambridge for research purposes.

Publications by former students

Many of our PhD graduates pursue academic careers and of course publish regularly in their particular fields. It is noteworthy that, during the current academic year, three books have been published by former students of the Modern Greek Section, all based wholly or partly on their Cambridge PhD:

Maria Athanasopoulou, *Το ελληνικό σονέτο (1895-1936): Μια μελέτη ποιητικής* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press 2011)

Tassos A. Kaplanis, *Ioakeim Kyprios'* Struggle. *A narrative poem on the 'Cretan War' of 1645-1669. Editio princeps* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre 2012)

Stratos Myrogiannis, *The emergence of a Greek identity (1700-1821)* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2012)

Activities of members of the Modern Greek Section

Dr Liana Giannakopoulou, Affiliated Lecturer, has been elected Secretary of the Society for Modern Greek Studies, for three years from 1 January 2013. She has published:

"Mapping the symbol of the statue in Ritsos' short poems", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 36.1 (2012) 72-90

Professor David Holton visited the University of Crete in December 2011 as a member of the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency's external evaluation committee for the Department of Philology. In January 2012 he took part in a conference at the British School of Athens, with a paper on "Kazantzakis in Cambridge". The theme of the conference was: "Between two worlds: the British Council and Anglo-Greek literary interactions, 1945-1955". He has published:

"Ξαναδιαβάζοντας τον *Ερωτόκριτο*", in: *Ο κόσμος του* Ερωτόκριτου *και ο* Ερωτόκριτος *στον κόσμο*. Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου (Σητεία, 31/7-2/8/2009). Επιμέλεια: Τασούλα Μ. Μαρκομιχελάκη (Irakleio: Dimos Siteias 2012), pp. 29-42

(With Peter Mackridge and Irene Philippaki-Warburton) *Greek: a comprehensive grammar*. 2nd edition. Revised by Vassilios Spyropoulos (London: Routledge 2012)

Marjolijne Janssen continues to work on the Grammar of Medieval and Early Modern Greek. She has been elected a member of the Executive Committee of the Society for Modern Greek Studies for two years from 1 January 2013.

Dr Regina Karousou-Fokas, Affiliated Lecturer, was one of the speakers at a seminar on the Learning and teaching of Modern Greek as a Second Language, with particular reference to the theory and practice of teaching vocabulary. The seminar took place in London on 2 March 2012 and was organised by the Education Office of the Greek Embassy and the Cyprus Education Mission in London.

About the contributors

Roderick Beaton is Koraes Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature, and Director of the Centre for Hellenic Studies, at King's College London. His books include *The Medieval Greek Romance* (1989/1996), the literary biography: *George Seferis, Waiting for the Angel* (2003), and *The Making of Modern Greece: Romanticism, Nationalism and the uses of the past, 1797-1896* (co-edited with David Ricks, 2009). From 2009 to 2012 he was awarded a Major Leverhulme Fellowship and in autumn 2010 was Visiting Fellow at the British School at Athens. The results of his research will be published in 2013 by Cambridge University Press, with the title *Byron's War: Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution.*

Robert Holland has published widely on British overseas history, including the end of empire. He has a special interest in the Mediterranean, and is the author of *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London: Allen Lane 2012). He is an Emeritus Professor at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in the University of London and is also a Visiting Professor at the Centre for Hellenic Studies at King's College London.

Alexander Kazamias is Senior Lecturer in Politics at Coventry University. He is the author of *Greece and the Cold War: Diplomacy and Anti-Colonialism after the Civil Conflict*, to be published by I. B. Tauris in 2013. He has also written several articles and book chapters on modern Greek history and politics, Greek-Turkish relations and the history of modern Egypt. In 2005 he was Visiting Fellow at Princeton University and in 2011 Visiting Fellow at the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World, University of Edinburgh. Between 1994 and 2008 he was a regular contributor to the Greek review *Αντί*.