

Greek Resistance Revisited

Lecture No. 0005 (January 25, 1974)

Transcript digitized in 2026 by the [Harvey Goldberg Center](#), a project of the University of Wisconsin–Madison Department of History.

Preliminary remarks

[*Inaudible*] ... to make announcements.

[*First student announcement*: I just wanted to say that Gulf Oil is coming out here on Monday to recruit for jobs in their corporation and stuff. And I think it's clear to most everybody, you know, what role Gulf has had, you know, in Africa and in the suppression of national liberation movements and stuff. And we've organized a rally for 12:00 on Monday to protest, you know, their role in Africa — how they aid Portugal and stuff — as well as tying in with how the university has always been used, you know, as a tool for corporations like Gulf and stuff to come out here. So there'll be a rally, 12:00 on Bascom Hill. And also tonight there's a movie called *A Luta Continua*, which is about — filmed, you know, with the liberation forces in Mozambique. And I don't know if it conflicts with this other one, but it's a good movie, and check it out and see.]

[*Second student announcement*: Okay, this weekend the Wisconsin Film Society will be opening their spring film series with *State of Siege* by Konstantine Costa-Gavras. It's about the Uruguayan guerilla movement, the Tupamaros, and it helps us crystalize this whole idea of America and intervention in Latin America. And you can see both the films, *A Luta Continua* and this, because *A Luta Continua* is at 7:00 and 8:00 tonight, and this is from 8:00 to 10:15 in B10 Commerce. Also, next Tuesday, CALA — Community Action on Latin America — will follow up the showing of *State of Siege* with a film called *Tupamaros*, a documentary on the Tupamaros guerilla movement which was filmed with the aid of the Tupamaros themselves, an inside look at the Tupamaros organization. So please try to see both of those two films, they're very informative films on the whole idea of interventionism. B10 Commerce, 8:00 to 10:00, *State of Siege*; and *Tupamaros* on Tuesday at 4:00, 7:30, and 9:30, at the Pres House, 731 State Street. Thank you very much.]

Costa-Gavras is the director who also made the film *Z*, from the [Vassilis] Vassilikos novel (which novel is in paperback, incidentally), and which describes a great deal about the processes in Greek society, Greek politics, in the period of the 1950s and early '60s.

Let me point out one thing to you before I begin, and that is that we have distributed to you now

those section lists, those discussion section lists. We have already accommodated, I think, whatever changes have been necessary and we have had to accommodate. So let me urge you to prepare your readings for the discussion this weekend, so that you come to the first session prepared. And please do come to the first session, because it's very important that the teaching assistants, who work very hard at this, have a sense of who is in the section. Sometimes a few of you disappear for a week or two after the beginning, but come anyway the first day so that we know who you are, and consequently can have something of a coherent record. And do the reading, because that makes it very much more fruitful.

Lecture

We can begin to understand something about the significance, and something about what was at stake in the Greek resistance movement between 1941 and 1945. We can begin to understand something about why the British intervened so brutally against that resistance movement in the fall of 1944; we can begin to understand why it was a brutal and bitter civil war after the liberation of Greece in 1945 which was to fall hard upon that resistance movement; we can begin to understand all of those things if we keep in mind that the Greek resistance movement of the 1940s was not only, or perhaps even primarily, a popular movement simply to harass the occupying troops of Germany and of Italy. It was not only, or even primarily, a popular movement to oust that occupation: that fundamentally, that Greek resistance movement was, implicitly and explicitly, something very much larger and very much more important.

What I am saying is that it really is akin to the movement of the partisans in Yugoslavia. It is really is akin to the national liberation movement of the Vietnamese people against the Japanese. And when I say there is that kinship, what I mean is that it is an immense and mammoth historical opportunity in Greek history: that what you do is devolve power, in the period of the Greek resistance, into the hands of the popular masses; that many of them take up weapons, after all, that they begin to organize, in the liberated zones, a life of their own. They begin to refurbish Greek society by themselves, and in the course of doing that, after all, they begin to renovate Greek society. They begin to create a popular democracy, if you please: they break that historical bottleneck which had been created by their own elite and by Western imperialism and that had been the weight over Greek society from the time of its independence in the 1820s. And all of that, crucially important to remember.

Now, we must not exaggerate either the coherence of the Greek resistance movement or underestimate its complexity. If we say, for example, that the EAM, the Greek Liberation Front, was the primary force in the Greek resistance movement — that that EAM, which was established in September of 1941 under the auspices primarily of the Greek Communist Party — if we say that it was far and away the center of the resistance, that ultimately it controlled most of

Greece at the time of the liberation, it does not mean that there were not other factors in the resistance movement, other groups that were anti-Communist and that were anti-EAM. As a matter of fact, in September of '41, very much at the same time that EAM was established, was founded the so-called EDES. And EDES, which was the Greek Democratic Union, was an anti-Communist group within the resistance movement. Now, EDES never really had a mass support. And, as a matter of fact, it was largely an organization of politicians and military officers who espoused a kind of republican or even socialist line in order to try to win a mass following, which they never did. But EDES does get a base in Epirus. It does get a base in the guerrilla war, and that because of a very remarkable guerrilla leader of this anti-Communist sector of the resistance. And that: General Napoleon Zervas. And Zervas, who establishes himself in Epirus, is really a guerrilla leader of great talent, and ultimately drops any kind of pretension at republicanism or at socialism, and really plays the British card, and will struggle against EAM and ELAS — the liberation army — for control of Greek territory, and ultimately will be a wedge by which the British will have a foothold in that resistance movement. That cannot be underestimated.

Or consider a second factor: that the Greek Communists themselves could not anticipate, or really could not control, the consequences of the resistance. And that's a terribly important thing to remember, because all Communist parties of Europe, whether in direct or indirect contact with Moscow, were beholden to the strategic line of Stalin. And the strategic line of Stalin, as we pointed out in regard to the Italian Communists, was really to make very broad popular national fronts against fascism, against the occupier, and not really to push a revolution. And consequently, the Communists of Greece, like the Communists of Italy, were not going to push the idea really of social liberation, were not going to try to frighten off the bourgeois allies that they might get, and as a matter of fact, were not even going to raise the question of the monarchy and whether the monarchy should be abolished. Consider, for example, the manifesto that EAM addresses to the Greek public on the 10th of October of 1941. And that manifesto, right after EAM is founded, demands a national liberation — in other words, to oust the occupier — but it says nothing about a social revolution. It says nothing even about the ouster of the king and the monarchy.

But having said that, we say that the Communists couldn't control that resistance movement even within EAM, that the Communists represented only 10% of that national liberation front. And there were many who were not beholden to the Communist line that would push the revolution much further than the Communists wanted to go. But something even more important than that, and profoundly important if you are to understand something about the kind of diversity that goes on — whether they like it or not — inside the Communist movements. And it is that the Communists could not even control their own rank-and-file, and they could not even control some of their leadership because of the very nature of that kind of resistance movement.

You're talking about something that will apply to China, something that will apply to Vietnam, as we will see. What I'm talking about is that in Greece there was a kind of contrast or a conflict between the city and the country, that the Communist resistance in the city was an orthodox, coherent resistance; in other words, it was a clandestine operation to try to undermine the German or the occupation presence. But, you see, that resistance also goes on in this mountainous country of Greece, cut off from contact with the Central Committee in Athens, certainly cut off from contact with the Soviet Union. It is an autonomy by itself when it is out in the countryside. It is what [French intellectual] Régis Debray calls the "revolution within the revolution"; it is what Mao will call the "creation of revolution bases" that were out in the hills. And consequently, the resistance becomes a revolution that has a momentum of its own, that cannot be foreseen or cannot be controlled from some kind of center in Athens.

And that contrast between city and country is also the contrast between the political leadership of the Communist Party in Athens and the *kapetanos*. And the *kapetanos* are, after all, those particular guerrilla leaders who are out in the hills, and who create by themselves a kind of revolutionary movement in the villages; they've related to those old klephts of the independence period of the 1820s. They're guerrilla leaders in the hills: they go village to village, and they arm the peasantry that they have a capacity to control their own destiny. And consequently, the movement of resistance begins out there, with the *kapetanos*, to have a momentum of its own. And the Party distrusts that. It distrusts even its own greatest guerrilla leaders because it cannot properly control them. Aris Velouchiotis, after all, who was the greatest name in the Greek resistance movement from the point of view of that kind of talent that he had for organizing peasantry — who was essentially a kind of peasant out in the hills, somebody who had a great capacity to make contact with villagers — always terribly suspect. Aris, you see, that's not his name. That's simply a name that he takes because it means "god of war." And he was a young Communist and somebody who suffered terrifically in the 1920s and '30s, and went to prison several times, and ultimately imprisoned by Metaxas. And he ends up in October of 1941, and he begs the party to send him off into the hills of Lamia. Because it's in Lamia, after all, that he knows his homeland. He can make contact with the villages. And the Party is very reluctant.

Finally, at the beginning of 1942, Aris is out in the mountains of Lamia and becomes one of the organizers of ELAS — ELAS which is the liberation army, and which is a kind of coordination of the guerrilla activity, village to village, that has grown up spontaneously. And what Aris and his group do is kind of remarkable. And there is a memoir by Nikiforos [Vrettakos], who was an associate of Aris, which is absolutely terrific. And Nikiforos describes the movement of Aris and ELAS up in the mountains of Lamia this way, and note it well, because you begin to understand something process: "When we arrived in the village, we were singing our partisan songs. Then we spoke to the villagers. We explained what our struggle was about. We told them that they had to organize. We persuaded them that, if they didn't like their mayor, they ought to replace him.

We held popular elections on the spot. And they themselves, these villagers, chose a new mayor and a municipal council. And we helped them to organize their own resistance, to control their supply, to control justice and administration. And then we left behind us a popular resistance organization."

Well, you see, no matter what the line of the Party is, that gets out of hand, because power begins to devolve. And even if you don't talk about socialism, in effect, when power devolves to the people, you already have the outworks of some kind of new society in the creation. And the Party was suspicious, and in fact they called Aris up before the Central Committee in Athens in March of 1943. And you can understand it. There is Giotis [*nom de guerre* of Charilaos Florakis], and these very good Communists down in Athens, and they're saying, "These guys up in the mountains, what they're doing is mucking up the line: that the bourgeois are getting frightened, that the British won't give us any supply, that Zervas and EDES are beginning to fight against EAM and ELAS, and consequently they're dividing the resistance." And they say to Aris, "Come down from the mountains, we want to talk to you." And of course, for Aris, whose face was everywhere, whom everybody knew was a kind of legend, with that immense black beard, quite obviously... [*inaudible; laughter*]...

And consequently, Aris, who this tremendous kind of visibility — he refused to shave the beard — he comes into Athens in the beginning of March of 1943, just walking in. He claims that he's disguising himself, because he has a priest's robe on. And he has a priest's robe on because underneath, he's just full of revolvers [*laughter*]. Quite obviously, it's a loose kind of thing. Finally he walks down toward the headquarters of the Communist Party, which is presumably clandestine under the eye of the Germans, and he there, then, suddenly is spotted by German sentinels, and he gets into a taxicab to go the rest of his route. And when he gets out of the taxi, he forgets his bag. And the cab driver finds it, and it's full of grenades. And that's the way he goes before the Central Committee, and he agrees, yes, he'll follow the line. But he never does. And he can't, and the resistance in the mountains will go its own way. You see the point. The point is that even if you have an anti-Communist sector in the resistance, as represented by Zervas and EDES, even if you have a line by the Communists, this cannot be contained just as a movement against the occupying forces, except for one factor. And it is the crucial factor. And it is not the anti-Communist resistance which is small; it is not the Party line. The crucial factor is the British presence.

And the British presence is about, after all, what the resistance will ultimately have to struggle against. And when we talk about the British presence, we don't mean a physical presence: we mean an ideological and strategic presence, that the British insisted that Greece was their pawn. They insisted that their political and economic and strategic primacy in Greece could not be threatened. You see, the British had a great stake in Greece. They had a stake economically,

because it had always been their kind of market. It had been a privileged market for British investment, it had been a privileged market for British loans, and beyond that, there were all kinds of potentialities in Greece that British capitalists were interested in. But it's more than that. It's strategic: that Greece controls that sector of the Mediterranean. And if you are to protect Egypt, if you are to protect Suez, if you are to protect that lifeline to India, you must control Greece. The British were sure of that.

And they had a strategy in two steps. It is a two-pronged strategy that the British have in Greece during the war. One is to protect and ultimately to restore the Greek king, and with him the government-in-exile. Now, the king, George II, and the government-in-exile under [Emmounil] Tsouderos — which had been taken off the mainland in May of 1941, when the Germans occupied — that government-in-exile and that king were under British protection. And they were in the city of Cairo, and there they were British agents, as it were. And the British insisted that both the king and this government-in-exile of Tsouderos had to go back to the mainland and do their British bidding. Fantasy, sheer fantasy.

Fantasy from the point of view that the king was wholly discredited, that the Greek people did not want that ruling house back; that George II had, of course, created tremendous hostilities during the republican movement of the 1920s and '30s. But then, even more, it's this George II who had brought in Metaxas, who had brought in that fascist regime. And consequently, over 90%, surely, of the Greek people wanted nothing to do with this king. And the government-in-exile of Tsouderos: it, after all, is a product of the 4th of August of 1936, it is a product of the Metaxas regime. And Tsouderos, who is himself a regent of the Bank of Athens and which is itself a kind of British agency, surrounds himself with all of these old officials of Metaxas. There's [Konstantinos] Maniadakis, who is the Minister of the Interior, who had established that secret police. There are all these old fascists and royalists that constitute this government-in-exile. And the British think they can bring it back.

And what gives them that illusion? What gives them that illusion, in the first place, quite obviously, is that they have to have those agents back: that the king and that government-in-exile know damn well that they have no future outside of the British, and so they are perfect pawns. But beyond that, the British know that they have American support. And the American support is categorical in July of '43. The United States figured that Greece really was British, that they couldn't go into that particular market. And consequently, when the British kept telling them that the king was essential to prevent communism, the American State Department agreed. And so we have them wiring the British Foreign Office, in July of '43, this way — these are the words of the State Department: "The United States recognizes the present Greek regime and acknowledges the necessity for continuity in government. It shares the confidence of the British government in the friendly and loyal sentiments of the brave Greek king and of his government."

And consequently, the Americans were behind this Greek fascism.

And the second part of the strategy, even more important. It's one thing to want the king back; it's one thing to want this Tsouderos government back on the mainland, but the second part is more important. And that is the imperative of containing, of weakening, and ultimately of defeating the popular resistance movement in Greece. Fantastic, because that resistance movement is fighting against the occupier; because, presumably, it is your ally. But no, no: that popular resistance movement, EAM, ELAS, they will preempt Greece, they will oust British imperialism, and they must be contained and weakened. But how do you do that? The British are in Cairo, and the Greek resistance is in the country. And how do you do that? The first point of contact between the British and the resistance movement comes through their intelligence services. It comes through what is called SOE: SOE, Special Operations Executive. SOE was a part of British intelligence. And it was that sector of British intelligence in the Second World War that had to do with resistance movements, that made contact with resistance movements, and presumably to try to coordinate action against the Nazis, against the German occupier. And so SOE first made contact with the Greek resistance from the city of Cairo. Because SOE for the Middle East, including Greece, was centered in Egypt, was centered in Cairo.

Now, there's something very important to note. It's complex, but it tells you a lot about American policy in that period also. And that is that there are two levels of conflict in the making of British policy; that there is a conflict between the Foreign Office and Special Operations. Special Operations was, if you please, military in its outlook. It was concerned to make the best possible military effort against the Nazi occupation, against German forces. The Foreign Office was political. It was concerned, after all, not only to make that operation, but to guarantee British interests wherever there was to be some kind of vacuum. And secondly, a conflict in SOE, between those who were behind in Cairo and those who were on the scene; in other words, between those who didn't recognize the reality of what the resistance movement was, who thought it was possible to contain this left and those who were on the scene — no matter how conservative they might be — but who saw the reality that, after all, Greece couldn't possibly simply be funneled into some kind of straitjacket, simply recreated as you wanted it.

And, you see, parenthetically, British agents in the field were a little bit flexible that way. They're much better than the Americans. American agents in the field really are — they're brute, they simply never change. They go out to Vietnam, they know they've got to undermine these people, and they do it from beginning to end, A to Z. And there are very few CIA people who turn. But you read the memoirs of these British intelligence agents in the Second World War, and they were at least pretty sensitive to the fact that the Foreign Office was projecting something that was pretty fantastic and pretty impossible. And so what happened was — now, let me just see if I can't fix this, because I can't read anything *[laughter]*... My God, I've done this before,

which shows you a repetitive stupidity [*laughter*]... Well, it's on [*laughter*]. At least I can see out of these.

What happened was that the British then sent their first contact people in September of 1942. They landed parachutists — twelve men, special agents — up into the hills of Epirus in order to try to make contact with Zervas. And they landed a brigadier general named Edward Myers, Eddie Myers, who has written rather well about this whole problem, actually, of the Greek crisis. And with Eddie Myers, Brigadier General Myers, was landed Colonel Chris Woodhouse. And Woodhouse has written one of the very best sources for this entire period, a book of memoirs called *Apple of Discord*, which — though Woodhouse himself is very conservative — is an extremely honorable account of what went on in the period between '42 and '45 in Greece. And these guys went up there, Myers and Woodhouse and ten others landed up in Epirus, and their only view was to make contact with EDES, to make contact with Zervas and that sector of the resistance. They really didn't know anything about the National Liberation Front. But once they got there, they began to see that really the significant part of the resistance movement was on the left; the significant part was this National Liberation Front. And so they tried, in some sort of way, to combine the military and political interests that they had; in other words, to mute somewhat the impact of EAM, but nonetheless not to ignore it; in other words, to try to bring a unity of effort between the Zervas forces and the forces of EAM which were, presumably, led by the Communists. And that was the effort of these guys in the field.

But, you see, back in Cairo, the British had no such view. And you get in Woodhouse's book the statement of a remarkable telegram that he was to receive, at the beginning of 1943, from Cairo. And listen to it well, because he makes a marvelous comment at the end of it. And here he receives, at the beginning of '43 — when dispatches are going in, saying the resistance movement is strong but it is basically to the left, and it is anti-monarchist — and Woodhouse gets this telegram: "We duly note your judgement on the importance of the guerrilla movements in Greece. We agree that you can't refuse contact with any group just out of political bias. However, except in cases of extreme military necessity, you should always favor and collaborate most closely with those groups which are ready to support the king and the government-in-exile. You must make it very clear to the other anti-monarchist groups that the Greek king and his government in Cairo enjoy the full support of the British government." Whereupon Woodhouse comments, years later, this way: "Given the circumstances of 1943, it was just as though the British government had asked its ambassador in Moscow to inform Stalin, whenever they met, of how devoted His Majesty's Government was to the Romanovs" [*laughter*]. And consequently, what Woodhouse is pointing out is how utterly unrealistic this is.

Now, the last real opportunity that there was for the British, in a sense, to accommodate themselves to the reality of Greek politics came in July and August of 1943, and it came under

the auspices of this Brigadier General Myers. And he is out in the field and the resistance has grown very large in Greece, and not only that but EAM really is the dominant force. I give you, for example, the evaluation that is made of EAM at that particular time by the Germans. The 5th of July of 1943, the commandant in Athens is writing back to Berlin this way: "90% of the Greeks are united in their hostility to the occupation forces and are on the verge of a mass rebellion. EAM and its armed forces ELAS has become the foundation of the entire resistance movement." Now, Eddie Myers knew that. And what he thought was — in the summer of 1943, and he tried to convey this to the British — that the best plan for them would be to have this unity between EAM and EDES, and not only that, but to bring in a kind of conference into Cairo in which a national unity front could be established with the government-in-exile, and perhaps even the king. That consequently, you might be able to co-opt a little bit of this resistance movement. But you could not ignore it.

And consequently, at that moment, he succeeded in arranging a conference. And he succeeded in arranging that conference, and that we understand when we...

[audio cuts out]

... called Sir Reginald Leeper. And Leeper, in his particular memories, writes this — the poor man was really on the spot, and consequently agreed to this particular meeting in Cairo — Leeper writes in the memoirs, "The political arm of British policy (namely, the Foreign Office) unconditionally supported the king and his government. The military arm (that is, our intelligence agents) supported the delivery of arms and money to the worst enemies of the king in the Greek mountains. When I pointed out to the Foreign Office that this was a contradiction, they told me to resolve it" *[laughter]*. Well, the result was, quite obviously, that Leeper at that moment agreed to a convention or to a meeting.

And this, you see, really tells you something about the potentiality. These Greek resistance people didn't want a civil war. They preferred a kind of evolution toward a new democracy in Greece; they preferred something to come out of this resistance movement. And they really wanted, especially those under Communist auspices, this kind of national unity front against the occupier. And so delegates of EAM and delegates of EDES leave Greece and are parachuted down into Cairo in the beginning of August for this particular conference. And as soon as they get there, both of these sectors of the resistance movement make it very clear to Sir Reginald Leeper that in no way will they accept the king back in any kind of postwar Greece. That's the perimeter within which these discussions have to take place. They make it very clear that there will have to be a plebiscite of the Greek people before the king can ever set foot on Greek terrain, which means that the monarchy will be ended.

Now, Leeper isn't quite willing to accept that, being the agent of British policy. And being a British fop, he decides that perhaps it can all be best resolved at lunch with the king [*laughter*]. So he arranges a luncheon between these guerrilla fighters in the mountains and the king [*laughter*]. And the king arrives, of course, with utter contempt for the resistance movement: he arrives in tennis shorts and tennis sneakers and a tennis racket [*laughter*]; that, after all, it has interrupted his proper activity. And so nothing comes out of that particular luncheon at all. Whereupon the resistance fighters, their delegates, then cable or wire to the government-in-exile right there in Cairo. And they state their position very categorically on the 7th of August of 1943, in which they say, "The undersigned, representatives of the resistance parties and organizations, have unanimously stated that in order to save national unity, which alone can assure our liberation, you must at once declare that the king will not reenter Greece before the people have voted on the form of their government."

Now, what is most fascinating is that the government-in-exile had been going through a little bit of transformation. That Tsouderos, because he was afraid that it really was too much a Metaxas regime, had begun to oust some of the worst reactionaries and bring in a few liberals like Sofaklis Venizelos, the son of Venizelos. And consequently, on the 19th of August, twelve days later, the provisional government replied and said that, "We agree that the non-return of the king before a plebiscite is indispensable if we want to avoid a civil war in Greece"; the 19th of August of 1943. For a moment, it seemed possible to make a national front, and to make, you see, a transition — if the British were willing to accept that — to make a transition to a regime in which the popular forces would finally have a proper say. But that same 19th of August of 1943 saw the end of that possibility.

Because, on that very day, the king wired to Churchill and to Roosevelt — both of whom were en route for the Quebec Conference at that particular time — and in his wire, you find a most extraordinary presage of what will happen: "What is being proposed," the king reminds Churchill, "what is being proposed, although the particular point of reference is Greece, will have vast repercussions elsewhere. It can influence developments throughout the Balkans, which you have marked out as special interest to you. I think that I should return to Greece with my own army even if, after a time, I should have to go into exile again to work with you, Greece's allies, to safeguard the interest of the nation." You see what George II is telling Churchill. He's saying, "If you permit this in Greece, you have lost the Balkans; that even if I go back and there is civil war and I have to leave again, I will come back with you. Because it will be up to you, the British, if you expect to maintain your base in Greece, to invade that country and to impose your particular system." The message got through to Churchill. And consequently, he immediately cabled the Foreign Office to put an end to these negotiations in Cairo. Sir Reginald Leeper was told to accompany these guerrilla fighters to the airport, and off they went. And that particular hope: gone.

Over the next year, from the middle of 1943 to the middle of 1944, there are sporadic efforts — various, half-hearted efforts — to make a national unity front in Greece; none of them worked. The most notorious being the so-called Plaka Conference of the 29th of February of 1944, when representatives of Zervas and representatives of EAM got together, presumably, to try to coordinate their military effort. But here is Zervas at this point really playing the British card, and saying that he wants 50% control over the military forces of the resistance movement, even though his forces were only a tenth as large as the forces of EAM and ELAS. And that conference fails.

At that point, at the beginning of 1944, the British strategy moves to a new level. At the beginning of 1944, the British realized that ultimately, they're going to have to invade Greece; ultimately, they're going to have to have a military presence there. Because what begins to haunt them is the vision of a Greece in which the Germans have been ousted, and suddenly the terrain is in the hands of the resistance movement. And quite obviously, they're pressed, because at the Tehran Conference (the Big Three Conference at Tehran at the end of November), it was decided that, finally, Plan Overlord — Strategy Overlord, which was the invasion of Western Europe, which was the "Second Front" — that that was going to come in the late spring of 1944; the British couldn't spare 50,000 troops to send off into Greece. And so what Churchill did at the beginning of 1944 was to make a contingency plan. And the plan was to set aside 5,000 crack British troops in Cairo, in Egypt: to arm them very well, to prepare their transport, and to be able to land them at a moment's notice in Athens when the Germans should withdraw or be kicked out. In other words: that Athens would not fall to the resistance movement. And having decided that, after all, the British went on with their plans for the Second Front. And then they were disturbed.

And they were disturbed, in the spring of 1944, by two things. And note it very well, because it shows you really where you are in the creation of your world. On the 10th of March of 1944, EAM and ELAS, the resistance movement of the people, decided to form a provisional government in Greece. And they formed what was called the PEEA, or the Political Committee of National Liberation. And the Political Committee of National Liberation was established in order to administer liberated territories, in order to coordinate the struggle against the occupied territories, and in order to, as it said, to devolve power into the hands of the people. In other words, the Rubicon had been crossed: that the resistance movement is now saying, "We are organizing a shadow government here in Greece."

And what the implications of that are were very well underscored by Woodhouse in his memoirs, because Woodhouse pointed out what these Greek resistance people had been doing in the liberated territories. And listen to this: "Having gained control of almost all territory except some main routes used by the Germans, EAM and ELAS gave the country things they never had

before: communications in the mountain, the advantages of civilization and culture, schools and courts and local self-government, theaters, small factories, popular elected assemblies, all of them appeared for the first time. I must admit, it was astonishing. It was a popular democracy born in the Greek mountains." And what, you see, Woodhouse is really saying is that it didn't make any difference if this provisional government, if this occupation of the liberated territories, didn't proclaim socialism; that it was en route, that somehow something was growing in Greece, that it would be very difficult to extricate. And that frightened the British.

And they became even more frightened by the mutiny that took place among Greek forces in Egypt following the proclamation of that provisional government. And that's one of the most fascinating aspects of the story. You see, Greek soldiers and sailors had gone down from Greece after the occupation; it wasn't only the king and this reactionary Tsouderos government that had gone down to Cairo, but there had been simple soldiers and sailors who had really braved the Aegean Sea in order to get to Egypt and to join the Allies in the struggle against fascism. And they were republican; they were anti-monarchist; they were anti-fascist; they were growing increasingly radical. And they were organized into these Greek Brigades in Egypt. They fought very bravely at the side of the British at El-Alamein, for example, and their ships joined the British Navy in the Mediterranean. And consequently, it is a fighting force. But it is a fighting force that is anti-fascist: that organizes, as early as October of 1941, the ASO, which is the anti-fascist military organization inside the Greek armed forces. And suddenly here they find out that EAM-ELAS have established this political committee, a kind of provisional government inside Greece.

And so they wait upon Tsouderos. They go to this prime minister of the government-in-exile. And they go to him on the 31st of March, fourteen of them, representing the mass of these 20,000 Greek soldiers and sailors, and they present him with a petition. And they say, "What we want is for you, the government-in-exile, at once to proclaim the Republic, at once to say that the King will not come back, and to take this Provisional Government into your government; in other words, to give it its place, to make for this particular broad front." Well, Tsouderos listens to them, reads the petition, and puts the fourteen immediately under arrest. Whereupon, on the 3rd of April of 1944, there begin to be mutinies inside the military camps of these Greek soldiers and on board the ships that the Greeks had. And it begins to become a kind of demonstration that turns into a rebellion, into an insurrection, demanding that this government-in-exile be replaced by something very much more viable for the Greek future.

Now, the British didn't like that at all. They didn't like the provisional government; they certainly didn't like that, here in Egypt, there suddenly was this mutiny. And consequently, on the 3rd of April, there were British motorized troops that surrounded one of the camps of the Greeks in Egypt and disarmed them. And then, on the 4th, they put down certain strikes by Greek dockers

and Greek workers in the city of Alexandria. They showed that they were going to get tough. Tsouderos, meantime, resigned, simply abdicated his position — figured he no longer could control the Greek community inside Egypt, and consequently tendered his resignation. And the British really felt that a full-scale crisis was on. And between the 5th and the 8th of April, the demonstrations grow very large, and all of Egypt really is rocked by these 20,000 Greek mutineers, whereupon Churchill intervened. And the intervention of Churchill really deserves your closest attention, because it really tells you something about the mythology with which you have all grown up about the great fighters for freedom.

And Churchill, on the 8th of April of 1944, orders, of course, the British commander in Egypt to suppress this rebellion. But what is most fascinating is the wire that he sends off to Sir Reginald Leeper. And it reads this way, listen to every word of it: "Our relations are definitely established with the lawfully constituted Greek government headed by the king, who is the ally of Britain and cannot be disregarded to suit a surge of appetite among these dismal, émigré nonentities. Nor can Greece buy constitutional expression in the hands of guerrillas, nothing but cutthroat bandits who are masquerading as the saviors of their country. I tell you that I vow that I will bring Greece back to the ranks of civilized countries." And then, as though to say that there might be a bad press if there were really repression and that Leeper might be somehow a little finicky about that, Churchill added, "As for the Greek dissidents in Egypt, don't worry about the external effects of your action; simply keep them bottled up by artillery and superior force, and then let hunger play its part." And so it was that from the 23rd of April 1944, the British forces did surround the camps of the Greek troops in Egypt, and did finally disarm them. And 20,000 of them, soldiers and sailors, ultimately sent to concentration camps in Libya and in Eritrea. And that ended that force.

But for the British, you see, it posed the question of Greece very, very directly. And it meant that the policy of simply keeping a troop of 5,000 to cope with this resistance — that might be 50,000 or 60,000, at the end, with arms in its hand — that simply wasn't sufficient, and the strategy had to move. And consequently, it is after this provisional government and after the mutiny that the British conceive of the idea of playing for time. And the playing for time really is an integral part of the story, because you cannot understand the American role in Greece unless you understand this next chapter. And that is that the British decided that they would make a national unity government, but they would have to co-opt the resistance movement; that what they really needed was some political figure who could stand at the head of a so-called national unity movement, who might have some reputation and might in some way disarm and co-opt the resistance. To play for time until that Second Front was established, to play for time until the British could land forces, they needed someone. They needed a figure, and they found him. Tsouderos had resigned. The position at the head of the government-in-exile was open. And suddenly, on the 27th of April of 1944, there is a new President of the Council of the

government-in-exile of Greece, and his name is Georgios Papandreou.

And Papandreou now comes onto the scene, becomes really such a fateful character, the father of that young Andreas Papandreou who would be so important before the coup of 1967. Now, nobody had much heard of Georgios Papandreou before 1944. And even if you were well informed, there was no disgrace not to have heard of him, because he hadn't really done very much. He'd been a minor Greek politician, and he'd been a member of Venizelos' Liberal Party. He'd occupied a ministerial post a few times, very minor posts. He was little known inside Greece, not known outside at all. But what recommended Papandreou to the British? Why did they fly him from Greece into Egypt to become head of this government? First, a highly intelligent guy, no kidding: that Papandreou was well educated, very intelligent and very clever — was a guy who always had their fingers wet to know which way the wind was blowing — and consequently very, very subtle in his political outlook. Secondly, he had what was called a "resistance record." Now, it wasn't really much of a record. But somehow the Italian police had arrested him in 1942, and he'd spent two months in prison, and that, of course, became a great badge of honor. The British could pass him off as a fighter in the resistance, as a man of the left.

But what really induced the British that Papandreou was their man and their agent was his attitude about the way the world was going, because he had that kind of fantastic, Manichean view of the world by 1943. What I'm saying is that he had a Cold War view of the world in the middle of the Second World War. And this becomes absolutely apparent in the statement that he writes out for the British command in the Middle East in July of '43. And he sends from Greece a report on the way in which the world is shaping. And read this kind of vision and see how it fits into a certain kind of strategy. Papandreou writes in July of 1943: "Today a new struggle is shaping up in the world; on the one side, pan-Slav communism, on the other, Anglo-Saxon liberalism: the eternal struggle of darkness and light" [*laughter*]. Well, but for twenty years you all talked that way! [*laughter*]. "... the eternal struggle of darkness and light. Every civilized nation, even those enemy countries we are momentarily fighting will naturally line up with Anglo-Saxon liberalism. Greece and Turkey, above all, must be the closest allies of Great Britain." Well, that was perfect. Churchill loved it. It was the kind of great prose, after all, that told him what he wanted to know. And consequently, Papandreou becomes head of this government. But he's chosen because he can become the man of national unity: he has that resistance record, he is not tarred with the Metaxas regime.

And consequently, the British now invite a conference with the resistance movement to try to make a national unity behind Papandreou. And they arrange that fantastic conference in Beirut, in Lebanon, on the 17th of May of 1944. Sir Reginald Leeper arranges all these hotel rooms in Beirut, and consequently brings all these delegates in, and there is this conference. And the first day of the conference, Papandreou comes in and he minces no words. He comes in and his

opening speech is a terrific denunciation of the guerrilla warfare, in which he attacks the partisans, he attacks the guerrilla movement and says that they are no better than the Nazis; he puts on the exact level of equality the terrors and the tortures that the Nazis have inflicted and the procedures of the Greece resistance movement. You would have thought that those delegates of the resistance movement at that point simply would have gotten up and walked out, except for two things: that the delegates to that conference from the resistance movement were not men of the mountain. They were not people who had come down, like Aris, from the villages; they were people from Athens who really had the idea that, if they broke up this conference, there would be civil war, and that they didn't want to do; who really felt that, if there was a national unity, they might have ultimately the predominant force in it.

And consequently, after all of that browbeating by Papandreou, they finally sign, on the 30th of May of 1944, the so-called Charter of Lebanon. And the Charter of Lebanon, you see, proclaims that Papandreou is head of a national unity government, proclaims that all forces in the Greek resistance are now to be put into the hands of that government-in-exile in Cairo, proclaims that all territories that are now controlled by EAM must be given up to the control of that Cairo government. All that the resistance delegates got at that particular conference was the agreement by Papandreou that the king would not return until there was a plebiscite of the Greek people. But the problem was that, though those delegates signed that Charter, could they impose it on the resistance movement in Greece? It was a great coup for the British. But would it work?

And back in the mountains, it didn't work. And great guerrilla leaders, like Markos [Vafeiadis] in Macedonia, who look at this agreement and say it is treason, and pure treason. And the fighting goes on. And even back in Athens, in the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party, it's felt that too much has been conceded, and there is a refusal to accept that Charter of Lebanon. What are the British to do? They had the support of the Americans, that's for sure. The ambassador to the government-in-exile, Lincoln MacVeagh, he keeps telling Roosevelt that, after all, the British are the only barrier against communism in Greece. That's okay. But what Churchill needs, he begins to get. And that is the support of the Soviet Union. And so he begins to negotiate, and Churchill was tough as hell. And he knew that in Stalin there was somebody who might understand old-fashioned British diplomacy, that there was someone who might understand the spheres of influence. And consequently, if he could get Stalin to commit himself to the idea very categorically that Greece was a British satrapy, that somehow the Greek Communists would accept this kind of national front government under Papandreou.

And so the negotiations began in May of 1944, rather subtly at the beginning. It begins in London, and there is Anthony Eden. And Anthony Eden is elegant, and he doesn't bring up crude things at once. And he sees the Russian ambassador to London, who's a man named [Fedor] Gusev. And he says to Gusev, "How would it be, how would your great leader feel, if we had

control in Greece and you people had control in Romania?" And Gusev said, "Well, I'll try." And he comes back the 18th of May, and he says, "*Da*," that our great leader decides that that is a very good deal. But do the Americans approve? Because if the Americans don't approve, then the deal won't go through, quite obviously.

And so next it's up to Halifax, Lord Halifax, who is the elegant British ambassador in Washington. And he goes to [Secretary of State] Cordell Hull, and he says, "How would it be if, because we are primary in Greece and the Russians are primary in Romania, we make this deal on spheres of influence?" And Cordell Hull says, "No, all that's ours" [*laughter*]. And consequently, he says, to put it more technically, it violates the "open door" [*laughter*]. And consequently, he refuses; whereupon Churchill makes his *démarche* very directly with Roosevelt. And he says to Roosevelt that it's either communism or us in Greece, that fundamentally we are stopping a tyrannical Communist regime. And so, nine days later, Roosevelt agrees. And consequently, that deal is in a sense consummated at the level of these informal talks.

Now, with that, the Russians make their first entry into the Greek scene, because ELAS had begged the Russians for arms and had never gotten any arms. And there had never been any Russians on the scene in Greece. And [Soviet foreign affairs minister Vyacheslav] Molotov kept saying he didn't understand the Greek problem. And all the time that MacVeagh was telling Roosevelt that the Russians were behind EAM, and that if EAM won it would be Russian victory — it was pure mythology. The Russians simply weren't there. But suddenly they arrive, and they arrive by parachute: a delegation of twelve of them, on the 26th of July, in the mountains to meet the Greek guerrillas. The 26th of July of 1944, the famous mission of Colonel [Grigory] Popov. And Colonel Popov sees the General Secretary of the Greek Communist Party, [Georgios] Siantos, and he says, "What do you have going here?" And Siantos says, "It's a liberation movement." And Popov says, "Well, it's not much. We don't think you can win." And he says, "Well, will we get help from the Russians?" And of course, Popov says, "No, we have no support for you. Now, we understand that you have not agreed to that Lebanon Charter. We think that this is a very good Charter, and it will help the Grand Alliance against fascism." In effect, the Russians demand that the Greek Communist Party accept this Charter of Lebanon. And that, then, is done on the 17th of August of 1944.

And still Churchill is worried. And he's worried because it's one thing for the Russians to agree that Greece will be British; it's another thing for the people in Greece to follow the line of the Communist Party. And he's still worried. And consequently, he pushes off on Roosevelt, on the 19th of August 1944, what is called Operation Rankin. And Operation Rankin is for a force of 12,000 very, very highly armed [men] to be prepared in Italy, to be dropped into Greece at a moment's notice if the Germans take off. And that is really, you see, what the great panic is. The

British are occupied on that Western Front. Suppose the Germans leave Greece suddenly? Suppose it is all in the hands of the resistance? And that is what happened, because Hitler got the idea — and it is consummated on the 14th of September in his discussions with General [Alfred] Jodl — he gets the idea that Greece is a liability for the Germans, they need those troops elsewhere. And besides, if they leave, it will be civil war in Greece, and it will bog the British down. And suddenly they decide they will withdraw from Greece, and they begin that in October of 1944.

And Churchill is beside himself, and he has to move quickly. And consequently, he rushes off to Moscow to get some kind of very firm agreement from Stalin. And the trip to Moscow, on the 9th of October, is really exquisite if you look for the way bargaining was done in those days, and look into Churchill's autobiography on that particular question. And he talks to Stalin immediately on the 9th of October — he has no time to lose — and consequently, he says, "The moment was apt for business, so I said to Stalin, 'Now, let us sit down and settle our affairs in the Balkans. Now, your armies are in Romania and Bulgaria, and we have interests there; missions and agents and so forth. How would it be if you have 90% predominance in Romania, and for us we'll have 90% predominance in Greece? And then we will go fifty-fifty on Yugoslavia?'" ...

[audio cuts out]

... revolutionary state. And Churchill added, to sum up what the advantage of this kind of agreement would be, "Because, you see, Comrade Stalin, if we manage these affairs well, we shall prevent civil wars." And Stalin agreed.

And consequently, the Russians would not be any problem. The problem was that, when the British began landing — under Operation Rankin — began landing their forces in Greece in the beginning of October, there were 75,000 armed Greeks who were controlling that country. And the problem of a clash became the crucial one. Whether that could be resolved really was in the historical cards. No way were the Greeks at that point going to give up to Papandreu without a fight. And so from resistance you go to civil war, and from civil war you go to the Americanization of Greece. *[applause]*