

The Greek Civil War

Lecture No. 0006 (January 28, 1974)

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Preliminary remarks

Let me say that, let me point out to you — because to me, it's terribly important; for you it may not make a bit of difference, but to me, it's very important — that I now have these lenses cemented [*laughter*], in these frames. So, I think I was extremely disoriented on Friday. One thing, I can't see much without my glasses and I can't read without them. And so I went to the optician, and he said, "Well, you know, that's the fourth time you've brought them that way." And I said, "Well..." And he said, "What do you do?" And I said, "Well, I wave them in class." And he said, "Well, why don't you use a stick?" [*laughter*]. And I told him not to tamper with my neuroses [*laughter*].

Now, I don't know what the hell this is...

[*audio cuts out*]

Lecture

In 1944 — which I point out to you was still during the war, which I point out to you was still during that period of time when tens of millions of people, presumably, were enrolled in a Grand Alliance against fascism — but in that fall of 1944, the fate and the destiny that really befell so many contemporary societies was already quite visible in the struggle over Greece. And that struggle, if I may recall it to you, really was about imperialism at its very heart. Or, to put it more precisely, it was about the determination of British policymakers that they were going to restore that hegemony which Great Britain had traditionally had, politically and economically, over Greece, and that they were not going to countenance any kind of popular revolution which was going to foreclose that particular option for them.

And so they developed a two-pronged strategy. And the first strategy, which was perfectly clear all through 1943-44, was that they would eventually restore the king to Greece, and that they would restore a conservative government-in-exile — both king and both government-in-exile which were then in Cairo under British protection — in other words, that they would bring back to the mainland of Greece those instrumentalities of their policy. All of which was fantastic,

when you stop to think that the Greek people had no use for that King George II, who had, after all, brought on [Ioannis] Metaxas and the fascist regime in the '30s. And certainly, that regime that was the government-in-exile was nothing but an extension, really, of that 4th of August 1936 government that Metaxas had established, and under which the Greeks had lived not very much better than they had lived under the occupations of the Germans. And that was the first part of the British tactic.

The second part of that strategy was, quite obviously, to contain and to disarm and ultimately to crush the popular resistance movement, the popular movement against the German occupation. Because, you see, that popular movement — which was centered around the Greek Liberation Front, around the EAM; and which had an armed force, the ELAS, which, after all, became a significant armed force — that that Greek resistance movement was wiping up the German occupation, liberating one territory after another. And all of that, presumably, is what it was supposed to be doing. But in the process it was doing something else. In the process, perforce, it really was revolutionizing Greek society. Perforce in those mountainous provinces, the province of Rumelia, the province of Macedonia, when you got those *kapetanos*, those guerrilla leaders, they devolved power into the hands of the people. They weren't proclaiming socialism, they weren't proclaiming a revolution, but they were telling the villagers to organize their own resistance, to organize their own lives. And consequently, that, to the British policymakers, quite obviously, became a threat of the very first order.

And the apprehension of the British really crested in the spring of 1944 when they saw two things happen, both of which really show you the threat of this kind of a movement. For it was on the 10th of March of 1944 that the EAM — which had been excluded from any kind of very broad national unity government, which had been ousted from Cairo in the summer of 1943 — in March of '44, that EAM simply took the bull by the horns and established what really was a provisional government. Because in establishing the Political Committee of the Greek Liberation, what it did was to take charge of the liberated territories, and to say that the whole strategy for liberating the rest of Greece would be in the hands of that government. And the British saw that. And then they saw the support that that provisional government had. Because, in April of 1944, they saw that astonishing mutiny on the part of those 20,000 Greek soldiers and sailors who were billeted in Egypt: who were anti-fascist and who, when that provisional government was established, began to riot, began to demonstrate, began to mutiny, and to say that that provisional government-in-exile that was being protected by the British had to recognize what was going on on the mainland, and include the EAM within the structure of its government. And the British, as I pointed out to you, crushed that particular mutiny, really, in blood, and ultimately sent off those mutineers into concentration camps in North Africa.

And all of that apprehension, you see, really reached a kind of height when the British, in the summer of 1944, began to realize that the Germans might evacuate Greece very quickly — that they might either be pushed out of the mainland, or that they might for strategic reasons deploy their troops elsewhere, and suddenly a vacuum would be created. Now, you might say that if the Germans leave Greece, the British have no more concern with it; that, after all, is what they should have been concerned about. But they weren't. They were precisely concerned about that vacuum: that the destiny or the future of Greece might then fall from their hands, and consequently that something quickly had to be done. Now, you see, they were strapped, because the British were fighting in Italy and barely managing to work their way up that peninsula, and then the second front was about to be established in France. And how even to think about those two big divisions that they felt would be necessary to send to Greece?

And so they hit upon a kind of alternate strategy in the spring of 1944. And that was to co-opt that radical resistance movement: to try to bring it into a government of national unity in which the EAM would be a minor partner, in which it would be suffocated, in which it would be paralyzed. And they looked for someone to establish such a government, and they found him in Georgios Papandreou. And Papandreou was parachuted into Cairo in April of 1944, became head of the government-in-exile in Cairo. And Papandreou was perfect because he was not only very pro-British, but he also had the idea that the British occupation of Greece was necessary if there were to be a prevention of communism, of something he considered the worst possible evil that could befall his country. And so Papandreou passed for the man of unity.

And the British arranged that rather bogus meeting in the city of Beirut, in Lebanon, on the 17th of May of 1944, negotiations that went on for over two weeks. And Papandreou was terrible. And he came to that meeting and he said to the EAM delegates who were brought there, he told them they were worse than bandits: he said that he would crush the terrorism that they were purveying, he told them that their guerrilla activity would have to stop. And then, after all, they should have left. But these EAM delegates were not the men of the mountains; they were people of the city, and they really believed in a national unity government to end the German occupation. And so they accepted the terms of the so-called Charter of Lebanon. And thus that Charter of Lebanon gave the EAM a very minor part in a unity government, that they would have four ministers out of the twenty. And secondly, they got a concession that the king would not be brought back to Greece until there was a public national plebiscite. But in order to get that, they had to agree that all of their action in Greece was now under the control of Papandreou's government in Cairo, and that anything that the ELAS had taken over and liberated and occupied had now to be turned over to this government of national unity — a settlement which the people back in Greece thought was a betrayal.

Up in the mountains, Aris Velouchiotis, that great guerilla leader, wouldn't accept that Charter of Lebanon. Markos Vafeiadis in Macedonia, the great liberation leader, would not accept those terms. And even the EAM delegates or representatives back in Athens thought it was a sellout. Until, you see, the Russians put pressure upon the Greek Communists, as they did in July of 1944, and finally on the 15th of October of '44, the Greek resistance movement accepted the Charter of Lebanon, and agreed really to go into the Papandreou government.

On the 2nd of September of 1944, the four EAM delegates arrived in Cairo to go into Papandreou's ministry. On the 7th of September, that government was moved from Cairo to Caserta in the south of Italy. The British wanted it in Italy, away from the radical Greek milieu of Cairo, from those Greek dockers and workers who really suspected the British ploy. And consequently, it's at Caserta on the 7th of September that the British impose their second term upon this coalition government by the so-called Accord of Caserta, in which not only does the EAM now say that this national unity government will have control of all of the liberated territories, but it agrees that all military action in Greece will now be under the command of the British general for Greece. And that general, Ronald Scobie: General Scobie, just appointed to go into Greece and really to command the military occupation.

And you may well ask the question: Why are the British sending troops into Greece? Why Scobie as the commander-in-chief of all of these military operations? Well, Churchill, you know, had a capacious, imperialistic mind. And consequently, Churchill never trusted these accords. And he said you had to have troops on the scene if you are to keep the EAM really faithful to these accords. And consequently, as the German withdrawal from Greece began to become more and more of a potentiality, Churchill devised a military plan which was called Operation Manna. Operation Manna, which was devised in the summer of 1944, and which provided that as soon as the Germans withdrew, that 12,000 British troops should immediately be sent from the Italian Front — where they were much needed, incidentally — immediately be sent into Greece, some to be parachuted immediately into Athens. And along with that, the so-called 2nd Mountain Brigade — and note it well — the 2nd Mountain Brigade, which was a Greek brigade that was fighting on the Rimini Front in Italy, would also be under Scobie's orders and would immediately go to Greece when the Germans withdrew. Now, that 2nd Mountain Brigade was what the British were able to resurrect after the mutiny of '44. They were the royalists, they were the pro-fascists, they were the worst reactionaries, and they would now go back into Greece along with this British commander plus these 12,000 forces who would immediately be on the scene. Why? Obviously, to prevent there being any takeover by the EAM at that particular time.

Now, you know that the British could not have gotten away with that unless they had two very important allies. One ally, the Americans, the American policymakers' decision that they would

support the British in Greece; the other, the Russians, the compliance of Stalin in that particular design on the part of the British.

So far as the Americans are concerned — and think about it carefully — the United States had no stake in Greece. It's one country that they hadn't considered as part of their Open Door empire. It was just like Indochina after the Second World War: the Americans had no particular stake there either, and consequently, just as they were supporting the French in Indochina, so they would support the British in Greece, because those policymakers calculated that the issue was either British occupation or the potentiality of a Communist takeover. That was very much the thinking of the American ambassador to the government-in-exile in Cairo, who was a kind of a paranoid, called Lincoln MacVeagh. And Lincoln MacVeagh sends these dispatches back to the State Department in which he says there will be a vacuum unless the British are there; that EAM, after all, means communism, and communism means Russian control. Now, it didn't make any difference to MacVeagh, because paranoids don't need evidence. It didn't make any difference, after all, that the Russians were not only not behind the EAM — that they were telling the EAM to go into coalitions, that they were not sending them weaponry, that there were no Russians on the scene — but MacVeagh looked at that and said, "You see how clever they are? They have really camouflaged what their design is." Well, Stalin camouflaged it so well that he sold out the whole Greek revolution. But it suffices to say that, for the State Department in '44, it meant that it was either Great Britain or Russia. And then, if the British, after all, weren't capable of their job, well... *[laughter]*.

The Russians were no less the ally. And we know, because I have mentioned it to you already, that on the 26th of July of '44, the Russians suddenly showed up in the Greek hills. And it was that mission of Colonel [Grigory] Popov. And Popov parachuted down with other Soviet agents and he saw [Georgios] Siantos and other Greek Communist leaders, and he said to them, "No, there will be no Russian help to you. No, you don't have a chance to make a revolution. Yes, you should accept the Accords of Lebanon." Now, you see, Churchill, when he talked to Papandreou, he was pretty candid. He said to Papandreou, "Don't worry about the Russians, because we've struck an accord with them. They're going to be in Romania, we're going to be in Greece. So you have nothing to worry about." But the Russians weren't that candid with the Greek Communists; they didn't say that they had made a deal, that Stalin had made a deal with Churchill. What they said was, "You must keep the Grand Alliance, you must keep the common front against fascism, and you must accept these accords." And consequently, that's what the Greek Communists did. And Stalin got a lot of mileage out of that, because he proved to Churchill, after all, that he was very loyal to his agreements, and consequently buttressed himself in Eastern Europe by that particular move.

But, you see, all of that opens up a tremendous question. Because, if in effect we're saying that the Russians did not support the Greek Revolution — but more than that, that they undercut its strategy — if we're saying that, we're saying something devastating. We're saying something way different than all of that Cold War rhetoric, that the Russians were out to foment revolutions everywhere; we're saying something really, profoundly important. And we have to know about that. We have to ask: What are the sources of Soviet conduct? We have to ask: What was this strategy of Stalin in the course of the Second World War? And why does it dovetail with the purposes, after all, that British and American imperialists may have?

And I think that it is reasonable to say that the strategy of Stalin rested upon certain operating principles that really predate the Second World War. One operating principle comes out of the mid-1920s, and it is the conception of socialism in one country. It is, after all, an operating principle that comes because of the defeat, or the failure, of the world revolution after the First World War. And by the mid-1920s, when it was clear that there would be no world revolution, Stalin took what he thought was the realistic course of saying that the only chunk of socialism in the world would be the Soviet Union, and consequently it had to be preserved and protected. So that all revolutionary action, or any action by the Communist parties, had to be subordinated to the preservation, the safety, and the security of the Soviet Union.

The second principle comes out of the '30s. And it is the idea that the security of the Soviet Union is best served, that its first line of defense, is to exploit inter-imperialistic rivalries. The first line of defense is not the revolution of the working class in other countries; it is to wedge into the rivalries among the imperialist countries. Consequently, in the '30s, when the German working-class movement proved incompetent to stop fascism, Stalin turned to what he thought was the viable tactic, which was to divide the bourgeoisie, to divide the imperialists. Hence the whole strategy of popular front, or of collective security: that you go with the British and the French against the imperialism of Germany; that inside various countries, the Communists go with a sector of the bourgeoisie in order to preserve bourgeois freedoms and the bourgeois regime. And when that failed, when those countries like Britain and France would not make a viable alliance with the Soviet Union, then they turned to the other camp. And it's the same tactic. It's the tactic in the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939: that this time you ally with the other power in the imperialist struggle, and you even manage to improve your frontier somewhat in Poland by doing that. And then, when there is an attack by Germany on the 22nd of June of '41 on the Soviet Union, you go back to the other camp and you ally with the rivals of that German imperialism, with Great Britain and with the United States.

All of which leads to a third operating principle, and one that becomes elaborated in the course of the Second World War, and that is that the security of the Soviet Union is defined territorially.

It is defined through revisions of frontiers, through spheres of influence. It is not defined in terms of trying to create a global revolutionary world; it is defined in terms of that perimeter of protection in Eastern and Central Europe which Stalin was to draw and for which he was to fight so very vigorously. And to get permission for that, it became essential to have the approval of Great Britain, but especially of the United States.

Within that context, you see, you can understand why the revolutionary potential of resistance movements was as heinous to Stalin as it was to the Western imperialists: because those resistance movements could so upset that sense of balance that he was trying to achieve, that he could not finally define his security perimeter with any expectation of success. All of which meant that that revolutionary potential in the resistance movements was to be scuttled by the Communist parties. The Communist parties, after all, in the course of the Second World War, had an opportunity as they had never had it in their history: tens of millions of men and women who were really fed up with the systems under which they were living. But to make a revolutionary issue out of that, to make it successful, meant that the Communists had to think revolution from the beginning, and that they had to do a terrific job of de-mystification: that they had to go to those resistance movements and say that, "If there is an American and a British part in this war against fascism, don't believe the rhetoric of Churchill and Roosevelt. Don't believe all of this blind rhetoric without a class base about liberty, about the four freedoms, about self-determination; no, that you have to determine your destiny by yourselves."

But, precisely, the Communists did not do that. They went to those resistance movements and they counseled faith, and they counseled adherence to that rhetoric of the Grand Alliance of the United States and Great Britain in those areas of Western and Southern Europe. And, you see, Stalin underscored it very carefully. He underscored it in a whole spate of agreements, only some of which I need to mention to you in order to give you the hint of what it's about. That Stalin, after all, in May of 1942 strikes the Anglo-Soviet Treaty: the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, a twenty-year friendship treaty signed between Stalin and Churchill in May of 1942. And what the hell is the significance of that from the point of view of the revolution? But it's so very clear, because Stalin guarantees, after all — implicitly, at any rate — guarantees that there will be no upset by the Communists in the British Empire.

And so the Indian Communist Party immediately takes a very pro-British line. And that is fundamentally important, because you must understand that there is an anti-colonial struggle in the Second World War, and that the bourgeois sector of the Indian nationalist movement — the Indian Congress Party and the Gandhian movement — is fighting like hell against the British, is trying to exploit British weakness in the course of the Second World War, is saying, "Why should we support the British in a struggle for freedom if they're the ones that exclude us from

freedom?" And, consequently, the leadership of the bourgeois Congress Party was all jailed in 1942, and all of its political activities set upon very hard by the British authorities, whereas the Indian Communist movement came out foursquare in favor of the British struggle against fascism. And consequently, that party, which had been outlawed since 1934, was suddenly legalized in 1942.

Or consider, in that same month of May of '42, the Molotov-De Gaulle meeting. And [Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav] Molotov meets De Gaulle in London. And De Gaulle promises that he will look sympathetically upon Russian demands in Eastern Europe, that he will look sympathetically upon the strategic perimeter of the Soviet Union, in return for which Molotov says that the Soviet Union will use its good offices — to use a very euphemistically term — will use its good offices to intervene with the resistance movement in France. So that it puts itself under the flag of De Gaulle, and so that it promises the restoration of the French Union (read: the French Empire).

And at that same time, and through 1943, that Stalin did support those cat's paws of Great Britain in Yugoslavia: did support King Peter, the exiled Yugoslavian king in London; did support Mihailović, that Colonel Draža Mihailovic and his Chetniks who were in favor of the restoration of the monarchy; and kept urging upon Tito that they join forces with these reactionaries, a counsel that Tito rejected.

But look: perhaps the greatest evidence, though it is shrouded in mystery still, perhaps the greatest evidence comes in the Soviet Union's strategy about the second front itself. Because the Soviet Union, through Stalin, demanded that second front throughout the war. And they demanded it in '42, all through that year when they were bleeding, and the West did not establish that second front. And then, in '44, Stalin is still saying on the 1st of May that the second front is absolutely essential to the victory over Germany. But if you read, you see, what the Soviet historians have written since 1947, it's a very different version, and one that raises a lot of questions. And Soviet historians since the Cold War have said that, yes, they needed that second front in '42. And it was exactly then that the Allies would not do it, because they wanted to weaken the Soviet Union vis-à-vis Germany. But then came the turning point at Stalingrad, and came the victories of '43. And consequently, by the end of '43, the Russian armies were rolling and the Germans were getting weaker all the time.

And the implication of those Soviet historians is that the Russians felt, in '44, that they could win by themselves in coordination with those cresting resistance movements. And they cite, and for good reason, that commentary that Roosevelt makes to Churchill at the Cairo meeting in November of 1943 on the way to Tehran, which is quoted by Elliot Roosevelt, Roosevelt's son,

in his memoirs. And Roosevelt said to Churchill, "With the momentum that the Russians now have, the second front will be superfluous next spring." And if there is then a second front, and publicly Stalin calls for it, is because there is a balance at stake, and that balance can be preserved only if there are Allied — and especially American — armies in Western Europe to repress those resistance movements, and only if the Communists can press the line that the rhetoric of the Western Allies is a serious democratic rhetoric.

But you understand, now, what the Greek problem is: that in October of 1944, the Russians could have moved into Greece, that they already had armed forces in Bulgaria and in Yugoslavia at the Greek frontier; that the Germans had withdrawn by October of '44, that the EAM was basically in control, and that they did not move in is because they promised not to move in the *quid pro quo* with Churchill. And they kept their promise...

[audio cuts out]

... "What the hell are you doing in Greece?" And that was a good question to ask just militarily. Don't forget that the Anglo-American forces said that they could not mount an offensive in the winter of '44 and '45 in Italy because they were short of reserves, that they didn't have the manpower and the equipment for it, and especially the British said that. Consider that in December of '44, on the 16th, General [Gerd] von Rundstedt, in the Ardennes, mounts that offensive which is going to be such a vigorous one. And at that very time, from the 15th of December, the British run 1,642 military sorties by air transport into Greece, delivering literally two British divisions, delivering tanks, delivering planes, delivering the hardware for that Greek war. And on the 6th of January of 1945, Churchill wired to Stalin and he said, "We are badly beaten by von Rundstedt. And we beg you, you Russians — who are planning a major offensive on the Eastern Front for the end of January of '45 when the climate is a little more favorable — we beg you to push forward the date of that offensive."

And the Russians did that on the 11th of January. Along a 1,200-mile perimeter, they launched their offensive on the Eastern Front, pushing it up by some three weeks. And in the official Russian history of the war, we read the explanation by Professor [Abram] Deborin, who says, "In its decision to launch the January offensive so early in response to British demands, the Soviet government was fulfilling its sacred obligations to its ally." And indeed it was, because part of that obligation was to have no obligation to the Greeks, and to permit the British to squander their military resources in a war against the Greek resistance movement.

Now, I don't want to imply, because I think it is fruitless and useless, that if the Russians had acted differently, there would have been great social revolutions in Europe; we none of us know.

But what is historically and politically important and interesting is that the Russians played a major role in helping the Americans and the British to resolve the dilemma which plagued them from the beginning of the war: how to strike down the imperialistic rivalry of Germany and, at the same time, to preserve most sectors of Europe for a restoration of capitalism.

And so the Greek story from that point on runs this way. That the Germans did withdraw from Greece in September of 1944: that Hitler gave the order on the 14th of September, in part because he was deploying troops elsewhere, in part (according to General [Alfred] Jodl) because he wanted to bog the British down there. And in those last stages, you should note — because the Germans really leave by the end of the month — in those last stages, there was a terrific hand-to-hand fighting by the Greeks against the Germans. And in the Peloponnese especially, it is that great Aris Velouchiotis who really just wrests the Peloponnese from the Germans. And they simply abandon a lot of their military equipment. And so, by the beginning of October, the ELAS has about 75,000 armed men in Greece, and the EAM is controlling about 80% of the country. And there is really order there and there is no chaos of any kind. And, in fact, the Communist Party issues an order on the 6th of October which indicates, really, how very much it is calling not for a revolution, but for a broad democratic front. Listen to this order of the Greek Communist Party on the 6th of October of '44: "The Greek Communist Party calls upon all patriots to show proof of their discipline and their spirit of sacrifice. To assure public order now, and a normal, legal political life, is a national imperative. War criminals will be prosecuted, but that is the task for a national government. Please avoid taking justice into your own hands. Be the guardians of public order and democratic liberties." You see the point? There was no reason for anybody to come in.

Well, the British began to come — Operation Manna. And so on the 3rd of October, at Patras, you get the first British troops landing. By the 14th of October, they are parachuting into Athens. General Scobie is there to lead those British troops that are coming in. And the British are not as orderly as the Greeks, and the British, consequently, are not interested in making contact with that Greek resistance. And the stories of that period are really quite awful, because the British came in and those diplomats and those generals immediately went to the poshest quarter of Athens, and really began dealing with those hundred families: the ones that were connected with the British banks, the ones that had collaborated with the Nazis during the war, who were all into the black market and making a fortune. Even Sir Reginald Leeper — who really likes rich people — even in his memoirs, Sir Reginald Leeper, who is the British ambassador, says, "Sometimes the feasts here were so sumptuous that we were a bit embarrassed, because there seemed to be a great deal of poverty on the outside" [*laughter*]. And consequently, there quite obviously was no British sensitivity as they arrived to what had gone on in that cauldron of the resistance.

And it really raises the question of why they were there. And Churchill answers it very categorically. Churchill wrote to [Foreign Office envoy] Anthony Eden on the 7th of November of 1944. And if there is one thing you can say about Winston Churchill — well, there are lots of things you can say about Winston Churchill [*laughter*] — but if there is one thing that you can say, that really you must underscore, is that in his private correspondence he was, if anything, always very blunt. And his language really was exquisitely elitist. And so Churchill writes to Eden on the 7th of November: "We should not hesitate to use British troops to support the royal Hellenic government under Papandreou. This means that British troops should intervene to end those acts of lawlessness, to end the reign of those bandits in Greece." In other words, what Churchill is saying is that he cannot trust this EAM at all. Because, you see, if it were a question of free elections — and think about the United States in Vietnam after the Geneva Accords, where, after all, free elections were to be guaranteed and so forth — but if you had free elections, then the left will win.

If there were anything like clean elections in Greece, the EAM would have won, would have organized a popular, democratic government — and consequently, the British option certainly cut off. Churchill knew full well that he had to prevent that, that he needed that king, and that he needed that king and that he needed that Papandreou government with a strong British arm behind it. But the problem was the pretext; even the British, after all, had to have some kind of public pretext. And here is all of this damnable order in Greece. And consequently, you read, for example, the *New Greece*, which is the newspaper of the EAM, and there you find things like, "We support the Papandreou government. All we ask for are free elections. All we ask for are a purge of the fascists in the bureaucracy." There's nothing about a revolution, nothing about an attack upon private property. And consequently, you need a pretext, and the British found one.

And they found one on the 2nd of November, when it was Papandreou, backed by General Scobie, who demanded that the ELAS now give up its weapons and go into retirement; in other words, that the ELAS simply disarm itself. And there was a deadline to the 2nd of December, one month for the ELAS to give up its weapons. A week later, on the 10th of November, that 2nd Mountain Brigade arrived: all of those good Nazis arriving from the Rimini Front, marching down the center of Athens, much applauded in the rich district.

And consequently, for the EAM and the ELAS, what was the question? The question wasn't to fight. They didn't want to fight; the question was to negotiate. And so they went to Scobie and they said, "Look, we will give up our weapons if you disarm that 2nd Mountain Brigade, and if you disarm all of those security battalions that the Nazis had established, which are paramilitary police and are roaming all over the place. We give up our arms and you do not disarm the others, and we are at their mercy." To which Scobie replied, "No-go: that, after all, you are a private

army and the 2nd Mountain Brigade is an official division within the British Army."

And so, on the 2nd of December of 1944, Papandreou declared that the ELAS was dissolved. And the EAM demanded to have a demonstration the next day, the 3rd of December of 1944, and the Papandreou ministry gave them permission for that demonstration. And the day after, the 4th of December, they were to call a great general strike. But right before that meeting was to be held, on the 3rd of December, the government suddenly withdrew its permission in order to make it, if you please, an illegal meeting. And so, that Sunday, the 3rd of December of '44, and literally tens of thousands of people poured out from the working-class districts of Athens. And they all converged toward the Square of the Constitution. And they had placards, and they were crying slogans, and it was peace and bread, and a purge of the fascists, and no new occupation. And they got to the Square of the Constitution, and they found it barricaded by the police, who then on this unarmed crowd opened fire, leaving 28 dead and 150 wounded.

And the next day was terrific. It is the 4th of December of '44, and it begins the war between the British and the Greek resistance movement. And for the only time in the Second World War, you have that phenomenon of a resistance movement fighting against the occupation of the Western powers. And so, on the 4th of December, there was simply something unprecedented in Athens. They poured out by the hundreds of thousands. The city poured out to do homage to those who had died the day before and had tried to oust the British, and it was a peaceful cortege behind the coffins of the dead. And they buried them. And as the crowd was dispersing, the police opened fire again, and this time more than a hundred were killed or wounded. And from that point on, for thirty-three days, it will be pitched war between the British forces and the resistance movement led by EAM and ELAS in Athens.

And Churchill sends the orders the next day to Scobie. And the orders of Churchill of the 5th of December read: "Do not hesitate to fire at any armed male in Athens who assails British authority or the Greek authority we support. Do not hesitate to act as though you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress." And from that point on, the war mounted.

Now, at the beginning and for that first week — and it's extremely interesting — ELAS practically dominated the city of Athens. The British were not there in big enough force. And they practically had the city won by the 11th of December, when they went to Scobie and asked for negotiations. They didn't want to mount this into a real confrontation; they knew that ultimately the British could defeat them. What they wanted was recognition of their right to be in that postwar Greek society. And so they went to Scobie and they said, "We will lay down our arms if you really do promise, you British, a popular government, a government that includes us with proper representation." And Scobie said, "No-go." And three days later, on the 15th of

December, it is Field Marshal [Harold] Alexander, who is the British commander in charge of the entire Italian Theater, who goes to Greece and gets very worried, and decides that either the British have to negotiate, or they will have to send in a big military force. And he wires to Churchill on the 15th of December, and he said, "We must negotiate. Otherwise, if the rebels continue to resist, we will have no other recourse but to send reinforcements from Italy."

And at that point, you see, Churchill recognizes that he doesn't have to negotiate, because he has three things on his side. He has, first of all, the assurance of the United States. And this is Franklin Roosevelt to Churchill, on the 13th of December of '44: "I regard my role in this matter as that of a loyal friend and ally to you, whose one desire is to be of any help possible in these difficult circumstances in which you find yourself." And on top of that, he could depend upon the Russians. And so Churchill writes in his memoirs, for the 11th of December of '44: "I am increasingly impressed, up to date, with the loyalty with which, under much temptation and very likely pressure, Stalin has kept away from Greece in accordance with our agreement." And the last thing that Churchill could count on was the denuding of the Italian Front: he could simply take military force from there and put it into Greece. And despite the von Rundstedt offensive in the Ardennes, from the 15th of December to the 25th, there are these constant air transports of military supply and of two British divisions landed into Greece, most of it concentrated in Athens and the area around.

And soon, obviously, the Battle of Athens turns. By the 22nd of December, the ELAS is being pushed back. And at that point, Churchill — who loves to negotiate from strength, from that muscle that he always thought was in the British Empire — Churchill says, "Yes, we can negotiate." And what was behind Churchill's notion about negotiations by the 22 of December? What was behind that extravagant gesture he made: that he would come to Athens on the 25th of December (that great Christmas gift for the Greeks), that Churchill would arrive on Christmas Day to negotiate? Behind it, of course, was the plan to put the Archbishop of Athens, Damaskinos, in as a regent, as a kind of funnel through which the king could come in. He couldn't bring the king back at once, but he could take that Archbishop of Athens and make him a regent.

And so you get in Churchill's memoirs an absolutely marvelous description of his calling the Greek king, George II, to a very special session up at 10 Downing Street in London on the 17th of December. And he said, "Look, George, you will not go back at once. Damaskinos the archbishop is going to be regent for a time." Well, that was *lèse-majesté* — Churchill was still a commoner, and this was a king, and the king began to scream. And he said, "You're putting in a Communist." Churchill said, "The archbishop?" He said, "Yes, he's a left-winger, he's favorable to the left wing. No way will I give up my throne." Well, they shouted and shrieked at each other

until the doorman came bursting in, thinking that they really were in terrific conflict in there. And, of course, Churchill had the power behind him, insisted that that would be the solution. And yet, that next day, the 18th of December, he began to wonder, "Is that archbishop a Communist?" [*laughter*]. And he wired to Field Marshal Alexander and asked him to run a kind of security check on the Archbishop of Athens to make sure that he was reliable. Alexander said, "He's okay." And, consequently, that was the stratagem. With that strategy, Churchill came to Greece on the 25th of December.

And when he came, even though he had called these people bandits — even though he had denounced the whole Greek resistance as Communists, as Trotskyists and so forth — he got there, and when he saw the scene, he wired back to his own cabinet, and he said, "This is a mass movement. It is a great danger." And so he called together a roundtable for the 26th of December. And at that roundtable was to be the American ambassador, MacVeagh, and was to be Scobie and Leeper (the ambassador of Great Britain), was to be Damaskinos in the chair, and was to be the representatives of the EAM, and then the representatives of all of those old conservative parties: Tsaldaris, the representative of the Populists, and so forth.

It was to be that kind of roundtable. And listen to it well. Because, you see, those EAM-ELAS people, they came to this meeting as great fighters, but with no idea of what diplomacy was about. And when they went to that meeting, they thought that Churchill was weak. They thought, fundamentally, that because the Labour Party was attacking Churchill on the Greek question, that it made any difference. And so they went into that meeting, and they fell into Churchill's trap. Because the ELAS delegates, the EAM delegates, immediately proposed a six-point program to give them 50% of the seats in a popular government, to give them the ministry of the interior and the ministry of justice, to have free elections — in other words, to pass power into their hands. And of course, all of the other parties, the Populists, the Liberal representatives, they all got up and broke up the meeting. And that gave Churchill the instrument he needed. He said to the world that these guerilla fighters will not negotiate, and consequently we must impose a settlement. By the time he went back to London on the night of the 26th, Damaskinos was the regent, promising to bring a government that would not include any of these bandits at all.

And so he named Plastiras, General [Nikolaos] Plastiras, as the prime minister. Papandreou was out. A reactionary government, and the fighting went on. And the fighting went on thirty-three days, and it ended on the 11th of January of 1945. And at that point, the ELAS had been driven out of Athens. And at that point, there had been, still, a kind of ELAS force in the countryside, but they were unwilling to use it. And they asked for a peace conference, and the peace conference took place. And it is a tragedy. The tragedy of Greece and the beginning, in a sense, of the Truman Doctrine comes with the Varkiza Agreement — the Varkiza Accord, V-A-R-K-I-

Z-A, the Varkiza Accord of the 12th of February of 1945 — because here the EAM was thoroughly outclassed. In return for false promises — in return for the promise of the legality of the Communist Party, the legality of EAM, free elections in the future, public liberties, no reprisal, and complete amnesty — in return for that, the EAM and the ELAS gave up their weapons. And the ELAS gave up, within the next month, 45,000 guns, 3,000 machine guns, 35 pieces of heavy artillery, and effectively disarmed themselves.

And what followed was a fantastic White Terror. What followed was a reprisal of the first order. The Plastiras government went all wild, and the people in the countryside who had been hostile to this resistance force went wild; the pro-Nazis, the pro-fascists, the collaborators, they all had their day. By the end of 1945, it is estimated that there were 80,000 Greek political prisoners, that there had been some 3,000 just shot on the streets. And all of that, of course, meant the end of some of the great fighters in that resistance movement. It is Aris Velouchiotis who finally is victim of this White Terror.

And that death is worth talking about much more than the death of an Anthony Eden; that's insignificant. But Aris was something, and they don't come that way too frequently. And he had refused to lay down his arms, and he had gone to the hills. And his own party, the Greek Communist Party, had expelled him for disloyalty. And he had been expelled in June of '45, when [Greek Communist Party chair] Nikos Zachariadis came back from Dachau and took charge of the Party. And he went into those hills of the Peloponnese, and he kept fighting until he was found. And on the 20th of June of 1945, you could go to the central square of the little city of Trikala in the Peloponnese, and there on a platform you could see the severed head of Aris Velouchiotis, which is how you take care of resistance fighters.

And yet, with all of that White Terror, had the British won? And the problem of '45 and '46, and the whole background of the Truman Doctrine, lies in these three data. That, in the first place, there is a political instability of the first order: that the repression really does not resolve the political crisis in Greece; that there is a social crisis of the very first order, that there is inflation, that there is misery; and that all of the relief and aid that is going to these Greek governments of Tsaldaris or Sofoulis, whether they be Populist (royalist) or whether they be Liberal (republican), for three years they were all the same. All the aid going to those governments was going into pockets like baksheesh. That by May of 1945, 50% of all UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] aid in Europe went to Greece, and it didn't get to the people: it got into the black market to enrich a few families. And even Reginald Leeper, who was no radical, writes in his memoirs: "The hesitation of each successive Greek government to tackle the monumental economic, financial, and administrative problems was their besetting sin. They always excused themselves for doing nothing by saying that nothing could be done without

another foreign loan." And another foreign loan meant enrichment again, and the British couldn't afford that. It's after the war and they are bankrupt, and consequently they have to internationalize the burden. They've got to keep these governments, but they can't do it themselves. And where can you internationalize that burden except by asking America to share it?

And the United States was willing. And already, you see, one of those areas that hadn't meant to fall into the American pocket. Well, here's the State Department, in June of '45, just beginning to consider the Greek problem: "To take an active and benevolent interest in Greece" — the language is great — "To take an active and benevolent interest in Greece at this time offers one of the most practical means of demonstrating our government's determination to play an international role commensurate with our strength and our public commitments." In other words, they're saying, "Yes, we may take over Greece" And of course, Lincoln MacVeagh, the ambassador, turning from paranoid into enthusiast by the end of 1945, writes this back to the State Department: "Greece is the only Balkan country attempting to retain orthodox ideas about private property and free enterprise along our American lines." Well, it suffices to say that it was a bit wildcat, perhaps along Texas lines *[laughter]*. But, at any rate, the idea that Greece might be an area for that kind of Open Door empire began to appeal to the Americans. And all they needed was an excuse. And the excuse, of course, was the beginning of the civil war. Because you go from resistance to the war with the British, from the war with the British to the civil war, and from civil war to the American intervention.

And that civil war really is inscribed in the terror. It's inscribed in the oppression, it's inscribed in the miserable economic conditions, and it's inscribed in that ambivalence of the Greek Communist Party; that their legalism, the legalism that Stalin was insisting upon, was getting them nowhere. Already in October of '45, at the 7th Party Congress, Nikos Zachariadis, who was a very loyal Stalinist, said, "After all, if there's White Terror, how can we play electoral politics? We must prepare also for revolution." And so that same December, they met emissaries of Tito and emissaries of [Georgi] Dimitrov, the Bulgarian and Yugoslavian Communist leaders, who promised them help if there should be an insurrection. And Stalin sent no emissaries to that meeting on the Bulgarian frontier. But then, that was December of '45, and Stalin had supported the Iranian Tudeh Party when it established an independent Communist regime in Azerbaijan in Iran. And consequently, they thought, these Greek Communists, that the Russians really might support them this time.

And so they decided to boycott the elections of the 31st of March of '46. Those elections couldn't be anything but fake and phony. They boycotted them. The elections were phony: what they added up to really was a smashing victory for the small rump right that was left. And they

boycotted, of course, that referendum or that plebiscite of the 1st of September of '46 in which, presumably, 70% of the Greek people voted for the king to come back, in an election that the Greek government said brought out 100% of the electors [*laughter*]. And consequently, George II came back. And all the time the Greeks began to take to the hills, to take to the hills.

And the Americans knew why. Note it well, that MacVeagh said at the end of '46 that there are guerilla fighters in the hills because these Greek regimes have been so corrupt and so fascistic. And the State Department, in a secret report of March of '47, says much the same thing. But that's not what you say publicly. Publicly you say, after all, that it's a question of outside interference; that the Russians have made this revolution, that they are responsible; that there are inside agitators, professional revolutionaries doing it; that it is freedom that is at stake, freedom that is at stake.

That was all in the Truman Doctrine. And when you know what we know about that background and the regimes that the Greeks had and the aspirations that were crushed, you know not only that there was mystification of the first order, but you have an obligation to yourself, in your own lifetime, to ask those people and their descendants, who perpetually have said those things: Why they have created that false world? And why have we lived a lie ever since? [*applause*]