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Doomed from the Start? Peace Negotiations in the Greek Civil War, January-July 1947

Blame Games

At the dawn of the 21st century, the Greek Civil War (1946-9) still remains a controversial episode of Modern Greek history. Academics (Greeks and non-Greeks) have not yet reached a consensus on what caused the outbreak, escalation and defeat of the communist insurgency; in fact, academics still debate when the war actually erupted.¹ Indicatively, three schools of thought in the historiography of the Greek Civil War have emerged: the “traditionalist” (which imputed the civil war to the allegedly power-greedy communists and their expedient Slavic allies), the “revisionist” (which assigned blame for the war to the allegedly reactionary anti-communist camp and its imperialistic Anglo-American patrons) and the “post-revisionist” (which endeavours to examine the conflict objectively).²

In summary, the great majority of the academics contend that the anti-communist camp caused the escalation of a low-intensity guerilla war into a total war. In particular, they uphold that the intervention of the USA in the first half of 1947 and the authoritarianism of

¹ In fact, academics have suggested different termini a quo for the Greek Civil War depending on their political and academic orientation. In summary, the traditionalist scholars contend that the civil conflict actually started in 1943 on account of the communists’ monolithic quest for power and continued up to 1949 in various phases, whereas the revisionist ones counter-claim that the civil war commenced in 1946 as self-defence by the communists against the terror of the far Right. For more information, see Giorgos Antoniou and Nikos Marantzidis, “The Greek Civil War Historiography (1945-2001): Toward a New ‘Paradigm’,” *Columbia Journal of Historiography* 1.1 (2003): 1-35.

² Spyridon Plakoudas, “The Greek Civil War, 1946-1949: How the Royalist Regime Countered the Communist Insurgency” (PhD diss., University of Reading, 2014), 13-29.

the anti-communist élites condemned the precarious peace negotiations between the insurgents and the coalition government between April and July 1947 to failure and, by extension, compelled the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) to prioritise the armed struggle for a “Free Greece.”³

The archival evidence, however, suggests otherwise. Information from hitherto inaccessible archives in Greece (e.g., the vast collection of Konstantinos Tsaldaris, a seminal right-wing politician during the 1940s or the detailed archives of the KKE) reveals that the two sides never *sincerely committed* to the precarious peace process. This article investigates this transitory phase of the Greek Civil War in the light of the new archival data and uses the insights of the discipline of strategic studies to explain the motives and behaviour of the two belligerents.

Conciliation Aborted?

These (eventually unsuccessful) peace parleys did not occur in a vacuum; in fact, the KKE had been consistently appealing for a peace settlement (on its own terms, of course) since September 1946.⁴ The KKE, in line with the precise instructions of Stalin, implemented a dual strategy: a legal political struggle in the towns and

³ Ole L. Smith, “Self-Defense and Communist Policy, 1945-1947,” in *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949*, ed. Lars Barentzen, John O. Iatrides, and Ole L. Smith (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1987), 159-75; Thanasis D. Sfikas, *Πόλεμος και Ειρήνη στη Στρατηγική του ΚΚΕ 1945-1949* (War and Peace in the Strategy of the KKE 1945-1949) (Athens: Filistor, 2001), 103-4; Sotiris Rizas, *Από την Απελευθέρωση στον Εμφύλιο* (From Liberation to Civil War), (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2011), 343.

⁴ The peace terms of the KKE were publicized by Zachariadis in *Ριζοσπάστης* (Rizospastis) on September 3, 1946. On condition that the British troops withdrew immediately, a coalition government of “all democratic parties” would declare a general amnesty for all (monarchist and communist) armed irregulars, restore “democratic order” in the state and security organs, and reinstate the trade unionist and political freedoms. Thereafter, the new government would organise free and fair elections and a plebiscite on the type of the regime. With regards to its foreign policy, the new government would adopt a policy of equal cooperation with the Big Four (France, Britain, the USA and the USSR) and establish friendly relations with the three northern Balkan Communist countries. *Ριζοσπάστης* (September 3, 1946).

a low-intensity guerrilla war in the mountains.⁵ This policy did not intend to compel the royalist regime to accept a political compromise (in the context of a “carrot-and-stick” policy) as the revisionist school of thought argues.⁶ Instead, this “dual strategy” intended to sustain the party in a so-called “waiting mode” until the political and military conditions ripened (most importantly, a green light from Moscow and sufficient military support from communist Europe) for the transition to the next phase of the party’s struggle.

In fact, the combat strength of the Democratic Army of Greece (ΔΣΕ) (established in December 1946⁷ did not exceed 12,000 fighters.⁸ The KKE wanted to increase the ΔΣΕ’s strength to 20,000 irregulars within a few months and requested military and economic aid from its allies (Dimitrov, Stalin and Tito) to realise this ambitious

⁵ Artiom Ulunian, “The Soviet Union and the Greek Question, 1946-53: Problems and Appraisals,” in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, ed. Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (London: Macmillan, 1996), 144-6; Ivo Banac, ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933-1949* (New Haven, Conn., London: Yale University Press, 2003), 396.

⁶ Smith, “Self-Defense and Communist Policy,” 159-75; Sfikas, *Πόλεμος και Ειρήνη*, 61-72.

⁷ Report of the KKE’s Central Committee to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 12-5-1947, in Philippos Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος: Η Εμπλοκή του ΚΚΕ* (The Greek Civil War: The Entanglement of the KKE) (Athens: Themelio, 2004), 110-1.

⁸ Report on Bandit Activity, 19-1-1949 in Hellenic Army General Staff/Army History Directorate (henceforth ΓΕΣ/ΔΙΣ), *Αρχεία του Εμφυλίου Πολέμου, 1944-1949* (Archives of the Civil War, 1944-1949), vol. III (Athens: ΓΕΣ/ΔΙΣ, 1998), 200; Dimitrios Zafeiropoulos, *Ο Αντιστασιακός Αγώνας, 1945-1949* (The Anti-Bandit Struggle, 1945-1949) (Athens: s.n., 1956, reprinted as Athens: DOL, 2011), 175; Charles R. Shrader, *The Withered Vine: Logistics and the Communist Insurgency in Greece, 1945-1949* (Westport, CT, London: Praeger, 1999), 111-2.

objective.⁹ However, Stalin's opposition to any further armed escalation¹⁰ and the small amount of military aid from communist Europe¹¹ compelled the KKE to postpone the second phase of its guerrilla campaign until the spring of 1947.

However, the spread of the insurgent activity from Thrace in northern Greece to the Peloponnese and Crete in southern Greece seriously perturbed the senior officials of Athens and London.¹² Field Marshall Montgomery, Chief of the (British) Imperial General Staff, urgently visited Athens in December 1946 and warned the top Greek officials that the insurgency should be wiped out by the spring of 1947 lest the kingdom's very survival should be jeopardised.¹³ According to the KKE's Secretary General at the time, Nikos Zachariadis, the royalist regime was unsettled by the insurgent successes to such an extent that the latter offered willy-nilly a peace deal. When Zachariadis visited Moscow in May 1947, he informed the senior Soviet officials that Konstantinos Tsaldaris (Prime Minister of Greece at the time) approached him in secret in January and offered 100 parliamentary seats for the EAM in exchange for peace. The KKE's Secretary General claimed in front of his bewildered Soviet hosts that he had rejected this peace offer.¹⁴ However, this alleged offer by Tsaldaris has not been confirmed by other sources; in fact, the intransigent anti-communist Prime Minister who intensified the

⁹ Report of the KKE to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: "The Situation in Greece and the Urgent Problems of Our Movement," 12-9-1946, in Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 37-50.

¹⁰ Ioannidis to Zachariadis, 10-11-1946, in Iliou, *ibid.*, 28.

¹¹ Iliou, *ibid.*, 51-54; Vasilis Kondis, *Σοσιαλιστικά Κράτη και ΚΚΕ στον Εμφύλιο* (Socialist States and the KKE in the Civil [War]) (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2012), 154-5.

¹² Zafeiropoulos, *Ο Αντι-συμμοριακός Αγώνας*, 198-9; Giorgos Margaritis: *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Εμφυλίου Πολέμου, 1946-1949* (History of the Greek Civil War, 1946-1949), vol. I (Athens: Vivliorama, 2001), 251-4.

¹³ Thanasis D. Sfikas, *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949: The Imperialism of 'Non-Intervention'* (Keele: Ryburn, 1994), 129.

¹⁴ Ioanna Papanthasiou, «Προς την Μόσχα με Συντροφικούς Χαιρετισμούς: Η Ενημέρωση για τις Εξελίξεις στην Ελλάδα, 1946-1949» (To Moscow with Comradely Greetings: The Updating for the Developments in Greece, 1946-1949), *Ο Πολίτης* 29 (December 1996): 32.

official persecutions against communists after his ascent to power in April 1946¹⁵ would never undertake such an initiative. After all, Tsaldaris rejected in January 1947 the proposal of the EAM for a (temporary) ceasefire that would remain in effect for as long as the UN Commission of Investigation Concerning Greek Frontier Incidents operated.¹⁶ Consequently, one can safely assume that Zachariadis invented this story to vaunt the success of the insurgents in front of Stalin and secure additional military aid from Moscow to realise his objectives.

The royalist regime did, nonetheless, adopt a policy of conciliation in early 1947 – right after the establishment of a centre-right coalition government. In January 1947 a new coalition government among seven (anti-communist) right-wing and centrist party leaders (Alexandris, Kanellopoulos, Papandreou, Tsaldaris, Zervas, Venizelos and Gonatas) was established upon the insistence of the Americans for the installation of a far more “representative” and “popular” government.¹⁷ Under the presidency of Dimitrios Maximos, a retired MP of the Populist Party and former Governor of the Bank of Greece

¹⁵ David H. Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (London: Longman, 1995), 152-3, 155-9; Theocharis Razakos, «Η ‘Λευκή Τρομοκρατία’ στην Ελλάδα (1945-1946): Ο Κόσμος της Εθνικοφοροσύνης και η Αντιμετώπιση του ‘Ερυθρού Κινδύνου’» [“The ‘White Terror’ in Greece (1945-1946): The World of National-Mindedness and the Tackling of the ‘Red Menace’”] (MA diss., Panteion University, 2008), 17-22, 26-8, 34-5, 43-8.

¹⁶ *Ριζοσπάστης* (January 19, 1947); Foundation of Konstantinos Karamanlis/Archive of Konstantinos Tsaldaris (hereafter AKT), File 21.1, No. 25, Tsaldaris to the Liaison Service of the UN Commission, 20-1-1947.

¹⁷ General Archives of the State/Archive of the former Royal Palaces (henceforth ΑτΒΑ), File 377, No. 45, MacVeagh to Tsaldaris, 7-1-1947 and No. 368, Agreement of the Political Leaders, 22-1-1947; *Βήμα* (January 25, 1947); *Ριζοσπάστης* (January 25, 1947). Besides, the USA never concealed its dislike for the reactionary right-wing government under Tsaldaris. US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946. The Near East and Africa*, ed. Everett S. Gleason and Rogers P. Churchill (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1969) (henceforth FRUS 1946), vol. VII, 181-2: Acheson to Harriman, 13-7-1946.

well-known for his moderate character, the new coalition government would adopt a conciliatory stance towards the KKE and the insurgency.¹⁸

The new coalition government vowed to restore law and order by declaring a general amnesty for all armed irregulars (right-wing and communist alike) and calling on all armed irregulars to surrender their weapons. At the same time, the government implemented a policy of leniency, upon the recommendation of the British, which involved the release of thousands of political prisoners and the suspension of the deportations for relatives of the communist insurgents (women and children).¹⁹ These policies of amnesty and leniency reflected the perceptions of the seven party leaders about the causes of the civil strife. They subscribed to the right-wing narrative that portrayed the insurgency as a “war by proxy” waged by the communist Balkan countries against Greece via their “agent” – the KKE. According to this narrative, the KKE consisted of nothing more than a few communist zealots that used propaganda and coercion to recruit thousands of “misguided [people]” («παραπλανηθέντες») among true Greek patriots and swell the ranks of this “anti-national movement.” The political parties or personalities that wished to negotiate a peace settlement with the KKE were labelled as “misguided” for allegedly failing to grasp the treasonous nature of Communism.²⁰

However, the policies of amnesty and leniency proved unfruitful due to mutual mistrust between the two sides. The communist insurgents suspected that the new government would violate the amnesty and punish them in the pattern of the “White Terror” (i.e., the right-wing terror against the left from February 1945 to March 2016). In

¹⁸ ΑτΒΑ, File 377, No. 368, op. cit.; *Βήμα* (January 25, 1947); *Ριζοσπάστης* (January 25, 1947).

¹⁹ Hellenic Parliament, *Επίσημα Πρακτικά των Συνεδριάσεων της Βουλής των Ελλήνων* (Official Minutes of the Sessions of the Hellenic Parliament) vol. 128 (Athens: Ethnico Typographeio, 1946), 1-10-1946 to 27-2-1947, 936-9 (27-1-1947); Foreign Office Papers, General Political Files (henceforth FO) 371/66999, R1190, Lascelles to Foreign Office, 27-1-1947; Zafeiropoulos, *Ο Αντισυμμωριακός Αγώνας*, 210-1.

²⁰ AKT, File 25.5, No. 15, Note of Information, Unsigned [probably Rodopoulos], 10-5-1947.

contrast, a few hundred right-wing irregulars responded positively to the call for amnesty and surrendered their weapons.²¹ After all, the anti-communist irregulars were being integrated into the Units for Countryside Security (MAY) and the Units of Pursuit Contingents (ΜΑΔ) which were established in October 1946.²² In a similar fashion, only 3,530 political prisoners were released²³ only to be rearrested within a few months. By March, Napoleon Zervas (the anti-communist Minister of Public Order who assumed office in February 1947) had ordered the arrest of hundreds of cadres and supporters of the KKE and EAM – most of which for the second time in a few months.²⁴

The KKE responded to the new government's reconciliatory stance with repeated peace initiatives. In late January, the Commission of Investigation Concerning Greek Frontier Incidents arrived at Greece to ascertain whether the communist Balkan countries supported or not the communist insurgents as Greece contended.²⁵ The Left seized this opportunity to internationalise the conflict at the expense of the royalist regime and assumed a series of initiatives²⁶ to accomplish two main goals: first, win the support of the international public opinion and the neutral Western powers and, secondly, cause

²¹ Ριζοσπάστης (January 29, 1947); AKT, File 21.3, No. 50, (Handwritten) Note of Rendis, 6-6-1947.

²² Plan for the Organisation of Special Rural Self-Defence Units, 7-10-1946 in ΓΕΣ/ΔΙΣ, Αρχεία του Εμφυλίου Πολέμου (Archives of Civil War), vol. III, 71; AKT, File 12.6, No. 60, Theotokis to Tsaldaris, 24-10-1946; Zafeiropoulos, *Ο Αντισυμμοριακός Αγώνας*, 101-3.

²³ Βήμα (October 8, 1947).

²⁴ Βήμα (March 6, 1947); AKT, File 21.1, No. 90, Sub-Director of General Security to Zervas, 7-3-1947; Roussos S. Koundouros, *Η Ασφάλεια του Καθεστώτος: Πολιτικοί Κρατούμενοι, Εκτοπίσεις και Τάξεις στην Ελλάδα, 1924-74* (The Security of the Regime Political Prisoners, Deportations and Classes in Greece, 1924-74) (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1978), 139.

²⁵ Van Coufoudakis, "The United States, the United Nations, and the Greek Question, 1946-1952," in *Greece in the 40s: A Nation in Crisis*, ed. John O. Iatrides (Hannover and London: University Press of New England, 1981), 283-4.

²⁶ In summary, the EAM petitioned a suspension in the executions of political prisoners to the UN secretary-general and appealed to the UN Commission to interview Vafeiadis, the ΔΣΕ's Commander-in-Chief, and the political prisoners in the prison camps across the Aegean Sea.

the intervention of the communist delegations (the Soviet Union and Poland) in Greek internal affairs.²⁷ To that end, the EAM appealed for a ceasefire for the duration of the Commission's operation in late January²⁸ and, a few days later, the KKE announced a peace offer similar to the one in September 1946.²⁹

Despite the aforementioned peace initiatives, the KKE was stepping up its preparations for a military struggle. Exactly twelve months after the Second Plenum,³⁰ in February the KKE's Central Committee secretly ruled that the party would set the armed struggle as a priority without, however, rejecting other options (e.g., peace talks).³¹ In April, the KKE's Secretary General ordered the ΔΣΕ's Commander-in-Chief to progressively convert the insurgents into a regular army that would carve out a "Free Greece" in northern Greece with Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest town, as its capital.³²

The army (dominated by anti-communist officers since its reconstruction from scratch in 1945 with British help and guidance³³) strongly opposed the reconciliatory policy of the new government. After the failure of the twin policies of amnesty and leniency, the military convinced the Prime Minister to set up a colossal prison camp in Makronisos (a small desert island in the Aegean Sea) in February. In total, three prison camps would be founded that would

²⁷ Plakoudas, "Greek Civil War," 129-30.

²⁸ *Ριζοσπάστης* (January 19, 1947).

²⁹ *Ριζοσπάστης* (February 6, 1947).

³⁰ In the Second Plenum of the Central Committee in February 1946, the KKE decided to adopt the "dual strategy" of political struggles and insurgent activities and, moreover, abstain from the elections in March 1946. Ole L. Smith, "The Problems of the Second Plenum of the Central Committee of the KKE, 1946," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 12.2 (1985): 43-62; Smith, "Self-Defense and Communist Policy," 159-77.

³¹ Memorandum of Zachariadis to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Stalin, 13-5-1947 in Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 96.

³² Zachariadis and Ioannidis to Markos, 17-4-1947 in Iliou, *ibid.*, 83-6; No. 10, Review of Confidential Letter of Ioannidis to Markos, 17-4-1947, in *Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος: Έγγραφα από τα Γιουγκοσλαβικά και Βουλγαρικά Αρχεία* (Civil War: Documents from the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Archives), ed. Vasilis Kondis and Spyridon Sfetas (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1999, reprinted by Epikentro, 2006), 60-6.

³³ Close, *Origins*, 151-2; Plakoudas, "Greek Civil War," 158.

grow into a symbol of the regime's campaign to wipe out Communism.³⁴ These camps would quarter the majority of prisoners during the course of the war – from family members of the insurgents to fifth-columnists within the military.³⁵ Using terminology from the disciplines of education and medicine, intellectuals and state officials praised these camps as the “national school” and “sanatorium” of Greece which “rehabilitated” the victims of Communism (the “ideological heroin of modern times”).³⁶

In March, President Truman articulated a strategy for the containment of Communism in Greece and Turkey (the so-called Truman Doctrine)³⁷ after a thinly veiled blackmail by the British.³⁸ The intervention of the sole nuclear superpower in support of the Greek royalist regime would cause the escalation of the low-intensity guerrilla war into an all-out war for two reasons: first, the USA would interdict any future peace negotiations between the regime and the Left and, secondly, the Kremlin would increase its own intervention in Greek internal affairs via the KKE to indirectly injure the interests of the USA.

³⁴ Polymeris Voglis and Stratis Bournazos, «Στρατόπεδο Μακρονήσου, 1947-1950» (Makronisos' Camp, 1947-1950), in *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας* (History of Greece), ed. Christos Hadziiosif (Athens: Vivliorama, 2009), vol. Δ2: *Reconstruction, Civil War, Reinstatement, 1945-1952*, 51-81.

³⁵ Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners during the Greek Civil War* (New York, Oxfam: Berghahn Books, 2002), 101, 103-4.

³⁶ Stratis Bournazos, «Το Μεγάλο Εθνικό Σχολείο της Μακρονήσου, 1947-1950» (The Great National School of Makronisos, 1947-1950), in *Ιστορικό Τοπίο και Ιστορική Μνήμη: Το Παράδειγμα της Μακρονήσου* (Historical Landscape and Historical Memory: The Example of Makronisos), ed. Stratis Bournazos (Athens: Filistor, 2000), 119-25; Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 77-8.

³⁷ For a thorough study of the origins of the Truman Doctrine, see John L. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, 2000²), 316-53.

³⁸ For a reappraisal of the British role in the outbreak of the Cold War, see Robert Frazier, “Did Britain Start the Cold War? Bevin and the Truman Doctrine,” *The Historical Journal* 27.3 (1984): 715-27; Thanasis D. Sfikas, “Toward a Regional Study of the Origins of the Cold War in Southeastern Europe: British and Soviet Policies in the Balkans, 1945-1949,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 17.2 (1999): 209-27.

The Peace Talks

a. April 1947

Zachariadis did not seem impressed by the declaration of the Truman doctrine; in fact, he reassured Stalin and Tito in two lengthy memoranda that the insurgents would finally prevail.³⁹ After all, the state of affairs in Greece after this declaration seemed to vindicate the optimism of Zachariadis. In April, King George II died unexpectedly and his younger brother Paul succeeded him. King George had consistently striven to instil unity among the traditional political parties in the face of the rising communist threat and, in addition, he had retained cordial relations with Britain – the protector power of Greece until 1947. His death, no wonder, stirred defeatism amongst the president and ministers of the government.⁴⁰ As a matter of fact, Maximos went as far as to write to the EAM in search for peace.⁴¹ As several case studies have shown, political transitions and military failures in the government camp have provided “transient and uncertain opportunities” for the initiation or acceleration of the peace negotiations between two sides in a civil conflict.⁴² The initiative of the Prime Minister displeased several ministers –in particular the right-wing ones– who claimed that the negotiations amounted to a victory for the Left.⁴³

In fact, peace talks between state authorities and insurgents present opportunities and risks. First and foremost, such talks can potentially convince the leadership of the insurgents to renounce violence. And secondly, peace parleys can strengthen the position of the moderate factions within an armed group and pave the way for a

³⁹ [Handwritten] Memorandum of Zachariadis to Tito, 22-4-1947 in Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 79-81; Memorandum of Zachariadis to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Stalin, 13-5-1947 in *Ibid.*, 91-7.

⁴⁰ ΑτΒΑ, File 377, No. 180, Pipinelis to King Paul, 6-4-1947.

⁴¹ Moas (Partsalidis) to Denisov (Ioannidis), 22-4-1947 in Iliou, *ibid.*, 143.

⁴² I. William Zartman, “Dynamics and Constraints in Negotiations in Internal Conflicts,” in *Evasive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars*, ed. I. William Zartman (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1995), 16-9.

⁴³ Ριζοσπάστης (April 18, 1947).

peace settlement.⁴⁴ On the other side, peace negotiations recognise an armed group as a legitimate political actor and, therefore, create the negative impression that violence could reward an armed group with official recognition. Moreover, peace talks can potentially injure the legitimacy of the government and even provoke a violent response from pro-government die-hards.⁴⁵

Upon the request of Maximos, in late April the Central Committee of the EAM circulated to all party leaders a note with its peace terms: the prompt withdrawal of the British troops, the neutrality of Greece (guaranteed by the UN) and the establishment of an all-party government that would include the EAM.⁴⁶ However, Maximos did not respond to the peace offer – probably owing to the staunch opposition of the right-wing ministers. After all, the Right dominated the coalition government with four out of the seven partners identifying themselves as royalists and anti-communists. Sofoklis Venizelos, leader of a centre-right party in the new coalition government, informally discussed with the EAM the possibility of a peace settlement in his capacity as the 2nd deputy president of the government. Although Venizelos suggested moderate terms to the EAM's representatives in early May,⁴⁷ the KKE stressed categorically that no peace settlement could be reached unless the EAM participated in a

⁴⁴ Daniel Byman, "Talking with Insurgents: A Guide for the Perplexed," *The Washington Quarterly* 32.2 (2009): 127-8. See also Patrick B. Johnston, "Negotiated Settlements and Government Strategy in Civil War: Evidence from Darfur," *Civil Wars* 9.4 (2007): 559-77.

⁴⁵ Byman, "Talking with Insurgents," 129; Jeffrey Bernstein, "Negotiating the Insurgency: The Case for Settling Afghanistan's War and Securing 'Negative' Peace," *Yale Journal of International Affairs* 7.1 (2012): 31.

⁴⁶ General Archives of the State, Archive of Emmanuel Tsouderos (henceforth AET), Box E, File 55, No. 22, Memorandum of the EAM to Maximos, 24-4-1947.

⁴⁷ The peace terms of Venizelos involved the disarmament of the insurgents under the supervision of the UN or the Big Four (France, Britain, USA and Soviet Union), the removal of Zervas from office, the establishment of a Centrist government that could include the EAM, and the organisation of new general elections. Moas (Partsalidis) to Denisov (Ioannidis), 19-5-1947 in Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 144.

new government.⁴⁸ After the failure of the roadmap for peace outlined in the Treaty of Varkiza, the KKE did not trust the traditional political parties and pushed for the inclusion of the EAM as a guarantee for the protection of its interests. Last but not least, the inclusion of the EAM in a new coalition government would guarantee the interests of Moscow as well; a state in the Western camp governed by a coalition of communists and non-communists would not easily take anti-Soviet decisions.

Stalin increased its intervention in Greek internal affairs via the KKE. Stalin invited Zachariadis to Moscow in May and personally pledged military and economic aid in support of Zachariadis' grandiose vision of a "Free Greece."⁴⁹ By giving Zachariadis the green light for an intensified armed struggle, Stalin hoped to kill two birds with one stone: first, harass the Anglo-American naval powers in their own spheres of influence in the Near East and, secondly, limit the growing hegemonic tendency of Tito in the southern Balkans.⁵⁰ After all, the communist insurgency in Greece seemed a rather sure bet: the insurgents already occupied one-third of Greece and increased their total number to 16,000 fighters.⁵¹

b. July 1947

On 5 June, the US Secretary of State, Marshall, announced the Marshall Plan – an aid program for the post-war reconstruction for Europe. The Marshall Plan shattered the belief of the Kremlin in the collective administration of the post-war world with Britain and Washington, constituting a "second watershed for Stalin" after the

⁴⁸ Denisov (Ioannidis) to Moas (Partsalidis), 13-6-1947 in Iliou, *ibid.*, 145-6.

⁴⁹ Jordan Baev, *Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος στην Ελλάδα: Διεθνείς Διαστάσεις* (The Civil War in Greece: International Dimensions) (Athens: Filistor, 1996), 145-6; Iliou, *ibid.*, 87-9.

⁵⁰ Peter J. Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism, 1944-1949* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 149-50; Kenneth M. Jensen, ed., *Origins of the Cold War: The Novikov, Kennan and Roberts "Long Telegrams" of 1946* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1993), 3-16.

⁵¹ John O. Iatrides, "Revolution or Self-Defense: Communist Goals, Strategy, and Tactics in the Greek Civil War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7.3 (2005): 24.

use of the nuclear weapon by Truman.⁵² Stalin's willingness to cooperate with the Allies in the early post-war era originated principally from a pragmatic realisation of the weakness of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the West after the titanic war struggle against the Third Reich⁵³ – although Stalin had fatalistically prognosticated a conflict with the West as inevitable by early 1946.⁵⁴

The course of the civil war in Greece and the negotiations between the communist and capitalist blocs over the Marshall Plan went hand in hand – testifying to the compliance of the KKE's actions with the Kremlin's overall strategy. In late June, a senior cadre of the KKE announced from the podium of the congress of the French Communist Party in Strasburg that the party intended to establish a "Free Greece" in the near future.⁵⁵ The infamous "Strasburg Bomb" went off the same day the talks between the West and the East on the Marshall Plan commenced⁵⁶ and just a few days before Stalin rejected the Marshall Plan. Indeed, in early July Stalin rejected the Marshall Plan as a sinister scheme to undermine Moscow's security perimeter in Eastern Europe and prohibited other European communist states from participating in the program.⁵⁷

⁵² Vladislav M. Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 50-4, 102-8; Geoffrey K. Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Co-existence, Revolution and Cold War, 1945-1991* (London: Routledge, 1999), 16-22.

⁵³ Malvyn Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 39-42; Roberts: *Soviet Union*, 16-22.

⁵⁴ Geoffrey K. Roberts, "Stalin and Soviet Foreign Policy," in *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter (New York; London: Routledge, 1994, ppb. 2005), 50-4; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside Kremlin's Cold War*, 37, 45-6.

⁵⁵ Denisov (Ioannidis) to Moas (Partsalidis), 12-7-1947 in Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 134.

⁵⁶ Ioanna Papatthanasiou, «Οι Κομμουνιστές στο "Διεθνές" 1947» ("The Communists in the 'International' 1947), in *Το Σχέδιο Μάρσαλ: Ανασυγκρότηση και διαίρεση της Ευρώπης* (The Marshall Plan: Reconstruction and Division of Europe), ed. Thanasis D. Sfikas (Athens: Patakis, 2011), 255-7.

⁵⁷ Scott D. Parrish, "The Marshall Plan: Soviet-American Relations and the Division of Europe, 1944-1949," in *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in*

Just a few days before the rejection of the Marshall Plan by the communist bloc, the EAM appealed to Lambrakis, the editor of a leading centrist newspaper who heavily influenced Sophoulis,⁵⁸ to assume initiatives for the resumption of the peace process. The timing of this peace initiative cannot be viewed as coincidental: Stalin moved his “pawns” in Greece to forestall the successful inclusion of Greece into the Marshall Plan. Upon the mediation of Lambrakis, the EAM conveyed to Maximos its new peace terms which were communicated to Sophoulis and Tsouderos, two former prime ministers and leaders of small centrist parties who sustained contacts with the Left.⁵⁹ The peace terms of the EAM entailed a ceasefire, a general amnesty, the disarmament and disbandment of the right-wing paramilitaries, the abolition of the organs of state repression (e.g., the emergency courts-martial under Resolution, the establishment of an all-party government that would include the EAM, the dissolution of the parliament and, finally, the organisation of free and fair elections.⁶⁰ When informed of the content of this peace offer, MacVeagh (the US Ambassador) warned against a peace settlement with the communists and proposed to Sophoulis and Maximos to issue a joint reply that would stress the unity of the parliamentary regime.⁶¹

The US Ambassador intervened in a far more forceful manner than before. Since June, the USA had intervened aggressively to consolidate their control over the political and economic affairs of Greece. The USA provided Greece an aid package under very strict terms and, in effect, placed the economy under the tutelage of a US

Eastern Europe, 1944-1949, ed. Norman M. Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 267-90.

⁵⁸ For the heavy influence of the *Βήμα* newspaper on the Liberal Party, see AKT, File 22.1, No. 51, Drosos to Tsaldaris, 28/9/1947; Headquarters of ΣΥΡΙΖΑ, Archives of Modern Social History (henceforth ΑΣΚΙ), Box 151, File 7.38, No. 6, Moas (Partsalidis) to Dionysis (Ioannidis), 7-7-1947.

⁵⁹ In fact, Sophoulis propagated since 1946 a so-called “appeasement policy” toward the Left – much to the chagrin of the anti-communist camp.

⁶⁰ AET, Box E, File 55, No. 22, Memorandum of the EAM’s Central Committee to Maximos, 4-7-1947.

⁶¹ FRUS (1947), vol. V, p. 213, MacVeagh to Marshall, 7-7-1947.

financial mission (i.e., the AMAG).⁶² Upon MacVeagh's advice, the two leaders replied conjointly and counter-offered to the EAM an internationally-supervised disarmament of the insurgents and a general amnesty. They, however, questioned the EAM's capacity to credibly represent the ΔΣΕ and, therefore, demanded valid guarantees for the solid commitment of the KKE to the peace process.⁶³ The reservations of the two leaders spotlight three recurring problems in the process of settling a civil conflict: a) the difficulty of identifying a valid representative for the insurgents;⁶⁴ b) the reluctance of both sides to sincerely commit to the peace process – primarily due to the absence of valid guarantees by third parties or power-sharing accords between the two sides;⁶⁵ and finally c) the problem of 'information asymmetry', i.e., the absence of reliable information about the intentions and capabilities of the other side.⁶⁶ Quite predictably, the EAM rejected the joint proposal outright.⁶⁷

The very same day that Maximos and Sophoulis submitted their counteroffer, Zervas ordered the arrest of thousands of cadres and supporters of the EAM and KKE (13,751 people in total) in Athens and Piraeus with the intention of seizing leading members of the two parties.⁶⁸ However, the police arrested only senior officials of the

⁶² AKT, File 29.2, No. 17, Ratification of the Greco-American Economic Accords, 27-7-1947. For an analysis of the political implications of the provisions of the accords, see Argyrios A. Fatouros, "Building Formal Structures of Penetration: The United States in Greece, 1947-1948," in Iatrides, *Greece*, 245-8.

⁶³ FRUS (1947), vol. V, p. 217, MacVeagh to Marshall, 9-7-1947.

⁶⁴ I. W. Zartman, "The Unfinished Agenda: Negotiating Internal Conflict," in *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End*, ed. Roy Licklider (New York, London: New York University Press, 1993), 25-7; idem, "Dynamics and Constraints," 10.

⁶⁵ Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization* 51.3 (1997): 335-6.

⁶⁶ Idem, "Civil Wars, Conflict Resolution, and Bargaining Theory," in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes et al. (London: Sage, 2001, ppb. 2013), 664-5.

⁶⁷ General Report of the KKE's Central Committee to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 17-7-1947 in Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 101-9.

⁶⁸ *Πιζοσπάστις* (July 10, 1947); FRUS (1947), vol. V, p. 240, Memorandum prepared in the State Department, 17-7-1947.

EAM,⁶⁹ since the KKE's secretary general and other members of the politburo had escaped to Yugoslavia in secret months earlier.⁷⁰ Although this decapitation strategy did not succeed eventually, the decapitation of the insurgents' leadership remains one of the oldest and most successful tactics in the history of irregular warfare.⁷¹

Leader of a nationalist resistance group (ΕΔΕΣ) in World War II that had clashed repeatedly with the EAM/ΕΛΑΣ,⁷² Zervas wanted to settle old scores with the communists. The former warlord orchestrated a police crackdown with the intention of sabotaging the ongoing peace parleys between the communists and the government. Zervas acted as a "spoiler" – in other words a dissident within one side in a war who undertakes violent actions to undermine an ongoing peace process.⁷³ He had demonstrated his violent temper a few months earlier when he arrested the cadres and supporters of the EAM shortly after they were amnestied by the Prime Minister. His extreme anti-communism had dismayed the Anglo-American officials who demanded in earnest his removal from the Ministry of Public Order since his ruthless policy merely drove the people away from the government.⁷⁴ This act embarrassed the Truman Administration which was "advertising" its aggressive intervention in Greece to the US public opinion as a campaign in support of democracy.⁷⁵ By June, the number of deported and imprisoned communists

⁶⁹ ΑΣΚΙ, Box 151, File 7.38, No. 10, Christos (Anastasiadis) to Dionysis (Ioannidis), 10-7-1947; ΑΣΚΙ, Box 146, File 7.33, No. 102, Christos (Anastasiadis) to Denissov (Ioannidis), 12-7-1947.

⁷⁰ Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 70.

⁷¹ Patrick B. Johnston, "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns," *International Security* 36.4 (2012): 47-79.

⁷² Close, *Origins*, 105-6, 138.

⁷³ Stephen J. Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security* 22.2 (1997): 5-53; Kelly M. Greenhill and Solomon Major, "The Perils of Profiling: Civil War Spoilers and the Collapse of Intrastate Peace Accords," *International Security* 31.3 (2006-2007): 7-40.

⁷⁴ FRUS (1947), vol. V, pp. 102-3, MacVeagh to Marshall, 7-3-1947; FO 371/67145, R11452, Notes of Conversation with Tsaldaris, 16-8-1947.

⁷⁵ FO 371/67006, R10227, Reilly to the Foreign Office, 14-7-1947; FRUS (1947), vol. V, pp. 244-5, Marshall to Embassy in Athens, 18-7-1947; FRUS (1947), vol. V, pp. 260-1, MacVeagh to Marshall, 24-7-1947.

soared to 17,000 and 18,890 individuals respectively. Indicative of the unjust character of the policies, only 61% of them had been convicted of any crime.⁷⁶ The courts and state authorities considered every suspected communist ipso facto an *enemy* of the Greek state and nation and, thus, guilty of treason.⁷⁷

Despite the police crackdown, the KKE continued to court the centrist leaders to win them over to the communist side and cause divisions within the heterogeneous and fragmented non-communist faction. In mid-July, the KKE submitted new peace terms to Sophoulis⁷⁸ since Zachariadis had identified him as the only politician with whom a peace deal could be struck despite his occasional flirt with the Populist Party (the most powerful right-wing party).⁷⁹ However, both leaders knew that they could not trust each other. Zachariadis wooed Sophoulis solely to sow dissent among the parliamentary parties; in turn, Sophoulis played the communists against the royalists and vice versa to weaken his rivals and seize the premiership for himself.⁸⁰ After receiving the new peace terms, Sophoulis requested a mandate for a new government by the king to implement his so-called “appeasement policy.” However, the king pointed out that the US officials, who had already seized control of the economy and interfered in the political affairs of the country with growing intensity, would never permit such an accord.⁸¹ Thereafter, the KKE

⁷⁶ FO 371/67005, R10216, Foreign Office to Norton, 16-7-1947; FO 371/67143, R11924, Reilly to Bevin, 28-8-1947.

⁷⁷ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 65-8.

⁷⁸ In summary, the KKE proposed the establishment of a new Centrist government under Sophoulis (in which Tsouderos and Nikolaos Plastiras would participate), the conclusion of an agreement between the KKE and the new government (which the UN or the Allies would guarantee) and the implementation of the “appeasement policy” of Sophoulis (a general amnesty with security guarantees and general elections). FRUS (1947), Vol. V, pp. 231-232, MacVeagh to Marshall, 13-7-1947.

⁷⁹ Sfikas, *Πόλεμος και Ειρήνη*, 86-8.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 75-83, 87-93, 104; [Thanasis D.] Sfikas, “A Prime Minister for All Time: Themistoklis Sofoulis from Premiership to Opposition to Premiership, 1945-49,” in *The Greek Civil War: Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences*, ed. Philip Carabott and Thanasis D. Sfikas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 82-7, 97-8.

⁸¹ FO 371/67005, R10070, Aide Memoire of the British Embassy (in Washington) to the US State Department, 16-7-1947; FRUS (1947), vol. V, pp. 250-2,

submitted to Tsouderos the peace terms that the EAM had offered to the Maximos earlier in April. These terms were rejected outright upon the insistence of the Anglo-American embassies.⁸²

While on the one hand the KKE submitted peace offers to the Right and Centre, the party on the other hand stepped up its preparations for the establishment of an independent communist state in northern Greece.⁸³ In late July Vafeiadis stated ominously that only a “Free Greece” could guarantee a democratic future for Greece.⁸⁴ Why did Vafeiadis choose that date to issue that ominous threat? The answer lies not in internal developments, as revisionist scholars maintain, but in the external ones. In fact, while Stalin was unifying Eastern and Central Europe with an iron fist,⁸⁵ his favourite protégé Tito was imitating him in the Balkans.

With Stalin’s tacit consent, in July Tito and Dimitrov concluded the Bled Agreement – a roadmap, in effect, for the progressive unification of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia through specific political, economic and educational policies.⁸⁶ British and Greek officials assumed that this agreement included secret provisions for the incorporation of the Greek Macedonia in the future Yugoslav-Bulgarian Federation in case of a communist victory.⁸⁷ Some scholars claimed that Albania’s Hoxha participated in the summit and that the three

MacVeagh to Marshall, 21-7-1947; Leonidas Kyrkos, *Πίσω από τα Κάγκελα: Ένα Ιστορικό Ντοκουμέντο* (Behind Bars: A Historical Document) (Athens: Filistor, 1996), 30-2.

⁸² FO 371/67005, R10070, Aide Memoire of the British Embassy (in Washington) to the US State Department, 16-7-1947.

⁸³ Πιου, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 158-66.

⁸⁴ *Ριζοσπάστης* (July 18, 1947).

⁸⁵ Norman M. Naimark, “The Sovietization of Eastern Europe, 1944-1953,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odde A. Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 189-91.

⁸⁶ Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964), 161-3; Dimitris Livanios, *The Macedonian Question: Britain and the Southern Balkans, 1939-1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 229-30.

⁸⁷ AKT, File 24.2, No. 63, Letter from Kyrou to the UN Secretary-General (in English), 31-7-1947; Vasilis Kondis, *Η αγγλο-αμερικανική πολιτική και το ελληνικό πρόβλημα, 1945-1949* (The Anglo-American Policy and the Greek Problem, 1945-1949) (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1984), 336-8.

communist leaders agreed to establish a joint general staff which would offer operational advice and military assistance to the Greek insurgents.⁸⁸ Archival evidence has not, however, substantiated the latter claims. Though absent from the summit at Bled, the KKE undoubtedly endorsed the accord that would establish a powerful confederation to the benefit of the struggle of the Greek communists.⁸⁹ Galvanised by the Bled Agreement, in early August the KKE founded the first “state institutions” for administration, justice and economy and hastened its military preparations.⁹⁰

Another critical development in August increased the optimism of the KKE much further. The failure of the National Army (ΕΣ) to wipe out the ΔΣΕ with operation “Dawn” (April-August 1947) caused a severe inter-governmental crisis. In late August, the three centrist leaders of the coalition government demanded the removal of Zervas from his post and the inclusion of the Liberal Party under Sophoulis (a party notorious for its clandestine contacts with the EAM and KKE⁹¹) instead; however, their demand was rejected and, thus, the three leaders quit the government. Maximos resigned the same day.⁹²

During the political crisis of August, Griswold (the Chief of the AMAG) intervened repeatedly (and in some cases undiplomatically)

⁸⁸ Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza, *By Fire and Axe: The Communist Party and the Civil War in Greece, 1944-1949*, trans. Sarah A. Rigos (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas Brothers, 1978), 190-1; Shrader, *Withered Vine*, 175; Nikos Marantzidis and Kostas Tsivos, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος και το Διεθνές Κομμουνιστικό Σύστημα: Το ΚΚΕ μέσα από τα Τσεχικά Αρχεία, 1946-1968* (The Greek Civil War and the International Communist System: The KKE through the Czech Archives, 1946-1968) (Athens: Alexandria, 2012), 98.

⁸⁹ Ivo Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 37-8.

⁹⁰ Iliou, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 158-9, 175-6.

⁹¹ Indicatively, in August Sophoulis clandestinely came into contact with the EAM and KKE in search of a peace settlement. AKT, File 21.5, No. 6, Sophoulis to the EAM’s Central Committee, 2-8-1947 and No. 13, The EAM’s Central Committee to Sophoulis, 6-8-1947.

⁹² FRUS (1947), vol. V, pp. 309-10, MacVeagh to Marshall, 23-8-1947; AKT, File 21.5, No. 75, MacVeagh to Tsaldaris, 24-8-1947.

to impose a marriage of convenience among the two suitors (the Populist and Liberal Parties) for the premiership.⁹³ Loy Henderson, director of the Office of the Near Eastern and African Affairs of the US State Department, urgently travelled to Athens to resolve the political crisis. In early September, he met separately with Sophoulis and Tsaldaris and forced them to form a new coalition government by threatening to terminate the US economic aid.⁹⁴ On 7 September, a historical coalition government between the Populist and Liberal Parties was sworn in with Sophoulis as Prime Minister and Tsaldaris as Deputy President.⁹⁵ This “forced marriage” between the two most powerful republican and royalist parties attests to the decisive control exerted by the USA on Greek internal affairs.

The new government overcame the old conflict between Right and Centre that dominated the history of the tiny Greek kingdom since the first decade of the 20th century. This conflict produced several of the worst crises and catastrophes in modern Greek history (e.g., the “National Schism” amidst World War I (1915-7) and, most notably, the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922)).⁹⁶ In more practical terms, the co-option of Sophoulis terminated the “divide and conquer” policy of both the KKE and Sophoulis and, by extension, isolated the KKE and EAM even further. In addition, the co-option of Sophoulis substantially increased the popularity and legitimacy of the coalition government. The Liberal Party still commanded sizable

⁹³ Henderson to Lovett, Monthly Report to the Secretary of State from the Chief of the AMAG, 15-9-1947 in John O. Iatrides, ed., *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece, 1933-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 725-6.

⁹⁴ Henderson named Nikolaos Plastiras, an ex-army officer of anti-Monarchist persuasion who had served as the first Prime Minister in the post-Varkiza era, and Papagos, the revered Field Marshall of Greece during World War II with strong sympathies for the Crown, as the possible heads of a service government. FO 371/72240, R2576, Norton to Bevin, Annual Report for 1947, 18-2-1948.

⁹⁵ AKT, File 22.5, No. 39, Distribution of the Ministerial Posts between Liberals and Populists, Undated [September 1947].

⁹⁶ For more information on this issue, see Alexandros Kotzias, *Εθνικός Διχασμός: Βενιζέλος και Κωνσταντίνος* (National Schism: Venizelos and Constantinos) (Athens: Fytrakis, 1975); Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos, *Εθνικός Διχασμός και Μαζική Οργάνωση: Οι Επίστρατοι του 1916* (National Schism and Mass Organisation: The Levied of 1916) (Athens: Alexandria, 1996).

support amongst the population and remained particularly strong in Macedonia and Crete.⁹⁷ As shown time and again, the co-option of political parties or personalities with close connections to the insurgents can in fact prove successful in isolating the armed movement from the population.⁹⁸

The Prime Minister announced a dual “appeasement policy:” a policy of leniency and amnesty for the communist prisoners and insurgents respectively, on the one hand, and intense military operations for the neutralisation of the communist diehards, on the other hand.⁹⁹ He ordered the release of 10,000 political prisoners (out of 18,000 in total) and enjoined his ministers to ensure decent standards of living for the remaining inmates.¹⁰⁰ However, Sophoulis neither stopped the operation of the emergency courts-martial in northern Greece nor cancelled the death sentences for prisoners already convicted.¹⁰¹ Sophoulis declared that amnesty would be granted to any insurgents who would surrender their weapons within a month or communist cadres who would impart information.¹⁰² However, the prospects of success seemed rather slim from the start. The KKE did not trust the new government; it did not trust the previous either. By the end of the deadline, just 4,666 armed irregulars had surrendered their arms – the majority of whom (2,937) came from right-wing paramilitary groups.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Ilias Nikolakopoulos, *Η Καχεκτική Δημοκρατία: Κόμματα και Εκλογές, 1946-1967* (Cachectic Democracy: Parties and Elections, 1946-1967) (Athens: Patakis, 2001), 38, 77.

⁹⁸ Montgomery McFate and Andrea V. Jackson, “The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition,” *Military Review* 86.1 (2006): 13; David R. Heines, “COIN in the Real World,” *Parameters* 38.4 (2008/2009): 49-50.

⁹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Service of the Diplomatic and Historical Archive–ΥΔΙΑ (1947), File 134.2, No. 42433, Griswold to Sophoulis, 19-9-1947.

¹⁰⁰ *Βήμα* (September 16, 1947).

¹⁰¹ *Ριζοσπάστης* (September 9-13, 1947); *Ελεύθερη Ελλάδα* (September 12, 1947); Sfikas, “Prime Minister,” 88.

¹⁰² Resolution 29, Government Gazette, No. 197, 14-9-1947; Emergency Law 809, Government Gazette, No. 255, 29-9-1947.

¹⁰³ *Ελευθερία* (November 11, 1947).

In fact, the KKE publicly declared that peace and stability would be established only in case the new government accepted the party's terms: an armistice, a general amnesty and the inclusion of the EAM in a new government.¹⁰⁴ Vafeiadis submitted a memorandum to the UN Secretary-General that presented the KKE's peace terms: a general amnesty, the inclusion of the EAM in an all-party government and general elections without external interference (implying the presence of foreign troops and monitors).¹⁰⁵ These peace terms, however, conceal the fact that the communist party had already decided to step up its armed struggle.¹⁰⁶

In mid-September, the third plenum of the KKE's central committee convened secretly in Belgrade and determined to intensify the armed struggle and establish a "Free Greece" in the northern provinces (with Thessaloniki as its capital).¹⁰⁷ However, the KKE did not immediately publicise the resolution and, instead, chose to consult with the EAM first.¹⁰⁸ To the chagrin of its founder, the EAM objected to the KKE's decision. Irritated, the KKE upbraided the EAM for cowardice and imputed the objections of its leadership to an ongoing covert negotiation with centrist officials close to Sophoulis.¹⁰⁹

In the third plenum, the KKE decided to implement "Plan Limnes" – an operation plan drafted jointly by the ΔΣΕ and the Yugoslavs and approved by the Soviets. The reasons behind these joint deliberations seem rather obvious: Stalin stood out as the high-priest

¹⁰⁴ Ριζοσπάστης (October 9-13, 1947); *Ελεύθερη Ελλάδα* (October 12, 1947).

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum of the ΔΣΕ's Headquarters to the UN General Assembly, 5-9-1947 in KKE, *Επίσημα Κείμενα* (Official Documents), vol. VI, 1945-1949 (Athens: Synchroni Epochi, 1995), 445-6.

¹⁰⁶ Ιλιου, *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 158-66.

¹⁰⁷ Letter of Roussos to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [Review of Minutes of the Session of the KKE's Central Committee and the Convention of the ΔΣΕ's Politico-Military Leadership] (translated from Russian) [Undated, September 1947] in Ιλιου, *ibid.*, 185-8; No. 21, Note of Mosev to Suslov for the Third Plenum of the KKE's Central Committee, 17-10-1947 in Kondis and Sftas, *Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, 82-93.

¹⁰⁸ Ιλιου, *ibid.*, 193.

¹⁰⁹ Smaro (Anastasiadis) to Dionysis (Ioannidis), 8-10-1947 in Ιλιου, *ibid.*, 216; Report of Stergios Anastasiadis (translated from Russian), 13-10-1947 in *ibid.*, 218-23.

of communist revolution and Tito as the guerrilla leader par excellence in Europe during World War II. In summary, by spring the ΔΣΕ would evolve from a guerrilla force of 24,000 fighters into a regular army of 60,000 soldiers that would include a navy, air force and artillery corps with the intention of achieving the KKE's core objective: the establishment of a communist state in northern Greece with Thessaloniki as its capital.¹¹⁰ These joint discussions attest to the predisposition of the KKE to openly declare war long before the establishment of the new government between the Populist and Liberal Parties.

In October, the KKE publicised the resolution of the third plenum in Rizospastis, in essence declaring open war on the new coalition government.¹¹¹ The government responded to the KKE's declaration with repression. In October, new emergency laws suspended the circulation of 62 communist newspapers, including the official newspapers of the EAM and KKE.¹¹² At the same time, the police swept through the towns of northern Greece in search for communist cadres and supporters. The Left claimed that the police sweeps in early October swelled the number of prisoners and deportees to 19,620 and 36,948 inmates respectively – the latter including over 12,000 soldiers and army officers.¹¹³ After October 1947, the war entered its most violent and crucial phase, which ended precisely two years later (October 1949) with the defeat of the communist insurgents.

Doomed from the Start?

The revisionist scholars tend to overstress the culpability of Sophoulis for the escalation of the civil conflict. They maintained that the “forced marriage” between Sophoulis and Tsaldaris forced

¹¹⁰ Plan “Limnes” in Iliou, *ibid.*, 189, 204-5, 207-11; Iatrides, “Revolution or Self-Defense,” 27.

¹¹¹ Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism*, 101-26, 135-46; Sfikas, *British Labour*, 166.

¹¹² Resolution 31, Government Gazette, No. 221, 17-10-1947; Resolution 22, Government Gazette, No. 267, 22-11-1947.

¹¹³ ΑΣΚΙ, Box 423, File 25.5, No. 105, [Note on Political Prisoners], Undated, Unsigned, [October 1947]; Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 63.

the KKE to give up hope on Sophoulis as a man of peace and, thus, give priority to its armed struggle.¹¹⁴ The archival evidence, however, suggests otherwise. The KKE set the armed struggle as a priority for the first time in February 1947. After all, the party never sincerely committed to the peace process that dragged on for the first six months of 1947. The KKE knew that the royalist regime and, most notably, its external allies would never yield to its demanding conditions for peace; nor did the KKE trust the Right which blatantly violated the Treaty of Varkiza. In essence, the KKE “bought” time until the (political, diplomatic, military etc.) conditions matured for the transition to the next level. After all, the KKE’s decision to declare war suspiciously coincided with the severe deterioration of the Soviet–American relations.

In September, a conference of the world’s communist parties in Poland gave birth to the Cominform – in essence the successor of the Comintern.¹¹⁵ Much to the chagrin of the KKE, Stalin did not invite the communist parties of China and Greece in the founding conference in order to stave off any accusations from the West that the communist camp interfered in the internal affairs of third states.¹¹⁶ In reality, the Cominform would never discuss the Greek Question

¹¹⁴ [Thanasis D.] Sfikas, «Η Ειρηνοπόλεμη Διάσταση του Ελληνικού Εμφυλίου Πολέμου: Ειρηνευτικές Πρωτοβουλίες και Δυνατότητες Συμβιβασμού, 1945-1949» (The Peace-and-War Dimension of the Greek Civil War: Peace Initiatives and Potentials for Comprise, 1945-1949), in *Ο Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος: Από την Βάρκιζα στο Γράμμο, Φεβρουάριος 1945-Αύγουστος 1949* (The Civil War: From Varkiza to Grammos, February 1945-August 1949), ed. Ilias Nikolakopoulos, Alkis Rigos, and Grigoris Psallidas (Athens: Themelio, 2002), 93; Rizas, *Από την Απελευθέρωση*, 343.

¹¹⁵ Anna Di Biagio, “The Marshall Plan and the Founding of the Cominform, June-September 1947,” in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, ed. Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (London: Macmillan, 1996), 208-9; Mark Kramer, “Stalin, Soviet Policy and the Consolidation of a Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe,” in *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2009), 80.

¹¹⁶ Anna di Biagio, “The Establishment of the Cominform,” in *The Cominform: Minutes of the Three Conferences 1947/1948/1949*, ed. Giuliano Procacci et al. (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1994), 25; Iatrides, “Revolution or Self-Defense,” 26.

in its sessions and only issue pompous declarations of moral support from time to time.¹¹⁷

Nor did the other side ever sincerely commit to a precarious peace process. Although some political leaders (e.g., the moderate Maximos) may have genuinely sought a peace settlement with the KKE, they were badly outnumbered and outweighed (in terms of political power) by their warlike colleagues of the staunchly anti-communist Right. After the “December Uprising” in 1944, the Right had tightened its grip over the state apparatus and the population by using violence against the Left. After all, the negotiations with the Left were dictated by the adverse political and military developments – not by a genuine will for peace. Last but not least, two all-powerful extra-parliamentary actors would intervene (and intervened eventually) to sabotage these peace parleys: the military and the USA. Therefore, contrary to what certain scholars contend, the peace talks between the Left and the royalist regime in the first half of 1947 were doomed from the start owing to the inability and unwillingness of the protagonists of the war to sincerely commit to a peace process.

¹¹⁷ Ioanna Papathanasiou, “The Cominform and the Greek Civil War, 1947-1949,” in Carabott and Sfikas, *Greek Civil War*, 57-76.

