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RIVAL VISIONS: THE GOVERNMENT IN EXILE
AND THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT
APRIL 1941 – APRIL 1944

Rationally, in the course of the Second World War Greece's government in exile and the numerous resistance organizations in the homeland should have been the closest of partners. While the country was under enemy occupation the cabinet, based first in London and later in Cairo, represented the state's sovereign authority abroad and served as the guardian of vital national interests, especially in relation to the Allies; it also sought to involve in the war effort the small armed forces under its command. At the same time, resistance activity of every kind symbolized the continuation of the armed struggle against the foreign occupiers. Moreover, both depended heavily on Britain's support and direction, giving British authorities the opportunity to coordinate and reconcile the goals and aspirations of the two sides. But rational considerations are seldom a match for political passions. In point of fact, each side regarded the other with suspicion, challenged its right to speak for the nation and in some instances involving leftist groups, treated it as an adversary to be defeated. This split, which eventually overshadowed the *dihasmos* of the interwar period, set the stage for a violent confrontation and civil war.

All the King's Men

In mid-April 1941, as the invading German forces advanced rapidly toward Athens, King George II prepared to be evacuated to Crete by British naval units. Left without a government by the suicide of Prime Minister Alexandros Koryzis (on April 18), the king's last formal act before his hasty departure was the selection of the men who would accompany him abroad as

the government in exile. The difficult task was entrusted to Adm. Alexandros Sakellariou, chief of the navy staff and a capable officer who, during the turbulence of the interwar period, had repeatedly demonstrated his loyalty to the monarchy. On instructions from the king, Sakellariou was to be deputy prime minister in the new cabinet.

Although most Greeks were unaware of the selection process, the names of those chosen were all too familiar: most had been stalwarts of the dictatorship which Ioannis Metaxas had established in August 1936 with the king's consent.¹ Thus, despite statements by the king and the new prime minister that with the death of Metaxas (on January 29, 1941) the dictatorship had become defunct, the composition of the "new" government suggested that, when the war had ended, the king was not likely to restore genuine democratic rule. His ministers who now continued to hold office had no public following and no stature except as Metaxas' willing tools and supporters of authoritarianism. Their only claim to legitimacy was their arbitrary anointment by the king and the collective recognition accorded to them by the allies, especially Britain. And although during the course of 1941 the cabinet's composition would gradually change as the Metaxas holdovers were eased out and democratic personalities joined the cabinet, the government's image would remain largely unaffected. As a foreign diplomat who knew well King George and his subjects observed, "*Had the King taken only one leading politician with him to exile, at least one important group of Greeks would be praying for his Government's return. As it is, no one is interested but a few stranded members of his Court. Greece as a whole wants a government of her own...*"²

Cut off from their homeland and without real authority, resources and support services, the "king's men" failed to comprehend the changing mood among their enslaved compatriots. In particular, they remained insensitive to the growing impatience and hostility toward the king and his government, and the rising republican sentiment whose most important manifestation was organized armed resistance. To be sure, information about resistance groups remained sketchy and unreliable and the political orientation of scores of underground

1. The cabinet, sworn in on April 21, left for Crete two days later. In addition to Sakellariou it consisted of E. Tsouderos, Th. Nikoloudis, K. Maniadakis, G. Kortzas, E. Sekeris, A. Demetratos, P. Panagakos, P. Nikolaidis, and S. Theofanidis. *Ellinikai kyverniseis ke ta proedria voulis ke gerousias*, (Athens: Government Printing Service, 1959), p. 60.

2. John O. Iatrides, ed., *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece, 1933-1947* (Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 337.



organizations was never easy to ascertain from abroad. To this day it is impossible to generalize about the identity, politics and strength of those claiming to have been involved in sabotage, espionage or other forms of resistance. Nevertheless, by temperament as well as in their own self-interest the “king’s men” saw most of the resistance as the work of irresponsible radicals and a threat to the country’s welfare and to their own future. Rather than making every effort to encourage and assist homegrown efforts to fight the enemy, or to influence their direction, politicians in and out of the cabinet remained at best indifferent if not openly hostile to resistance activity. In this respect the “king’s men” abroad were no different from the majority of the *politikos kosmos* at home who for the most part kept their distance from resistance groups and appeared to remain indifferent to the threat to their cherished institutions and values posed by the burgeoning communist-controlled National Liberation Front (EAM).

The man chosen to head the new government, Emmanuel Tsouderos, was himself anything but a Metaxist or royalist. Indeed, he had been exiled by the dictatorship and on the day he was asked to form a government he was still under house arrest (by order of Maniadakis, now minister of interior and deputy minister of public security in the new cabinet). The selection process, conducted in great haste under chaotic conditions, had been strongly influenced by British officials who in turn advised the king. Anticipating that the new government would be based in Crete, which it was generally believed could be successfully defended against the invaders, the Foreign Office had recommended that the prime minister be a Venizelist because the island, Eleftherios Venizelos’ birthplace, was “strongly antimonarchist.”³ The selection of Tsouderos, a Cretan and a Venizelist, contained a large element of chance in which intelligence agents, acting with the knowledge of the British ambassador, played a crucial role. Members of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Athens first sought but failed to persuade Alexandros Zannas⁴ to accept the premiership. When Gen. Alexandros Mazarakis⁵ was approached, he was informed that British military authorities in Greece insisted that Maniadakis, “*who was keeping a firm*

3. Virginia Tsouderos in Emmanuel Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, (Athens: Ekdoseis Fytraki, 1990) A, xi.

4. Prominent leader of the Venizelist/Liberal Party in Northern Greece, Minister for Air (1928-1932).

5. Career army officer, removed from active service in 1935, retired in 1937, President of the Academy of Athens in 1937.

hold on Security, should not be shifted from the Ministry at that moment. After the Government had reached Crete he could be displaced if necessary."⁶ Mazarakis was reported willing to accept the mandate and leave for Crete, "but as a good democrat was jibbing at the idea of including in his Government the best-hated member of the Dictatorship."⁷ Others who were similarly sounded out refused to go to Crete.

Thereupon, SOE's chief man in Athens, Ian Pirie, suggested to his colleagues Graham Sebastian (Consul-General) and Thomas Bowman (honorary Vice-Consul) that, "as going to Crete was a *sine qua non*, instead of trying to persuade potential first-class Premiers to leave Greece, they might look through the list of people anxious to go to Crete and see if anyone who could by a stretch of the imagination be made into a Premier was among their number." When a short list of "possibles" was compiled, Tsouderos' name was at the top. Contacted immediately through an SOE operative Tsouderos first declined, saying that he was "neither a doctor nor an undertaker." However, later that day, April 21st, he agreed to accept the king's mandate, "... if General Mazarakis refused."⁸

According to the same authoritative account, Tsouderos telephoned Mazarakis and told him that "the Venizelist ex-Ministers whom he had consulted were agreed with Tsouderos that they could not see their way to entering any government of which Maniadakis was a member. The General replied that their opinion finally confirmed him in his own refusal to form a government including Maniadakis, and he would, when he saw the King later that evening, decline his request to form a government." The SOE report concluded: "Mazarakis must have been somewhat surprised to read in the next morning's papers that a new Government had been formed, with the King himself *pro tem* President of the Council, Tsouderos Vice President and Maniadakis Minister of Home Security."⁹ Thus Tsouderos took the reins of government in the worst of times and under a cloud of confusion and mistrust. A year later, when Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, then deputy prime minister in Cairo, contacted political leaders in Athens their response was that "after the way in which the General (Mazarakis) had been

6. Ian Pirie, "History of SOE Activities in Greece, 1940-1942," Public Record Office, HS 7/150, 3, p. 8. Presumably King George endorsed the selection of Maniadakis as indispensable.

7. Pirie, 3, p. 8-9.

8. Pirie, 3, p. 9.

9. Pirie, 3, p. 9. Before leaving for Crete on April 23, Tsouderos took over as prime minister, minister of foreign affairs and, temporarily, minister of finance and national economy.

ricked by M. Tsouderos, the political world was not disposed to consider verbal messages.... Any written statement would however be considered on its merits....”¹⁰

Tsouderos was a promising political figure. He had served on Crete’s National Council (1906-1912) and later became a prominent member of Venizelos’ Liberal Party. In 1929 he had been appointed Governor of the Bank of Greece, which he had helped establish, and fought successfully to preserve the bank’s autonomy. In 1936, a clash with the Metaxas regime over the bank’s policies led to his resignation, but he soon returned to his post when the government acceded to his terms. However, when the authorities discovered evidence implicating him in a plot to overthrow the regime, Tsouderos was dismissed and packed off to internal exile.¹¹ In short, while his credentials as a Venizelist were impeccable and he had distinguished himself in public service, he was not a popular national leader and was not regarded as a solid opponent of the monarchy.

In London, where his cabinet was based,¹² Tsouderos applied himself to his many tasks with energy, dedication and self-confidence and soon developed a good working relationship with British officials. More a capable technocrat than a leader, he kept virtually all authority in his hands, holding himself aloof from his ministers whom he mistrusted and disliked.¹³ He rarely convened meetings,

10. Pirie, 3, p. 9.

11. Tsouderou in Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, ix-x.

12. After their evacuation from Crete the king and government were moved to Cairo, where the Egyptian authorities made it clear that their Greek visitors were not welcome to remain. In March 1943 a new Egyptian government reversed its stand and, in view of serious disturbances among the Greek forces in the Middle East, the Tsouderos cabinet returned to Cairo. E.I. Tsouderos, *Diplomatika paraskinia, 1941-1944* (Athens: Ikaros, 1950), p. 84-85. In his diary Tsouderos attributes Egypt’s initial refusal to have the Greek cabinet remain in Cairo to the outcry among the Greek communities of Alexandria and Cairo against the Metaxist ministers and to the highhanded tactics of some fifty police informers (*hafiedika organa*) that had accompanied Maniadakis and who now began to intimidate the Greeks of Egypt. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 52-53.

13. On Demetratos, whom he retained even after the other Metaxists had been forced to resign, Tsouderos recorded: “...his relations with Greek labor and our inability to replace him by someone with contacts and friendship with workers necessitated his retention. A strange type, capabilities and intelligence mixed in with primitive and ignorant sentiments. When it comes to labor issues the barely concealed wild animal is ready to bite to kill if it can. My impression is that he is a ‘communist’ or a man without principles who does not hesitate to go to extremes, as long as he is in authority. It is not difficult to discern his intentions and direction

and then usually to announce decisions he had already taken. He was secretive, suspicious (even of the British, who he thought had not favored his choice as prime minister), and manipulative.¹⁴

To be sure, his disdain for his ministers, in whose selection he had played no part, was justified: whatever their individual talents, many were an embarrassment and a liability to himself and his government. He had retained them out of deference to the king, who was ultimately responsible for their choice and who considered them loyal (Maniadakis was widely believed to have the king's backing), and because they were in no position to seriously challenge his handling of national issues.¹⁵ When mounting pressure to remove them could no longer be ignored, he consented to having them sent off to distant lands as special envoys or ministers without portfolio, with personal staffs and ample budgets.¹⁶ By then the damage to his own image was already done; the government's formal decisions later in 1941 and spring 1942 abolishing the dictatorship did not have the desired effect. For Greeks at home and abroad, including prominent members of the traditionally royalist People's Party, the government in exile remained a thinly disguised extension of the dictatorship, for which the king was ultimately to blame. What many politicians refused to forget was that following Metaxas' death the king had publicly declared that the domestic policies of the dictatorship would remain in force.¹⁷ This perception was to emerge as an albatross on the government's relations with political leaders and the resistance movement. It was to become EAM's most effective propaganda weapon against its principal rivals.

Tsouderos devoted his efforts to the promotion of Greek postwar claims and interests. He was especially vigilant regarding British and American pronounce-

for governing. He believes that his hour will come 'after the war'." Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 53.

14. Based in part on characterizations by Kanellopoulos whose relations with Tsouderos remained strictly correct but strained. *Emerologio Katohis* (Athens: Estia, 2003).

15. For Tsouderos' justification of his initial cabinet see his *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 2-3.

16. In his diary Tsouderos hints that the handling of the resignations of Maniadakis, Nikoloudis, Sekeris, Kortzas, Tsanakakis and Argyropoulos, announced on June 2, 1941, and their new appointments had not been of his choosing: "...for Maniadakis, it was decided to send him to South America (Argentina)...To what purpose?...The entire manœuvre was tiring but interesting..." Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 53. Maniadakis' mission was "to study various subjects pertaining to military and other procurement and to publicize the Greek struggle on Crete and elsewhere." Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 85.

17. Karapanagiotis letter to Tsouderos, June 17, 1941, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 88-90.

ments on Albania and Bulgaria but also about the Dodecanese, Cyprus, and even Turkey—and worked hard to preserve and enhance Britain's role as Greece's patron during the war and beyond. He was anxious to avoid internal political bickering and confrontations and hoped that after the war he could preside over the country's transition to parliamentary rule with the help of a reformed government, the monarchy and the Greek armed forces now stationed in the Middle East. He regarded the old political parties as discredited and defunct and their leaders as sterile and irrelevant. He saw no need for repeated and unambiguous public commitments regarding the constitutional issue. As he wrote in his diary, *"My prime minister's speech of 21st April... was most emphatically democratic. The Government was not to be characterized by the presence of some Ministers of the dictatorship but by my own ideology and long political record..."*¹⁸ As long as the war continued, he regarded efforts to raise the constitutional question, and in particular the future of the monarchy, as unwarranted, premature and the work of irresponsible extremists determined to destroy the *status quo* in order to impose their narrow partisan solutions. His public addresses regarding the country's political future, broadcast over the BBC, were meant to be optimistic, conciliatory and reassuring. Yet his commitment to genuine democracy in Greece remained less than solid and in his concept of democratic rule the king and the armed forces represented essential components.

Thus, in a long memo to the Foreign Office dated November 4 1941, Tsouderos expressed fears that ambitious and unprincipled politicians were waiting for the war's end to seize power in the name of liberty. He warned that the unruly and excitable Greeks were not suited for a republican form of government (presidential democracy), especially in the absence of a strong man who could establish it. Under these circumstances he thought it was Britain's *"friendly duty"* to ensure in Greece *"normal political life from the first day of the truce, with the King as head of State"*, to prevent the *"demagogues"* from leading the people astray. National elections should be delayed, while *"the King, at the earliest, upon his return to Greece, must have a Government satisfying the public sentiment..."* Making no mention of a plebiscite he wrote: *"With what I propose, I wish for the King and his current advisers to acquire the means to ascertain the genuine Common Popular Opinion on whose basis the King will in time take the appropriate decisions concerning the formation of a*

18. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 2.



Government which will satisfy the people's will." He ended his memo with a telling anecdote: "An Athenian asked Solon what is the best form of government. Solon replied: 'For what people and for what moment...'"¹⁹ In a note to the king along similar lines Tsouderos offered advice on how to govern after the country's liberation.²⁰ And in another note for his personal files he expressed himself categorically in favor of the king's return without the benefit of a plebiscite: "The return of the King and his Family to our country is a matter of honor..."²¹

It was his stand on the king's early and unconditional return, and his reliance on the British government to bring it about, that put Tsouderos on a collision course with the resistance movement whose principal guerrilla formations (but also most urban groups) were led by republicans or communists. It also precipitated a break with almost all political leaders at home who, virtually to a man, signed a statement in March 1942 declaring their opposition to the return of the king until and unless he had been invited back by a national referendum.²² His dismissive attitude toward the country's old parties and venerable politicians overshadowed his considerable efforts on behalf of the nation and cost him whatever support he might have otherwise enjoyed. Ironically, in the short term his role as the king's loyal servant brought him into serious friction with the British intelligence services, especially the SOE, which was the principal allied agency responsible for espionage and resistance in occupied Greece.

From the outset, SOE's contacts and operations in Greece, which dated back to the final days of the Metaxas dictatorship, had relied almost exclusively on Anglophile republican officers and civilians and for that reason had to be carried out without the knowledge of the Greek authorities.²³ Following the country's occupation the same considerations compelled SOE to conceal its activities from Tsouderos, especially its encouragement and support of resistance groups, while keeping the Foreign Office and British military authorities duly informed. In consequence, the rise of the powerful resistance movement and the concomitant growing opposition to the king and his government were widely reported by SOE through confidential British channels but not to Tsouderos who on these issues remained uninformed and in a state of denial. When stories of SOE's

19. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 213-18.

20. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 108-9.

21. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 210-13.

22. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 294-95; Pirie, 15, p. 3.

23. Pirie, 1 and 2.



considerable support of resistance activities in Greece began to circulate, Tsouderos accused Britain's "secret service" of instigating and encouraging attacks on the Greek king and his government.²⁴ In talks with Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and other top-level British officials Tsouderos complained about the intelligence agencies and demanded that they be reprimanded and instructed to refrain from involving themselves in Greek political matters. At the same time he urged the British government to declare its unconditional support for the Greek king.²⁵ Although the Foreign Office formally protested the language in Tsouderos' aide-memoire,²⁶ it launched an investigation into his allegations and instructed SOE to stir clear of Greek political issues. Under pressure from the Foreign Office and during a wider reshuffling of SOE in December 1942 Pirie was removed from its Greek section.²⁷ Soon the work of SOE would be entrusted to British Liaison Officers (BLO) attached to resistance organizations in the Greek countryside.

The man at the center of the constitutional controversy, King George II, could not be said to have taken to heart his family's motto: "My strength, the love of my people." President Roosevelt, who called him "Georgie," thought he was "nice but stupid."²⁸ He was shy, sullen and ill at ease at public functions, especially among Greeks, whose language he never learned to speak properly. In more intimate surroundings, where he could be quite sociable, he referred to his

24. Examples in Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 86, 117, 216,

25. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 201-02. In an aide-memoire for the Foreign Office Tsouderos observed that "the persons and party organizations to which the Intelligence Service addresses itself (in Greece) merely represent cliques of no importance whatsoever and that they are endeavouring to gain artificial prestige through the support of the Service's agents." He characterized the work of the agents involved as "ill-advised and psychologically disastrous activities on the part of the officers of a friendly, Allied Government." Pirie, 18, p. 4-5.

26. Pirie, 18, p. 3.

27. Tsouderos had complained that Pirie was coaching Kanellopoulos, who was about to join the government in exile, on concessions he should extract in return for his entering the government. Terence Maxwell, SOE's head in Cairo, telegraphed SOE headquarters in London denying the charge and added: "Tsouderos of course is a Cretan, and was it not Homer who said: 'All Cretans are liars?'" Pirie, 15, p. 13; On Pirie's removal from SOE's Greek section see comments by his superior, George F. Taylor in Phylis Auty and Richard Clogg, eds., *British Policy towards Wartime Resistance in Yugoslavia and Greece* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 261; William Mackenzie, *The Secret History of SOE. The Special Operations Executive 1940-1945*. (London: St. Ermin's Press, 2000), p. 165; Kanellopoulos, p. 438.

28. *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports*, p. 396.



subjects as “*these people*,”²⁹ and regarded them as politically immature, volatile and prone to extremist solutions. Having failed to prove himself non-partisan and the king of all Greeks— his efforts to heal the national *dihamos* had been rejected by both royalists and Venizelists—he became convinced that the only enduring solution was a strong-man government. And although in 1936 he had readily endorsed the regime provided by Metaxas, once the dictator had left the scene the king refused to acknowledge his own responsibility for the hardships the dictatorship had inflicted and for the consequences of the political paralysis that accompanied it. Accordingly, he rejected the legitimacy of the “constitutional question,” dismissed those raising it as ideological enemies of the monarchy, and remained firm in his determination to return to Athens at the earliest opportunity and unconditionally. He regarded the government in exile as “his” government and the Greek armed forces as owing loyalty to him. As the living symbol of Greece and of its heroic contribution to the war effort, he expected the Allies and especially Britain to protect him from his detractors and restore him to his throne. Given his frame of mind, he naturally regarded the predominantly republican resistance movement and those associated with it as his avowed enemies. Characteristically, the only time he is known to have threatened to abdicate was when he demanded that the head of the SOE military mission to Greece, Brig. E.C.W. Myers (who in August 1943 had brought to Cairo a delegation of resistance leaders, all staunch republicans, for talks with the government in exile) not be permitted to return to the Greek mountains.³⁰

The charge made by Tsouderos, King George and others³¹ that in its support of resistance in Greece SOE had favored republicans and communists and was therefore largely responsible for the violence in 1943-1944 between guerrilla bands and the mutinies in the Middle East cannot be examined here in any detail. Yet the questions raised are relevant to this essay and therefore deserve brief discussion.

29. *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports*, p. 227.

30. C.M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, (London: Hutchinson, n.d.) p. 157; E.C.W. Myers, *Greek Entanglement* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955), p. 264.

31. Possibly the most fanciful variation of this charge holds that SOE supported the Greek Left, including the communists, as part of a plot by opposition factions in the British parliament designed to embarrass and unseat Prime Minister Churchill. Rigas D. Regopoulos, *Mystikos polemos. Ellada-M. Anatoli 1940-1945* (Athens: Estia, n.d.), pp. 300-01. The logic of this labyrinthine argument is likely to mystify students of British politics.

From its inception the monarchy in Greece had been a frail and rootless institution whose place in the country's legitimate political order and culture had remained undefined and controversial. Especially in the aftermath of the First World War, the king had emerged as the head of a political movement rather than the nation's impartial father-figure. As a result, despite its hereditary nature, in reality the monarchy's survival depended on the public support it could generate at moments of grave domestic crisis. That support had evaporated long before the appearance of armed resistance to foreign occupation in 1941 and SOE's support to it, a fact that was obvious to knowledgeable observers. One such observer, US Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh, wrote on July 19, 1941 that after the war,

It is almost certain to be remembered that the King's only answer to Greece's political problems in the past was to install and support a dictator, and that after that dictator's death he deferred his appeal to other leaders till it was too late for anyone to save the situation, and embarked on a crucial war against Germany with a Government, and a High Command, representing nothing more national than the rump of a fascist junta... Fiery Venizelists ... have urged me to realize that the King can never come back, no matter what happens, and have begged me to tell my Government not to let the British attempt to impose him on an unwilling country. Moderate liberals, and even royalists of more weighty opinion... have argued to me to the same effect... It is possible, of course, that the King's future conduct may conquer for him an esteem which he could never win previously. But this seems unlikely. Whatever his good qualities, he is no Albert of Belgium to sum up in his person the heroism of a whole nation. It appears more probable that what Greece has against him and his dynasty, — their avariciousness and self-absorption at the expense of the country, but above and beyond everything, their ill-success, — will bulk even larger than it does today when the hour of possible return arrives....³²

SOE's support to resistance organizations, in gold sovereigns, weapons and supplies, was substantial. However, its distribution hardly explains the overwhelming strength of the communist camp as represented by EAM-ELAS. For example, before the establishment in July 1942 of the Anglo-Greek Committee to control the disbursement of money to resistance groups, SOE had distributed the following amounts (in sovereigns):

32. *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports*, p. 376-78.

Kanellopoulos/Tselos	42,900
EDES and EKKA	24,000
Zannas	11,000
YBE/PAO	11,000
EAM/ELAS	11,160 ³³

On July 30, the Committee, on which Kanellopoulos represented the Greek government, approved the distribution of the following amounts:

Committee of Coordination of Greek Government	35,000
YBE (Salonica)	21,000
EAM	10,000
Odysseus (SOE's liaison with EAM)	4,000
Prometheus II (SOE's liaison with EDES and Athens	12,500
Organizations other than EAM)	
Operation Thurgoland (Tsigantes mission)	12,500 ³⁴

The above amounts, which are representative of disbursement patterns to resistance groups through 1943, when assistance to EAM/ELAS was drastically curtailed, do not support the claim that EAM/ELAS received preferential treatment.

The same is true of air-drops of supplies, for which exact figures are not available. To be sure, all recipient organizations listed were republican but hardly leftist. They were supported not because of their politics but because they were known to be actively fighting the occupation forces. Moreover, SOE and M.I.9 assisted a number of prominent non-leftist figures, including Kanellopoulos, to escape to the Middle East and made every effort to encourage non-leftist groups to engage in resistance activity. Among those approached for that purpose were Alexandros Zannas, Napoleon Zervas, Evripidis Bakirtzis, Dimitrios Psarros, General Stylianos Gonatas (who received ten million drachmas but refused to become active in resistance), and others.³⁵ SOE also supported several anti-communist organizations in Macedonia including the Yperaspistes Voriou Elladas (YBE, later PAO), and a number of guerrilla bands.³⁶

33. "Greece. SOE relations with EAM," PRO, SOE HS 5/689.

34. Pirie, 17, 7-8.

35. Pirie, 16, *passim*.

36. Woodhouse, "History of the Allied Military Mission in Greece", (typescript) [Hereafter "History of AMM."] Ch VII; Nicholas Hammond, *Venture into Greece. With the Guerrillas 1943-1944* (London: William Kimber, 1983), p. 97-185.

Indeed, while willing to support any group that was active in resistance activity, SOE's policy was to "*stimulate the Liberals into an activity as great as that of the Popular Front (EAM), and to attempt to unite the two movements together, in which case it might be anticipated that in view of the greater number of the Liberals and the greater prestige of their chiefs, leadership of the united resistance movement would not fall into Communist hands.*"³⁷ Although naïve in the extreme, the purpose of such a policy was to reign in rather than promote the Left. However, the response to SOE's efforts to generate resistance among non-leftist groups was passive if not non-existent, leaving the field virtually open for leftists to dominate.³⁸ In addition, in late 1943 SOE's representatives sought to prevent ELAS from seizing the bulk of the weapons surrendered by the Italian Pinerolo Division and opposed the integration of guerrilla bands into a large army as favored by British military authorities in Cairo with the apparent support of the Tsouderos government. Efforts to bring the guerrilla bands under a centralized command (in the hope that they might become more effective and could be controlled from Cairo) benefited ELAS, which was in a position to dominate the admittedly ineffective command structure.³⁹ But this development could not be blamed on SOE.

Thus, the explanation for the fact that much of the resistance movement, especially the guerrilla bands, came to be dominated by republicans and communists is not to be found in the support they received from SOE. Rather, it resulted from the Left's success in mobilizing and fielding a larger and stronger resistance army, its highly centralized structure, ruthless tactics and determination to eliminate its domestic competition.

The Government and Resistance Groups: the Record

In the course of the occupation the number of individuals and groups which engaged in various forms of resistance was substantial, especially in the cities. For a multitude of reasons their political orientation, tactics and contribution to the war effort remain to this day difficult to assess. Many were clearly very small and their activities received little publicity; others became legendary, deservedly

37. Pirie, 16, p. 2.

38. Pirie, 11 and 12.

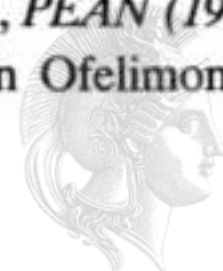
39. Woodhouse, "History of the AMM", IV.

or not. Despite efforts after the war to identify them and give them due recognition, many were destined to remain known only to their members.⁴⁰ Many more simply failed to come to the attention of the Greek government in exile, or of the allies' clandestine services operating in occupied Greece.

The government's contacts with resistance groups were pursued through several channels. There was, of course, a steady stream of escapees reaching the Middle East, including military officers, some of whom brought news and messages to Tsouderos and his colleagues (the Greek embassy in Ankara and consulate in Izmir were important information-gathering posts) but they were sporadic, informal, often highly prejudiced, and rarely useful for sending messages back to Greece. Accordingly, before the spring of 1942, when Kanellopoulos entered the government (replacing Adm. Sakellariou as deputy prime minister) and became its principal representative in the Middle East, Tsouderos had depended on British intelligence channels, and especially SOE, for communication with individuals and groups in Greece. Afterward, convinced that SOE was promoting enemies of the king and his government, the prime minister supported Kanellopoulos in his efforts to oversee SOE's activities and to establish direct communication with occupied Greece through agents and links not controlled by British agencies. However, there is no evidence that Tsouderos looked upon the resistance organizations he knew about, including those clearly anti-leftist, as a national asset deserving his interest and support. His voluminous *Istoriko Archeio* is sprinkled with complaints and caustic comments about the British intelligence services but contains remarkably little about resistance groups except occasional incoming reports in the general context of political developments in occupied Greece. Even then, his government's attitude toward resistance organizations was virtually always passive or indifferent.

A case in point is the Panellinios Enosis Agonizomenon Neon (PEAN) which was established in the fall of 1941, was in contact with Kanellopoulos before his escape to the Middle East, and, after 1942, with the *Committee of the Six Colonels*, which the Tsouderos government promoted as its collective

40. For a serious discussion of the difficulties in establishing the facts about some groups and their members, and for examples of recent scholarly research on urban resistance in general, see Constantinos Svolopoulos, *Haidari, 8 Septemvriou 1944. E aorati stratia sto apospasma* (Athens: Pataki, 2002), p. 11-53; also Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *PEAN (1941-1945). Panellinios enosis agonizomenon neon* (Athens: Syllogos pros Diadosin Ofelimon Vivlion, 2004), p. 16-20.



representative in occupied Greece.⁴¹ Although republican in orientation, PEAN recognized the legitimacy of the government in exile (although mistrusted some of its members) and did not seek or receive assistance from the British intelligence services. Yet the government took no interest in the organization and its activities; significantly, what little information it collected on PEAN was subsequently found to be incorrect and misleading.⁴²

Another nationalist resistance group, the *Elliniki Patriotiki Etaireia* (EPE, code-name Yperesia 5-165), received basically the same treatment. After providing the allies with information about enemy troop and ship movements, it was discovered by the Germans and a number of its members were executed. Its leader, Rigas Regopoulos, a reserve army officer, escaped to the Middle East and reached Cairo, having failed along the way to interest the British intelligence services in his organization and to secure their support. Tsouderos, to whom Regopoulos paid a visit, listened with interest to his account of developments in Greece, including details of the communists' brutally aggressive tactics against their domestic rivals, and conceded that the country's future was in peril. However, to Regopoulos' urging that action be taken to counter the communist threat, the prime minister's response was that he was powerless to change the policies pursued in Greece by the British and intimated that, as a result, his relations with British officials had frequently reached the breaking point. He asked his young visitor to submit a written report on conditions in Greece and invited him to join his staff. After working in the prime minister's office for about a month, and having volunteered to organize the government's efforts to combat communist propaganda among Greek troops in the Middle East, Regopoulos gave up and joined the *Ieros Lohos*.⁴³

There is no doubt that the government's dependence on the British for virtually all communication, transportation and funding for the resistance movement imposed a severe restriction on its freedom of action. Time and again, the role of British intelligence channels was decisive in determining whether a particular resistance group deserved to be supported. Thus, in August 1941, when a courier from a group led by the Kyrou brothers, owners of the daily *Estia*, arrived in Cairo seeking instructions and support, he was debriefed by SOE before being sent to Sakellariou, whose staff handled

41. Hatzivassiliou, p. 31-68.

42. Hatzivassiliou, p. 62.

43. Regopoulos, p. 228-53.

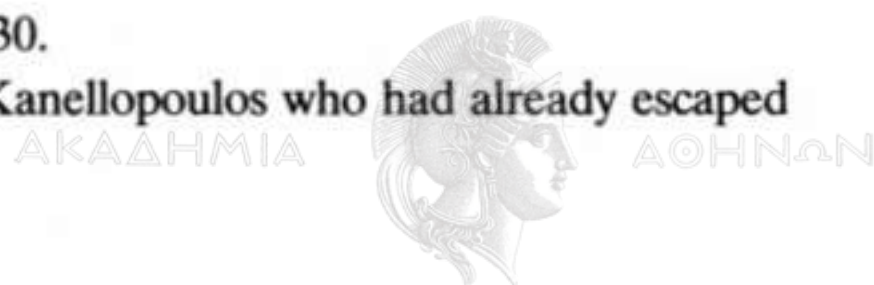
clandestine contacts with Greece. According to the courier, the group, with the improbable name of Ali Baba, recognized the legitimacy of the Tsouderos government, supported the Allies, and favored the king's return. In addition to the Kyrou brothers, the group's leadership was said to include the former Metropolitan of Athens Archbishop Chrysanthos, and the royalist generals Markos Drakos and Ioannis Pitsikas who had served with distinction in the Albanian war. It claimed among its followers some 2,400 officers with access to impressive quantities of weapons. Its principal request to the government was for formal recognition and political guidance. SOE arranged for a young Greek naval officer (code name Alexander) to travel to Greece to contact the Kyrou group on behalf of the Greek government and investigate its claims. On his return *Alexander* reported that he had found the group to be "very small—eight or ten meet from time to time for little discussions—but I do not look upon them as a serious organization."⁴⁴ Despite the arrival of a second courier from the group, SOE decided that the Kyrou organization was "more concerned with the smooth return of the emigrés than with active resistance to the enemy," and therefore should not be supported. Confusion and suspicions concerning the identity and motives of the organization were also expressed by Greek officials; as a result there is no evidence that it was given the endorsement and direction it sought.⁴⁵ Ironically, when Tsouderos secretly invited Kanellopoulos to come to the Middle East to join the government, he instructed him to "come to an understanding" with Archbishop Chrysanthos and the group headed by the Kyrou brothers.⁴⁶

Another urban organization that in the early fall of 1941 sent a courier to the Middle East in search of endorsement and assistance was *Elefthera Ellas*, also known as the "Under Thirty Association." Headed by the industrialist Demetrios Sfaelos and the youngest son of the Eleftheroudakis family, it was believed to be republican in orientation and to have among its members army, police and gendarmerie officers below the rank of captain; it also claimed to have on its *advisory board* General Pangalos and Admiral Bouboulis. According to a Greek government report, the Sfaelos group requested "directions regarding matters of internal organization, propaganda, national action, propaganda, etc."

44. Pirie, 12, p. 1-2.

45. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 139, 326-330.

46. Pirie, 12, p. 11. The message never reached Kanellopoulos who had already escaped from Athens to avoid arrest.



There is no evidence that the government responded to the requests.⁴⁷ For its part, keeping Greek officials in the dark, SOE attempted to discern the importance of the Sfaelos group. Once again *Alexander* reported that “*they were no more serious...than the Kyrou organization.*”⁴⁸

In October 1941, SOE decided, “*not without some misgivings, to contact and aid in their resistance to the enemy an extreme Left-wing organization, from which was later to spring the formidable E.A.M.*” In authorizing such contact, which was to be kept secret from the Tsouderos government, SOE’s Greek section was admonished that “*...we must on no account give these people to understand that we are supporting them as a political party against the present Government; on the other hand, we should like them as far as possible to sink their political differences so that the Greeks can present a united front against the enemy.*”⁴⁹ As already mentioned, this initiative, and the resulting assistance given by SOE to EAM/ELAS, would incur the wrath of Prime Minister Tsouderos. It led to the reining in of SOE’s operations in Greece and the eventual assignment of British officers to the principal guerilla bands.⁵⁰

It is hardly surprising that the Tsouderos government wished to keep its distance from resistance groups dominated by extreme republicans and communists. After all, such groups and their patrons regularly denounced Greek officials abroad, above all the king, and threatened to prevent their return. And while it resented any support given to these organizations by the allies, the government could not openly oppose it, particularly as the value of their resistance activity could not be denied. What is surprising is the government’s lethargic attitude toward resistance groups that by all accounts appeared to be on the side of the government in exile and hostile to its critics. These groups included Napoleon Zervas’ EDES, the second largest guerrilla force after the communist controlled ELAS and, virtually from the start, the target of EAM/ELAS attacks.

47. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, A, p. 326-27.

48. Pirie, 12, p. 2-3.

49. Pirie, 12, p. 5-7.

50. When SOE’s “Odysseus” (Gerasimos Alexatos) first approached KKE’s leadership offering money and weapons in exchange for resistance activities, Giorgis Siantos thought that the agent had been sent by the Communist International. Andreas Tzimas became “Odysseus” liaison with the KKE and Ares’ first ELAS armed band was dropped weapons and supplies arranged by “Odysseus.” Giannis Ioannidis, *Anamniseis* (Athens: Themelio, 1979), p. 124-25, 513; Grigoris Farakos, *Aris Velouhiotis* (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 1997), p. 40-41.

To be sure, Zervas had been a staunch republican who recognized as his leader Nicolaos Plastiras, a declared enemy of the monarchy; his deputy and political adviser, Komnenos Pyromaglou, was an intellectual of strongly socialist leanings. Moreover, Zervas' roguish reputation and apparent lack of integrity had dogged his every move. After accepting large sums of money from SOE for the purpose of forming a guerrilla army, he left for the mountains in August 1942 only when he was threatened with exposure.⁵¹ Even then, the authorities in Cairo continued to regard him as "*hardly less disreputable than EAM/ELAS.*"⁵² In October 1942, at a meeting of the Anglo-Greek Committee responsible for financial assistance to the Greek resistance, Kanellopoulos had declared that "*Colonel Zervas was quite useless; he can do nothing, and even if he can do anything, he must be stopped from doing it.*"⁵³ Yet by the fall of 1942 Zervas had fielded a large guerrilla army that engaged the enemy, had carried out faithfully orders issued to him by military authorities in the Middle East and had played a key role in the operation that destroyed the Gorgopotamos bridge. More to the point, in March 1943, under attack by ELAS and at the suggestion of his senior British liaison officer, C. M. Woodhouse, he sent a message addressed to "*H.M. the King of Greece and the Greek Government.*" In the message he protested that EDES' contribution to the war effort was not properly appreciated abroad, "*perhaps due [to] our object [being] misrepresented.*" After declaring that "*We wish to help our Ally and protector England [in] every small way possible in gigantic struggle she is now making to free all from inhuman violence [and] For this we [are] cooperating with all true patriots ...both Royalists and Democrats...*," he charged: "*Though Greece [is] enslaved Communism now seeks [to] impose itself by force and has already declared revolution....*"⁵⁴

51. Pirie, 16, p. 27. After receiving from SOE 1500 gold sovereigns Zervas still temporized, requesting an advance of 20 million drachmas and one sovereign per man per month; he thought he could raise a force of 1000. In July 1942 SOE's man in Athens had been instructed: "*About Zervas: I beg you not to risk pressing him to his duty. If we have lost few hundred sovereigns to a rascal it does not matter. Your safety is far more important.*" PRO HS 5/711///258045.

52. C.M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord.*, p. 74.

53. Pirie, 18, p. 22.

54. C.M. Woodhouse, "History of the AMM..." Appendix D. In his *Apple of Discord* (p. 74, fn), Woodhouse writes that Zervas sent two telegrams: one to the king and another to the government. He adds that, in retrospect, he regards his own role in the matter a mistake. In the appendix of his "History of the AMM", the text of one telegram contains both messages described above.

Zervas' message went far beyond complaints against the communists. Apparently without prodding from Woodhouse, he offered his "opinions [on] constitutional matters." First, "If King returns here [as a] result [of] free opinion [of] our people we wish [to] be first to welcome and consider Greece constitutional quarrels ended." Second, "If England for wider reasons and even without peoples' wishes wants return of King we fighting for liberation will not oppose at all." Finally, "[We] Are determined in full cooperation [with] Royalist elements here and abroad to attack all efforts already begun [for the] establishment [of] Communism by force or violence." To this extraordinary commitment, which damaged irreparably his reputation among republicans and communists alike, Zervas received from the king polite thanks and congratulations for his services to the national struggle, "...to which the King and Government,...and the Greek Armed Forces in the Middle East are devoting all their efforts." As for constitutional issues, "After his return to Greece, His Majesty will base himself on the will of the people and will follow the opinion which they will freely express on all questions affecting them."⁵⁵ The Tsouderos government sent no acknowledgment or response. According to Woodhouse, "One telegram gave them no reason by itself to modify their disapproval..." of Zervas.⁵⁶

A more accusatory explanation for the government's passive attitude toward all resistance is to be found in a memorandum of a royalist group, *Ethniki Drasi*, dated August 5, 1943: "To Greeks living in Athens our National Government gives the impression that it exists on the Moon. Its political gestures, activities, propaganda on radio stations, testify to its total estrangement from Greek realities. King and Government appear to be living in a web woven by men pursuing who knows what goals..."⁵⁷ Actually, while feeling virtually powerless to control developments in Greece, and leaving it for the most part to the British to deal with resistance organizations, Tsouderos was not unaware of the gathering clouds and of the importance of Zervas' EDES in the approaching storm. Following the conference in Cairo in August 1943, at which representatives of the government and of the principal resistance organizations and parties failed to agree to unite their efforts and form a coalition, he wrote:

55. Woodhouse, "History of the AMM..." Appendix D. For Pyromaglou's strong disapproval of his chief's initiative see his *O Doureios Ippos. E ethniki kai politiki crisis kata tin katohi*. (Athens, 1958), p. 77-83.

56. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, p. 74.

57. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, C1, p. 162-68.



The truth is that responsible for the current confrontation [between ELAS and its rivals] are neither the parties nor the EDES organization...EAM with its army ELAS is moving rapidly toward [seizing] authority and considering themselves more powerful, wish to remove every obstacle to that goal. If they succeed in defeating EDES and Zervas they will turn next on the old parties. They are preparing a dictatorship of the proletariat...⁵⁸

But for all its apparent importance, the fate of EDES and of other armed organizations like it was left to the British military and their liaison officers on the Greek mountains.

Some urban resistance groups claimed to be organizing armed units which, at the moment of liberation would emerge to pursue the retreating Germans and maintain order in support of the returning government. One such organization, named *Relos-Avlon-Nesoi* (RAN) and headed by Col. Constantine Ventiris, informed Tsouderos in June 1943 that its strength would soon reach two battalions, to be employed in support of the anticipated allied landings and against “*communist plans*.” Ventiris had been a staunch republican who had been sentenced to death for his involvement in the 1935 coup. Nevertheless, RAN recognized the king as head of the national struggle until the time of liberation, when he would be expected to declare that he would not return to Greece until invited to do so by a referendum. RAN requested weapons, to be distributed to its units in Athens, and financial support. Although in early 1944 Ventiris made his way to the Middle East where he was promoted and appointed chief of the army general staff, RAN received no assistance from the government in exile.⁵⁹

Another umbrella group, *Ethniki Drasis* (ED), claimed to have sent some 80 officers to join EDES and to have organized armed bands in the Peloponnese one of which, consisting of 72 career officers, was said to be under attack by ELAS. Charging that the communists were intent on imposing upon the country their regime by force, it maintained that “*the war of liberation must be entrusted to the Greek Army*.” ED declared its goals to be “*1. the return of the king, 2. maintenance of order against anarchy, 3. the national program*” and claimed that, together with several affiliated groups, it could field “*a force greater than EAM*.”

58. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, C1, p. 502-03, Tsouderos to embassy in London, October 29, 1943.

59. Evstathis Hatzivassiliou, “O Kraton tes protevousis”, PAN, 1943-1944,” *Kleio* ‘No 3 (Summer 2006), p. 97-120. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, C1, p. 113-15; Kanellopoulos, p. 520.

However, they were lacking in weapons and money.⁶⁰ Once again, there is no evidence that the government responded to ED's communications.

It is highly unlikely that the Tsouderos government took comfort in such declarations of loyalty. In any event, any support to resistance groups in Greece could only come from British military and intelligence channels which Tsouderos did not trust. In turn, a number of clandestine organizations, such as *Yvone* under Yiannis Peltekis, the legendary *Apollo*, dealt directly and almost exclusively with British agencies, having learned the hard way that contact with the government in exile could cause no end of trouble.⁶¹ Moreover, the government had hoped to see the Greek armed forces in the Middle East strengthened and improved so as to provide the security that would be needed at the moment of liberation. Such hopes received a severe blow when army and naval units mutinied and order had to be restored by British force. Kanellopoulos, who had worked hard to have the armed forces upgraded and sent to the front to fight, resigned in March 1943 and the Anglo-Greek committee to coordinate assistance to resistance groups soon ceased to function.⁶² If the government could not control Greek officers and men in the Middle East, it could hardly hope to have its orders obeyed by those who had spent most of the war years under enemy occupation engaging in clandestine activities or waiting for the allied landings. When a secret organization of army officers named Omeros asked for guidance on a pressing matter, Tsouderos' response was paraphrased in Kanellopoulos' diary as follows: "*We do not know you, we have never recognized you, do as you like, and we (the government in Cairo) reserve the right some day to judge everyone according to their actions.*"⁶³

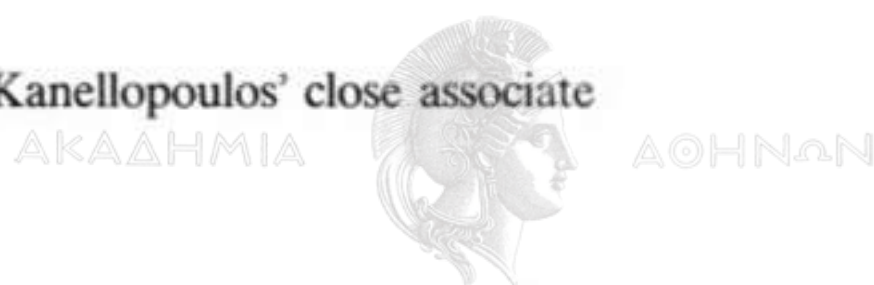
Of all the resistance organizations that actually took the field and fought against the country's enemies none was more deserving of the government's endorsement and assistance, at least at its inception, than the *Yperaspistes Boreiou Ellados* (YBE), renamed *Panellinios Apeleftherotiki Organosis* (PAO). Operating mostly in Macedonia, it was led by military men and civilians of predominantly Center-Right orientation and claimed to have a battalion-size armed force. In addition to fighting the foreign occupiers, its special mission was

60. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, C1, p. 162-68.

61. Mackenzie, *The Secret History of the SOE.*, p. 479-81.

62. Kanellopoulos, p. 509.

63. Kanellopoulos, p. 520. Omeros had been founded by Kanellopoulos' close associate Tselos.



to defend the territorial integrity of Northern Greece against Bulgarian encroachment and Romanian propaganda. It pledged to punish severely “Greek traitors and others who wished, wish or shall wish to collaborate with the enemies and who betray Greece in any way.”⁶⁴ Thus, in addition to resisting the brutal Bulgarian occupation of Greek Macedonia and Thrace, YBE-PAO declared openly its intention to fight those who appeared to condone Bulgarian efforts to assimilate those territories. The object of this declaration was, of course, the Greek Communist Party whose submission to Comintern policies had compelled it to support autonomist schemes for Greek Macedonia. For its part, EAM/ELAS would not tolerate rival organizations of any kind, no matter what their particular identity or program. But YBE-PAO’s very purpose made it one of the communists’ most hated opponents. And given ELAS’ overwhelming superiority in northern Greece, YBE-PAO was doomed virtually from the start.

YBE-PAO’s charter placed it formally under the authority of the Greek government and the Allied Headquarters in the Middle East. It made early contact with the government, secured its recognition and complied with instructions from Cairo which included the change of its original name. As mentioned above, with government endorsement it received a radio transmitter and a considerable amount of money which by the fall of 1943 was reportedly depleted.⁶⁵ At the government’s invitation YBE-PAO had sent to Cairo representatives to explain its needs and prospects and to urge the coordination of activities among nationalist resistance groups. According to its own records, the response was disheartening: the government’s indifference was contributing to the proliferation of resistance groups which was detrimental to the national effort.⁶⁶ Much worse, the government could do nothing to save YBE-PAO’s rank and file from extermination by ELAS, forcing the most desperate to take weapons from the Germans and to join the Security Battalions, thus incurring the stigma of collaboration. YBE-PAO’s tragic end is told by Woodhouse:

The Germans had succeeded better in Macedonia than anywhere else in arming the people against ELAS. Prominent officers such as Col. Chrysokhoou, Col. Poulos, and remnants of PAO had long been in the field; and towards the end of the occupation, many villages round Kozani had

64. Parmenion Papathanasiou, *Gia ton elliniko vorra. Makedonia 1941-1944. Antistasi kai tragodia*. (Athens: Papazisis, 1997), p. 43-44.

65. Tsouderos, *Istoriko Archeio*, C1, p. 523-25. Papathanasiou, p. 154-56.

66. Papathanasiou, p. 133-34.

*taken arms from the Germans to keep ELAS away from them. Their motives were natural. They identified EAM with Communism, Communism with Pan-Slavism, and Pan-Slavism with the domination of Macedonia by Bulgarians and Serbs. They expected their action to be condoned; they appealed, not without success, to Zervas to sponsor them; and they regarded themselves as our friends. Circumstances obliged us to regard them as Quislings; but it was with a heavy heart that we did so.*⁶⁷

If the government remained indifferent even toward loyal resistance groups that had looked to it for support and direction it was not only because it felt powerless to do much for them. Tsouderos and Kanellopoulos preferred to establish in Greece an organization they could control and commission as their official agent to prepare the country for the government's return. It was to be a clandestine force under regular army officers that would surface only when the German evacuation had begun and would assume control of Athens and other urban centers. The architect of this organization was Kanellopoulos who, until he arrived in Cairo, was thought by many to be *"capable of bringing [the] bulk of [the] Greek people behind the King and Government."*⁶⁸ In Athens his contacts had included many republican officers and his principal liaison with them was Major Tselos. When Tsouderos secretly invited Kanellopoulos to come to the Middle East to join the government he added: *"Before leaving Greece Kanellopoulos must set up a political and military organization composed of men whom he can trust in order to represent us during the war period."*⁶⁹ Although Kanellopoulos escaped from Athens without receiving Tsouderos' message, he had convened on his own an *Action Committee* consisting of Koundouriotis, Bakirdzis, Tselos, Psaros, Gonatas and Zangas; EAM representatives had also attended the first meeting.⁷⁰

In Cairo Kanellopoulos (who entered the government on May 5, 1942) asked the Anglo-Greek Committee to provide a monthly budget of 150,000 pounds sterling for his newly formed *Military Center* (the amount was eventually divided as shown above) which consisted of regular officers *"who were ready to take control and action."* Claiming that EAM was *"demagogic and non-active, although it had bands on Parnassos and Giona,"* he asserted that

67. Woodhouse, "History of AMM" ... VI, p. 39.

68. Pirie, 13, p. 10.

69. Pirie, 14, p. 6.

70. Pirie, 18, p. 2-3; Kanellopoulos, p. 196.



“there was no other organized body except EAM and the Military Center.” In his view, *“The Military Center in Athens must take control of all bands, for their unification and development by the supply of arms and money. The suppliers of such are the natural leaders, and supply therefore should come through the Center.”* On October 5, 1942, in a message to a committee of six colonels heading the *Military Center*, Kanellopoulos bestowed upon them *“full powers on the problem of the struggle for enslaved Greece.”*⁷¹

Despite Kanellopoulos' assurances, the *Military Center* was at best a work in progress: Koundouriotis was arrested, Bakirdzis, Psaros and Tselos were in hiding, Zangas fled to Turkey (where he informed British intelligence that he had nothing to do with Kanellopoulos), and there were reports that others were not in fact Kanellopoulos' followers.⁷² Therefore, when SOE decided to send a nine-man mission to attack the Corinth Canal (Operation Thurgoland), Kanellopoulos took advantage of the opportunity to use the mission's leader, Major Giannis Tsigantes, to communicate new instructions and money to the *“Military Center”*.⁷³ Tsigantes and his men (Midas 614) left by British submarine on July 27, carrying three radio sets and 12,000 gold sovereigns; they reached Athens five days later. His instructions from Kanellopoulos, not revealed to the British, were to contact leading political, military and resistance leaders and urge them to unite behind the *Military Center* and the government.⁷⁴ Although ill-suited for such delicate negotiations and snubbed by military men, Tsigantes succeeded in forming a *National Council* consisting of Archbishop Damaskinos, Papandreou, Stefanopoulos, Al. Mylonas, and C. Tsatsos. However, he was careless and indiscreet and on January 14, 1943 he was cornered and killed by Italian security forces. According to a well informed

71. Pirie, 18, p. 20-25. The message was sent via SOE channels prompting SOE's agent in Athens, Koutsogiannopoulos, to radio back: *“We have applied to many of colonel's rank but all have refused [to engage in resistance activity]. It is ridiculous as they think to try and conduct guerilla warfare from saloons... We are afraid you are acting under the influence of parasite ex-King and of Kanellopoulos.”*

Kanellopoulos did not reveal to the Anglo-Greek Committee the identity of the six colonels. They were Spiliotopoulos, Kitrilakis, Filipaios, Liosis, Karpenisiotis, and Kaggouris. Stylianos Th. Houtas, *E Ethniki antistasi ton Ellinon, 1941-1945*. (Athens, 1961), p. 240-41.

72. Pirie, 17, p. 3. Tselos also escaped from Athens and remained in Cairo as Kanellopoulos' principal assistant.

73. Kanellopoulos, p. 441-43.

74. Kanellopoulos, p. 437-44; Houtas, p. 241.



prominent nationalist resistance leader, after Tsigantes' death "*the National Council failed to undertake any significant action and was dissolved. This was the only attempt by the Greek Government in Cairo to unify the Struggle of National Resistance.*"⁷⁵

That Tsigantes had failed in his mission was evident before his death. The composition of the National Council made it clear that the six colonels and their associates in the *Military Center* had refused to have anything to do with him. Moreover, the *Military Center* very soon proved itself incapable of performing any useful function and collapsed under its own weight.

Following the destruction of the Gorgopotamos bridge (November 25/26, 1942) British authorities in Cairo decided to merge the existing guerrilla bands into a large if dispersed army with a centralized command and British liaison officers attached to all major units. That command was to be entrusted to the *Military Center* in Athens and be formally under the authority of the Greek government in exile, with Brig. Myers in Greece serving as the link between the *Military Center* and Cairo. In January 1943, as Myers' deputy, Woodhouse traveled to Athens in disguise to "sell" the plan to the leaders of the *Military Center* and to ELAS' political masters, the leadership of the Communist Party. EDES' leader, Zervas had already agreed to the plan. At his first rendezvous none of the six colonels appeared; the two who came to the second meeting were too frightened and distracted (Tsigantes' death had just become known) to be willing to discuss Cairo's proposal or any other plan. For their part, the communists rejected the concept of a unified command and refused to send to Myers' headquarters a representative who could decide on their behalf. However, they expressed the wish to send representatives to Cairo for talks with the Tsouderos government.⁷⁶ The failure of Woodhouse's dangerous mission revealed the *Military Center* to be a sham and Kanellopoulos' efforts to harness the resistance bands to a government-controlled authority a dismal failure.

In August 1943, when representatives of the principal resistance organizations met with the Tsouderos government in Cairo, the focus was no longer on a unified military command for the resistance bands. Rather, it was on the need for a broader coalition government in which the resistance would be properly represented. Emboldened by their superior armed strength and organization the communists demanded some of the most important ministries

75. Houtas, p. 241.

76. Woodhouse, *Something Ventured* (London: Granada, 1982), p. 56-61.



in the contemplated cabinet, thus helping to precipitate the abrupt collapse of the discussions. The failure of that attempt at compromise sharpened the division between the communist-dominated EAM and its opponents and set the stage for the “First Round” of the looming civil war. The relegation of the resistance to the periphery of Greece’s vital issues became even more apparent in May 1944, at the Lebanon conference. By that time the murder of Psaros and scores of his men by ELAS, the systematic attacks on Zervas’ forces and the terror tactics of EAM/ELAS across much of the countryside left little doubt that the Communist Party had launched a campaign to seize power. Momentarily the Left found itself on the defensive, compelled to have ELAS (as well as EDES) placed formally under British military authority in anticipation of the country’s impending liberation (Caserta agreement of September 26, 1944). For George Papandreou’s “*Government of National Unity*” the most powerful component of the armed resistance had become an adversary to be feared and, with British help, to be neutralized.

ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ

Epilogue



ΑΘΗΝΑΝ

In retrospect, the study of the government in exile and of the resistance resembles shooting at a moving and constantly reconfiguring target. During 1941-1944, the composition and politics of the cabinet changed, with only the king remaining the one constant factor. More significantly, the resistance, from the outset a disparate assortment of groups and organizations each with its own characteristics, capabilities and goals, underwent gradual transformation. The focus of activity shifted from small, independent, mostly Athens-based clandestine teams attempting to engage in espionage and small-scale sabotage to large guerrilla bands controlling ever-expanding areas of the countryside. In turn, the guerrilla movement, at first highly fragmented, localized and politically amorphous, gradually gravitated around two principal poles: EDES, a regional army dominated by a supreme leader who remained obedient to authorities in Cairo and had no particular political aspirations, and EAM/ELAS, a country-wide force controlled by the communists and increasingly harnessed to their political ambitions. Thus, to have any validity, generalizations about the government as well as the resistance require constant qualification and careful wording.

This said, it is nevertheless useful to view the government and the bulk of the resistance as representing two divergent visions of postwar Greece. While in principle united in their desire to fight the foreign invaders, their long-term

political goals and tactics differed substantially. On one side, the government represented the country's traditional elites and stood for the restoration of democratic values: civil liberties, parliamentary government, executive accountability, the rule of law, stability and moderation in public policies. There was no burning desire for radical reforms and experimentation with new ideas or social institutions but rather a wish to return to the familiar and predictable ways of pre-Metaxas politics and society. As for the key constitutional question, a repentant and humbled monarch would have been acceptable to most, if still unpopular. On the other side, a large segment of the non-communist resistance initially was imbued with a revolutionary spirit and a wholesale rejection of the past that went far beyond the dismantling of the Metaxas dictatorship and of the prewar elitist order. It aspired to a never-defined transformation of the country's political and social institutions which would usher in a new era of liberal democracy, social justice, individual freedom and economic progress. In such a new Greece there would be no place for a monarch. At the extreme end of the resistance spectrum the leaders of the communist party began with a populist agenda and gradually moved toward vaguely conceived plans for a Soviet style dictatorship of the proletariat.

Although fundamentally different, in time the two visions might have been modified sufficiently to be reconciled. But once the most powerful and aggressive of the resistance factions was found to have been hijacked by Moscow's apparatchiks intent on seizing power by any means, both visions became irrelevant. With mutual suspicion overwhelming any sense of common purpose, the dividing line between "nationalists" and "slavo-communists" was drawn all too rigidly, and there could be no real political dialogue and no compromise. The country's future would be determined by the winners in the impending civil war.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

JOHN O. IATRIDES: *Αντίπαλα οράματα: Η εξόριστη Κυβέρνηση και το κίνημα της Αντίστασης*

Πέρα από το ότι διεξήγαγε τον αγώνα του έθνους κατά των ξένων εχθρών, το ελληνικό αντιστασιακό κίνημα επιδίωξε να διαδραματίσει αποφασιστικό ρόλο στον καθορισμό του μεταπολεμικού πολιτικού συστήματος της χώρας. Συνήθως, η πόλωση που επακολούθησε εξετάζεται στο πλαίσιο των προστριβών και της βίας ανάμεσα στις αριστερές ομάδες των βουνών (ΕΑΜ/ΕΛΑΣ) και τους αντι-αριστερούς αντιπάλους τους (ΕΔΕΣ, ΕΚΚΑ, ΥΒΕ, κα). Το παρόν άρθρο εστιάζει

ζει σε μία άλλη διάσταση αυτής της πόλωσης: τις συστηματικές προσπάθειες της εξόριστης Κυβέρνησης να παραμερίσει τις αντιστασιακές οργανώσεις που δημιουργήθηκαν στην κατεχόμενη Ελλάδα και τις ως επί το πλείστον αποτυχημένες απόπειρες να προωθήσει δικό της αντιστασιακό κίνημα στην Αθήνα που θα ήταν διατεθειμένο να δεχθεί την επιστροφή του βασιλιά και της κυβέρνησής του. Παρά την ασταθή εκχειρία ανάμεσα στην Κυβέρνηση και τις κυριότερες εν δράσει αντιστασιακές οργανώσεις, που επατεύχθηκε πριν από την απελευθέρωση της χώρας, τελικά ο πιο αποφασιστικός ρόλος στον καθορισμό του πολιτικού μέλλοντος της χώρας παίχθηκε από αξιωματούχους και στρατεύματα της Βρετανίας.

ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ



ΑΘΗΝΩΝ

