

O. V. SOKOLOVSKAYA

RUSSIAN NEWSPAPERS OF 1917
ON GREECE JOINING WORLD WAR I

Developments in Greece during the final stage of World War I were given wide coverage by the Russian press, and specifically, by the leading bourgeois newspapers, beginning from the fall of 1916. Major newspapers of different trends published in Petrograd and Moscow, the centres of Russian journalism, carried vast military surveys, international reviews and editorials on the Balkan events, great powers' stands in respect to Greece that reflected political colouring of those newspapers. From early 1917, telegrams of the Petersburg Telegraph Agency from Greece appeared in the press almost every day, as well as reviews by correspondents accredited in Athens and Saloniki, which gave detailed analyses of Greece's internal political situation. They included the relation of different layers of Greek society to the war, the Republican and Venizelos movements, and the Entente policy in Greece aimed at drawing it into the world war. Newspapers are one of the most important and interesting historical sources that contain both the statement of facts and an immediate assessment of the events reflecting the state of minds of certain social groups. This source of abundant information that is yet to be studied, does not only add to our knowledge of the Greek history, but also helps to reassess Russia's attitude to the Greek problem in the turbulent 1917.

The article deals with the newspapers of Russia's most prominent capitalist and financial circles, the liberal bourgeois press, and the organs of Octoberists, Cadets and Socialist Revolutionaries. It is difficult to determine in certain cases to which of the political groups newspapers might belong, because of the variety of their shades and trends. By the beginning of 1917, two months prior to the falldown of the tsarist regime, most bourgeois and even monarchist newspapers levelled criticism against some aspects of the tsarist government's external policy. Even *Novoye Vremya*, the mouthpiece of reactionary nobility, landowners, ministerial and beaucocratic circles, which was loyal to Nicholas II, expressed its disapproval of the tsarist policy in respect to Greece. Hence the easy transition, since, following the February Bourgeois-Democratic

Revolution, bourgeois and even monarchist newspapers supported the Provisional Government and "war to the victorious end".

Some main trends—official government, liberal-bourgeois, and reformist-collaborationist—were reflected by newspapers beginning from that time. The Bolshevik press took an individual stand, that of defending the interests of all nations. *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva* expressed an unconditional support to the Venizelos movement in Greece and dethronement of the Germanophile King Constantine. The government policy was also backed by *Peterburgskiy Vedomosti*. *Novoye Vremya* carried daily News of the Balkan Front and telegrams of its own correspondents and PTA from Athens and Saloniki, and, beginning with April 1917, introduced a special column under the heading "On Greek Events". From late 1916 on, the newspaper gave detailed accounts of the events in Greece and its own appreciation of them, claiming to express Russia's public opinion.

Greece was also one of the main subjects highlighted by such leading bourgeois newspapers as *Birzhevyye Vedomosti*, connected with Octoberists and Cadets, and *Utro Rossii*, the organ of Moscow industrialists and bankers, which was published by P. P. Ryabushinsky during 1907-1918. These newspapers had considerable staffs of their own correspondents abroad, including Athens and Saloniki, and provided valuable information.

The liberal press, defending the interests of Russian imperialists on the Balkan Peninsula in the Black Sea settlement gave much space to the international political events, the situation in the Balkan states, and Greece in particular. For instance, there was the *Russkoye Slovo* major bourgeois-liberal paper belonging to the Sytin I.D. partnership; P. N. Milyukov's *Rech*, the central organ of the Cadets; to a lesser degree, it was *Russkaya Volya*, and finally, *Russkiye Vedomosti*, the organ of the Cadets' right wing.

The newspaper *Russkii Invalid* of the General Staff, published in Petrograd, supplied the most interesting information for the study of different aspects of the Allies' policy in Greece. The newspaper featured detailed military and naval surveys from the Balkan Peninsula, items by war correspondents and telegrams of the PTA from Greece. War correspondents stressed in their materials the need to secure the rear of the Saloniki Army against Greece's Germanophile king and to lead General Sarrail stir up the operations of his army, which was to coordinate its actions with those of the South flank of the Russian Army. The newspaper called for the "war to the victorious end". On June 2(15), 1917, its title was changed into the *Army and Fleet of Liberated Russia*.

Less consideration was shown to Greek events by *Dyelo Naroda*, the

newspaper of Socialist Revolutionaries, edited by Kerensky, as well as by the Menshevik newspapers, among others. Unfortunately, the democratic press was banned and censored for a long time and had only limited staffs abroad, therefore, it could not devote much space to international developments. In view of this, the article is a critical survey mostly of the Russian bourgeois newspapers of 1917.

There was also a new type of the press based on genuine scientific principles and adherence to Party principles—the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda* that led the national campaign against the war and exposed the anti-popular policy of tsarism and the Provisional Government. The decision to restore the newspaper was adopted at the session of the bureau of the RSDWP Central Committee on March 2(15), 1917. On his return from abroad on April 5(18), V. I. Lenin joined the editorial board and became chief editor, and the newspaper took a clear stand on all the political issues. Ample proof of this is V. I. Lenin's polemic article on Greek developments entitled "The Laugh is on You!" and denouncing the imperialist essence of World War I and the Allied Powers' policy in regard to Greece*.

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The Russian bourgeois press was unanimous on the disputable issue about the need to continue the Saloniki operation and the ensuing attitude to the Greek king.

As far back as early October 1916, *Novoye Vremya*, which was closely connected with Russia's government circles, wrote: "All the demands (of the Great Powers-O.S.) mean beating about the bush without tackling the gist of the matter, since there is no one resolute enough to do away with Constantine, and Constantine agrees to whatever is suggested, if only he gains time". The newspaper said in conclusion: "What is most regrettable about this unworthy comedy is that bloodshed is going on in Saloniki, while Sarrail's general onslaught is impeded"¹. This viewpoint was shared by *Utro Rossii*, the newspaper of Moscow industrial and financial circles, which gave arguments for the burning necessity to continue the Saloniki operation in its editorial entitled "The Balkan Conjunction"².

The Rome Conference of Allies that took place on January 5-7, 1917, was a milestone in relations between Greece and the Allied Powers. Despite

* See further p. 146-147.

1. *Novoye Vremya*, 30 sentyabrya (13 oktyabrya) 1916 g.

2. *Utro Rossii*, 30 dekabrya (12 yanvary) 1917 g.

the existing difference of opinion, they agreed on the decision to reinforce the army led by Sarrail. Their resolution was to present an ultimatum to King Constantine urging him to accept all of their earlier demands, otherwise Sarrail would be given free hand (or, as they put it, "he was free" to choose measures to secure the Saloniki Army). In case the government in Athens showed obedience, the blockade would be made on easier terms and Venizelos' Army would not be admitted to the territories governed by Athens. The Great Powers reserved the right to occupy, for the "military purposes", any territories controlled by Royalists³.

In its editorial published in the wake of the conference, *Utro Rossii* stated with satisfaction that "the mist over Greece's political horizons is clearing away", which is entirely due to the Great Powers' "tough policy" in respect to the Greek king, which, in its turn, "is evidence of the Allies' irrevocable determination to continue the Saloniki operation to the end, contrary to the views to be found in the columns of certain friendly newspapers..." (The three dots used to conclude the sentence might evidently mean newspapers in Great Britain and Italy-O.S.).

Athens government's consent to comply with all the demands of the Allies⁴, as the newspaper saw it, could guarantee a safe rear of the Allied Army operating at the front in Saloniki. However, the newspaper cast doubt on Constantine's sincerity. "Against the background of the complex political situation on the Balkan Peninsula", *Utro Rossii* wrote, "Greece's response cannot be regarded as definite and clear-cut". "Taking into account that the Allies' recent demands met with hostile manifestations in Athens and Piraeus", the same newspaper went on, "and that King Constantine's Greek government agreed to comply with the demands under the threat of an ultimatum... relations between official Greece and the Allied Powers cannot possibly rest upon a stable basis". *Utro Rossii* suggested therefore that the Allies' control over the Greek government be re-established, which was an "indispensable guarantee of the future political and strategic activities of the Allies on the South-Balkan theatre"; secondly, that the Germanophile official circles "be rendered harmless" and the two governments be united with Venizelos' followers taking the upper hand. As the newspaper saw it, all this could provide conditions for the successful end of the Saloniki operation.

"In view of the general military situation obtaining on the sites of fire

3. Leon G. B., *Greece and the Great Powers 1914-1917*, Saloniki, 1978, pp. 449-451.

4. The Allies' Ultimatum was sent to the King's government on December 26, 1916 (January 8, 1917). Greece accepted the demands on December 29, 1916 (January 11, 1917).

of the war theatres” the newspaper was optimistic about “a new military campaign against Turkey”. “A pounce on the Dardanelles”, it wrote, “launching a front in one of the coastal regions of Asia Minor, or large-scale landing operations on Syria’s coast could, in our opinion, play a decisive role for the future of the Ottoman Empire and bring about its break-away from the German Alliance as early as possible”⁵.

In its editorial of January 9, 1917, liberal-bourgeois *Birzhevye Vedomosti* demanded in sharp words that the Allied Governments take drastic measures against the king who “doubtless was evading the sincere and honest discharge of his duties in compliance with the Allies’ demands”. The newspaper insisted that there was no place for “verbal solicitation, since it was an entirely useless method”, and printed in bold type: “what we need is deeds, and not words”. “The most effective way”, according to the newspaper, “was to isolate, temporarily, the most harmful Athenian Germanophiles”. Meanwhile, the Venizelos government, to which diplomatic representatives have been accredited by the Great Powers, should be transferred to Athens⁶. This was the way to have Greece drawn into the war on the side of the Entente.

In an attempt to justify the actions of the “protecting Powers” in Greece, *Birzhevye Vedomosti* wrote in its editorial on the Greek problem that “from the beginning, the Allies did not mean to pull Greece into the bloody slough”. Their sole intention was to ensure their strategic interests on the Balkan Peninsula and to save the army of General Sarrail from chance happenings. “If only”, wrote the newspaper trying to convince the reader, “King Constantine had in actual fact shown genuine sincerity in complying with the demands of the Powers of Entente, the task of the Allies, accomplished by peaceful means would have been resolved most happily, since the Allies did not intend to turn the arms against the state which was their own creation”⁷. In this way, following French and British newspapers, the Russian bourgeois press was trying to lay the blame for Greece’s involvement on the Greek monarch.

Taking advantage of the peaceful initiative of US President Wilson, the Greek king appealed to him complaining about the actions of the Allies that prevented Greece from sticking to the policy of neutrality. “It was due to their backing of the Venizelos movement”, Constantine wrote, not without reason, “that the country has been split into two hostile parts, it was due to them that Greece has been cut off from “certain” European states, and to

5. *Utro Rossii*, 4(17) yanvary 1917 g.

6. *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 5(18) yanvary 1917 g.

7. *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 9(22) yanvary 1917 g.

crown it all they have resorted to a severe blockade”⁸.

Birzhevye Vedomosti responded with its editorial under the heading “Complaints of the Offended”, in which it did not conceal the concern that such complaints could produce the most “unfavourable impression in the cultural world”, especially so that “the Allies, unlike Germany, regard highly the public opinion of neutral states, and one of the main tasks they set themselves in the war...was to settle the destinies of minor nationalities”. The newspaper urged that the unpleasant impression should be dispelled immediately and that “a diplomatic scalpel” should be used to “open up” the real cause of the Allies’ policy in Greece allegedly conditioned by King Constantine’s Germanophile inclinations⁹.

Instead of answering the Greek king, the US government that was planning to join the war on the Entente side shortly after that, called upon neutral states to define clearly their stand in the war. Getting ahead of the events, we may say that late in April Washington recognised officially the Provisional Government of Eleutherios Venizelos¹⁰.

As the editorial in *Birzhevye Vedomosti* devoted to “Greece’s zigzag course” put it, “the present Athenian government is incapable of performing its duties honestly and conscientiously, because they run counter to the interests of Berlin”. The question it posed therefore was: “Is it worthwhile to expect any “sincerity” even if forced, from the Berlin branch at King Constantine’s court?”. The conclusion the newspaper made reads as follows: “If the next few days show that evasion and war ruses continue, the Allies will have to take into their own hands the fulfilment of the political tasks that seem indispensable to guarantee the secure rear of General Sarrail’s armies”¹¹.

The Petrograd Conference of the Allied Powers that was held a week before the downfall of the tsarist regime in Russia took a decision to launch the general offensive on all the fronts in April 1917. Even in the last months of the tsarist government, the Russian bourgeois press backed the Western Powers’ initiative on the need to draw Greece into the world war, with prominence given to the military aspect of the problem, i.e., security of the rear of the Saloniki Army, which included, by that time, considerable forces of the Allies French, British, Italian, and Russian troops and the whole of the Serbian Army.

8. *Ibidem*.

9. *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 15(28) yanvarya 1917 g.

10. *Utro Rossii*, 13(26) aprelya 1917 g.

11. *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 8(21) fevralya 1917 g.

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Bourgeoisie, that came to power as a result of the February Revolution, and its Provisional Government took over the imperialist policy of tsarism proclaiming war to the victorious end and wishing to obtain the compensations promised by the Entente. The task of prime importance, in view of this, was "to unite the efforts of the Allies" on all issues, including the Greek problem. However, the existence of the Soviet Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies along with the Provisional Government made bourgeoisie conceal its purposes behind pronouncements calling for democracy.

Utro Rossii of March 14 carries a telegram of the PTA from Copenhagen under the heading "King Constantine's Fate", which informed: "As the Greek circles believe, Constantine, who has lost his main support in the face of the Russian tsar in the wake of the revolution, will be dethroned by the Allies"¹².

In its overwhelming majority, the Greek population welcomed the Russian events. For instance, E. Rafail, correspondent of *Utro Rossii* reported from Athens on March 10(23) that "Greece's public opinion is entirely on the side of the Russian people", while the PTA correspondent sent a wire from Saloniki reporting that a large-scale meeting was organised there on the initiative of Greek political associations, at which "the population of Saloniki expressed supreme happiness and admiration for Russia's renovation". The city's Mayor S. Angelaki welcomed "Russia's victory over the tyranny of absolutism" and expressed the desire that "the struggle of the Greek people against the tyrant and traitor King Constantine be crowned with final triumph"¹³.

"The Russian revolution", wrote E. P. Demidov, Russia's Ambassador in Athens, "has produced a painful impression on the court and government circles and bereaved the king of a friendly support"¹⁴. As we know, Constantine's mother, Grand Duchess Olga Constantinovna, Greek Queen Olga, stayed in Russia during the years of the world war and enjoyed influence at the Russian court.

The correspondent of *Birzhevye Vedomosti* in Athens, N. Amira, reported that the overthrow of Nicholas II had set up commotion at the Greek court. The royal family gathered for a family conference at Prince Nicholas' residence, "in view of the grave danger threatening the Greek dynasty"¹⁵.

12. *Utro Rossii*, 14(27) marta 1917 g.

13. *Utro Rossii*, 30 marta (17 aprelya) 1917 g.

14. Adamov E. A., *Evropeiskie Derzhavy i Gretsia v epokhu mirovoi voiny*. M., 1922, p. 181.

15. *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 9(22) aprelya 1917 g.

As the same correspondent reported, “the Russian revolution and the joining of America* have produced a deep impression on the Hellenic people”. “They see now”, he went on, “that King Constantine and his Germanophile policy will lead to the country’s isolation from world democracy”. And he inquired in conclusion: “Can the Allies’ diplomacy hamper the Greek national movement?”¹⁶. Thus, the former imperialist course was presented in a democratic cover.

Russian newspapers in April carried a mixture of reports about “the spread of the Venizelos movement”, growing anti-dynasty sentiments, soldiers and officers abandoning the king’s army and joining the forces of the Saloniki government, an unconditional support given to the Venizelos government by the Greek colonies in Russia, France, the USA, Australia, etc., the ministerial crisis in Athens due to worse relations between Greece and the Allies, and the resignation of the Germanophile government of Lambros.

The newspapers gave immediate response to the Entente becoming more involved in the Greek problem. The conference of English and French diplomacy of February 1917 in Folkstown reached an agreement on strategic and tactical issues. France’s Foreign Minister A. Ribot thought it necessary to conclude a similar agreement with the Italian Cabinet of Sonnino that evaded taking part in the collective demarche of the Allies, which would expand considerably the programme of actions in Greece, outlined by the conference in Rome¹⁷. For this end, Lloyd George, Bazili and Sonnino met in Savoy at the beginning of April. As Izvolsky informed P. N. Milyukov about it on April 8(21), “since the Greek government has failed to carry out its obligations, the French government considers the Powers free from their promises and demands a more effective policy in respect to Greece and King Constantine”. As a result of the meeting, the French government was given carte blanche in Greece, and the dethronement of the Greek monarch was not entirely out of the question¹⁸.

One of the key issues discussed at the meeting was the form of Greece’s state organisation and a possibility of establishing a republic in view of strong Republican trends, which was also shared by Venizelos’ followers. However, taking into account sharp objections of the Italian side, the French government

* i.e., USA joining the war on the Entente side on April 6(19), 1917.

16. *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 9(22) aprelya 1917 g.

17. Leon G. B., *Greece and the Great Powers*, p. 473; Adamov E. A., *Evropeiskie Derzhavy i Gretsya v epokhu mirovoi voyny*, p. 182-183.

18. *Razdel Aziatskoi Turtsii*. M., 1924, p. 319; Adamov E. A., *Evropeiskie Derzhavy...*, p. 184.

said it would refuse to support the Greek Republicans. This was declared by Ribot and then by Lloyd George¹⁹. Thus, the destiny of the Greek republic was predetermined.

Russian diplomacy headed by the Cadet leader P. N. Milyukov agreed to back France in the Greek problem, counting on the Middle-East policy in an attempt to gain a foothold in the Straits²⁰. The Provisional Government ceased to aid Constantine in any way and buried in oblivion its former promise not to encourage the development of the Venizelos movement in Greece²¹. This meant following the example of London and Paris, and the Russian bourgeois newspapers reflected it by publishing numerous materials from the English and French press. *Utro Rossii* carried the call of a French journalist Jacque Erbet from *Echo de Paris* "to clear the perfidious nest built around the Greek royal family, in order to secure the rear of the Sarrail army"²². The correspondent of *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva* reported from Paris: "The local press point to an extremely grave situation in Greece and inevitable and logically ensuing definite interference prompted to the Powers of Entente by their awareness of the rights and duties in regard to justice...". Clemenceau exclaimed in *Homme enchanté*: "It is high time to show our cards!"²³. Many Russian official newspapers expressed viewpoints similar to those of the Western press on the eve of the general offensive, including the Front in Saloniki. In the opinion of *Russian Invalid*'s military reviewer G. Klerzhe, "it was necessary for General Sarrail to shift from the language of diplomacy to that of cannons and machine-guns"²⁴.

At the Saint-Jean-de-Maurien meeting of April 19, 1917, English and French imperialists divided the spheres of influence in the Middle East. They agreed to transfer Smirna (Izmir) to the possession of Italy, thus winning it over to their side. Now, as Ribot put it, France could consider itself absolutely free from commitments in respect to the Athenian government. From that moment, France did not conceal its purpose, i.e., to dethrone Constantine²⁵.

The decisions of the Paris meeting in April on the Greek problem boiled down to its expanded occupation by the Allies and a backing to the Venizelos movement²⁶.

19. *Razdel Aziatskoi Turtsii*, p. 319.

20. Ignatiev A. V., *Vneshnyaya politika*. Vremennogo Pravitelstva M., 1974, p. 161.

21. *Ibidem*, s. 160-161.

22. *Utro Rossii*, 9(22) aprelya 1917 g.

23. *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva*, 14(27) aprelya 1917 g.

24. *Russkii Invalid*, 16(29) aprelya 1917 g.

25. Leon G. B., *Greece and the Great Powers*, pp. 473-475.

26. *Razdel Aziatskoi Turtsii*, p. 330.

The new members of the Provisional Government in Russia agreed to that decision without delay, because they thought the unity with the Allies was indispensable against the background of complex military and political conditions, which showed its growing dependence on the Allies.

Utro Rossii published on April 21 a report of its correspondent from Yass under a sensational heading "Revolution in Greece", which read: "According to information from Saloniki obtained by the local diplomatic circles, King Constantine has been dethroned, the Lambros Cabinet fallen down and a new government formed with Venizelos on the head"²⁷. The resignation of the Lambros monarchist cabinet was the only authentic fact; there was a little over a month before the rest of the events happened. Such "foretelling" of the events showed that there was no doubt as to the lines along which they would develop.

The same newspaper carried yet another editorial late in April against the Greek king and his crowned relatives. It pointed out that "the revolutionary movement launched by Venizelos" failed because of the "pressure" on the part of certain circles of the "Allied Powers". "Censorship of the tsarist government", the newspaper went on, "did not allow to name them. It is an open secret today what kind of "influential circles" they were. It should be recalled that King Constantine's mother, Grand Duchess Olga Constantinovna, has lived in Russia since the beginning of the war in Europe, and she was quite closely connected with the former Russian court on which she exerted considerable influence. She tried more than once to persuade Nicholas II to defend her cousin, despite the latter's obvious Germanophile policy". The newspaper justly stressed, at the same time, that "the Russian court was not alone in rendering assistance to King Constantine against Venizelos". "Doubtless", the newspaper wrote, "there was also "pressure" on his own government by King Constantine's British cousin, King George and his mother, the Greek king's own aunt, the widowed British Queen. There were transparent hints at this more than once in British Parliament. This is also what the Balkan expert Abbott says in his book "Turkey, Greece and the Great Powers" published recently. The newspaper of Moscow industrialists surmised that since "Constantine's position has been shaken with the downfall of Romanovs, there will evidently" be time when Venizelos is given a free hand, to a certain degree, by his "allies", the Great Powers"²⁸.

27. *Utro Rossii*, 21 aprelya (4 maya) 1917 g.

28. *Ibidem*.

In blockading the coasts of Old Greece, the Allied Powers had hoped to cause the discontent of the people, which might be used against the king and his government.

Beginning with January-February 1917, the Russian press published information about famine in Old Greece brought about by the blockade of the Greek coast. "The population is suffering greatly from the blockade", reported E. Rafail from Athens. "Some of the districts are actually famine-stricken, and a number of people are officially registered to have starved to death: 6 in Yannina, 5 in Messina, and 7 in Prevaesus. In other districts there is complete lack of bread, flour and other foodstuffs. The whole country is threatened with famine"²⁹. As a result of the blockade, the streets were darkened, many factories closed and the Greek working people lost their means of subsistence. All this led to the people's discontent with the Athenian government which was soon expressed openly. According to the information published by *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, meetings of protest against the king's policy took place in Volos, Larissa and Trikkala under the slogans "We are starving to death!" "We want bread!"³⁰. There was also information about a potential uprising in Old Greece and the workers' unrest³¹. Shortly after, the newspaper reported about the demonstration at the docks of Piraeus demanding support to Venizelos³².

The reports said about "the flight of a great number of soldiers from the king's army" as a result of famine³³. *Novoye Vremya* and *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva* published in the issues of May 6(19) information that no bread was sold any longer in Athens, that the political crisis was growing and the government failed in its attempts to overcome it³⁴.

Growing dissatisfaction of the population with the king and the government, that were blamed for all the misfortunes which had befallen Greece by the Venizelos followers as well as the Allies, created favourable conditions for the development of the Republican movement in the country.

A meeting held in Saloniki on May 26 was attended by 40,000 people. The resolution "adopted by loud cries of approval", as Russian correspondents reported, said about the dethronement of the ruling dynasty and demanded mobilisation. The resolution was drowned in the shouts: "Long Live

29. *Utro Rossii*, 28 yanvarya (10 fevralya) 1917 g.

30. *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 14(27) fevralya 1917 g.

31. *Russkii Invalid*, 15(28) fevralya 1917 g.

32. *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 18 fevralya (1 marta) 1917 g.

33. *Russkie Vedomosti*, 13(26) fevralya 1917 g.

34. *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva*, 6(19) maya 1917 g.

the Four-Partite Entente!” “Long Live Venizelos!” “Long Live the Republic!”³⁵. *Vestnik* and *Novoye Vremya* published simultaneously the PTA telegram concerning the workers’ meeting organised in Athens on May 1 with Greek Socialist Drakulis in the chair, who took a collaborationist stand at that time. He said that “only the Allies’ victory could ensure lasting and stable peace which the working people need so badly”. According to him, the war should go on until the Allies win. A majority of those present voted for the resolution, which stressed that “Greek workers want peace, but peace that should be “non-German”³⁶.

Politically weak, the Greek working people that did not yet have an organisation of their own, thought that the only outcome from the situation obtaining the country was to overthrow the dynasty, proclaim a republic, form a new national government with E. Venizelos in the head as the only worthy political leader in Greece, and join the war on the side of the Allies.

As documents show, Venizelos was aware of the Allies’ refusal to assist in establishing the republican system in Greece³⁷; however, he wanted to have the Greek people misled by his Republican inclinations. He told correspondents of Western newspapers that the US participation and the Russian revolution had led to deep changes in his views, and although he used to be an adherent to Constitutional monarchy, now he “considered that proclaiming a republic was the only remedy for Greece”³⁸.

From early May, Russia’s bourgeois press carried almost daily reports from Greece, reflecting growing Republican movement, telegrams about meetings and rallies in Greek cities demanding the overthrow of Constantine and expressing support to Venizelos and the Allies. The PTA telegram, for instance, published on May 21 (June 3) by *Novoye Vremya* said: “The liberal circles of Greek society state that no compromise is conceivable between liberal Greece and the ruling dynasty, because they represent two entirely different worlds of ideas and aspirations. Contradictions between them are as deep and irreconcilable as those between the democratic regime in Russia and autocratic ambitions of the Hohenzollern dynasty. “Any compromise” will only check, and not cure the disease”. The conclusion read as follows: “A radical operation is needed”³⁹.

35. *Utro Rossii*, 26 aprelya (9 maya) 1917 g.

36. *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva*, 6(19) maya 1917 g. *Novoye Vremya*, 6(19) maya 1917 g.

37. Leon G. B., *Greece and the Great Powers*, p. 3.

38. *Novoye Vremya*, 14(27) maya 1917 g.

39. *Novoye Vremya*, 21 maya (3 iyunya) 1917 g.

“The radical operation” was shortly performed by the French and British diplomacy with the assistance of the Navy that landed troops in Old Greece. The plan of the operation was coordinated by Lloyd George and Ribot and their meeting early in May. France managed to obtain *carte blanche* in Greece, which it had expected for a long time, and Britain could, by mutual consent, withdraw some of its troops from the front in Saloniki, where military operations carried out by Sarraill late in April—early in May turned out to a complete failure⁴⁰.

The Provisional Government realized that to implement that plan meant, first, France’s growing influence in Greece; secondly, it decreased the possibility of coordinated action of the Saloniki forces and the Russian Army, since a part of the Sarraill army had to participate in the revolution; thirdly, it was fraught with aggravated political situation on the Balkan Peninsula in case of a civil war in Greece; and finally, Petrograd feared the great-power ambitions of Venizelos, of which diplomacy and the government were well informed, unlike the Russian press. Therefore, new Minister of Foreign Affairs M. N. Tereschenko gave a negative answer to Ribot’s inquiry about Russia’s attitude to the Anglo-French plan of the revolution in Greece on May 19. He thought it “untimely and dangerous” and “contrary to the Allies’ joint interests”⁴¹.

The Allies, disregarding the opinion of the “provisional”, launched the operation they had been preparing for a long time.

A well-known French diplomat Jonnart, appointed “Supreme Commissar” of the Allied Powers, arrived on a special mission to Athens at the end of May 1917. On June 1, he categorically demanded, threatening the landing of 10,000-strong troops, the abdication of King Constantine, on behalf of the three “powers—protectors”, Britain, France and Russia (in spite of its disagreement). He published an appeal to the Greek people for the restoration of the constitutional rights and Greece’s unity, which also included the lifting of the blockade. In the event of counteraction, he threatened with repressions against Greece⁴². As *Novoye Vremya* reported, military forces of the Allies were brought up to the Greek capital: 10 large troop-carriers. They started landing in Piraeus, on the Corinth Isthmus on June 4(17), while the Allies’ armies moved to the neutral zone in Fessalia⁴³.

40. Ignatiev A. V., *Vneshnyaya politika Vremennogo Pravitelstva*, p. 249.

41. Adamov E. A., *Evropeiskie Derzhavy...*, p. 190, 193.

42. Ignatiev A. V., *Vneshnyaya politika...*, p. 250.

43. *Novoye Vremya*, 6(19) iyunya 1917 g. *Novoye Vremya*, 4(17) iyunya 1917 g.

In order to calm down the Provisional Government, French diplomacy made some formal concessions to it on other issues. Tereschenko had to submit and informed the Russian Ambassadors in London and Paris on June 7 that the Provisional Government thought it “ungraceful to shun the Allied governments in recognizing the fact that the revolution has taken place”⁴⁴. As the *Novoye Vremya* correspondent reported, the news of the abdication was taken by the population in Old Greece without commotion. Constantine’s second son Prince Alexander was appointed his successor⁴⁵. All this was done to the accompaniment of reassuring speeches by Allied diplomacy. French Minister of Foreign Affairs did not spare himself and said, for instance, “the Powers-Protectors do not want to coerce Greece, they only want to reconcile the two hostile parties for the good of the country”⁴⁶.

The bourgeois press both in the West and in Russia, that was condemning Allied diplomacy for its imaginary indecision, welcomed enthusiastically the news about the punitive expedition, which was also approved by the Russian newspapers of all trends in their editorials of June 1(14).

The Cadet newspaper *Russkiye Vedomosti*, closely connected with the Provisional Government, wrote the following: “What has happened could have been witnessed by us long ago, had it not been for France that had to consider the wishes of the former Russian court”. In the opinion of the newspaper, “the Russian revolution gave the French Republic freedom in this respect”. It also stated that “There is no doubt that of all neutral countries, Greece was destined to drain the most bitter cup of woe as a result of the world war”. However, the Cadet newspaper believed that the cause of it all was “the strife between the Germanophile king and Greece’s most prominent political figure, Venizelos, leaning for support on the majority of the Chamber of Deputies”. The newspaper thought that now, “when the international network of lies entangling it is torn up and every thing gets its proper name, the situation will improve in Greece”⁴⁷.

The newspaper of the General Staff was rejoicing: at long last, the protracted crisis in relations between the Allies and Greece was “settled radically” and “the causes paralysing the Allies’ freedom and successes on the Balkan Peninsula were eliminated”; “now, that the main culprit of Greece’s hostile attitude to the Allies is removed, its future policy seems to be clear”. The

44. Ignatiev A. V., *Vneshnyaya politika...*, p. 250.

45. *Novoye Vremya*, 1(4) iyunya 1917 g.

46. *Ibidem*.

47. *Russkie Vedomosti*, 1(14) iyunya 1917 g.

newspaper did not doubt that it “cannot run counter to the aspirations of the Allies”; it was convinced that “Greece can only get rid of the aftermath of the war if German militarism is defeated”⁴⁸. This opinion was shared by reactionary *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* considering that “the Greek people have only one way to cleanse itself of the disgrace inflicted on it by the treacherous king...”⁴⁹.

In its extensive editorial, *Utro Rossii* approved the measures taken by the Allies that wanted to see Greece “strong and independent”. “The question is”, the newspaper went on to say, “what kind of state system can make Greece strong and independent”. This was for the Greeks themselves to decide. Nevertheless, the newspaper expressed its own opinion, “Greece has a State leader whose prestige is recognized both within the country and beyond..., we mean Eleutherios Venizelos. The great Greek is valued and respected by the Allies that are linked with Venizelos by common political views and identity of national purposes”. As far as the state system was concerned, newspapermen in Moscow were convinced that “the example set by Great Russia could not but influence the minds of the Greek people. The reign of Constantine and everything it had entailed, can only help the idea of a republic spread among the Greeks. In the person of Venizelos, Greece has a worthy leader of such a republic”. The newspaper wrote in conclusion: “Proclaiming a republic in Greece is the most effective and direct way to make it strong and independent”⁵⁰.

Meanwhile, the destiny of the Greek Republic was determined long beforehand. The delegate of the Provisional Government, speaking at the Allies’ Paris conference in May 1917 in favour of the Greek people’s right to choose a form of government for themselves⁵¹, found himself in isolation.

Novoye Vremya published the most extensive editorial devoted to King Constantine’s abdication. The newspaper proclaimed, forgetting about its own monarchist past: “In case Greek democracy chooses to organise without a monarch, Russia’s allied democracies will render it every kind of assistance”. Republicans from *Novoye Vremya* were mostly concerned lest “Greek democracy” should fall into the hands of Bolsheviks. “We wait, calmly and hopefully, for further developments in Greece”⁵², the editors concluded,

48. *Russkii Invalid*, 1(14) iyunya 1917 g.

49. *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 2(15) iyunya 1917 g.

50. *Utro Rossii*, 1(14) iyunya 1917 g.

51. Adamov E. A., *Evropeiskie Derzhavy...*, p. 359, 360.

52. *Novoye Vremya*, 1(14) iyunya 1917 g.

without having any idea of the bitterness and sufferings those “further developments” would inflict on the Greek people. A similar opinion was expressed by other bourgeois newspapers, for instance, *Rech* of the Cadets, edited by former Foreign Minister P. N. Milyukov, wrote that King Constantine signed the act of abdication “under pressure from Allied diplomacy”⁵³. A different view of the events was expressed by A. Kerensky’s newspaper *Dyelo Naroda* published in Petrograd since March 1917. It condemned the Allies’ actions in Greece. The editors in “self-determination for Greece” were mocking the statements of Western diplomats on the “accomplishments of self-determination in Greece”. It read as follows: “Following the un-coerced annexation of Albania by Italy, comes forced “self-determination for Greece”: two brilliant lessons within a week on the part of the coalition governments devoted to “peace without annexations and on the basis of peoples’ self-determination...”. “Ethics is what is important for Socialists”, the newspaper continued. “And from this point of view, it is clear to everyone that there is no essential difference between imperialist Germany’s robber attack on Belgium, Austria’s attack on Serbia and the present “advance into the interior of Greece” on the part of the Allied governments”⁵⁴.

Exposing the Powers’ policy in Greece in words, the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks gave every kind of support to the coalition Provisional Government in deeds.

Double-facedness of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, in particular, on the Greek events, was denounced by Lenin in his brilliant polemic article “The Laugh Is On You!” published in *Pravda* on June 3 (16).

“*Dyelo Naroda*”, he wrote, “the ministerial paper of Kerensky, Chernov and Co., publishes a laughing editorial entitled “Self-determination for Greece”. The S.R.s’ said that Greek “self-determination would have been admirable had it been sincere”. In admitting personal sincerity of the people who wrote the editorial, Lenin questioned their sincerity in politics, “that is, in that sphere of human relations which involves not individuals, but the millions, is a correspondence between word and deed that lends itself to verification”. Subjected to such “verification” the article in *Dyelo Naroda* did not hold water. “The editorial in *Dyelo Naroda*”, explained Lenin according to his point of view, “is insincere because it is precisely the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, precisely the Kerenskys and the Chernovs, its leaders, who support the Ministry of subjugation... I beg

53. *Rech*, 1 (14 iyunya) 1917 g.

54. *Dyelo Naroda*, 1(14) iyunya 1917 g.

your pardon, the Ministry of Greek “self-determination” together with citizens Tsereteli and Skobelev”. Although Lenin agreed that there was no difference between the two shameless acts of pressure on minor states exerted by Germany and the Entente, he stressed that “this is not at all a question of “ethics”, as the S.R.s believe, but a matter of pure politics”. Blaming the Socialist-Revolutionaries as accomplices, the Bolshevik leader wrote: “A robber attack—t h a t is what you are participating in, citizens S.R.s, citizens Mensheviks, a s m e m b e r s o f t h e g o v e r n m e n t”. V. I. Lenin concluded the article with the power of denunciation so characteristic of him: “The laugh is on you, gentlemen of the S.R. and Menshevik fold! You are laughing at your own policy of trust in the capitalists and the government of the capitalists! You are laughing at your own role of eloquent and bombastic servants of capitalism and imperialism, servants in the rank of ministers!”⁵⁵.

In his “Speech on the Attitude Towards the Provisional Government” delivered on June 4(17), 1917, at the First Pan-Russian Congress of Soviet Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies and published by the *Pravda* newspaper shortly after, Lenin said that “the nature of a war is determined by what class wages it, not by what is written on paper”. “You can write on paper anything you like”, he addressed once again the authors of Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik newspapers. “But as long as the capitalist class has a majority in the government, the war will remain an imperialist war no matter what you write, how eloquent you are, no matter how many near-Socialist Ministers you have. ...And the cases of Albania, Greece and Persia have shown this so clearly and graphically...”⁵⁶.

Greek developments caused indignation in the democratic layers of Russian society. As *Novoye Vremya* already informed on June 4, one part of Russia’s public opinion was in a “strained condition”⁵⁷.

Tereshchenko had to make excuses explaining allegedly that long distances and urgent affairs did not allow Russia to take an active part in the Powers’ recent sessions devoted to the Greek problem, and the government had to confine itself to expressing its considerations and remarks post factum⁵⁸.

Vestnik of June 23 (July 6), published the announcement of the government on the impending conference of the Allies that was to take place in Paris around

55. Lenin V. I., *Polnoye sobranie sochinenii*, t. 32, p. 259, 260.

56. Lenin V. I., *Polnoye sobranie sochinenii*, t. 25, p. 12. The speech was published in *Pravda*, 15(28) and 16(29) June, 1917.

57. *Novoye Vremya*, 4(17) iyunya 1917 g.

58. *Rech*, 7(20) iyunya 1917 g.; Ignatiev A. V., *Vneshnyaya politika...*, p. 250.

the middle of July. "The need for the conference", the announcement read, "is brought about by an extremely complex political and strategic situation in the Balkans and the desire of the Allies to coordinate their views on those issues and outline their general trend". The Russian representatives were instructed "to defend the viewpoint of the Provisional Government in the discussions of the political issues of the Balkans and to spare no efforts on insisting on the general principles of foreign policies proclaimed by Russian democracy...". As the government announced, the instructions included, in particular, "the Greek problem in view of the recent developments". "On this issue", the announcement said, "we could not but show our negative attitude to the means used to force the replacement of one king by another". "Of course", the provisional explained, "in this we were guided not by our desire to give backing to King Constantine, whose personal policy we have condemned and continue to do so, but by in-admissibility of interference in the Greek people's internal affairs. This is what made us raise respective objections and refuse our Army to participate in the South-Greek expedition. In our negotiations with the Allies we insisted that the Greek people solely had the right to establish the form of government and the State system on their own and declared that the sympathy of the Russian people that has just thrown off the shackles of all dynasties favors a similar free decision of the Greek people itself"⁵⁹.

Russkiye Vedomosti of the Cadets responded with a poisonous article, in which they accused the government of inefficiency and took the announcement as an "act of our home policy, the need to silence the protest of the parties that regard the Allies' settlement of the protracted crisis in Greece through violation as an offence to the international political principles they adhere to". "Dethronement of King Constantine therefore is the key issue of the government's announcement". The newspaper expressed its unconditional support to the Allied chastizers⁶⁰.

Although the Provisional Government expressed its disapproval of the Allies' action in Greece in the press, it actually reconciled itself to the actions of Anglo-French diplomacy and the military, thus confirming what V. I. Lenin said about its policy. As a result of the failure of the July offensive organised by Kerensky, the Western Powers ceased to take into account the opinion of the Russian government altogether, while its diplomacy was pushed to the background in dealing with the Greek problem.

59. *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva*, 27 iyunya (10 iyulya) 1917 g.

60. *Russkie Vedomosti*, 22 iyulya (4 avgusta) 1917 g.

The summer issues of *Novoye Vremya*, *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, *Utro Rossii*, etc. contain only information about lifting the blockade by the Allies, E. Venizelos coming to power late in June, the breaking-off of relations between Greece and the Central Powers on July 20, and mobilisation of the Greek army.

The last extensive section of materials on Greece included news about the Greek's new king, Alexander, swearing in on July 22 (August 4). Particular stress was laid on the words about Greece joining the war and its purposes. The king concluded his speech saying: "The current world catastrophe must decide the final destiny of Hellenism. What is to be lost today will never be restored...". Addressing the Head of the new government, E. Venizelos, Alexander said: "I entrust You with the concern about the defence of our nation's lofty interests, and wishing You every success, I prey for Your help from above"⁶¹.

That was the reaction of Russian newspapers on one of the burning questions of the Greek policy.

61. *Ibidem*.