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GREEK NATIONAL CLAIMS AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE  
OF 1946

As early as September 1941 the Greek government in exile raised the question of the Greek national claims with the Foreign Office and the State Department. On September 29th prime minister E. Tsouderos in a memorandum stated the claims: a) Realignment of Greece's northern frontiers, b) Northern Epirus, c) Dodecanese, and d) Cyprus<sup>1</sup>. In this memorandum Tsouderos expressed, first, his confidence that Great Britain and the United States would furnish all possible assistance for the re-establishment of an enduring and just peace. The recognition of Greek rights, the prime minister argued, "would constitute the most concrete encouragement in the hard struggle against oppression and hunger which the Greek people are today waging with such fortitude and daring"<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, he believed that, after the war Greece's surplus population should be able to emigrate to Cyrenaica and Libya. Such an emigration would solve Greece's demographic problem<sup>3</sup>.

The Greek proposal for readjustment of the northern frontiers affected not only the Greek-Bulgarian frontier up to the Rhodope mountains but also the realignment of the border with Yugoslavia in the region of the Monastir gap. According to Tsouderos, important considerations of political expedience as well as security principles dictated this readjustment.

As a result of this memorandum, the Foreign Office asked professor Arnold Toynbee to write a paper on the subject of the Greek claims to Northern Epirus from ethnological, economic and strategic points of view. Indeed, Toynbee prepared such a paper and concluded... "that the decision taken by the Powers in the 1920s in fixing the Southern frontier was on the whole a just and wise one. The existence of an independent Albania was a necessity to the peace of that part of Europe, and an independent Albania

1. Public Record Office, Foreign Office (FO) 371/29712/8810, Greek Memorandum, London, 29 September 1941.

2. *Ibid.*

3. FO 371/29817/8008, Conversation between Tsouderos and Lord Harlech, 27 August 1941. E. Tsouderos, *Διπλωματικά Παρασκήνια, 1941-1944*, Athens, 1950, p. 100.

was possible only if the southern provinces were included"<sup>4</sup>.

Officials at the Foreign Office, as Pierson Dixon of the southern Department, felt that the Albanian question should not be settled purely on ethnological grounds. On wider grounds there were strong arguments in favor of the Greek claim. The Greeks had defeated the Italians and were forced to abandon the territory only in the course of the German invasion. At the end of the war, therefore, the whole Greek nation would undoubtedly feel entitled to retain the area on which their arms had set their stamp. Moreover, Dixon thought that Britain certainly had to reward the Greeks for the part they played in the war<sup>5</sup>. Very characteristic is the fact that since, in the spring of 1941, Winston Churchill had vetoed the offer of Cyprus to Greece<sup>6</sup>, apart from the Dodecanese, there was nothing short of Northern Epirus which could be offered to her by way of territorial reward. However, the question of the future of Albania contained so many uncertain factors that Dixon and other British officials did not wish to commit themselves in any way. They were afraid that the Greek demands would produce a Yugoslav claim in northern Albania<sup>7</sup>.

Indeed, on November 1st the exiled Yugoslav government expressed its concern about the future of Albania and, assuming that Greece would put forward claims, they noted that if the Greeks were able to annex southern Albania, it would be extremely difficult to prevent a violent agitation in the Montenegrin province for the annexation of considerable areas of northern Albania to Yugoslavia, which would end in the partition of Albania and would be likely to lead to endless difficulties and minority problems. The Yugoslav government felt, therefore, that it might be best to come to some arrangement with Greece by which the integrity and independence of Albania should be maintained, but the country placed under joint Yugoslav and Greek protection<sup>8</sup>. Tsouderos, however, made it clear that he did not favor efforts to promote the partition of Albania but reminded the Yugoslav government of the claim to Northern Epirus<sup>9</sup>.

4. FO 371/29715/9607, Toynbee to Foreign Office, Balliol College, Oxford, 27 October 1941.

5. FO 371/29715/9607, Dixon's letter to Toynbee, London, 9 October 1941.

6. For a detailed account see C. Svolopoulos, "Anglo-Hellenic talks on Cyprus during the Axis campaign against Greece", *Balkan Studies*, 23 (1982), pp. 199-208.

7. FO 371/29715/9607, Minutes of British officials 29 October 1948.

8. FO 371/29711/9622, Rendel (British Minister to the Yugoslav government) to Foreign Office, London, 1 November 1941.

9. Tsouderos, *Διπλωματικά Παρασκήνια*, p. 99.

The Greek and Yugoslav aspirations on Albania disturbed the Soviet government, which on 13 January 1942 enquired British views about the future of the country and asked whether Britain had defined its policy. In their view, there would be an independent Albania after the war. At this point the British government was not anxious to commit itself since there were difficult frontier questions and claims from Greece and Yugoslavia. Moreover, they thought that the time was not appropriate<sup>10</sup>.

The British government, throughout the spring and summer of 1942, considered the possibility of making a declaration regarding the independence of Albania. The main argument against making such a statement was the fact that Britain could not commit herself about Albania because she wished to keep her hands free about territorial questions in South-Eastern Europe in general. Then suddenly in the fall of 1942 the Foreign Office was of the opinion that the British government should make a declaration recognizing the post-war independence of Albania since there were particular advantages to be gained by doing so<sup>11</sup>. According to A. Eden, minister for Foreign Affairs, the main points were as follows:

- a) "We are now on the offensive in the Mediterranean, and a declaration about the future of Albania would be interpreted in the Balkans as evidence of this spirit.
- b) It would be better to say what we have got to say about Albania now, while we are adopting a stern line towards Italy in our political warfare, rather than later when, if circumstances are favourable, it may suit us to offer inducements to the Italians in order to undermine their war effort.
- c) A declaration recognizing Albanian independence would lead to an increase in resistance to the Italians in Albania, and would thus increase the commitments of the Axis forces in the Balkans. S.O.E. consider that such a declaration would help them in their work among the Albanian guerrillas"<sup>12</sup>.

The decision by Britain to issue the declaration concerning Albania caused great concern to Tsouderos, who, although had no objection to the declara-

10. FO 371/33107/332, Conversation of Eden with Soviet ambassador Maisky, London 13 January 1942.

11. FO 371/33107/7685, Memorandum by P. Dixon, London, 15 November 1942.

12. FO 371/33107/8174, Memorandum by Eden to War Cabinet, London, 1 December 1942.

tion, emphasized the fact that the claim on Northern Epirus was of such vital importance that Greece would not take part in any settlement that her rights were not taken under consideration<sup>13</sup>. In contrast to Tsouderos, Panayotis Canellopoulos, vice-premier of Greek government in-exile and minister of National Defence, reacted very dynamically thinking that such a declaration would have disastrous repercussions in Greece. He protested to the British and threatened resignation of the Greek ministers resident in Cairo and the commanders of the Greek armed forces<sup>14</sup>. As a result of Canellopoulos' reaction, when Eden declared in the House of Commons on 17 December 1942 that Great Britain wished to see Albania restored to independence, he made a qualifying statement that all questions of her frontiers should be left to the Peace Conference to settle<sup>15</sup>. The Soviet government, on 18th December, made a similar statement<sup>16</sup>.

Eden, amplifying his statement to the Greek government, emphasized that it was the policy of the British government not to discuss territorial claims during the war<sup>17</sup>. Generally, the attitude of the Foreign Office was that the Greek claim amounted to about one-quarter of the total area of Albania. The cession of all these districts to Greece would render the viability of Albania, both politically and economically, precarious in the extreme, and it was doubtful whether in such circumstances Albania would be able to survive as an independent state. On the other hand, neither the whole nor any part of Northern Epirus was economically vital to Greece<sup>18</sup>.

Throughout the 1943-44 period, the Greek government was primarily concerned with the claim on Albania and the Dodecanese islands. On 4 August 1943, the Greek ambassador Thanasis Angidis in a communication to Eden noted "my government feels obliged to present their just claims against the Kingdom of Italy. These are twofold and concern the Dodecanese islands and Northern Epirus". Again speaking in London on 6 October 1943, Angidis

13. Tsouderos, *Διπλωματικά Παρασκήνια*, pp. 138-139.

14. P. Canellopoulos, *Ημερολόγιο 31 Ματίου 1942 - 4 Ιανουαρίου 1945*, Athens 1977, pp. 241-249.

15. FO 371/33107, Statement of Eden in the House of Commons, 17 December 1942.

16. A little earlier on 11 December 1942 Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, had stated in Washington that the United States had never recognized the annexation of Albania by Italy and that the restoration of Albania's independence was a natural consequence of the Atlantic Charter. Tsouderos, *Διπλωματικά Παρασκήνια*, p. 134.

17. FO 371/37147/4447, Eden to Tsouderos, London, 15 June 1943.

18. FO 371/43567/10439, Paper on the Frontiers of Albania, Foreign Office, 30 June 1944.

claimed that Greece ought to have restored to her all those lands which had been "Greek from time immemorial"; the Greeks could not again see their unredeemed brothers left under the rule of their Italian and Albanian neighbors"<sup>19</sup>.

Acquisition of the Dodecanese islands had undoubtedly been one of the main objectives of Greek foreign policy since the termination of Turkish rule over the islands in 1912. In view of the indisputable Greek character of the population, Greek claims had rested almost exclusively on ethnic rather than on strategic or economic arguments<sup>20</sup>. The Greek government considered that Italy's oppressive rule and the fortunes of war had completely eliminated Italy from consideration and that the services they had rendered the Allied cause in their Albanian campaign against the Italians gave them a special claim on the Dodecanese<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, the fact that Turkey, the only possible rival claimer, had waived its interest indicated that there would be no great difficulty for the Greeks to gain sovereignty over the islands after the war<sup>22</sup>.

In the case of Cyprus the Greek government rested its claim on two arguments. On the one hand, they recalled the British offer of 1915 to cede Cyprus if Greece entered the war on their side and argued that, although that offer was not accepted at that time, Greece had on two subsequent occasions gone to war on their side without making any conditions and in recognition of that Britain should give Cyprus to Greece. On the other hand, they emphasized the Greek character of the island since four-fifths of the population were Greek<sup>23</sup>. It is very illuminating the fact that the Foreign Office thought the Greek claim was not as strong as that on the Dodecanese, since the Turks living on the island constituted the remaining one-fifth of the population which amounted to about 80,000. Thus, although the force of the Greek claim on ethnic grounds could not be denied, there were other considerations which had to be taken into account before any decision could be made<sup>24</sup>.

19. *Ibid.*

20. FO 371/37248/9740, Memorandum on Greece's Post-war territorial claims, Foreign Office, 29 September 1943.

21. United States National Archives, Office of Strategic Services' (OSS), Research and Analysis Report No. 2662, Paper on Greek territorial claims, Washington, 8 February 1945, p. 46.

22. FO 371/37248/9740, Memorandum on Greece's Post-war territorial claims, Foreign Office, 29 September 1943.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

After the return of the Greek government to Athens, the prime minister George Papandreou in his first speech on 18 October 1944 declared "...Northern Epirus is an inseparable part of Greece and it has recently been hal- lowed by the tombs of our heroes. The Dodecanese must be ours, but there is also the question of security...the time has come for Greece to obtain a backbone in Macedonia and Thrace..."<sup>25</sup>. A little earlier on 7 August 1944, Philip Dragoumis, under-secretary for Foreign Affairs, specifically laid claim to the southern portion of Yugoslav Macedonia (including Monastir and Prilep) and to parts of Pirin Macedonia up to a point slightly south of Samo- kov, the Rhodope mountains to the edge of the Philippoupoli plain and the Khaskovo tobacco-growing region in the east<sup>26</sup>.

In 1945, Greek foreign policy, besides the objective of getting aid for economic recovery, continued chiefly to be concerned with the problem of the national claims. Tacitly dropped from the agenda were the matter of the Greek-Yugoslav frontier and of Cyprus. The Greek government opposed any raising of the Cyprus issue in public in order not to antagonize the British. In private, however, the Greek Regent Damaskenos, when he visited London in September 1945, noted quite frankly that it would be of the utmost value to him if as a result of his visit a decision was taken to cede Cyprus to Greece. But a refusal to do so would not affect Greece's friendship for Great Britain. The Regent, knowing that the island was of considerable strategic importance to the British, stated that the Greek government would be ready to grant bases, not merely in Cyprus but wherever they were wanted on Greek terri- tory, in order to strengthen Britain's position in the Eastern Mediterranean<sup>27</sup>. The cession of the Dodecanese he took for granted, but since that was not enough, Greece deserved further compensation, namely, in Northern Epirus<sup>28</sup>.

In the summer of 1945 the fate of Northern Epirus preoccupied the Greek government since they believed that the Greek element there was in danger of being eliminated<sup>29</sup>. The reports, however, which the British government received from the British Military Mission in Albania, did not confirm the Greek government's allegation that the Greek minority were being systemati- cally persecuted<sup>30</sup>. Nevertheless, British officials thought that the only final

25. OSS, Research and Analysis Report No. 2662, p. 35.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

27. FO 371/48344/15394, Conversation of Damaskenos with Orme Sergeant, Foreign Office, 8 September 1945.

28. *Ibid.*

29. FO 371/48351/11179, Caccia to Foreign Office, Athens, 29 June 1945.

30. FO 371/48351/11180, Caccia to Foreign Office, Athens, 29 June 1945.

solution would be an exchange of populations. However, the Albanian Chams, who lived in Greece, were already in Albania and were unwilling to return to Greece, unless their safety could be guaranteed. On the other hand, the Greek government would not have accepted such a solution since the withdrawal of the Greek minority would have deprived them of one of their strongest grounds for claiming the annexation of Northern Epirus<sup>31</sup>. The Greek government thought that the only solution would be that the Allied Powers proceed to occupy the area using Greek forces that were under Allied Command<sup>32</sup>. It is very interesting to note that Harold Caccia, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Athens, believed that the Greek government, being a caretaker government, was very sceptical of the practicability and wisdom of the suggested solution, therefore they would not press it very hard. This did not mean that they were not greatly concerned about the fate of the Greek population in southern Albania or about the Greek claims in that area, but it meant that Athens did not wish to embarrass the British at that particular moment<sup>33</sup>.

The postwar aspirations of the Greek government were best summarized by Dragoumis on August 20th, 1945. His statement indicated that Greek foreign policy was mainly concerned with the peace settlement and the national claims and with getting aid for economic recovery and for defence against Slavic aggression. Also, he warned that many of Greece's neighbors had designs against her integrity and independence<sup>34</sup>. On the other side, the Greek Communist Party had its own brand of national claims. They demanded Cyprus from Britain, Eastern Thrace from Turkey and the Dodecanese islands from Italy, and denounced the government's claims against Albania and Bulgaria. The Greek Communist Party believed that only the Soviet Union and no other power was in a position to help in the settlement of Greek national claims<sup>35</sup>. Regarding Northern Epirus, the Greek Communist Party was against the immediate occupation of the area by the Greek army. Its position was that there existed an unresolved Northern Epirus problem which should be reely settled by the people of the region themselves. But for the sake of democratic unity, Zachariadis on June 1st 1945 made the following statement.

31. *Ibid.*

32. FO 371/48351/11180, Caccia to Foreign Office, Athens, 30 June 1945.

33. FO 371/48351/11904, Caccia to Foreign Office, Athens, 14 July 1945.

34. Stephen Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers, 1944-1947*, Thessaloniki, 1963, pp. 122-123.

35. Yannis Petsopoulos, *Τα Εθνικά Σητήματα και οι Έλληνες κομμουνιστές*, Athens, 1946, pp. 24-25.

“if the majority [of democratic forces] decides in favor of the immediate military occupation of Northern Epirus by the Greek army, KKE will formulate its reservations but will submit to the majority decision”<sup>36</sup>.

This statement damaged a great deal the communist cause. It supplied the ammunition for a campaign for slandering KKE as anti-national<sup>37</sup>. A little later Zachariadis characterized the Northern Epirus statement as a serious and capital error<sup>38</sup>. According to Elisabeth Barker, Zachariadis told her in an interview in 1946 that the statement was a tactical move to appease the non-communist groups allied with the communists in EAM<sup>39</sup>.

At the 12th Plenum held in Athens from the 25th to the 27th June 1945 Zachariadis changed somehow his views. He stated that the Greek Communist Party was against any frontier changes and the Party only recognized the right of self-determination for the Dodecanese, Cyprus and Northern Epirus. Moreover, this right had to be applied also to the “Macedonian minority”. It is evident from Zachariadis’ statement that the Greek government should recognize the so called “Macedonian minority”<sup>40</sup>. This problem, coupled with Tito’s desires to create a unified Macedonia by annexing portion of Bulgarian Macedonia and Greek Macedonia to the People’s Republic of Macedonia<sup>41</sup>, complicated greatly the question of the Greek national claims.

Until the autumn of 1944 the territorial issue concerning Bulgaria and

36. *Rizospastis*, 2 June 1945. Nicos Zachariadis, *Δέκα χρόνια αγώνες, 1935-1945*, Athens, 1945, p. 252.

37. Heinz Richter, *British Intervention in Greece: From Varkiza to Civil War, February 1945 to August 1946*, London, 1986, pp. 251-252.

38. Enver Hoxha in his book *With Stalin*, Tirana, 1979, p. 170 states the following about Zachariadis’ statement “...our Party immediately protested publicly and warned that it would combat such views mercilessly. Following this event, we invited Comrade Nicos Zachariadis to a meeting, at which I criticized him severely, describing his statement as anti-Marxist and anti-Albanian stand, and I made it very clear to him that “Vorio-Epirus” which was Albanian territory, would never become Greek territory. I want to say on this occasion that comrade Nicos Zachariadis acknowledged his mistake, admitted to us that he had made a grave error in this direction and promised to correct the mistake he had made...”.

39. Elisabeth Barker, “Η Ελλάδα στο πλαίσιο των ελληνοσοβιετικών σχέσεων 1941-1947”, in *Από την Αντίσταση στον Εμφύλιο Πόλεμο*, edited by Marion Sarafis, Athens, 1982, p. 51.

40. *Αποφάσεις της 12ης Ολομέλειας της ΚΕ του ΚΚΕ*, Athens, 1945, p. 51.

41. Regarding the “Macedonian Question” in the period 1944-1945 see B. Kondis, *Η αγγλοαμερικανική πολιτική και το ελληνικό πρόβλημα, 1945-1949*, Thessaloniki, 1984, pp. 106-120.



Yugoslavia appeared to be simply whether Greek claims to an expansion of the Greek frontiers would be fulfilled. After that date, however, even the restoration of the pre-war Greek frontier began to be called in question. There were numerous statements of Yugoslav officials declaring that the "autonomous state of Macedonia" would include Thessaloniki and Greek Aegean territory as far east as the Nestos River<sup>42</sup>. Also, they rejected Greek claims to either Yugoslav or Bulgarian Macedonia and in turn accused Greek officials of persecuting "our Macedonians" in "Aegean Macedonia"<sup>43</sup>.

The British government with considerable apprehension followed the situation and the statements in favor of an autonomous Macedonia and the creation of a federation. Although the British would welcome a federation between all the Balkan states, including Turkey, they would not favor an exclusive union or federation between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, because it would isolate Greece and endanger her position as a Balkan state. Regarding Macedonia, the British government were prepared to acquiesce in the creation of a "Macedonian state" in a Yugoslav federation, but they would not wish that state to annex or lay claim to any territories whatsoever belonging to either Bulgaria or Greece on the ground that such territories were "Macedonian"<sup>44</sup>.

The activities of the Yugoslav government alarmed greatly the Greeks. Repeatedly they appealed to the British and the Americans for support against Yugoslav demands in Macedonia and for the rectification of Greece's frontiers with Bulgaria. The British government thought that it would be hopeless to expect the Greek to get any satisfaction from Bulgaria or Yugoslavia. So far Britain had been successful in preventing Bulgaria and Yugoslavia from making far reaching claims against Greek territory, but she would had been unable to maintain that position if the Greek government continued to press their claims<sup>45</sup>. Relating to Albania the Foreign Office thought, that if the Greeks were allowed to seize part of the country the inevitable result would be to drive the Albanians into the arms of Yugoslavia and to bring them permanently under Soviet influence, whereas there was just a possibility that if Greece adopted a friendly attitude towards Albania she might eventually draw her into the Greek orbit, since the Albanians had no love for the

42. OSS, Research and Analysis Report No. 2662, p. 36.

43. *Ibid.*

44. FO 371/48343/8314, Earl Halifax (Embassy at Washington) to Foreign Office, Washington, 12 May 1945.

45. FO 371/46344/10247, Churchill to Caccia, Foreign Office, 28 June 1945.

Slavs and their affinities really lay with the Turks who were the Allies of Greece. The best course of action for the British government was to explain the position frankly to the Greeks hoping to dissuade them from making any public declaration, particularly about Yugoslavia and Bulgaria<sup>46</sup>. Winston Churchill discussing the claims noted: "...our advice to the Greek government about their claims on their northern neighbours will be extremely unpalatable to them. The best antidote would be to give them a categorical assurance about our attitude towards their claims to the Dodecanese..."<sup>47</sup>. But the British government could not issue a public statement pledging their support to the Greek claim owing to the situation in north-east Italy. However, there was the possibility of including a clause in the provisional peace treaty to be concluded with Italy by which Italy would cede the Dodecanese outright to Greece. Since, according to Churchill, at this point no mention of this could be made to the Greek government, the only thing left to do was to give assurances to the Greeks that "...as far as His Majesty's Government are concerned they may await the final settlement with absolute confidence..."<sup>48</sup>.

The Greek government considered as unjust the advice repeatedly given to them by Britain and the United States to avoid excessive claims, as well as the suggestion often made that the future safety and welfare of Greece did not depend on the inclusion in her frontiers of a few square miles of Bulgarian territory. This repeated advice had created to the Greeks the impression that their arguments were not being taken into consideration and not fully understood. Athens had notified the British that no Greek government could ever conceive of a reduction of the national claims of Greece and that an internal upheaval of incalculable consequences would be the result of an eventual disillusionment of the Greek people in this respect<sup>49</sup>.

On 15 April 1946, prime minister Constantinos Tsaldaris requested that the Council of Foreign Ministers should consider the Greek territorial claims. The memorandum presented to the British stated that Britain knew well that Greece had been and would continue to be the main bulwark of the peace-loving democracies in the eastern Mediterranean and a defender of the highly strategic area of the Middle East. It was, therefore, to Britain's

46. FO 371/48344/10247, Record of a meeting on Greek territorial claims, Foreign Office, 14 June 1945.

47. FO 371/48344/10247, Churchill to Caccia, Foreign Office, 28 June 1945.

48. *Ibid.*

49. FO 371/48388/7762. Agnidis to Foreign Office, London, 14 May 1945.

advantage to help Greece fulfill this strategic role, if the need arose again, by helping Greece to secure a more dependable frontier with Bulgaria and Albania<sup>50</sup>. A similar memorandum was sent to the United States<sup>51</sup>. Throughout this period the Greek government emphasized that Greece was in a Mediterranean, rather than a Balkan setting. It would be to Britain's and to the United States' interest to strengthen Greece as a counterbalance to Soviet power in the Balkans. Greece controlled the exit to the Dardanelles and safeguarded sea communications on the way to Suez and India. Therefore the Greek government expected Britain and the United States to support their claims at the Peace Conference.

After the Greek claims had been officially presented, there was a change in Britain's policy. Up to that point, as it has been noted, the British government discouraged the Greeks from putting forward their claims on the ground that they were likely to stimulate counter claims by the Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments. However, since the claims had been presented, this policy had become out of date and the British needed to alter their tactics. Their primary concern was not to be blamed for the rejection of the Greek claims, thus the British government could not take the initiative in opposing them, particularly since they had such universal support in Greece<sup>52</sup>. But whatever the merits of the claims, it was obvious to London that Greece would not achieve them, as a result of Albanian and Bulgarian resistance which would have strong Soviet support. Therefore it was important from the point of view of Britain's position in Greece that they should support the Greeks on procedural matters, since it seemed desirable that the Soviets and not the British should be blamed for Greek failure to obtain their desiderata<sup>53</sup>.

The British, having formulated their tactics towards the question of the claims, informed prime minister Tsaldaris, that when the claims came to be considered either by the Council of Foreign Ministers or by the Peace Conference the British representatives would state that their government had not made up their minds about the Greek proposals, but held that they should

50. FO 371/58478/6379, Greek Memorandum on territorial claims, Athens, 15 April 1946.

51. United States National Archives. Department of State (DS) 868.06/4-1746, Greek Embassy to Department of State, Washington, 17 April 1946, FO 371/58886/6032, Halifax to Foreign Office, Washington, 17 April 1946.

52. FO 371/58886/6367, Foreign Office Minutes, 23 April 1946 and FO 371/58887/8942, Foreign Office to United Kingdom Delegation at Paris, London, 1 July 1946.

53. *Ibid.*

be fully investigated<sup>54</sup>. Moreover, when Tsaldaris visited London in July 1946 the official communiqué issued at the close of his talks with the British noted "Greece's territorial claims against Bulgaria and Albania were discussed and His Majesty's Government expressed their determination that they should receive a full and fair hearing"<sup>55</sup>.

Regarding the claim against Bulgaria, the Council of Foreign Ministers on 8 May 1946 proposed that the frontiers should remain unchanged. This proposal was, however, tentative until Greece and Bulgaria had presented their views<sup>56</sup>. The decision of the Foreign Ministers very much alarmed the Greek government. Dragoumis, in identical letters to London and Washington, expressed his deep concern about this decision. He once again emphasized the importance of the strategic position of Greece in the eastern Mediterranean both for the United States and Great Britain. The rectification of the northern Greek border was a necessity. Without a rectified frontier, an invader could easily outflank the Dardanelles and occupy the northern coast of the Aegean<sup>57</sup>.

At the second session of the Council of Foreign Ministers on 27 June 1946, Greece gained the Dodecanese. Molotov proposed that the Dodecanese would be given to Greece as soon as the Italian Peace treaty was signed<sup>58</sup>. The news of the award of the Dodecanese to Greece was greeted with notable enthusiasm on the part of the government, the Parliament and the press. Tsaldaris expressed the gratitude of the whole of the Greek people toward the Council of Foreign Ministers. Contrasting with official views, general public showed little enthusiasm, possibly because they regarded the Dodecanese as Greek and its cession as only simple justice<sup>59</sup>.

At the Paris Peace Conference —29 July to 11 October 1946—, Greece presented claims totaling \$ 700,000,000 in reparation from Bulgaria, for damages suffered during the occupation. Tsaldaris demanded not only reparation, but also territorial security through the readjustment of the frontier with Bulgaria and the cession of Northern Epirus. Moreover, the Prime Mini-

54. FO 371/58886/7057, British Embassy at Athens to Tsaldaris, Athens, 4 May 1946.

55. FO 371/58986/10729, Foreign Office to Embassy at Athens, London, 20 July 1946.

56. FO 371/58886/7188, United Kingdom Delegation at Paris to Foreign Office, Paris, 8 May 1946.

57. FO 371/58886/7245, Letter of Dragoumis to Bevin, Paris, 10 May 1946.

58. FO 371/72241/6490, Embassy at Athens to Foreign Office, Review of Events in Greece in 1946, Athens, 2 April 1948.

59. DS 868.014/6-2946, Embassy at Athens to Department of State, Athens, 29 June 1946.

ster noted that Greece had as much right to secure herself from attack in the future as France and the Soviet Union had in the case of Germany<sup>60</sup>. All Greek Parties —the Right, Center and Left —backed the national claims. The Greek Parliament unanimously supported the government's demands. So did the Political Coalition of EAM and the Party of Left Wing Liberals by cabling an appeal on 30 July 1946 to the President of the Peace Conference in Paris and to the British, French, American and Soviet Delegations stating:

“...The primordial demand of the Greek people is that full independence and territorial integrity of their country is secured. Foreign troops and other instruments of foreign imposition must completely withdraw and sovereign democratic rights of the Greek people, which are non-existent now, effectively restored. On the other hand, it is a question of international justice to definitely adjudge to Greece not only the Dodecanese, but also Cyprus; its population is Greek in its very great majority and has repeatedly and firmly manifested its will to be incorporated to the Greek fatherland...”.

But it is also just that the regions of Northern Epirus and Eastern Thrace be adjudged to Greece; their populations were Greek in majority before their forced displacement during recent times. This had been acknowledged even by previous international treaties. It is also imperatively necessitated that the security of the Greek frontier to Bulgaria be safeguarded...it is also absolutely fair that the states which attacked Greece be compelled to pay reparations...<sup>61</sup>.

This appeal demonstrated the unanimity of Greek public opinion and refuted contentions that such claims were merely the expression of the “imperialist” aspirations of Greek reactionaries. According to the British, the additional demand for Cyprus and Eastern Thrace came about in order to complicate Anglo-Greek and Greek-Turkish relations<sup>62</sup>.

At the Paris Peace Conference the Bulgarians, on their side, not only contended that the Greek claim was unfounded, but they presented a counter claim on the Greek province of western Thrace, proposing that article 1 of the Bulgarian Peace Treaty be amended in such a way as to re-establish the

60. Kondis, *Η αγγλοαμερικανική πολιτική και το ελληνικό πρόβλημα*, p. 179.

61. FO 371/58888/11844, Appeal of the Political Coalition of EAM and the Party of Left Wing Liberals, Athens, 30 July 1946. *Rizospastis*, 31 July 1946.

62. FO 371/58888/11844, British Embassy at Athens to Foreign Office, Athens, 3 August 1946.

Greek-Bulgarian border as it had been in 1941<sup>63</sup>. The Bulgarians argued that they needed an outlet on the Aegean Sea. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia supported the Bulgarian demand and found it perfectly justified<sup>64</sup>. The Soviets even accused the Greek government as responsible for stirring up trouble in the Balkans and pursuing an old imperialist policy. Indeed Stalin, on 7 June 1946, told Dimitrov and Tito that “we and the Americans were not parties to the drawing of the borders and do not recognize them as just. You should demand territorial access to the Aegean, and if this is not accepted, you should demand economic access...”<sup>65</sup>.

At this point the British and American representatives were in a very awkward position. On the one hand, they had to defend the Greek government as being unfairly criticized by the Soviets and on the other hand, they could not support Greece’s national claims.

When on 30 August 1946, Dragoumis requested the Conference to put on the agenda of its next meeting the Greek draft resolution on the question of Northern Epirus, the Soviet and Yugoslav representatives opposed the Greek request. The British and the Americans insisted that Greece had the right like any other delegation to present its case. The Conference by a twelve to seven vote, with two abstentions, placed on the agenda of its next meeting the Greek motion concerning Northern Epirus<sup>66</sup>. It was clear, however, that none of the main Greek claims could get support from Britain and the United States. The British government, in accordance with their policy, were prepared to support Greece on procedural matters but not on substance matters. This became quite evident on 14th September, when the Greek government brought before the Bulgarian Commission of the Conference their claim, which received no support from the British and the Americans, but the British had no objection that Greece refer the whole claim to the Military Commission<sup>67</sup>. It is very characteristic that the United States’ government wished the Greeks to withdraw their claim, but the British government were unwilling to press them<sup>68</sup>.

Despite this initial procedural victory it was evident to London that whatever the report of the Military Commission, it would never obtain even

63. Volms Cassidy (ed.), *Paris Peace Conference, 1946: Selected Documents*, Washington, 1947, p. 887.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 891.

65. *Otečestven Vestnik*, June 19, 1990. Newspaper published in Sofia.

66. Cassidy, *Peace Conference*, p. 913-915.

67. FO 371/58888/13782, Paris Delegation to Foreign Office, Paris, 16 September 1946.

68. FO 371/72241/6490, Embassy at Athens to Foreign Office, Athens, 2 April 1948.

a simple majority vote in the Bulgarian Commission. In view of this, it was disturbing to the British to learn from members of the Greek delegation that the great majority of the public in Greece was confident the Conference would award them Bulgarian territory. Thus, their concern was to find ways to avoid the eventual and inevitable disappointment of Greek hopes<sup>69</sup>. There was, however, little which could be done on that direction since in October the Military Commission rejected the Greek claim. The United States, the Soviet Union and France voted against Greece and Great Britain and the Dominions (except South Africa) abstained<sup>70</sup>.

The rejection of the Greek claim by the Military Commission caused great disappointment in Greece and extreme indignation was centered on Great Britain. The Greek government viewed with bitterness the fact that Britain had abstained from voting, instead of making gesture of solidarity with her oldest ally regardless of numerical alignment<sup>71</sup>. However, despite this set back at the Military Commission, the Paris Peace Conference when ended on 15 October 1946 did not reject Greece's claims against Bulgaria and Albania but referred them to the Council of Foreign Ministers in New York without any specific recommendation. There, the Greek government modified their Bulgarian claim to four small frontier areas<sup>72</sup>. But even this lacked British and American support and Britain's position was that there was no chance of success in view of the Soviet attitude towards the final settlement of an area of which their troops were in occupation<sup>73</sup>. The Americans in their talks with the Greek government emphasized the fact that although the United States was Greece's good friend and had a very sympathetic understanding of her claims, the American government could not support Greece's territorial demands<sup>74</sup>, since they were only interested in the economic revival of Greece and in the question of her security<sup>75</sup>.

On 3 December 1946, the Council of Foreign Ministers decided that the Greek-Bulgarian border would remain along the lines which existed on 1

69. FO 371/58888/13787, Paris Delegation to Foreign Office, Paris, 16 September 1946.

70. FO 371/58889/14832, Paris Delegation to Foreign Office, Paris, 7 October 1941.

71. *Ibid.*

72. FO 371/58889/15416, Greek Embassy at London to Foreign Office, London, 19 October 1946.

73. FO 371/58889/16008, Minutes, 1 November 1946.

74. DS 868.014/11-446, Conversation between Dean Acheson and the Greek ambassador at Washington, Washington, 4 November 1946.

75. For a detail account on this problem see Kondis, *Η αγγλοαμερικανική πολιτική και το ελληνικό πρόβλημα, passim.*

January 1941. It was also agreed Greece would receive 150 million dollars for reparation from Italy and Bulgaria combined<sup>76</sup>. Thus, this decision finally closed the question of the Greek claim against Bulgaria and the Bulgarian claim for western Thrace. On the other hand, the question of Northern Epirus remained open since it was ignored and never discussed at the Council. It is important to note that before the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Greek government had suggested to the British that if the claim against Albania could not be satisfied, a declaration should be made recognizing Greece's right to Northern Epirus, while not actually transferring the territory<sup>77</sup>.

As a result of the Council's decision, Greece felt injured and disillusioned. There was great disappointment and large anti-British feeling. The Greek people could not believe that the high principles of international morality and justice had lost all their value, and a faithful ally would not be rewarded, while Bulgaria would be compensated for its disloyal policy during the war. There is no doubt that the Greek government had not prepared their case well. They still cherished the old-fashioned illusion, that unique sacrifices in a victorious war entitled them to large territorial gains. Greek strategy was based on the "gallant ally theme" and overlooked the fact that the national interest of Great Britain and the United States was not similar.

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76. FO 371/58890/17506, Paris Delegation to Foreign Office, Paris, 4 December 1946.

77. FO 371/58890/16764, Conversation between Bevin and the Greek ambassador, London, 9 November 1946.