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BRITISH PERCEPTIONS OF EAM/ELAS RULE IN THESSALONIKI
1944-45

Since the Second World War there have been numerous scholarly accounts of the Greek civil war of December 1944. As a rule they have focused on events in Athens, where the most important negotiations and eventually the worst of the bloodshed between the British Army and EAM/ELAS* took place. By contrast, events in Salonica during this troubled time have been largely ignored. In the present article use will be made of recently released official British archives to present a brief survey of a turbulent period in the history of the capital of northern Greece**.

I. Dictatorship (29 October - 5 December 1944)

The long awaited evacuation of German troops from Salonica commenced on 29 October 1944. Three days later, on 1 November, the last of the Wehrmacht quit the city's perimeter. Units of ELAS promptly entered the town, soon followed by a handful of British troops, a few Greek Government officials, and two squadrons of Royal Air Force Spitfires which harassed the retreating enemy into Yugoslavia. To their chagrin the Greek officials found Salonica's civil administration firmly under the control of EAM. Yet British military reports to Athens during the first fortnight of November indicated that the town was quiet, and that EAM/ELAS was cooperative¹.

*EAM (National Liberation Front) and its army ELAS (National Popular Liberation Army) constituted the largest Greek resistance movement. EAM was a coalition of Socialists and Communists, in which the Communists predominated.

**Indeed, the article will rest exclusively on British sources. An American Consul-General arrived very late on the scene, and French and Russian diplomats were not posted to Salonica. Extensive and reliable Greek sources on the subject have yet to emerge. The present work will therefore reflect essentially the British perception of events, a perception this writer believes was generally accurate. It is to be hoped that this article will encourage the search for new source material, which will substantiate or disprove the conclusions reached herein.

1. 4.11.1944, R. Leeper (British Ambassador to Greece) to Foreign Office. R 17891. F.O. 381/43695. 13.11, Leeper to Foreign Office. R 18578. F.O. 371/43695, (Archives of the British Foreign Office. Public Records Office, London). Hereafter, all telegrams are

But the British soon discerned that the prevailing calm was an illusion, a veil behind which EAM was consolidating a stranglehold over all political expression. Moreover, EAM/ELAS' "cooperativeness" proved forthcoming only so long as the guerillas had matters their own way. In a despatch to Athens of 19 November, General F. Holworthy, the British Commanding Officer in Salonica, reported that beneath the 'reasonable surface order' maintained by ELAS, EAM's private security police were conducting numerous arrests. Some 3000 'Social Democrats' were now languishing in prison under appalling conditions. Impartial control of the organs of justice was a prerequisite of law and order, Holworthy believed. He considered the first step toward restoring legality to be the cessation of arrests not ordered by proper constitutional authorities, the liberation of wrongfully arrested persons and the early trial of the remainder by impartial courts². Under the terms of the Caserta Agreement of 26 September 1944, EAM/ELAS was required to assist the Greek Government to re-establish such responsible civil administration³. But the decrees of the Greek Government's chosen representatives in Salonica—the Civil Governor, G. Modis, and the Military Governor, General C. Avramidis—were earning nothing but lip service. 'Although EAM and ELAS profess readiness to hand over the powers they have been exercising to the representatives of the Central Government, to which they express loyalty', Holworthy observed, 'there is in fact as yet no sign that either Modis or still less General Avramidis is able to exercise any effective authority'².

Indeed, according, to British Intelligence, the Secretary of the Salonica Bureau of the Greek Communist Party (K.K.E.), V. Vasvanas, had boasted to colleagues on 17 November that 'all opposing elements [to EAM] have been eliminated, either by "removal" or by arrest, and both the authority and the arms are now in our hands'⁴. EAM constituted the State in Salonica; the Greek Governors were mere Pretenders. At the root of the latter's predica-

understood to be addressed to the Foreign Office unless otherwise designated. The prefix F.O. 371/-will also be dispensed with.

2. 19.11, Leeper, R 18897/43695.

3. At the Caserta Conference General S. Sarafis, Commander in-Chief of ELAS, had undertaken to forbid his units to take the law into their own hands, and had pledged to assist the establishment of legal civil authority. R 15394/43793 (Text of Caserta Agreement).

4. 20.11, report by Intelligence Security Liaison Division (I.S.L.D.). W. O. 204/8902. (Archives of the British War Office. Public Records Office, London).

The news media of Salonica were also dominated by EAM. Of the Athenian newspapers, only "Rizospastis", the communist daily, was circulated. See 26.11-2.12, Anglo-Greek Information Service (hereafter: A.I.S.). R 21876/43700. A.I.S. was the cover name for the Greek section of the British Political Warfare Executive. It compiled weekly situation reports.

ment was EAM/ELAS' monopoly of armed force. Avramidis, by contrast, was a Military Governor without troops, and Modis a Civil Governor without a police force. For immediately after the liberation of Salonica, EAM's militia, the "National Civil Guard" (E.P.), had rounded up the town's 1500-man Gendarmerie, disarmed it and imprisoned 25 officers and 82 men. The remaining 1400 the EP had them released—an act which had belied EAM's own frequent charge that Gendarmes were "Fascists". But EAM had declined to reinstate the liberated officers and men, despite their apparent innocence. By this method the EP had been rendered the *de facto* Police of Salonica⁵.

Modis and Avramidis could only hope to assert their authority by acquiring an armed force of their own. Toward this end a "Provisional National Guard" was to be called up on 24 November. G. Papandreou, Premier of the Greek Government, had conceived of the Provisional Guard as an independent non-political security service. It was to be drawn impartially from the 1936 age-class, and by its very existence it was to liberate provincial administrators from the coercion of EAM.

The mobilisation of the Provisional Guard was plagued with trouble from the start, however. Partially to blame was a foe to orderly government as formidable as were the Communists: the chaos prevailing in government administration. On 23 November, the eve of the call-up, the Greek Army officers who were to supervise the operation had yet to arrive from Athens. Moreover, the ELAS unit occupying Salonica's main barracks, where the Provisional Guard was to be housed, had been given insufficient warning of its need to find new accommodation. General R. Scobie, Commander-in-Chief of all British forces in Greece, assembled the tardy Greek Army officers in Athens on 24 November and flew with them to Salonica. There he called on General E. Bakirtzis, Commander of ELAS forces in Macedonia. Scobie insisted that ELAS vacate the town's barracks forthwith, as recruits to the Provisional Guard were already arriving in Salonica and had nowhere to go. Bakirtzis graciously undertook to make room for them.

Scobie then insisted that ELAS should evince respect for the Salonica Governors by ceasing its arbitrary arrests and summary trials. Bakirtzis agreed to issue an order to ELAS to this effect. The trials were being conducted by "peoples' courts" sitting in the ELAS-held countryside, to which the inmates of Salonica's prisons were being deported. Many of the defendants were perhaps ex-Security Battalion personnel, and deserving of little sympathy.

5. See 22.11, report by Chief of Greek Gendarmerie Colonel Papagyris. W.O. 204/8974.

But 'persons of good standing' were also being victimised, complained T. C. Rapp, the British Consul-General in Salonica. Furthermore, the arbitrariness of ELAS' actions in itself indicated that EAM had 'every intention of maintaining its dictatorship'.

Indeed, even as Bakirtzis and Scobie spoke, two armed members of ELAS forced their way into the house of an aide to Avramidis, seeking to arrest the officer. Avramidis himself disarmed and detained the men, while his Chief of Staff rushed to British Headquarters and appealed for assistance. Holworthy, eager to back the Greek Governors in a bold confrontation with EAM, asked Modis to authorise British troops to imprison the intruders. But in a sudden and startling telephone call to Holworthy, Avramidis declared that he had handed them back to ELAS, 'for safe custody'. Avramidis was not proving up to his job, Rapp reported. Scobie decided to approach Papandreou upon his return to Athens, and to suggest that Avramidis be replaced.

Scobie departed from Salonica during the evening of 24 November. He had been impressed by Bakirtzis' cooperative demeanour, but he was anxious about the future, as it was by no means certain that the Greek General could control the Communists within EAM/ELAS⁶. Indeed, the next 48 hours proved decisive for the fate of Salonica, and it was the Greek Governors, not the Communists of EAM, who were cowed into submission.

No sooner had Avramidis released his two captives than five armed ELAS guerillas returned to his aide's house, determined to effect the officer's arrest. Avramidis again appealed for British assistance, and Holworthy swiftly captured the guerillas and placed them in the custody of a British unit. But EAM responded promptly and forcefully, by staging a noisy public demonstration in the streets of Salonica on 25 November. Processions calling for the expulsion of Avramidis filed past Modis' offices and then massed outside British Headquarters. A deputation confronted Holworthy with the demand that his five prisoners be surrendered to the EP, Holworthy objected, but Modis, whom Rapp described as by now 'reduced to a state of collapse', capitulated and ordered the men's release. The elated deputation then returned to the streets and announced not only that the guerillas were to be freed, but that Avramidis was to be expelled by Holworthy. The crowds dispersed, cheering the British! The humiliation of the Governors was complete. 'The present position of the two Government representatives', Rapp reported on 26 November, 'is that General Avramidis is living under British military protection, while the Governor-General [Modis] feels that his plight is hopeless and wishes

6. 23.11, Rapp to Leeper. R 20863/43698. 25.11, Leeper. R 19336/43696.

to return to Athens at once, for good'⁷.

Now Papandreou and the British could only 'play for time' until the Provisional National Guard had been organised, Rapp believed. Modis and Avramidis would then possess sufficient force to compel the EP and ELAS to disband. By 28 November, 85 officers and some 1000 men had reported for duty, Rapp noted optimistically⁸. But unknown to him, their numbers were being infiltrated by members of the KKE. British Intelligence later learned that Communists of the 1936 age-class had been summoned to the KKE's Salonica offices prior to mobilisation, to receive 'orders from the General Area Secretariat on the course of action to be adopted by them while in the army'⁴. These orders were probably those issued secretly in Athens on 22 November, by the Secretary of the Central Committee of the KKE, G. Siantos. Siantos instructed KKE members to be the first to join the Provisional Guard. They were to 'organise themselves securely' within its ranks⁹—an obvious allusion to the formation of subversive cells.

Bakirtzis, meanwhile, had yet to clear his troops from Salonica's barracks. ELAS wished to occupy the main offices and the entrance to the compound, relegating the Provisional Guard to buildings in the rear. This Holworthy rejected as a humiliating compromise, and as negotiations crept forward, the Guard's recruits remained without uniforms or weapons in an abandoned tobacco factory¹⁰. The situation in Salonika was clearly grave, R. Leeper, the British Ambassador to Greece, warned the Foreign Office on 28 November. Leeper proposed to despatch a special emissary to Macedonia forthwith¹¹.

The emissary's mission was never to materialise. Like Rapp, Papandreou was convinced that only the dissolution of the EP and of ELAS could break the Communists' monopoly of force in the land. On 28 November a crisis erupted in Athens over the demobilisation issue. Fruitless discussions and bitter recriminations between the Premier and the Communists continued for some days. On 1 December Papandreou and Scobie finally issued a unilateral Order of the Day instructing the EP to dissolve immediately, and ELAS to prepare for its disbandment on 10 December.

Salonica was soon in a state of uproar. Church bells were sounded and

7. 26.11, Rapp to Leeper, R 20505/43737. 28.11, Leeper. R 19627/43696. 26.11-2.12, A.I.S. R 21876/43700.

8. 26.11, Rapp to Leeper. R 20505/43737. 2.12, Leeper. R 19855/43697.

9. A copy of this telegram was discovered by British troops who occupied EAM's offices in Athens during the December Civil War. W. O. 204/8903.

10. 28.11, 4 Indian Division (Salonica) to H.Q. 3 Corps (Athens). W. O. 204/8841.

11. R 19627/43696,

people were summoned into the streets by EAM agitators crying that 'democracy was in danger'. Posters bearing Scobie's Order to the EP and to ELAS were torn down from the walls, and an aeroplane which was to have showered the town with pro-Government leaflets failed to appear. No means existed of getting word through to the rank and file of EAM/ELAS, 'many of whom are not communist or at all extreme', that the demobilisation of guerilla armies was a necessary step toward normalcy, Rapp complained. Communist propaganda was thus unchecked and unchallenged, and was claiming that a reactionary *coup d'état* was afoot.

The EP declined to surrender its arms to British troops. The Socialists and Communists of the Macedonian EAM Central Committee visited Rapp and contested the validity of Scobie's unilateral Order. It had not been sanctioned by a unanimous decision of the Government, of which EAM was a participant, they argued. Rapp, who was himself puzzled about the legality of the Order, asked what EAM intended to do while the matter was sorted out. A divergence of opinion within the Committee suddenly emerged. The Socialists—A. Haritantis, of the Union of Popular Democrats (ELD), and P. Dimitrakopoulos and D. Mylonas, of the Socialist Party of Greece (SKE)—were inclined to give Scobie the benefit of the doubt. They were willing to disband the EP and to ready ELAS for demobilisation even while the legality of the Order was under examination. Rapp sought to nurture their trust by assuring them that Scobie must be acting in 'good faith, on sufficient authority and in the interests of the Greek people as a whole'. It was 'inconceivable... that British armed forces would ever serve... the interests of any minority wishing to stage a *coup d'état*, whether of the Right, Left or any other political complexion', he declared. But the Communists, led by Dilaveris, the Secretary of the Committee, refused to acknowledge the Order unless it were unanimously approved by the Government. Dilaveris' intransigence eventually prevailed: the Communists' supremacy within the Committee was 'only too apparent', Rapp noted, and it overrode the moderate inclinations of the Socialists. In conclusion Rapp and the Committee agreed that there should be no step toward demobilisation until further word was received from Athens¹².

The news from the capital was hardly reassuring. During the night of 1/2 December the socialist and communist Ministers resigned from the Government without reaching agreement on ELAS' demobilisation. EAM in Athens subsequently called for a massive demonstration against Papandreou

12. 1.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21230/43738. 1.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21464/43738.

to be held in Syntagma Square on 3 December. Tension ran high in Salonica. The EP launched a new wave of arrests, the subjects being 'not so much "Traitors" as actual and potential opponents of the extremists in control', Rapp observed. One of his own employees was incarcerated in a cell so overcrowded that it was impossible to sit or to lie down. Nevertheless, the town was outwardly calm, and many observers were even hopeful of a peaceful future. Dissension between the moderates and the Communists within EAM/ELAS was thought to be growing, Rapp explained, as the KKE had been trying 'to force too hot a pace'. Several non-Communist ELAS officers had now offered their services of Avramidis. It was rumoured that many non-Communist rankers wished to quit ELAS and to transfer to the National Guard¹³.

But these first, slight indications of an emerging split within EAM/ELAS were swiftly overtaken by events. In Athens on 3 December panic-stricken policemen opened fire on demonstrators advancing across Syntagma Square. At least 15 persons were gunned down, and the bloodshed roused the fury of EAM sympathisers. Spurred forth by their ideological convictions, their suspicion of the British and their fear of retribution at the hands of their opponents, the Communists seized the opportunity to strike. That evening the ELAS Reserve in Athens took up arms and assaulted suburban police stations. By the next morning all the Piraeus had been captured. On 4 December in Salonica, EAM/ELAS pronounced the Papandreou Government illegal and the Military Governorship of Avramidis defunct. EAM/ELAS had formally seized all power in Macedonia, Rapp cabled to Leeper¹⁴. The December Civil War had begun.

II. Division (4-24 December 1944)

During the morning of 4 December, Rapp learned that an EAM/ELAS deputation had arrived at Modis' offices. The deputation was demanding that the Governor join the revolution or resign. Rapp rushed to Modis' side and after considerable discussion persuaded the EAM delegates to return at 5:00 p.m., for a conference with Modis, Holworthy and himself. 'A temporary *modus vivendi* based on yesterday's *status quo*' was imperative, Rapp insisted. ELAS had to choose between some such agreement or a battle with British troops. The guerillas were already picketing the Provisional Guard building, confiscating relief supplies and supplanting the few Greek officials left in the town. If this state of affairs persisted, Rapp observed, the British would intervene rather than acquiesce in a *fait accompli*¹⁴.

13. 3.12, Rapp to Leeper, R 21871/43739.

14. 4.12, Leeper. R 19940/43736.

The prospect of British armed intervention evidently worried EAM/ELAS. Non-Communist ELASites were evincing 'considerable hesitation' to make war against the British, Rapp reported¹⁵. The Communists themselves apparently hoped to win power without embroiling themselves in a battle with a Great Ally. That evening, therefore, EAM/ELAS concluded an uneasy "non-aggression pact" with General Holworthy—no doubt much to the latter's relief for British troops were not of sufficient strength to expel ELAS from the city¹⁶.

The fate of EAM/ELAS was thus to be decided by the course of the battle for Athens. The most the Communists of Salonica hoped to do was to preserve the morale of their party and to keep the public in a state of agitation. Hence on 6 December a general strike was declared in solidarity with ELAS' struggle in Athens. On 7 December EAM staged a demonstration of huge proportions. For the first time only Greek flags were displayed, Rapp noted¹⁵. Evidently the Communists wished to cloak the factional nature of their revolution under a banner of national independence vs. foreign domination.

The demonstration proved a resounding success, but the proclamation of a general strike was a gross tactical error. Labour on the docks came to a halt, preventing any further delivery of relief supplies. So perilous became the plight of Salonica's poor that on 8 December EAM was compelled to allow long-shoremen to return to work. The economic paralysis of the town meanwhile disrupted all civil administration, and helped to bankrupt EAM's "Administrative Committee of Macedonia" (DEM), which on 4 December had become the *de facto* government of Salonica. On 10 December, in the face of growing public indignation, the Communists suspended the strike altogether¹⁷.

Adding to the KKE's embarrassment were instances of confusion and division within EAM/ELAS' ranks. EAM stressed the patriotic nature of its battle in Athens. But on 8 December the Communist A. Tzimas, ELAS' representative to the Yugoslav Partisans, visited Salonica and urged its citizens to renounce all territorial claims against their Slav neighbours to the North—including, by inference, those against hated Bulgaria¹⁸. The Communists' newspaper "Laiki Phoni" printed bitter propaganda against the British, even

15. 7.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20287/43736.

16. 6.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20160/43736.

17. 7.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20287/43736. 8.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20366/43736. 10.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20416/43737.

18. 10.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20660/43737.

as the impoverished DEM asked Rapp for a British credit of £ 200,000¹⁹! It remained Rapp's distinct impression that many officers of ELAS wished to avoid a clash with the British at all costs. And even within EAM the unity of Communists and Socialists soon grew precarious. Indeed, on 10 and 11 December Dimitrakopoulos appealed to Rapp to put him in contact with the SKE's leader in Athens, D. Stratis, with a view to arranging the immediate cession of the group from the EAM coalition²⁰. On 12 December the SKE and the ELD ceased to participate in EAM deputations which regularly delivered protests to the British Consulate.

As non-Communists became more timid, the aggressiveness of communist propaganda only increased, to steel the faltering spirits of its subjects. The British were worse than the Huns and the Greeks would fight to expel every Englishman from the country, "Laiki Phoni" insisted on 12 December. The Communists now scheduled a second general strike and demonstration for 15 December. Reports soon reached Rapp of the distribution of arms to civilians and even of plans for the arming of schoolchildren. Rumours of an impending assault on the British Consulate swirled through the city. Haritanitis warned Rapp that the KKE planned to proclaim an autonomous Macedonia, and nine prominent local SKE officials publicly denounced the Communists and then went into hiding, fearing arrest. Nevertheless, Bakirtzis and Vasvanas assured Rapp that the demonstration would be peaceful. Rapp himself was confident that the Communists would not dare break the peace. The populace was growing tired of repeated demonstrations and of their attendant hardships, he noted. Moreover, Holworthy had had time to prepare impressive defences, and he expected further reinforcements from Volos and from Kavala²¹.

The general strike was conducted on 15 December, but torrential rains forced the postponement of the demonstration. This delay and the exhaustion of the population evidently sapped the momentum of communist agitation, for the turnout at the demonstration on 17 December was poor. About a third of the marchers were peasants trucked in from the ELAS-controlled

19. 8.12, Rapp to Leeper, R 20366/43737.

20. 10.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20416/43737. 11.12, Rapp to Leeper, R 20681/43737.

21. 12.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20783/43737. 13.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20853/43737. 14.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 20930/43737. 14 and 16.12, Rapp to Leeper. R. 21100/43738. 16.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21165/43738. 17.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21190/43738. 24-30.12, A.I.S. R 1479/48248.

British troops had been compelled to withdraw from Volos by the local forces of ELAS. See R 21636/43699.

countryside, and despite the Communists' incessant propaganda, Rapp detected no animosity toward the British in the crowds who filed past his Consulate. Communist influence over the masses was waning and 'moderate and friendly elements are beginning to pluck up courage', he believed. The situation showed 'distinct signs of improvement'.

But the danger remained that the Communists would panic and resort to violence precisely now that their grip on the city was slipping. This consideration was weighing on Bakirtzis' mind when Rapp visited him on 18 December. Bakirtzis was 'definitely upset' by the prospect of British troops' arriving from Kavalla and Volos, Rapp reported. This would be interpreted by the extremists as preparation for a British offensive against ELAS, Bakirtzis feared. The General was 'clearly scared' of being ordered by the Communists to take offensive measures against British troops, Rapp observed. Indeed, Bakirtzis hinted that in the recent past there had been occasions 'when the situation had almost got out of control'. All he wanted was a speedy settlement in Athens. There was ample evidence that this feeling was increasingly widespread in ELAS, Rapp reported²².

The Communists had by now evidently lost the initiative, however. British troops from Volos arrived on 19 December and those from Kavalla disembarked on the following day, but ELAS received no orders to resist. EAM, meanwhile, further disintegrated at an alarming rate. On 20 December the Communists were reduced to issuing an announcement that the ELD remained loyal to EAM. This statement was not entirely true, Rapp observed, for while it was correct that the ELD had yet to secede from EAM, the KKE was well aware that the Socialists were out of sympathy with its policies. Hence the announcement amounted to little more than 'a desperate effort to stage a show of unity', Rapp believed²³, at a time when EAM in truth no longer represented any party other than the KKE. The ELD's and SKE's response to the announcement was to boycott the next meeting of the EAM Central Committee²⁴. Subsequent to this, all that remained to convene of the once broad "National Front" was its communist core.

III. Chaos (24 December 1944 - 17 January 1945)

On Christmas Eve 1944 Rapp reviewed the course of the recent hectic

22. 17.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21190/43738. 18.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21343/43738. 23.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21664/43738. 24-30.12, A.I.S. R 1479/48248.

23. 20.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21509/43738.

24. 26.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21728/43739.

weeks. EAM had refrained from hostilities in Salonica, firstly because it had expected a speedy and favourable settlement of the fighting in Athens, and secondly because it had hoped to win British recognition of itself as the *de facto* government of Salonica. But the protracted warfare in Attica—now in its third week, with ELAS on the defensive—had shattered its hope for an early victory. Financial and administrative difficulties had meanwhile embarrassed the DEM's efforts to govern. As disillusionment corroded deeper into EAM/ELAS, the peace of Salonica might grow more fragile, Rapp warned. 'The population as a whole is in despair, sees no daylight at all and is suffering intensely, both morally and physically', he concluded²⁵.

The DEM was indeed in desperate straits, crippled by its own incompetence, its lack of funds and the diversion of what revenue it collected to purely political purposes. The chaotic nature of its policies was manifest. It forbade dealings in gold on 13 December, for instance, yet on the following day paid municipal employees in gold coin. It closed the Bourse on 13 December and re-opened it on 17 December, claiming never to have ordered it closed. Desperate for funds, it repeatedly appealed to Rapp for credits, and haphazardly confiscated and sold the stocks of merchants and firms, pocketing the proceeds. It even went so far as to attempt to seize the holdings of the International Red Cross. Yet at the same time it had reportedly despatched a small fortune in gold—60,000 Napoleons—to the KKE in Athens. Its was a 'hand to mouth policy' which was rapidly destroying the last vestiges of Salonica's economic life, Rapp protested. It was implementing 'no... systematic re-organisation of society on a communist' or any other basis; there was only 'begging extortion and plunder', and the looming threat of complete chaos²⁶.

Hopes that a catastrophe might be averted were kindled by Winston Churchill's visit to Athens on Christmas Day, and by the subsequent peace talks of all Greek political leaders on 26 and 27 December. But the talks broke down over the KKE's remarkable demand that EAM should control the ministries of the Interior, War and Justice in any new Greek government. Consequently, warfare in Athens only intensified on 28 December, with ELAS now definitely getting the worst of it.

In Salonica, non-Communists were gripped first by alarm and despondency, but then by a more determined spirit of resistance to the KKE. Pro-

25. 24.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21709/43739.

26. 24.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 21709/43739. 28.12, Rapp to Leeper. R 22005/43739. 6.1.1945, Rapp to Leeper. R 518/48245. 24-30.12, A.I.S. R 1479/48248. 7-13.1.1945, A.I.S. R 2684/48254.

fessors of the University of Salonica thwarted the Communists' attempt to use the main University Hall as a venue for a Military Court to try the prisoners of the EP. Judges refused to participate in EAM-orchestrated trials. There were further reports of a serious confrontation between Communists and moderates within ELAS itself. A number of Communists, who believed the time for action against Holworthy to be 'now or never,' were believed to have pressed for war on 1 or 2 January. They were met with a 'blanket refusal' from senior ELAS officers, however, who were determined not to fight unless themselves attacked. Cracks meanwhile appeared in the solidarity of DEM. Its President, Karamaounas, a Liberal by conviction, confided to Rapp that he was opposed to the continuing arbitrary confiscation and sale of merchants' and firms' stocks. He had not yet the courage to say so openly, however²⁷.

But the gravest shock to EAM/ELAS was delivered by the news of ELAS' final withdrawal from Athens during the night of 5/6 January. The revolution was clearly failing, but the Communists put on a brave face. M. Vafiades, Bakirtzis' political adviser, stressed to the British Vice-Consul, C. Halkias, that EAM/ELAS did 'not propose to bend'. Dilaveris reportedly vowed that the KKE would continue the struggle and, if necessary, retire into Yugoslavia 'after first liquidating as many political enemies as possible'²⁸. By contrast, the Socialists were now desperate to sever their ties with the KKE. On 8 January Rapp learned that Haritantis, Stratis, and the leaders of the Macedonian branch of the Agricultural Party of Greece (AKE)—A. Hatziasteriou and N. Zervos—wished to secede from EAM and to proceed to Athens for consultations with the new Greek government of General N. Plastiras. The KKE discovered their plan, denounced them as traitors and threatened them with violence should they desert. This no longer cowed them, however, and on 10 January they departed on a British aircraft. The EP promptly arrested Mylonas' wife and children, but they were eventually released on Bakirtzis' insistence²⁹.

Fear and defeatism now broke the morale of ELAS. On 11 January Holworthy's Headquarters received word that the Commander of an ELAS reserve division stationed on the outskirts of Salonica wished to surrender with all his men. Bakirtzis' own Chief of Staff was known to be seeking an

27. 2.1.1945, Rapp to Leeper. R 231/48244. 3.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 311/48244. 5.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 504/48245. 5.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 405/48245.

28. 6.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 506/48245. 8.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 767/48246.

29. 8.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 767/48246. 9.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 654/48245. 10.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 769/48246. 11.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 906/48246. 14.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 1071/48247.

opportunity to desert. Their chance arrived on 12 January, when representatives of ELAS signed a truce with Scobie in Athens. Under its terms, ELAS was immediately to evacuate Salonica. Rather than take to the hills, Bakirtzis' Chief of Staff and two divisional commanders placed themselves at Avramidis' disposal. Bakirtzis himself, much relieved by the turn of events, promised Brigadier Lovett, Holworthy's Chief of Staff, that the truce would be respected. A number of his troops and the political organs of EAM proved more unruly, however. As Bakirtzis and Lovett negotiated the details of evacuation, some ELASites feverishly plundered parts of the town. 'Everything possible is being taken, occupied houses and government offices being completely denuded', Rapp protested on 15 January. The DEM meanwhile continued to seize and sell stocks, and the EP made arrests and rounded up hostages. Chaos reigned until the very end—17 January 1945, when the last ELAS unit withdrew from Salonica, and Karamaounas surrendered City Hall to Modis, now the official representative of the Plastiras Government³⁰.

CONCLUSION

Upon its liberation from the Germans on 1 November, Salonica came under the rule of EAM/ELAS. This rule was not a "reign of terror", for EAM did not engage in indiscriminate violence. Indeed, EAM initially no doubt enjoyed the approval of considerable sections of Salonica's population—though such approval, founded on EAM's grandiose promises, fostered by its one-sided propaganda and regimented by professional agitators into show-piece demonstrations, was not the sort of popular support characteristic of pluralist democracy. Rather, EAM's regime was a dictatorship, the rule of a single political organisation determined to share power with none other. It exercised a monopoly of armed force and exclusive control of all information, and was unrestrained by any law and unaccountable to the public for its actions.

The foundation of EAM's dictatorship was its control of the organs of justice. Conversely it was Modis' and Avramidis' inability to supervise arrests, trials and sentences which reduced them and their Government to impotence. They were harassed by the EP and intimidated by EAM's demonstrations. The only armed force they hoped to call their own, the Provisional

30. 10.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 903/48246. 11.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 899/48246. 11.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 938/48247. 15.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 1245/48247. 16.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 1247/48248. 17.1, Rapp to Leeper. R 1367/48248.

National Guard, was systematically infiltrated by Communists. The Government of National Unity never established its authority in Salonica prior to the December Civil War. EAM/ELAS possessed all armed power, and hence EAM/ELAS constituted the State.

The perpetuation of this authoritarian regime did not accord with the Socialists' vision of the future. Free to express their dissent within EAM, they were nevertheless powerless to impose their will on the Communists. On 1 December they failed to compel the KKE to disband the EP and ELAS and so dismantle EAM's regime. On 4 December they watched helplessly as the Communists brought Salonica to the brink of civil strife. Had ELAS scored a quick victory in Athens there can be little doubt that the Socialists would have been unable to prevent the emergence of an essentially communist dictatorship.

But the intervention of British troops in Attica broke the Communists' hold over Salonica, as surely as it blunted their drive on the nation's capital. Confident of victory in Athens, the Salonica Communists allowed the opportunity for an early and decisive strike against Holworthy's troops to slip through their fingers. They then frittered away their influence by staging tiresome and sterile strikes and demonstrations. As the month wore on and ELAS' fortune in Athens faded, fear of a clash with British troops gripped the Salonica Socialists and non-Communists of ELAS. This fear, in turn, inspired in them a will to resist the Communists and to dissolve the alliance which had entangled them in a war they had never desired. The Macedonian EAM disintegrated; the Macedonian ELAS was crippled by defeatism and even desertion. EAM's dictatorship, founded on a monopoly of force, was broken by superior power, and crumbled without firing a shot.