

IOANNIS STEFANIDIS

UNITED STATES, GREAT BRITAIN AND THE GREEK YUGOSLAV
RAPPROCHEMENT, 1949-1950

A. Laying the ground, July 1948 - March 1950

The expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform (28 June 1948) signalled the beginning of a long and arduous process that in slightly more than two years led to the normalisation of Greek-Yugoslav relations. However, the Tito-Stalin rift did not immediately lead to a radical reappraisal of the foreign policy of Communist Yugoslavia. For many months after June 1948 the Yugoslav leaders, apparently still hoping for a reconciliation with the Soviet Union, were competing with their Eastern European comrades in chastising Western "imperialism" and expressing their solidarity the policies of the Socialist Mecca. Articles in the press and radio broadcasts, Yugoslav leaders' speeches (most notably Tito's 8-hour speech at the fifth Congress of the CPY in July 1948) and the Yugoslav attitude at the United Nations (U.N.) provoked serious misgivings among Western observers and even led some to doubt the genuineness of the Yugoslav-Soviet dispute¹.

At the same time, however, there were signs of some improvement in Yugoslavia's relations with West. It so happened that, shortly after Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform, a U.S. - Yugoslav agreement settling certain differences between the two countries was signed². The British also tried to encourage Yugoslavia's move away from the Soviet orbit by initiating trade talks. These negotiations resulted in one-year trade agreement, signed in December 1948. Through such minimum economic help, the British hoped, as Bevin put it, to keep Tito "afloat", since Yugoslavia's Eastern European

1. Regarding the events that led to the Tito-Stalin rift and the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform, see Auty, Phyllis, *Tito: a Biography*, London, 1970; about the reactions in the West, see Barker Elisabeth, "Yugoslav Policy towards Greece, 1947-1949", in *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949*, Copenhagen, 1987, pp. 278-279.

2. Iatrides, John O., *Balkan Triangle: Birth and Decline across Ideological Boundaries*, The Hague, Paris, 1968, p. 27.

partners either suspended or refused to renew their economic agreements with her³.

The Americans, however, although anxious to undermine the the Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, remained undecided as to what concrete course of action to take regarding Yugoslavia, at least until the beginning of 1949⁴.

Greece had an all important stake in any change in Yugoslav foreign policy. Greek-Yugoslav relations had sharply deteriorated since the end of the war, reaching their lowest point in August 1947, when Yugoslavia recalled her Minister from Athens. The issues dividing the two countries were many and extremely intriguing. Yugoslavia constituted the main source of supplies to the Greek Communist insurgents and the Yugoslav territory served as a safe area of retreat and recuperation for the Greek Democratic Army (GDA). Parallely, the Yugoslav leadership had promoted the concept of a "Macedonian" nation, deserving its national rehabilitation in a unified motherland stretching from Skopje to Salonica. Yugoslavia, therefore, became suspect in Greek eyes of expansionist intentions involving Greek Macedonia. For the Yugoslavs the problem allegedly was the treatment of the Slav-speaking people in Greek Macedonia were receiving at the hands of the authorities. There was also the issue of Greek children who had been taken in large numbers to Yugoslavia by the insurgents and who, the Greek government claimed, should be returned to their parents in Greece⁵.

In any case, the Greeks proved quite eager to seize the opportunity presented by the Yugoslav-Cominform schism and try to improve their relations with at least one of their neighbours. However, the diplomatic feelers which were put to the Yugoslav side early after the June 1948 events proved premature⁶.

In November 1948 the U.N. General Assembly voted for the establish-

3. Iatrides, 27; Barker, 283.

4. For an account of the deliberations generated by the Yugoslav-Cominform split in American policy-making quarters, see Lees, Lorraine M., "The American Decision to Assist Tito, 1948-1949", *Diplomatic History*, 2 (1978), pp. 407-433; about the views of the U.S. Ambassador in Belgrade, see *Foreign Relations of the United States* (henceforth referred to as *FRUS*) 1949, Vol. V, Washington D.C., 1976, pp. 858-861.

5. Barker, 264-278, 296-308; see also, Wittner, Lawrence, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949*, Columbia University Press, pp. 57-60, 259; Kopfos, Evangelos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, Thessaloniki 1964, pp. 154-174; Baerentzen, Lars, "The 'Paidomazoma' and the Queen's Camps", in *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War*, op. cit., pp. 127-158.

6. Iatrides, 60-61.

ment of a Conciliation Committee with a view of assisting Greece and her three northern neighbours to settle their outstanding differences and resume normal diplomatic relations. The chairman of the Committee, Australian Foreign Minister Herbert Evatt, engaged in strenuous efforts to bring an understanding about. However, more than any other single issue, the question of the Greek-Albanian boundaries proved a stumbling block. The Albanian representation demanded that the Greeks formally recognised the existing boundaries between the two countries as definite, a demand on which the Greeks were not forthcoming. Significantly, the Yugoslav representative, Dr Aleš Bebler, put the blame for the break-down of the talks on Greek intransigence. The Yugoslavs themselves, while professing desire to see the talks producing results, connected any Greek-Yugoslav agreement to the entire problem of Greece's relations with all her northern neighbours. Thus, the possibility of a separate agreement seemed virtually excluded⁷.

Despite Belgrade's display of solidarity with the Soviet bloc and its continuing anti-Western propaganda, Cominform verbal attacks continued and the boycotting of the Yugoslav economy went on unabated.

Becoming increasingly conscious of the strains facing the Yugoslav leadership, the British and American governments stepped up their effort to exploit the situation. By early 1949 both had reached essentially similar positions regarding the policy to be followed towards Belgrade. Both had come to appreciate "Titoism" as an "erosive and disintegrating force" within the Soviet sphere of influence and wished to keep the Yugoslav leaders strong enough to survive Cominform pressure. Of course, there were important issues still standing in the way for better relations. The Yugoslav claims on Trieste and Carinthia and particularly the Yugoslav role in supporting the Communist insurgency in Greece, let alone the anti-Western rhetoric of Belgrade, created much distrust and irritation in Western capitals. At the same time, both London and Washington were reluctant to exercise undue pressure on Tito in order to extract immediate political concessions. The desire to avoid offending Yugoslav susceptibilities or exposing Tito's regime to Cominform castigations dictated a cautious approach⁸.

So as long as no dramatic changes were taking place in the international balance of power, the Western Powers could bide their time until the Yugo-

7. Howard, Harry, "Greece and her Northern Neighbours, 1948-1949", in *Balkan Studies*, 1966, Vol. I, Thessaloniki 1966, pp. 5-6; Iatrides, 61-62.

8. About the American attitude, see *FRUS*, 1949, V, 858-859, 859-861, 873-875; see also *U.S. Department of State Papers*, National Archives, Diplomatic Branch, Washington

slavs, under the pressures generated by their diplomatic isolation and their deteriorating economy, made the first move. Indeed, by early January 1949, a Yugoslav official had contacted Paul Porter, Deputy U.S. Representative to the UN Economic Commission for Europe, inquiring about possible direct financial aid from the West through increased purchases of Yugoslav metals⁹. The U.S. proved eager to revise its trade policy towards Yugoslavia along more favourable conditions without demanding any political concessions for the time being. However, in his telegram to the U.S. Ambassador in Belgrade outlining the newly formed policy towards Yugoslavia, Dean Acheson, the American Secretary of State, stressed that Tito should "at an opportune time" be left in no doubt as to how much it was in the vital interests of the U.S. and the West that the Yugoslavs should cease supporting Greek insurgents¹⁰.

The new U.S. policy and particularly the decision not to link a more favourable economic policy to political concessions was duly explained to the Greeks. According to U.S. sources, Panayotis Pipinelis, the Greek permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "warmly" agreed with this policy and concurred that a high degree of confidentiality was required in dealing with Yugoslavia¹¹.

A month earlier, after the break-down of the first round of the Conciliation Committee talks, Pipinelis had taken the initiative to suggest the renewal of the Greek-Yugoslav negotiations. The Americans, however, were reluctant to press the matter, while the British were only too conscious of "the internal strains and stresses within the CPY" (Communist Party of Yugoslavia), which had proved sufficiently strong to prevent the initiation of separate Greek-Yugoslav conversations. The British even went as far as to caution the Americans against making "too early or too precipitous advances to Tito" lest that should provoke a "strenuous" Soviet reaction¹².

D.C. (henceforth referred to as *DS*) 869.00/3249, Memorandum by B.C. Connelly : "Potentiality for Yugoslav-Greek Rapprochement". Regarding the British attitude, see *FRUS*, 1949 V, 875-876; *Foreign Office Papers*, Public Record Office, London (Henceforth referred to as *FO*) 371, 78447/R 1953, Belgrade, 17.11.1949.

9. The official was Milenko Filipović, Yugoslav Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and Chief of the Yugoslav Delegation to the UN Economic Commission for Europe: *FRUS*, 1949 V, 875, note 7; see also, *ibid.*, 859-861.

10. *FRUS*, 1949 V, 866-868, 873.

11. *FRUS*, 1949 V, 876-877; *DS* 66OH.119/3-1749, Athens 511.

12. *FO* 371, 78447/R 1067, Belgrade, 28.1.1949; R 1095, Belgrade, 28.1.1949; R 1503, *FO* to Belgrade, 8.11.1949; R 1559, Belgrade, 9.11.1949; *FRUS*, 1949 V, 875-876.

However, the US government in relaxing its trade policy towards Yugoslavia was above all placing, as Acheson put it, "certain economic counters" at the hands of the US Ambassador in Belgrade¹³.

The first months of 1949 witnessed a growing disenchantment of the Yugoslav Communist leadership with the attitude of their Greek comrades. In late January 1949 the KKE's Fifth Plenum re-introduced the pre-1935 platform of the Party for an independent Macedonian state within a Balkan federation of people's republics. By that time the KKE leadership had removed pro-Tito elements from the leadership of the Slav-Macedonian movement in Greece and was increasingly giving signs of its attachment to Cominform policies. In this context, the Fifth Plenum decision seemed not only as an effort by the KKE to win over the Slav-speaking element in Macedonia to its cause, but also as a move directed against Tito's firm grip on Yugoslav Macedonian politics. That was most probably the way the Yugoslav leaders understood the KKE's initiative, despite their mild public reactions initially¹⁴.

As Yugoslav-KKE relations grew increasingly strained, Yugoslav officials on occasions intimated to Western diplomats their misgivings about continuing assistance to the Greek insurgents¹⁵. In March 1949 Yugoslav feelers were put to the Greek side. The Yugoslav Consul at Salonica was reported to have expressed interest regarding the reactivation of the erstwhile Yugoslav Free Port area in that city. More important, a Yugoslav agent approached a member of Greek intelligence and offered to discuss the possibility of an "entente" between the two countries. This channel was used by Pipinelis who encouraged further contacts. Eventually, the Yugoslavs authorised Vesselin Martinović, the Secretary of the Yugoslav legation in Athens, to contact the Greek government with the perspective of bringing about a meeting between officials of the two countries¹⁶.

The Americans looked favourably at the matter while the British warned the Greeks against attempting "anything hurried or dramatic". However, this first serious attempt at higher-level Greek-Yugoslav contact fell victim of the indiscretion of the Greek Foreign Minister, Constantine Tsaldaris,

13. *FRUS*, 1949 V, 873-875; *DS* 66OH.119/2-2649, Washington to London 674, March 1, 1949.

14. Kofos, 177-184; Pirjevec, Jose, "The Tito-Stalin Split and the End of the Civil War in Greece", in *Studies...*, op. cit., 312-331.

15. Aleš Bebler, for example, had intimated to Sir Charles Peake that the Yugoslav government was "sick and tired of supporting a rabble of Greek refugees"; *FO* 371, 78447/R 1067, Belgrade, 28.1.1949; R/2809, Memorandum by G. A. Wallinger, 5.III.1949.

16. *FRUS*, 1949 VI, 267-268; *ibid.*, p. 268, note 3.

who, in a talk with the "Daily Mail" correspondent in Athens, spoke of an almost imminent alliance between Greece and Yugoslavia¹⁷. What proved imminent instead was the prompt exploitation of Tsaldaris' statement by Cominform propaganda and the equally swift and indignant Yugoslav denial that any contacts had taken place with the Greek "Monarcho-fascists"¹⁸.

This episode highlighted not only the delicate position of the Yugoslav leadership vis-à-vis Cominform criticism but also its difficulty in dissociating itself from the rhetorics, if not the perceptions, of its pre-1948 policies. At the same time it fostered the belief in many quarters that absolute secrecy and discretion were required if anything was to be achieved concerning a Greek-Yugoslav understanding.

During April and May 1949 the UN Conciliation Committee under Dr Evatt's chairmanship initiated a new round of talks with Greece and her three Balkan neighbours. The Committee's efforts soon focused on the problem of the Greek-Albanian frontier. This obstacle had not been removed by the time the Committee had suspended its proceedings. Once again, both the Yugoslav and Bulgarian delegations made their agreement subject to Albanian acceptance of the drafts produced by the Committee. Greek-Yugoslav relations in particular remained in a stalemate, although reports from Athens spoke of signs of "decreasing Yugoslav unfriendliness"¹⁹.

By that time, the American and the British Ambassadors in Belgrade, Cavendish Cannon and Sir Charles Peake, were eager to exploit any Yugoslav approach about financial support in order to encourage them to modify their policy towards Greece. Little by little the Yugoslav leaders became more forthcoming to such suggestions. In June 1949 both the Minister and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Edvard Kardelj and Dr Bebler respectively, stated to the American Ambassador that no further aid was being provided to the Greek insurgents²⁰. Moreover, in early May, according to the British Foreign Office, Tito himself had made a pledge to Fitzroy MacLean, British MP and wartime chief of the British Military Mission in Yugoslavia, that the Yugoslav authorities "would not in future allow (Greek) rebels who crossed the frontier to return to Greece to fight, and that no other help would be given to the rebels". Regarding Yugoslav-KKE relations, Tito

17. FO 371, 78447/R 3959, FO to UKUN, 8.IV.1949; FRUS, 1949 VI, 268, note 3.

18. DS 76011.68/4-2649, Belgrade, 437; FO 371, 78447/R 3821, Athens, 6.IV.1949; R 3913, Belgrade, 8.IV.1949.

19. Howard, 10-12, 13-16; DS 760H.68/5-949, Athens 915.

20. DS 868.00/6-2249, Memorandum by L. Cromie.

was reported to have stated to Mac-Lean that "now it is all different... we have no friends there anymore". Soon afterwards the British government decided to offer Yugoslavia a credit²¹.

Yet even these seemingly unequivocal assurances of the Yugoslav leaders were contradicted by reports from United Nations Special Committee On the Balkans (UNSCOB) observers. The US representative on that body, which had been set up by a UN General Assembly decision in 1947 with the task of observing the situation in both sides of Greece's northern frontiers, expressed his misgivings about the validity of the Yugoslav assurances, concluding that "if Yugoslav assistance to (the) guerillas had not increased since 27 November 1948, it has not decreased materially either and it is now furnished in a less open fashion". The Greek government in a letter to UNSCOB also denied that any change of Yugoslav attitude had taken place. Nevertheless, the UNSCOB observers did not fail to notice a sharp deterioration in the relations between Yugoslavia and the Greek Communists. In early July 1949 the "Free Greece" radio broadcast allegations about Greek-Yugoslav military cooperation against GDA forces; this broadcast also contained a blast by the KKE controlled Communist Organisation of Aegean Macedonians (COAM), the organisation of the Slav-speaking Macedonians, against the Tito "clique"²².

Ironically enough, the Yugoslav government was trying to refute publicly any allegation of the Cominform organs that it was coming to terms with Athens. The months of June and July were characterised by constant recriminations between Greece and Yugoslavia regarding violations of the Yugoslav territory and airspace by the Greek armed forces. The Yugoslavs even sent a note to the UN Secretary General protesting about alleged incidents. However, one of these incidents, the alleged bombing of the Yugoslav village of Scočvir by a Greek aeroplane in early July 1949, provided the opportunity for a meeting between Greek and Yugoslav military officers in order to investigate the incident²³.

This combination of intransigent rhetoric and covert conciliatory overtures was best expressed by Tito in his famous Pula speech of 10 July 1949. Having the Ambassador to Washington, Sava Kosanović, at his side, the Yugoslav

21. The content of the Tito-Mac Lean conversation was disclosed to the Americans two months later: *FRUS*, 1949 VI, 363-364; see also, *FO* 371, 76716/R 4734, Belgrade, 6.V. 1949; 78448/R 6907, Memorandum by A. Rumbold, 13.VII.1949; Barker, 292-293.

22. *FRUS*, 1949 VI, 366-367.

23. *FO* 371, 78448/R 6595, Belgrade, 6.VII.1949; 78448/R 6709, Athens, 9.VII.1949; *DS* 76OH.68/7-1449, Athens 1364.

leader asked that the U.N. intervened to stop the frequent incidents which he attributed to the provocative attitude of the Greek army. He denied KKE's radio allegations regarding Yugoslav cooperation with "Monarcho-fascist" forces. Then, invoking the Greek army "provocations" and the insurgents' "slanders", he announced that Yugoslavia was obliged to close its frontier with Greece completely in order to protect the life and the welfare of her own people. Quite significantly, Tito also appealed to the Western Powers to "put an end to the Greek provocations"²⁴.

Moreover, Foreign Minister Kardelj attempted to clarify the Yugoslav position on the Greek situation further in a statement that was published in the official party paper "Borba" on 24 July. Kardelj expressed sympathy for the Greek insurgent movement and blamed the "organisers of the anti-Yugoslav campaign" for the difficulties in which the Greek comrades had found themselves. He then went on to condemn the KKE for engaging itself in "an openly hostile and intriguing policy against Yugoslavia" since the inception of the Cominform campaign. In order to respond to "intrigues" and "slanders", Kardelj maintained, Yugoslavia had had to close the Yugoslav-Greek frontier²⁵.

The Yugoslav policy had at last reached a turning point: using the frontier incidents to create the necessary smokescreen and properly quoting the hostility of the Greek Communist leadership, the Yugoslavs proceeded to give the Western Powers the first tangible evidence of their intention to reconsider their foreign policy.

Both the State Department and the Foreign Office were quick to express their satisfaction to Tito while urging restraint upon the Greeks. Moreover, the US decided to issue a licence for export of a blooming mill and not to raise any objection to a small International Bank loan to Yugoslavia²⁶.

Now that the Yugoslav leadership had taken the first step, the US and the UK felt freer to exert more pressure on Belgrade regarding its policy towards Greece, particularly in connection with further Western aid to Yugoslavia²⁷. The Yugoslavs for their part remained as anxious to secure financial aid from the West as they were to refute any allegation of collaboration with the West or a rapprochement with the Greek government. In the case of Greece, the Yugoslav leaders did not hide their dislike for the character of

24. *FRUS*, 1949 VI, 368-369; *FO* 371, 78448/R 6907, op. cit.

25. *DS* 76OH.68/7-2449, Belgrade 693; 76OH.68/7-2749, Belgrade 712.

26. *FRUS*, 1949 VI, 369-370, 370-371; *FO* 371, 78448/R 6890, Washington, 16.VII.1949; 78448/R 6907, op. cit.

27. *FRUS*, 1949 VI, 369-370; *FO* 371, 78448/R 6890, Washington, 16.VII.1949.

the Greek government. They particularly distrusted the Greek Foreign Minister Tsaldaris. At the same time they felt it unwise to drop their campaign against "Monarcho-fascism" all at once, being mindful not only of Cominform accusations but also of possible reactions among CPY cadres²⁸.

In the case of the "Macedonian question" more specifically, the Yugoslav leaders considered it expedient to continue posing as the champions of the "Macedonian people's cause". In late July 1949, Tito speaking in a public meeting in Skopje strongly reaffirmed the support of Yugoslav leadership for the "struggle of the Macedonian people" and their "national aspirations". A few days later he made another reference to a "United Macedonia". On 28 July a resolution issued at a conference of Slav-speaking refugees from Greek Macedonia condemned COAM for its pro-Cominformist activities, protested against the treatment their "brothers" received in Greece, and, finally, expressed their desire to remain in the people's Republic of Macedonia until the conditions were created for return to their country²⁹.

These claims caused a good deal of suspicion about Yugoslav intentions not only in Athens but also among Western diplomatic circles. Yugoslav officials for their part, while admitting the need for an improvement in the climate that characterised Greek-Yugoslav relations, repeatedly pointed at the equally important necessity to meet Cominform and, particularly, Bulgarian efforts to shake the allegiances of the "Macedonian" people away from Belgrade³⁰.

Throughout this period, the Greeks, although annoyed by the tone of the Yugoslav propaganda, remained firmly in favour of a Greek - Yugoslav understanding. Pipinelis appeared to appreciate the delicacy of Tito's position and was prepared to proceed cautiously and discreetly. Already in June, the Greeks, encouraged by the Yugoslav overtures, requested that the U.S. Ambassador in Belgrade approach the Yugoslavs regarding the initiation of talks between the two parties on specific matters of common interest. The basic idea was a "step-by-step approach", which was to characterise all efforts aiming at a Greek-Yugoslav rapprochement. More specifically, the Greeks put forward as areas, where some common ground might be found, the resumption of commercial relations, the restoration of the Salonica-Belgrade

28. FO 371, 78448/R 7069, Belgrade, 21.VII.1949; R 7227, Belgrade, 27.VII.1949; R 7333-7334, Belgrade, 30.VII.1949.

29. FRUS, 1949 VI, 380-381; DS 76OH.68/8-249, Belgrade 740; see also, Kofos, 184-185.

30. FRUS, 1949 VI, 380-381; DS 76OH.68/8-249 op. cit.; FO 371, 78449/R 11392, Belgrade 2.XII.1949.

railway, and the reopening of the Yugoslav Free Port area in Salonica³¹. At that particular moment however the State Department preferred not to undertake such a mediatory role. They would rather support a *démarche* if and when one was made by the Greek side³².

The sealing of the Greek-Yugoslav border had created an atmosphere of expectation which was only partially clouded by Yugoslav agitation about the rights of the "Macedonian people". Even UNSCOB in its report of August 1949 observed that there was "no outstanding question between Greece and Yugoslavia which could not be settled amicably". On 20 August Martinović paid a visit to Pipinelis, the first by a Yugoslav official for two years. The British and the Americans also began to encourage both sides to establish joint investigation committees along their borders in order to avoid further incidents³³. At the same time, however, the two powers were deeply concerned with the plans put forward by the Greek military leadership regarding military action against Albania.

In April 1949 the Greek government submitted to Washington a proposal suggesting "preventive operations" in Albania in the event of satellite or Soviet aggression against Tito's regime³⁴. In August 1949, when the final thrust of the Greek Army against the insurgents was in full swing, information concerning imminent Greek military action on Albanian soil led the US and the British governments to express to Athens their absolute opposition to such plans. The Americans went so far as to threaten "a revision of the entire US policy towards Greece" in case of an invasion of Albanian territory. The Western powers, although not happy at all with the situation in Albania, were concerned not only with possible Soviet reactions but also with the repercussion a Greek invasion might have on Belgrade's attitude towards Greece and the West. The State Department was aware of Yugoslav plans against Enver Hoxha's regime and equally disapproved of them, at least until a concerted Anglo-American policy was formed with regard to the Albanian problem³⁵. In any case, the Greek leadership displayed remarkable restraint

31. FO 371, 78448/R 7335, Athens, 29.VII.1949; DS 868.00/6-2249, Memorandum by L. Cromie.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Howard, 18; FO 371, 78448/R 8322, Athens, 20. VIII.1949; FO 371, 78448/R 6932, Belgrade, 21.VII.1949; FRUS, 1949 V, 927-928; VI, 370-371.

34. FRUS, 1949 VI, 287-288.

35. DS 868.00/8-849, Athens, 1567; DS 768.75/9-16, Mc Ghee to Acheson; FRUS, 1949 V, 952-953. About the formulation of the US Policy towards Albania during the Autumn months of 1949; see: FRUS, 1949 V 952-953; VI 438.

and the insurgent movement was eventually liquidated without recourse to violations of Albanian territory.

The Yugoslav leaders for their part were facing problems with the pro-Cominformist activities of Greek refugees in Yugoslavia and, in September 1949, decided to let a number of them emigrate to Czechoslovakia via Hungary³⁶. Friction between Yugoslavia and the KKE mounted particularly over Macedonian politics. Since March 1949 the KKE leadership, under the increasing pressures generated by the Fifth Plenum decision, had moved towards a partial reversal of its tactics regarding the Macedonian question. They had tacitly dropped the slogan of "full national restitution of the Macedonian people" and they merely expressed themselves in favour of "self-determination". After the insurgents' military defeat, charges appeared in the Yugoslav press that Slav-speaking veterans of the GDA were persecuted in Albanian refugee camps for their pro-Yugoslav sentiments. In early October 1949 many leaders of the KKE-controlled Slav-Macedonian "National Liberation Front" (NOF) were arrested in Albania while a number of their followers escaped to Yugoslavia³⁷.

During the remainder of 1949 there were increasing signs that there existed a mutual disposition in Athens and Belgrade for an improvement in relations. In October 1949 a new Conciliation Committee was set up by the unanimous decision of the Fourth UN General Assembly. Again, the Committee's effort foundered on the problem of the Greek-Albanian frontier. However, observers did not fail to notice the conciliatory mood of the Yugoslav delegation. In his final report, the President of the Committee, Carlos Romulo, indicated that both Greece and Yugoslavia had accepted the draft agreement substantially, while Albania and Bulgaria made their acceptance conditional on a formal Greek renunciation of the claim to Northern Epirus³⁸. Of course, the Yugoslav acceptance of the Committee's proposals was not unqualified. Issues like border supervision-Yugoslavia still refused adamantly to cooperate with UNSCOB- and the Greek children caused much irritation in Yugoslav quarters. On 6 October 1949 all Yugoslav press agencies declared that Yugoslavia had no intention of handing over the children to the Athens government³⁹.

Such utterances in turn caused much consternation in Athens but were

36. FO 371, 78449/R 8875, Belgrade, 7.IX.1949.

37. Kofos, 179-184, 186-187; FO 371, 78449/R 11392, op. cit.

38. Howard, 24; FRUS, 1949 VI, 439.

39. Howard, 19-23; DS 781.00/1-1950, Memorandum by G. Mc Ghee, 17.II.1950.

balanced by Yugoslav overtures regarding the initiation of talks on specific issues between the two countries. Even on the problem of the Greek children, Yugoslav leaders appeared more accomodating in their talks with Western diplomats. When pressed on the subject by the British Ambassador in December 1949, Kardelj, indicated that Yugoslavia "would in fact be prepared to facilitate the return of all children whose parents, then in Greece, asked to have them back". However, he regarded the character of the government as an obstacle to any substantial improvement in relations between the two countries⁴⁰.

Just a few days before the end of 1949 Kardelj delivered a speech in Belgrade, which was indicative of Yugoslav intentions: While expressing some concern about the treatment of the "Macedonian minority" in Greece and sympathy for the "cause of democracy" in that country, Kardelj said that he saw no special obstacles to the normalisation of relations between Greece and his country. However, he appeared to make such a development conditional upon the "general political conditions in the Balkans" as well as on what he termed "internal progress in Greece"⁴¹.

Meanwhile, the Greek side seemed ready to go even further towards a general rapprochement with Yugoslavia. In October 1949 Tsaldaris exposed to Acheson and Bevin his ideas for a Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav defence pact. However both the State Department and the Foreign Office considered the project entirely premature⁴².

In November 1949, during the UN General Assembly, an important secret meeting took place in New York. Sava Kosanović and Sophocles Venizelos, the Greek Deputy Prime Minister, had what the Yugoslav Ambassador to Washington characterised as a "nice exchange of views". The meeting was arranged by Dr Basil Vlavianos, former editor of the Greek-American newspaper "Ethnikos Kyrix", who maintained close contacts with American, Greek as well as Yugoslav officials⁴³.

40. During an Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Stockholm in September 1949, the President of the Yugoslav Federal Assembly, Vladimir Simić, approached a member of the Greek Delegation to the Conference and expressed the interest of his country in better relations with Greece. As subjects of common interest, the Yugoslav official suggested the familiar triptych: trade-transportation, the Vardar railway and the Salonica Free Zone: *DS* 76OH.68/10-549, Stockholm 1788. See also, *FO* 371, 78449/R 11850, Belgrade, 20.XII.1949.

41. *FO* 371, 87693/10392/6, Memorandum by E. Peck, 6.I.1950.

42. *FRUS*, 1949 VI, 447-449, 460-461.

43. Kosanović to Vlavianos, 27.III.1950, in *Vlavianos' Papers* (in possession of Mr Basil Vlavianos).

In December, the Greek Ambassador in Paris requested the French government to use their influence in order to promote a general rapprochement between Athens and Belgrade. Again, the Americans, the British as well as the French advised the Greeks that they and the Yugoslavs should get together over specific issues such as the Greek children or the reopening of the Salonica-Belgrade railway⁴⁴.

By the end of 1949 the Americans had concluded that Tito's political independence vis-à-vis the East—as well as the West—represented an important asset for the West. The US was determined to support Tito's regime through "limited measures of economic assistance". It had even considered the possibility of affording military aid in case Yugoslavia became the target of outright Soviet or satellite aggression. It was believed that a Soviet success in overthrowing Tito would threaten to overturn the balance of power in the region, endangering the position of Greece and Italy, let alone the psychological impact of such a development in Europe. The Americans considered Yugoslav Macedonia as the "weakest spot" in the country's political structure and as the area where a Soviet-inspired campaign against Tito might be initiated⁴⁵. The US, however, still displayed cautiousness in using Tito's need for Western aid in order to extract more political concessions. In September 1949 Yugoslavia received a \$ 20 million Export-Import Bank loan and towards the end of 1949 started negotiating a second International Bank loan of \$ 25 million⁴⁶.

When in early January 1950 a caretaker government took over in Greece and general elections were proclaimed, the British Foreign Office considered the occasion opportune for a joint US-UK-French approach to the Greeks and the Yugoslavs in order to achieve an early understanding between the two sides. According to the British, the Yugoslavs had given enough evidence of their willingness to see relations with Greece improved. It was also believed that the Yugoslavs would be more eager to negotiate since their *bête noir*, Tsaldaris, was then out of government having been replaced by Pipinelis in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter had on many occasions

44. FO 371, 78449/R 11850, Belgrade 20.XII.1949.

45. "Report by the National Security Council to the President, NSC 18/4, Washington, November 17, 1949, in *FRUS* 1950 IV, 1341-1348.

46. DS 668.81/2-1550, Memorandum by L. Cromie. As matters on which the US were exercising pressure for a reorientation of the Yugoslav policy, besides the Greek question, the State Department official pointed out Trieste, the handing over of Cominform refugees to the West, the liberalisation of civil liberties within Yugoslavia and the non-recognition of Ho Chi Minh.

indicated to the British and the Americans that Greece was prepared to facilitate an understanding. However, as both Athens and Belgrade appeared reluctant to take the initiative, the British considered urging them to establish full diplomatic relations and then proceed to a step by step examination of issues of common concern. Matters, such as the reconstruction of the Vardar railway line, should be dealt with first, while thorny issues such as the return of the Greek children should be left to future examination⁴⁷.

The Americans, however, proved reluctant to adopt the idea and expressed themselves in favour of a different approach. They preferred to "proceed cautiously" linking the matter of the improvement of Greek-Yugoslav relations to the Yugoslav need for economic or even military assistance from the West. In any case, they made it clear that they did not wish to "push Tito to move faster than he himself judged prudent". The French also took a negative view of the proposed *démarche*⁴⁸.

Despite its cautious reply to the British, the US government was already reconsidering its policy not to tie specific political conditions to financial aid to Yugoslavia. In a memorandum to the Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs, John Jernegan, dated 6 February, the officer in charge of Greek affairs Leonard Cromie, expressed the thought that the policy of not attaching political conditions to economic support "should not be carried so far as to enable Tito to play both ends against the middle"⁴⁹. One of the issues on which this new trend of policy became evident was the case of the Greek children who had been taken to Yugoslavia during the insurgency in Greece. President Harry Truman in a letter to the Greek-Orthodox Archbishop of Northern and Southern America, Michael, dated 18 January 1950, pledged his support to the UN and Red Cross efforts for the repatriation of the children. In fact, the US government was daily receiving expressions of concern about the children's fate emanating from various quarters of the American public life. When the Yugoslavs became aware of the criticisms that had been levelled against their government, they tried to assure the US authorities of their good intentions. Ambassador Kosić and even President Tito himself promised that Yugoslavia would conform with the UN resolution on the matter as soon as the technical aspects of the

47. FO 371, 87693/10392/4, Athens, 12.1.1950; *ibid*, FO to Washington, 21.1.1950; 87693/10392/6, *op. cit*; FRUS, 1950 IV, 1356.

48. FRUS, 1950 IV, 1357; FO 371, 87693/10392/8, Washington, 26.1.1950; FRUS, 1950 IV, 1356 note 6.

49. FRUS 1950 IV, 1364-1365. See also: DS 668.81/2-155, *op. cit*.

issue were settled. However, the US Ambassador in Belgrade charged the Yugoslav authorities with policies of "procrastination and obstruction". The US Assistant Secretary of State, James Webb, also made it clear to Kossanović that the US government was anxious to see all difficulties overcome and the UN resolutions implemented⁵⁰.

Coincidentally, it was about the same time that the Greek Ministry for Foreign Affairs inquired the State Department whether any connection could be made between further financial assistance to Yugoslavia and an improvement in the attitude of that country towards Greece. Although the Americans were already moving towards that direction, they opted not to tell the Greeks, most probably out of fear of a security leak⁵¹.

B. The process of normalisation: Steps forward and reversals

The results of the Greek elections of 5 March 1950 were received by the Yugoslav press with evident satisfaction. In particular, the Yugoslavs made no secret that they would welcome a government in Greece headed, by General Nikolaos Plastiras leader of the left-of-center Ethniki Proodeftiki Enosis Kentrou (EPEK) (National Progressive Center Union). Indeed, Tito sent a personal message to Plastiras shortly after the elections, expressing the hope that a rapprochement could be effected between Yugoslavia and a Greek government headed by Plastiras himself⁵². While both the Americans and the British did not conceal their disapproval of the Yugoslav tendency to link relations with Greece to the sort of government that the latter might have, they too distinguished a clear chance of considerable progress in the aftermath of the Greek elections⁵³.

On 19 March 1950 the new US Ambassador to Belgrade, George Allen, visited Athens and had talks with the King, Pipinelis, Venizelos as well as with the Yugoslav Chargé d'Affaires. He also inspected the erstwhile Yugoslav Free Zone of Salonica. These moves were seized upon in Soviet bloc press which was already talking of a "new criminal conspiracy against the democratic Balkan states" aimed at the creation of an Athens-Belgrade

50. DS 781.00/1-1950, Memorandum by G. McGhee, 17.II.1950; 781.00/1-1950, Webb to Kossanović, 24.II.1950.

51. DS 668.81/2-1550, op. cit.

52. DS 781.00/3-1650, Belgrade, 343; 660.81/4-2250 Athens, 622.

53. FRUS, 1950 IV, 1364-1365; DS 668.81/3-24, Belgrade, 388.

"axis"⁵⁴. The Greek press on the other hand interpreted the visit as indicative of the importance which the Americans attached to Greek-Yugoslav relations in the context of post-civil war policy towards Greece⁵⁵.

The swearing in of Venizelos' government contrary to the agreement of the leaders of the Center parties providing for General Plastiras' premiership, dealt a severe blow to the prospects of a rapprochement with Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav press assailed Venizelos' government as a "manoeuvre by discredited reactionary forces to liquidate the result of the elections" and considered that the new Greek government would be unable to promote "the normal international cooperation in Balkan relations". President Tito himself, in an interview to the London "Times" stated that the state of affairs in Greece could not permit any progress towards better relations between the two countries. He added, however, that he nonetheless anticipated a "turn for the better soon"⁵⁶.

Of course, such statements were regarded by the Greek press as an unacceptable intervention in the internal affairs of the country. However, the really drastic intervention came from the US Ambassador in Athens, Henry Grady. His letter to Venizelos in early April, in which he expressed his concern about the government's lack of parliamentary majority and the adverse effect this might have on the effective use of US aid to Greece, was properly interpreted by most observers as a clear indication of the US Ambassador's disapproval of Venizelos' move to accept the premiership. As Venizelos eventually stepped down, sections of the Greek press suggested that this was the result of the determination of the Americans and the British to "impose" a Plastiras government and thus facilitate the creation of a Greek-Yugoslav alliance⁵⁷. The Yugoslav attitude, reflected in Tito's interview in particular, helped give some validity to such scenarios.

In any case, Venizelos' resignation was received with relief in Belgrade as well as in Washington and London. The Yugoslav Chargé d'Affaires in Athens, Serif Sehović, was one of the first to visit the new Premier, General

54. *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1394-1395; *ibid*, 1950 V, 364-365; *DS* 668.81/4-150, Moscow 400.

55. In the same sense were interpreted the moves of the influential American journalist, Cyrus Sultzberger, between Athens and Belgrade; *DS* 668.81/4-2250, Athens 622.

56. *DS* 781.00/3-2850, Belgrade 400; *FO* 371, 87693/10392/14, Belgrade, 7.IV.1950; 87693/10392/16, Sir Clifford Norton to Sir Anthony Rumbold, 13.V.1950: In a conversation with the British Ambassador, the Yugoslav Chargé d'Affaires in Athens Sehović remarked that normalisation of the Greek-Yugoslav relations would be possible only if a government either including or headed by Plastiras was formed.

57. *FRUS*, 1950 V, 364-365; *DS* 668.81/4-2250, *op. cit.*

Plastiras. During that meeting Sehović conveyed his government's proposal for an exchange of Ministers between Athens and Belgrade. The Yugoslavs suggested to the Greeks to send their Minister first while the Greek side countered a simultaneous exchange⁵⁸. Towards the end of April Tito and Plastiras almost simultaneously announced the improvement that had been effected in Greek-Yugoslav relations. The Greek press received the news cautiously, emphasising that the Yugoslavs should return the children and stop their agitation over Greek Macedonia. The point was also stressed, that Yugoslavia would benefit more than Greece from a rapprochement given the desperate need of the former for alternative routes of supplies. The right wing opposition on the other hand, was voicing its concern lest the government, in its desire to see Greek-Yugoslav relations improved, neglected the preservation of vital national interests, particularly regarding Macedonia⁵⁹.

However, in early May 1950, the Greek government made strenuous efforts to persuade the Western Powers to bring pressure to bear on Yugoslavia to repatriate the Greek children the soonest possible and to do so without making the issue subject to political negotiations. The Greek *démarche* had some effect and the US Ambassador in Belgrade took the matter up with Yugoslav officials. Allen once again expressed the hope that the improvement of relations between Athens and Belgrade would result in the prompt repatriation of the Greek children. He also pointed out that such a gesture would enhance Plastiras' position, since the Greek Premier's policy toward Yugoslavia was increasingly getting under attack by the right-wing opposition. Finally, the American Ambassador made it clear that he referred to children of Greek race with parents not in Yugoslavia and not to Slavic children. This remark was received with satisfaction by the Yugoslavs⁶⁰.

Yugoslavia subsequently showed some signs of concern with the matter. In early May the Secretary of the Yugoslav Red Cross was instructed to proceed to Geneva in order to discuss the question of the Greek children with the IRC⁶¹.

On 9 May, Sehović again called on Plastiras and the permanent Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ioannis Politis. This time the Yugoslav Chargé

58. DS 668.81/4-26, Athens 944; FO 371, 87693/10342/17, Athens 22.IV.1950.

59. FO 371, 87693/10392/20, Belgrade, 29 IV.1950; 87693/10392/21, Athens, 29.IV.1950; DS 668.81/4-2250, op. cit.; "*Eleftheria*" (Athens daily), 20.IV.1950; FRUS, 1950 IV, 1413-1414.

60. DS 781.00/5-350, Memorandum by L. Cromie; 781.00/5-450, Athens 1012; DS 881.411/5-650; Belgrade 595; FRUS, 1950 IV, 1413-1414; 1414-1415.

61. DS 881.411/5-650, op. cit.; 668.81/5-1050, Athens 1067.

communicated to the Greeks the Yugoslav suggestion regarding an exchange of Ministers: the Greek government should make the request first but the names of the persons to be appointed were to be given simultaneous publicity. Apparently, the Yugoslavs had difficulty presenting the normalisation of their relations with Athens in a way that might attribute the initiative to Belgrade. General Plastiras agreed with the Yugoslav proposal. The Yugoslav diplomat then informed the Prime Minister of efforts to help solve the issue of the Greek children and expressed the desire of his government to see trade and communications between the two countries re-established. The Yugoslav government proposed to send a commission to Salonica to study the matter of the Yugoslav Free Zone. Sehović also insisted upon the necessity of avoiding any publicity, a point on which the Greek side promptly agreed⁶².

General Plastiras initially considered the possibility of sending his friend Dr Vlavianos as Greek Ambassador to Belgrade. The Americans, however, advised against this appointment, quoting Vlavianos' long residence in the US and suggested that any "spectacular advances" on the part of Greece should be avoided⁶³.

On 16 May the Yugoslav Foreign Minister addressing the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Yugoslav National Assembly, reaffirmed the decision of his government to improve the relations with Greece. Although he paid lip service to Yugoslavia's sympathy with the cause of the Greek insurgency and charged Cominform policy with the responsibility for its liquidation, he admitted that "internal events in Greece had gone their won way". He stressed that the re-establishment of trade and, more important, communications between the two countries would further enable Yugoslavia to defeat the Cominform blockade. When, however, deputies from the People's Republic of Macedonia referred to the "suppression of the basic rights of the Macedonian national minority in Greece", Kardelj stated that the position of the minority was one of the questions which should be taken into consideration in the context of the normalisation of Greek-Yugoslav relations. Reportedly, he even went as far as to say that the Greek government's attitude towards the "Macedonian minority" would constitute one of the basic criteria by which the sincerity of the Greek government should be judged⁶⁴.

When the news reached Athens, the Greek press reacted violently, hardly

62. *DS* 668.81/5-1050, *op. cit.*; *FO* 371, 87693/10392/23, Athens 14.V.1950.

63. *DS* 668.81/5-550, Memorandum by G. Mc Ghee; 668.81/5-650, Washington to Athens 832; 668.81/5-950, Athens 1047.

64. *DS* 768.00/5-1850, Belgrade 645; *FO* 371, 87693/10392/25, Belgrade, 17.V.1950.

distinguishing between Kardelj's remarks and those of the deputies from Skopje. The Greek government, however, displayed remarkable restraint. Politis considered that Kardelj's statement should have been "misreported". At the same time he pointed out that there had never been any question of a deal on a minority issue in Greek Macedonia since the Greek government simply considered such a matter non-existent. However, Politis privately stressed his concern over the raising of the question by Kardelj to the US Chargé d'Affaires, Harold Minor⁶⁵.

The US State Department, for its part, appeared reluctant to take sides on the matter. It regarded the Greek reactions as "unduly sensitive" considering that Kardelj's remarks had been made for "internal consumption". State Department officials cautioned the Greek Embassy in Washington against "hypersensitivity on the Macedonian question" and stressed the importance of a Greek-Yugoslav rapprochement⁶⁶.

Plastiras' government, however, tried to do its best to keep the negotiations going in spite of increasing disaffection among governmental circles to the rapprochement policy. The Greek government gave its agrément for the appointment of Sehović as the Yugoslav Minister in Athens, although this choice caused some disappointment: It appeared that the Yugoslavs were merely raising their chargé in Athens to the rank of chief of mission while the Greek side had nominated an official of ministerial rank, Dimitrios Pappas⁶⁷.

There followed a campaign in the Yugoslav press and radio on the "Macedonian question" while accusations were also made that the Greeks presented the issue of the Greek children in a "distorted way". At the same time, "Politika" accused the Greek "extreme reactionary Right" of distorting Kardelj's statement in order to provoke misunderstanding and prevent the normalisation of relations between the two countries⁶⁸.

The Greek government found itself in an increasingly embarrassing situation. Politis informed the US chargé that, at the absence of any real progress at the talks in Geneva regarding the repatriation of the Greek children, his government intended to proceed slowly with the establishment of joint Greek-

65. DS 668.81/5-19, Athens 1154 and 1155; FO 371, 87693/10392/28, Athens, 19.V. 1950.

66. FRUS, 1950 IV, 1420; DS 781.00/5-2350, Washington 942.

67. DS 781.00/8-1750, Athens 281; FO 371, 87696/10392/91, Athens 9.IX.1950; Royal Greek Embassy, Washington D.C., Memorandum in DS 668.81/6-2250.

68. DS 668.81/5-2250, Athens 1221; 668.81/5-2950, Belgrade 565.

Yugoslav committees which were to examine the matter of the Salonica Free Zone and the reopening of the Vardar railway. Minor once more suggested moderation⁶⁹.

The Greek side was no less irritated by the Yugoslav tendency to draw too great a distinction between Plastiras' government and its "reactionary" predecessors, all the more so since such remarks were seized upon the rightist opposition to assail the government's credentials of "national-mindedness". This attitude of the Yugoslavs forced Plastiras to state before the Greek Parliament that a "Macedonian minority question" did not exist as far as Greece was concerned and to affirm that his government maintained "constant vigilance over the national interests of the country". At the same time, however, Plastiras reiterated Greece's desire for normal relations with "all countries of good will"⁷⁰.

For a while it looked as if the rapprochement still had chances to succeed; these, however, were dashed when, according to the Greek Foreign Ministry, Sehović stated to Plastiras and Politis that the Yugoslav government considered the Greek attitude towards the question of the "Macedonian minority" "inadmissible and unsatisfactory". The continuation of that attitude, Sehović added, could seriously jeopardise the improvement of the Greek-Yugoslav relations. In undertaking this *démarche*, he explained, the Yugoslav government was expressing the interest of Yugoslav public opinion in the fate of Slav minorities. Politis replied that whatever minorities were to be found in Greece, their fate could not become an object of negotiation with other countries⁷¹.

Following the Yugoslav "*démarche*", the Greek government decided to suspend all efforts to improve relations between the two countries and to postpone the exchange of ministers until there was some clarification of Yugoslav intentions. Indeed, using various pretexts, the Greek Foreign Ministry postponed the presentation of Sehović's credentials, due on 19 June, until the latter returned to Belgrade a few days later. The Greek Minister's departure for Belgrade was also postponed indefinitely⁷².

The Greek reactions were duly explained to Washington, London and Paris. Plastiras and Politis in Athens undertook to explain to the British am-

69. *DS* 668.81/5-2550, Athens 1217.

70. *DS* 781.00/8-1750, Athens 281; *FO* 371, 87694/10392/36, Athens, 27.V.1950.

71. *FO* 371, 87694/10392/42, Athens, 20.VI.1950.

72. *DS* 668.81/6-2050, Athens 1484; 781.00/8-1750, *op. cit.*; 668.81/6-2650, Washington to Belgrade 507; *FO* 371, 87694/10392/42, *FO* to Athens, 22.VI.1950.

bassador and the American chargé the determination of the Greek government not to proceed with the Greek-Yugoslav rapprochement as long as Belgrade persisted in its attitude with respect to the "Macedonian minority". They also expressed the hope that the Americans and the British would use their influence in Belgrade to make the Yugoslavs drop the agitation on that issue⁷³.

Both the Americans and the British tried to dissuade the Greeks from implementing their decision. Although they regarded Yugoslav actions as "most unfortunate" and "dissappointing", they insisted that the Greeks should go forward with the plans for the exchange of Ministers. They stressed the ultimate advantages that both Greece and her neighbour would accrue through the restoration of normal relations. They both suggested that Yugoslav propaganda should be disregarded on the grounds that it was being waged for internal consumption. It was also pointed out that if normalisation of Greek-Yugoslav relations was not effected by the next UN General Assembly, the Greek government might find itself in an awkward position parallel to that of the Albanian government in its refusal to re-establish diplomatic relations with Greece prior to the withdrawal of Greek claims in Northern Epirus⁷⁴.

The Greek government, however, resisted these suggestions. It merely accepted not to inform the Greek public of the latest developments and to postpone a parliamentary debate on the Greek-Yugoslav relations. The Greek party leaders were summoned to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and were persuaded not to raise the subject⁷⁵.

In a memorandum to the US, UK, and French governments, submitted on 22 June, the Greek government expressed its concern lest the Allies, in pursuit of their overall policy, overlooked vital Greek interests. It was also stressed that Greece had accepted the re-establishment of good relations with Yugoslavia "in order to serve overall Western interests" and without laying any conditions other than the "moral claim concerning the return of the abducted children". However, the shriller of the Yugoslav campaign about the "rights of the Macedonian minority" in Greece or the all too frequent

73. *DS* 668.81/6-2050, op. cit., *FO* 371, 87694/10392/44, Athens 21.VI.1950.

74. *DS* 668.81/6-20 op. cit.; 668.81/6-1450, Washington 1203; *FO* 371, 87694/10392/44, op. cit.; 87694/10392/47, Athens, 23.VI.1950; 87694/10392/56, Athens, 7.VII.1950; 87694/10392/65, Sir A. Rumbold to Sir C. Peake, 29.VII.1950.

75. *DS* 668.81/6-1450, op. cit.; 781.00/8-1750, op. cit.; *FO* 371, 87694/10392/44, op. cit.; 87694/10392/53, Athens 27.VI.1950.

references to the internal affairs of Greece led the Greek government to distrust Yugoslav intentions. It therefore appeared to the Greek side that the whole case for a Greek-Yugoslav rapprochement implied a "well set trap" which had to be removed beforehand by allied intervention⁷⁶.

To be sure, both the Americans and the British spoke in very strong terms to Yugoslav officials, warning them against raising subjects which could jeopardise the normalisation of Yugoslavia's relations with her Western neighbours. The Yugoslavs, once more, retorted that if Belgrade did not show concern with all "Macedonians", then the Soviet Union acting through Bulgaria would exploit the matter to create trouble in Yugoslav Macedonia. Tito, in particular, explaining his position to Allen denied the Greek allegation that Yugoslavia harboured expansionist claims on Greek Macedonia and felt that the Greeks should "appreciate" his delicate position on the matter⁷⁷.

Although the Americans appeared to recognise the force of the Yugoslav claims, the State Department nonetheless considered that there was "evidence of an aim on the part of the CPY, in its ambition to create some day a South Slav Federation, to absorb the Greek and Bulgarian Macedonian regions" into the already established People's Republic of Macedonia⁷⁸. As for the British, they were well aware of the pressures that were exerted on the federal government by clauvinist elements of the Yugoslav Macedonian Communist Party. Foreign Office officials, however, could not but consider the raising of the issue of the Slav minority at that particular moment "completely irrational"⁷⁹.

By the end of June both US and British diplomats in Athens were advising their governments not to take any further action but rather let a "period of silence" set in. The US State Department attempted to have the rapprochement efforts renewed by giving further reassurances to the Greek side regarding the Yugoslav intentions, but it soon adopted the recommendations of its representative in Athens. The British also opted against any fur-

76. *DS* 668.81/6-2250, op. cit. (n. 98); *FO* 371, 87694/10392/50, Note 23.VI.1950.

77. According to the Yugoslav Ambassador in London Brilej, the Yugoslav chargé in Athens was not authorised to add anything to Kardelj's statement of 16 May 1950. According to Brilej, Kardelj himself had not intended to make any reference to the minority issue but had been obliged to do so "in order to pacify hot-headed Macedonian deputies": *FO* 371, 87695/10392/66, *FO* to Athens, 11.VI.1950. See also: *FO* 371, 87694/10392/42, Athens, 20.VI.1950; 87694/10392/45, Belgrade, 23.VI.1950; *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1426, 1427-1428, -1430.

78. *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1430; *DS* 668.81/5-2950, op. cit.; 781.00/8-17, op. cit.

79. *FO* 371, 87695/10392/66, op. cit.; 87694/10392/46, Belgrade, 24.VI.1950; 87694/10392/55, Sofia, 26.VI.1950.

ther pressure considering that this might justify the claims that in order to bring about a rapprochement with Yugoslavia, the Western Powers were overlooking Greek interests⁸⁰. As the Greek government maintained silence Kardelj informed Western diplomats of his intention also to refrain from any statements, particularly with regard to the Macedonian issue⁸¹. However, the situation could clearly be called a stalemate.

During July both sides maintained silence on all matters of friction. The communist invasion of South Korea caused widespread anxiety in Athens as well as in Belgrade and it was considered that it might provide a new incentive towards the renewal of contacts between the two capitals. Western observers in Belgrade noted that since the invasion the Yugoslav Press had avoided any comment on Greek affairs. However, neither Washington nor London considered the time opportune to press the two parties to resume their efforts. Such a move, it was thought, might cause great difficulties for Plastiras' government, not only with the opposition but also with some of the government party leaders. This implication clearly referred to Venizelos, who had only too often given signs of his intention to overthrow the government and replace Plastiras in office⁸².

However, the mounting international tension, entailing troop movements in the satellite countries as well as border incidents between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, apparently led the Yugoslav leadership to approach the British regarding a renewal of efforts for the normalisation of Greek-Yugoslav relations. Almost simultaneously, President Tito, Foreign Minister Kardelj and the Yugoslav Ambassador in London Dr Joze Brilej indicated that the Yugoslav side was ready to proceed with the rapprochement. They all spoke of the potential danger of war and the need for Yugoslavia to be relieved of anxiety about her frontier with at least one of her neighbours. On the other hand, they declared that the Yugoslav government was of the opinion that the "Macedonian question" should not, as Tito put it, "be allowed to stand in the way of a restoration of proper relations between Greece and Yugoslavia". Referring to the issue of the Greek children, Tito reaffirmed his intention to contribute to the solution of the question but pointed out that it had

80. *DS* 668.81/6-2250, op. cit.; 668.81/6-2850, Athens 1571; *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1428-1429; *FO* 371, 87694/10392/52, Belgrade, 26.VI.1950; 87694/10392/47, op. cit.

81. *DS* 668.81/6-2750, Belgrade 814; *FO* 371, 87694/10392/52, op. cit.

82. *FO* 371, 87695/10392/61, Belgrade 15.VII.1950; 87695/10392/65, *FO* Minutes by M. Chevallier), 24.VII.1950; 87695/10392/65, Rumbold to Peake, op. cit.; *DS* 668.81/8 550, Athens 399.

been complicated by the Greek tendency to exaggerate the numbers involved as well as by the fact that most of the children had parents in Yugoslavia or in the Cominform countries⁸³.

Encouraged by the Yugoslav overtures, the British Foreign Office charged the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Ernest Davies with the task of mediating between Athens and Belgrade. During his visit to Athens on 14 August, Davies found the Greek government willing to get matters started again, provided that the Yugoslavs would repeat to them the assurances they had given to the British. In this respect, Politis prepared two draft statements to be considered by the Yugoslav government to the effect that the two governments by resuming full diplomatic relations undertook to "abstain from interfering in all matters of domestic jurisdiction of other countries concerned". One of these draft statements should be published simultaneously by the two governments on the occasion of the exchange of Ministers. These public gestures should, according to the Greeks, be accompanied by the acceptance of a confidential *aide mémoire* of similar content⁸⁴.

While Davies visited Belgrade, however, Plastiras' government fell in Athens and Venizelos had accepted the mandate to form the next cabinet. In their talks with the British official, the Yugoslav leaders did not hide their disappointment with those developments. They also appeared mistrustful of Greek intentions. Moreover, Kardelj referring to the drafts prepared by Politis, insisted that his government could never be brought to abandon its interest in the "Macedonian minority". However, he indicated that Yugoslavia might agree to a joint communiqué regarding the principle of non-interference but could not accept a confidential *aide mémoire* on the matter. The British were getting exasperated by what they perceived as a Yugoslav effort to "have it both ways". They advised the Yugoslavs to make counter proposals, since the mere rejection of the Greek suggestions might well raise doubts about Yugoslav sincerity⁸⁵. In the end, Davies' effort, caught between the political turmoil in Greece and the familiar inconsistencies of Yugoslav policy, was terminated with no tangible results.

The US State Department, although it took "interested note" of the British initiative, was still of the opinion that neither country was ready to

83. FO 371, 87695/10392/66, op. cit.; 87695/10392/72&73, Belgrade, 11.VIII.1950; 87695/10392/74, Belgrade, 12.4VIII.1950.

84. FO 371, 87696/10392/89, Brief for Ernest Davies, 5.IX.1950.

85. FO 371, 87695/10392/77&78, Belgrade, 19.VIII.1950; FRUS, 1950 IV, 1440-1441 FO 371, 87695/10392/86, Belgrade 1.IX.1950.

take the necessary steps to improve relations with the other⁸⁶. However, shortly after Davies' effort ended, the US Ambassador in Belgrade suggested to Washington that the US "make every effort to foster the improvement" in Greek-Yugoslav relations. Having recently met with the Yugoslav official charged with the handling of the Greek-Yugoslav affairs, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Mates, Allen stressed the importance of restoring Greek-Yugoslav relations, particularly in view of possible Cominform aggression. In this respect, he regarded the failure to achieve an improvement while Plastiras was still in office as "contrary to (US) national interests". He also expressed support for what the Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister referred to as an effort to proceed with matters on which progress could be made⁸⁷.

In fact, as the pressures on their country increased in both the political and economic fields, the Yugoslav leaders were anxious to see the supply routes leading from Greece to Yugoslavia restored. In this context, they requested the Greek authorities to appoint a Greek-Yugoslav commission to consider the resumption of post and railway communications and to grant visas to Yugoslav representatives to visit the Salonica Free Zone. The Greeks, however, insisted that Ministers should be exchanged before such issues could be dealt with, according to the original Yugoslav proposal made during the April-May negotiations⁸⁸.

Again, the Americans and British, although they expressed their understanding of Greek annoyance over the Yugoslav position on Macedonia, suggested that, "in view of the critical situation", the Greek government should make an effort to restore normal diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia⁸⁹.

The Greek Prime Minister Venizelos, had already indicated that he fully shared the views of the previous government on relations with Yugoslavia. British diplomats observed that, although "the policy of rapprochement with Yugoslavia was not universally popular in Greece", all political leaders were convinced that improved relations between the two countries were desirable, provided that no Greek interests were sacrificed⁹⁰.

The Yugoslavs, however, took several steps that seemed to justify Greek reservations. On 30 August their representative at the UN, Dr Bebler, voted

86. *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1440 n 1.

87. *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1440-1441.

88. *FO* 371, 87696/10392/91, Athens, 8.IX.1950; *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1440-1441.

89. *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1440-1441; *FO* 371, 87696/10392/89, op. cit.; 87696/10392/94. Bevin to Norton, 6.IX.1950; 87696/10392/95, Attlee to Norton, 2.X.1950.

90. *FO* 371, 87695/10392/83, Athens, 24.VIII.1950; 87696/10392/91, op. cit.

for the Soviet motion on the "reign of terror" in Greece. A few days later he made provocative references to the "Macedonian minority" in Greece in a dialogue with a Greek journalist, while the Yugoslav press resumed its attacks against the Greek government⁹¹.

Following these developments, the Greek Minister-designate to Belgrade was appointed head of the Greek delegation in the West German capital. This move was interpreted by Western diplomats as signing the termination of efforts to re-establish normal Greek-Yugoslav relations⁹². Both the State Department and the Foreign Office once again considered any new attempt to that effect "hopeless".

By October 1950 developments in Yugoslavia got things moving again, earlier than Washington and London could have expected even shortly before. Indeed, after an extremely poor harvest, Yugoslavia found herself in a very difficult economic position. The Yugoslav leaders as a result had to sound out the West about increased financial assistance. Perceptions of the Soviet threat against Yugoslavia also led the US, the UK and France to set up a tripartite working party on military assistance to Tito. This time it was the French Quai d'Orsay that ventured the idea of using whatever military aid that might be extended to Yugoslavia as a means of securing an improvement in relations between that country and Greece, Italy and Austria⁹³. The Yugoslavs, however, at that stage rejected the idea of requesting arms from the West in the absence of outright aggression, lest such a move provoke the Soviets. Instead they concentrated their efforts in obtaining a \$ 400 million loan from the World Bank.

When Kardelj discussed the matter with the US Secretary of State, Acheson did not miss the opportunity to stress to his Yugoslav counterpart the importance of better relations between Yugoslavia and her Western neigh-

91. Minuting these news, a Foreign Office official remarked that "...there is no doubt that the main points of the Greek memorandum (on the Greek-Yugoslav relations, dated 28 September 1950) is amply proved; namely that the Yugoslavs have recently taken several steps which collectively cause the Greek government to doubt the good intentions of the Yugoslavs"; FO 371, 87696/10392/104, Minutes by M. Chevallier, 12.X.1950. See also: 87696/10392/91, op. cit.; DS 668.81/10-1750, Belgrade 250.

92. DS 668.81/9-2650 Athens 1035. As Deputy Foreign Minister Politis explained to Foreign Secretary Bevin, "no Greek political party would understand it if the Greek government put aside the question of Macedonian minority in Greece, which the Yugoslavs persisted in raising, and went ahead with the establishment of diplomatic relations"; FO 371, 87696/10392/95, Record of Secretary of State's conversation with Politis.

93. Iatrides, 27; FRUS, 1950, 1476, 1477; FO 371, 87696/10392/107, Athens to Belgrade 25.X.1950.

bours. During the discussions both parties agreed that the reopening of the Salonica railway would be of great practical value to the ailing Yugoslav economy. Kardelj reiterated the Yugoslav readiness to proceed with the long-awaited normalisation of Greek-Yugoslav relations, pointing out that the settlement of the issue of "minorities" was not regarded by the Yugoslav government as a precondition for the rapprochement⁹⁴.

Shortly after this meeting, at the request of the Yugoslav government, the US Ambassador in Athens, John Peurifoy, sounded Venizelos about the opening up of the Salonica railway in advance of an exchange of Ministers between the two countries. The food shortage in Yugoslavia had reached dangerous proportions and the Americans were evidently considering the immediate shipment of supplies through the port of Salonica. At the same time Ambassador Allen at Belgrade made it clear to the Yugoslavs that their current press polemics over the "Macedonian issue", "were anything but helpful to Yugoslav interests"⁹⁵.

When approached by Peurifoy, Venizelos expressed his willingness to go ahead with the exchange of Ministers and to improve economic relations with Yugoslavia. He stated that the Greek government would facilitate the transit of food supplies for humanitarian reasons. However, he pointed out that the Yugoslavs should provide him with a "springboard" by returning a number of Greek soldiers and civilians captured by the insurgents and taken to Yugoslavia. Talking to the British Ambassador a few days later, the Greek Premier remarked that, although he was not absolutely convinced of Tito's good intentions, he considered that it was in the Greek interest to support him since his fall would have grave consequences for Greece⁹⁶.

Contacts followed between the Greek and Yugoslav governments and within two weeks of Peurifoy's approach Venizelos was able to announce that the Yugoslavs were ready to return a number of Greek soldiers and civilians. The news were welcomed by the Greek press and hopes were raised for a rapid amelioration of Greek-Yugoslav relations. Indeed, on 7 November 1950, 57 Greek prisoners were returned to the Greek authorities and 7 more followed two weeks later⁹⁷. However, Yugoslav agitation for the "Mace-

94. *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1476-1478.

95. *DS* 868.03/10-1, Washington 1301; *FO* 371, 87696/10392/109, Minutes by Talbot de Malahide, 31.X.1950.

96. *DS* 668.81/10-2450, Athens 1381; *FO* 371, 87696/10392/110, Athens 31.X.1950.

97. *DS* 668.81/10-2450, Washington 310; *DS* 668.81/11-750, Athens; *FO* 371, 87697/10392/114, Athens 8.XI.1950.

donian minority" in Greece once more threatened to cause a break-down. In early November the organ of the Slav-speaking refugees from Greek Macedonia, "Voice of Aegean Macedonia", published an article, broadcast by Skopje radio, advocating UN intervention with regard to the "repressive" policies of the Greek government against "hundreds of thousands" of Slav-speaking Macedonians⁹⁸.

When these utterances became known in Greece, the Salonica Union of Lorry Owners refused to carry American food supplies to Yugoslavia; the Union of Dock Workers also decided to boycott all shipments destined for that country. Referring to these developments, the US Ambassador Peurifoy, who happened to be in Salonica, stated that "the Greeks were the last people in the world to obstruct the shipment of food to other hungry peoples". He also expressed himself strongly in favour of a Greek-Yugoslav rapprochement on the earliest possible day⁹⁹.

Another Tito interview, this time to Cyrus Sulzberger of the "New York Times", did little to clear the atmosphere. Although he expressed his hope for an early normalisation of relations with Greece, he went on stating that since a "Macedonian minority" did in fact exist in Greece, Yugoslavia would like to see it granted certain minority rights. On the other hand, the Yugoslav leader categorically dismissed any allegations that Yugoslavia aspired to any alteration of her southern frontiers. Regarding the Greek children, Tito reaffirmed his willingness to return all those with parents in Greece. However, desirous to avoid Cominform castigations, he would prefer the matter to be dealt with by the International Red Cross and not directly between the national branches in the countries concerned¹⁰⁰.

Despite these far from conducive statements, Venizelos, apparently under considerable pressure from both the British and the Americans, went ahead with plans for the exchange of Ministers. On 9 November he informed the US Ambassador of his intention to proceed as soon as he received a vote of confidence for his new government. Indeed, direct negotiations were resumed between Athens and Belgrade. At the same time the Greek government requested the US and the British governments to make clear to Belgrade the adverse effects that continuing rhetoric about "Macedonian minority rights" was bound to have on their efforts for better relations between Greece and

98. DS 668.81/11-750, op. cit.

99. *Ibid.*; FO 371, 87697/10392/115, Salonica, 4.XI.1950.

100. FO 371, 87697/10392/114, Belgrade, 9.XI.1950.

Yugoslavia¹⁰¹. Finally, on 28 November, the Greek Premier announced the exchange of Ministers between the two countries and the appointment of Spiros Capetanides, former Chief of the American Section of the Greek Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as Greek Minister in Belgrade. A similar announcement followed in Belgrade to the effect that Radoš Jovanović, former Deputy Foreign Minister, was to be appointed to the Yugoslav Embassy in Athens¹⁰².

Still, past experience and particularly the continuing references by the Yugoslav media to the Slav minority and the Greek children issues made Western diplomats extremely cautious and even led some to fear another break-down. The British Ambassador in Belgrade stressed to Tito the necessity of avoiding offending Greek susceptibilities. The Yugoslav leader characteristically replied that the Greeks and the West should not pay too much attention to what the local Macedonian press said. He also expressed his willingness to build Greek-Yugoslav relations "upon a much closer and more confident basis", adding, however, that he was not thinking of a "pact or any form of written agreement"¹⁰³.

In fact, the Greek side avoided making an issue out of the outbursts of Yugoslav rhetoric. Finally, in late December 1950 the news that the Greek and the Yugoslav Ministers had reached their respective posts caused widespread relief in many quarters in the West. The Greek-Yugoslav rapprochement had eventually been effected and was to prove an important and lasting development. Despite certain differences—not least of all the different social and political systems—the cooperation between the two countries developed so rapidly and to such an extent that by 1954 Greece and Yugoslavia, along with Turkey, were formally linked by a military alliance, the so-called Balkan Pact.

101. *DS* 668.81/11-950, Athens; *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1493 n 2; *FO* 371, 87697/10392/124, Greek Aide-Memoire, 22.XI.1950.

102. *FRUS*, 1950 IV, 1493 n 2; *FO* 371, 87697/10392/126, Athens, 22.XI.1950.

103. *DS* 668.81/12-1250 Athens 1885; 668.81/12-1250, Washington 1912, December, 14, 1950; *FO* 371, 87697/10392/132, Belgrade, 8.XII.1950.