

Baerentzen, L., Iatrides, J., and Smith, O., eds., *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1987), pp. 324.

This relatively little known volume on the "third round" of the Greek Civil War is probably the most comprehensive and inclusive analysis of most, if not all, controversial issues surrounding the causes, the course, and the effects of that costly modern Greek tragedy. The volume creates the impression that a conscious effort was made to substantiate the analysis on the basis of scientific research, something not always done in the treatment of the Greek Civil War. By abstaining from partisan colorings, the contributors of this volume also avoid the perpetuation of ideological controversies. The objective, it seems, is not to convince, but to inform.

Since disagreements are clearly absent, the different contributions easily create the impression that they are the product of one mind—of a single author. Although responding to a variety of issues, the conclusions deducted supplement each other, and provide a sense of a general consensus. Based on careful scholarly analysis, the conclusions are not forced upon the reader, but become inevitable outcomes. Shortcomings are recognized and limitations are accepted.

The first question the volume seeks to clarify is whether the politicians involved in the Civil War precipitated its outbreak, or, like the outbreak, they were themselves symptoms of uncontrollable circumstances. Was the political situation prevailing during the Civil War period different than those that prevailed before and after it? By examining a number of variables indicative of political stability (political turnover, office allocation and reallocation, cabinet size, official autonomy, cabinet/post ratios, and so forth), Keith Legg reaches the conclusion that although "squabbling politicians" were easily identified as being the cause of political instability, their behavior was nonetheless understandable because "the politicians of the civil war period merely followed the norms of the past". Lacking political experience, they simply followed political patterns that had been established during the inter-war period and handed down by the old generation of politicians (p. 34). By allotting blame to the political conditions, such a conclusion absolves, at least to some extent, the politicians involved, and inadvertently legitimizes the actions taken towards preventing the reinstatement of the pre-war political order.

In its turn, the political conflict that ensued prevented the implementation of post-WWII economic policies. As a result, the perpetuation of lagging economic performances became inevitable. Due the unsuitability of the social and political conditions, economic programs were, according to Christos Hadziiossif, never implemented (pp. 27, 28, and 37).

The controversial issue of the implementation of the Varkiza resolutions can also be looked upon under the same light. The political polarization made the one-sided implementation of the Varkiza Agreement a foregone conclusion. To the legitimate conclusion reached by Procopis Papastratis that the Agreement was implemented selectively—the Right was spared from the purges—one can say that if the Left came to dominate the political arena, it would, under the conditions that prevailed in Greece, have done the same—spare the Left, but punish the Right. Either way the purges would have contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Should the above conclusion then be taken to mean that the Left was, by default, not responsible for the escalation of political violence? The Greek Right, as well as the British and the American authorities involved in Greece, have maintained that terror was a common practice undertaken by both sides: the Left having done so in a systematic and organized

way, and the Right in an uncoordinated and somewhat spontaneous way which was definitely not sponsored by the authorities. The Greek Left has maintained that their decision to undertake armed insurrection was a reaction to the "white terror" unleashed against them by the Right in violation of the Varkiza Agreement. So, who is correct, the Right or the Left?

Ole Smith's conclusion is that the objective of the KKE from 1945 to 1947 was to avert civil war despite provocations. By August 1945, however, it became obvious that the self-defense tactics against the purges and the "white terror" were not working. The mere threat to respond to violence with violence, became a serious consideration between the Seventh Party Congress and the Second Central Committee Plenum in February 1946. While the main emphasis was still on parliamentary tactics, the decision was made to gradually build up armed resistance. Reliance on armed resistance gained priority on February 1947, and on September 1947, during the Third Plenum, the decision was made for an all out offensive. The same conclusion is reached by Heinz Richter whose detailed analysis of the deliberations of the Second Plenum indicates that no decision was undertaken towards armed insurrection. "Neither the Second Plenum nor the Panhellenic Military Committee", he argues, "took any decision to launch a civil war" (p. 186). Such a conclusion seems to resolve the controversy by allotting responsibility to the Right—it compelled a reluctant Left to gradually react to violence with violence. But does this absolve the Left of any responsibility? Definitely not! Certainly, not until a precise and direct cause and effect relationship can be established between the purges and the Left's reaction. All that is indicated by the above conclusion is that the Left had reasons to escalate the level of violence. It does not follow that the Left would have not done so one way or another or that it was motivated in its initial restraint by considerations irrelevant to the avoidance of the Civil War.

In any case, having established the Right's responsibility in precipitating the civil war, should the British government share in the responsibility? After all, it can be said that it was the policy of Great Britain that helped the Right recapture power in Greece after WWII. Or should the case be made that short of a communist dictatorship, the Right provided the only viable alternative for the British. According to Nigel Clive, the British officials themselves believed that "a Republican Center both should and could be created" (p. 214). Accordingly, twice the British appointed prime ministers whose republican convictions had been impeccable. Unfortunately, neither Plastiras nor Voulgaris managed to establish any workable civic order; neither had broad political support not only necessary for the curtailment of the right-wing excesses, but also for maintaining their governments in power. Thus, the lack of a broad political support, and the inability to deal with the economic chaos condemned both regimes to failure. The British were also caught in a vicious circle in which demands for a republican government could not be satisfied, certainly, that no government perceived to be imposed by the British could gain legitimacy. Republican governments were desirable, but not if chosen by the British. Being willing and able to maintain itself in power through coercive means, the Right became the only alternative to Communism. Conclusively, although the British intended well, their intentions were nonetheless neutralized by the interventionist nature of their approach.

But were the British correct to assume the worst case scenario? What evidence was there to conclude that without their continuous intervention, Greece would fall under Communist rule? Was not such an outcome conditional to Soviet involvement? Here again the British drew the conclusion that "without active Soviet involvement and direction, there would be no civil war" in Greece (p. 242). Yet, such a conclusion did not reflect the available evidence. As John Iatrides notes in his contributing article titled the "Perceptions of Soviet

Involvement", the "KKE leaders expected much from the Soviet Union, and that although their hopes were never dashed, they remained largely unfulfilled" (p. 245). Professor Iatrides' analysis then indicates that Soviet involvement in the Greek insurrection met neither the expectations of the KKE nor that of the Greek, British or American governments. In other words, there is no evidence indicating direct Soviet implication in the KKE decision towards armed insurrection.

Can the same, though, be said about Tito's involvement? With two comprehensive analyses, Elizabeth Barker notes that not only were there a number of reasons for Tito to want to provide assistance to the Greek guerrillas, but there was also more than just one reason for its termination in 1949. This conclusion is especially important if seen in the background of the controversy as to whether it was Tito's "treachery" of the guerrilla cause that condemned it to failure or Stalin's decision to expel Tito from the Cominform. Cautioning against giving in to attractive but simple answers, Barker concluded that "examination of relevant facts suggests that the truth of the matter is to be found neither in Tito's "treachery" nor in Stalin's desire to liquidate an inconvenient and tiresome diversion, but in the combination of a larger number of factors, ranging from the internal problems of the various Balkan communist parties, exacerbated by Moscow's interventions, to the grand strategy of the great powers of the cold war" (p. 295). Coming from a life-long student of Balkan politics, this statement is an invaluable reminder of life's complexities, and a legacy left behind by a wise scholar to those who will continue to provide explanations.

Indeed, such are the complexities of historical developments that they become impossible to be explained by the written or spoken language. It is to this reality then that one should, if he must, attribute the shortcomings of this volume. The contributors' effort to approach the controversies as scientifically as possible was hampered as much by the incompleteness and often biased content of the sources being used, as by the shortcomings of the scientific approach itself. The high degree of controversy surrounding the related issues calls for infallible proof of conclusions that only mathematical formulas can provide. Although aspiring to come up with mathematical computations, behavioral analysis falls short of its aspiration because the realities of life cannot be duplicated in laboratory experiments. No matter how many variables one tries to include in his computation, there will always be some that will either escape or deceive computation. The same is applicable with some of the contributions in the volume *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War*. No matter how many variables Keith Legg takes into consideration in his analysis of political stability, and no matter how many statistics Lars Bearentzen and Angeliki Laiou utilize to prove that the GNA maintained the initiative, in regard to the issue of the "paedomazoma" and the evacuation of civilians from the warring zones, there will always be room for doubt and controversy. The end result is that people who do not wish to be convinced will not be convinced. The unconvinced will not only be able to point to the limitations of the scientific approach to remain unconvinced, but also to the bias of the available sources, and most importantly, to the unavailability of sources. Repeatedly, the contributors of this volume point to both the lack of resources and the bias of the available ones.

It seems that the only way that irrefutable conclusions can be provided is to apply Stanley Aschenbrenner's examination of life of a particular Messenian village on a country-wide scale. One can then have a precise description of exactly what transpired in each village. By connecting one case with the next, one can presumably come up with a persuasive, albeit voluminous, answer to all the controversies. But even this approach is bound to leave some doubt since memories are either incomplete or full of unpleasant and perhaps incriminating

experiences and so people will either be hesitant to make revelations or will make biased ones. Thus, it would appear that the only way out of the Civil War predicament is for the controversial issues to be settled in the minds of the people. The volume under consideration will go far in helping people to do so. It addresses all of the controversial issues of the civil war, and on the basis of the available sources, it reaches the best common sense conclusions that can be reached. And, despite its failure to always abide by conventional editorial forms, it should definitely be among the basic book collections on the Greek Civil War.

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Peter Bien, *Kazantzakis. Politics of the Spirit*, Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 309.

Peter Bien's *Kazantzakis. Politics of the Spirit* is certainly a major and definitive study of Nikos Kazantzakis in English by a literary scholar whose involvement in the life and art of modern Greece's most widely known and controversial author has been extensive as his translator and critic.

Bien argues that Kazantzakis was involved in politics because of a basic concern that "reached beyond politics". Like Dante, one of his many mentors, Kazantzakis was concerned with that which made man eternal, and his political engagement was the means by which "he actualized his own non-political potential".

To many he "appeared" to be essentially political, and yet because of a personality that saw the complexity in any political position, he often earned the support and the hatred of a variety of contradictory elements. The Greek communists saw him as a decadent mystic, the Greek Orthodox Church tried to persecute him as an atheist and a communist, the monarchists viewed him as a Bolshevik rabble-rouser, and the Chinese communists called him "an apostle of peace" even though he often advocated violence as the way that mankind moved forward in its evolutionary development.

And Kazantzakis did not remain silent when attacked. He courageously expressed his views, at one time suggesting to the consternation of the left and the right that fascism and communism might be "involuntarily and unknowingly faithful collaborators" that would delay the forthcoming conflict between capitalism and the left. He was also harsh on the concept of a liberal democracy, particularly as he saw it at work in Greece with its inability to rise above mediocrity and factionalism. As he once said: "There is not a regime that can tolerate me—and very rightly so, since there is no regime that I can tolerate".

Bien feels that Kazantzakis' seemingly chronological allegiances to "nationalism, communism, socialism, metacommunism, aestheticism, Buddhism" were temporary manifestations of an essential core in Kazantzakis, an obsession with a freedom whose basic nature was often expressed in his favorite concept: the transubstantiation of the flesh into spirit.

This freedom was actualized by his heroes—Odysseas, Manolios, Capetan Mihalios, Christ—who chose death as an antidote to despair and bourgeois inertia, and whose lives were marked by a "passion that was a good in itself and not just a duty". Kazantzakis' advocacy of a passionate virility led him during his nationalistic phase to an admiration for others—Napoleon, Mussolini, Kipling, Cellini—but his view was eventually tempered by a