
Internal Dissension and the Greek Leader

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YOU MAY BE GREAT

but if you expect your people around you,
knowing you,
to spread palms for you to walk upon,
you are a child!

You may be great,
but if you believe that hatred,
which creeps about looking for you,
does not get strong as you get strong,
you are a child!

You may be great,
but you will die,
and they will bury you,
and the worthless and useless ones
will spit upon your greatness.

You will die
and the greatness of your star will become
nothing but a small candle
flickering in a child's hand

Only the anathema
which wrath will set upon your bones
will rise to a height
that will remind us of your stature.¹

*Unless otherwise stated, all quotations and excerpts from modern Greek works have been translated by me. All excerpts from Thukydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* are from the English translation by Charles Foster Smith in the Loeb Classical Library.

¹Kostas Palamas, *Oeuvres*, (Athens, 1966), 7, p. 528.

This poem was composed by Kostas Palamas on the day following an unsuccessful assassination attempt against Venizelos' life by two young army officers at the train station of the city of Lyon, in Paris. Venizelos had just signed the Treaty of Sèvres (July 20, 1920), a product of his hard and ingenious work as a politician, which created the Greece of "the five seas and two continents," and revived the centuries-old Greek dream of the acquisition of lands inhabited for the most part since ancient and Byzantine times by Greek-speaking populations.

Under Venizelos' leadership, the small bankrupt Greece of 1897, ten years after the military revolution of 1909, which invited him to power, was tripled in size and the Greek army came the closest it had ever been to Constantinople since the "City" had been taken by the Turks. The "Great Idea" (ἡ Μεγάλη Ἰδέα),² which had been nurturing countless generations of Greeks, seemed to become a reality for a moment. And then internal dissension overcame the best qualities of the Greeks and the battle was lost.

It was not the first or the last time that internal dissension had defeated the accomplishments of the Greek nation. Greek history exhibits a chain of highs and lows when the Greeks invariably destroyed whatever they build in their high moments of creative cooperation. Thukydides drew attention to the catastrophic effects of internal dissension on the internal and external policies of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, when he wrote that the Athenians "did not finally succumb until they had in their private quarrels fallen upon one another and been brought to ruin."³

The hymn to the Athenian democratic system is given by Thukydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, through Perikles' "Funeral Oration." It is a democratic system whose qualities were attested by the very power of the city, a power acquired in consequence of the qualities of its citizens.⁴ At least this is Thukydides' judgment on the matter, if one agrees with the majority of the scholarship concerning Perikles' Funeral Oration, which, although a glorified picture of what Athens could have been if things were as Perikles had presented them in it, also is believed to contain much of Thukydides' own ideas.⁵

²The Hellenic dream for the reconquest of the lands lost to the Turks.

³Thuk. 2.65.12.

⁴Thuk.2.39.1-4, 40.1-5, 41.1-5.

⁵Most scholars agree that Book 1 of Thukydides' *History* has been reworked and revised by its author and it therefore contains many of the author's personal judgments on the war. About Perikles himself and the Funeral Oration Jacqueline de Romilly in her book *Thukydides and Athenian Imperialism* (New York, 1963), maintains that Thukydides' work is entirely dominated by Perikles' ideas (p. 119), that the Funeral Oration expresses Thukydides' own views on the Athenian superiority and their right to rule

The Athens which Thukydides presents through Perikles' "Funeral Oration" is a city which its citizens had adored as "lovers,"⁶ and for which they "nobly fought and died, deeming their duty not to let her be taken from them."⁷ This was a process "most daring in action and yet at the same time most given to reflection upon the ventures undertaken."⁸ Thukydides strongly implies that the Athenians were able to create this city under the leadership of men like Themistokles and especially Perikles.

According to Thukydides' narrative it was Themistokles who convinced the Athenians to fortify Athens and concentrate on creating a maritime force by building a strong fleet, for he had foreseen what possibilities the sea had to offer. Thus he was laying the foundations of Athenian power and of the confidence of the Athenian citizen in himself. The complete transference of the political power to the Athenian people came later with Ephialtes and Perikles.

This confidence which Themistokles initiated is what enabled the Athenians at Themistokles' exhortation, to abandon their city and fight the Persians from their ships. This confidence is what prompted Perikles to say some fifty years later:

You think that it is only over your allies that your empire extends, but I declare that of two divisions of the world which lie open to man's use, the land and the sea, you hold absolute mastery over the whole of one, not only to the extent to which you now exercise it, but also to whatever fuller extent you may choose; and there is no one, not even the great king or any nation of those now on the earth, who will block your path as you sail the seas with such a naval armament as you now possess. This power, therefore, is not to be compared with the mere use of your houses and fields . . ."⁹

Themistokles was a man: "who had most convincingly demonstrated the strength of his natural sagacity, and was in the very highest degree

(p. 137) and that Thukydides, disapproving of his contemporary democracy is only referring to the most general principles of the Athenian Constitution when he praises Athenian democracy in the Funeral Oration (p. 137). She adds that Thukydides was an admirer of Perikles although Perikles clearly refers to the Athenian rule as "tyranny" (p. 155). Westlake in his book *Individuals in Thukydides*, (Cambridge, 1968), points out that according to Thukydides, Perikles' leadership which he himself approves of was greatly superior than that of his successors whose private interests were the cause of the fall of Athens (p. 8).

⁶Thuk. 2.43.1.

⁷Thuk.2.41.4.

⁸Thuk.2.40.

⁹Thuk.2.62.2.

worthy of admiration in that respect . . . To sum up in a word, by force of native sagacity and because of the brief preparation he required, he proved himself the ablest of all men instantly to hit upon the right expedient."¹⁰

Perikles is the only other Athenian politician about whom Thukydides expresses admiration: ". . . For so long as he presided over the affairs of the state in time of peace he pursued a moderate policy and kept the city in safety, and it was under him that Athens reached the height of her greatness; and, after the war began, here too he appears to have made a farsighted estimate of her strength."¹¹

According to Thukydides, both Themistokles and Perikles possessed in the highest degree the ability to foresee quite accurately the future course of events, to choose the appropriate course of action, and were able to convince their fellow-citizens to follow their advice. In fact, such was the authority that Perikles exercised over the Athenians, that "Athens, though in name a democracy, gradually became in fact a government ruled by its foremost citizen."¹²

Thukydides, therefore, attributes the creation of the ideal democracy which he glorifies in his "Funeral Oration," to its leaders who, besides their great mental capacity had the ability to control the crowd and impose their policies freely in a democratic government. The cause for its fall, according to him, is the subsequent lack of such gifted and strong politicians, and the internal strife which resulted under the leadership of weak individuals who were merely pursuing their own interests.¹³

Such is the explanation given by Thukydides for the ascent and fall of the Athenian empire. Reserved in his personal comments though he may be, Thukydides stated it clearly: The Athenians were able to accomplish great feats under the leadership of ingenious and strong leaders. With the lack of such leaders they invariably fell into civil strife and destroyed their city and themselves.¹⁴

The importance attributed by Thukydides to internal strife as the main cause for the destruction of Athenian power has also been noted by modern scholarship. Thus, Jacqueline de Romilly takes notice of Thukydides' decision to emphasize the importance of the internal conflicts in Athens which resulted in the sending of Alkibiades into exile.

¹⁰Thuk.1.138.3.

¹¹Thuk.2.65.5.

¹²Thuk.2.65.9-10.

¹³Thukydides' explanation of the reasons for the fall of the Athenian power is explicitly stated in 2.65.6-13.

¹⁴See Thuk.2.65.10-13.

She attributes this tendency demonstrated by Thukydides to a sort of patriotism on his part, demonstrated after the war, which is aimed at defending both Perikles' policies and Athens itself.¹⁵ Pouncey also draws attention to this point,¹⁶ while Westlake maintains that passage 2.65.5-13 is in essence a vindication on the part of Thukydides of Periklean policy and of the quality of his leadership during the war, which leadership — according to Thukydides — was immensely superior to that of his successors.¹⁷

One could draw numerous examples of Greeks and internal dissension from the pages of Greek history. The following excerpts, however, are characteristic of what the average Greek from the ranks of the common people — the worker, fighter, and political activist — believed on this subject. And since they come from the beginning of the nineteenth century, which also marks the beginning of the history of the Greek nation as a modern emancipated state, they are presented here in translation. These excerpts are selected from the book of Makrygiannes,¹⁸ who learned how to read and write at an advanced age in order to deliver to the Greeks a similar message to that of Thukydides, in a far less sophisticated manner than of the Athenian general of classical Greece, but bearing similar points as to the Greeks, their leaders, and internal dissension.

"When you read the whole thing [the book],"¹⁹ writes Makrygiannes, "from the beginning to end, then you will be able to bear judgment about all those who brought misfortune and internal dissension to the fatherland because of their own interests and selfishness. And it is because of them that the poor fatherland and honest fighters suffered and are suffering still."²⁰ "We are this kind of cannibals, and

¹⁵Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thukydides and Athenian Imperialism*, p. 229.

¹⁶Peter R. Pouncey, *The Necessities of War*, p. 11.

¹⁷H.D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thukydides*, p. 8.

¹⁸Makrygiannes was born in 1797 and died in 1864. Born to the people, Makrygiannes spent his whole life fighting in the Greek struggle for independence from the Turks in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and for political unity and justice in the newly born tiny Greek state. A true fighter for the welfare of the Greek nation, he offered his whole life to this purpose. Makrygiannes learned how to read and write at an advanced age in order — in his words — to write "about the distressful acts which were committed against the fatherland, because of our foolishness and self-interest, both by the religious and political leaders and by us the military. . . ." and ". . . make a note of the mistakes . . . until today, when we never sacrifice virtue and patriotism and we are at this wretched condition . . ."

Makrygiannes' history of the Greek struggle for independence and of the first years of the free Greek state, essentially a history of civil strife among the Greeks — although composed by a man who hardly knew how to read and write at the beginning of its composition — is one of the most powerful works of Modern Greek literature.

¹⁹Reference to Makrygiannes' own *Ἀπομνημονεύματα* (Athens, 1972).

²⁰*Ibid.* p. 4.

this is why we have been slaves for so many centuries under the Turks; we are the children of this kind of men and we have their virtue. Let us live well and let the rest perish; and whoever helps them let us destroy him also!"²¹ "Brave forefathers, Miltiades, Themistokles, Aristides, Leonidas, and the rest of the brave men, do not pride yourselves that you accomplished so many great and brave feats for which the whole world praise you, you did not accomplish them alone. The military people and the politicians helped you; the philosophers helped you with virtue and patriotic enlightenment. They had virtue and enlightenment, you had bravery and honest patriotism, and this is why you became illustrious. What if you had as politicians Maurokordatos, Koletes, Zaimes, Metaxas, and others similar to these,²² causing thousands of counteractions and frequent internal strifes, trying to kill with their opposition those who wished to support the fatherland; and they were killing them; and all the flower of Greek youth was lost in the civil wars."²³

"What the fatherland suffered because of the "laws" of these people and their own interests and the death of so many young men, the fatherland had not suffered during the struggle against the Turks."²⁴

"All these urged me to learn how to read and write in my old age, in order to write everything down . . . I will tell the unvarnished truth."²⁵ "Undertaking this task I write down the misfortunes of the fatherland and our religion which were caused because of the stupidity and self interest on the part of our religious, political and military leaders. Angry because of all this, for we have damaged our fatherland much, with so many innocent people having perished and still do, I record the mistakes of everybody, and I come to the present when we never sacrifice virtue and patriotism ever and we find ourselves in this wretched situation where we are on the point of perishing."

It seems that the Greeks who created the democratic way of thinking also developed within themselves a pathological form of it which makes it difficult for them to accept the superiority of a person with exceptional qualities. And although the Greek democratic system has always relied upon the direction of gifted political leaders, personalities who happen to be exceptionally above the democratic crowd will bring out the best but also the worst in the Greek temperament, and they will

²²The politicians mentioned had created parties supporting the interests of England, France, Russia, Austria and Bavaria in Greece.

²³Makrygiannes, *Απομνημονεύματα*, p. 192.

²⁴Ibid. p. 5.

²⁵Ibid. p. 5.

²⁶Ibid. p. 1.

stir up the dreaded hereditary disease of internal dissension.

An interesting attempt to offer an explanation to this phenomenon is found in Constantine Tsatsos'²⁷ article: "Eleutherios Venizelos."²⁸ I present here two excerpts from this article because they make very important points on the psychology of the modern Greek voter in regard to his political leader and to the power of persuasion in political issues. This article has been written with Eleutherios Venizelos in mind, and it is therefore an exposition of what the author considers to have been the behavior of the Greek voter toward Venizelos in particular.

Only in rare instances, when in their history a creative personality has dominated the scene, have Greeks been able to raise themselves to the height of great historical deeds. Only in those instances have the Greek people demonstrated their superior human quality, and this ascertainment makes their long years of self destruction even more tragic.²⁹

In no other history do personages play the primary role which they play in Greek history. But in no other history is the fate of these personages more tragic. They have to struggle with their people, with their people's indomitable soul, and with the stubborn negation of that soul. Impetus, which in other peoples becomes a fertile beginning of political life, in Greece it gives birth to a destructive counteraction. In the country where the lesser logos becomes better, where there is no respect for the personality, where the delight for criticism, the crushing of the "non ego" is a delight more profound than the bliss which the prosperity of the community brings, in this country, persuasion becomes a means difficult to use and uncertain. And, worst of all, in a country where all the deeds do not have a sequel — because the nation itself is not historically conscious — in a place where everything runs the risk of being destroyed the next day only because of the joy of negation and illogical reaction, the politician cannot easily have the faith which strengthens his will, the faith to devote himself to a deed fertile and permanent for history. That his contemporaries will seek to assassinate him or to condemn him, identifying him with common criminals, this cannot disturb the politician who embraces the whole expanse of history in his eyes. But he is disturbed and crushed

²⁷Former president of Greece who was also active in letters, now deceased.

²⁸Constantine Tsatsos, "Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος", Museum and Library of Eleutherios Venizelos ed., *Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος Σήμερα* (Athens, 1973), pp.9-22.

²⁹Ibid. p.10.

by the thought that his contemporaries and their descendants, unstable, unfaithful, ignorant of history, will assassinate his work — the most important, the ideal, the immortal part of his life. The Greek politician has to saturate himself with all these poisons. Were I to mention examples, I would have had to line up the most beautiful names of Greek history."³⁰

Were one to mention examples, one would have no difficulty indeed. Aristides, Themistokles, Perikles, would be the most obvious to select from the fifth century B.C. The three of them led in turn their fellow citizens toward the grandeur of the Athenian empire of the middle of the fifth century. Aristides and Themistokles were condemned to exile, the latter having to flee for his life, accused of treason: "... for it was not lawful to bury him there [in Athens] as he had been banished for treason."³¹ Perikles was fined:³² "Indeed one and all they did not give over their resentment against him until they had imposed a fine upon him. But not long afterwards, as is the way with the multitude, they chose him again as a general and entrusted him with the whole conduct of affairs."³³ According to Plato, the charge against Perikles was embezzlement, although: "he had proved himself clearly incorruptible in the highest degree."³⁴

Eleutherios Venizelos proved himself to be such a leader for the Greeks at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, he inevitably unchained around him the whirlwind of centripetal and centrifugal forces so familiar in Greek history:

Eleutherios Venizelos has entered our lives [those of the generation after his death] like something mythical. Demon or angel, national death or national resurrection, satanic force or that of Prometheus — this man who with his name gave a name to his opponents — what was he? ... Near his name we always would hear a word ["National Schism" Ἐθνικὸς Διχασμὸς] the content of which, unexplored and personified into an evil ghost of our childhood dreams, was gaining the same enormous proportions as his personality ... and connected to his name, whether sincere or

³⁰Ibid. p.11.

³¹Thuk.1.138.6.

³²Eighty talents, according to Diod.12.14, but according to Plut. Per.35, estimates varied from fifteen to fifty talents. The charge was embezzlement, according to Plato Gorg.576a.

³³Thuk.2.65.3-4.

³⁴Thuk.2.65.8.

hypocritical or deceitful or agonizing, was a wish, let not the nation be divided as it was "then." The cause of the dissension according to his enemies, victim according to his friends — we who were growing up, in any case, realized that he had been its center . . ."³⁵

The beginning of what was going to be known as the "National Schism" stemmed from the difference of opinion between the prime minister, Eleutherios Venizelos and King Constantine as to the policy to be adopted by Greece at the beginning of the First World War. Venizelos, because of his strong ideological affinity with the British form of government, as well as his belief that this was the only way for the realization of Greece's centuries old dreams, favored Greece's entry into the war on the side of the Entente (Britain, France, Russia). For this position he was accused by his opponents of wanting to "sell" Greece's interests to Great Britain and the Entente. King Constantine and his advisors were for the neutrality of Greece. This neutrality progressively became a "benevolent neutrality" in regard to the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary), creating an extremely difficult situation for Greece which was running the risk of losing her newly-won acquisitions through the Balkan wars. For this position, King Constantine was accused by his opposition of being willing to "sell" Greece's interests to the Central Powers because of his kinship with Kaiser Wilhelm II.³⁶

Neither accusation was true. Eleutherios Venizelos believed that Greece's place was on the side of Great Britain and France, both from the point of view of ideology and interest. Venizelos believed in the victory of the Entente and he was proven right in his foresight. King Constantine, on the other hand, held German military power in great esteem,³⁷ and he believed that the Central Powers would win the war. Therefore he was of the opinion that Greece's interests would be served best if Greece remained neutral. Thus King Constantine and his prime minister Eleutherios Venizelos held two different opinions as to Greece's involvement in the First World War. Their opinions were primarily based on their foresight concerning the outcome of the war.

King Constantine's responsibility, however, lies in the fact that he held to his opinion even after it had been proven detrimental to Greece's

³⁵George Mauros, "Eleutherios Venizelos," in *Ἐλευθέριος Βενιζέλος Σήμερα*, p. 23.

³⁶King Constantine was a brother-in-law to Kaiser Wilhelm II, through his marriage to the Kaiser's sister Sophia.

³⁷King Constantine had received his military training at the Prussian Military Academy and it is possible that it was there that he learned to appreciate the power of the German army, which he believed to be superior to the British naval power.

interests and that he used unconstitutional measures to impose it. He can also be accused of deceiving his prime minister, Eleutherios Venizelos, and Greece's ally Sarbia. Of course behind King Constantine were his advisors who, like their king, were incapable of admitting that they had been wrong in their initial predictions about the best way Greece's interests would be served, and in so doing led the Greek people into the worst internal schism in modern history, the results of which are still existant today.

Venizelos's opponents have accused him as the one responsible for the internal schism. It is true that Venizelos formed a separate government in Thessalonike in October of 1916, an act which formally separated the already internally divided Greece.

When Venizelos finally decided to form a separate government, the Greek people had already been divided into the supporters of King Constantine and the supporters of Eleutherios Venizelos. The internal unity, so rare among the Greeks, which had created a strong Greece at the end of the Balkan wars had been broken. The Greeks, as if obeying a genetic urge of their race for an internal dichotomy after a great accomplishment of internal unity — which was their successful struggle in the Balkan Wars — had been again split into two opposing camps. And the opportunity for this new split in the history of the Greeks had been caused by the actions of King Constantine and his advisors.

Twice King Constantine forced Eleutherios Venizelos to resign, although twice the latter had won a popular majority through elections. Venizelos, however, avoided resorting to anything which would aggravate the national schism that had already started to form in the ranks of the Greeks. He knew very well what internal dissension meant for the Greek and his accomplishments. It was only when Greece's most vital territorial interests were at stake with the advancement of the Bulgarian army into the Greek territory, and when the Greek populations of northern Greece were beginning to find themselves in serious danger from the antagonism between the Entente and the Central Powers in Macedonia, and when King Constantine's policy toward Serbia presented Greece with a serious moral obligation she refused to fulfill, that Eleutherios Venizelos resorted to the only solution which would save Greece from the moral and political impasse into which she had been led.

What Venizelos had not estimated exactly and had to risk, was the power of the destructive propaganda on a population which had already been weary of fighting wars outside their immediate home. This propaganda tested one of the most unstable characteristics of the Greek ego, its loyalty to the same leader and its commitment to the same cause with no immediate gratification for private short term interests at hand.

The major part of the Greek army was composed of the agrarian populations of the Greek mainland. This population had followed the leadership of the middle class which had begun to emerge as a strong political factor in Greece at the beginning of twentieth century. It was this middle class that the military coup of 1909 had placed in power and the old oligarchic factions which had gathered around the king and his court had attempted to overthrow. When Venizelos undertook the leadership of this class, he restored the fallen prestige of the kingship and invited many of the representatives of the old oligarchy into his government. His reasoning behind these actions was that he wanted a unified Greece where everyone qualified would be able to participate in the government, and he wished to include among his collaborators the most experienced and qualified people regardless of their political beliefs.

Venizelos, however, failed or was reluctant to discern that the old oligarchic elements he had included in his government were working against him. True representatives of the old Greek ego, which placed its self-expression above the expression of the whole, were waiting for the right moment in order to regain the power they had lost. And the right opportunity presented itself with the disagreement between King Constantine and his prime minister. They accosted King Constantine's conservatism and indecisiveness and made his reluctance to commit Greece to the war their own policy to be followed no matter what the course of events should be, as long as this policy was diametrically opposed that of Venizelos. And in their blind course for self aggrandizement they destroyed the common interest and the three thousand year old Greek presence in Asia Minor was erased forever.

This brief look into the most severe internal schism in modern Greek history does not aim to prove that in this internal dissension, devastating for the Greek Nation, King Constantine was absolutely wrong and Venizelos absolutely right. Venizelos was undoubtedly a great figure in modern Greek history, a leader with many of the qualities which Thukydides attributes to Themistokles and Perikles. He was highly intelligent, he could foresee future political developments and plan for their anticipation. But he was also stubborn, arrogant, and a poor loser. Ever since his first years of active involvement in politics in his native island of Crete, he had proven himself irreconcilable when things went against his personal political beliefs, and resorted to revolution.

What the study of the internal strife among the Greeks in the beginning of the century demonstrates is the extent to which destructive propaganda can divide the people and alienate them in two completely opposing factions where perceptions of the most vital importance for the welfare of the nation can be totally distorted. Thus, both King

Constantine and Eleutherios Venizelos have been idolized by one section of the Greek population and hated by the other. And the ideas by which each one of them stood acquired secondary importance to the intense polarization of the Greek population and with them, the national interest as well. Throughout the national schism, King Constantine was presented to the people by his supporters as the personification of the last king of Byzantium, who would win Constantinople back for the Greeks. Venizelos, as the great politician, another Perikles, who stood for the democratic ideals and whose perception of future political events was infallible.

Generalizations and analogies in history can be dangerous. They can also be a source of inspiration for important political events. The analogy established between King Constantine and ancient Byzantium undoubtedly contributed to a great extent to the victorious battles the Greek army fought during the Balkan Wars. It is possible that Venizelos had also counted on that, and this is why he reinstituted the then Crown Prince Constantine to the prestigious position of the army commander. This same analogy, however, proved disastrous for Venizelos' external policies during the First World War.

The analogy between Venizelos and Perikles and his contemporary events with those of Classical Greek antiquity had been attempted not only by his contemporary Greeks, but also by people influential in letters and politics on an international scale, as the following poem seems to indicate:

Venizelos! Venizelos!
Do not fail us! Do not fail us!
Now is come for thee the hour,
To show forth thy master power.
Lord of all Hellenic men,
Make our country great again!

Venizelos! Venizelos! Thou'lt not fail us!
Righteousness is on thy face;
Strength thou hast to rule our race;
Great in war and great in peace,
Thou, our second Perikles!³⁸

Richard Clogg, in his article, "Politics and the Academy: Arnold

³⁸The first and last strophes of a poem composed by Ronald Burrows, the principal of King's College in London and founder of the Koraes Chair of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language, and Literature at the same institution.

Toynbee and the Koraes Chair" refers to the circumstances of the composition of this poem as follows:

During his time at Manchester he [Burrows] demonstrated a keen interest in the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 and his enthusiasm for the Greek cause found expression in his "Song of the Hellenes to Venizelos the Cretan," first published in the Manchester University Magazine in January 1913. This strikingly illustrates the way in which Burrows, like so many of his philhellene contemporaries, was bowled over by the charismatic personality of the Greek statesman."³⁹

One of the last letters that Burrows wrote "on his deathbed"⁴⁰ was addressed to Eleutherios Venizelos. "Venizelos published this astonishingly moving letter," Clogg writes, "in the forword which he contributed to Glasgow's memoir of Burrows. So remarkable, however, is the letter, the original of which is to be found among Venizelos' papers in the Benaki Museum in Athens, that it deserves to be reproduced here."⁴¹

I also present this letter here in the way it appears in Glogg's article:

Principal's House,
King's College,
Strand.
May 5/20

Dear Friend,

So San Remo is over, and all is well! It was like your thoughtfulness to send me that prompt letter in the midst of all your work. Νῦν ἀπολύεις τὸν δοῦλόν σου, Δέσποτα ἐν εἰρήνῃ ὅτι εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου τὸ σωτήριόν σου. Yes, dear friend, I can sing that nunc dimittis in all joy and solemnness. This may well be my farewell letter to you. The doctors tell me that the trouble has broken out again, and that the end may come very soon. I see from the telegram that you are taking back the good news in triumph to Greece. That is your last battle; the recreation of a united Hellas. I have no doubt that you will sweep the polls again at the election, but there is something harder to do, to convert the

³⁹Richard Clogg, "Politics and the Academy: Arnold Toynbee and the Koraes Chair," *Middle Eastern Studies* (21, 1985), p. 1.

⁴⁰Ibid. p. 45.

⁴¹Ibid. p. 45.

ignorant, obstinate — often well meaning — folk whose whole outlook was perverted and turned to bitterness by the royalist struggle. You are still, thank God, young and strong, and you can do such mighty things these next ten years if you have the whole nation behind you. It is not only that I have unbounded faith in you, my Perikles, but I love Hellas as a whole, and I love those dear people, many of them friends of mine in the past, and cannot bear that they should be so blind. Ah well! It may be that your sweet reasonableness will win them in the end. Goodbye, φίλε μου and may you and Έλλάς sometimes think of me.

Ronald Burrows

The “good news” Burrows is talking about was the decision of the allies that Greece should be given almost the whole of Thrace, sovereignty over the Aegean islands, except for Rhodes, and a trial period over the Smyrna region, which was to be permanent after five years by means of a plebiscite or a vote by a local parliament. The above terms were agreed upon at the San Remo conference, and this treaty, extremely favorable to Greece, was signed August 10, 1920. On his way to Greece, the bearer of the “good news,” Eleutherios Venizelos, suffered an assassination attempt by two Greek officers, members of the opposition at home which had sprung from “the royalist struggle” to which Burrows refers. And at the following November election Venizelos, who had finally created the Greece “of two continents and of the five seas,” instead of “sweeping the polls” was not even elected a member of the parliament and had to go into exile fearing for his life.

Ronald Burrows was the principal of King's College, London, from 1931 until his death in 1920.⁴² According to Richard Clogg, “Burrows, a Christian socialist, developed a strong interest in modern Greece. In the course of his topographical researches in the Peloponnese he was impressed by the vigour with which the Greeks conducted their politics and was fond of contrasting this with the apathy he had encountered in the municipal politics of Glasgow.”⁴³ Richard Clogg goes on to describe an event that Burrows witnessed, which I believe is characteristic of modern Greek political life: “At one local election in Pylos he [Burrows] had come across the local citizenry, “with many

⁴²Ronald Burrows must have been very influential in the political circles of his time as the following excerpt from Richard Clogg's article seems to indicate: in October 1915 when Serbia was gravely threatened after Bulgaria had thrown in its lot with the Central Powers, Burrows managed to induce the British government to adopt a policy of offering the enosis of Cyprus with Greece in return for Greece's entry into the war on the side of Serbia.

⁴³Ibid. p. 1.

bands and banners,” electing a town council of fifteen members. The voters' roll contained 1200 names and there was a total of 127 candidates.”⁴⁴

The above mentioned passages are an example of the impression which Venizelos' apparition on the Greek political scene had produced on an international scale at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Burrows' poem he is viewed as the man with the qualities of the remarkable leader of Ancient Greece, Perikles. The last passage demonstrates the intense political awareness of the modern Greek and his active involvement in politics.

It may be that it is in this intense political awareness of the Greek that the source of the destructive controversies around his political leaders lies.

⁴⁴Ibid. p. 1.