

<sup>84</sup> By mid-1942 the BBC was fully aware of its attraction and influence within occupied Greece, where death was often risked in exchange for the evening news. BBC archives, E9/20, April 25, 1940: the BBC broadcast "is listened to at present in a spirit approaching religious devotion." See also T. Lean, *Voices in the Darkness* (London: 1943), 56: "everybody listens to the BBC."

<sup>85</sup> Note Lockhart B., *Comes the Reckoning* (London: 1944) 333. Lockhart, once the director of the PWE, mentions that during the events of December 1944 in Athens (i.e. a highly charged, almost explosive, situation where the utmost discipline would be called for) the BBC announcers, although some were known "sympathizers with the insurgents" acted in a way "akin to mutiny." Following the positive vote of confidence in the House of Commons on the governments' Greek policy, the Greek section of the BBC had added the statement: "The vote of confidence is not the end for Greece. The people of England will express their real will at the next election." See also Clogg, *Greek Government*, 392.

<sup>86</sup> Woodhouse, *EAM*, 167.

<sup>87</sup> Proving or disproving the thesis under examination is still possible. Radio transmissions at this time were being monitored and the main items of news (as well as the slant placed upon them) recorded by the intelligence services of the various belligerents. The Greek intelligence service (Δ.Ε.Υ.Π.) followed such transmission during the relevant period. Were such documents to be made available it is possible that a solution to this mystery could be found despite the missing transcripts of the BBC itself.

## "Taking The Lead" – The *Dekemvriana*, British Foreign Policy And Yalta, 1944-1945\*

WENDY WONG

December 3 1944, marked the beginning of the quelling by British and government troops of an uprising in Athens led by the Communist-dominated resistance organization, the National Liberation Front (EAM). Fighting had broken out among the various resistance factions in 1943, and on that fateful December day, EAM had been protesting the Papandreou Government's order to disband all resistance and guerrilla groups which had been mobilized against the Germans during World War II.<sup>1</sup> Following the initial confusion and tragedy of the late morning which had claimed fifteen casualties, further violence broke out between EAM's military wing, the National Popular Liberation Army (ELAS), and British troops. This wave of fighting lasted until January 1945, when the British finally restored the authority of the Papandreou government. On February 12, 1945, the Varkiza Agreement was signed in order to make, *inter alia*, provisions for the disarming and disbandment of the Greek resistance. Furthermore, it was hoped that

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the foundations for a more liberal Greek government would be achieved at Varkiza. The "Second Round" of the Greek Civil War had ended.<sup>2</sup>

Although it was only the "Second Round" of what became a brutal, three-round Civil War, the *Dekemvriana* was an international issue as much as it was a domestic one. Among the Allies, peace and security remained a question of significance throughout 1943-1945 beginning with the Teheran Conference and the final culmination of important decisions made there being confirmed at Yalta in February 1945. The United States, Britain and the Soviet Union were the emerging Great Powers of the post-war period, and the Big Three were determined that the peace would be established by them. Security for Stalin, in part, meant a solution to the Polish Question.<sup>3</sup> For Roosevelt, it meant the affirmation of the American position in France.<sup>4</sup> France and the United States formed a uneasy relationship of mutual need—the Americans needed French communication and transportation facilities to get to Germany, and the French needed American aid. FDR took it upon himself to oversee French sovereignty in the hopes of bringing France into line with Washington's interests. The American president, due to France's collapse in 1940, was not convinced that responsibility for the country's sovereignty could be placed entirely in French hands. Once again, according to Frank Costigliola, "Roosevelt saw himself as a lord of France's destiny, as a seigniorial matchmaker." As the main party who would decide France's fate, he "coded de Gaulle as the difficult bride who did not understand France's true interests and Giraud as the tractable and hence suitable surrogate who would take care of the lord's concerns." Therefore, the United States not only oversaw the recognition of the French Provisional Government under de Gaulle, but also the stabilization of a French currency, neither of which could be done without the approval of the Allies, but in particular the Americans. After all, argued Cordell Hull, "the power to issue currency was the litmus test of sovereignty."

For Churchill, the question of British security in the post-war world was closely linked with the preservation of the Empire.<sup>5</sup> Two months before the December Uprising, Churchill had concluded a percentages agreement<sup>6</sup> with Stalin during October 1944, hoping to keep Greece friendly to British aims in the post-war world. Brit-

ain, he felt, must be allowed to "take the lead in Greece." The situation there became one of great importance, a fact which had already been reinforced by the First Round of the Greek Civil War in which EAM/ELAS had sought to eliminate its rivals. In June 1944, not long after the success of OVERLORD, Eden had stressed the importance of "building up a regime [in Greece] which after the war would definitely look to Britain for support against Russian influence."<sup>7</sup> He had been fearful that the British position there was in jeopardy, particularly given the growing strength of EAM/ELAS. If so, what would the situation in Greece mean for Britain and the Empire, particularly in the post-war world? What would it mean for Britain's present and future relationship regarding her allies?

### *Keeping Greece within the British sphere*

Earlier in the war, after the evacuation of British troops from the Greek islands in April and May of 1941, Churchill felt morally obliged to Greece which had until then stood alone with Britain in the face of German aggression. Due to the Germans' superior equipment and air power, the British Expeditionary Force had been unable to offer effective resistance. Each defensive position they took had deteriorated rapidly.<sup>8</sup> Throughout April, the Greek army also disintegrated due to poor strategy and fighting against overwhelming odds. Subsequent plans were made on April 17 for the eventual evacuation of British troops by the Royal Navy.<sup>9</sup> And so the "Greek burden", Churchill would later remark, "rests almost entirely upon [British shoulders] and has done so since we lost 40,000 men in a vain endeavour to help them in 1941."<sup>10</sup> He felt that Britain not only had special responsibilities to Greece, but also *special rights*. However, the Prime Minister's interest in Greece was hardly one based merely on moral obligation. Strategically, British dominance of Greece meant effective control of the Mediterranean and thus protection of the route to India, the jewel in the British Imperial crown.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the Mediterranean had been seen by successive British governments as a means of security for the Empire.<sup>12</sup> Militarily, it meant that air bases and naval bases would be available to Britain, meaning that the British would be able to create a bottle neck for the Russian fleet in the Black Sea. Furthermore, the pos-



sibility of German air bases being established on Greek soil meant that the Nazis could conceivably close off and hence deny the Eastern Mediterranean to the British throughout 1941-1944. Such strain on British influence there meant that troops and supplies within the Empire were forced to undertake the long route—around the Cape of Good Hope—meaning that the lifeline to the Far East was thus as unstable and fragile as a string of light bulbs connected in series rather than being connected in parallel. Britain's objective, therefore, was to "save what she could of South-East Europe to protect the Eastern end of the Mediterranean."<sup>13</sup> As Greece became overrun by Axis occupation forces during the war, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) was created in July, 1940, to conduct sabotage and liaise with resistance groups in occupied territory. By endorsing SOE activity in Greece, the British leader hoped to re-establish some semblance of the pre-occupation political and social status quo.<sup>14</sup>

### *The British position and spheres of influence*

However, the political and economic stability of the Empire was seriously challenged and undermined by the events of the Second World War as well as the highly volatile situation in the Balkans. It was already clear that Britain could no longer exist as "perfidious Albion." As early as 1920s, the British position had already become "one of trying to defend a two-hemisphere Empire with a one-hemisphere navy."<sup>15</sup> Having previously been devastated by the Great War and plagued with instability and economic strife during the 1930s, the Empire was much in need of aid. Throughout World War II, Churchill endeavoured to foster a close working relationship between Britain and the United States. This "special relationship," he hoped, would help guarantee the Empire's survival.

Despite Churchill's efforts, the relationship he envisioned was not to be. Given the increase of American diplomatic and economic might, the United States was hardly content to allow the Britain a leading role in Allied affairs—a position that Roosevelt had already made clear to the British leader at Teheran in 1943 and reiterated many times throughout the war.<sup>16</sup> Thus, as the war began to draw to a close, Churchill found Roosevelt and the American Chiefs of

Staff far less obliging when it came to British interests. Furthermore, the Americans viewed the way in which the British delegation handled matters as little more than an unfortunate habit of involving the United States in their affairs by implication.<sup>17</sup> Thus, they cast a wary eye upon British endeavours in Greece. In this light, Churchill hoped that Britain's much-weakened military and diplomatic position could be eased through an understanding with the Soviet Union.

Although the British leader's regard for Stalin can hardly be described as cordial, he was not about to repeat the mistakes of the Chamberlain government. The fact that the Soviet Union had proven itself resilient enough to survive the war meant that it could not be excluded from the post-war diplomatic arena. Stalingrad, and subsequent Soviet victories, "had erased forever the idea that the peace could [strictly] be an Anglo-American affair,"<sup>18</sup> and Britain would have to work with the Soviet Union as well as with the United States. Furthermore, Churchill was fully aware of Stalin's interest in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, and he hoped that the Soviet leader would prove to be both reasonable and opportunistic.

The year 1944 was a rather desperate year for Churchill. With hostilities in Europe nearing their end, Roosevelt believed there was urgent need of another Big Three meeting, perhaps by the year's end. As early as July, the month after OVERLORD, he had notified Stalin that "things are moving so fast and so successfully that I feel there should be a meeting between you and Mr. Churchill and me in the reasonably near future. The Prime Minister is in hearty accord with this thought."<sup>19</sup> Germany's collapse was only a matter of time. In the Pacific and South East Asian theatres, the war with Japan continued bitterly and steadily. There would be much to discuss, as had been revealed in the last rounds of Big Three talks at Teheran. The outcome of the war in the Far East was yet to be determined, as was the future of Poland; if not the future of post-war security. By the time Churchill met with Stalin in 1944, the Warsaw uprising had been crushed, and the American position had already been established in Northern France with the success of the Normandy landing. Comparatively, the British course of action was yet to be settled.

It seemed that Britain and the Soviet Union might reach a common understanding, for at the TOLSTOY meeting in Moscow on



October 9 1944, Stalin confided to Churchill that Roosevelt's aims did not augur well for either of them. A message he had received from the President "seemed to demand too many rights for the United States leaving too little for the Soviet Union and Great Britain, who, after all, had a treaty of common assistance."<sup>20</sup> Greece, the Prime Minister then stated, was of particular interest to Britain. He would not concern himself with Romania because "that was very much a Russian affair."<sup>21</sup> It was essential, he argued, that Britain be the leading Mediterranean Power and he "hoped that Marshal Stalin would let him have the first say about Greece in the same way as Marshal Stalin had about Romania."<sup>22</sup> It was a crude division of power, and both decided not to use the phrase "dividing into spheres" lest the Americans "be shocked."<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, Stalin gave the "naughty document" his seal of approval— a bold tick with his blue pencil. The Soviet leader's acceptance of this percentages agreement freed Churchill's hands with respect to the Greek situation.

*"No peace without victory": The dekemvriana*

Therefore, when later confronted with what he believed was mounting evidence that pro-Communist guerrillas intended to seize power in recently-liberated Athens, Churchill "decided on 3 December to use British troops to crush them."<sup>24</sup> Deliberately ignoring the United States and even members of his own War Cabinet save for Eden, he sent the following dramatic telegram to General Ronald Scobie: "We have to hold and dominate Athens. It would be a great thing for you to succeed in this without bloodshed if possible, but also with bloodshed if necessary."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Churchill had argued, Greece could not find constitutional expression "in particular sets of guerrillas, in many cases *indistinguishable from banditti*, who are masquerading as saviours of their country while living on the local villagers..."<sup>26</sup> In addition, he warned that he might "denounce these elements and tendencies publicly in order to emphasize the love Great Britain has for Greece..."<sup>27</sup> The "salvation" of Greece would be primarily a British matter. Later justifying his actions to Roosevelt's personal advisor Harry Hopkins, he stated that his guiding principle for action in Greece had been "no peace without victory."<sup>28</sup>

The situation in Greece had deteriorated sufficiently such that on December 3, 1944, demonstrators led by EAM marched towards Constitution Square in Athens to protest the disbanding of the resistance and its replacement by a new army by the Government of National Unity. The area leading to this part of Athens was blocked off by police cordons, but one group, approximately some 600 demonstrators strong, managed to break through the cordon and advance towards police headquarters at the edge of Constitution Square.<sup>29</sup> When the crowd was about 100 yards away, an unidentified man in military uniform ran out of the station shouting "shoot the bastards!"<sup>30</sup> He then dropped to his knees and fired. The frightened policemen did likewise, scattering the surprised, panic-stricken crowd in all directions leaving several wounded and dead. A second crowd later broke through the police cordon which was later joined by thousands more as 60,000 people crowded Constitution Square. British paratroopers pushed the demonstrators from the area several hours later. Over the next two days, police stations were attacked by Leftist and guerrilla forces, and British troops under General Scobie committed themselves to the struggle. Eden had warned that "there was bound to be a tussle over the surrender of arms by ELAS."<sup>31</sup> Elisabeth Barker confirms this, for she writes that "the cause of the civil war was not the question of the king— or only indirectly. It was the attempt of the British and the Papandreou government to get EAM/ELAS to lay down their arms."<sup>32</sup> With the quelling of the *Dekemvriana*, the British had established themselves firmly and satisfactorily in Greece in preparation for the Big Three meeting in the new year. When, in January 1945, it was agreed that the Americans and British would first meet at Malta before proceeding to meet with the Russians at Yalta, Churchill enthusiastically replied: "No more let us falter! From Malta to Yalta! Let nobody alter."<sup>33</sup>

*The Yalta conference*

At the Yalta conference, codenamed ARGONAUT, the three powers discussed a good many matters, some of which included the fate of Germany, the prosecution of war criminals and the future role of France in the new post-war order. The peace that the



three leaders sought for Germany would be a punitive one, and they discussed her dismemberment and division into zones of occupation. Anglo-American efforts regarding strategic bombing in East Germany were to be liaised with Soviet High Command. Additionally, the three allies hoped to round off the discussions for an international organization dedicated to the preservation of world peace that had begun at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944.<sup>34</sup> However, the issues on the agenda of overlying and foremost importance were the continuing war in the Far East and Poland. The Polish question had been discussed by the Big Three at Teheran and also by Churchill and Stalin at the TOLSTOY meeting in Moscow. Given that the United States remained preoccupied with the Far Eastern theatre, Roosevelt hoped to secure from Stalin a guarantee that the Soviet Union would enter the conflict and aid its closure after the end of the war in Europe. The Soviet leader agreed, however it was also clear that a decision on Poland would have to be reached. Poland, as far as Stalin was concerned, was the main bulwark of Soviet security.

However, Poland was not the only litmus test for the Big Three alliance and the subsequent Yalta accords. Greece, ever an issue which constantly promised to generate suspicion and distrust regarding British aims in particular, remained a question of importance as well. Churchill had expressed Britain's "earnest hope" that "the people and authorities of Greece *and our British Allies* will work together in rebuilding that ravished country."<sup>35</sup> In response, Roosevelt made certain to remind the Prime Minister that he could expect no American aid for British ventures, particularly those concerning the Balkans. Popular reactions everywhere, particularly in Britain and in the United States, regarding the current situation in Poland and Greece were in danger of causing irreparable damage to the Allied cause.<sup>36</sup> But, although Roosevelt officially disliked the notion of spheres of influence, he was willing to acknowledge a substantial British presence there, just as he had with regard to British rule in India.

As regards the Soviet Union, Churchill felt that he and Stalin were bound by mutual agreement since October 1944. After all, the "naughty document" procured for Britain 90% influence in Greece as opposed to the Soviet 10%. Britain's right to "take the

lead" in Greece was exchanged for the Soviets having "a largely preponderant voice"<sup>37</sup> (90% Soviet influence) in Romania no less, at least superficially. Despite earlier suspicions on the part of Churchill and Eden that Stalin hoped to overstep his 10% and intervene on behalf of what they saw to be groups of "miserable banditti," the fact that this was most likely not the case was an indication that the Soviet leader had kept his word.

However, the Soviet leader strongly felt that such a relationship should be reciprocal. If he was to keep his word on Greece, then he expected that Churchill would do likewise regarding Poland. Although the Prime Minister had kept relatively quiet and was mostly careful not to overstep the boundaries of the TOLSTOY agreement, Churchill often gave vent to his fears regarding Soviet intentions for Poland after Stalin's January 1 endorsement of Lublin.<sup>38</sup> While Churchill expressed his hope throughout the conference that Poland would have free elections and a government which was far more inclusive than simply the Lublin Poles, Stalin indulged in a *quid pro quo* concerning the British in Greece and in Yugoslavia. "I have two small questions to raise," he began. "First the fact that the formation of the new united government in Yugoslavia has been delayed. I should like to know why. Also there are all sorts rumors with regard to Greece. I have no criticism to make but I should like to know what is going on."<sup>39</sup> Churchill then related that Britain had had "a rather rough time in Greece,"<sup>40</sup> but that he "merely desired that everybody should have a fair chance and do his duty."<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, Stalin assured the Prime Minister that he had no great interest in Greek affairs and that "he had complete confidence in British policy in Greece;"<sup>42</sup> a statement to which Churchill expressed much gratification.

By February 9, 1945, The Big Three had agreed with the conclusion of the conference that the overall objective was that the United States *and* Great Britain "in conjunction with Russia and other Allies"<sup>43</sup> were to concentrate their efforts for the purpose of bringing the war in the Pacific and in Europe to an end. Russia would enter the war ninety days afterward. To the benefit of American policy in the Far East, the three powers would "direct the full resources of the United States and Great Britain to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of Japan."<sup>44</sup>



Furthermore, the foundations for a world organization for the purpose of guaranteeing the peace agreed upon at Yalta would meet in the United States on April 25, 1945.<sup>45</sup> But until then, German terms of surrender which would be enforced at the end of hostilities in Europe would also be subject to administration by the three powers. Germany was to be "dismembered" with further recommendations to be made by a tripartite committee consisting of Ambassador Winant (United States), Eden (Great Britain) and Ambassador Gousev (Soviet Union).<sup>46</sup> The Big Three parted on the last day of the Yalta conference satisfied that world security, and indeed their own, had been assured.

Yalta was thus an issue of security for all of the three Great Powers. In the shift in American foreign policy to a more conservative stance during the duration of the Cold War, the Yalta accords have been much reviled. Indeed, many Republicans contend that Yalta was the beginning of the Cold War and that Roosevelt's Democrats were responsible for handing over Poland and Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union. However, it would be worthwhile to note that the manner in which The Big Three dealt with the Polish question was hardly one of betrayal. After all, a much larger matter was at stake. The American and British leaders were long aware of the realities the situation presented and acted accordingly. As Churchill had related in no less strong terms to Mikolajczyk in October 1944, "If you think you can conquer Russia, well, you are crazy, you ought to be in a lunatic asylum. You would involve us in a war in which twenty-five million lives might be lost."<sup>47</sup> Britain had Russia's friendship. Additionally, she hoped to remain in good stead with the United States. For the sake of Britain's own security in the post-war world, Churchill made it clear to the Polish leader that he meant to keep it that way. "I tell you, we'll become sick and tired if you continue arguing," he continued in utter frustration at the sheer stubbornness of Mikolajczyk and the London Poles. "We shall tell the world how unreasonable you are. We shall not part friends."<sup>48</sup>

With the brutal quelling of the Warsaw Uprising by the Germans and the subsequent entrance of Soviet troops into Polish territory in 1944, Roosevelt had since been well aware that even if the United States or Britain wished to "declare war on Joe Stalin if they cross

[Poland's] previous frontier," it was certainly true that the Soviet Union was capable of fielding "an army twice our combined strength, and we would just have no say in the matter at all."<sup>49</sup> David Reynolds emphasizes that "it is worth noting that between June 1941 and D-Day – 93 per cent of the German Army's battle casualties were inflicted by the Red Army. As late as January 1944 the Soviets were actively engaging over two hundred German divisions, the figure for the Americans was about twenty."<sup>50</sup> Clearly, the Soviet Union could suffer more casualties than either Britain and the United States – certainly more than they both were *willing* to suffer. As Elisabeth Barker writes, "both Churchill and Eden had fought hard and long, with very weak weapons, to fulfill an obligation. It was not their fault that they failed."<sup>51</sup> Due to the political, military and geographical realities the situation presented, Poland was hardly Churchill's, or Roosevelt's for that matter, to betray.

Although the Yalta Conference involved an extensive discussion of the Polish question, the conference was hardly about Poland per se, nor was it about the settlement of the Polish question in and of itself. However, it can perhaps be said that the Polish issue served to set the tone and mood of the conference itself given its importance in the question of overall security. Stalin was wont to remind the other two members of the Big Three, and Churchill in particular, that although he understood the Prime Minister's position that for Great Britain the question of Poland was "a question of honour,"<sup>52</sup> it was quite different for the Soviet Union. After all, he reiterated forcefully, "*for Russia it is not only a question of honour but also of security.*"<sup>53</sup> As Roosevelt had said, in agreement with Stalin, since the beginning of the conference on February 4, 1945, "the great powers bore the greater responsibility [for the war]; the peace should be written by them."<sup>54</sup>

Despite the President's often vocal repudiation of "Spheres of Influence," these had long been decided at Teheran. These areas where each of the Big Three could exert the most influence were the guarantee of security for each power and were thus the basis of the Yalta accords. Therefore, because military needs reinforced political ones, the geographical locations where each of the Big Three could "take the lead" and the fate of Poland had already been decided. When Admiral William D. Leahy warned of the "elas-



ticity" of the final protocol on Poland, Roosevelt replied: "I know, Bill—I know it. But it's the best I can do for Poland at this time."<sup>55</sup> In reality, it was the best that any of the Big Three could do for Poland at Yalta.

Indeed, the situation not only represented a question of security for the Soviet Union but consequently, for Britain and the United States as well. When Roosevelt expressed his hopes for the creation of a Polish *ad interim* government "which will have the support of the majority of the Polish people," he was also insistent that "we want a Poland that will be thoroughly friendly to the Soviet for years to come. This is essential."<sup>56</sup> Interrupting Roosevelt but for a moment, Stalin added: "friendly not only to the Soviet Union but all three allies."<sup>57</sup> As if to seal the bargain, Churchill gave the Soviet leader some assurance of his own— "I have always considered that after all Russia has suffered in fighting Germany and after all her efforts in liberating Poland her claim is one founded *not on force but on right*."<sup>58</sup> Given that it was generally recognized among the Big Three that Britain, having lost 40,000 men in the process, had a right to Greece,<sup>59</sup> the Soviet Union for similar reasons, had a right to Poland. The general consensus among the three leaders was that Poland was a small price to pay for world security.

Yalta laid the foundations for the post-war world and provided one of the cornerstones of the United Nations. Churchill and Roosevelt, after all, were determined to ensure that the Soviet Union became a part of the new organization. Furthermore, both were indebted to Stalin for his consideration regarding the war against Japan and the British presence in Greece, respectively. The Soviet Union agreed to join the United Nations, thus implying that the Big Three were the keepers and guardians of the peace; a decision which was subsequently translated into international law after its proclamation at Yalta. Through the United Nations Charter, the three powers had created what they felt was a theoretical basis for the maintenance of stability. The time for what had previously been diplomatic subterfuge was over. The relationship between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union which had been determined as early as Teheran in 1943 was thus reaffirmed in the Crimea in 1945.

During dinner on February 9, 1945— an event that Lloyd Gardner refers to as "a chummy affair"<sup>60</sup> — Roosevelt referred to the Big

Three as a "family." Churchill, in turn, waxed lyrical about Stalin as a "great man, whose fame has gone out not only over all Russia but the world." The Prime Minister related that he walked with greater courage because of their relationship of "friendship and intimacy." "My hope," Churchill added "is in the illustrious President of the United States and in Marshal Stalin, in whom we shall find the champions of peace, who after smiting the foe will lead us to carry on the task against poverty, confusion, chaos, and oppression."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the general understanding between the Big Three achieved through the Yalta accords held its stead until 1989 when the security of Poland and thus the Soviet Union could no longer be guaranteed. Unlike the Treaty of Versailles before it, Yalta was a peace based not on idealism, but on the strict and often less-than-compromising rigors of *Realpolitik*.

### Varkiza

Significantly, with regards to Greek affairs, the Varkiza Agreement which called for the installment of a more liberal Greek state was signed on the day after the end of the Yalta conference on February 12, 1945. The agreement discussed the need for the security of "free expression of the political and social opinions of the citizens, repealing any existing liberal law."<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, Varkiza, it was hoped, would "secure the unhindered functioning of individual liberties such as those of assembly, association and expression of views in the Press."<sup>63</sup> The agreement also gave provisions for the raising of martial law, an "amnesty for political crimes committed between the 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1944, and the publication of the law establishing the amnesty" and the release of all civilians previously arrested by ELAS or the National Civil Guard (EP). A more liberal Greek state would be further achieved through the creation of a national army, demobilization of the resistance, and a purge of the civil and security services. Also important was the holding of free elections which would follow a plebiscite on the Constitutional question. Moreover, ELAS agreed to surrender its weapons. Ioannis Sophianopoulos, P. Rallis and I. Makropoulos signed for the Hellenic Government. George Siantos, D. Partsalidis and E. Tsirimokos signed on behalf of EAM.



By early March, 1945, Churchill informed President Roosevelt that the Greek situation was "well in hand,"<sup>64</sup> seeing as how "peace has now been restored in Greece." Though he felt that there were many difficulties ahead, he added that "I hope that we shall be able to bring about in the next few months free, unfettered elections, preferably under British, American and Russian supervision, and that thereafter a constitution and government will be erected on the indisputable will of the Greek people, which remains our supreme ultimate objective in all cases, and with which I know you are in sympathy."<sup>65</sup> For all intents and purposes, this was a reaffirmation, through the partnership formed by the Big Three, that Greece would continue to lie in the British camp.

### Conclusions

As mentioned above, Greece, for Churchill, was the key to the security of the British Empire. Furthermore, Yalta confirmed that Britain would stand on an equal footing with her allies in the coming post-war period. Britain's economic and diplomatic woes during the Interwar Period made it clear that the Empire had exerted far too much pressure on its limited resources and that it would likely not survive another war. With the coming of the Second World War, Britain found herself to be more dependent on her allies than she had been in the past. Throughout 1944, her security, unlike that of her allies, was hardly as assured. In contrast, the Soviet Union's security had been affirmed by the occupation of Poland by Soviet troops. After the success of OVERLORD, the United States, too, had secured for itself a position in France from which it could act independently. Given Roosevelt's enthusiasm for a Big Three meeting as early as July 1944, it is not surprising that Churchill felt the urgent need to secure Britain's lot in Greece before this impending meeting. The British leader "got tough over Greece," states Warren F. Kimball, because the situation "was important more as an expression of Britain's place in the world than as a place where freedom had to be defended."<sup>66</sup>

At TOLSTOY Churchill and Stalin met to settle their mutual question regarding spheres of influence in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. By way of "the naughty document," the two leaders al-

lotted themselves influence in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia and Greece based on percentages. Churchill had been well aware of the volatile nature of Greek politics as the war drew to a close. He was also cognizant of the the violent "First Round" which had erupted during the Summer of 1943. If Britain was to claim her right to take the lead in Greece, Churchill had to make it clear to Roosevelt, and certainly to Stalin, that the traditional ties Britain had with that country were to remain intact. Stalin willingly obliged and accorded Britain 90% influence in Greece.

The significance of Churchill's decision to crush the December Uprising in the larger context of British Foreign Policy during the Second World War is that it was intimately connected with Britain's security as well as her position among the Great Powers. "In order to have the freedom to save Greece," said Churchill to Roosevelt in March 1945, "Eden and I at Moscow in October recognized that Russia should have a largely preponderant voice in Roumania and Bulgaria while we took the lead in Greece."<sup>67</sup> However, "saving Greece" meant far more than subduing Communist elements there. In the larger scheme of things, it hardly mattered that EAM/ELAS was largely controlled by the Greek Communist Party. Due to the fact that EAM/ELAS was the largest group opposing a settlement of the constitutional question in a manner more favourable to Britain, it mattered far more that they stood as an obstacle to the objectives of British policy. For Churchill, the *Dekemvriana* had been a political expression of the spheres of influence which had already been claimed *de facto* at Teheran by the three Allies. As British troops pushed ELAS back into the mountains, he reasserted Britain's "largely preponderant voice" in Greece.

With the Soviet Union entrenched in Poland, the United States in France and finally the British in Greece, all three powers guaranteed themselves their own security. Arguably, Greece, on that fateful December day, became a test of the agreement which had been reached at TOLSTOY and the future relationship between the three allies at Yalta. The recognition of Britain's right to "take the lead" in Greece was therefore a part of the larger context of collective security. In his recent work on Churchill, Ian S. Wood writes that "Poland did not figure in the 'percentages agreement' on post-war spheres of influence agreed by Churchill and Stalin in



October 1944, but it is arguable that its fate was sealed then anyhow."<sup>68</sup> In light of the proceedings at Yalta, it would not be an overexaggeration to say that although Churchill had offered Stalin 90% influence in Romania in exchange for 90% British influence in Greece, the two leaders had really traded Poland for Greece. After all, as Stalin remarked, "the question of Poland is for the security of the Soviet Union what the question of Belgium and Greece is for the security of Great Britain."<sup>69</sup>

After the signing of the Varkiza agreement, Britain's previously precarious hold on Greece was further strengthened. True to his word, it seemed that Stalin refused to have anything to do with the Greek Communist Party and EAM/ELAS. Despite what has earlier been conjectured about the link between any continuity of the three "rounds" of the Civil War and their larger context, there remains much reasonable doubt of a Soviet-supported Communist bid for power. The connectibility of the three rounds seem to stem more from the larger problems of Greek politics rather than any solitary initiative of the KKE. Furthermore, the KKE's control and organization of EAM/ELAS was hardly sufficient to guarantee a suitable base for the seizure of power. Although many leaders of the Greek Communist Party tended to be dogmatic in their approach to Communism, the overall thrust of EAM/ELAS, as Mark Mazower argues was far more nationalist than communist. The initials "E-L-A-S," for example, were read as one word—*elas*, which was similar to the Greek *katharevousa* word—*Ellas*—for Greece.<sup>70</sup> Notably, in the years before the break between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Stalin pointedly warned Tito to refrain from aiding and abetting the Greek Communists during the Third Round of Greece's tragic and bloody civil war. The Soviet leader was far more interested in maintaining the security of the Soviet Union than spreading Communism abroad. Britain's hold on Greece would endure another couple of years until she was forced to withdraw, due to a lack of resources and a general change in policy, in favour of the Americans in 1947.

For Churchill, British influence in Greece, a matter vital to overall British security, was first assured at TOLSTOY and then reaffirmed at Yalta. Stalin had kept his word to him, and he consequently kept his word to Stalin. Given the political realities the situation

presented, the Soviet leader had kept the Soviet Union out of Greece. When the United States publicly criticized what they saw as unwarranted interference in Greek internal affairs, Churchill openly disregarded these criticisms. After all, his policy there was reassured by and given the tacit support of the Soviet Union, no less. His agreement with Stalin was not one he had easily forgotten. While in retirement in 1956, he told an American journalist, C.L. Sulzberger:

"Stalin never broke his word to me. We agreed on the Balkans. I said he could have Rumania and Bulgaria; and he said we could have Greece (of course, only in our sphere, you know). He signed a slip of paper. And he never broke his word. We saved Greece that way. When we went in 1944 Stalin didn't interfere. You Americans didn't help, you know."<sup>71</sup>

For his part, Churchill had voiced much support for the Soviet Union and the security of Poland. Although he paid lip service to those wanting a stronger stance towards the Soviets largely for domestic political reasons, he obligingly kept Britain largely out of Polish matters. Churchill's stronger position on the Soviet Union probably arose more out of a need he felt for keeping Stalin in check over Greece. Therefore, the diplomatic dialogue between the two over Greece and Poland served to reaffirm their positions regarding the agreements reached by the Big Three at Yalta. For the time being, it also reinforced Britain's status as a Great Power.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Baerentzen, L., "The Arrival of the Soviet Military Mission in July 1944 and KKE Policy: A Study of Chronology." *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* Vol. XIII, Nos. 3 and 4 (Fall-Winter 1986), 78.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek Civil War's "First Round" occurred during July and August 1943. The "Third Round" would last from 1946-1949.

<sup>3</sup> It was clear that Poland was of prime importance for Soviet interests, for Stalin would emphasize at Yalta that:

"not only because we are on Poland's frontier but also because throughout history Poland has always been a corridor for attack on Russia. It is sufficient that during the last thirty



years our German enemy has passed through this corridor twice. This is because Poland was weak. It is in the Russian interest as well as that of Poland that Poland be strong and powerful and in a position in her own and in our interests to shut the corridor by her own forces." Stalin, as reported in the Matthews Minutes. February 6, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*. 679. (Hereby referred to as *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*)

<sup>4</sup> Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, Manfred Jonas, eds. *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*. New York: Saturday Review Press / E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1975. 456. In light of many works dealing with American foreign policy regarding France, France was of great importance to the United States. In *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance, 1940-1990*, Frank Costigliola states that "When Americans looked at France, they saw a nation whose empire and strategic location between Germany and the Atlantic made it vital to U.S. interests." (See Costigliola, Frank, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance Since World War II*. New York: Twayne, 1992. 38). For the American president, a dedicated Wilsonian, France figured in his calculations as the "mistress of territories that it had not governed fairly in the past, that it could not defend in the present war, and that had become vital for America's worldwide position in the future." (Costigliola, P. 10) Thus, he viewed the national pretensions of Free French leader Charles de Gaulle as being "destined to create trouble for a stable order in the postwar world." (See Blumenthal, Henry, *Illusion and Reality in Franco-American Diplomacy, 1914-1945*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986. 304). (See also Loewenheim *et al.*, Doc. 436: Septemebr 28, 1944 and Doc. 382: June 12, 1944)

Roosevelt may have vehemently disliked Charles de Gaulle, but that did not mean that France did not feature in any of the American president's larger designs for the future. Quite the opposite. Roosevelt disliked de Gaulle because he feared that the leader of the Free French would establish a postwar dictatorship after the war; a prospect which clashed with Roosevelt's belief in the Atlantic Charter. By June 12, 1944, the Americans had already secured the Normandy Beaches. Despite Roosevelt's earlier complaint to Churchill about "protesting the paternity of Belgium, France and Italy" (Loewenheim, Langley and Jonas, 456. Doc. 318: February 29, 1944) in February, 1944, things had decidedly changed by June, 1944.

<sup>5</sup> Stafford, David, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets*. London: Little, Brown and Company, 1999. 245. Stafford remarks that although Churchill claimed he was "only interested in killing Germans," he made

his message clear to Roosevelt—"hands off the Balkans." At Moscow, in October, 1944, Churchill made it clear to Stalin that Britain should be the leading Mediterranean power. Stalin agreed, saying that it was "a serious matter for Britain when the Mediterranean route was not in her hands." (See Ross, Graham, *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin: British Documents on Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1941-1945*. 176).

<sup>6</sup> The percentages agreement, otherwise referred to by Churchill as "a naughty document," described in detail the spheres of influence (in the form of percentages) to be accorded Britain and the Soviet Union in the post-war world. In the case of Greece, Britain would have 90% influence with the Soviet Union having 10%.

<sup>7</sup> Iatrides, John O., *Revolt in Athens: The Greek Communist "Second Round," 1944-1945*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 77. June 7, 1944. Memorandum presented to Cabinet. During the war, EAM/ELAS rapidly grew to become the most organized and numerous resistance organization. (See Mazower, Mark, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-1944*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 304.) Although evident that it attacked the Germans far more than any other movement, it was also true that EAM/ELAS had its own political agenda for Greece. Additionally, the organization opposed the return of King George II before a plebiscite on the question of the Monarchy had been held. It was thus possible that its continued presence might imply that Britain could no longer be assured of a Greece that was friendly to her. As the strength of the Axis powers diminished greatly by 1943, the post-war environment in the Balkans assumed a greater priority for the British.

<sup>8</sup> Gerolymatos, André, *Guerrilla Warfare and Espionage in Greece, 1940-1944*. New York: Pella Publishing Company inc., 1992. 62.

<sup>9</sup> Koliopoulos, John, *Greece and the British Connection: 1935-1941*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. 275.

<sup>10</sup> Elisabeth Barker, "The Framework of Anglo-Soviet Relations." *Greece: From Resistance to Civil War*. Marion Sarafis, ed. Nottingham: Spokesman, 1980. 25. Churchill, June 22, 1944.

<sup>11</sup> Although Atlee and Wavell had argued favourably for Indian independence to follow the end of the war, Churchill remained adamant that India should remain within the British Empire. Churchill's understanding of empire was indeed an emotional one. With the signing of the Atlantic Charter, he was more than wary of Roosevelt's stress on Article 3 which entailed self-determination of all subject peoples. In 1942, the failure of the Cripps Mission gave him the justification he needed, for he could claim that Cripps had overstepped his bounds and authority, not to mention expertise, on the question of India and independence. Furthermore, even on his way to the Yalta Conference in early February 1945, his preju-



dices remained intact. Having read a new book about India, he wrote to his wife that "It certainly shows the Hindu in his true character and the sorry plight to which we have reduced ourselves by losing confidence in our mission." (See Wood, Ian S., *Churchill*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000. 169)

<sup>12</sup> Gerolymatos, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Woodhouse, Christopher M. *Apple of Discord: A Survey of Recent Greek Politics in their International Setting*. London: Hutchinson and Co., 1951. 18. This meant that without the fortification of the Eastern Mediterranean through Greece, British holdings in the Far East – which included Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong and most of all India, were greatly endangered. During the war, these were lost to the Japanese, thus forcing Britain to place more dependence on help from her allies.

<sup>14</sup> Gerolymatos, 341.

<sup>15</sup> Fry, Geoffrey K., *The Politics of Crisis: an Interpretation of British Politics, 1931-1945*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001. 94.

<sup>16</sup> Gardner, Lloyd C., *Spheres of Influence: The Great Powers partition Europe, from Munich to Yalta*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993. 164. At Algiers in January, 1944, the Prime Minister constantly pushed the need for an Allied assault on Rhodes – an endeavour the Americans feared would divert much-needed resources from OVERLORD. The Prime Minister, the State Department argued, was "perfectly capable of diverting political questions after the war so as to produce either an East-West struggle or an Anglo-Soviet accord, in order to protect the empire." At Cairo and Teheran, Churchill also cajoled and even attempted to threaten Ismet İnönü, the Turkish President, to join the Allied war effort. (see *Foreign Relations of the United States: Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943*. Hereby referred to as *FRUS: Cairo and Teheran*, 734).

<sup>17</sup> John O. Iatrides, ed., *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece 1933-1947*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. September 16, 1939. To Franklin D. Roosevelt. 420, 514-515. Lincoln MacVeagh had stridently remarked on December 30, 1943, about "the British tendency to regard 'informing' us as the same thing as 'associating' us in the schemes." Unfortunately, he lamented, "most of the time we can't dissociate ourselves sufficiently from our allies to counteract the impression, which they naturally like to foster, that British policy in Greece is Anglo-American." Emphasis, mine.

<sup>18</sup> Gardner, 158.

<sup>19</sup> Roosevelt to Stalin. July 17, 1944. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ross, 176. Meeting at the Kremlin, October 9, 1944. (Prem 3, 434 / 2 and 434 / 4; FO 800 / 302). The American ambassador to Moscow, Averell Harriman, was present at the talks as an observer so that Roosevelt

would be kept informed. The President also stated that decisions between the British and Soviet leaders should be "of a preliminary nature."

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Carlton, David, *Churchill and the Soviet Union*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000. 118-119.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Emphasis, mine.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*. Vol. III: Alliance Declining, February 1944-April 1945. Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984. 451. C-849/ 1 Churchill to Harry Hopkins, December 10, 1944. It is interesting to note that the Prime Minister is insistent on American backing for British action in Greece. Churchill can be seen as pleading with Hopkins: "I consider we have a right to the President's support in the policy we are following. If it can be said in the streets of Athens that the United States are against us, then more British blood will be shed and much more Greek. It grieves me very much to see signs of our drifting apart at the time when unity becomes even more important, as danger recedes and faction arises."

<sup>29</sup> Gerolymatos, 14.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Eden to Leeper, 17 November, 1944. R 18858 / 9 / G. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*: Part III, Series F, vol. 24. 280.

<sup>32</sup> Barker, *Churchill and Eden at War*. London: Macmillan, 1978. 194.

<sup>33</sup> Churchill to Roosevelt. January 1, 1945. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> The Dumbarton Oaks Conference took place in Washington in late 1944 and concerned the formation of a peace-keeping organization.

<sup>35</sup> The Stettinius "Record". Week of 1-9 December, 1944. "Trouble in Italy and Greece." *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 432. Emphasis, mine. It is also worthwhile to recall that Churchill continually lobbied for American support in his ventures whether or not actual American association with British endeavours was officially endorsed by either the President or the State Department.

<sup>36</sup> In late 1944, Lend-Lease administrator Oscar Cox expressed his concern to Harry Hopkins that "already, for example, some people on the Hill are asking why Lend-Lease supplies should be used to kill some of our Greek friends." (Gardner, 218). In December 1944 Stettinius, then acting Secretary of State, told Eden that "this whole activity in Greece and in Poland was causing great resentment in [the United States] and we



should definitely have a private talk. (See "The Stettinius Record" for the week of 17-23 December, 1944 in *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 435-6)

<sup>37</sup> Churchill to Roosevelt. March 8, 1945. 1415 Z / TOR 1820 Z as quoted in Kimball, 547.

<sup>38</sup> Warren F. Kimball writes that "Stalin's decision to recognize the Polish National (Lublin) Committee as the provisional government of Poland upset the British, not because they had not expected it but because Stalin did so abruptly and without giving the Churchill government any way to avoid embarrassment at home." Churchill thus had to play two hands at once— the British could not yet withdraw completely their support of the London Poles. However, the general tone of Churchill's dealings with Stalin remained conciliatory. (See Kimball, 496).

<sup>39</sup> Britain's stake in Yugoslavia was still substantial. Churchill and Stalin had, after all, agreed to share Yugoslavia 50-50. Stalin, as reported in Matthews Minutes. February 8, 1945. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 790.

<sup>40</sup> Gardner, 234.

<sup>41</sup> Stalin, as reported in Matthews Minutes. February 8, 1945. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 790.

<sup>42</sup> Bohlen Minutes (of Sixth Plenary Meeting). February 9, 1945. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 849.

<sup>43</sup> Report of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. February 9, 1945. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 827.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> United States Delegation List of Tripartite Decisions at Yalta. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 947.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Gardner, 212-213. During October 16-19, 1944.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Gardner, 209.

<sup>50</sup> David Reynolds, "World War II and Modern Meanings," *Diplomatic History*, 25, #2 (Summer 2001), 464. Reynolds cites Gerhard J. Weinberg, *A Global History of World War II*, (New York, 1994), 894: "As a proportion of the prewar population, the United States lost less than 0.25 percent, the United Kingdom about 0.8 percent, China over 3 percent, and the Soviet Union more than 13 percent."

<sup>51</sup> Barker, Elisabeth, *Churchill and Eden at War*. London: Macmillan, 1978. 260.

<sup>52</sup> Stalin, as reported in the Matthews Minutes. February 6, 1945. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 679.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Gardner, 228. At dinner, during the first plenary session at the Yalta conference, Stalin added that some of the liberated countries "seemed to

forget that the Great powers had been forced to shed their blood in order to liberate them and... were now scolding these Great Powers for failure to take into consideration the rights of these small powers." In other words, the Soviet Union was willing to do its part in preserving the peace. However, added Stalin "it was ridiculous that a country the size of Albania could have an equal voice with the victorious powers now present at this dinner."

<sup>55</sup> Gardner, 237.

<sup>56</sup> Matthews Minutes. February 6, 1945. *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, 678. Emphasis, mine.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine.

<sup>59</sup> Barker, Elisabeth, "Framework of Anglo-Soviet Relations." *Greece: From Resistance to Civil War*, Marion Sarafis ed. Society for Modern Greek Studies. Russell Press: Nottingham, 1980. 25.

<sup>60</sup> Gardner, 235.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Iatrides, John O., *Revolt in Athens: The Greek Communist "Second Round," 1944-1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972. 320. From Appendix G – The Varkiza Agreement.

<sup>63</sup> Iatrides, 320.

<sup>64</sup> Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt, The Complete Correspondence: vol. III. Alliance Declining, February 1944-April 1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. 546.

<sup>65</sup> Churchill to Roosevelt. March 8, 1945. 1415 Z / TOR 1820 Z. As quoted in Kimball, 547. Emphasis, mine.

<sup>66</sup> Kimball, Warren F., *Forged in War: Churchill and Roosevelt and the Second World War*. New York: W. Morrow, 1997. 297.

<sup>67</sup> Churchill to Roosevelt. March 1945, 1415 Z / TOR 1820 Z. As quoted in Kimball, 547.

<sup>68</sup> Wood, Ian S. *Churchill*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000. 68.

<sup>69</sup> Kitchen, Martin, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War*. London: Macmillan, 1986. 253.

<sup>70</sup> Notably, the anthem or theme song for ELAS makes use of this element in a wonderful pun, for its chorus reads: "ΕΛΑΣ, ΕΛΑΣ, ΕΛΑΣ νια την Ελλάδα, for Greece."

<sup>71</sup> Carlton, 120.