

British Foreign Policy toward Southeastern Europe and the
Restoration of the Dodecanese Islands to Greece

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to analyze Britain's Mediterranean strategy and his relationship to the acquisition of the Dodecanese islands to Greece. Chapter I of this study includes a historical background of the islands prior to the Second World War. Chapter II examines British policy toward Greece and the Dodecanese between 1923-43. Chapter III provides an analysis of the role of the Dodecanese within British policy and military operations in the eastern Mediterranean. The last section deals with the actual restoration of the Dodecanese islands to Greece.

Abrégé

Cette dissertation a pour but l'analyse de la stratégie méditerranéenne de la Grande Bretagne et sa relation avec l'acquisition des îles Dodécanèses à la Grèce. Le chapitre premier de cette étude examine l'historique des îles avant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale. Le deuxième chapitre se penche sur la politique britannique vis-à-vis la Grèce et les Dodécanèses entre 1923-43. Le troisième chapitre fournit une analyse du rôle des îles Dodécanèses en rapport avec la politique britannique et les opérations militaires en Méditerranée orientale. La dernière section traite de la restauration des îles Dodécanèses à la Grèce.

Preface

This study would not have been possible without the encouragement and the support from Professor Peter Hoffmann, my supervisor. I would like to thank him for his valuable comments and suggestions, as well as for the informative and stimulating courses that I have attended.

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Introduction

From ancient times the Dodecanese straddled the sea lanes of the southeastern Mediterranean. Consequently, because of their location, these islands were frequently occupied by European and Middle Eastern powers who used the archipelago to extend their hegemony in the Mediterranean as well as in the Middle East. In the modern period the Dodecanese became an integral part of Italian expansion in North Africa and an important element of Italian imperialism. This prevented the modern Greek state from incorporating the islands as part of its territorial development in the early 20th century.

During the 1930's, despite the growing agitation of the inhabitants of the islands, succeeding Greek governments were powerless to invoke their claim to this part of the Greek world. It had become obvious to Greek political leaders, starting with Eleftherios Venizelos, that the objectives of Greek irredentism could only be accomplished if Greece had the support of at least one of the major powers. Considering the geographic location of Greece, the obvious power that she had to have on her side was Great Britain.

In the inter war period, however, British foreign policy was

aimed at keeping Italy neutral. As far as Greece was concerned, her strategic importance was relegated to minor significance by the British Chiefs-of-Staff who during this period considered the Mediterranean as secondary importance to the security of the British Empire. The situation changed dramatically with Italy's entry into the war on the side of Germany and Greece's steadfast adherence to Great Britain.

Throughout the war the Greek government-in-exile assumed it would be able to press its claims for the Dodecanese as well as to other Greek territories and that these claims would be resolved successfully with the support of Great Britain.

The British, on the other hand, facing enormous difficulties during the first phase of the war preferred to remain uncommitted regarding the fate of the islands and attempted to use them as a means of drawing Turkey into the conflict on the side of the Allies.

After 1942 the issue was no longer Britain single handedly defending herself against the Axis offensive but with the entry to the war of the Soviet Union and the United States, to preserve her hold on southeastern Europe and the Middle East. Once again the islands served as a useful stratagem to gain Turkish support for British imperial interest. The Turks, however, preferred to maintain their neutrality and refused to commit themselves to any military initiatives in

southeastern Europe, regardless of any inducements offered to them by British. After the war Turkey's neutrality and Greece's belligerence on the side of the Allies created a partial momentum for the restoration of these islands to Greece. In the crucial period between 1945-1946, as well as the initial impact of the Cold War, the position of Greece assumed a new importance.

Ultimately two factors led to the restoration of the islands to Greece. First it was imperative for the British to prop up the post war Greek governments, and one means of accomplishing this was to enhance the credibility of these regimes by addressing some of the Greek territorial claims. At the same time, to maintain Greece within the western alliance it was necessary to deny control of that country to the Greek communists. The restoration of the Dodecanese to Greece in 1947, to some degree, was instrumental in fulfilling these objectives.

Although there have been several studies on British - Greek relations there has not been a single comprehensive work on the process that led to the award of the Dodecanese islands to Greece. To accomplish this objective it is necessary to understand the strategic role of the Dodecanese islands in the southeastern Mediterranean and their relationship to the Middle East in the period before and during the Second World War.

On the whole, information on the history of the Dodecanese is limited and many of the Greek accounts are either too general or marred by personal biases. Some documentation concerning the Dodecanese, as well as the process of their unification with Greece, is available in the archives of Greece, the United States, and Great Britain and although useful a great deal of it deals with specific foreign policy issues. However, direct references can be found in the papers of E. Tsouderos, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Winston Churchill, and David Hunter Miller.

A valuable source on the Italian reforms and de-Hellenization of the islands is J.D. Booth's: Italy's Aegean Possessions (London 1928). This is supplemented by the account of Sk. Zervos: Ikonographimeni I Dodekanesos kai I Tetarti ton Ellenon Ethnosyneleusis (Athens 1940) that offers numerous examples of Italian oppression against the inhabitants of the islands. The work of N. Kasavis: Italy and the Unredeemed Isles of Greece (New York 1935) provides an interesting and informative history of the Turko-Italian occupation of the Dodecanese. A detailed, though one-sided, account of the unification of the islands to Greece can be found in Em. Protopsaltis': "To Dodekanesiako Zetema kai I Exelixis tou Mechri Simeron" Dodekanesiaka Chronika, 1975, pp. 155-81.

Valuable insight and details of Churchill's efforts in encouraging operations against the Dodecanese are included in Lord Ismay's The Memoirs (New York 1960) and in Lord Tedder's: With Prejudice: The War Memoirs of the Royal Air Force and Lord Tedder G.C.B. (London 1966). Very good and informative accounts of the British operations against the Aegean islands in 1943 are included in Buckley's: Five Ventures (London 1977); E. Walker's and P. Smith's : War in the Aegean (London 1974) and Henry Maitland Wilson's: "Operations in the Middle East from 16th February 1943 to 28 November 1943", Supplement to the London Gazette, 38426, October 1948, pp. 5471-5374.

Several diplomatic and political histories of Greek foreign relations also offer valuable insights concerning the issue of the Dodecanese in the immediate post-war period. One of the more significant works on this period is S. Xydis' study: Greece and the Great Powers 1944-1947 (Thessaloniki 1963). Xydis provides a thorough analysis of Greek foreign policy and relations with the major powers from 1944 to 1947, with particular emphasis on the problem of the Dodecanese. Another is S. Agapetides': I Dodekanesos eis ten Syntheken tes Eirenes (Athens 1947) that focuses on the actual treaties and diplomatic activity that preceded the restoration of the islands to Greece. Other useful sources for the study of the Dodecanese are the five bibliographies by Clogg, Mary Joe and Richard (Greece, vol. 17, of World

Bibliographical Series, Oxford: Clio Press, 1980);
Fleischer, Hagen and Bowman, Steven (Greece in the 1940's: a bibliographical companion, Hanover: Gunther Altenburg, 1988); Mavris, N.G. (Dodekanesiake Vivliographia, Athena: Dodekanesiake kai Laographike etaireia), 2 vols, 1965 and 1975); Richter, Heinz A. (Greece and Cyprus since 1939-45, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag: Nea Hellas, 1984); Spyridakis, L.S., ("Vivliographike episkopisis Dodekanesiakon demosievmaton ep' efkaireia tes ensomatoseos tes Dodekanesou", (a bibliographical survey on Dodecanesian publications on the occasion of the Unification of the Dodecanese with Greece), Dodekanesiake Epitheorisis, 2(1948), pp. 115-18, 179-183); these provide the most complete published references to the history of the islands.

Chapter I

Historical Background

From ancient times¹ the Dodecanese islands have been an integral part of the Greek world and Hellenic civilization.² The first literary reference to this part of ancient Greece is found in Homer's Iliad in which he records that the islands, except for Astypaleia, participated in the Greek attack against Troy.³ Later on the islands formed a Doric Hexapolis and maintained close ties with the Spartans. The Dodecanesians took part in the Peloponnesian War and were later included in Alexander's Empire. In 146 B.C. the islands were conquered by the Romans and after the collapse

1. The name "Dodecanese" in Greek means twelve islands, "dodeka nesia." The archipelago includes: Karpathos, Patmos, Kasos, Astypaleia, Lipsos, Leros, Kalymnos, Nisiros, Tilos, Khalki, Simi, with Icaria until 1912, Rhodes and Kos, and the actual Kastelorizo before 1912 and from 1923. The term Dodecanese is of disputed origin. Some writers claim that it was first used under Leo III, the Isaurian Emperor of Byzantium. Naval Intelligence Division, "Dodecanese", London 1943, p. 3. Others believe that Theophanes, a Byzantine writer (circa 800-815 A.D.) first used this term. J.N. Kasavis, Italy and the Unredeemed Isles of Greece, New York 1935, p. 3.

2. Some useful comments on the evolution of the Dodecanesian population can be found in S.I. Agapetides, O Plythismos tes Dodekanesou, (The population of the Dodecanese), Athens 1948; or in M. Volonakis, The Island of Roses and Her Eleven Sisters, London 1922; N.G. Mavris, The Greek Dodecanese: a Symposium by Prominent Americans, New York 1944, p. 16.

3. The Complete Works of Homer: The Iliad, vol. 2, trans. by A. Long, New York 1950, pp. 57-8.

of the empire in the west, they remained with the Byzantine Empire. With the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204, the islands were divided among the city-states of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa. In 1309 the Dodecanese were captured by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem.⁴ However, the northern outlying islands of Patmos⁵ and Astypaleia, however, remained under Venetian and Byzantine control.

In the mid-fifteenth century, the Ottoman Turks extended their naval power to the Aegean islands and by 1540 the rule of Venice and that of the other Italian city-states was brought to an end, leaving the Ottomans masters of the eastern Mediterranean. The islands were then conquered by the forces of Suleiman the Magnificent but, as on previous occasions, some of them managed to retain their "ancient privileges."

Rhodes and Kos, according to the customs of the Ottomans, since they had resisted capture were treated as prizes of war and made subject to the direct rule of the Ottoman Empire and placed under the authority of a "Vali" (governor

4. George Finlay, (A History of Greece from Conquest to the Present Time, vol. V, London 1877, p. 66) describes the adventures of Fulk de Villaret in the Dodecanese.

5. In 1088 the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Komnenus gave the monk Christodoulos title to the entire island so that a monastery could be established to commemorate the imprisonment of St. John who allegedly wrote the Apocalypse in Patmos. (W.E. Geil, The Isle That is called Patmos, London 1904, p. 99-109).

general).⁶ The other islands, however, since they submitted voluntarily to the Sultan, were given certain privileges guaranteed by a series of imperial degrees, ("firmas"). Accordingly they enjoyed administrative and judicial autonomy and freedom of trade and in exchange they had to pay an annual fixed sum, "the maktou".⁷ They were permitted to practice their own religion,⁸ and retained their own language and culture. For example, the monastery of Patmos remained independent while in Kalymnos and Simi schools were established that attracted students from all over Greece until the University of Athens was founded in 1834. It is with some justification that the Dodecanese acquired the

6. Volonakis, pp. 298-300; C.D. Booth, and I.B. Booth, Italy's Aegean possessions, London 1928, pp. 211-13; Sk. Zervos, To Zetema tes Dodekanesou kai ta Diplomatika autou Eggrafa, Athens 1926, p. 20.

7. The same system of administration that was used in Sparta and in mainland Greece, was also found in the Dodecanese. The privileges of the islanders were exercised through their local government. This is the system of the "demogerontia" (town consul). The Mayor was the "demogeron" who presided over the "demogerontia", that was composed of twelve men. The "demogerontia" had full judicial, administrative, and financial powers in the internal affairs of the town. A general assembly of the people, the "Apella", decided about all important matters, such as taxation, education, and religious problems. Chr. I. Papachristodoulos, E Istoria tes Rodou, Athens 1972, p. 406.

8. The patriarch had subdivided the Dodecanese into five "dioceses" (provinces). The first was included by Rhodes, Khalki and Nisiros; the second by Kos and Simi; the third by Kalymnos, Leros and Astypaleia; the fourth by Karpathos and Kasos; and the fifth by Patmos and Lipsos. (Sk. Zervos, Ikonographimeni I Dodekanesos kai I Tetarti ton Ellinon Ethnosynelefsis, Athens 1940, p. 489).

title "privileged islands".⁹ Succeeding sultans formally reconfirmed these privileges in 1644, in 1813, in 1858, and in 1869.¹⁰

Under the Ottoman rule, despite these guarantees, the islanders suffered and lost much of the commercial prosperity which they had enjoyed previously; the Ottomans were not interested in maritime economy and, consequently, they did not appreciate the significance of the lucrative trade of the eastern Mediterranean. In the late 18th century the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the interest of the European powers in the Mediterranean enabled the islanders not only to increase their economic prosperity, but stimulated a new sense of Greek nationalism. A basic factor that enabled the islanders to maintain a Greek consciousness was the policy of the Sublime Porte that permitted the Dodecanesians to practice their own religion and also afforded them a degree of self government.

In the reign of Catherine II of Russia the Dodecanesians were given their first taste of freedom as a result of the Imperial Fleet's victory in the Aegean Sea.¹¹ In 1774

9. These privileges were first given to them by Patriarch Gennadios Scholarios in 1453 (Naval Intelligence Division, p. 35-36).

10. Zervos, p. 43.

11. M. Michailidis-Nouaros, Istoria tes Nesou Kasou, Athens 1936, p. 52-3. The author cites a number of documents

according to the Treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji, the islands were placed under Russian protection.¹² This permitted them to sail their ships under the Russian flag and thus brought them into contact with Europe and with the doctrines of nationalism and liberalism.

During the period of the Greek War of Independence (1821-1830), there are numerous references to the Dodecanese. The islanders¹³, however, played an active part in the war, particularly the seamen of Kasos who, and as a result, suffered severe reprisals from the Ottomans in 1824;¹⁴ they served without pay and often equipped their ships at their own expense.¹⁵

indicating the valuable naval assistance rendered to the Greeks by Admiral Spiradov of the Russian squadron.

12. St. Stavrianos, The Balkans Since 1453, New York 1958, pp. 191-192.

13. The Greek inhabitants of this area did waver in their desire for an independent Greek State. Finlay refers to Georgillas Limenitis of Rhodes who appealed in 1814 to all Greeks to unite against the Turks. Finlay, vol. V, pp. 54-106. Also Emmanuel Xanthos was one of the members and founders of the "Philiki Etaireia" (the Friendly Society). K. Paparegopoulos, Istoria tou Ellinikou Ethnous, vol. VI, Athens 1932, pp. 10. Dimitrios Themelis was another Dodecanesian who distributed considerable propaganda in support of the Greek War of Independence. Michailidis-Nouaros, p. 61-66.

14. Ibid., p. 78.

15. It was to build ships for the Greek patriots that Simi sacrificed the last of its forests, its chief source of wealth. R.E. Kasperson, The Dodecanese: Diversity and Unity in Island Politics, Chicago 1966, p. 19.

In 1823, at the Second National Assembly at Astrai¹⁶, it was assumed that the Dodecanese would be included in the new Greek State. At the London Conference (20 February 1830), however, the Great Powers, overlooking the linguistic and ethnological reality of the islands, returned them to the Ottoman Empire in exchange for Euboea¹⁷, which with Attika and the Peloponnese made up the new Greek State.¹⁸ Many of the Dodecanesians, after the decision of the Great Powers (Treaty of Constantinople, 1832), started to migrate to the Peloponnese. The Greek President, Ioannis Kapodistrias, however, advised the Dodecanesians that if they left their homes the islands would be forever lost to Greece.¹⁹ He also emphasized that Greece had to put its own house in order before she could incorporate other Greek territories within her boundaries.²⁰

On the other hand, the decline of the Ottoman Empire, in the nineteenth century enabled the Greek government to initiate a policy aimed at acquiring territories that the Greeks

16. Finlay, vol. V, p. 165ff.

17. Euboea was more significant at the time because of its proximity to the Balkan peninsula.

18. In the past the Great Powers, especially Russia, had frequently protested to the Ottoman Government over the treatment of the Christian population of the Dodecanese.

19. H.B. Dewing, Greece and the Great Powers, Washington, 1924, p. 1618.

20. D. Caclamanos, "The Dodecanese: Past and Future", Contemporary Review, vol. 160 (June 1941), p. 14.

claimed as their own. Nineteenth Century Greek irredentism as described by Kolletes was based on the historical argument that Greece includes not only the kingdom of 1832 but also Jannina and Thessaloniki and Serres and Adrianople and Constantinople and Trebizonde and Crete, and Samos, and any other country where Greek history or Greek race was present.²¹

Ultimately some Greek territorial ambitions were fulfilled either by war or diplomacy. Greece succeeded in acquiring from Great Britain the Ionian Islands (1864),²² with the succession of George I²³ who was favoured by the British. Thessalyn and Epirus were incorporated in the Greek State in 1883 as a reward for Greek neutrality during the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78.²⁴ Crete also joined Greece in 1909

21. Kolletes argued this point before the Constitutional Assembly on January 15, 1844. E. Driault, and M. Lheritier, Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 a nos jours vol. 2, Paris 1925, pp. 252-253.

22. The Ionian islands were under British occupation since the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

23. With the abdication of King Othon (1832-62), Prince William George (the second son of Prince, later King Christian of Denmark) became King of the Hellenes. The title King of the Hellenes replaced that of King of Greece held by Othon. The implication was that the new monarch represented all Greeks within as well as those living outside of Greek territory.

24. S.T. Laskaris, Diplomatiki Istoria tes Ellados, Athens 1947, pp. 83-151.

thanks in part to British intervention.²⁵ These acquisitions encouraged the Greeks to implement a policy of expansion and, although unprepared for any serious military ventures, in May 1898 they declared war on the Ottoman Empire²⁶ with the aim of gaining northern Thessaly and Krete. Although Greece was defeated in this conflict she did not suffer substantial territorial losses. This war, however, was more than a military setback; Greece was isolated diplomatically, for she appeared weak in the eyes of the other Balkan states as well to the Great Powers. As a result, the "Megali Idea" (Great Idea) initiated during the reign of Othon²⁷ and the corner stone of Greek foreign policy remained an illusion. It was not until Eleftherios Venizelos took over the leadership of the Greek State that the dream of a Greater Greece achieved some degree of success.

25. The history of Krete in the nineteenth century was characterized by a pattern of insurrections and bloody clashes between the islands Muslim minority and the Greek Christian inhabitants. In 1867, 1896, and 1897, the Kretans rebelled against Ottoman rule without success. The solution of the Protecting Powers to the Kretan problem came in 1898, when Krete was given autonomy under a High Commissioner from Greece, Prince George, the second son of the King. The Protecting Powers, however, refused to allow the union of Krete with Greece until 1909. C.B. Jelavich, The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920, London 1977, pp. 174-7.

26. The Dodecanesians demonstrated their sentiments in favour of Greece. Michailidis-Nouaros, pp. 46, 160-63.

27. His German name was Otto but in an effort to Hellenize the monarch it was changed to Othon.

The main obstacle to Greece's territorial claims in the nineteenth century²⁸ was the major powers, especially Britain, who believed that it was in her interest to frustrate Greek irredentism. It was assumed by British leaders that Greek expansion would hasten the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and result in a power vacuum in the Middle East. The governments of European States were determined to avoid such a situation and reacted cautiously to any upheavals in the Near East which would alter the balance of power in that region.²⁹ Second, Britain and

28. This was a period of great prosperity not only because there was a greater demand for the traditional Greek exports of fruits, wine, and oil but with the expansion of the Industrial Revolution countries needed more sponges. By 1840 Simi and Kalymnos were exploring new sponge-fishing grounds off the coast of Libya. Many Dodecanesians were working in the cities of Smyrna and Constantinople or were investing in farms outside the cities and along the coast. P. Vouras, "The development of the resources of the island of Rhodes under Turkish rule", Balkan Studies, vol. IV (1963), pp. 45-46; Naval Intelligence Division, pp. 36-7. However, it was still a time of frequent struggles against the Ottomans. Ottoman forces were sent twice to Kalymnos and Simi in connection with the Kretan Revolt of 1867. Local administrators in Kalymnos and Simi were replaced by Ottoman officials. Also some of the island's "demogerontiai" were suppressed. Turkish courts were established in 1871. In 1874 Turkish control of harbors and customs and a series of new taxes on salt and sponge-fishing were established. In 1885 Turkish troops were sent to Simi to restore order and the islanders were blockaded and prevented from fishing. When the Young Turk Movement took power in 1908, the Dodecanesians hoped for more liberal concessions from the Ottoman Empire. By 1910 the new regime, however, had abolished all ancient privileges. In addition, as the protecting powers neglected the Dodecanesians and the Ottomans disregarded the Patriarch in Constantinople, the only option for the Dodecanesians was to await their liberation by the Greek State (Paparegopoulos, vol. VI, pp. 5-8).

29. For this reason the following treaties were established: the first between Italy and France (14 December 1900), the

France generally favoured the Ottoman Empire over Greece in order to contain Russian expansion. In addition, Russia preferred a militarily weak Greece in order to protect her interests in the Straits and the Danube. In the early twentieth century, however, Britain and France changed their policies toward the Near East and took it for granted that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was inevitable. At the same time the success of Venizelos in guiding Greece through the Balkan Wars (1912-13) elevated the status of the country to that of a rising power in the Balkans. Venizelos was regarded by the British, especially by Lloyd George, as the only competent Balkan politician who could be relied upon to participate effectively in European affairs. Furthermore, Venizelos's unequivocal pro-British and pro-French policies endeared him, and by extension Greece, to the policy makers in London and Paris. Consequently, the British and the French began to look upon the prospect of a greater Greece as a stabilizing factor in the Balkans and in the Middle East. After the First World War, Lloyd George even considered Greece as a replacement for the defunct Ottoman Empire and the best guarantee to protect British interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed the relationship of Lloyd George and Venizelos re-enforced the notion of what

second between Russia and Italy (24 October 1909), and the third between Austro-Hungary and Italy (20 February 1887). R. Albrecht-Carrie, Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna, New York 1958, pp. 198-9, 233.

Greek politicians later believed was the "special bond" between Great Britain and Greece.³⁰

With the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East in the early 20th century, a new force loomed on the horizon. Italy, after achieving unification and securing her foundation as an independent state, began her imperial expansion in Africa and in the Mediterranean. From this period, regardless of the political orientation of the cabinet, the Italian Foreign Office sought expansion at the expense of the Balkan nations and the Ottoman Empire.³¹ In the course of the Italian-Turkish War (1911) over Tripoli and Cyrenaica,³² the Italians, unwilling to pursue the war in Africa any further, decided to seize the Ottoman Dodecanese. The operations against the Dodecanese had three main objectives: first, to secure bases from which to attack

30. A. Gerolymatos, "Lloyd George and Venizelos 1912-17", Deltion tes Istorikes kai Ethnologikes Etaireias tes Ellados, 1985, pp. 206-219.

31. Italy's expansionist policy dates approximately from 1880, when a colonial settlement had been established on the Red Sea, that in the words of the then Italian Foreign Minister, Mannikin, held "the key of the Mediterranean." It was Francesco Crispi who gave greater impetus to Italian imperialistic schemes.

32. Italy had originally set her sights on Tunisia, but when that country became a French colony she was determined to secure Libya which was then a Turkish villayet. On the Libyan war, see: W.S. Askew, Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Libya, Durham 1942; R.S. Gunsolo, "Libya, Italian nationalism and the revolt against Giolitti", Journal of Modern History vol. XXXVII, (1965), pp. 186-207; G. Giolitti, Memoirs of My Life, London 1923, pp. 249-308.

the shipment of arms and men from the Ottoman Empire to Libya and Cyrenaica, second, to use the occupation of the islands as a bargaining chip at the peace table, and thirdly as a base for any future operations against Asia Minor. The islands were invaded on 23 April 1912 and by the 25th Astypaleia (Stampalia) was captured. On 4 May Rhodes, after a minor resistance by the Ottomans at Psynthos, was occupied and by the end of the month the other islands came under Italian control. The islanders, consequently, encouraged by the proclamations of General Ameglio and Admiral Presbitero who promised them an "autonomous government", received the Italians as liberators.³³ As a result between 1 and 14 of May the autonomous government of Kalymnos was established.³⁴ In June (4-17), the assembly of all Dodecanesians in Patmos, proclaimed the "Autonomous State of the Dodecanese" and expressed the wish to be united with Greece.³⁵ The Italians

33. According to Zervos (p. 70) one of the proclamations stated: "We assure you in the most categorical manner that at the end of the Italian-Turkish war, the islands provisionally occupied by Italy will have an autonomous form of government. This we declare to you as Generals and Christians, and you may place reliance on our words, as you do on the Gospel." N.G. Mavris, The Dodecanesians are not Enemy Aliens, New York 1942, p. 19; P. Pipinelis, "To Zetema tes Dodekanesou", Tsouderos Archive, (hereafter cited as Tsouderos Archive), File VII, p. 6.

34. Ipp. Frangopoulos, I Dodekanesos ypo Italokratian, Athens 1958, pp. 18-9; J. Stefanopouli, Les îles De l'Egée: Leur Privileges, Athens 1912. p. 73-77.

35. On the diplomatic machinations of this period see: Mavris, N.G., "Certain Misconceptions in Relation to the eastern Mediterranean and Greece", Social Science, vol. XXI (January 1946), pp. 22-30; Vclonakis, pp. 323-24; Naval Intelligence Division, pp. 37-39; Stefanopouli, (pp. 73-79)

by this time had other plans for the islands and not only ignored the request but imposed severe penalties on some of the delegates.³⁶

The emergence of Italy as a naval power in the Mediterranean also brought new tensions in the Aegean; her presence disturbed the Mediterranean status quo, that had been established by Russia, France, and Britain. The British, however, reacted slowly to Italy's expansion in the Aegean, whereas. If any other country had occupied naval bases near the Straits or the Suez Canal, Britain would have reacted quickly and decisively. The British Government did not protest against the Italian expansion, since they assumed that Italy would remain neutral in a future European conflict. Furthermore, British official policy had been to keep Italy in the Triple Alliance as a weakening factor and as a way of preserving the European balance. "It is important", Sir Edward Grey³⁷ wrote to Nicholson, "that neither we, nor France side against Italy now."³⁸

in his study includes all the proclamations of the Italian commanders.

36. Caclamanos, pp. 14-15; Booth and Booth, pp. 222-28.

37. Since 1916, 1st Viscount Grey of Fallodon and British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1905-16).

38. G.P. Gooch and H.W.V. Temperley, British Documents on the Origin of the War, London 1926, vol. IX(i), p. 274; A.J.P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, Oxford 1954, p. 474.

General Wilson³⁹ sent a memorandum to the Foreign Office arguing that the temporary occupation of Astypaleia did not offend British interests.⁴⁰ Sir Charles Mallet,⁴¹ however, made a more realistic prediction about the Italians and the Dodecanese islands. He stated

I do not think that Italy will ever retire from Rhodes or has any intention of retiring ... it is difficult to foretell what may result from a continuance of this [Libyan War], but it looks as if the British position in the Mediterranean may be seriously affected.⁴²

The Foreign Office also predicted that the Dodecanese would either become "a dozen little Kretes" or "if, on the other hand, Italy retains possession of one or two of the more important islands, she would be the dominant factor in the eastern Levant."⁴³ The Admiralty had also prepared a memorandum on Aegean naval strategy which among other things stated that:

we are now confronted with the possibility of Italy retaining possession of certain of the Aegean islands in full sovereignty. The geographical situation of these islands enables

39. Sir Henry Wilson, British Chief of Staff 1913.

40. R. Bosworth, "Britain's and Italy's acquisition of the Dodecanese, 1912-15", Historical Journal, XIII, 4, (1970), p. 687.

41. Since 1916, 1st Baron Carnock; British Ambassador at Madrid (1906-10); Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1910-16).

42. Bosworth, p. 687.

43. Bosworth, p. 688.

the Sovereign Power, if enjoying the possession of a Navy, to exercise control over the Levant and the Black Sea trade and to threaten our position in Egypt in an unprecedented degree.⁴⁴

This report summarized the obvious strategic importance of the Dodecanese islands from the British point of view.

Grey, on the other hand, did not until 6 August 1912 raise the problem of the Aegean islands:

I took the opportunity of saying that I hoped ... his Government would not pass any decree about the Aegean Islands or commit themselves about them; for any great power to keep one or more of these islands, that might form a naval base, might give rise to difficulties.⁴⁵

Raymond Poincaré,⁴⁶ the French Minister President, already annoyed by the Manouba and Carthage incidents,⁴⁷ along with Serge Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister⁴⁸ who wanted to keep the peace in the Balkans, demanded that Italy be forced

44. Ibid., p. 688-9; Gooch and Temperley, vol. IX(i), pp. 413-16; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 9-11.

45. Eosworth, p. 689; Gooch and Temperley, vol. IX(i), pp. 420; L. Albertini, The Origins of the World War of 1914, vol. 1, London 1952, p. 362.

46. French Senator, Minister for Finance (1906); Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs (1912-13); President of the Republic (1913-20).

47. During these incidents the Italians had seized French vessels to see if they were transporting men and war material for Turkey.

48. Serge Sazonov, Counsellor of the Russian Embassy at London (1904-6); Agent to the Vatican (1906-9); Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs (1909-10); Minister for Foreign Affairs (1910-16).

to withdraw from the Dodecanese.⁴⁹ The Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Berchtold,⁵⁰ also opposed the Italian moves in the Aegean and accused Italy of not consulting Vienna regarding any changes in the Mediterranean status quo, as stipulated by article VII of the Agreement with Italy (20 February 1887).⁵¹

Grey, after his meeting with Sazonov at Balmoral (September 24-26, 1912), decided that the Dodecanese must be returned to Turkey but with guarantees for the safety of the islanders. Both supported the proposal of the Hellenic Government⁵² that the Dodecanese be organized into an autonomous state under a Christian governor.⁵³

49. Gooch and Temperley, vol. IX(i), pp. 758-9; Giolitti, p. 353; Albertini, vol. I, p. 362.

50. Count Leopold Berchtold, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to St. Petersburg (1906-11); Minister for Foreign Affairs (1912-15).

51. This stated that both nations were pledged to preserve "the status quo in the regions of the Ottoman coastline and the islands in the Adriatic and in the Aegean Sea". G. Giolitti, p. 298-9, 302-3, 369; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 14; Gooch and Temperley, vol. IX(i), p. 447.

52. F.A. Hamilton, "The Unredeemed Isles of Greece", Foreign Affairs, IV, October 1925, p. 155.

53. E. Grey, Twenty-five Years, 1892-1916, New York 1925, vol. II, pp. 260-2; Gooch and Temperley, vol. IX, pp. 758-59, 769; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 13; Giolitti, p. 29.

At Ouchy (18 October 1912) Italy and the Ottomans ended their conflict with the conclusion of a treaty at Lausanne.⁵⁴ In article 2, the treaty stated that:

The effective evacuation of the above mentioned isles [the Dodecanese] by Italian troops and civil servants shall take place immediately after

54. N. Vlachou, Istoria ton Kraton tes Chersonesou tou Aimou 1908-14, vol. 1, Athens 1954, pp. 715-18; Giolitti, p. 347.

Tripolitania and Cyrenaica have been evacuated by the Ottoman officers, troops and civil servants.⁵⁵

This undertaking, however, was never fulfilled. Italy maintained her occupation of the Dodecanese as a guarantee for the execution of the terms of the peace treaty. Thus began the de facto occupation of the Dodecanese islands by Italy; it had the character of a purely military occupation and the Italians were declaring it to be a temporary affair.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Demetrios Caclamano, the Greek Chargé d'affaires in Rome, reported that the Italians did not consider the occupation of the islands temporary. The Greeks were not alone in their suspicion concerning the policy of Rome in the Dodecanese. Raymond Poincaré, in a conversation with Caclamano, stated that if the archipelago remained under Italian control it could only be given up by the Italians after the war.⁵⁷

In 1913 two international events took place in London that among other matters, affected the Dodecanese. The first was the Peace Treaty of 30 May 1913 that ended the Balkan Wars

55. According to article two of the treaty. Emm. Protopsaltis, "Italike Katoche tes Dodekanesou mechri tes Apeleutheroeseos", Dodekanesiaka Chronika, vol. 2, nos. 2-4, (February-April 1948), p. 48; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, pp. 16-17; Gooch and Temperley, vol. IX, pp. 438-42.

56. Driault and Lheritier, vol. V., p. 143. Giolitti, then the Italian Minister, as well as Tittoni and San Giuliano were speaking of a temporary Italian occupation of the Dodecanese.

57. Caclamano, p. 15.

and according to article 5 the Great Powers had to decide on the fate of all the Ottoman islands in the Aegean.⁵⁸ The second event was the Conference of the Ambassadors on 12 August 1913 which instructed the Ottomans to withdraw their troops from Tripolitania and Cyrenaica and stipulated that: "the six Great Powers shall express their opinion on the question of the attribution of the Dodecanese and will reach, by a unanimous agreement, a decision on that matter".⁵⁹

Negotiations on the Dodecanesian problem continued during 1914 but little progress was made. The situation became further complicated by the outbreak of the First World War. Although Italy declared her neutrality the Ottoman Empire had concluded a secret alliance with Germany on 2 August and a year later joined the Central Powers. Greece, however, joined the Entente in 1917 after the overthrow of King Konstantine of Greece.

Italy entered the war on 23 May 1915 on the side of the Entente after she was promised complete sovereignty over the Dodecanese by article 8 of the Secret Treaty of London (26

58. Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 26-9; Driault and Lheritier, vol. 5, p. 113.

59. Albertini, vol. 1, p. 423; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 33-35; Driault and Lheritier, vol. 5, p. 113.

April 1915).⁶⁰ But Russia renounced this and the Americans, who entered the war in 1917, advocated that secret treaties would no longer be recognized.⁶¹ Consequently, the Treaty of St. Jean de Maurienne of 20 April 1917 did not include the Italian possession of the Dodecanese. A year later, on 30 October 1918, the Treaty of Mudros was signed and Italy again kept the Dodecanese as a guarantee for the execution of the armistice terms by Turkey.

After the conclusion of the First World War, further negotiations on the Dodecanesian issue took place between Greece and Italy. Venizelos believed that the only way Greece could get the Dodecanese would be by an agreement with Italy. He resumed discussions with Count Bosdari, the Governor of Rhodes, on the future of the islands based on previous conversations between Athens and Rome in 1913 that had been interrupted by the war. There is some indication that Italy had given consideration to ceding the islands to Greece on ethnological considerations. Count Bosdari recognized that the population was Greek he aimed at

60. J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, Princeton New Jersey 1956, vol. 2, pp. 11-12; Frangopoulos, p. 36; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 40-1; Driault and Lheritier, vol. 5, p. 113.

61. It was also not included in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Mavris, Social Science, p. 27. With the end of First World War the Dodecanesians looked to President Wilson for support. K. Tsalachouris, "Dyo dokumenta apo ton agona ton Dodekanesion", Dodekanesiaka Chronika, p. 217.

retaining one of the islands as a naval base.⁶² On 2 November 1918, in a memorandum⁶³ presented to the Supreme Council, Venizelos requested the cession of Rhodes and the rest of Dodecanese. On 2 February 1919 he told Gibbons, that:

If I cry out against what is happening in Northern Epirus and if I demand the Dodecanese, Italy may join you Americans in contesting my claims to Thrace.⁶⁴

Actually Venizelos knew that on the Dodecanesian issue he was not on very solid ground, since the secret Treaty of London of 26 April 1915 and the Agreement of St. Jean de Maurice of 29 April 1917 had given the Italians possession of the islands. The French, British, and the Americans,⁶⁵ however, agreed that the Dodecanese should now be given to Greece on ethnic grounds.⁶⁶ Greek claims in the Dodecanese

62. Driault and Lheritier, vol. 5, pp. 99-100.

63. G. Lloyd, Memoirs of the Paris Peace Conference, vol. 2, New Yale 1939, p. 792-93.

64. H.A. Gibbons, Venizelos, Boston 1920, p. 344.

65. On May 17, 1920 the United States Senate resolved that "It is the sense of the Senate that the Twelve Islands of the Aegean (Dodecanese) where a strong Greek population predominates, should be awarded to Greece and become incorporated in the Kingdom of Greece." (Mavris, p. 1).

66. On 21 January 1914 a report by the American territorial experts (to the Paris Peace Conference) stated that "It is recommended that Rhodes and the Dodecanese be assigned to Greece. Over 80% of the population is Greek Orthodox; they are bitterly opposed to the present Italian occupation and should be assigned to the Mother Country. Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 46; D.H. Miller, My Diary at the Conference of Paris, vol. IV, London 1928, p. 250.

were reviewed by the Council of Four in May 1919. Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Wilson agreed that "the Dodecanese shall be ceded to Greece in full sovereignty."⁶⁷ However, no effective steps by the Great Powers, however, were taken to implement this agreement.

Conflicting Greek and Italian territorial ambitions in Anatolia and the Balkans during the Paris Peace Conference, ultimately, forced both sides (29 July 1919) to reach an agreement.⁶⁸ It was signed between the Greek Prime Minister, Venizelos and the Italian Foreign Minister Tommaso Tittoni⁶⁹, whereby Italy promised to cede the Dodecanese to Greece with the exception of Rhodes.⁷⁰ On 22 July 1920,

67. Lloyd, vol. II, p. 567; Miller, vol. XIX, (1923), 13A, Appendices I, II, p. 539-42, 561, 570.

68. Venizelos stated in a memorandum of December 1919 that the Greek Government had no doubt that its neighboring nation (Italy) would take the initiative in proposing the return of these islands to Greece. Just before that he had spoken with Signor Sonnino, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Italians had offered to support the Greek claims to the Dodecanese and Smyrna, if Venizelos would support Italy's claim in Albania. A.P. Frangoulis, La Grèce et la Crise Mondiale, vol. 2, Paris 1926, pp. 41, 91.,

69. Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1903-5 and 1906-9; Ambassador at Paris (1910-17).

70. A plebiscite was to be held on the island on the day that Great Britain would hand Cyprus over to Greece. If, however, the British were to keep Cyprus the plebiscite would be held anyway, but not before five years. R. Albrecht-Carrie, Italy at the Paris Peace Conference, New York 1938, pp. 242-3, 296-7. Also the island of Kastelorizo was not included in this agreement, since it was situated outside of the Aegean. Frangoulis, vol. 2, p. 97; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 42-3.

however, Count Sforza, Tittoni's successor, renounced this agreement.⁷¹ Negotiations for a new agreement led to the Treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920.⁷² In a separate part of the treaty concluded between Venizelos and Count Bonin, the Italian representative, Italy promised to cede the Dodecanese to Greece with the exception of Rhodes in return for concessions in Albania. It was agreed that if England ceded Cyprus⁷³ to Greece, Italy would likewise give up Rhodes provided that the Rhodians agreed to a union with Greece to be decided after fifteen years by a plebiscite, conducted by the League of Nations. In order for Italy to transfer to Greece territory that was still legally Turkish, a special article (122) was included in the Treaty of Sèvres by which Turkey renounced in favour of Italy all rights of title over the Dodecanese and Kastelorizo.⁷⁴ However, after

71. Albrecht-Carrie, p. 297; M.V. Mavris, Sforza vs Sforza, New York 1943, p. 15; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 49.

72. Zervou, pp. 100-118; Frangopoulos, pp. 44-5; Volonakis, p. 339.

73. The British had ceased from the Ottoman Empire Cyprus in 1878 and used it as a base from which to assist Turkey in the defense of Asia Minor. The island was to be occupied and administered by Britain, until the Russian Government restored to Turkey Kars and the other conquests made by her in Armenia during the war of 1877-8.

74. Zervou, p. 118. Kastelorizo was invaded by the inhabitants of Samos who then declared union with Greece. The status of the island was decided in 1913 by the Allied powers who, anxious to please the Italians, ordered the Greeks to return the island to Turkey. Documents on British Foreign Policy, Series 1, vol. 7, March 18, 1920, pp. 528-29, 541-2. In 1916 it was occupied by the French and in 1921 it was given to Italy. Driault and Lheritier, vol. 5, p. 383; V. Mostra, "To zetema tou Kastelorizou", Gennadion Library, Tsouderos Archive, File VII, 6, pp. 77-84.

the Greek defeat in Anatolia, Italy, more aggressive under a new Fascist government led by Benito Mussolini, on 6 October 1922 repudiated the above agreement and announced her intention to keep the islands.

The British, especially after the Chanak crisis, were more concerned with domestic and imperial matters and had lost interest in Greece. Furthermore, the British Chiefs of Staff in a memorandum on 14 October 1922 recommended closer ties between Britain and Turkey. They suggested that friendly relations with Turkey would allow Britain to maintain control over the Straits with minimal forces.⁷⁵ As for the Balkans and the Near East, they were concerned to maintain the status quo. Within this context Greece was of minor strategic importance. "When they looked to Europe", Woodhouse writes, "Greece fell within their blind spot", for the British Government was now more concerned with the security of the Far and Middle East.⁷⁶

On 15 October 1922 Lord Curzon⁷⁷ reminded Italy that the cession of Jubaland was based on the condition that this would be an Italian settlement regarding the question of the

75. D.B.F.P., Series 1, pp. 984-9.

76. C.M. Woodhouse, Modern Greece: A short History, London, 1968, p. 210.

77. The Times (London), 6 October 1922.

Dodecanese.⁷⁸ On 3 November 1922 Mussolini wrote to Lord Curzon that "public opinion in Italy would not allow him to hand them over to Greece." Mussolini also told Alexandris, the Greek Foreign Minister, that Italy's policy regarding the Dodecanese was not a hostile policy against the Greek people but was needed to strengthen Italian national interests in the eastern Mediterranean.⁷⁹ The Turks also resisted the cession of the islands to the Greeks and preferred Italy rather than Greece, since they did not desire having a strong and ambitious Greece near them.

In 1923, with the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne (July) Venizelos approved the cession of the Dodecanese from Turkey to Italy.⁸⁰ He, however, insisted that Greece still had rights over the islands and that it was a matter of a later settlement between Italy and Greece.⁸¹ On 4 February 1923 the Turks accepted the proposal regarding the islands. A few weeks later, the Turkish delegation received an order from Ankara to insist upon the return of the Dodecanese to Turkey. Italy, on the other hand, with Allied support,

78. A.J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, Oxford 1924, pp. 464-66. This Agreement was reached on July 15, 1924.

79. Ap. Alexandris, Politikai Anamneseis, Patras 1947, p. 101; Em. Melas, "O Venizelos kai ta Dodekanesa", Dodekanesiaka Chronika, VI, 1977, pp. 330-4.

80. Great Britain, Accounts and Papers, vol. 14 (1923), pp. 412-20; Booth and Booth, p. 190; Zervos, p. 132.

81. Zervos, pp. 132-5.

refused to accept the Turkish demand not to cede the islands to Greece.⁸² As mentioned above, Turkey renounced in favour of Italy all rights over Kastelorizo and the Dodecanese in the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923).⁸³

Henceforth, Lloyd George's statement that Italy's policy was to make the Mediterranean an Italian lake started to become a reality.⁸⁴ In the meantime the strategic position of the islands was considered significant to future Italian plans and the Fascist government of Mussolini began a policy of Italicization⁸⁵ of the islands affecting their administration, language, culture and religion.⁸⁶ Italy was

82. C.J. Grew, Turbulent Era. A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-45, vol. 1, London 1953, pp. 557, 565.

83. Great Britain, Accounts and Papers, vol. 31 (cmd. 1929 [1923]), p. 21; Grew, vol. 1, p. 567; S.T. Laskaris, Diplomatike Istoría tes Ellados, Athens 1947, pp. 171-3; I. Korantis, Diplomatiki Istoría tes Europes, Thessaloniki 1968, vol. 1, p. 182; Gr. Daphnis, I Ellas Metaxi Dyo Polemon, Vol. 1, Athens 1955, p. 34; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 69.

84. Lloyd George, Memoirs of a British Statesman, vol. 2, New Haven 1939, p. 825.

85. The official name of the islands was changed to "Isole d' ell Egeo." (Booth and Booth, p. 256).

86. In March 1926 Signor Pedrazzi stated in the Chamber of Deputies that: "The Aegean islands are under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs precisely because their role is a part of our Foreign policy ... They belong to the imperialism of the Italian Empire in the Mediterranean" N.G. Mavris, The Free Italian Movement and the Foreign Policy of its Leader, New York 1943, pp. 15ff.

not only determined to keep the Dodecanese but, a month after the Lausanne Treaty, tried to occupy Corfu.⁸⁷

When a representative from Kalymnos arrived in Athens to discuss the situation that had developed with the Italian authorities, he was informed by the Greek Foreign Minister, Loukas Roufos, that the Dodecanesians had to come to a separate understanding with the authorities in Rome because Greece could not do anything about matters regarding the archipelago;⁸⁸ this issue was an internal Italian matter in which the Greek Government did not have any right to intervene. Roufos's comments represented the official Greek policy towards the Dodecanese during these years. Effectively, this policy was the outcome of Greece's weakness and diplomatic isolation that came in the aftermath of her defeat in Asia Minor. During this period, consequently, as far as the Greek Government was concerned good relations with Italy took precedence over the Dodecanese.

87. Daphnes, p. 50; J. Barros, The Corfou Incident of 1923, Princeton 1965.

88. Ipp. Frangopoulos, The History of Kalymnos from Ancient Times until Today, vol. 2, Athens 1961, p. 102.

Chapter II

British Policy toward Greece and the Dodecanese 1923-43

The Italian invasion of Greece in October 1940 and the German attack of April 1941 essentially began the process that ultimately led to the restoration of the Dodecanese to Greece. Although the British did not promise the islands to Greece in 1940-41, the fact that Italy entered the war against the Allies removed an important obstacle for the Greeks to acquire the archipelago.

In 1939, however, the political and military situation in south-eastern Europe did not offer any possibility for Greece expand her frontiers. British military policy in the inter war period did not consider the Mediterranean an essential region to British security. The Treaty of Lausanne (1923) reduced the strategic importance of Greece by transferring control of the Dardanelles from Turkey to an international commission. At the same time bases in Cyprus and in the Middle East reinforced and safeguarded British interest in the Straits and the eastern Mediterranean. Consequently, the traditional role of Greece as an area vital to British interests in the southeastern Mediterranean was no longer of major importance. British policy between 1936 and 1940 aimed at maintaining the status quo in the

Mediterranean and in this respect every effort was made to keep Italy neutral. This, in turn, meant that the Greeks could be expect little support from the British on the issue of the Dodecanese.

After the Treaty of Lausanne Greece underwent a period of political, economic, and social upheaval. Though a member of the victorious Entente, Greece emerged from World War I politically divided and militarily depended upon Britain and France. The decision of the Greeks to ally themselves with the Entente had led to a political and constitutional crisis that divided the nation between the pro-British Prime Minister Venizelos and the "Germanophile" King Konstantine who wished to keep Greece neutral.¹

The King had twice dissolved parliament over the issue of whether Greece should enter the war or not and on both subsequent elections Venizelos had gained a large majority. Despite this the king refused to accept the will of the electorate and in 1916 Venizelos was forced to resign.²

This created a constitutional stalemate that was left in

1. V. Papakosmas, "To Zetema tou Avasileutou Demokratikou politeumatos 1916-20", in Meletemata gyro apo ton Venizelo kai ten Epochi tou, ed. by O. Demetrakopoulos and Th. Veremis, Athena 1980, pp. 487-9; G. Leontaritis, "E Ellas kai o Pagkosmios Polemos", Istoria tou Ellenikou Ethnous, vol. 15, Athena 1978, p. 15.

2. Papakosmas, Meletemata gyro apo ton Venizelo kai ten Epochi tou, p. 493; Leontaritis, Istoria tou Ellenikou Ethnous, p. 28.

abeyance until Britain and France forced King Konstantine to abdicate (17 June 1917).³ Venizelos returned to Athens and reconvened the Parliament constituted by the elections of 1916. Another element of the constitutional crisis was the participation of the military in the political arena.⁴ In 1916 the Greek officer Corps was divided between the followers of Venizelos and King Konstantine. The former rallied to the pro-Venizelist politicians who set up a provisional government in 1916 at Thessaloniki, since they no longer recognized the government of King Konstantine as representative of the Greek nation. After Venizelos returned in 1917 these officers resumed their former positions and now dominated the Greek Armed Forces, but with the referendum of 1920 and the return of King Konstantine many senior officers had to relinquish their commands in favour of Royalists.⁵

The Greek debacle in Asia Minor in 1922 created new conditions for another military coup which ousted King Konstantine. Subsequently, the military took over the Greek government in 1922 and only relinquished power after they

3. Lloyd, Memoirs, vol. 2, New York 1972, p. 790.

4. For more information on the role of the military in politics see, Th. Veremis, Oi Epemvaseis tou Stratou sten Ellenike Politiki 1916-1936, Athens 1983.

5. A. Gerolymatos, "Lloyd George and Venizelos", Deltion tes Istorikis kai Ethnologikis Etaireias tes Ellados, Athena 1985, p. 216.

established a government sympathetic to their interests.⁶ During the next few years agitation against the monarchy from Venizelist officers as well as the continuing political and economic impact of the Asia Minor catastrophe brought about the establishment of a republic (1927).⁷ With the exception of the short-lived Pangalos regime (1925), which attempted to revive the territorial settlements of the Lausanne treaty, succeeding Greek governments maintained a status quo foreign policy during the inter-war period. The return of Venizelos in 1928 brought some degree of internal political stability in Greece but the effects of the Great Depression a year later doomed the country to further political and economic chaos.

In matters of foreign affairs, Venizelos's foreign policy was to avoid dependence on any one of the great power. The most plausible method of achieving this, he believed, was to establish friendly relations with the neighboring Balkan states and other small countries especially interested in the Mediterranean. Accordingly, he signed a Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression with Italy on 23 September

6. King Konstantine was succeeded by his son George II, who as a result of pressure from Republican (Venizelist) officers who had taken over the government, was forced to take an extended leave in 1923.

7. The monarchy, and in particular King Konstantine, was held responsible for the Greek defeat in Anatolia.

192⁸, and the issue of the Dodecanese, which had remained open since the Treaty of Lausanne was now considered by the Greek government officially closed. Venizelos, however, managed to exact a promise from Italy that the policy of de-Hellenization of the islands would cease. In return Greece had to dissolve all Dodecanesian societies within her territory.⁹

Venizelos, in his statement to the Athenian Press on 28 September 1928, reiterated that the Dodecanesian issue was a problem to be solved between the Dodecanesians and the Italians and not between Greece and Italy. He added that it should be treated along the same lines as the relationship between Great Britain and Cyprus. It was his duty, he said, not to hide the truth from them; at the same time he believed that the establishment of good relations with Italy would improve the lot of the islanders.¹⁰ This statement produced a storm of protest from Dodecanesians in Athens, Egypt, and New York.¹¹

8. Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 70; Korantis, vol. 1, pp. 382-3; Daphnis, vol. 2, pp. 51-6; K.D. Svolopoulos, Ellenike Exoterike Politike meta ten Synthike tes Lozannes, Thessaloniki 1977, p. 60; The Greek White Book: Diplomatic Documents relating to Italy's aggression against Greece, London 1942, pp. 21-22.

9. The Greek White Book, pp. 21-22.

10. Svolopoulos, p. 60; Tsouderos Archive, File VII, p. 71.

11. Melas, Dodekanesiaka Chronika, pp. 336, 339-40; The New York Times, 25 September 1928, p. 22.

Several months later the representatives of the Dodecanesians in Athens, Skevos Zervos, protested that contrary to Venizelos's optimism, Italy's policies towards the islands had not changed but continued as before.¹² In the following year, King Victor Emmanuel III's visit to the islands gave the Dodecanesians in Athens the opportunity to claim that despite the pact with Italy conditions on the archipelago had further deteriorated and that the measures taken by the Italians tended to encourage emigration from the islands.¹³

Venizelos's attempt to maintain friendly relations with Italy was based on obvious political realities.¹⁴ The charges, however, of the Dodecanesians against Italian policies were valid. Rhodes was developed by Italy and used as a showpiece to exude the glories and the virtues of the Italian occupation and colonial administration.¹⁵ By 1931 the Italian authorities had placed severe restrictions on the Greek educational system in all the islands. Six years later the Greek municipal secondary schools were closed down (in 1937), and Greek was now only taught as a second

12. Booth and Booth, p. 256.

13. The New York Times, May 27, 1928.

14. Mavris, Dodekanesiaka Chronika, p. 17.

15. Kasperson, pp. 157-166.

language in the Italian controlled schools. Another important aspect of Italian repression was the land policy adopted by the Italian authorities, and the restrictions placed on the maritime economy of the islands, which limited their trade. The most serious problem for the Dodecanesians, however, was the enforcement of Rome's religious policies.¹⁶ The Italians interfered with Orthodox rituals, local church festivals and, after 1936, eastern rites for weddings and funerals were forbidden. The building of Catholic churches, together with the appointment by the Vatican of an Archbishop to Rhodes, were seen as another manoeuvre to convert the islanders to the Catholic faith.

Venizelos, on the other hand, continued his policy of reconciliation by settling the Saloniki free trade zone dispute with Yugoslavia (17 March 1929). But his greatest diplomatic triumph was the establishment of cordial relations with Turkey.¹⁷ These diplomatic achievements strengthened and paved the way for the creation of the Balkan Pact. On the economic front Venizelos could do very little and finally withdrew from active politics. The elections of September 1932 led to a government made up of

16. Naval Intelligence Division, pp. 22-3, 39-42; Frangopoulos, p. 90; Booth and Booth, p. 234.

17. I. Anastasiadou, "C Venizelos kai to Elleno-Tourkiko Symphono Philiatou tou 1930", in Meletemata gyro apo ton Venizelo kai ten Epochi tou, Athena, 1980, pp. 309-421.

various anti-Venizelist factions headed by Panagiotis Tsaldaris, the leader of the Populist Party.

The election of the Royalist inclined Populist Party created considerable uncertainty within the republican dominated officer corps who feared that a government controlled by the Populists and the impact of the economic hardships faced by the Greek nation would lead to the restoration of the monarchy. To prevent this Venizelist officers attempted in 1933 and 1935 to take over the government and to ensure the continuation of the republic. The abortive coups, however, led to the forced retirement of over 1,800 Venizelist officers from the Greek Armed Forces.¹⁸

This paved the way for the restoration of the monarchy. In 1935 the Populists with the support of Royalist officers held a fraudulent referendum that enabled King George II to return to his throne. Although the King attempted to effect a reconciliation between the Venizelists and the Royalists by offering a general amnesty to the officers who had been involved in the coups, he was discouraged from doing so by the monarchist leaders of the Greek Armed Forces. The situation became even more complicated as a result of the 1936 election that split almost equally the Greek parliament

18. A. Gerolymatos, "The Role of the Greek Officer Corps in the Resistance", Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora, vol. XI, N. 3, (Fall 1984), p. 71, n. 7.

between the Populist and Liberals, with the Communists holding the balance of power.

In April 1936 Konstantinos Demertzis, the Prime Minister, died and left the government in the hands of Ioannis Metaxas, a staunch defender of the monarchy and a believer in authoritarian rule.¹⁹ In early May the communist controlled unions proclaimed a strike in Thessaloniki and announced a general strike throughout Greece. Metaxas interpreted this as a prelude to a communist revolution and convinced the King to suspend certain articles of the Greek constitution in order to prevent a communist take over.²⁰ On this basis Metaxas, with the support of the King, established a dictatorship that was to last until his death in 1941.

19. J. Koliopoulos, Greece and the British Connection 1935-41, Oxford 1977, pp. 39-43. Metaxas was the acting Chief of Staff of the Greek Army in 1915. He resigned his commission to protest the proposed Greek participation in the Dardanelles expedition. In November 1918 he left Greece for Sardinia and returned in July 1919. Upon his return he organized a small ultra royalist party that elected a small number of deputies to the Greek Parliament. Metaxas had been a protege of King Konstantine and with his help won a scholarship that enabled him to study at the War Academy in Berlin. Although a "Germanophile" by sentiment, Metaxas was an admirer of the Kaiser's Germany, throughout the years of his dictatorship he avoided imitating Nazi policies and in 1940 was just as resolute in opposing a German invasion as he was in not accepting Mussolini's demands. On his attitude toward the Germans and Italians see: To Prosopiko tou Imerologio, Athena 1951-64, vol. IV, V.

20. Gr. Daphnis, I Ellas Metaxy Dyo Polemon 1923-40, vol. II, Athena 1955, pp. 425-6; Koliopoulos, p. 38; KKE Episima Keimena tou KKE, vol. IV, Athens 1974, p. 366.

The 4th of August Regime, as it came to be called, was begrudgingly tolerated by the general population and met with little resistance from the leaders of the Greek political parties. Although the 4th of August Regime was a dictatorship, Metaxas did not create a political party as was the case in Italy and Germany but relied on the support of the King to sustain his rule. The primary victims of the dictatorship were the Communists but it avoided antagonizing the other parties as long as they did not actively oppose the regime. In matters of foreign affairs, Metaxas continued with the policies of the previous Greek governments by maintaining good relations with Turkey as well as with the Balkan states. Metaxas, however, faced a serious problem when he had to deal with an aggressive and expansionist Italy, while trying to maintain a balance of cordial relations with Nazi-Germany and Britain. He had to be particularly careful in maintaining good relations with the British since the King was a determined Anglophile and wished to keep good relations with Great Britain.

Anglo-Greek relations after 1922 had essentially remained dormant and it was not until the Abyssinian crisis in 1935-36 that the British government began to reassess their relationship with Greece but only within a framework that would not alienate the Italians. In addition, Britain had to deal with Turkey, which in June-July 1936 managed to re-

acquire control of the Straits. According to the Montreaux Convention, Turkey was permitted to re-militarize the zone of the Straits and thus control of the passage through them was now in Turkish hands. Although the British initially had objected to altering the international status of the Straits, fear of Germany and Italy induced them to accept the Turkish demands. Control of the Straits increased Turkey's strategic importance and induced the British to cultivate the Turks as potential allies.

The Greek government for its part tried to maintain an equilibrium between its fear of Nazi-Germany and Italy and the traditional relationship Greece maintained with Great Britain. The Greek King preferred that Greece, at any cost, maintain her traditional friendship with England, whereas Metaxas was making every effort to keep Greece neutral. The Greek dictator owed his position and the continuation of his regime to the support of the King and for this reason he had to give at least the appearance of pursuing a pro-British policy.²¹ In 1939 Metaxas did not have to work very hard toward this because the British government did not wish to antagonize Mussolini by establishing a formal alliance with Greece.

21. Koliopoulos, p. 65.

The British, on the other hand, could not afford to abandon any potential allies in this region and made some effort to protect the small Balkan states. On 10 April 1939 Great Britain and France issued guarantees to Greece and Rumania as a response to the Italian occupation of Albania. To avoid a total break with Italy efforts were made to assure the Italians that Britain was not aiming at establishing an anti-Italian coalition in the Balkans. Accordingly it was only after Mussolini's statement announcing that Italy would respect Greek territorial integrity that England went ahead and issued the April guarantee.²² A little later, when Mussolini proposed to renew the Italo-Greek Pact of 1928, the British government advised the Greeks not to comply since the British feared that in case of war it would deprive them of naval and air bases in Greece. Although, it was assumed that in the immediate future Britain's interests would be best served by maintaining the neutrality of Greece, the Chiefs of Staff wanted Greece to deny the use of her harbors to Britain's enemies.²³ Britain needed a friendly Greece, not necessarily an ally in the Mediterranean. For the British it was essential to maintain Italian neutrality so that the Royal Navy would be able to transfer its ships easily from the Mediterranean to the Far East. Consequently the aim of British policy in the Near

22. Koliopoulos, p. 111.

23. Koliopoulos, pp. 114-5.

East, at this time, was directed at establishing a neutral bloc in the Balkans and not a series of alliances with weak countries.²⁴

Italy's entry into the war at the end of June, on the other hand, presented the British Government with a completely new situation and priorities. Britain's strategic position in the Mediterranean and her political prestige in the Balkans and the Middle East would have been further compromised if Greece was occupied by the Italian army.²⁵ At the same time, the Italian domination of the Dodecanese once again figured prominently in the military struggle for control of the Mediterranean. During the first stages of World War II, Italy's strategy was to use her naval and air bases in the Dodecanese islands in order to attack British shipping. The Italian naval bases at Leros as well as air bases at Rhodes, and, Kos had been instrumental in the campaign against Ethiopia (2 October 1935) and now were equally important for the war against Britain.²⁶ By 1940 the Italians had completed construction of a series of bases from Brindisi to Leros and with these facilities they were planning to strike at the British positions in Middle East and the Suez Canal.

24. CAB 65/1, 12 September 1939, WM (39) 25.

25. J.R.M. Butler, Grand Strategy, vol. II, London 1976, pp. 372-3.

26. The Ethiopia campaign was part of Mussolini's attempt to create an Italian Empire.

Britain's response to the Italian threat was to try to involve Turkey against the Axis Powers.²⁷ On the other hand, Turkey demanded, in exchange for her participation in the war, several of the Dodecanese islands.²⁸ This, however, was not acceptable to the British. As a result during the first two years of the war Britain was forced to send the majority of her shipping around Africa rather than risk passage through the Mediterranean. This led to considerable delays in providing reinforcements and necessary supplies for the Middle East. Ultimately, to overcome this problem the British had to gain control of the Dodecanese.

On 18 August the British government once again tried to get Turkey involved in the war by suggesting that the Turks support Greece in the event of an Italian attack.²⁹ Though Turkey was bound by the terms of the Balkan Pact to assist Greece in the event of an attack by Bulgaria, she was not

27. Press reports claimed that the British Government offered Cyprus to Greece, on condition that they could make use of Greek military and naval bases. The New York Times, 24 November 1935, 10, and 25 December 1935, and 1 January 1936.

28. The New York Times, 24 November 1935, p. 22; A. Alexandris, "Turkish Policy Towards Greece during Second World War and its impact on Greek-Turkish Detente", Balkan Studies vol. 23, no. 1 (1981), pp. 157-97.

29. S.L. Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, vol. V, London 1976, p. 509.

obliged to render any help if Italy attacked.³⁰ On the other hand, Turkey was bound, under article 2 of the Anglo-Franco-Turkish Treaty of Mutual Assistance, to assist France or Britain in response to an act of aggression in the Mediterranean and (under article 3) to aid them in their fulfillment of their guaranties to Greece. Since the Turks continued to remain uncommitted, the British now considered that the war material planned for Turkey should now be diverted to Greece. Ultimately the British did not change their policy, and although Greece was now important to British strategy Turkey was still considered a vital ally in the long run.³¹

In the meantime the main objective of Italian policy in the Balkans was to bring Greece into the Italian orbit.³² But the immediate problem between Greece and Italy was the Dodecanese. The Italian Minister in Athens, Signor Grazzi, met with Ioannis Metaxas, the Greek Minister President, on several occasions to discuss the issue of the Dodecanese as well as other outstanding matters between the two countries. On 2 August 1939 Metaxas informed the Italian Minister that:

we had always felt that if the inhabitants of the Dodecanese were well treated, this would help to

30. Woodward, vol. I, pp. 22, 512; Alexandris, pp. 172-74.

31. CAB 65/16, 1 November 1940, WM (40) 281.

32. W.S. Churchill, Grand Alliance, vol. 3, London 1950, p. 72.

improve relations between Greece and Italy ... things actually got worse, and to such an extent that there is a continual influx of Dodecanesians into Greece, ... we already have here in Athens and Piraeus some 10,000 Dodecanesians ... How do you expect us to persuade the Greek people to believe that they are in no danger from Italy, when the soldiers you send to the Dodecanese sing a special song: "Sbarcheremo al Pireo e conquisteremo tutto l'Egeo" ³³

Meanwhile in the Dodecanese the situation got worse and the inhabitants developed a deep resentment for the Italian authorities. ³⁴ Mussolini believed that this sentiment was shared by all Greeks and in an address to his party said:

The Greeks hate Italy as no other people hate her. It is hatred which at first glance, appears inapplicable but it is, general, deep seated and incurable, in cities, in villages, high and low, everywhere. The reason for this hatred is a mystery. ³⁵

In early July 1940 Adolf Hitler assured Galeazzo Ciano that everything concerning the Mediterranean was a "purely

33. The Greek White Book, pp. 35-6.

34. In 1935 serious street fighting broke out in Kalymnos when the bishop accepted a decree by the Italian government separating the Orthodox Church in the Dodecanese from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Also in April 1936, 14 women from Kalymnos were sentenced to three months in jail for disobeying the decree of the Italian administration by burying their husbands according to the Orthodox Rite. According to The New York Times (20 April 1936, p. 9), there were some promises of better treatment and respect for local customs but the Italians failed to overcome Dodecanesian nationalism. As a result hundreds of people were leaving their homes and emigrating to the Greek mainland.

35. J. Tomazos, The Dodecanese: A Greek archipelago, South Africa 1944, p. 88.

Italian matter."³⁶ In September 1940 Germany and Italy reaffirmed their agreement to direct their main war effort against Britain.³⁷ By October 1940 Italy was planning an attack against Greece with the excuse that the aim of the operation was to eliminate a "British prop".³⁸ According to Mussolini,

The King of Greece was English, the political classes were pro-English, while the people were trained to hate Italy. Greece had made available to Britain her naval and air bases, and she was essentially to the Mediterranean, what Norway was to the North Sea.³⁹

Hitler's policy after the failure of Operation Sea Lion was to drive the British out of the Mediterranean. By September he had decided that the only alternative was to isolate the Mediterranean by seizing Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. To accomplish these objectives, Hitler attempted to convince Franco and Petain to enter the war on the side of Germany; he failed, however, to draw either dictator into the conflict.⁴⁰

36. D.G.F.P. Series D, X, N.129; M. Muggeridge, (ed.), Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, London 1948, pp. 375-79.

37. D.G.F.P., Series D, vol. XI, N. 73.

38. D.G.F.P., Series D, vol. XI, N. 135.

39. D.G.F.P., Series D, vol. XI, N. 199; El. Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, London 1966, p. 274; M. Creveld, Hitler's Strategy, 1940-41: The Balkan Clue, Cambridge 1973, p. 45; P. Badoglio, Italy in the Second World War, Oxford 1948, pp. 26-8.

40. D.G.F.P., Series D, vol. XI, N. 323, N. 352 and N. 353.

After the Italian attack on Greece (28 October 1940), Britain re-evaluated her policy toward the southeastern Mediterranean. Support for Krete, however, took precedence over a major British military commitment in Greece.⁴¹ The Greek government at the same time was anxious to avoid antagonizing Germany and would only accept limited British support.⁴² At a Cabinet Meeting on 4 November 1940 Churchill stated that public opinion in Britain was "most anxious for the British intervention in Greece". "Strategically", he said, "the loss of Athens would be as serious a blow to us as the loss of Khartoum and more irreparable."⁴³

Britain's ⁴⁴ assistance to Greece depended upon several factors. An important consideration was to maintain British security in the Aegean, but any support of ground forces to Greece meant weakening the British position in the Middle East. Furthermore, Britain could not secure her Mediterranean communications until the Italian threat in the Aegean was reduced by destroying the Italian fleet and bases

41. Koliopoulos, pp. 173-75.

42. With the exception of the British forces in Krete the Greek government received British air force units, but these were limited to bases in Athens in order to avoid threatening the Rumanian oil fields.

43. CAB 65/16, 4 November 1940, WM (40) 282.

44. Koliopoulos, p. 134.

in the Dodecanese. Rhodes and some of the other Dodecanesian islands took on a greater importance since they provided the Axis with strategic naval, and air bases from which they could threaten Malta, Egypt, and the Suez Canal.

The military situation, however, changed dramatically in November 1940. The British naval victories at Taranto (11-22 November 1940) and off Cape Matapan (26-29 March 1941) drove the Italian fleet from the Mediterranean and isolated the Italian garrisons in the Dodecanese.⁴⁵ In addition, the Greek victories against the Italians in Albania (November 1940-January 1941) threatened the position of the Axis in the Balkans and had the potential of exposing Germany's oil supplies in Rumania to British attack. For Hitler this was of immediate concern since it affected his plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the vulnerability of the Ploesti oil fields combined with the imminent demise of Italy, Germany's only ally, forced him to reconsider his Balkan policy.

Hitler's first directive called for the occupation of northern Greece and some of the Aegean islands, not only to eliminate a potential British threat to Rumania but to establish bases from which the German air forces could

45. A. Cunningham, A Sailor's Odyssey, London 1951, p. 290.

attack the Royal Navy in the southeastern Mediterranean.⁴⁶ For the British one alternative was to occupy the Dodecanese in order to counter a possible German threat in the southeastern Mediterranean; a problem that was of a major concern to the Middle East command.⁴⁷ Churchill, since November 1940, brought up the question of the Dodecanese and gave instructions to prepare plans for operations against the archipelago.⁴⁸

Within this context it seemed probable that there would have been considerable advantages in launching an attack against Rhodes in April 1941.⁴⁹ As a prelude to this strategy an assault against Kasos, which lies between east of Krete, and Scarpanto was planned for 17 February. Kasos was significant, since the straits separating from Karpathos

46. The Luftwaffe used bases in the Dodecanese to bomb the Suez Canal on January 18, and 19, 1940. Cunningham, p. 306; I.O.S. Playfair, The Mediterranean and the Middle East, vol. 1, London 1954, pp. 324-5; J. Connell, Wavell: Scholar and Soldier, New York 1964, pp. 226-8.

47. The planned capture of the Dodecanese islands was given the code name "Mandibles". The codes chosen for operations against the individual islands were Cordite (Rhodes), Allowance (Leros), Consumption (Stampalia), Armature (Karpathos), Blurt (Kasos), and Beneath (Kos), Commandeer (Patmos), Border (Lipsos), Abstention (Kastelorizo). M. Gilbert, Finest Hour: Winston Churchill 1939-41, London 1983, pp. 922, 933; J.R.M. Butler, Grand Strategy, vol. II, London 1972, p. 372; Connell, pp. 331-2.

48. Gilbert, p. 926.

49. Butler, vol. II, p. 372, 382; Lord G.C.M. Tedder, With Prejudice, London 1966, p. 52.

and Rhodes could be used by German U-boats and E-boats.⁵⁰ An attempt to land on Kasos on 17 February failed owing to lack of information about the coastline and the limited landing places available on the island.⁵¹ A week later, on 24 February, a force of commandos landed at Kastelorizo, a tiny island situated some eighty miles east of Rhodes near the coast of Turkey.⁵² The British intended to establish a garrison of troops on this island, but after a series of misunderstandings and mishaps they had to withdraw their forces to Alexandria. A second attempt was equally unsuccessful.

Admiral Cunningham, the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean fleet, in his autobiography commented on the operation that:

The taking and abandonment of Kastelorizo was a rotten business and reflected little credit on anyone ... The Italians were unbelievably enterprising, and not only bombed the island, but bombarded it and landed troops ... For some reason the Army wireless did not work ... These Commandos we have out here are tommy-gun and knuckle-duster basis (sic), and apparently can't defend themselves if seriously attacked ... All we can say is that we have learnt a lot from it and won't repeat the same mistakes⁵³

50. Cunningham, p. 306.

51. Cunningham, pp. 352-357.

52. Chr. Buckley, Greece and Crete, 1941, London 1952, p. 151; Tedder, p. 52; Gilbert, pp. 1010-14; Cunningham, p. 316.

53. Cunningham, p. 316; Butler, vol. II, pp. 382-3; Gilbert, pp. 1014-15.

Hitler's decision to invade the Balkans, on the other hand, resulted in a complete reversal of British policy that led to the commitment of substantial forces in mainland Greece.⁵⁴ Greece now became the key to British policy in the Balkans. In a telegram to Churchill Eden stated that:

My present intention is to tell the Greek people of the help we are prepared to give them now, and to urge them to accept this help and brave any risk it may entail of involving them in early hostilities with Germany, there is a fair chance that we can hold a line in Greece... .⁵⁵

The War Cabinet assumed that if the Greek government could be persuaded to accept British forces it might have been possible to induce Yugoslavia and Turkey to join Britain and Greece in a common front against the Axis.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Greece having been a victim of aggression by one Axis partner made every effort to avoid provoking Germany who had already established a military presence in Rumania.

As early as 20 January 1941 the British were aware, through the decipherment of German signal communications, that

54. Operation "Marita" was the German code name for military action against Greece. D.G.F.P., Series D, vol. XI, N. 323; H.R. Trevor-Roper, (ed.), Hitler's War Directives, 1939-45, London 1965, pp. 91-2; Crevelde, pp. 92ff.

55. Churchill, vol. 3, pp. 70-2; Woodward, vol. 1, p. 526.

56. CAB 65/17 10 February 1941, WM (41) 15; Churchill, vol. 3, pp. 66-9; Woodward, vol. I, p. 522; A. Eden, The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning, London 1965, pp. 192-3.

Hitler was planning to invade Greece.⁵⁷ On the 10 February 1941 the War Cabinet resolved that Greece had to be supported regardless of the impact this would have upon the British offensive in North Africa. On 12 February General Wavell was instructed to stop his army from advancing beyond Tripolitania and hold his forces at El Ageila. Consequently, future plans for British landings on the Dodecanese were either scaled down considerably or abandoned, since a large part of the British Forces in the Middle East were to be committed to mainland Greece.⁵⁸

After the death of Metaxas his successors (General Papagos and Alexander Koryzis), although resolved to resist a German invasion, were undecided on where to hold a defensive line against the Wehrmacht.⁵⁹ On 22 February 1941 at the Tatoi Palace, Eden put forward the view of the British War Cabinet to the Greek government, that it was Germany's intention to subdue Greece and immobilize Turkey and that the British

57. Enigma decrypts and intelligence reports from other sources indicated that the Germans were planning to invade Greece as early as 20 January 1941. The German invasion did not take place in January and the British Chiefs-of-Staff concluded that after a gradual German occupation of Bulgaria over a two month period the attack on Greece would take place. In mid-February further decoding of German signal communications provided conclusive evidence that the Germans would attack Greece in early April. F.H. Hinsley, British Intelligence in the Second World War; Its Influence on Strategy and Operations, vol. 1, New York 1981, pp. 372-3.

58. Connell, pp. 330-2; Gilbert, p. 11.

59. Woodward, vol. 1, pp. 502-25.

were prepared to offer the Greeks military support.⁶⁰ The Greek government accepted the British offer of help and it was resolved to oppose a German invasion.⁶¹

On 6 April 1941 the German armies began their offensive against Yugoslavia and Greece and by the end of April occupied the entire Balkan Peninsula.⁶² In addition, they occupied all of the Aegean islands and established garrisons at Thasos, Samothrace, Lemnos, and Krete.⁶³ In North Africa, the Germans also retook Cyrenaica and thus in two short months the strategic situation in the eastern Mediterranean had completely changed. The Germans by occupying Greece, the Aegean islands, and Cyrenaica (with the exception of the fortress of Tobruk) forced the British on the defensive. All plans for offensive operations in the Dodecanese, or elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, were cancelled until the Italian Armistice on 8 September 1943.

60. CAB 65/15, 24 February 1941, WM (41) 39.

61. Woodward, vol. 1, pp. 526ff; Eden, 1965, pp. 200-1; Papagos, p. 265.

62. D.G.F.P., Series D, vol. XI, n. 540, p. 916; Creveld, p. 133; Cunningham, pp. 352-7. Initially Hitler had considered the occupation of northern Greece but on 13 December changed his mind and ordered the invasion and occupation of all of Greece and the Aegean islands.

63. Cunningham, p. 380ff; R. De Belot, The Struggle for the Mediterranean 1939-45, London 1951, p. 130; Tedder, p. 98.

During the next year and a half the British had to focus their attention on North Africa and the defense of Egypt. It was only in November 1942, after the defeat of the German and Italian forces at the battle of El Alamein, that the British position in Egypt and the Middle East was once again secure. Furthermore, the entry of the United States in the war and the German defeat at Stalingrad gave the Allies the initiative. The American strategists were convinced that the best method of defeating Germany was by invading western Europe. The British, however, preferred to attack the Axis in southeastern Europe. Although the Allies agreed that the primary objective of their strategy would be the invasion of France, the Americans conceded to a limited offensive in the Mediterranean (Operation Torch) in order to finish off the Africa Corps and liberate the French colonies in north Africa. The successful completion of this operation enabled the British to convince the Americans to extend operations in southern Europe with the invasion of Sicily (Operation Husky).

In 1943 the British were again in the position of initiating an offensive Mediterranean strategy but faced new difficulties with the United States who had only agreed to limited operations in southeastern Europe. The Americans still considered the invasion of France as the main objective of Allied strategy and did not favor the British desire to divert forces to the Middle East. On July 1941

Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's personal representative, expressed the American attitude concerning Allied policy in the region by stating that:

The men of the United States who held the principal positions... were of the opinion that in the Middle East the British Empire had an indefensible position, in attempting to defend it great sacrifices were being made.⁶⁴

The overthrow of Mussolini caused a third diversion from the strategy of a cross channel assault since the Italian surrender now enabled the British to argue for an allied offensive against the Italian peninsula. Roosevelt agreed, despite the misgivings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who argued that Britain was attempting to protect her imperial interest in the Mediterranean. Consequently, the collapse of Italy and the British Mediterranean strategy brought into the forefront the conflicting interests of the Balkan and Mediterranean states such as Greece.

During the Axis occupation, official British policy toward was that the Greek government-in-exile and the king were the legitimate representatives of the Greek state.⁶⁵ In effect the underlining factor of British support for the Greek king was that a constitutional monarchy would provide the best

64. E. Walker and P.I. Smith, War in the Aegean, London 1974, p. 38.

65. The German attack drove the king and his government from Greece to Kreta and in May to Cairo and afterwards to London.

guarantee of a friendly post war Greece.⁶⁶ In addition, Emmanuel Tsouderos, who became Prime Minister on 21 April 1941, regarded collaboration with Britain as the corner stone of Greek foreign policy. In a memorandum of 4 August 1941 to the King, Tsouderos stated that Greece's foreign policy had to be considered within a framework that took account of the fact that Greece was not only part of the Balkans but also a Mediterranean state.⁶⁷ Thus according to Tsouderos, the country's interest could best be served by collaborating with the British.⁶⁸ In February 1942 he stated that the Greek government had to give the British certain harbors and airfields in return for British support to Greek territorial claims. Tsouderos, consequently, conducted his foreign policy on the assumption that after the war Britain would continue to play a predominant role in Greece and in the Mediterranean as she had done throughout the course of modern Greek history.

66. Woodward, vol. III, pp. 383-85; A.I. Korantis, Politiki kai Diplomatiki Istoria tes Ellados, Athena 1987, vol. 1, pp. 213, 230; Ch.M. Woodhouse, Struggle for Greece 1941-49, London 1976, p. 36; W. McNeill, America, Britain and Russia: Their Cooperation and Conflict 1941-46, London 1970, p. 103; H. Fleischer, Stemma kai Svastika: I Ellada tes katoches kai tes Antistases 1941-44, Athena 1988, p. 187.

67. Tsouderos Archive, File II, p. 78-9.

68. St. Xydis, Greece and the Great Powers, 1944-47, Thessaloniki 1963, p. 6; Pr. Papastratis, British Policy towards Greece During the Second World War, Cambridge 1984, pp. 5, 8; Pr. Papastratis, "Diplomatika Paraskenia tes Ypographis tes Stratiotikes Symphonias Vretanias Ellados stis 9 Martiou 1942", Mnemon, 1979, p. 180; Tsouderos, Athena 1950, p. 240-9.

The Greek government-in-exile had almost from the moment of its establishment in London put forward its territorial claims in the Balkans and in the Aegean.⁶⁹ The British government avoided giving any commitment of support to Greek territorial requests by shifting such issues to the outcome of a general post war settlement. Despite this the Greeks were never able to get from the British or the Americans any formal commitment concerning Greek territorial claims.⁷⁰

A memorandum of 12 June 1942⁷¹ was submitted to the Americans (Roosevelt, Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles) that outlined Greek territorial demands that had previously been

69. Kimon P. Diamantopoulos, "Greece's National Claims", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (March 1944), pp. 110-15. This article provides details of the Greek post-war territorial claims.

70. The efforts of Tsouderos were also supplemented by Panagiotis Kanellopoulos. In a conversation with Lord Moyne and Warner of the Foreign Office on 16 December 1942, Kanellopoulos stated that Eden should make a statement about the Greek post-war territorial demands concerning northern Epirus, Cyprus and the Dodecanese. Lord Moyne, however, said, concerning Cyprus, and the Dodecanese that "how can we make such a statement about territories which belonged to Turkey." In a meeting with Eden on 12 January 1943 Kanellopoulos once again brought up the question of the Dodecanese, northern Epirus, and Cyprus. Eden replied that the rights of Greece remained in abeyance. P. Kanellopoulos, Ta Chronia tou Megalou Polemou, 1939-44, Athens 1964, pp. 60, 66-7, 71-2.

71. Tsouderos Archive, File II, pp. 5-10; Xydis, Annex III, pp. 693-96; D.G. Kousoulas, The Price of Freedom: Greece in World Affairs 1939-53, Syracuse, New York 1953, Appendix IV, pp. 200-1.

given to the British on 29 September 1941.⁷² In a note of 25 November 1941 Eden had replied to the Greek Premier that since these matters could not be decided until the peace settlement, it would be dangerous for the British to forecast what these decisions would be and to bind themselves by any specific arrangement at the present time.⁷³ The American response on 28 October 1942 stated that the United States could not make any statements on Greek territorial claims that might be taken as a commitment.⁷⁴ On 17 November 1942 a copy of an aide-memoire from Tsouderos was received from Alexander Cadogan, indicating Greek claims to the Dodecanese.⁷⁵ On 1 December 1942 Cadogan avoided opening the door to a British commitment by stating that the his government was fully conscious of the Greek sentiments regarding the archipelago⁷⁶.

Tsouderos attempted to get around the problem of the Greek territorial claims by proposing an Anglo-Greek alliance and within such an agreement he hoped to address the issue of

72. The Greek White Book, Washington D.C. 1943, pp. 5-18; Papadakis, p. 221-2.

73. Tsouderos, pp. 94-5; Papadakis, p. 232; Xydis, p. 6.

74. Xydis, 1963, p. 18; Tsouderos, p. 129.

75. FO 371/37225/8098/464/19; Tsouderos Archive, File II, p. 39.

76. Tsouderos Archive, File II, p. 15.

the Dodecanese. Tsouderos's efforts, however, to draw the British into a political alliance failed to materialize. The British, instead, offered the HGreeks a military alliance similar to the one they had concluded with the Yugoslav government-in-exile. Tsouderos and the king had no other recourse but to comply, and on 9 March 1942 the Anglo-Greek military alliance was concluded.⁷⁷ The agreement, among other things, stated that its principal aims were "the complete liberation of Greece and the re-establishment of her freedom and independence."⁷⁸

77. Papastratis, Mnemon, pp. 172-84.

78. Xydis, Annex I, pp. 683-88; Papastratis, p. 6; Papastratis, Mnemon, pp. 172-84; Tsouderos, pp. 164-7.

Allies to make use of airfields in Anatolia.³ Since the beginning of the war Turkey's potential as an ally had always figured prominently in British strategic planning. According to Churchill "for the British, consequently, the potential of Turkish participation in the war on the side of the Allies could not be ignored."⁴ The Allies would not only be able to use Turkish bases from which they could strike at Germany's satellites such as Bulgaria and Rumania,⁵ but they would be in a position to provide greater support to the resistance movements in the Balkan states. In addition, an estimated 46 Turkish divisions would be available to reinforce the Allied armies in the Middle East. The Allies, in turn, would gain control of the Dardanelles, whose neutrality so far favoured the Germans. At the same time, if the Red Army was successful in driving the Germans out of the Ukraine and the Crimean, it would open a direct sea route to the Soviet Union and Allied convoys would avoid the dangerous and expensive Arctic route to northern Russia. Finally, a Turkish alliance would further upset the delicate balance of German forces throughout Europe by threatening

3. Great Britain. Cabinet office. Cabinet History Series. Principal War Telegrams and Memoranda, 1940-43, Middle East, (hereby cited as Cabinet Office), part II, vol. 4, Hist. (B) 11, No. 135, (IZ 1786/16 CC239), p. 75.

4. On British relations with Turkey see: S.I. Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, vol. IV, London 1975.

5. The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-43, ed. L. Lochner, Westport 1976, p. 433; J. Ehram, Grand Strategy, vol. V, London 1956, pp. 88-9.

them with a new campaign on their most exposed flank. The capture of the Dodecanese, consequently, might then become a prelude to a second "Gallipoli", this time for the Germans.⁶

Despite the advantages by the British outlined for a campaign in southeastern Europe, it became the focus of a significant difference of opinion between the British and the Americans in 1943. The American military planners had little interest in the Balkans or in the Aegean and they saw any attempt by Britain to take the war to this area as a diversion from the strategy of invading western Europe.⁷

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed that the Mediterranean theater would remain a British sphere of military responsibility and that the United States government would be content to let the British "play the Allied cards" in Greece.⁸ American strategy was focussed on the western front and secondly on the Far East. The only interest that the Americans had in the Dodecanese was to keep the British from committing any forces to this area.

On 12 May 1943 General Marshall informed the Combined Chiefs

6. Ehram, pp. 88-9; Molony, pp. 532-53; W.S. Churchill, Closing the Ring, vol. V, Boston 1951, pp. 180-1; Lord Ismay, The Memoirs of General Lord Ismay, New York 1960, p. 322; Matloff, p. 128.

7. "Every division sent in the Mediterranean" an American official historian has remarked, "was a division lost for the main battle". A.H. Gordon, Cross-Channel attack, 1951, p. 96.

8. W.S. Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, vol. IV, Boston 1950, p. 305.

of Staffs at the Trident Conference in Washington that "the Mediterranean was a vacuum into which America's great military might could be drawn off until there was nothing left with which to deal the decisive blow on the Continent."⁹ Thus while the British believed that the "Mediterranean operations will result in a demoralization and breakup of the Axis, the Americans feared that the Mediterranean operations are highly speculative as far as ending the war is concerned."¹⁰

At the Quadrant Conference in Quebec (on August 1943) the Americans got the impression that Britain's Mediterranean policy was based on political motives.¹¹ The Americans believed that the British were more concerned with the post war balance of power in Europe rather than with the quick defeat of Germany. The American military also suspected that Churchill wanted to avoid the cross-channel landing in favor of an eastern Mediterranean campaign.¹² Henry L.S. Stimson, the American Secretary of War, assumed that Churchill was afraid of a repetition of the senseless slaughter that took place on the western front during the First World War.¹³ Churchill, on the other hand, believed

9. Matloff, pp. 130-1; Eham, p. 116.

10. Matloff, p. 131.

11. A. Bryant, The Turn of the Tide 1939-43, vol. 1, London 1986, pp. 688-727; Matloff, p. 214.

12. Matloff, p. 214.

13. Matloff, pp. 211-43; L.H. Stimson, On Active Service in

that a cross-channel invasion was not the only way of winning the war and that an attack on southeastern Europe would be more successful since in this region the enemy appeared to be most vulnerable.¹⁴

As a result of discussions and disagreements between the two principal Allies, various half-hearted plans for operations against the eastern Mediterranean emerged during the winter and spring of 1943. As a result, General Henry Maitland Wilson, the new commander of the Middle East Theater of operations, received a directive on 12 February 1943 to prepare "for amphibious operations in the eastern Mediterranean."¹⁵ After receiving this directive, Wilson discovered that plans for the seizure of the smaller Aegean islands had been in consideration for some time.¹⁶ A joint meeting of representatives from the army, Royal Navy, and RAF, known as Number 2 Planning Staff, was set up in Cairo in February 1943 to consider the possibility of a major assault on the Dodecanese and in particular the invasion of Rhodes and Scarpanto. The main objectives were to either

Peace and War, New York 1948, pp. 435-8.

14. Churchill, vol. V, p. 514; Bryant, vol. 1, p. 54.

15. Cabinet Office, No. 44, (52100/12), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 11, p. 19; E. Walker and P. Smith, War in the Aegean, London 1974, pp. 42-3.

16. Since 29 December 1942, Cabinet Office, No. 290, (CC/166/29), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 10, p. 137; H.M. Wilson, "Operations in the Middle East from 16th February 1943 to 8th January 1944", Supplement to London Gazette, 37786 (November 1946), p. 5585.

open the sea-route to Smyrna or as a preliminary stage to operations in the Greek mainland or both.¹⁷

From the period of May to September 1943 specific plans were produced for the capture of the Dodecanese but had to be altered to take advantage of new developments.¹⁸ Earlier plans only included the capture of the island of Rhodes and operations against the Axis in mainland Greece.¹⁹ After the Italian surrender on 9 September 1943, the new plans only dealt with the capture of Rhodes and Krete. The Commander-in-Chief of the Middle Eastern Theater of Operations assumed that Eisenhower would supply him with additional troops, aircraft, and ships. Eisenhower, however, could not at this time commit the resources required for the operation. In addition, satisfactory air intelligence was very difficult to acquire since the Germans had airfields in the Dodecanese as well as in Krete making it very difficult for the British to conduct a thorough air reconnaissance.²⁰ The airfields of Cyprus and Gambut unfortunately were too distant to be

17. "Accolade" was the codename for the operation against Rhodes, Scarpanto, and the lesser islands that replaced "Handcuff" as the codename for the capture of Rhodes.

18. For more information, see Cabinet Office, No. 116-171, Hist. (B) 10, pp. 59-90 and N. 1-18, Hist. (B) 10, pp. 1-9.

19. Cabinet Office, No. 135, (IZ 1786/16, CC/239), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 11, p. 75; Wilson, pp. 5584-5592; A. Willis, "Naval operations in the Aegean between the 7th September, 1943 and 28th November 1943", Supplement to the London Gazette, 1948, pp. 5371-79.

20. Molony, p. 534.

effective in the upcoming campaigns. According to the early plans of 1943, air operations against Rhodes depended upon single-engined fighters which, it was assumed, could effectively cover the troop convoys and landings. However, single-engine fighters could not be used because of the problem of distance and "Accolade" seemed impractical unless the Turks allowed the British to use their airfields in Anatolia.²¹

On 27 July Churchill, who was very interested in "Accolade", raised the subject: "I suppose that the planners are all keyed up with plans for taking Rhodes on the assumption that Italians ask for an Armistice."²² On 1 August General Wilson independently suggested the same operation:

Reports from the Balkans, Crete and the Dodecanese during the last few days show developments which we might be able to turn to our advantage at short notice if we had the means... . It seems possible that a situation favorable to us may develop shortly in the Dodecanese ... Apart for the 8th Indian Division, we have no fully equipped formation in the Middle East. For a quick "Accolade" ... we should have available ... 10th Indian Division, 1st Greek Brigade and the 9th Armoured Brigade²³

21. Cabinet Office, No. 124, (IZ 1659/6, CC230), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 11, p. 69; Cabinet Office, No. 135, (IZ 1785/16, CC279), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 11, p. 75.

22. Lord Tedder, With Prejudice: The War Memoirs of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder, G.C.B., vol. V., London 1966, p. 471; Ehram, p. 91; Churchill, vol. V., p. 102.

23. Cabinet Office, No. 1, (CS 2126), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 1; Molony, pp. 535-36.

Churchill on 2 August remarked:

Here is a business of great consequence to be thrust forward by every means... I hope the staffs will be able to stimulate action which may gain immense prizes at little cost though not little risk ...²⁴

He also insisted that all supplies to Turkey should be suspended. On 5 August Eisenhower was asked to provide eight ships and craft, four squadrons of transport aircraft, two airborne battalions, and two special units.²⁵ At first (on 7 August) Eisenhower agreed to send the required forces and supplies but later he relented, and supported by Tedder and Alexander, he cancelled the transfer of these forces because of the operation in Italy and the plans for Salerno.²⁶ He explained that "we should concentrate on one thing at a time and that Accolade should be abandoned."²⁷ At the Quadrant Conference, the Allies agreed "that operations in the Mediterranean theater should be revoked."²⁸

24. Cabinet Office, No. 2, (N.D. 1503), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 2; Churchill, vol. V, p. 204; Ehram, vol. V, p. 91; Walker and Smith, p. 55.

25. Cabinet Office, No. 6, (111, CC271), Hist. (B) 12, vol. 4, p. 3.

26. Cabinet Office, No. 6, (111), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 3.

27. Tedder also believed that "we could not help fearing that in practice the requirements of Accolade would draw upon resources urgently needed for the main business in hand." (Tedder p. 473; Molony, p. 536).

28. The British-American Conference held at Quebec in August 1943; Matloff, pp. 224-5.

On 26 August Eisenhower warned Wilson that he would soon require the return of the 8th Indian Division, which Wilson needed for the operation on Rhodes.²⁹ This turn of events came about as a result of the Allied policy to press the offensive against Japan that had been agreed by the British and Americans during the Conference in Washington on May 1943.³⁰ The 8th Indian Division, however, was committed to the Italian campaign. Consequently, when Italy surrendered on 8 September 1943, Wilson did not have any troops or time to exploit the opportunities that presented themselves in the Aegean.

However, Wilson believed that something could still be done if he acted quickly and he was also encouraged by Churchill's personal message on 9 September that advised him that "this was the time to play high, improvise and dare. The capture of Rhodes by you at this time with Italian aid would be a fine contribution to the General War. This is the time to think of Clive, and Peterborough and of Rooke's men taking Gibraltar."³¹ On 13 September, consequently, he

29. Eisenhower's Papers, No. 4410, vol. III, p. 1352; H. Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace they Sought, Princeton 1954, p. 150; Matloff, pp. 228-9.

30. Matloff, p. 135-9.

31. Cabinet Office, No. 20, (OZ 2722), Hist. (B) 12, p. 10; Churchill, vol. V, p. 182; Walker and Smith, p. 59; Tedder, p. 474; H.M. Wilson, Eight Years Overseas, London 1948, pp. 174-5; Ehram, p. 89, 93; Bryant, vol 1, p. 49; Gilbert, p. 497 and pp. 502-3.

decided to attack Rhodes with the support of the 234th Brigade. The task of the brigade was, in conjunction with the Italians in Rhodes, to overpower the German troops and secure the port and airfield facilities. On the night of 12-13 September Major Jellicoe and another officer landed by parachute on Rhodes and made contact with the Italian commander, Admiral Campioni.³² However, the British officers could do little more without further support and thus on 13 September Rhodes and Scarpanto were occupied by the Germans.

By the end of August 1943, the German commanders, however, were faced with a shortage of men and material and were uncertain whether to evacuate the Dodecanese, but ultimately decided to hold on to the islands.³³ At the Fuehrer Conference of 12 September 1943 reinforcements for Krete and the Dodecanese were considered.³⁴ Two days later Army Group South East (Army Group XII) submitted the following evaluation:

operations against the Dodecanese ... are shortly to be launched. It is obvious that the enemy will try to take advantage of the present moment of weakness caused by the Italian surrender ... The

32. Cabinet Office, No. 23, (IZ 3280/12 CC297), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 11.

33. A. Willis, Supplement to the London Gazette, p. 5,372.

34. War Diary Operations Division, German Naval Staff, (hereafter cited as War Diary), part C, vol. 49, Wilmington Delaware 1984, p. 184.

attack must be expected³⁵

On 18 September, Admiral Lange, Commander of the Aegean, reported to his superior officer Admiral Fricke, Naval Commander Group South East, that he considered the Dodecanese, with the exception of Rhodes, completely lost. He advised the immediate occupation of the Kyclades in order to establish a defense line with the inner chain of islands and thus to forestal any British attempt to occupy them. Admiral Fricke, however, did not consider the situation to be serious, but the Commander-in-Chief southeastern Europe, Field Marshal von Weichs as well as the Naval Commander of the eastern Mediterranean recommended a complete withdrawal of German forces from the Aegean islands.³⁶ Hitler, on the other hand, decided to defend the German position in the Aegean in order to deny the region to the Allies and prevent them from using the islands as a route to the Black Sea. Hitler, furthermore, was worried that if the Wehrmacht abandoned the Aegean it would have an adverse affect on Turkey as well as to give the impression that Germany was

35. War Diary, part C, vol. 49, p. 209.

36. Field Marshal Baron von Weichs stated that "the bases on the islands, in particular on Krete, were established at a time when we were still planning offensive operations in the eastern Mediterranean area. Meanwhile, the situation has changed completely. The Italian Armed Forces no longer exist. Our position in the Balkan peninsula is in danger for lack of sufficient forces... . The evacuation must be undertaken in time, before he inflicts irreparable losses on our sea routes, ... on our shipping" Germany. Fuehrer Conferences on matters dealing with the German Navy 1939-45, (hereafter cited as Fuehrer Conferences), Wilmington, Delaware 1983, 24 September 1943, pp. 139-40.

retreating on all fronts. At the Naval Conference of 24 September 1943, Hitler outlined his concerns:

The attitude of our allies in the southeast and Turkey's attitude is determined excessively by their confidence in our strength. Abandonment of the islands would create the most unfavorable impression. To avoid such a blow to our prestige, we may even have to accept the loss of our troops and material. The supply of the islands must be assured by the Air Force.³⁷

Ironically the Dodecanese held the same appeal for Churchill as it did for Hitler.³⁸ Meanwhile the Middle East Command planned to occupy Kos, Leros, and Samos, until an attack could be launched against Rhodes. Between the 8th and 16th of September, light British forces landed and occupied Kos, Leros, Lissos, Patmos, Furni, Icara, Kastelorizo, Kalymnos, Stampalia, Simi, as well as Samos and Ikaria.³⁹ In the third week of September, Middle East Headquarters drafted a new plan for an assault against the island of Rhodes to take place in the second half of October. Churchill outlined the reasons for the attack in two cables to Eisenhower on 25 September. He stressed that Rhodes was the key to the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean.⁴⁰ He also pressed for

37. Fuehrer Naval Conferences, p. 140; Churchill, vol. V, pp. 207-8.

38. Churchill, vol. V., pp. 207-8; Walker and Smith, p. 186.

39. War Diaries, vol. 49, pp. (19 September 1943) 279, (20 September 1943) 291, (21 September 1943) 309.

40. Cabinet Office, No. 30, (cable 5224), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 15; Churchill, vol. V., p. 186; Efram, p. 94.

action in several directions giving his priorities for these actions as "Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff believed that the island would fall easily and quickly. He assumed that not only were its airfields valuable, but Allied possession of this island might also bring Turkey into the war."⁴¹ According to Churchill "It will be a great disaster if the Germans are able to consolidate there. The requirements which the Middle East asked for are small..."⁴²

Wilson required several naval escorts bombers, three L.S.T.'s, a few transports, one hospital ship, and enough transport aircraft to lift one parachute battalion.⁴³ On 26 September General Eisenhower agreed to give the necessary support to Wilson.⁴⁴ Thereupon, the Middle East Command decided to attack Rhodes on 23 October."⁴⁵

41. The Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower: The War Years, vol. III, (hereafter cited as: Eisenhower Papers), Baltimore, London 1970, p. 1461, no. 1289,

42. Churchill, vol. V, p. 209; Gilbert, pp. 510-12.

43. Churchill, vol. V, p. 209.

44. In a cable to Wilson, Eisenhower listed the maximum resources that might be spared for an operation against Rhodes. It included two destroyers, two cruisers, three LSI(L)'s, a headquarters ship, nine MT ships, the 9th Armored Brigade, and one group of troop carrier aircraft. Eisenhower Papers, vol. III, N. 1290, p. 1463; H. Butcher, My Three Years, New York 1946, p. 429; Churchill, vol. V, p. 210; Ehram, p. 94.

45. Eisenhower Papers, vol. III, No.1319, (CC5321), p. 1489.

Unfortunately on 4 October Kos fell to the Germans and its airfield could now be used against the British in the Dodecanese.⁴⁶ The Prime Minister on the same day minuted to the Chiefs of Staff: "In view of the Italian collapse, a forward policy of audacity and improvisation was enjoined upon General Maitland Wilson and the Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East."⁴⁷

In Churchill's view "Everything must now be done to recover the position" and he sketched the possible recapture of Kos as a prelude to the invasion of Rhodes.⁴⁸ Eisenhower on 5 October reported to the Combined Chiefs of Staffs that to divert resources to the Aegean would prejudice the campaign in Italy.⁴⁹ Churchill now turned once again to Roosevelt and in a detailed telegram, on 7 October, stated clearly and precisely the British objective in the Aegean and its relationship to the war; he asked Eisenhower to approve the diversion of enough troops and supplies to insure the

46. Walker and Smith, pp. 90-134; Detailed description of the operation against Kos, it is also provided in J. Lodwick, The Filibusters: The Story of the Special Boat Service, London 1947, pp. 56-61; Wilson, pp. 178ff; Chr. Buckler, Five Ventures: Iraq, Syria, Persia, Madagascar, Dodecanese, London 1977, pp. 216-225; H.M. Wilson, Eight Years Overseas, 1939-47, London 1948, pp. 178ff.

47. Cabinet Office, No. 42, (D162/3), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 20; Molony, p. 545.

48. Cabinet Office, No. 42, (D162/3), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 20; Eham, p. 545.

49. Eisenhower Papers, vol. III, No. 1319(3464), p. 1487; Matloff, pp. 254-5; Eham, p. 94; Walker and Smith, p. 69.

capture of Rhodes and the other Dodecanese Islands.⁵⁰

Churchill claimed that:

it will be found that the Italian and Balkan peninsulas are militarily and politically united and that really it is one theater with which we have to deal. It may, indeed, not be possible to conduct a successful Italian campaign, ignoring what happens in the Aegean ...⁵¹

The President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff based their views on the decisions taken at Washington and Quebec, but stipulated that "no division of forces or equipment should prejudice "Overlord" as planned."⁵² Churchill persisted and cabled the President on 9 October,⁵³ but the President who was not impressed by this operation remarked on 9 October:

Strategically, if we get the Aegean Islands, I ask myself where do we go from there, and vice versa where would the Germans go if for some time they retain possession of the islands?⁵⁴

50. Cabinet Office, No. 53, (438), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 25; Ehram, p. 94-5.

51. Cabinet Office, No. 53, (438), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 25; Churchill, vol. V., pp. 210-1; Ehram, p. 95; Matloff, p. 254; Molony, p. 545.

52. Cabinet Office, No. 54, (379), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 26; Eisenhower's Papers, vol. III, No. 1323, (9562), p. 1492; Ehram, p. 96; Churchill, vol. V., 1951, p. 212; Matloff, pp. 228-9.

53. Cabinet Office, No 58, (445), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 29.

54. Cabinet Office, No. 57, (381), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 28; Churchill, vol V, p. 210-15; Bryant, vol. 1, 1986, pp. 30-2; Matloff, pp. 226-9; Ehram, pp. 97-8; Churchill, vol. V., pp. 190-1.

At the Conference at La Mars in Tunis on 9 October

Churchill's last hope for an Aegean campaign came to an end.

At this conference the American position was made clear:

our resources in the Mediterranean are not large enough to undertake the capture of Rhodes and at the same time secure our immediate objectives in Italy. We must then choose between Rome and Rhodes. To us, it is clear that we must concentrate on the Italian campaign. We therefore recommend that "Accolade" be postponed until such time as weather conditions and availability of forces make the operation a reasonable undertaking.⁵⁵

Churchill then tried to get Stalin's assistance since any operation that would open the Straits was of enormous importance to Russia.⁵⁶ Stalin, consequently, was more agreeable.⁵⁷ At the Teheran Conference in November 1943, however, Stalin reversed his position and supported General Eisenhower's decision to give priority to the Normandy invasion.⁵⁸

Despite this turn of events, the Middle East Command decided on 11 October to hold on to Leros and Samos.⁵⁹ British

55. Cabinet Office, No. 68, vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 34; Eisenhower's Papers, vol. III, N. 1328, (686-687), p. 1497; Ehram, p. 99; Matloff, p. 258; Molony, p. 545; Gilbert, p. 526.

56. Matloff, p. 229.

57. Churchill, vol. V, pp. 271-2.

58. Churchill, vol. V, p. 288.

59. Walker and Smith pp. 135-53; Buckler, pp. 226-43; Lodwick, pp. 62-8; Willis, Supplement to the London Gazette, 1948, p. 5373.

occupation of these islands, as Wilson reported to Churchill, depended "on continued Turkish cooperation."⁶⁰ Whereas the capture of the Dodecanese had originally been designed to prevent similar action by the Turks; Turkish cooperation was now necessary to secure their possession. On 19 October the three Allied Foreign Ministers met in Moscow and they agreed that "Turkey should enter the war on the side of the United Nations before the end of 1943 ... and that Turkey should be asked to give all possible aid to the United Nations..."⁶¹

On 7 November the Turks refused to permit the British to operate from Turkish soil which delayed operations in the Aegean.⁶² The remainder of the campaign in the Dodecanese was a repetition of the evacuation of Krete. On 12 November the Germans attacked Leros and on the 16th the island fell and with it the British plans for using the Dodecanese as a base for a Balkan invasion.⁶³ Samos was evacuated three

60. Cabinet Office, No. 70, (I23724/10, CIC/133), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 35 and No. 78, p. 38, and No. 114, p. 53; Ehram, p. 100.

61. Ehram, pp. 101; Churchill, vol. V, pp. 345-6; Woodward, vol. IV, p. 140-3; Matloff, pp. 259-62.

62. On British negotiations with Turkey see: Churchill, vol. V, pp. 219-26, 285-89, 334-35; Ehram, pp. 99-103; Willis, p. 5379.

63. The codenames for the German operations against Leros and Samos were "Leopard" and Poseidon." War Diaries, part C, vol. 50, p. 105; Churchill, vol. V, pp. 223-4. For German plans on operations against the Dodecanese see: War Diaries, vol. 49, September 1943, vol. 50, October 1943, vol. 51, November 1943; Cabinet Office, No. 125, p. 58 and

days later and the British garrison of Kastelorizo withdrew on 27 November.⁶⁴

Churchill, despite this set back, still insisted on an operation in the Aegean to take place after the capture of Rome. Therefore, five days after the fall of Leros, he stated that

The center point of my thought is the capture of Rome at the beginning of January and the capture of Rhodes at the end For the latter two requisites are necessary: first, a declaration of war by Turkey and the use of the Turkish base. Second, a good British division to be landed in the first wave, to be backed up and followed by [an] Indian as the second wave. These divisions need to be fully equipped with transport, etc ... How much landing craft will be needed?⁶⁵

In his study of First World War, The World in Crisis, Churchill commented that "we cannot undo the past, but we are bound to pass it into review in order to draw such lessons as may be applicable to the future".⁶⁶ It is not difficult to judge Churchill's motives behind the British strategy in the Aegean. It is possible that he was encouraged by certain events in 1943: the destruction of the Axis powers in North Africa, the capture of Sicily, and the

No. 132, (IZ4415/17 CIC/189), vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 61 and No. 131, p. 61.

64. Cabinet Office, No. 133, vol. 4, Hist. (B) 12, p. 61; Churchill, vol. V, p. 223; Buckley, pp. 240-42.

65. Churchill, vol. V, pp. 598-9.

66. Ehram, p. 103.

collapse of Italy. Finally, it may have been his sheer enthusiasm for victory and the desire to preserve the British Empire. He believed that "audacity would be rewarded on this occasion as had been the case many times before". As Churchill said at the time:

Here is a business of great consequence to be thrust forward by every means I hope the Staffs will be able to stimulate action which may gain immense prizes.⁶⁷

Edwin Parker has concluded "that the campaign in the Aegean was a defeat, it is obvious and cannot be denied." The price of this failure was high.⁶⁸ The Army suffered 5,046 casualties, the Royal Navy lost six destroyers, and one submarine, and six destroyers and four cruisers were also damaged, as well as a number of smaller craft were either lost or damaged. The R.A.F. reported 100 aircraft destroyed and 25 damaged.

In 1943, consequently, Churchill was attempting, with limited forces, to develop an offensive in the Balkans by way of the Aegean and then through the Greek mainland to the Danubian plain. Churchill's strategy was inspired by the successful Balkan offensive of 1918 that was instrumental in bringing about the collapse of the Central Powers. In 1943 the fault may not have been with the strategy but with the

67. Churchill, vol. V, p. 205; M. Howard, Grand Strategy, vol. IV, p. 489; Bryant, vol. 1, p. 49.

68. Walker and Smith, p. 268.

lack of adequate resources.

On 1 November 1943 Brooke noted in his diary:

When I looked at the Mediterranean, I realized only too well how far I have failed. If only I had sufficient force of character to swing those American Chiefs of Staff and make them see daylight, how different the war might be. We should have had the whole Balkans ablaze by now, and the war might have finished in 1943.⁶⁹

69. Bryant, vol. 1, pp. 56-59.

Conclusions and Analysis

The End of a Cycle: The Restoration of the Dodecanese Islands to Greece

Throughout the Second World War the Dodecanese represented an integral part of Britain's Mediterranean strategy.

During the 1930's and in the first year of the conflict the British avoided the issue of the Dodecanese as well as all other Greek territorial claims in order to secure Italian neutrality. After Mussolini committed himself to join Hitler in the war, the British were free to manipulate the issue of the Dodecanese to suit their own policy objectives. In this respect the fate of the islands became intertwined with British plans and strategies aimed at the southeastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The wishes of the Greek government during the war, or for that matter those of the islanders themselves, were of secondary importance. Official British policy regarding Greek territorial claims was based on the premise that all boundary disputes and adjustments had to be examined within the framework of a general postwar settlement. This policy enabled the British to deflect the repeated requests of the Greek government-in-exile for some type of commitment with respect to Greek territorial demands. On the other hand, the British attempted on several occasions to use the islands as a means of inducing Turkey to enter the war on the side of the Allies or at least to permit the British

access to Turkish bases from which to strike at the Axis in the Aegean.

Coincidentally, the Germans had also held out the Dodecanese as a reward to the Turks in exchange for their entry into the Axis fold. The Turkish government, however, hedged its bets and despite the potential aggrandizement offered by both sides they chose to remain neutral; a policy that ultimately worked against them in the postwar settlement. In the interim period the Foreign Office kept bringing up the offer of some or all of the islands in exchange for Turkish belligerence on behalf of the Allies.

Initially the British had offered Rhodes to Turkey and the rest of the islands to Greece¹ and until September of 1945 the British believed that Kastelorizo should be given to Turkey². The intensity of Turkish-Soviet relations over the Straits issue from 1945-46, however, forced the British to reconsider this option. The British feared that a claim to Kastelorizo and Simi by the Turks would have also encouraged the Russians to ask for a revision of the status quo in the Straits.³ Another factor that worked against Turkey was her refusal in November 1943 to let the Allies use her

1. A. Alexandris, Oi Ellinotourkikes Scheseis 1923-87, Athens 1988, p. 115.

2. D.B.F.P., Overseas, Series I, vol. II., 1945, pp. 247-8.

3. Foreign Relations of the United States (1946), Washington 1974, p. 173.

airfields, whereas Greece had joined the war on the side of the Allies.

By 1945 the Americans had come to the conclusion that the islands belonged to Greece and in February 1945 the United States Senate introduced a resolution stating that northern Epirus and the Dodecanese should be awarded to Greece.⁴ By this time both the American and British governments believed that the restoration of the islands to Greece would be of tremendous help to the Greek government and that it would enable it to resist the establishment of a communist regime.⁵

The Italian government, furthermore, had no objections to the cession of the Dodecanese to Greece and deemed such a solution as being in accordance with the principles of justice that reflected the policy of the new democratic Italy.⁶ On 26 September 1943, Count Sforza, the leader of Free Italian Movement, stated that "when I speak of the national integrity of Italy, I admit that the Dodecanese were never an integral part of our country ... the free Italy of tomorrow will gladly cede the Dodecanese to the Greek nation."⁷

4. Xydis, p. 273 and p. 627 (n. 22).

5. Alexandris, p. 116.

6. Xydis, pp. 214-15.

7. N.G. Mavris, Einai O Comis Sforza Phillelinas?, New York 1944, p. 8; Tsouderos Archives, File II, pp. 40 and 83; The

Signor de Gasperi in a note to the Greek Minister in Rome, Mr. Exindaris, indicated that:

Far be it from us to entertain any objection towards the restoration of these islands to Greece. We consider this solution as fully in accordance with the principles of justice which guide the policy of new democratic Italy. I have, therefore, the fervent hope that this solution erasing the fundamental cause of dissention between the two nations, will result in a clearer and mutually beneficial understanding and will enable the two peoples to work together in peaceful reciprocity.⁸

The Italians realized that they had to accept the loss of the islands and Albania to avoid being isolated diplomatically or prejudice their position with regards to their colonies in North Africa.⁹

Meanwhile the Turkish government continued to work behind the scenes in the hope of acquiring some or all of the Dodecanese. According to A. Alexandris, The Greek-Turkish competition in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean can be traced as far back as 1939.¹⁰ It was in July 1939, that the Turkish government suggested to the British that in the

New York Times, 27 September 1943.

8. S. Agapetides, I Dodekanesos eis ten Synthiki tes Eirinis, Athens 1947, p. 4.

9. Xydis, pp. 214-15.

10. A. Alexandris, "Turkish Policy towards Greece During Second World War and Its Impact on Greek-Turkish Detente", Balkan Studies, vol. 23, no. 1, (1981), p. 184.

event of an Anglo-Franco-Turkish victory the Turks could take possession of the Dodecanese.¹¹ In April 1941 the German ambassador in Ankara, von Papen, also offered the cession of some of the Dodecanese such as Kastelorizo to Turkey as a basis for a German-Turkish alliance.¹² In March 1942, during a meeting with the Yugoslav Ambassador in Ankara, the Secretary General of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Numan Menemencioglou, stated that Turkey was ready to occupy the Dodecanese if she was attacked by Germany.¹³

On the eve of the Churchill-Inonu meeting at Adana in January 1943 Rauf Orbay, the Turkish ambassador to the Court of King James, in a conversation with Emmanuel Tsouderos, referred to the possibility of restoring certain Mediterranean islands to Turkish sovereignty. Tsouderos interpreted this as another Turkish attempt to claim the Dodecanese.¹⁴ The Greeks also feared that at the Anglo-Turkish negotiations in Adana the annexation of the Dodecanese was Ankara's price for her participation in the Second World War.¹⁵ On 1 March 1943 in a conversation with

11. Alexandris, Balkan Studies, p. 184.

12. D.G.F.P., vol. VI, pp. 75-6; Em. Tsouderos, Diplomatika Paraskinia 1941-44, Athena 1950, p. 79; F.G. Weber, The Evasive Neutral, Germany, Britain and the Quest of a Turkish Alliance in the Second World War, Columbia 1979, pp. 82, 95.

13. B.P. Papadakis, Diplomatiki Istoria tou Ellinikou Ethnous, Athens, 1956, pp. 230-31.

14. FO 371/37224/464/19, FO 371/R942/464/19.

15. FO 371/R2128/1417; Tsouderos, p. 147.

Eden, Tsouderos pointed out the weakness of the Greek navy and urged that its strength be increased in order to safeguard Greek interests in the Aegean. Also Tsouderos expressed the wish that Greece might participate in the administration of these islands after their liberation.¹⁶

During the military operations against the Dodecanese, the British were obliged by Article 3 of the 1939 Anglo-Turkish Treaty of Mutual Assistance to permit Turkey the right to participate in an expedition against the Dodecanese. This was not applicable, however, as long as Turkey remained non-belligerent or if she entered into the war after an attack against the islands.¹⁷ Turkgeld, Acting Secretary General, in a conversation with Sir M. Peterson on 13 May 1945 expressed the view that Turkey was concerned about the disposal of the Dodecanese and especially of Leros, Kalymnos, Kos, Nisiros, and Simi, which as he claimed, were more or less in Turkish territorial waters. Kastelorizo, in particular, he believed belonged to Turkey.¹⁸

At this time, however, the Turks seemed to be more concerned with the postwar disposition of Cyprus than with Dodecanese. The Turkish government suspected that the British planned to

16. FO 371/R1873/1417, FO 371/R8098/464/19; Tsouderos Archive, File II, pp. 17-23, 81.

17. FO 371/R3765/753/G, FO 371/R2097/464/19, FO 371/R6426/464/19; Tsouderos, p. 147.

18. FO 371/8317/464/19.

transfer the islands to Greece, as a reward for Greek participation in the War.¹⁹ As a result of this, the Turkish government tried to make the best of a bad situation and on March 1943 ambassador Orbay informed the Greek ambassador in London, A. Agnides, that as long as the Greek government remained on friendly terms with Turkey there would no objections to the annexation of the Dodecanese by Greece.²⁰ A few months later (on 26 August 1943) Rauf Orbay stated to Roussos, the Greek vice premier, and to Exindaris that Turkey did not wish to make any claim to the Archipelago²¹ and his government would not oppose its restoration to Greece.²² Also on 31 July 1943 the Turkish ambassador, Akaygen, assured Papandreou that it was official Turkish policy not to have any territorial claims and that Turkey had no objection to the patriation of the islands to their friend and Ally Greece.²³ On the other hand, the Turkish foreign minister, Fedridum Cemal Erkin, unofficially told the representatives of Britain and the United States that the people of Turkey were disappointed over the restoration of the "Ege Adalari" to Greece since these islands had been Turkish from the sixteenth century until

19. Xydis, pp. 16-17; Weber, pp. 117-20.

20. Xydis, pp. 25; Alexandris, Balkan Studies, p. 186.

21. FO 371/R8135/464/19.

22. Xydis, pp. 25, 62.

23. Xydis, p. 40.

taken over by Italy in 1912.²⁴

On the diplomatic front, most of the activity advocating the restoration of the islands to Greece was carried on by the Dodecanesian Committees in New York, London, and Alexandria. Copies of a memorandum of 9 May 1943, at the fifth Dodecanesian Council, concerning the eventual union of the Dodecanese with Greece were sent to Churchill.²⁵ In addition, copies of correspondence by the Dodecanesian National Council in New York (on 27 May and on 5 June) concerning the status of the Dodecanese were sent to Lord Halifax.²⁶ In the spring of 1945 the mayor of Stampalia and the people of Kasos sent copies of declarations to the Allies proclaiming their union with Greece.²⁷ A report by the BBC on 12 May 1945 stated that the Greek prime minister, Admiral Voulgaris, telegraphed Churchill asking for the immediate annexation of the Dodecanese to Greece.²⁸

At the Council of Foreign Ministers, during the Paris Peace Conference, there was considerable disagreement over the Dodecanesian issue. S. Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister insisted that a decision on the Dodecanese should be

24. Alexandris, p. 118.

25. FO 371/R5807/464/19; FO371/R8496/464/19.

26. FO 371/R5244/464/19; FO 371/R1523/2/43.

27. FO 371/R9689/210/19.

28. FO 371/R8959/210/19; FO 371/8795/ 188/19.

insisted that a decision on the Dodecanese should be postponed until the Allies settled the fate of the Italian colonies.²⁹ James Byrnes, the American secretary of state, brought to Churchill's attention a report in a newspaper that the Russians were demanding a military base in the Dodecanese.³⁰ He recalled that at the Council of foreign ministers it had been agreed by all concerned that the Dodecanese should be handed back to Greece. Furthermore, with the exception of the Soviets, all agreed that the Dodecanese should be demilitarized.³¹ The Soviets, in effect, wished to gain control over Tripolitania or over some of Dodecanese islands, in particular Rhodes, to protect their commercial interests in the Mediterranean.³² Molotov tried to achieve a separate agreement with Greece over the Dodecanesian issue and on 3 March Ambassador Rodionov, in a conversation with Premier Sofoulis, discussed the possibility of a Soviet base on the Dodecanese (most likely in Rhodes) to be used by the Russian merchant fleet for fueling and refitting.³³

Molotov, as the British feared, was delaying the resolution

29. Byrnes, p. 94 and 97.

30. FO 371/20914/188/19; Byrnes, pp. 74-77; The New York Times, 11 November 1945.

31. Byrnes, p. 278.

32. FO 371/ 20914/188/19; The New York Times, 14 January 1946; D.B.F.P., Series I, vol. II, 1945, p. 194-6.

33. The New York Times, 4 March 1946; Xydis, p. 182-3.

of the Dodecanesian issue hoping that the outcome of the Greek elections would bring a government more friendly to the Soviet Union.³⁴ Byrnes, however, pointed out that Soviet bases in Tripolitania or in the Dodecanese would threaten Britain's position in the southeastern Mediterranean as well as pose a danger to Greece and Turkey.³⁵ Suddenly (on 15 June) Molotov changed his mind and agreed to the restoration of the Dodecanese to Greece on the condition that they would be demilitarized. According to Dixon, Molotov changed his attitude concerning the islands on 23 June after a long session of the Council of Ministers. At the end of the day, according to Dixon, Byrnes jokingly said: "as we are in an agreeing mood how about settling the Dodecanese." Molotov at once said: "I agree."³⁶ The volt face of the Russian minister was not uncharacteristic. On previous occasions Molotov had suddenly agreed on something to which he had previously resisted. Dixon has commented that: "This was the Russian way of agreeing at the last moment on a point which they had held on for months."³⁷

34. FO 371/16290/188/19; D.B.F.P., Series I, vol. II, 1945, p. 247.

35. Byrnes, p. 278-79; The New York Times, 14 April 1946.

36. P. Dixon, Double Diploma: The Life of Sir Pierson: Don and diplomat, London 1968, p. 217; Byrnes, p. 279; Xydis, pp. 221-22.

37. Dixon, p. 217.

The question which must be asked, however, is why did the British finally agree to the restoration of the Dodecanese Greece? The obvious argument is that since the population of the archipelago was Greek and that since Greece had remained Britain's staunch ally it was only fitting that the islands would be awarded to the Greeks. On the other hand, the same case was made by the Greek government for Cyprus and northern Epirus but neither region was given to Greece. Furthermore, the Hellenic composition of the Dodecanese did not inhibit the British from offering some or all of the islands to Turkey during the course of the war. Here again it can be argued that Britain was acting in desperation and needed Turkish support against the Axis in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, but in the postwar period this was no longer the case.

The British, however, still required the cooperation of the Turks since that country had the capability of controlling the Straits which had been strategically significant in the past as a means of isolating the Russian fleet in the Black Sea, but at the dawn of the Cold War it was equally vital to contain Soviet encroachments in the Middle East. Perhaps this was the rationale for denying Cyprus to the Greeks and not offending Turkish susceptibilities with regards to this particular island. Maintaining Cyprus as a British colony was less offensive to Greece and Turkey than awarding the island to either party.

The Dodecanese, unlike Cyprus, had been occupied by the Italians who represented the other half of the Axis partnership. In the aftermath of the war, the Italian government was willing to give up the islands not only because Italy was defeated but as a means of proving its non-fascist credentials. In exchange, the Italians hoped that the Allies would let them keep some of their territories in Africa. This policy was imminently more plausible since the Dodecanese were demanded by the Greeks who had fought on the side of Britain and could raise a storm of protest if the islands reverted to Italian control. Consequently, once the Italian possession of the Dodecanese was eliminated it automatically meant that someone had to take possession of the islands. This was not the case with Cyprus or Northern Epirus.

Ultimately, it came down to a choice of dividing the islands between the Greeks and Turks or restoring the entire archipelago to Greece. The former option may have been possible, if not entirely acceptable to the Greeks, since it had the merit of partially satisfying both Greek and Turkish aspirations. The latter option, at least, had the benefit of appeasing the Greeks for not receiving Cyprus and northern Epirus. The final consideration that led to the restoration of the Dodecanese to Greece was probably that the British and Americans had to deal with the problem that

postwar Greek governments faced a continuous and effective communist threat that might have brought that country within the Soviet sphere. Denying the Dodecanese to Greece would have jeopardized the credibility of every postwar Greek government and given the communists a powerful propaganda tool, who thus far had been on the defensive over Greek territorial issues.

During the course of the occupation, the policy of the Greek Communist Party (Kommounistiko Komma Ellados KKE) regarding Greek territorial claims was confused as a result of the decision taken in 1924 to recognize an independent Macedonian state.³⁸ This decision was perceived by the Greek population to be against the interest of Greece and plagued the KKE throughout the years of the occupation. The extant communists literature from this period avoided any specific references to Greek territorial claims, except in broad and general terms. The question of Macedonia was played down while communist policy towards northern Epirus was essentially based on the notion that the people of this region had to decide their fate. As far as Cyprus and the Dodecanese were concerned, the communists faced no ideological or political dilemma. The Greek claim on Cyprus, a British crown colony, and the Dodecanese, a possession of defeated Italy, received the unqualified

38. C.M. Woodhouse, The Struggle for Greece 1941-49, London 1976, pp. 101-1.

support of the KKE.³⁹

In the wake of the December uprising and the volatile political situation that afflicted Greece after 1945, the failure to address any territorial claims would have discredited all Greek political leaders and ensured a greater base of support for the communist cause. The Dodecanese, in particular, with the exception of Cyprus, represented the easiest and least contentious territorial claim that the Greek communists could champion and manipulate against their opponents in Greece by bringing into disrepute the western allies and by showing that they had betrayed Greece. A communist victory in Greece would have threatened British and American interests not only in the southeastern Mediterranean but would have provided the Soviets with a foothold in the Middle East. On 15 August 1945 the British Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, forwarded a memorandum to the War Office in which he outlined the significance of the archipelago by indicating that it was imperative for Britain to "prevent any unfriendly power from obtaining access to the Eastern Mediterranean. The strategic significance of the Dodecanese lies in the fact that they controlled the eastern sea lanes from the Aegean to the Mediterranean."⁴⁰

39. Xydis, p. 210 n. 488; D.G. Kousoulas, Revolt and Defeat; The Story of the Greek Communist Party, Oxford 1965, pp. 221-2.

40. FO 371/16715/188/G.

On 27 June 1946, consequently, the Council of Foreign Ministers formally decided on the award of the Dodecanese islands to Greece.⁴¹ The Treaty, however, was signed in Paris on 10 February 1947 and came into force on 15 September 1947.⁴² One reason for the delay may have been,

41. Before the islands were transferred to Greece, the British reached an agreement (on July 1946) with the Italians over the administration of the Dodecanese. Article 23 of this treaty stated that "the islands should be continued under their present administration." This administration, however, was British. (Great Britain, Accounts and Papers, "Draft Peace Treaty with Italy prepared by the Council of Foreign Ministers for Consideration by the Peace Conference of the twenty-one Nations in Paris on 29 July 1946"; 1945-6, (cmd. 6892), XXV, 431. The British Military Administration was under the direct authority of the British Commander-in-Chief, Middle East (H.M. Wilson, Eight Years Overseas, 1939-47, London 1958, p. 232.) It is useful to note some of the major proclamations issued by the British Military Administration. "Existing laws, customs, rights, and properties in the said territories would be fully respected..." (proclamation 1, article 3). "No right or privilege of the Fascist Party will be recognized, and no legal provision against race, religion will be enforced" (proclamation 1, article 6). The British Military Administration of the Dodecanese made another interesting innovation by abolishing the existing Italian Police Force and by establishing a new one recruited from the local population (proclamation 4). Proclamation 19 is addressed to the problem of housing for the homeless by the requisition of accommodations. The institution of the new civil courts was another proclamation (proclamation 25. T.L. Chrysanthopoulos, "The British and the Greek Military Occupations of the Dodecanese 1945-48," Revue Hellenique de Droit International, vols. 2-4 (April-December), 1949, pp. 227-330.

42. The principal issues that concerned the Dodecanese, were resolved at the Council of Foreign Ministers. These included: The cession of the islands to Greece; the delimitation of the boundaries of the ceded area; demilitarization; the nationality of the Italians; the disposition of Italian public and private property on the Dodecanese; damages suffered by the islanders; the return of historical monuments; the monetary exchange of the Italian lire for the Greek drachma. Agapetides, pp. 22ff.

in part, due to the fear of a communist victory in the Greek civil war. On 31 March 1947, Great Britain turned over the administration of the Dodecanese to the Greek government.⁴³

43. Some of the more interesting proclamations issued by the Greek Military Administration include; "As from 1200 hours of 31st March 1947, the Greek Government takes over the maintenance of public order and security as well as general police duties" (proclamation 1, article 1); "The existing civil, administrative and fiscal legislation, including taxation laws are retained in the Dodecanese with the exception of laws having a fascist or illiberal content or are contrary to Greek laws of public order or those abolished or modified by me (the military governor) because of insurmountable obstacles in the application of local legislation" (proclamation 1, article 2); "Greek penal and police laws are exclusively applied..." (proclamation 1, article 2, paragraph 2); "Civil and penal justice shall be rendered by civil and military courts to be appointed" (proclamation 1, article 3); "Under the restrictions of International Law... personal freedom, freedom of thought, the right to own property, the freedom of public meeting and association and all rights recognized by the Greek constitution are bestowed upon all the residents of the islands providing that these do not create any difficulties in maintaining the assurance of public order and the exercise of administration" (proclamation 1, article 4); "Civil and municipal servants as well as other public servants appointed during the Italian and British administrations who desire to continue their employment and who are considered fit to be retained in the service, may keep their positions under the condition that they take an oath to the effect that they will fulfil their duties lawfully and conscientiously..." (proclamation 1, article 6); L.T. Chrysanthopoulos, "The British and Greek Military Occupations of the Dodecanese 1945-48", Revue Hellenique de Droit International, 2-4, (April- December), 1949, pp. 230-36.

List of Abbreviations

CAB	Cabinet Papers
D.B.F.P.	Documents on British Foreign Policy
D.G.F.P.	Documents on German Foreign Policy
FO	Foreign Office
KKE	Kommounistiko Komma Ellados
L.S.T.	Landing Ship Transport
R.A.F.	Royal Air Force

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48342, 48343, 48344, 48391, 48437, 43741, 43774, 37224, 37225, 37226, 37248, 33165, 58886, 58887, 58888, 58920, 58948, 67023, 72259,

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