

An Australian Officer In Greece

By

COLONEL A. W. SHEPPARD

- British Army Aids Greek Fascism
- Fascists Sell U.N.R.R.A. Supplies
- British Secret Service Used Against Trade Unions.
- Torture — Imprisonment — Exile — Execution
- Greek Guerrillas
- How Democrats Can Help

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An Australian Officer In Greece

An expose of how Greece ceased to be the home of liberty and became a Police State; and particularly the part played in this by British Officialdom and British policy.

By Col. A. W. Sheppard

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CHAPTERS

1. THE POSITION IN 1945.
2. BRITISH OFFICIALDOM.
3. BRITISH FORCES IN GREECE.
4. ESPIONAGE AGENCIES AND THE POLICE STATE.
5. GREEK ARMY VERSUS THE REBELS.
6. ECONOMIC RECOVERY.
7. TRADE UNIONISM IN GREECE.
8. COURTS-MARTIAL.
9. SECURITY COMMITTEES AND PRISONS.
10. THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT.
11. A TEN-POINT PROGRAMME FOR RECOVERY.

The Author

Colonel A. W. Sheppard first went to Greece with the Australian Imperial Forces in 1941. During the evacuation from Greece he was in command of D Beach (Porto Rafti), and after some adventures there he went to Crete. He was awarded the Military Cross for bravery in Greece.

Early in 1945 he returned to Greece in charge of two Australian Relief Teams, and later transferred to U.N.R.R.A., where for more than 15 months he was O.I.C. Refugee Camps at Florina, Kozani and Sikhirokastron, and later O.I.C. U.N.R.R.A. Northern Greece clothing programmes.

In July, 1946, he was appointed Director of the Northern Greece office of the British Economic Mission, an appointment which he relinquished on his return to England on 6th March, 1947.

In the following pages Colonel Sheppard tells of some of his experiences and reactions in Greece.

FOREWORD

By GEORGE THOMAS, M.P.

The tragedy of modern Greece has dismayed and bewildered progressive people throughout the world. It provides a special challenge to the Labour and trade union movement of Great Britain, for this country has played a leading part in the drama of Greek history since 1944.

I particularly welcome this authoritative work by Colonel Sheppard, whose "inside" experience enables him to shed the light of truth on what is happening to our comrades in the "cradle of democracy." On no subject has it been harder to obtain a fair presentation of the case in the British press. With a few honourable exceptions, there has been a reluctance to give the story of the barbarism unleashed by the quisling Governments who have been maintained in power by the presence of British troops.

When I visited Greece in the early part of this year (1947) it was to be assured by all political parties—from the extreme Left to the extreme Right—that the presence of the British military forces and the various Missions were of incalculable advantage to the Government in power.

Since the Greek enterprise has cost the British taxpayer roughly £100,000,000 and also, at the time of writing (August, 1947), withholds thousands of our most able-bodied young conscripts, the people of Britain cannot avoid responsibility for the sort of Athens Government maintained in their name.

When it is also appreciated that Greece may well be the starting-point for a third world war, the importance of Colonel Sheppard's story receives its correct perspective. It may be noted that the same people who in 1938 asked, "What business is it of ours what happens in Czechoslovakia?" are now asking the same question of Greece. Since individual freedom and the rights of democracy are like peace, one and indivisible, we dare not remain indifferent to the Fascist tyranny which bludgeons our Greek comrades into revolt.

In my Greek travels I had abundant evidence of the savage cruelty practised by the Government against the trade union and Labour movement. In Athens I visited an overcrowded political prison. There was pathos in the eager trust which these helpless people placed in the activities of the Labour rank and file in Great Britain. Many of the prisoners were charged with activities against Hitler's Security Battalions during the occupation. Since some of the leading quisling collaborators are now in the Greek Government this is understandable!

In the Piraeus I met a young man in his early twenties; he was just out of hospital after the amputation of a leg as a result of being shot by a gendarme. This same gendarme had been to his house to arrest him during the occupation—for activities against the Nazis! The gendarme was still in the service of the Government.

When I left Athens to visit the Provinces, I found the only way to contact socialists or liberals was by using the underground movement that had been active during the war.

As all my movements were being shadowed by M.I.5 (British Espionage), I had to take measures to prevent bringing trouble to anyone giving me information. At that time I thought it was the Greeks who were shadowing me; I was to learn later that it had been the British all the time. So much for the freedom of movement of a British M.P. seeking to talk to the workers!

It was in the shadow of Mount Olympus that I contacted the guerrillas. For five days and nights I lived in the peasant homes of the mountains, sharing not only their hardships but their fellowship as well. The only time that I had any real sense of freedom was in these mountain villages. The young people gathered together to sing the songs of the Resistance Movement against Hitler. This was the first time for me to hear these songs, for it is forbidden to sing them in those parts under the control of the Athens Government.

The stories of the persecution with which I was regaled convinced me that the policy of the Government was creating guerrillas. Tyranny always produces its own antidote! Undoubtedly large numbers of the guerrilla forces would have been quietly pursuing their daily work had it not been for the ever-present fear and dread of sudden arrest, exile without trial, or even worse.

The Government of Greece is a Government of frightened men. They seek to keep themselves in power by crushing their people with the aid of foreign powers. The British Military Mission has been busily engaged in training the Greek conscripts to this end. Now that Britain can afford this luxury no longer, American dollars are pouring into Greece. The land where lynching of coloured men goes unpunished rushes to the defence of Greek democracy by helping to keep the tyranny in power.

Since June 17th, 1946, 399 political executions have taken place in Greece; 15 women have been sent to their death for political activities. Many thousands of the intellectuals of Greece have been exiled without trial. I am convinced that this is the way to breed communists and not to destroy them. It is a short-sighted and dangerous policy that drives even moderates to resort to extreme policies to defend themselves.

I believe that British troops should be withdrawn; that the frontiers of Greece should be guaranteed by U.N.O.; that an effective amnesty should be given to all who have resisted the Greek Government and that a new and broader-based Government is essential to the well-being of that troubled land. All these are possible only when the free peoples of the great democracies awaken to their responsibility for what is done in their name.

This pamphlet by Colonel Sheppard should be studied with care by all who take their duties of citizenship seriously. It is a most revealing indictment of fascism at its worst.

INTRODUCTION

When I returned to Greece in 1945 it was quite obvious that British prestige had fallen from the level it enjoyed in 1941; but an Australian or New Zealander received a great welcome. The events of December, 1944, still rankled everywhere, not only in the breasts of left-wing followers, and I was told tales of how British and Indian troops had been led into doing things which must have been very distasteful to them.

I was told also how Lord, then Sir Walter, Citrine, when he visited Greece in 1945, had been allotted an interpreter (Miss Kriszeis), who hated E.L.A.S. because her uncle had been killed in the 1944 civil war.

Later, as a fellow Australian, I had talks with Sir Reginald Leeper, then H.M. Ambassador to Greece. My war-time experiences brought me into touch with senior Greek Service officers, and my rank and appointment kept me in touch with British officers. My job was with the common people, so I heard and saw every point of view. The mixed picture made me determined to keep away from Greek politics, and I did so until sights of sheer brutality forced me to come to certain conclusions. But even now I can say that I did not interfere in politics in Greece, and I kept my criticism of British and Greek policy until I had relinquished my official appointment and was no longer a guest in a place I love so much.

As I have hoped that a Labour Government could and would do something to change the state of affairs, particularly where our own foreign policy is to blame, I have criticised only in meetings organised within the Labour or Trade Union movement, of which I have been an active worker, in Australia, for 17 years. I do not think that the fact that U.S.A. has now taken over the major direction of Greece means that Britain cannot do much to change things there. We have a strong, although reactionary, Embassy there, a Police Mission, a Military Mission, an Air Force Mission, a Naval Mission, an Army and a Member on the Currency Control Committee which has power of veto over all government expenditures.

Having seen how much one can be at the mercy of an interpreter, I decided very early that I must master the language, and in that I had fair success.

Let me add finally, that I am not and have never been a Communist.

London, July, 1947

A. W. SHEPPARD

CHAPTER ONE.

THE POSITION IN 1945.

In 1945, Greece needed peace, stability, economic reconstruction and a wide circle of friends who would help her and not fight over her prostrate body. There is no need for me to go into details of destruction: that is for a larger survey than this. But it is important to compare the economic position then with the position today. It will be found that there has not been the slightest improvement. In fact, there has been definite deterioration.

In 1945, unemployment was 18 per cent., in April, 1947, it was 29 per cent. Communications of all kinds have deteriorated until they are practically non-existent. Since 1945, the drachma has depreciated from 600 to 20,000 to the £ sterling. The cost of living in December, 1946, as compared with March, 1945, shows a rise of 34 per cent., and in Salonica from January to May, 1947, there was a further rise of almost 10 per cent. Greece is heading for the abyss, and only unity and reconciliation can save her.

CHAPTER TWO.

BRITISH OFFICIALDOM.

As in most countries, the British Embassy is the bulwark of conservatism and reaction. The few ex-servicemen employed there are those who were liaison officers with the E.D.E.S.* group in Greece or with Mihailovitch in Yugoslavia. Some of the best-known officials are Lt.-Col. Mathews, formerly political adviser to General Scobie—a Levantine who has been mixing in Greek politics for many years; Balfour, one time a monk on Mt. Athos, and Major Clive, a very young man who, as head of the Political Department in Athens, controls the secret service organisations. These people have all been open in their interference in Greek political affairs in favour of the Royalist or anti-left groups.

Then in Northern Greece you had Mr. E. H. Peck, Vice-Consul (Acting Consul-General and later Consul), who told Mr. N. N. Dodds, M.P., that there was no such thing as a Labour foreign policy; Mr. Hill, Vice-Consul at Florina, who was either born in Yugoslavia or had spent many years there, had been a British agent with the Chetnik forces and who speaks Macedonski; and Mr. Christos Halkias, Smyrna-born Greek, Vice-Consul at Salonica, who was always hopeful of earning the approbation of his superiors.

Prior to coming to Greece, Mr. Peck had been in Turkey, where he spent a pleasant war, and before that in Barcelona, where, as he often told us, he

"put many a spoke in the wheel of the International Brigade" and "helped ensure that Britain's policy favoured Franco."

On one occasion Mr. Peck came to the Labour Centre (Trades Council) in Salonica with me, at my request, to see what sort of people they were. But he made me promise first that I would not tell Mr. Halkias, for Mr. Halkias would not like him to visit such a place. But all that these dreadful radicals asked for was reduced fees at the British Council English classes, the loan of a few British Army tents and a suggestion from British sources that it would be a good idea for the Minister of Supply to appoint a Trades Union representative to sit on the Supply Committee, which controlled distribution of U.N.R.R.A. rations and clothing. The last two could not be done without knowledge getting to the ears of Mr. Halkias, so even though the Army delivered the tents, they were withdrawn after Mr. Halkias had stated that there might be a danger of the children being indoctrinated with communism if the Trades Council was allowed to run a camp by the sea, as they had done in pre-war years.

Mr. Peck was unwilling to oppose Halkias because he feared that it might be said that he was showing Left-wing tendencies and such of course would "ruin my future in the Diplomatic Service."

When he went to see what had happened at Mandalos on 26th November, 1946, he told me that the Right-wing newspaper reports were incorrect. But in his weekly report written a few days afterwards he repeated those press reports. When I asked him why he did not report the truth as he had told it to me he replied: "There are enough people making propaganda for the Left; why should I?" He was unwilling to visit Zyrovrisi to see how the Right-wing murdered the Left. Each week he repeated as fact the allegations made by the various Greek military authorities, mainly to cover up their own weaknesses, as to aid being given to the rebels by Yugoslavia and Albania. When he and Halkias were made members of the British section of the U.N.O. Investigation Commission, liberal people in Salonica, who knew of his activities, said: "He is going on to the Commission to justify his own reports."

Mr. Hill, on the other hand, had a different role to play; but I am prevented by the Official Secrets Act from disclosing what Mr. Knight, Consul-General at Salonica, and Mr. Peck told a conference at the Consulate-General in September, were his duties. (Incidentally, this started a heresy-hunt, for his duties were supposed to be kept a dark secret.) Likewise, I am prevented from disclosing what was said in October at a similar meeting (Mr. Knight was not present) concerning Communist allegations against Hill, Peck and Peck's landlord, a naturalised Greek who had come from Albania not many years before the war, that they were engaged in putting anti-Hodja and anti-Tito agents across the border from Florina. The order to close the Vice-Consulate at Florina was sent out the day following the publication of the intention to send a U.N.O. Investigation Commission to Greece, and Mr. Hill left by plane for England before the Commission started its work.

About the work of other people with many of whom I had perforce to collaborate, I am prevented from speaking by the Official Secrets Act.

CHAPTER THREE.

THE BRITISH FORCES IN GREECE.

During 1945 and 1946 we had two Divisions of the British Army, some R.A.F. with a R.A.F. Mission and elements of the Mediterranean Fleet in Greece. There was also a British Military Mission of considerable strength, under command of a Major-General with a large staff, whose job it was to reorganise, equip and train the Royal Greek Army. It was always recognised that those training an Army were combatants, so how can it be claimed that this Mission is now non-combatant? At the end of February, 1947, the forces had been reduced to approximately 16,000 men, apart from the Mission.

Those forces are a great help to the Greek Army in fighting against the rebels. Firstly they are deployed in such a way as to release the maximum possible number of Greek soldiers to fight against the rebel Army; secondly, they are placed near Concentration Camps for Left-wing prisoners. For example, the awful Pavlo Melas Artillery Barracks in Salonica, where most of the Left-wing journalists and editors from Northern Greece can be found, is surrounded by British Army Workshops, Base Ordnance Depot, Staging Camp and Salvage Depot. On the remaining side there is a Greek Army training school. Our soldiers guard their own depots and have orders to shoot anyone trying to pass through them without authority. Thirdly, and this is more important still, on three occasions to my certain knowledge (and there were others of which I heard reports from British officers), British units were sent on reconnaissance marches, just to "show the flag," in areas in which they could cause the maximum inconvenience to the rebel forces, at a time when those forces were engaged with the Greek Army.

On one occasion the Armoured Unit in Salonica (name not disclosed for security reasons) made a trek from Salonica to beyond Kilikis, just after 44 Left-wing supporters had been murdered by Royalists at Zyrovrisi. On two occasions a British Infantry Battalion sent out columns of Company strength on the road from Edessa to Florina and slightly beyond. On both occasions the rebels were being pushed by the Greek Army and wanted to deploy near Kaimaktsalan. In doing this the lives of British soldiers were put into jeopardy. No instructions had been issued to the Commander as to what action was to be taken if they were fired upon, and according to Army custom the decision would have fallen to the officer in command on the spot, a Major. A battle might have ensued to "uphold the prestige of British arms." But the rebels had been instructed that under no circumstances were they to make any contact with British troops "even at the cost of their own lives" for fear that they might be the cause of starting an action against British troops.

If I were asked what about the two British soldiers who were killed near Alexandroupolis in May, I would counter with two questions. Firstly, what were they doing in that area with a three-ton truck and other vehicles, for there were no British units in the neighbourhood; and, secondly, why has the matter been dropped so suddenly by the Tory press and even in Parliament? Why in fact has there been nothing more said since the investigation was made by Brigadier Steele, of the British Military Mission? For myself I do not believe that they were killed by the rebels. I know that there are elements

in the Greek Army and the Greek Government which would not let the lives of a few British soldiers stand in their way if they thought they could get the British troops into action against the rebels. I also remember Mr. Halkias, British Vice-Consul at Salonica, saying to a Greek, in the presence of the Chief of Staff to General Ventiris, that the British troops would not interfere in any way with the rebels unless the rebels attacked them first. To a Greek that might mean anything.

CHAPTER FOUR.

ESPIONAGE AGENCIES AND THE POLICE STATE.

These are very nasty terms, but I have thought for a long time and cannot find any others suitable to describe the activities of some of our special units in Greece. We were maintaining five such units in Greece until February of this year at least. One of their tasks was passing or rather assisting to pass over the border people opposed to Tito and Hodja. Many Greeks were aware of this and were very displeased about it, particularly if they wanted to resume trade with Yugoslavia as most of them did.

Despite questions in the House of Commons, there has not yet been a satisfactory explanation of the functions of the British Vice-Consul at Florina, who left Greece and his Consulate closed down within a few days after the appointment of the U.N.O. Commission to investigate the Greek border incidents.

Many of my poor friends in Northern Greece used to make money by "finding" documents for an organisation which went under the letters I.S.L.O. Sometimes these documents were really stolen from Greek offices, sometimes they were written for the purpose of sale. But they were invariably accepted at face value and sent back to the Foreign Office at Whitehall as proof of the activities of the Communists. How silly we grown-up British people sometimes are. Many of our agents started off with decent intentions; but that sort of work soon breeds in some people a certain outlook which is destructive of all decencies and they must sell themselves. There was not one of our Missions or Departments in Greece but had its representatives from one of the five "intelligence" or "special" departments. I have seen and benefited from the normal Army intelligence services in war and I have no criticism of such intelligence as an Army needs; but I have no hesitation in saying, from my own knowledge, that these agencies were not working for ordinary military intelligence; they were working, directly or indirectly, for a special department of the Foreign Office and their only duties were to report upon and investigate activities of Left-wing elements. Investigation often meant positive action. Positive action meant acting in concert with extreme Right-wing elements, and it is for that reason that most Greeks think, however wrongly, that the British were participating actively in, or at any rate knew and approved of, the enormously large and inhuman exiling of political opponents, torture whilst awaiting exile, or death following trial by court-martial and general suppression of a kind which one had learned to associate with Nazi Germany.

Greece today is a police state. I had many experiences which showed me that in every hotel and large block of flats, every large factory or place of

employment and in every street, there was a security officer who was responsible only to the Minister of Public Security or his representatives. They were not even responsible to the Commander of the Gendarmerie, and through him to the Military Commander. It is a little-known fact that the Gendarmerie have been under command of the Military Forces for the past 12 months. But martial law has not been declared because, as M. Rodopoulos, Governor-General of Northern Greece, told me, "It would look as if there was not liberty in Greece." But what is martial law if it does not mean command of civil forces by military forces and the trial of offences by court-martial instead of by ordinary civil courts, i.e., as in Greece today.

I finish this chapter with an apt quotation from the speech of Mr. Bevin in the Commons on 15th May, 1947: "It does not matter how many elections you have, if you have a powerful secret police operated by a single Minister, which can inculcate fear into the people; you have no democracy and you are not within miles of it." I agree entirely with Mr. Bevin in that respect, and when I heard that he had said that I thought for a moment that he had read some of my reports on Greece or those of any other liberally-minded person who knows Greece.

CHAPTER FIVE.

THE GREEK ARMY VERSUS THE REBELS.

Readers of the daily press will have been struck by the number of times that the Royal Greek Army has reported that it had all the rebel forces surrounded and on the point of destruction. But they always seem to forget to report the final results of the operations. A highlight was a report in the "Daily Telegraph" on 18th May after its Special Correspondent had reported for several days running that the rebels were all surrounded and then, at the end of a dispatch reporting the continued surrounding and mopping up of the rebels, disclosed that the rebels had blown up the main bridge behind the Royal Greek Army. A stout effort for a force which was surrounded!

The truth of the situation is that the Greek Army will never destroy the rebels on their own, and that is why it wants to embroil the British Army. It is not because the Greek soldier is not a good fighter—anyone who has fought with him, as I have, knows that he is excellent material, and the same could have been said of the Greek officers who used to be in the Army—now in retirement, exile or living in abject poverty in Athens. But the heart of the Greek soldier is not in this fight against his brothers, generally against those he knows to have fought best against the Germans. Hence the continuous courts-martial for soldiers who refused to fight. No fewer than 28 soldiers have been shot during the past year, and more than 230 sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for refusing to fire on the rebels. Only by mobilising the dregs of humanity, which can be found in any country which has been under German occupation, could the Army get together the firing squads which have already shot 364 good Greeks since June last year for the offence of fighting for liberty.

There are three grades in the Greek Army today. Grade A comprises those people who can be trusted implicitly to carry out the orders of the Government; Grade B are those who are known to be liberal in sentiment but who

will not take any action against the Government; and Grade C are those who are known to be Left-wing in political views and who might not be loyal to the present Government. Grade B can rise to the rank of sergeant, but must serve under a selected officer. Grade C can have no rank whatsoever and must serve under specially-selected N.C.O.'s and officers.

Just to give an example as to how the Army operates—it will appeal especially to those who have had military experience—I will recount an incident which I remember very clearly. It was September, 1946, and I was returning from Athens to Salonica by road and decided to go around the back of Western Macedonia, right into the rebel country from Trikkala, Kalabaka, to Grevena, then on to Kozani and home to Salonica. When I got to Trikkala I found a long column of Greek Army vehicles (incidentally, as I reported, the vehicles still had British Army unit signs painted on them). I saw the Major in command sitting under a tree in the square, surrounded by civilians and soldiers, and heard him discussing the route to be followed. I told him that I was going over the same route and he suggested that I should go with him, for safety. He told me that he would travel for a few hours in daylight, camp for the night in some suitable spot, and then go on towards Grevena in the morning.

I told him that such would not do for me, as I wanted to spend the night in Grevena, to which he replied that he would not spend a night in Grevena for fear of having his throat cut. During the conversation I said to him, perhaps not too tactfully, "Surely, you are not going to chase the rebels in three-ton trucks full of equipment. That looks like most of a Battalion equipment to me." He said, "Yes, it is, and on British scale, too. We drew it only last week, and you don't think I would be silly enough to leave it behind in Larissa and have some other Battalion steal it. No, sir, where we go, it goes, typewriters, desks and all."

So, after this publicity, I was not surprised when I got to the spot where they were going to camp for the night to see all the trees bearing notices from the rebels such as, "Democratic soliders of X Bn., come to us and fight against the real enemies of the people." "Save your bullets for the fascists."

Incidentally, on 26-27 September, 1946, these two companies burned down eight houses in the village of Gria, on the road to Grevena, because, they said, the occupants were communists. Gria had been 100 per cent. destroyed by the Germans and U.N.R.R.A. had restored 12 houses a short time before.

Yes, the Greek Army is extremely well armed now. They have been issued with the very latest British and American equipment, and they have been trained by efficient British officers and N.C.O.'s; but they are not winning, and in their latest communiques they are stressing that it will be a long fight, because the rebels are fighting for what is dearest to all men of spirit—liberty. I do not believe that you will ever crush a Greek who feels that his cause is just. The Germans did not do it and they tried hard enough. According to the "Times" of 25th June, 1947, the Greek Minister of Public Order announced that the rebels suffered 7000 casualties between 1st April, 1947, and 15th June, 1947. I do not believe this figure, but I have no figure from the Rebel Army H.Q. to put against it.

On 5th March, 1947, the Royalist Press in Athens alleged that the Rebels had suffered more than 3000 casualties up to that date. But all along we have been told that the Rebels were only a small force; generally the Greek Government said they were not 5000 strong. So if they suffered a total of 10,000 casualties and are still fighting so well that the Government admits that it will be a long-drawn-out affair, it must be a fact that the policy of the Government is driving more and more people to the hills every day, and that is

just what I have been trying to tell people ever since I arrived in the United Kingdom.

Basing myself upon my experiences as a soldier, and with knowledge of both adversaries, I repeat that the Greek Army will never crush the rebel movement, no matter what additional arms may be given to the Army and the Air Force, no matter how many more rocket-firing Spitfires we give them, and even if British troops are retained in the country and used to embarrass the rebels and to be so near concentration camps that the maximum number of Greek soldiers are released for actions against the rebels. No matter what you do for the Greek Army, it will never defeat the rebels, for the same reasons as the British Army could not defeat the American colonists in the War of Independence. It has been truly said that "thrice armed is he whose cause is just." Therefore the sooner all are united in pressing on the Greek Government a policy of national reconciliation, the better for all concerned.

CHAPTER SIX.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

Britain had sunk between £80,000,000 and £100,000,000 in Greece up to 31st March, 1947, and according to Press statements spent another £25,000,000 from that date until the Americans finally passed the loan for Greece. And yet it is admitted on all hands that Greece had not started to recover economically. Unemployment reached 29 per cent. on 15th April, 1947, and more than 30 per cent. of all available manpower is either in the Armed Forces, including Gendarmerie but not including police, or in exile. Industry and commerce have been stagnant while waiting for the decision on the American loan and especially waiting to find out what strings will be attached to it.

From April, 1946, to April, 1947, the general price level rose 48 per cent. (British Economic Mission Intelligence Reports and Bank of Athens circulars), but in the same period wages rose only 8 to 10 per cent.

Communications in Greece are almost non-existent. The road between Athens and Salonica is virtually impassable, and tests conducted by U.N.R.R.A. and the British Army about eight months ago showed that the maximum distance which could be travelled in an hour over an average 200-mile stretch in a jeep was 10 miles. It costs £2/10/- per ton to take cotton from Levadhia to Athens, about 60 miles. For the same price cotton could be carried from India by sea. There is no rail communication between Athens and Salonica, and even the short line from Salonica to the Yugoslav border has not been completed.

Much has been said in the Royalist Press about the fact that about 60 miles of the line in Southern Peloponnese has been restored, but it is not mentioned how many times it has had to close down because of lack of signal communications.

I was intimately concerned with economic affairs in Greece. I travelled over the whole of the country, excluding the islands, and I can vouch for the fact that, two and a half years after the German occupation had ceased, the

country was worse off economically than on the day the Germans moved out. Why? Because the policy followed by every Government (except that of Sofoulis and the short time during which Varvaressos endeavoured to get the Right-wing Voulgaris Government to implement a policy for the benefit of Greece, and was forced out of office by "the Athens black-marketeers and German collaborators"—his words, not mine), with the consent and approval of the British Embassy, British Economic Mission, and therefore, surely of the British Government, has been to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

The Bulletin of the Greek Information Office in London shows that only in the luxury trades such as ceramics, rayon and beer, has production equalled or exceeded pre-war levels. Essential commodities such as edible oils and fats were only 15 per cent., mining 13 per cent., metallurgical industry 25 per cent., cement and building materials 32 per cent., textiles 58 per cent. of the pre-war output in May of this year.

The importation of perfumes, highly-coloured ties and scarves, coffee and high-powered motor-cars, was so high when compared with pre-war levels that at a meeting which I attended late last year, Mr. Paterson, the American member of the Currency Control Commission, stated that he had told the Greek Government that if they did not control such importations he would have to consider resigning. That he did not do so might be due to the fact that soon afterwards certain U.S. mining interests got valuable concessions, particularly in lead-mining near Alexandroupolis, and lignite-mining at Ptolemaïd, so there were large U.S. interests to be watched.

The situation was never better described than by an observer in the U.S. semi-authoritative "World Report" during June: "While the people of Greece shiver in their roofless houses and walk through the snow without shoes and overcoats, fortunes are amassed in Athens. . . . In the swank shops luxury goods from the far corners of the globe are brilliantly displayed—Swiss watches, French silks and perfumes, American cosmetics, fountain-pens and cigarettes. And there are enough people around to buy them. . . . Look at the list of machinery imported into Greece and you won't find a lathe in it. What you will find is 132 brand new high-priced automobiles for the use of bureaucrats and politicians in mule and buggy Athens."

Or consider the report of the British All-Party Parliamentary Delegation to Greece. The tax system is "regressive, with four-fifths of the revenue coming from commodity taxes which fall heavily on farmers and low-income city workers, or from taxes which burden greatly and impede national production, commerce and trade."

Only 10/- per head is raised by direct taxation against £2/10/- per head by indirect taxation. Members of the wealthy class have their income in gold and are therefore not taxed. To quote again from the British Parliamentary Delegation, "There is a small class of wealthy people chiefly residing in and around Athens. Members of these families, to which many of the leading politicians belong, live in great luxury . . . as there is no income tax in the British sense, they live practically tax-free."

After being in Greece for more than 18 months, the British Economic Mission had still done nothing to improve this situation, although it did prohibit spending more than 10 per cent. of the Budget on reconstruction, while not objecting to 38.5 per cent. being spent on military expenditure, improving only the lives of the Greek General Staff.

And what is the American solution? That the control of the economy shall pass into American hands, in return for 80 million dollars for Government reconstruction, 20 million dollars for food production, 50 million dollars to stabilise the currency, and 50 million dollars to combat hunger. Without a policy of liberty and self-government which will unite the people, one million times these amounts would not save Greece from disaster.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

TRADE UNIONS IN GREECE.

The general background to the effectual, if not legal, suppression of Trade Unionism in Greece is set out in the pamphlet "Greek Trade Unions in Chains," published by the League for Democracy in Greece. Since that was issued, however, there have been two main developments. In April of this year, the Council of State found that the action of the Royalist Government in appointing its nominees to the Executives of Trade Unions and Trades Councils was illegal and invalid. Subsequently, the Athens Court of Appeal decided that it would nominate a provisional executive to be responsible for calling a congress and holding new elections. Although the congress held in 1946 under W.F.T.U. supervision elected a wholly Left-wing executive, that executive said that it would accept the nominations of the Athens Court of Appeal if the new provisionally-appointed executive included seven from the originally-elected executive to five from the Government-appointed Right-wing groups, as proposed by Mr Braine, the Labour Attache at Rome, who had been sent to Athens especially by Mr. Bevin to try to find a solution to the problem.

But the Athens Appeal Court appointed a seven-member executive consisting of one from the Left, one from the Centre and five from the Right. The representative of the Left was the only one who had been elected at the 1946 congress. Naturally, the Left did not accept this.

Mr. Tewson, of the British T.U.C., then went to Greece on behalf of the World Federation of Trade Unions and tried to get an agreement between all three parties. He suggested that there should be a 15-member executive, composed of five from the Left, five from the Right, and five representing various other trends. The representatives of the Right would not accept this.

Since Mr. Tewson left Greece, the Greek Government, emboldened by the support which the British and U.S. Governments have given to its intransigent policy, have now proposed a 21-member committee (that the proposal came from the Court of Appeal does not make it any less a Government proposal). The new committee is to be composed of 11 Right-wing nominees, six Left-wing and four Centre. Only the Left-wing people have ever been elected by an open election. No guarantee of restoration of fundamental trade union liberties and not even the return from exile of hundreds of trade union leaders was given by the Government, so the Left-wing group naturally again had to turn down the proposal.

Now it might be thought that if the Left are as certain of mass support as they claim to be, and as I say that they are, and if the elections are fair, why do they not accept any executive, just to get the job done. The answer is that every Greek knows that under such circumstances the elections could not be fair; but they could be held in such a way as to trick the cleverest foreign observer unless he had a good knowledge of the Greek language, character and background. (It would be even easier than it was to hoodwink

the very young and generally inexperienced officers, who observed the elections and the plebiscite. I met at least 80 of them and did not find one who could read, write or speak any Greek.)

The other reasons are just as cogent. At present every Greek trade union leader of any importance is in exile or in prison on a false trumped-up charge. One such charge is that they continued to attend at meetings of their unions without the approval of the Right-wing Government-appointed executives.

From Salonica alone, as at 30th January, 1947, there were 78 trade union or Labour Centre (Trades Council) executive officers in gaol or exile.

For the past eight months or more the executive appointed by the Government has been "doctoring" the Union rolls and registers. A most interesting report from the British Vice-Consul at Kavalla to the British Consulate-General at Salonica, dated 30th July, 1946, shows the way in which the appointed executives at Kavalla, Drama, Serres and Alexandroupolis were planning to "purge" (sic) the registers which the police had taken from the elected leaders before they were imprisoned.

Thanks to the activities of Mr. Theocharides, leader of the Right-wing trade union group in Salonica, E.M.E.,* a man with a collaborationist record which should have earned him a place in the dock at Nuremberg (he was political adviser to Dangoulas, the German-appointed executioner who was responsible for killing hundreds of Greeks, Gentiles and Jews)—thanks, I say, to the work of this man, the reactionary forces of E.M.E. in Salonica can show that their numerical strength has increased in the past eight months. And this is how it was done. Before he was appointed sub-Minister for Supply, Mr. Theocharides, who is a Deputy for Salonica, got the Minister of Supply, Mr. Stephanopoulos, to allot to his group 20,000 pairs of U.N.R.R.A. boots and 12,000 sets of workers' overalls. For these he was to pay 12,000 drachmas each—the price fixed by U.N.R.R.A. and the Greek Government for a rationed distribution scheme for which I was responsible to U.N.R.R.A. in Northern Greece. The boots he sold for 15,000 drs (the extra 3000 being his group's profit) to all who joined his Union group.

Boots at the time were selling for 90,000 drs., and it was small wonder that a lot of people, particularly those in great need, joined up. In fact, I advised some friends to do it, just for the boots. Similarly, the overalls, which were being distributed under the ration plan at a price of 4000 drs., he sold for 6000 drs. The value in the shops was 40,000 drs.

I protested against this, and the chief of U.N.R.R.A. took it up with the Minister of Supply. After about two months he was told that there was no record of such deliveries having been made—it was never said actually that they had not been made. About this time, May, 1946, there were a great many disputes between U.N.R.R.A. and the Greek Government, which concluded in a visit from the late Mr. F. La Guardia, then Director-General of U.N.R.R.A. This item formed one of the complaints.

A few months later Mr. Theocharides was appointed Sub-Minister for Supply, in which position he could authorise deliveries from various warehouses without any further check being made.

In Salonica I used to attend meetings of the Supply Committee, a Government-controlled body responsible for authorising issues of U.N.R.R.A. supplies. At the last meeting of the clothing sub-committee which I attended as Chairman, we found that whereas in the past the Committee had decided allocations, the Minister was stating specifically what numbers of boots and overalls were to be given to each workmen's organisation and which persons were to be authorised to give receipts for the goods. In no case were they persons

who had been elected by the workmen. In some cases military boots and overalls were to be given to women clerical workers in tramways and electrical trades unions of which Mr. Theodorides' friend, Mr. Theodoron, was trying to gain control.

The other members of the sub-committee, i.e., the Director-General of the Supply Office (whom Mr. Theodorides tried to displace on many occasions) and the Director of the Labour Office, agreed with me that this was at least open to a suggestion of political machination, but would not agree to protest.

Until the return of Mr. Grozos (General Secretary of the Tobacco Workers' Union, released from exile because of ill-health and the constant appeals of the Tobacco Workers' Union of Great Britain, since re-arrested in July, 1947), there were only two members of the elected Trades Council Executive of Salonica at liberty. They were M. Mouzenides, a Vice-President, a socialist of long standing; and M. Danelides, the Assistant Secretary. Both these two men have been arrested ten or eleven times, generally for attending meetings of their unions which had not been authorised by the Government-appointed executive, it now being illegal to hold a meeting which had not been authorised by the Government-appointed executive. On one occasion last December, when a meeting of the Tobacco Workers' Union was being held to decide what action could be taken to compel employers to pay the Christmas bonus which has been the practice in the Balkans for about 50 years, and which was approved subsequently by Government decree, everyone attending the meeting was arrested.

Four unfortunate members who had come in to pay their union dues were arrested as well. Although the meeting was being held with the knowledge of the Governor-General, and in fact the meeting was to report back to him what their proposals were, some of the members served 14 days in gaol before they were released.

They were not charged, so they could not get their normal entitlement of 500 drachmas per day (equal to 6d.) for food. They had no blankets or food until their relatives brought them. And just so that they would continue to love the Security Police officers who arrested them, they were marched down the main street, Tsimiski Street, in handcuffs, for about 200 yards. Mouzenides was not handcuffed, the Security Police officer saying to him, "We have nothing on you, Mr. Mouzenides, but as you were there and we were told to bring along everybody who was there, you will have to come along too." Mouzenides spent three days in gaol, just for being there.

On another occasion, Thursday, 12th December, at about 8 p.m., Mouzenides was in the office of his union when two members of the Government-appointed executive came in and asked him what he was doing there. He said, "Union business." They said, "You did not get our permission to come back after dark." One of them then telephoned No. 8 Security Police Station and in a few minutes Mouzenides found himself in the cells of that police station, where he remained for a period of three days, without any charge. In this case it was getting so bad that even the British Consul-General, at my request, suggested to the Governor-General of Northern Greece that if he really wanted to antagonise world trade union opinion then he was going the right way about it; but if he did not want to do that, perhaps he would stop these arrests. The Governor-General said that it was always done without his knowledge and consent and that the Security Police were not responsible to him, only to the Minister for Public Security in Athens.

As I write this, 30th June, 1947, I learn that Mouzenides and 39 others have been arrested again.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

COURTS-MARTIAL.

Courts-martial in Greece are not the same sort of trial before a group of active officers, bound by rule of evidence, and subject to review by an unbiassed judge advocate-General, as in the British Army; and Greek Courts-Martial are not restricted to trying soldiers charged with military offences. In Northern Greece all cases of a political nature or which are considered by the Commander of the Military Forces to concern the security of the State, are tried by Court-Martial. The procedure is that a dossier of evidence is made up by the Prosecutor prior to the trial, by calling together, not necessarily in the presence of the accused, a number of witnesses.

I have been present on more than one occasion when this was being done, and on the only occasion I saw the accused trying to question a witness the case was closed, as they did not want to stop him in front of me. On many other occasions I was present in Court when accused persons claimed that they had not been allowed to question witnesses and no notice whatsoever was taken of their pleas.

Very rarely were the witnesses brought before the Court, generally only their statements were read to the Court by the Prosecuting Officer. When they were brought to the Court it was a brave defending officer indeed who would examine them. On more than one occasion I heard counsel threatened by both Prosecuting Officer and Presiding Officer for trying to show that a witness's evidence was false. I have seen two defending officers beaten up in front of the Gendarmerie officers at Yiannitsa because they showed the falsity of evidence against the accused.

At the trial of I. Yiannopoulos and I. Charitos at Yiannitsa on 20th August, 1946, the depositions of four witnesses of Naoussa were read. Eight witnesses appeared in person for the defence and contradicted this evidence, so the defending officer asked that the witnesses for the prosecution be called. The Prosecutor asked that the accused be discharged. The Presiding Officer denied both requests and the accused were sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment. Outside the Court I saw the defending officer beaten with a stick by a lieutenant of the Gendarmerie. I reported this to the British Police Mission, who promised to make enquiries, which it did—from the officer in charge of Gendarmerie at Yiannitsa, whose officers did the beating. Of course, he denied it and on subsequent visits to Courts-Martial at Yiannitsa I was not given a seat in the body of the Court.

CHAPTER NINE.

SECURITY COMMITTEES AND PRISONS.

These are the Committees which sentence persons to exile. Normally they comprise the Nomarch (a sort of President of the County), the Public Prosecutor and a "nationally-minded citizen" chosen by the Nomarch. The Committee is appointed by the Governor-General of the Province. Until late in 1946 the Officer-in-charge of Gendarmerie used to be the third member, but since then he acts as adviser only. The accused has no absolute right to appear before the Committee or to call any witnesses or to hear the evidence against him. In a majority of cases the first he hears, after his incarceration whilst awaiting decision of the Committee, is that he has been sentenced to one, two or five years' exile to such and such an island. Sometimes he is allowed to be represented by counsel and in that case is called before the whole committee to receive a homily and sentence.

But, as has been stressed so many times in the House of Commons by Mr. Hector McNeil, he can appeal—to the Governor-General who appointed the Committee. I have seen the Governor-General of Central Macedonia dealing with such appeals. It was like the machine in the Post Office marking a postal stamp on a letter. On a few occasions I was able to save friends from exile, merely because I was an officer and asked in a friendly way for their release.

However the worst part of this process is the condition in which these people live whilst awaiting the decision of the Committees, or in transit to exile islands. Until the decisions have been made, technically, they are not prisoners, so they are not even covered by the antiquated Balkan pre-war Prisons Regulations.

I will quote now from a very senior official's report, written in late November, 1946. Unfortunately the Official Secrets Act makes it undesirable for me to give the name of the official or the report.

"In any reconsideration of this law, the fundamental question is whether it has actually contributed to that improvement in the state of law and order which we all earnestly desire. After careful consideration of all the information in my possession, I must express my grave doubts whether it has achieved this purpose to any degree which would compensate for the hardships inevitably caused and the strong criticisms which might be brought against its results even by those who are true friends of Greece.

"Reports have, however, been received that in some cases persons are being illegally detained, their cases never having been brought before the First Grade Committee.

"It appears that the consideration of appeals lodged by detainees may take as long as two months. During this time they are held at Police Stations and makeshift places of detention, in conditions of extreme overcrowding and without proper opportunities for exercise and personal hygiene.

"In no case is food provided for the detainees. They receive the extremely meagre allowance of 500 drachmas per diem, which is plainly insufficient to sustain life even on the minimum scale.

"Moreover, in a large number of cases not even this wholly inadequate allowance of 500 drachmas has been paid to the detainees. No bedding or blankets are provided. Children and infants share these conditions with their parents.

"Journey to the islands is accomplished under similar conditions of overcrowding with no provision for nourishment.

"Conditions on arrival in the islands are as bad and in some cases even worse than in transit prisons.

"There are no doctors nor any medical supplies.

"On arrival in the islands the allowance is reduced to the fractional sum of 300 drachmas per day. It appears, however, that in most cases, not even this has been paid over."

From my own direct experiences I can vouch for all this. I found in Kilikis Gendarmerie Station in November, 1946, four pregnant women in a cell which was not large enough for them to all lie down at the same time. As a result of my protest to the Governor-General of Central Macedonia, these four were released and one gave birth to a still-born child the day after her release. The Governor-General was a leading gynaecologist, and he promised to do what he could to see that pregnant women were not imprisoned; but he told me that he could not guarantee this as the Gendarmerie were not in any way responsible to the civil power.

Brutality does in fact breed brutality, and this treatment of prisoners was sure to bring reprisals from the guerrilla forces, in the same way as this Governor-General (M. Tsirides) stated on 30th November, 1946, after "nationally-minded citizens"—Right-wing bands armed by the Greek Army—had massacred 42 Left-wing supporters at Zyrovrisi: "The patience of the 'nationally-minded citizens' is exhausted, and I fear that these unpleasant incidents will be repeated in other communities." Surely such was an incitement to further violence.

CHAPTER TEN.

THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT.

On no other subject is there more misinformation and false propaganda from the Greek Government information department. This false information is spread by inspired newspaper articles written by people who have never been to Greece or who have never been beyond Athens, and as it is repeated so often it eventually gets the imprint of truth. I, however, met the guerrilla bands on many occasions and I was their guest sometimes for days at a time. I knew many of their members before they went to the hills and I saw them again when they were in the hills. Before I left Greece I went to say good-bye to my friends in the Democratic Army and promised to do my best to tell others what sort of people they are.

I repeat again and again, that the rebel movement is an indigenous movement. If they are at last getting aid from an International Brigade, which I doubt, it is no more than they have earned, for of all people in Europe they are doing their best to keep aloft the flag of liberty and decency, against a truly fascist government.

On no occasion did I see a person who was not truly a Greek citizen, although some of them were certainly born or had lived outside the borders of Greece. I even found one who had spent most of his life in my own native country of Australia. For the most part they were clothed in ordinary civilian clothing; but to prove their membership of the Democratic Army they wore armbands. Some wore British blue-dyed battle dress, mainly made in Australia, of which more than 200,000 were distributed by U.N.R.R.A. A lot had British Army uniforms which they had captured from the Greek Army units which had fought against them; a few had mixtures of uniforms, French, German, Italian and Russian, which they had received as refugees when they were returning from forced labour in Germany or Poland. For it must be remembered that most of the members of the rebel forces were those individuals against whom the Germans wreaked their revenge by transporting them to Dachau or Ayschwitz. Their opponents, of course, are mainly those whom the Germans were quite content to allow to lead a normal life in Greece, for they were in no way a danger to the Nazi doctrines.

As far as the uniforms are concerned, when I was officer-in-charge of refugee camps in Northern Greece some 15,000 Greeks returned through those camps and they were invariably clothed in military uniforms of one nation or another. These uniforms remained in Greece and were either used or sold. Yet it was the presence of these uniforms on the bodies of soldiers of the rebel army which was made one of the arguments before the U.N.O. Investigating Commission and accepted by them as a proof of foreign aid. The facts of these uniforms and pictures of them on refugees in 1945 were in the possession of Mr. Peck long before the U.N.O. Commission met, for I gave them to him.

As far as arms are concerned, I looked especially to see if I could find any of Yugoslav or Russian make, but there were none; 75 per cent. of the arms were British made and had been given to E.L.A.S.* when they were fighting the Germans and Italians, or had been captured from Greek Army units. Of the rest, most were Italian and German and a few were American. Even now the rebel army does not possess any artillery, and if they were being supplied by a modern army, like the Yugoslav Army, they would certainly be given artillery.

Why do young men take to the hills? I can answer that question because I have asked it of hundreds of people in the hills and on occasions the relatives they left behind them. I would say that about 50 per cent. go from ideological reasons, because they believe that it is the only way that can get freedom for Greece; about 45 per cent. go from economic reasons, because they find it impossible to get a living in Greece as it is at present; and about 5 per cent. because they have been so badly treated by the Gendarmerie forces that they seek revenge in this way.

Often whole villages go to the hills. Olimbias in the peninsula of Chalkidiki is an example. The whole village moved to the hills because they were not allowed by the Gendarmerie commanders at Stavros and Polygaros to bring their firewood into either of those towns to sell it there. They were not allowed to purchase foodstuffs there and their U.N.R.R.A. rations were not delivered to them until various U.N.R.R.A. officials, including myself, had fought the matter with the Governor of Central Macedonia. But it was then too late; they had all joined one of the bands in the Holomonda mountains. How many times I enquired after, the young men I had met in villages only to be told

that they had gone to the hills. In reply to my query, why, I was invariably told: "Well, what else is a young man to do?" In a previous chapter I mentioned the burning down of houses at Gria by the Greek Army. This brought a host of recruits to the Rebel Army from the neighbourhood of Gria and Grevena. The Courts-martial and shootings of well-known resistance fighters have been the next best reason why young men will endure the horrors of living in the hills and fighting.

That the Greeks who fled to Bulgae in Yugoslavia to escape the tyranny of the Greek Government have been permitted by the Yugoslav authorities to return is beyond doubt; but has not political refuge been a thing of which countries have been proud in the past? Has not Britain given entry and exit to political exiles before today, and has it not been one of our proud boasts that we have done so? Was it not the bright spot in French political affairs, when there was not much other brightness on the French scene, that they gave hope and help to those who had fled from political tyranny? Why has it now become a sin for Yugoslavia to do what was a virtue in us?

Let there be no doubt about it. The rebel movement in Greece has been formed from precisely the same group of men and women who would form a similar rebel movement in Great Britain were we ever faced with the same tyranny and terror as has been the lot of all people in Greece with democratic political views who have not been willing to stifle their consciences for fear of losing their comfort. As long as courage and decency remain active virtues in this not very bright world, so will fascism in whatever form it may show itself, bring into being a rebel government.

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

A TEN-POINT PROGRAMME FOR IMPROVEMENT.

After such criticism of others, it is right that I should make some suggestions as to what can be done to bring about an improvement. Briefly, the things which I think are essential if Greece is to be brought back to democracy and to a condition fit for those who have fought and worked so hard for their lovely country, are as follows:

(1) Greece cannot recover unaided. She must receive quick and substantial aid from other countries, either free or on long-term credits with small interest charges. What she needs is exports, not experts.

(2) The people must be united, and this cannot be done while other countries advise suppression of political liberties and the destruction of political opponents and supply armaments to enable these things to be done.

(3) A general amnesty for all rebels who have not committed murder must be given at once by a Government which can be trusted, i.e., one which has participation of all parties and is not controlled by one only.

(4) The Security Police must be disbanded and the Armed Forces and Gendarmerie purged of all elements who collaborated with the Germans as members of the German-organised Security Battalions, or who have been engaged in terrorist activities against the rebels.

(5) Civil servants dismissed for political reasons by the Royalist Government must be restored to their positions, and the civil service reorganised as a small and well-paid force.

(6) All Trade Union liberties must be restored and Trade Union leaders released from exile or imprisonment unless they have been guilty of a normal (i.e., not under Special Security Regulations) criminal offence.

(7) Democratic local government should be instituted throughout Greece there is none today.

(8) The economy should be overhauled so that taxation falls most heavily on those best able to bear it; importations should be restricted to what is necessary for the recovery of Greece; and natural resources, especially metallurgical, should be developed by the Greeks for themselves.

(9) Trade within the Balkans must be resumed. It must be recognised that the obvious economic links for Greece are Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Turkey.

(10) When the country is settled down, new elections must be held to elect a Parliament and to adopt a constitution.

My 10-point programme is not exclusive, and I have not stated the order in which it should be carried out; but if the foreign powers who have been interfering in Greece for strategical or ideological reasons would tell Greece to go ahead with such a plan and give some help in implementing it, they would be doing something to restore this brave land which has done so much for the world.



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