

PSF

Greece

1940-42

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*Lib Greece*  
*personal* 4

Athens, January 30, 1940.

Dear Franklin:

I have written you recently about the danger of Russian aggression in the Dardanelles area as viewed from here, and this remains perhaps the chief source of local anxiety. But as spring approaches and Italy still plays possum, while Russia seems to have caught a genuine Tartar in Finland, another most interesting problem for this region has arisen in the possibility of the creation of an Eastern Front. Of what is said in London and Paris on this subject you must be well informed, but out here on the ground, as it were, we are observing widespread signs of preparation. The French concentrations in Syria seemed at first to be in anticipation of Italian action, and this was confirmed by the fact that they lost tempo as the Italians gave no indication of "belligerency". But they have recently speeded up once more, and Weygand has arrived in Ankara again, almost at the same moment with a large shipment of British gold. I am informed that military communications between Egypt and Syria have been improved

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington, D.C.

improved by the metaling of the highway clear to Beirut, and that the British are looking into the future even so far as to envisage the use of Greek islands for hospital bases. That they can be contemplating an attack on Germany with forces concentrated in Syria seems out of the question. But on the other side of the fence, Germany has made an arrangement with Russia whereby she now has a common frontier with Rumania, thereby greatly increasing the latter's jeopardy. Furthermore, Germany seems to be massing troops in Galicia and there is no country in the Balkans, perhaps least of all Rumania, which could withstand for an instant the lightning-like methods of her mechanized forces. Bulgaria would probably not even try, as her Premier has admitted. Under these conditions, if Germany should be the one to attack, there would seem to be little or nothing to check her advance before she meets with the French and British, who, however, must transport their troops a long way and organize bases on the European coast. Thus the Eastern front, if it comes, would seem likely to depend on German initiative, and likely to run pretty close to such possible allied bases as Istanbul and Salonika. Whether Germany is able to make a drive in this direction under present conditions, both at home and in her newly conquered provinces, and whether she would dare to do so in view of possible complications from Italy and Russia, are other questions. But it seems clear that one of the reasons frequently urged against her invading the Balkans, namely that such action would destroy one of her main sources of economic supply, is based on a misconception

as to where the only really effective resistance could develop.

With threats to Balkan peace on all sides, well-informed people here will watch the approaching conference of the Balkan Entente at Belgrade with considerable interest, though not, I think, much hope. This groupment has never been very strong, and the Premier the other day, in explaining to me his own modest expectations of a conference which he will himself attend, described one of the reasons for this fact. Yugoslavia and Rumania, he said, are oriented towards central and northern Europe, but Turkey and Greece toward the Mediterranean. Their interests consequently tend to diverge on all really important issues of foreign policy. He might also have pointed to the existence of an enigmatic and always dangerous Bulgaria in the very heart of the peninsula. But of course, the real cause of Balkan disunion lies in the stresses and strains set up here by the Great Powers. In the last analysis, their interests will control the approaching conference, and what it develops should accordingly indicate to some extent in what direction the European tide will flow regarding the Near Eastern question, or whether the present dead water is to continue to prevail.

To add to our worries, there is always the local political situation. The Dictatorship is flourishing to all outward appearances. I believe that, despite rumors to the contrary, England has no interest in unseating Mr. Metaxas at this time, and I have got this confirmed by

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the British Minister himself. He says Britain is satisfied with the Greek Government's loyalty, up to a point. The French are not so certain, but neither France nor England wants trouble here just now, and neither can see the possibility of a change being anything but from the frying pan into the fire. Nevertheless, the hatred of tyranny in Greece is ingrained, and whereas with luck, intelligence and determination the present régime is carrying on, the more the people submit to it the more they dream of overturning it. There is a widespread belief that it cannot survive Greece's entry into war. I am not sure that I share this belief, but its existence must be kept in mind.

The Greek Minister to Germany has just been here for a few days. He appears to be an intelligent fellow and has occupied his present post for six years. He says the Germans are confident that their superiority in the air remains overwhelming, and that they honestly think they can destroy London and knock the British out of the war with bombs. Furthermore, he is sure they intend to try to do this at no distant date. He is very much afraid.

Always affectionately,

*Lincoln McVeagh*

*file  
personal.*

*Greece*

Athens, February 27, 1940.

Dear Franklin:

Before this letter can reach you, Sumner Welles will probably have brought you a lot of information about things we can only guess at out here. Nevertheless, I will go on with the local reporting which, if we all do it, gives you, like Argus, a hundred eyes.

Concerning Sumner's visit, one of the Greek papers writes today that the peoples of Europe are anxious to see it crowned with success, "and though the leaders may simulate indifference to the pacific purposes of his mission, public anxiety is greater than that of Noah waiting in his ark the return of the pigeon." Rather nice, that! But the leaders of Greece are by no means indifferent. They think that the trip cannot fail to influence both the war and the peace which must follow, and it is with genuine seriousness that they have expressed their willingness to follow your lead in the matter of an "exchange of views" on post-war problems.

Public

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington, D. C.

Public anxiety is, of course, very great with us, and seems growing with the conviction that something must happen soon. Italian concentrations and troop movements are again on everyone's tongue, and there are persistent rumors of an approaching Franco-Turkish attack in the Caucasus. However, the Greek Government does not seem much alarmed by the former, and the Turkish Ambassador and his Military Attaché both tell me that Turkey will not lend herself to offensive action. In this connection, the Ambassador points out that as long as Italy's stand remains doubtful, Turkey's main value to the Allies is in helping to maintain the status quo in the Mediterranean, and that if she is involved in a war with Russia this value will largely disappear. This seems to be reasonable. Furthermore, Weygand's forces in Syria amount to only about 125,000 men, despite widely current reports of half a million or more, and though they are apparently good shock troops--Moroccans, Senegalese, Foreign Legion--they hardly constitute a sufficient force with which to start a distant and difficult war, particularly with a potential enemy in their rear.

Regarding Germany, people here still feel she is averse to extending the war in this direction, and will neither do so herself nor allow Russia to do so, unless Allied influences cut her supplies off too effectively, especially her supplies of Rumanian oil. In that case she might conceivably feel forced to attack, but must fear the possible destruction of the oil wells in advance of her reaching

reaching them. Good informants say that she is pleased with Turkey's stand at present, and with the results of the recent Balkan Conference which ostensibly dedicated itself to nothing but the maintenance of local peace.

All that the four Foreign Ministers of the Balkan Entente said to each other in their secret meetings at Belgrade has by no means been published. It seems generally to be thought that they took no new decisions. But Mr. Metaxas, who is one of the four, has told me in "strict confidence" that they decided to extend the application of the Balkan Pact to cover attack from outside. Hitherto, as you know, the Balkan Pact has been held to involve mutual assistance against Bulgaria only. If what he told me is true, and the Entente now forms "a barrier to a descent into the Balkans by either Germany or Russia", the Conference certainly took a step forward, as I lost no time in remarking. Furthermore it is a step which must be pleasing to allied policy so long as the latter contemplates only the defense of this region, and may even be an indication of what that policy is.

Almost as exciting for this region as the Balkan Conference was the fall of the Bulgarian Cabinet, which followed it almost at once. Reports from Sofia assert that internal politics were the cause. But foreign policy may also have contributed. Mr. Metaxas told me that one of the best things that happened at the Conference was the receipt of assurances from the Bulgarian Premier that, without wishing to join the Entente, Bulgaria would follow

a "parallel policy" with her neighbors. He thinks this was going too far to be popular in Bulgaria and that it gave the Premier's enemies just the edge necessary to unseat him at this time. The Rumanian Ambassador tells me that Mr. Gafenco holds the same view, and the Italian Minister has also expressed it to me. The new Cabinet has not been entrusted to the men who ousted the old, but to persons more in the King's confidence. They declare Bulgaria's foreign policy will not be changed. The Minister to Belgrade is now Foreign Minister, and the Minister to Greece, his second in command. But the incident calls for caution in estimating the chances of any further rapprochement between Bulgaria and the Entente.

Finally we come to Italy,--for the Greeks seem to feel that Russia is out of the picture as a potential aggressor now that she is so tied up in Finland. Italy is still a cause of anxiety to the Greek public, but the Government feels satisfied that she will start nothing, at least for the time being, and probably not till she is fully satisfied which side is going to win. She is moving new recruits to Albania,--about 2,000 have recently arrived there,--and she has sent five thousand or more to the Dodecanese these past few days. But this seems to be no cause for great alarm. The alarm comes from the exaggerations popularly based on the more sober facts. The Italian Minister says--and apparently has been told to say--that Italy will attack no one unless her interests are vitally menaced, but that she will oppose any country, even Germany, which

which attempts to disturb the peace of the Near East. How reassuring that sounds! One hates to remember the lies which precluded the seizure of Albania, and to think how easily a totalitarian government can fake a "menace" to its interests. But for the time being such protestations do seem to agree with Italy's logical strategy, so far as an outsider can judge of it. So perhaps they may be believed "in so far forth"--as the Under Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me the Greek Government is doing.

Locally, three classes of "specialists" have just been called to the colors, but by individual summons, without public announcement. I am reliably informed that the Premier told the staff officers in Salonika, on his return from Belgrade, that "if any Balkan state is attacked, Greece will have to fight." This is in accord with what he told me of the Conference's decisions, and would justify any refurbishing of his army which he may undertake, even if no attack seems immediately imminent. For the moment, there is no talk of internal political trouble,--a bad sign in this country where revolutions are never so likely as when the political scene is quietest.

Reports reaching here from Germany indicate with somewhat remarkable uniformity that the Germans expect the war to end this year. This and the apparently growing unlikelihood of anyone's attacking in this area, as well as the fact that to end the war by a flanking movement would, for either side, probably take several years, all  
seem

seem to point to the Western Front as the coming battle-ground. The Italian Minister says he is sure the war will be won in France, and by the side which does not attack. The Turkish Military Attaché says the same thing. This gentleman came in to my office this morning and began, "We are probably soon to see terrible things." But I go back to my thought at the beginning of this letter, namely, that you will have heard, before you get it, from those who are cooking the broth, and will know far better than we can here what we shall have to drink.

Affectionately yours,

*Lincoln MacVeagh*

Greece

file  
personal

Athens, May 4, 1940.

Dear Franklin:

Since the German invasion of Scandinavia, we have been living here under the sword of Damocles, as you better than anyone else, I think, can realize. The Greek government, however, has maintained a remarkably calm attitude, and after a talk with the Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs this morning, I can report that it still holds the same view it adopted three weeks ago, namely that Italy will not adventure into the war on her own initiative, but may very well move "to protect her interests" if Germany attacks in the Balkans, or even join Hitler as an openly confessed ally if the latter achieves some really convincing success.

Greek timidity, the timidity of one of the least among the neutrals, still leaves a pretty clear field for German propaganda, and while I am informed from Salonika that some three hundred Germans per month have recently come into Greece from the north, I have heard of no expulsions such as are now being reported from Rumania. There may be now some five or six thousand Germans in the country, and

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D. C.

and it is certain that all of them are in close touch with the very active German Legation. In addition, the French Minister declares that besides several cabinet ministers who are known to have pro-Nazi sentiments there are numerous minor officials in Germany's pay. But all this may not be so dangerous as it sounds. Both the French and British Ministers have expressed to me only recently their satisfaction with the Dictator's policies and actions, and the Dictator is still, despite rumors arising from a brief illness on his part, firmly in control of the party in office, while the opposition is very largely Venizelist and pro-Ally. Add to this the fact that the King, though he has not much of a following, is also decidedly pro-British in the present struggle. Consequently, the "fifth column", though it is undoubtedly at work here as elsewhere, seems not as likely to succeed in softening up the national resistance as in some other places. Mr. Metaxas is the only Stoyadinovitch available, and he remains, it appears, pro-Greek though German-trained, while the other leaders who might make trouble are not only in exile but quite as anti-German as they are anti-Metaxas. An interesting situation.

Greek timidity, the fear of provoking powerful aggressors, is also responsible for the fact that in the past few weeks this country has taken few additional military precautions. A few submarines and destroyers  
were

were sent to the west coast when fears arose for Corfu after the news arrived of Germany's invasion of Norway. More recently some thousands of reserve officers have been called up "for training". But the forces on the Albanian frontier are no greater than the Italian forces facing them, and the chief of the General Staff has explained to the Turkish Military Attaché that calling up new classes would only lead Italy to do the same and start a race which Greece could not hope to keep up. Quiet work continues to be done on the defenses of the northern frontier, however, and on roads, and on perfecting the machinery for mobilization.

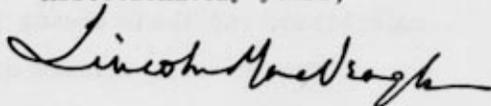
My canvassing of Greek, Turkish, Yugoslav, British and French opinion at this post would lead one to expect no war in this region at least for a month. Nobody seems to expect Italy to move alone. Germany, of course, is incalculable, but the Turkish Military Attaché remarked this morning that she has been forced to spend so much of her petrol supply in Norway that an invasion of the Balkans, which would have to depend greatly on airplanes and motorized transport, can hardly be contemplated for the present. Russia is regarded as genuinely out of things for the time being, recuperating her strength and preparing to take an opportunist course later.

Much interest has been aroused, and much encouragement gained from Mr. Phillips' reported talk with Mussolini, apparently at your behest. The Italians here (when scratched)

betray

betray a feeling that the United States is going to join the Allies sooner or later (perhaps I have mentioned this before) and this appears to frighten them, though nothing else does, their heads have grown so big. "Moi aussi", said the little Italian Minister, running to catch up with the French and British Ministers in a parade not long ago, "Moi aussi je suis une grande puissance!".

Affectionately yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lincoln Steubens". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Lincoln Steubens".

Sheet 4



*file  
personal*

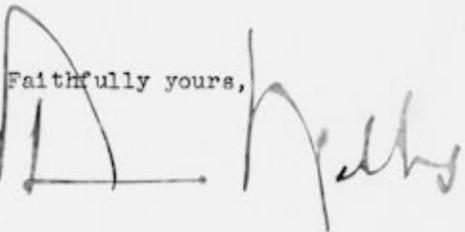
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

May 7, 1940

My dear Mr. President:

In accordance with the request contained in your memorandum of May 4, I am submitting a suggested reply to the letter sent you by Lincoln MacVeagh under date of March 26.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,  


The President,  
The White House.

May 4, 1940

am

MEMORANDUM FOR SUMNER WELLES:

To prepare personal reply for  
my signature.

F. D. R.

FDR-rr

Letter to the President -- March 26, 1940.  
FROM: Lincoln MacVeagh, American Legation, Athens.  
RE: Tells of results of the events of the past month  
in regard to the Balkans, Russia and Finland, Germany,  
the Finnish campaign, Italy who has increased reinforcements  
in Albania, and present status of the Greek army. States that  
if Greece becomes involved in the war they can muster 600,000 men  
and equip 20 divisions.

Athens, 26 March 1940.

Dear Franklin:

On rereading my last letter to you, dated February 27th, I find there is little to be changed or added as a result of the events of the past month. The best opinion here continues to regard the extension of the war to this region as unlikely, at least for the present. It is still supposed that Germany desires no disturbance of the Balkans and that the Allies will not assume the offensive here so long as Turkey remains averse to such a policy. Russia, of course, no longer has one of her hands tied in Finland, and the possibility of her taking the imperialistic path toward the Straits still exists. But it is felt here that she will almost certainly not attempt such an advance in the near future. Germany is supposed to be against it, for one thing, and aside from that, military men say it would take Russia at least three months after the close of the Finnish campaign to organize a new operation on another front with any chances of success. In the Caucasus I am informed that the Russians have only seven full divisions, with four or five skeletonized ones in addition, and that this is only one division more than they had at the outbreak of the war.

The

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington, D.C.

*The outcome of*

The Finnish campaign shocked public opinion in Greece severely and it was felt here, as apparently elsewhere, to be a setback to the Allies. But in official circles I have found this attitude less marked than in the cafés and drawing rooms. The Under-Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed to me only the other day the greatest confidence in England's determination and tenacity. "Having made up her mind to fight the war in 1941," he said, "she is now preparing to do so with telling effect." He was more immediately concerned with the effect of the Finnish peace on France and regarded the fall of Daladier with some dismay.

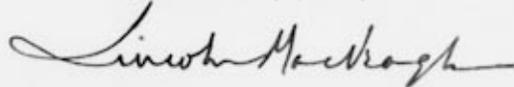
Italy continues, of course, to be watched with the greatest care. She has increased her reinforcements in Albania by 10,000 men and done the same in the Dodecanese, but trustworthy reports state that these troops are all new recruits. In this connection the Under-Minister for Foreign Affairs said to me, "Italy is less of a menace to us this year than last, because her pretensions have grown so much larger. It is no longer a question of, let us say, Corfu, but of hegemony over the entire Balkans." Doubtless this fact, together with Britain's guarantee, make it less necessary now than formerly for Greece to fear a coup de main. Nevertheless, a serious attack by the Italians toward Salonika, combined with German pressure on the northern Balkans, in a joint effort to bring the peninsula promptly and definitely under Axis control, is still to be reckoned with, and, as I have reported to the Department, has not escaped the Greek General Staff, as at least a possibility.

This Legation was deprived only a few months before the war began, and over my protest, of even a part-time military attaché. But I have been able to secure some help from other military observers here, and I have just sent in a report on the present status of the Greek army. If this country becomes involved in the war,

you

you might care to know that while Greece can muster 600,000 men she is prepared to equip only about 20 divisions, or about 320,000 men; that it will take her ten days to mobilize completely; that her artillery is predominantly of the mountain type; that her airplanes number less than 100; and that she has no tank corps. Thus her army is poorly equipped as modern armies go. As it stands, it would seem of questionable value for fighting outside of Greece, though it might give a good account of itself in defending Greek territory, where the terrain does not favor the advance of mechanized forces.

Affectionately yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lincoln Macchugh". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed text "Affectionately yours,".

*file  
personal*

*Greece*

Athens, May 24, 1940.

Dear Franklin:

It seems absurd to be writing when events move so rapidly that a letter becomes ancient history by the time it reaches you. But even ancient history may sometimes throw some light on the puzzling present, and if Italy goes to war you might possibly find a little illumination for dark corners in the following estimate of Greece's attitude before the fact.

That attitude has recently somewhat altered as a result of German successes and their demonstration of the power of mechanized armies. Facing Italy across narrow seas and sharing, too, with her a land frontier, Greece has been thinking fast. The press of course remains editorially colorless but the news columns are full every day of striking pictures and vivid descriptions of tanks and planes in action, and as Greece has no tanks and only one hundred planes, there is being brought home to even the most ordinary citizen that resistance to Italy can only be a relative affair if the latter is minded to put forth here even a portion of her strength. People in the

The President,

The White House,  
Washington, D. C.

the Government still maintain that Greece will resist if attacked, and even talk, though less confidently, of going to war if any Balkan state is invaded, but one senses more than a little bravado in what they say, while the man in the street is at least more honest. You can hear it said in the cafés that all Greece's expenditure for defense, which is enormous for so small and poor a country, has been just so much money thrown away. Such comment of course ignores the insurance aspect attaching to that expenditure in connection with possible limited and local wars, but it correctly expresses a certain resignation to the inevitable which appears to be the most widespread reaction here to the lesson of the German victories.

So far as the military authorities are concerned, this reaction is betrayed by a listlessness which, if its opposite could do any good, would be culpable. Though the international situation is quite as threatening as it was last September, the military precautions being taken by this country are considerably less than they were at that time. Athens has had no black-out for months and the army remains only sketchily mobilized at a moment when every other Balkan state bristles with bayonets. The Turkish Military Attaché pointed out the other day that the reason given by the Government, namely not to provoke a powerful neighbor, is hardly a valid one. For if Italy is decided not to go to war, he said, such a small thing as Greek mobilization will hardly cause her to change her mind.

Whereas

Whereas if she is decided to do so, it is the duty of Greece to be as well prepared as possible. But the Greek attitude seems based on psychology rather than on logic.

In Government circles the change is also marked and foreign policy has undoubtedly been affected. Greece may yet play the part of Leonidas, but at present I am betting on Ulysses. The Foreign Office feels that Italy may go to war now fairly promptly. With France reeling under Hitler's blows, what better opportunity could present itself for a stab in the back? But it feels, too, that this is encouraging for the Balkans if it means that Italy's effort will be concentrated in the west. More than once in the last few days I have caught Greek thoughts turning to the possibility of remaining non-belligerent in case Italy goes to war with England and France and even Turkey. Her coasts and islands may be fought for, but she has always the possibility of submitting--to both sides. Such a policy finds a precedent in Greece's conduct during the first years of the last Great War, when she "balanced herself on a knife-edge", to use a phrase of the King's, and made money at the same time with her tin-pot but abundant merchant marine. Today she may not be able to follow this program if Italy takes it into her head to control the whole country rather than only a few isolated harbors. But the chance lies in Italy's preoccupation elsewhere, and the wits to take advantage of it are not lacking here. My Swedish colleague asked the Director General of the Foreign Office the other day how Greece could stay non-belligerent if Turkey fulfilled her

pledges

pledges to the Allies, and that clever son of Laertes replied, "Greece's obligations to Turkey arise only if Turkey is attacked, and not if she attacks others in fulfillment of her own obligations"! Technically, he is right, but I have a feeling that this remark, if repeated in Ankara, might go far to dissolve a famous friendship. It justifies suspicions the Turks have had for a long time.

Of course, while Hitlerian warfare has impressed the Greeks and made them more than ever wary of Mussolini's planes and mechanized divisions, the defeats recently suffered by France and England have also had their effect. A Greek said to me today, "The prestige of the Allies is gone forever." That is not true. The Greeks are a mercurial people, and a recovery by the Allies would bring back their prestige here in a jiffy. But, altogether, recent events have made the Greeks acutely aware of their own helplessness and exposure. The old expectation of maintaining non-belligerency as long as possible and thereafter forming a firm front with England, France and Turkey is gone, and I look now rather for a more two-faced policy of token resistances balanced by pro forma compliances, of explanations and apologies, and every shift necessary to save the skin. It doesn't sound heroic, but it cannot be called unintelligent, and it certainly is Greek.

Affectionately yours,

*Lincoln MacVeagh*

*Handwritten mark*

*file  
personal*

Athens, July 2, 1940.

Dear Franklin:

Since my letter of May 24th, Italy has come into the war as expected, and France has collapsed contrary to expectations. So far as Greece is concerned, Italy has continued to manifest peaceful intentions, and Germany has sent a trade delegation, which is busy securing from this country what the British "control" has recently held up. This delegation will probably succeed in tying Greece even more tightly into the German economic system than was the case before the war, but on the other hand its activity here appears to support the idea that Germany, as well as Italy, wants no disturbance in this region for the present.

On the basis of this idea, and the fact that the Allies can no longer expect to form an Eastern Front, the Greeks now seem less apprehensive of being immediately involved in the war than they have been for some time past. Of course, they must envisage possible difficulties over the use of their islands and harbors so long as the naval war goes on in the Mediterranean, but so far neither side has put their tight-rope-balancing qualities to the test, and hope springs eternal.

Meanwhile,

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington.

Meanwhile, a more remote source of anxiety has once again cropped up in the Russian occupation of Bessarabia and northern Bukowina. It is felt here that this move may have had advance consent from Germany, but that from Russia's point of view it represents not only the completion of her campaign to repossess her pre-war territory, but an improvement of her strategic defensive position in case of German aggression eastwards. The Greek authorities do not believe that it presages an immediate Russian descent to the Straits, but they evidently feel greatly relieved that Turkey did not declare war on Italy when the latter entered the conflict, since Turkey's consequent preoccupation might have seemed to the Russians to offer an opportunity too great to be ignored.

As I duly telegraphed the Department, the Turkish Ambassador here predicted to me just a week ago that Rumania would cede Bessarabia to Russia "peacefully and soon". The Director General of the Foreign Office told me yesterday, however, that Greece was surprised by what has happened. I find this last hard to believe. Certainly there is a general awareness here of Russia's increasing interest in the Balkans. The Premier told me recently that he cannot see why Germany continues to furnish arms to Bulgaria unless she has thoughts of herself making use of that country, presumably in a drive toward Constantinople, but at the same time he let me see that his thoughts are also very much occupied with Russian policy. As for public sentiment, it seems about equally divided between

hopes

hopes that Germany may soon find herself involved in a war with Russia and fears that hostilities in such a war might eventually extend to the whole of the Balkans, including Greece.

I believe that Greek sympathies remain, for the most part, pro-Ally even today, though German influence in responsible circles has naturally increased enormously since the collapse of France. On the other hand, having feelings and expressing them are two different things, and you will appreciate that bowing in the house of Rimmon is a gesture which has long been familiar to the Greeks. At present, barring a general Near Eastern conflagration as a result of a Russo-German war, our friends here think their lives may be spared, but they are under no illusions as to the place likely to be allotted to this country in a new Europe of German fashioning. If they were, their eyes would be opened by the kind of literature which the Foreign Office spokesman told me yesterday is now being circulated here by German "propagandists", based on ideas ascribed to Schacht's inventive genius. According to this literature, the Führer has decided that Greece is an agricultural country and must be content to remain such. Consequently, she is to get rid of her industry and supply Germany with the fruits of the soil, receiving in return all the manufactured goods of which she stands in need, or which may be dumped upon her. But during the past fifteen years Greece has built up, relatively to her size, a vast amount of local industry which it would be difficult to scrap

without

without serious social upheaval, and in addition, the idea of exclusively raising agricultural products for foreign masters against such recompense as the latter may decide to accord, revives memories of the Ottoman domination too vivid for enjoyment.

Affectionately yours,

*Lincoln H. H. H. H.*

Greece  
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Athens, August 30, 1940.

Dear Franklin:

Since I last wrote, and beginning about two weeks ago, the Italian press and radio has violently attacked this country, alleging hostile Greek designs and actions against Albania, as well as un-neutral conduct in connection with the war. At the same time, Italian troops have been concentrated along the Greco-Albanian frontier, and Greek war and merchant vessels have been bombed by Italian planes and a Greek cruiser sunk by an "unidentified" submarine. You may have read about all this in the papers, as I understand it has been given some publicity at home.

The Greek Government has received no official notification of Italian demands or desires, and ostensibly relations between the two countries remain on the basis of the pact of friendship renewed last November. Nevertheless, the Greek Government has been very much alarmed, and as a result, while cautiously refraining from overt mobilization, which might be construed as provocative, has covertly called many reservists to the colors and made such dispositions of its effectives to meet the menace

as

The President,

The White House,

Washington.

as has seemed possible without attracting undue notice. Its extensive precautions along these lines lend credence to the reiterated statements of officials that Greece will resist if attacked.

Within the past few days, the Italian authorities have denied privately to diplomats in Rome and publicly through the semi-official Stefani news agency, that Italy has any intention of taking military action. They have explained that the whole affair has been one "of the press" only. In consequence, tension here has been somewhat relieved. But the Greek Government is remaining vigilant and the Greek public retains its apprehension. The Italians have not taken back even the most absurd of the charges they have been so busy making, and if these are not used as a basis for official demands at present, they still remain available for that or other purposes later on.

So far the chief result of the Italian campaign has been to create a wholly fictitious "Albanian problem" out of local minority and border issues of small importance and long desuetude. Should the question of Bulgaria's claim to an exit on the Aegean be revived, as it very well may be if and when Germany gets the present Danubian problems regulated to suit herself, Italo-Albania will be in a position to say "Me too". There are some observers here who see this as all that the Italians have aimed at from the start, and regard the present lull as marking the successful conclusion of the first phase in a drive for limited objectives. But certain aspects of what has been going

going on appear to indicate that there may have been a larger aim in view. It would seem unnecessary, for instance, in order to establish claims for settlement at a future conference, to accompany propaganda with distinct provocations to conflict, as the Italians have done repeatedly these past two weeks; and in addition, the Italian propaganda itself has not been confined to the Albanian question but has attacked the local government, directly with charges of un-neutral conduct and indirectly with incitements to disaffected persons to revolt. Accordingly, it seems more likely that the Italians really started out with the idea of forcing Greece to adopt an attitude in foreign affairs more in conformity with what they term the "New Europe" than the strict neutrality she endeavors to preserve at present, and that they thought that this could be done easily by the undermining and intimidating methods employed. That they have abandoned these methods for the present may have been due in part to a realization that they had misjudged this country's morale and capacities. This point of view was expressed to me yesterday by the Premier himself, who is justly proud of the extent to which his policy of combined caution and determination has rallied the personal support of even his bitterest political enemies. But behind Greek determination in this matter lies the new confidence which British resistance to the Axis has inspired in both Greek and Turkish breasts. Neither this country nor Turkey is yet willing to regard the issues of the war as definitely decided, particularly in the Mediterranean region.

The Turkish press has been warmly approving of the Greek attitude under the Italian menace. The British press has emphasized that Greece is not without friends. Under such circumstances an Italian clash with Greece, far from being a localized push-over, might easily develop into a considerable extension of the European war, and once this became unmistakably apparent, a more canny and less provocative policy seemed indicated if the general Axis aim of no-war-in-the-Balkans was to remain undisturbed. As to which member of the Axis first took alarm, the Premier said to me yesterday, "The Germans have realized the situation better", and despite his statement that "Greece is no beggar", I am reliably informed that Berlin brought a restraining influence to bear on Rome on receipt of a petition from Athens which revealed that the situation had reached the point of danger.

Today the Italian press and radio appear to have forgotten Greece, and Balkan eyes are riveted on negotiations in Vienna over the Transylvanian problem, but the Italian Minister says "The Albanian minority question will have to be settled some day." Meanwhile, of course, the larger question of the neutrality of this interestingly placed little country, with its head in the Balkans and its feet in the Mediterranean, may pop up again at any time but apparently awaits a turn of events elsewhere, perhaps in the English channel.

Affectionately yours,

*Lincoln MacVeagh*

*4/c* *Grecco*

Athens, November 28, 1940.

Dear Franklin:

I sent you a cable on your reelection, but such messages must always be cold and formal in comparison with one's real feelings. Personally you know what these are, anyhow, so far as I am concerned. Otherwise, I am not a bit behind our Greek friends, who from King to bootblack have been congratulating the world in general and thanking their lucky stars that you and not another will continue to guide our ship of state.

Recent news about this country has probably been well covered at home. The army has done excellently and appears to have established a moral superiority over the enemy, but its equipment is inferior and it particularly needs pursuit planes and anti-aircraft ammunition. The British were cautious about coming here at first, but are now giving some valuable assistance to the Greeks in the air and exploiting the opportunity afforded to them themselves to bring the war home to the Italians. In this connection, General Parry, who has been here coordinating

the

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington, D. C.

the British and Greek efforts for the past couple of weeks, told one of my officers, the night before last, that the British General Staff changed its mind about aiding Greece as a result of the Greek successes in the early days of the war. He also paid a tribute to the military "genius" of General Metaxas and said the Greek dispositions at the beginning of the conflict were "exceedingly clever." He further added that it is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of the Greek success, since "after all it is the first and only success of the Allied armies on land." My latest talks with Foreign Office officials indicate a belief on the part of the Greek Government at present that the British attacks on the Albanian ports will effectively prevent serious Italian reinforcements from arriving, while the Greek army can handle what is there already.

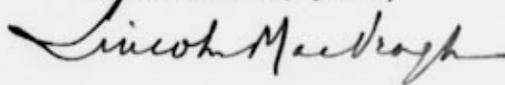
Of course, the question of international complications has been bothering the Greeks a great deal. Their right flank is now badly exposed to attack from the north. That Germany should bring military pressure to bear to restore Axis prestige has appeared inevitable, and that she should do so through Bulgaria rather than through Yugoslavia has seemed the more likely. However, in the past few days, a stiffening attitude on the part of Yugoslavia and new indications of Turkey's determination to "protect her vital interests" have encouraged Greece, even as her successes have perhaps encouraged them. The Director General of the

Foreign

Foreign Office told me yesterday that he thinks Germany wishes to localize the Greco-Italian conflict just as far as may be possible. Nobody here knows exactly what Russia has been up to behind the scenes, but it is suspected that she has not abandoned her freedom of action in regard to Balkan questions and that this may be fundamental in the present situation.

Local political affairs have taken an amazing turn. When Italy began menacing this country, politicians of all shades of opinion rallied behind the Government, instituting a kind of "era of good feeling" for the duration of the emergency. But when General Metaxas accepted the Italian challenge so simply and fearlessly in the dark hours before the dawn on October 28th, he spoke words which have positively endeared him to the Greek people. He now represents the whole country as perhaps no one has ever done at any time in its history ancient or modern. The "era of good feeling" has become an "union sacrée." As I have cautioned the Department, this condition may not survive a long and hard struggle calling for solidier qualities than enthusiasm, but it represents an unexpectedly good start and should help tremendously no matter what the future holds.

Affectionately yours,



*George J. Fisher*

*file  
personal*

Athens, January 19, 1941.

Dear Franklin:

I wish to thank you for the kind words with which the Department recently refused my resignation. That resignation is and has been, of course, always yours to accept at any time, owing not only to the terms of the appointment but to the loyalty of the appointee. In addition, let me say that this is Inauguration Eve, and that our thoughts are with you and with the future, so much of which we are happy to know is in your hands.

On re-reading the pertinent paragraphs of my last letter, of Christmas Day, I find the present general situation here remarkably similar, only intensified. Things appear to be "hotting up." The most outstanding developments from this point of view are the coming of German air-forces to the Mediterranean and the subsequent visit of General Wavell to Athens. In the former connection, it seems that Germany has decided to take over Italy's job of pressing on Britain's life-line in this section of the world, and if so, a move on her part to Salonika

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington.

Salonika would make sense as a step toward securing bases in the Eastern Mediterranean to supplement those she now has in southern Italy and Sicily. Thus, new weight is given to the Greek Premier's opinion, which I have already reported, that a German drive southward from Rumania may be expected soon. On the other hand, British strategy must not only be prepared to meet this threat, but has always contemplated forming an Eastern Front, if possible, in order to extend and exhaust the enemy within the circle of the blockade. Consequently, immediately after expelling the Italians from Egypt, General Wavell has come to Athens not only to discuss with the Greeks the problem of supplying their army, but to seek their aid in the prompt preparation of Salonika for action against Germany, either defensive or offensive, as circumstances may dictate. At the same time, a British Military Mission now in Turkey is trying, I am told, to influence that country to enter the war on Britain's side without further delay. And this also makes sense in the premises, whatever be the success achieved.

To go on with the story, German forces in Rumania are increasing, though perhaps not to the extent alleged by British propaganda, and General Wavell's mission, while disappointing so far as concerns insuring immediate and adequate supplies to the Greek army (hence the continued appeals to us!), has overcome part of Greece's

natural

natural caution regarding giving provocation to Germany to set these forces in motion. The British argument in this connection seems to have been that in dealing with the Dictators it is no use not provoking them, since they will follow in any case what they conceive to be their interests, and if no provocation exists, will invent it, as Italy has so recently done with Greece; and that consequently the best policy is to "fear God and take your own part" rather than to fear Hitler and neglect opportunities. As a result, General Metaxas has consented to allow British reconnaissance of the Salonika district--hitherto barred to all members of the British forces--and, I understand also, to begin discussions aimed at bringing the Greek army administratively under British control, to facilitate supply and the operation of technical services as well as to prepare for eventual cooperation on an increased scale. In addition, I am told that he has concurred in the advisability of the British amassing forces immediately, and preparing transportation, to proceed to Salonika, the moment the Germans cross the Danube. Whether he agrees to anything more than this later, will doubtless largely depend on what Turkey decides to do.

Colonel Donovan has just left here for Sofia after a visit of three days, during which he did a grand job. He flew over from Egypt at about the same time as General

Wavell

Wavell, and stayed at the British Legation with the General, but I had him to lunch with the King and introduced him to the Premier, and without my long and repeated talks with him, both before and after his conversations with the authorities, I could have written little of the above, and none of it with so much confidence. He has been particularly useful, not only as a prominent American fresh from home, but as a Republican, in impressing these people with the unanimity as well as the importance of our attitude toward the war. (He conquered me at once by frankly giving you due credit for your leadership in this matter.) He has shown tremendous interest and a quick grasp of our more important immediate problems, and will certainly know whereof he speaks when he gets back to the United States. I hope you will have a moment to ask him about Greece. He was planning to go to the Albanian front, but the British Minister and General Heywood, Chief of the British Military Mission here, were anxious to rush him up to Sofia and Belgrade without delay, believing that the present moment is truly critical and that he might help to give the leaders in those capitals a very timely steer. When asked my advice on this matter, I fully concurred both in the change of plan and in the reasons for it. The Colonel now intends to visit the front later, before going on to Ankara.

As to the war in Albania, the papers are probably keeping you posted fairly accurately. Neither bad weather

nor

nor difficult terrain, nor enemy reinforcements, nor inferiority of equipment, nor deficiency in transport, nor lack of airplanes has yet halted the Greek advance. But these things have, taken all together, slowed the advance down, and it now seems definitely out of the question that the Italians can be ousted this winter. All the more reason for the Greeks to dread the future, with their flank and rear exposed to possible German onslaught! But the country at large knows nothing of the Government's provisions in this regard, and is quite unaware of British plans and even of General Wavell's visit. The morale of the people, as well as of the Army, remains remarkably high, God bless them both! The young Foreign Service Officer who brought our pouch down to Athens today from Yugoslavia, and who saw, en route, the destruction in Salonika caused by recent bombing, was astonished at the smiling faces he met with. I only hope they may still be smiling when this letter reaches you.\*

Affectionately yours,

*Lincoln MacVeagh*

\* It has taken just 2 weeks for your last note - of Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> - to reach me.

Greece folder  
1-41

file  
personal

Athens, March 8, 1941.

Dear Franklin:

"Leg-over, leg-over, the dog went to Dover", and country by country the Germans have come to Greece. They are now on the border both of Greece and Turkey, and it is confidently expected here that an attack toward Salonika will develop very shortly. Even the hitherto optimistic Under Minister for Foreign Affairs now thinks it unlikely that Germany is merely on the defensive in this region.

Greece is still determined to resist, and the Germans have so far made no offer of terms which might create dissension. The country is still in its heroic mood. Meanwhile, since my last letter, the British have apparently decided not only to help Greece as a gesture but as a part of their own strategic plan. They seem clearly to be intending to bring in considerable forces, mostly motorized, as quickly as transport can be arranged. These forces will be landed south of Salonika, to avoid the obvious risk from air raids at that port. (The story

that

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington.

that there is a Canadian division there already is such a poor lie that I wonder the Germans bothered to put it out.) About a brigade's worth of engineers and signal corps arrived in the Piraeus promptly when the Germans crossed the Danube, and there now seems to be a race going on to see which side can concentrate for the struggle with the greater dispatch, the advantage being with the Germans because of the nature and length of the British communications. In addition, whatever the British bring, the Germans are sure to have the advantage of numbers. But the advantage of the terrain will be decidedly on the side of the defenders. When I asked the British Minister what reason his people had for thinking the defense of Greece possible with the forces available, he replied, "It is the considered opinion of Generals Wavell and Wilson".

The Greeks at present do not intend to withdraw in Albania, fearing the moral effect and the difficulty of retreating with their poor transport facilities. The Italians have close to half a million men in Albania but the Greeks are definitely the better soldiers and believe they can hold. To face the Germans they have some five divisions of their own available and may, with British help, eventually have all the force that can be used to advantage on a short front in mountainous country. At the outset it seems that there will be an attempted resistance at the frontier and then perhaps on the line from Lake Doiran to Amphipolis, where the Allies had their

their positions in the last war, and finally along the mountain barrier running north from Olympus to the Yugoslav border, giving up Salonika but still protecting both Greece proper and the rear of the army in Albania. Much will of course depend upon the ability of the Royal Air Force to keep the more numerous German planes from utterly disrupting communications and demoralizing the defense, and of course if Yugoslavia joins the Axis and the Germans get the use of the Monastir gap, these well-laid plans will go a-gley. On the other hand, if Yugoslavia decides to fight rather than see herself further encircled, there will be a different story too, but this seems to people here to be definitely unlikely, however desirable.

The Greeks in general are beginning to realize the facts outlined by Mr. Eden to the Government (and incidentally to me) in his recent visit. The Turkish army is not equipped to take the offensive and furthermore the Turks are convinced that Turkey and not Greece is the principal objective of the German drive in the Balkans. Turkey may possibly declare war if Greece is attacked, and give Britain the use of her airfields, but Greece can hardly expect any direct assistance. Yugoslavia, on her part, is wavering as to whether or not to take up arms even in case Salonika, which she maintains to be within her zone of security, is attacked. In between the two, Greece will have to bear the brunt of the first shock, and the British will give her all the assistance they possibly can, in the hope

hope that a show of successful resistance here may hearten the others and finally bring about an Eastern Front stretching from the Bosphorous to the Adriatic. Mr. Eden said to me, "I think eventually the Yugoslavs, Turks and Greeks will all be in the fight, but there will be a lot of slipping and sliding before that happens." Obviously, right up to the very last minute, the British have failed to get a line-up established and are still living on efforts and hope. Mr. Eden himself did not seem to be too cast down about this. He said to me, "Even if Germany succeeds in overrunning Greece, I don't see how this will help her. By that time we shall have cleaned up in the Middle East and be sitting pretty in Africa. In making war in the Balkans, Germany is only playing football in her own cabbage patch."

Mr. Eden of course looks at matters from the Empire point of view. If he can't win a victory here, he can console himself with thinking that Germany's victory will be a Pyrrhic victory, but the Greeks have their own fate to consider and were definitely distressed by the news he brought them from Ankara. However, he did his best to cheer them up with assurances that England's effort will be a serious one, and with Wilson here and troops obviously coming, they certainly have something to go on.

Affectionately yours,

*Lincoln MacVeagh*

ROYAL GREEK LEGATION  
WASHINGTON

*file  
personal*

*PSF Greece folder  
1-41*

*3-19-41*

The Minister of Greece is instructed by his Government to convey to President Roosevelt the expression of the deep gratitude of the Hellenic Government and of the Hellenic Nation for the friendly words The President used in his last speech concerning Greece. This noble gesture on behalf of The President caused a vivid and wide-spread emotion in Greece and is a precious encouragement in the crucial days the nation is living.

Washington, D.C.

March 19, 1941. ✓

PSF Greece folder  
1-41

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 19, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR  
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

Will you reply to this  
cable in my name?

F. D. R.

PSF Greece

[TRANSLATION]

TELEGRAM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

RCA ki. 124 Cable

Athens, March 17, 1941

The President:

Your noble words have been deeply felt in Greece whose gratitude towards the United States of America and its illustrious President is infinite [.] In the name of the Hellenic people I thank you for the confidence in it which you are good enough to express [.] In the name of the Greek Army I wish to assure you that every cannon [,] every shell placed in its hands will be a gain for the ideas to which the Union devotes in so lofty a spirit its immense resources [.] The soldiers of Greece are resolved to win, they also [,] the right that free nations worthy of liberty may be able to repeat in the days of posterity your moving words blessed be our ancestors.

GEORGES II.

Tr: :HSF

TELEGRAM

The White House  
Washington

RCA ki. 124 Cable

ATHENES, Mar. 17, 1941



THE PRESIDENT:

VOS NOBLES PAROLES ONT ETE PROFONDEMENT RESENTIES EN GRECE DONT LA GRATITUDE A L EGARD DES ETATS UNIS D AMERIQUE ET DE SON ILLUSTRE PRESIDENT EST INFINIE AU NOM DU PEUPLE HELLENIQUE JE VOUS REMERCIE DE LA CONFIANCE QUE VOUS VOULEZ BIEN LUI TEMOIGNER AU NOM DE L ARMEE GRECQUE JE TIENS A VOUS ASSURER QUE CHAQUE CANON CHAQUE OBUS MIS ENTRE SES MAINS SERA UN GAIN POUR LES IDEES AUXQUELLES L UNION CONSACRE DANS UN ESPRIT SI ELEVE SES RESSOURCES IMMENSES LES SONDATS DE LA GRECE SONT RESOLUS A GAGNER EUX AUSSI LE DROIT A CE QUE LES NATIONS LIBRES ET DIGNES DE LA LIBERTE PUISSENT REPETER DANS LA POSTERITE VOS PAROLES EMOUVANTES BENIS SOIENT NOS AIEUX.

GEORGES II.

Athens, March 25, 1941.  
Greek Independence Day.

Dear Franklin:

Re-reading my last letter, I find that there is no need to alter the general picture there given of the Greek situation. Recent important developments have been few, and mainly along lines already indicated. The picture is becoming more definite, if more uncomfortable.

Yugoslavia has joined the Axis today. The terms are not yet known here, and there may be reservations. But it is the first step which counts, when one gives in to Germany. Turkey's attitude, according to diplomatic friends recently returned from Ankara, has become increasingly offish and timid as regards helping Greece and Great Britain, and Yugoslavia's action is likely to make it more so. Britain, on the other hand, continues to pour in reinforcements here. The British authorities are giving out no information whatever as to the real extent of this effort. This is in keeping with Mr. Eden's  
remark

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D. C.

remark to me, "I am saying nothing on that question, not even to the United States, or to my own Minister in Athens." But of course we can see with our own eyes the ships coming in, trucks and troops crowding the roads, and camps in all the outskirts of the city. The Turkish Military Attaché estimates that there are now 120,000 British in Greece. He may be right, but Major Baker, of this Legation, thinks 80,000 would be closer. Meanwhile, the Greeks have fought an Italian counter-offensive to a standstill, but have themselves been unable to progress toward the desired shortened line in Albania which would permit the withdrawal of divisions to face the Germans. The weather in the north is improving.

Following the settlement with Yugoslavia, and the packing of a huge German force on the Greco-Bulgarian frontier, it is expected here that German demands will be made of Greece very soon, probably in the form of an ultimatum. Von Papen recently told my Swedish colleague in Ankara that the Greeks can expect far less favorable terms now than they might have had last January, if they had asked for them. But now the British are here in force, and the decision is out of Greek hands. Public opinion has been frightened by Yugoslavia's defection, but the die is cast, as the Government and the army as a whole well realize.

Indications

Indications, such as the presence of ammunition dumps and transport parks, would seem to confirm what the King told me some time ago, namely that it is the intention of the British and Greeks to make their principal resistance in the Olympus region. It is clear that a development of the German attack through southern Yugoslavia, which is now more than ever possible, would not turn a line there as it would one established further east. As stated in my last letter, the terrain of Greece greatly favors the defense, particularly against mechanized advance. On the other hand, the discrepancy in numbers between the present opposing forces is enormous. Perhaps the best that the Allies can look forward to is a succession of Thermopylaes. The German air force, according to recent estimates, will take the place of the Persian arrows, darkening the sun, and British tenacity and Greek devotion will fight in the shade.

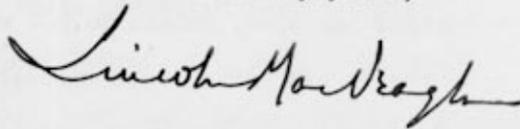
It is possible, of course, that the Germans will not press their attack against Greece proper but content themselves with Salonika, and then switch off against the Dardanelles, leaving a British force cooped up here which might have been used to advantage elsewhere. The Turks appear to be afraid of this, but the idea is not supported by apparent German dispositions in Bulgaria. Meanwhile, recent indications of Soviet willingness not to molest the Turks if they defend themselves are not regarded here as

meaning

meaning any shift toward Great Britain on Moscow's part, but only a desire to let others fight Russia's battles for her.

There are still some dubious points to be cleared up, but we are doubtless on the eve of drastic clarifications.

Affectionately yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lincoln MacVeagh". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Lincoln MacVeagh".

RF Greek Folder

File  
Personal

ROYAL GREEK LEGATION  
WASHINGTON

Canea, May 13, 1941.

685 Greek Legation.  
Washington, D.C.

.....

" I have read with the greatest pleasure your letter which has been transmitted to me by your son, Captain James Roosevelt. His presence among us is another happy token of the help of your interest for my country. I thank you heartily for the help which the American people, under your brilliant leadership, give to Greece in so hard times, and I am very happy to be able to assure you that my people admire your inspired action for the salvation of the civilization and the liberties of the world."

George II.  
R.

PSF Greece Folder

file  
personal

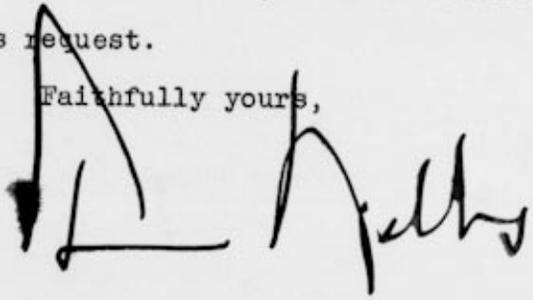
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

July 29, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

On the occasion of the birthday of the King of Greece on July 19, I requested the Greek Minister in Washington to transmit to His Majesty a message in your name, expressing felicitations. There is now enclosed a copy of a communication from the Greek Minister containing an acknowledgment from the King, which is transmitted to you in accordance with the Minister's request.

Faithfully yours,



Enclosure:

From Greek  
Minister,  
Note No. 2272,  
July 22, 1941.

The President,  
The White House.

Department of State

BUREAU |  
DIVISION |

NE

ENCLOSURE

TO

Letter drafted 7/25/41

ADDRESSED TO

The President

No. 2272

July 22, 1941.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

I have the honor to transmit herewith the heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation of His Majesty the King of the Hellenes for the cordial felicitations and good wishes of the President of the United States on the occasion of his birthday as well as for the earnest hope that the future may bring peace, the restoration of their kingdom and their independence to the Greek people.

I should highly appreciate if you kindly transmit His Majesty's answer to The President.

I avail myself of this occasion, my dear Mr. Secretary, to express the assurance of my highest consideration.

His Excellency  
Mr. Sumner Welles,  
Acting Secretary of State,  
Washington, D.C.

file  
personal

Greece Folder  
1-41

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

August 6, 1941.

Dear Franklin:

To put an end to my long series of letters on Greece, I can do nothing better than to send you a copy (enclosed) of my informal notes on the German conquest and occupation of Greece, written in Berlin immediately after my arrival there from Athens. Reading over these notes here I find <sup>only</sup> the most minor corrections necessary on the basis of later information. It is my thought that you may care to have these notes in your files, but if you ever have time to read them you may find them to embody an interesting little story; and they are certainly "hot off the griddle."

Affectionately yours,

Lincoln MacVeagh

Enclosure.

The President,  
The White House.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Notes on the German Conquest  
and Occupation of Greece

Berlin, June 16, 1941.

The Italians attacked Greece on October 28, 1940, and the Greeks immediately foresaw German participation when the time should be ripe. General Metaxas said to me early in November, "Let us not fool ourselves; when the spring comes the Germans will attack us." He told me at that time, - and this attitude was repeatedly reaffirmed to me right up to the final collapse, not only by him, but by his successor and by the King, - that Greece would resist German aggression in the same manner as it had resisted Italian, on the basis not that it expected to keep from being over-run, but that it believed in the final victory of England, and that the country owed it to its future to keep at least its soul alive.

Neither General Metaxas, whose plans for the defense continued to be adhered to though he died before the Germans came in, nor the King, ever believed in any very effective assistance, other than naval, coming from Great Britain. They naturally pressed for all the aid they could get from this source, but their strategy was so conceived that it could be adhered to whether the British sent seven or only three divisions. Neither did they take much stock in Mr. Eden's projected plans for possible Yugoslav and Turkish collaboration. The Foreign Office professed to believe in Turkey's assurances up to the last minute, but the military saw themselves fighting without such props against the combined armies of Italy and Germany and laid their plans accordingly.

#### The First Plan

Their first plan involved driving the Italian Army out of the peninsula before the spring when, with an army of 300,000 men plus whatever expeditionary force the British might bring,

they could support the lightly fortified line along the Bulgarian frontier with a large force located in the mountainous bottle-neck of the Epirus-Olympus region.

This plan presumed the neutrality of Yugoslavia, but was easily alterable to allow for a thrust by the enemy from Bulgaria through the southern part of that country.

#### The Second Plan

However, as spring approached, the Italians had not been driven out of Albania, chiefly on account of the severity of the winter, the mountainous terrain, and the difficulties experienced by the Greek Army in all matters of supply. The Germans by this time had occupied Rumania and seemed likely soon to enter Bulgaria as well. The Greeks then attempted a limited offensive against the Italians to attain at least a shorter line along the Skoumbi River and release a number of divisions for defensive purposes against the Germans, a modification of the original plan as already outlined.

At the same time, in order not to precipitate German aggression, the Greeks insisted that no British troops come to the mainland of Greece until the Germans had actually crossed the Danube. One British division was landed in Crete for the defense of Suda Bay and a British military mission was allowed to come to Athens to study the situation, but the small British air force aiding the Greeks against Italy was not materially increased and no British officers or troops were allowed in Greek Macedonia and Thrace.

#### The Third Plan

When the Germans crossed the Danube and began massing troops on the Greco-Bulgarian border early in March, the British

began to arrive in Greece. The Greek offensive to the Skoumbi had been only partially successful and was now answered by an Italian counter-offensive, which indeed gained no ground, and cost the Italians dear, but effectively kept the Greeks from withdrawing troops to the south to meet the German menace. The British therefore assumed practically alone the central assignment in the Olympus region, their mechanized equipment and the nature of the terrain being counted on to make up for their lack of numbers. What Greek troops were available in this region were placed on the mountains and the British were expected to hold the German columns which might attempt to use the valleys. The plan was now changed again. As in all previous plans, the defense of the Bulgarian border was to be a delaying action only and the main effort was to be made in holding the Olympus region; but this now involved not the withdrawal of divisions from a shortened Albanian line, but a retreat under fire by the whole Greek Army in Albania, and especially its right flank, until contact could be established with the British.

#### The Attack

This last plan was the one finally attempted. The entrance of Yugoslavia into the war raised Greek hopes, but did not necessitate any change in the allied dispositions. The collapse of the Yugoslav armies in southern Serbia only rendered actual what had long appeared possible, namely, the appearance of the Germans in force at the Monastir Gap, turning the British forward positions west of the Vardar and threatening to cut in between the British and the retreating Greek Army in Albania. No more than two Greek divisions were in the entire region east of the Vardar, and these, under cover of detachments left in the field works of the so-called Metaxas Line, were evacuated southwards by sea when the weight of the German attack made itself felt.

Phase One of Operations

The British forces in Greece, the numbers of which had been kept a close secret, were now revealed to me by the British Minister as including no more than two divisions and one armored brigade. This brigade was used by General Wilson to delay the German penetration southwards from Monastir while he abandoned the whole region north of Olympus and west of the Vardar, and prepared to defend the line of the Haliacmon River, as well as to give the Greeks more time to come south and take up effective positions on his left. The brigade was overwhelmed by German armored superiority,<sup>1</sup> but gave a good account of itself. This phase of the battle was a race against time, the retreat of the Greeks being delayed less by the Italian pursuit than by the difficulty of the terrain and by the assaults of German detachments which, as the main body moved south, struck up into the mountains on the flank of their withdrawal.

The small British air force which had now been slightly reinforced, came into action at Monastir and during this phase was very useful in bombing tanks and machine-gunning troops and lorries. The tremendously superior German air force seems not at this time to have swung itself into general action,<sup>2</sup> but nevertheless almost all the British and remaining Greek planes, perhaps 140 machines in all, were accounted for in western Macedonia, and to a less extent in Albania, during this opening stage of hostilities.

1. Note: The German armored strength was estimated at Athens to be two full divisions.
2. Note: The British thoroughly destroyed the Salonika air installations and burned up all the gasoline stocks when the Greeks evacuated the city. The full weight of the German air attack seems to have developed only after the Germans had been able to put the airfields in northern Greece into usable condition - close up behind the battle zone.

Phase Two of Operations

Forcing its way down from the Monastir Gap and pushing along the coast, the German Army came now into contact with the main British position along the Haliacmon north of Olympus, where the British inflicted heavy losses on the Germans as the latter crossed the river; but also the full weight of the German air force here came into play. British communications were continually hammered and the airfield at the main advance base of Larissa was actually captured and held for a time by parachute troops. After a short but sharp resistance the line gave way at both ends and the Germans entered the plain of Thessaly around both sides of Olympus. On the east, near Grevená and later near Kalabaka, where the Greeks were just beginning to get back in some force after great difficulties in the mountains, the fight was particularly stubborn. When the British left Kalabaka behind them and the Greek resistance there was shattered, the Germans not only swept south through the plain but also turned west up the road which connects Thessaly and Epirus, and thus threatened to take the bulk of the Greek Army in the rear. It was this exploitation of the gap opened up by the rapidly withdrawing motorized British in the plain and the slowly retreating Greek infantry in the mountains that decided the fate of the campaign. The British, with great speed and skill, escaped encirclement, somewhat to the surprise of the Germans, but the Greeks were trapped. And, after they had felt the full force of German bombing of their communications and bases in Epirus, Janina being almost completely flattened, and supply columns everywhere blocked or destroyed, they asked for an armistice. The British took up a final defensive position on the Thermopylae line, topographically the strongest in Greece, but they took it up without the Greek forces to help them, which they had counted on in case a retreat to this line became necessary.

It should be said that the British campaign was well handled up to this time, the best use possible being made of the means available. When taking up the Thermopylae position, General Wilson was careful to block the road leading southwest by which the Germans, moving down the west coast of Greece, were attempting to out-flank him. Thus Thermopylae was not turned, but forced,<sup>1</sup> and the Germans paid for it. But something clearly went wrong at this time with the liaison between British and Greeks. I was with the British Minister, General Heywood, commanding the British Mission, and Air Vice Marshal d'Albiac, commanding the RAF in Greece, when they received the news of the Greek surrender, and they were obviously taken completely by surprise. It was ~~obvious~~<sup>clear</sup> that they did not regard the German penetration in the Greek rear as being necessarily decisive, and there are many Greeks today, including soldiers, who agree with them. In this connection, it may be noted that the armistice was signed not by the Greek Commander in the field, but by some of his subordinates, the leader of whom has since become the local "Quisling". An important Greek said to me just before I left Athens that General Metaxas had made his greatest mistake in attempting to resist Germany with a pro-German clique, meaning that his cabinet and his generals were largely drawn from King Constantine's adherents in the last war. The armistice certainly appears justifiable on purely formal grounds, but the question of whether more determined leadership might not have brought at

1. Note: The Germans used both armored units and Alpine troops in this action. No reliable estimate of the total German numbers involved in the entire Greek operation could be obtained in Athens, but it was estimated before the attack took place that about 12 divisions were massed on the Greek and south Serbian frontiers, and that the air force earmarked for the Greek operation totalled at least 1,000 planes.

least a large part of the Greek Army safely back to the Thermopylae line will probably always be debated. When the rebellious generals were communicating with the Germans regarding an armistice, a mysterious order was issued in Athens dismissing all soldiers in that area to their homes and providing them with pay in drachma bills which had been raised from 100 to 1,000 in value. This order was speedily countermanded, but what appears to have been a plot involving the Ministers of Finance, War and Navy, resulted in not only a wave of defeatism spreading throughout the capital, but in the suicide of the Prime Minister, Mr. Korizis, and the formation of a new government. The British are supposed to have taken a stiff attitude in regard to this affair, and to have borne down heavily on the Premier for what had happened, and this is probably the origin of certain stories to the effect that they had him put out of the way.

#### The Pursuit.

The British forces in Greece were evacuated from many points, including coves and beaches, all the way from Chalcis, just south of Thermopylae, to Kalamata at the southern end of the Peloponnesus. The German pursuit was vigorous, but the British motorized equipment was of better quality than the German and it was chiefly through the use of their air force that the Germans inflicted damage on their fleeing opponents. By this time there was no allied air opposition whatever. Parachutists were used in the capture of the Isthmus of Corinth but failed to prevent the British from blowing up the road and railway bridge across the canal and thus delaying the approach of the pursuing columns. It appears that whenever the Germans caught up, their casualties were considerably greater than those of the British, but the effective dive-bombing of small Greek coastal steamers, schooners and fishing snags, commandeered for the purpose of

evacuation, brought the British losses up again. The British appear to have been able to evacuate safely about two-thirds of the total forces brought to Greece, but to have lost all their motorized and armored equipment as well as their artillery and planes. After the whole operation was over, the German troops who swarmed over the entire country not excepting even the smallest islands, appeared to be a badly dilapidated and considerably shaken lot of men. Their material was greatly superior to the British in quantity but inferior in quality, and the dearest hope of their soldiery seemed to be an early ending to a war in which constant victories bring them no rest.

#### The Capture of Crete

The German attack on Greece may be divided into two main parts, or operations, the first directed against Greece proper, and the second against the island of Crete with its important anchorage at Suda Bay. Subsidiary operations involved the seizure of less important islands of the Aegean, notably Samothrace, Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, and Samos, while various smaller islands, not so strategically placed, in this area, as well as the so-called "Ionian" islands (Corfu, Cephallonia, Zante, Lefkas, Ithaca) on the west coast of Greece, were occupied by the Italians. Little, if any, opposition appears to have been encountered in these captures, except at Lemnos when a small force of gendarmes and local guards beat off several attempts at landing. The German troops proceeded to these islands in small Greek fishing craft, and possibly also in motor launches towing pontoon boats and rafts specially brought down from Central Europe in the wake of the advancing armies.

During the war with Italy, the Greeks had drawn practically all the fighting men from the islands for service in Albania, or for garrison of the Bulgarian frontier and the rear areas in Greece.

The Cretan contingent amounted to some thirty thousand effectives, and all who remained of these after the collapse on the mainland were trapped there, leaving the defense of Crete to a few detachments of young recruits plus a British contingent of no more than one division.

The Germans left nothing to chance in their attack on Crete. For several weeks after the capture of Athens they concentrated a special corps of invasion troops in the coastal area from Chalcis to Corinth, and while the armored divisions withdrew northward, brought down a large number of light launches and pontoon boats. These were transported on trucks, as the railway had been thoroughly destroyed by the British, particularly in the region near Thermopylae, where bridges and tunnels are numerous. The Germans must also have imported a great quantity of petrol by truck, and perhaps also by plane. While preparations for invading Crete by land and air went ahead, the German motorized infantry which had pursued the British finally to the very tip end of the peninsula (losing, as I was told by an eye-witness, at least 1,000 dead in the vicinity of Kalamata alone) began coming back with its wounded, and the resulting traffic congestion on Greece's limited roads was terrific. At this time also, the wear and tear on the German vehicles became strikingly apparent. Between Athens and Corinth, among several thousand vehicles there were hundreds halted for repairs both for engine and tire trouble.

The lack of air opposition allowed the Germans, throughout the entire campaign, to operate their planes from fields directly in the rear of the fighting line. Thus at Olympus they based their bombers and fighter protection on Salonika, Florina, and Monastir, and at Thermopylae employed the field at Larissa. For the Cretan campaign they developed the three Athenian fields (Tatoi, Herakleion and Kleusis), and the fields at Corinth and Argos, and built new fields at Megara, and between Gytheion and Monemvasia southeast

of Sparta. This last was apparently used for dive-bombers particularly. Because the Germans had made their last devastating dawn attacks on the Greek airfields with machine guns and incendiary bullets rather than bombs, they inherited the runways in good condition.

When evacuating Athens, the British did not destroy the oil stocks (Shell, Socony, etc.) at the Piraeus, as they had done at Salonika. It seems the Greeks begged them not to, fearing the spread of fire. Among the stocks thus captured by the Germans there was a considerable amount of <sup>high-grade</sup> ~~aviation~~ petrol, but the subsequent intensive operations against Crete by a force of at least 1,000 planes over a period of a few days could not have been carried out without further stocks being brought down from the north, and the German achievement in this regard is worthy of remark, in view of the condition of the roads and the dangers to navigation. I heard of no petrol being brought in by sea at this time.

During the couple of weeks of German preparation, the British made several bombing raids on the airfields in the Athens area, but without important results. Antiaircraft defenses were installed with a profusion unknown during the British occupation of the area. At one time there were eight antiaircraft guns on the Acropolis itself, and after these had been removed at the instance of better judgment, guns still remained on the adjacent hills as well as on the roofs of all important buildings in the city. During the Italian, German and British raids from October to May, planes passed repeatedly over the center of Athens and were fired on intensively on every occasion, but no bombs were ever dropped within the city limits strictly speaking.

When the actual assault on Crete started, about the middle of May, the port of the Piraeus was still practically

unusable. On the night following the initial German attack on Greece early in April, it had been heavily bombed; many ships had been set ablaze, and after futile efforts to tug her to safety, a vessel loaded with 200 tons of TNT blew up close to the Free Zone Wharf, totally destroying the only modern installation of its kind in Greece, and partially blocking the entrance to the inner basins. Later, further bombings sank more ships, notably during the British efforts at evacuation, and the harbor became cluttered with wreckage. Accordingly, no large part of the German expedition to Crete by sea left from this point. Convoys assembled at the island of St. George off Cape Sunium, and in the Bay of Eleusis, near Nea Perama, and perhaps at other points, such as Kyme in Euboea, - which would seem to give an answer to the question why so many German troops crossed to that island on the way down from the north. Bomber and fighter airplanes seem to have been based largely on the Athens airfields, troop-carrying planes on Megara and Corinth, and the dive-bombers on fields further south.

The attempt to invade Crete by sea was a complete fiasco. The convoys were made up of small Greek coastwise steamers - a few of which were left over in Greek harbors after the British evacuation and were assembled by the Germans from far and wide - and of small boats towed by Greek fishing smacks equipped with diesel motors. The passage was nocturnal and the protection was provided by Italian destroyers. As many as five thousand men were committed to a single convoy of this kind; all were heavily equipped and the small craft were packed to overflowing. How many such convoys attempted to reach the island, I do not know, but I had advance anonymous information of the sailing of two. There may have been three, but probably not more, since the fate of the first couple created a mutinous reaction among the troops slated to follow, and there were a number of executions

out of hand at the embarkation points and suicides among superior officers in Athens. The convoys appear to have been intercepted by British naval patrols and decimated, the men who fell into the sea being too heavily laden to swim, even if they knew the art, and the Italian destroyers taking to their heels or being suddenly sunk by the British guns at practically point blank range. To judge from the reports of Greek captains who escaped the holocaust, an estimated loss of 4,000 men per convoy would appear conservative. Few of the Germans who survived came back to Greece, and there were no reports from any source of any sea-borne formations having taken part in the fighting on the island.

Crete was taken by attack from the air. A large force of parachutists was employed, perhaps as many as 1,500 or 2,000. These appear to have been "accounted for". One witness told me of the New Zealanders remarking that they had never had such good snipe shooting in their lives. The parachutists were followed promptly, however, by swarms of bombers and dive-bombers, whose unremitting efforts from low altitudes against slight air opposition, disorganized British resistance and drove it underground. The bombers were then followed by hundreds of troop-carrying planes whose occupants leaped out with machine guns and grenades, and even small cannon, and took up positions front, flank and rear before their opponents could get out of their slit trenches, dugouts, and caves. The battle, in its resulting confusion, appears to have been like nothing hitherto known. The Germans secured an early hold on the airfield at Canea, near Suda Bay, and were never thereafter dislodged from this key position. At Rethymno and Herakleion, the British regained control after first losing it, but wave after wave of troop-carrying planes preceded by bombers and fighters swept in, while the British received no reinforcements except a few marines. The

British fleet shelled the Canea airfield, and effectively defeated the German attempts to bring in troops by sea, as I have already recorded, but was heavily attacked in turn from the air, and lost at least two cruisers, the Gloucester and the York, the latter already damaged and lying in Suda Bay, and four destroyers. Gradually the overwhelming arrivals and the lack of any relief to the British troops, as well as the impossibility of organizing any position in the circumstances created by the German methods, rendered further resistance impossible, and the fleet covered a general evacuation. Some three hundred severely wounded British were left in hospital at Canea, and these were transported by German plane to Athens. Other losses are hard to estimate from information available in Athens, but it seems likely that the British claim to have saved the bulk of the defenders is correct. German losses in planes were clearly very heavy. One air transport convoy left Megara with 130 planes and returned with only 90, approximately. It was said that 300 of these unwieldy Junkers found graves in Crete, and that many crashed badly with the loss of all or most of their passengers. An interesting aspect of the operation was the use by the Germans of old machines which had passed their proper time of service in the air, and obsolescent types. The few British Hurricanes (no Spitfires were seen during the entire Greek campaign) which came into action against them played havoc with these abundant "orates", but their use was justified by their numbers and the restricted British resources. In the early stages, the Germans made some use of gliders, towed behind regular planes to be cut loose at the chosen moment. These gliders seem to have carried a dozen or more men, and to have been regarded as specially dangerous by the troops required to descend in them. A high-ranking air officer, generally credited

In Greece with having been Richtofen himself, the Commander of the German air forces involved in the campaign, was killed on the island of Aegina when demonstrating to his reluctant personnel the perfect safety of the device. Thereafter, little more was heard of it. When the operation ended, Crete was in German hands, but the British defenders had been few in numbers and the majority had escaped after inflicting exceedingly heavy losses and giving the German morale a distinct jolt. The impression was inescapable in Athens that the entire Greek campaign was both harder and more time-consuming than the Germans anticipated.

As might be expected, the liberty-loving population of Crete, composed largely of rugged if backward mountaineers, gave ardent support to the British in the defense of their island, old men and even women joining irregularly in the fray, and it is to be feared that vicious reprisals are being taken. The chief towns were of course practically destroyed by air bombardment.

#### The German Occupation

The German occupation of Greece has finally alienated any elements in the population which might previously have been called sympathetic. The Germans gave out that they were entering as "friends", and desired only to purge Greece of the British. But whereas they entered Salonika and Athens in a peaceful and orderly fashion, their subsequent conduct has been out of keeping with this excellent beginning. The British brought food with them and placed their troops in camps outside the towns, but the Germans entered the country to live on it, without a commissariat, and billeted their troops on the population. In many cases this billeting was allowed to go on at the discretion of the troops themselves, who entered houses and demanded rooms, without orders from above, and then looted when they left, carrying anything they could away with them, particularly silver and linen.

Looting and even wanton destruction appears to have been specially prevalent in the provinces, where cases of rape were also reported. In Athens, the Senior officers, who had installed themselves in the best houses, driving the inhabitants to seek shelter in poorer quarters, occasionally attempted to temper the wind, but the general impression was inevitably that of a wave of ill-disciplined barbarism sweeping over a civilized community, with the result that the Germans and the "Quisling" government they set up, are now universally held in contempt as well as hated.

As regards the food situation, it should not be forgotten that Greece had already been at war for five months when the Germans came in, and her stocks were low. In addition, she cannot normally supply her wheat requirements, and has very little meat - even in peace times. Had the Germans brought food with them, they might have weaned an already almost starving population into thinking that they are indeed the liberators they claimed to be. But their "locust" tactics rendered this impossible from the start, and in addition, their grand gesture of turning the captured Greek Army loose instead of making it prisoner - as a tribute to Greek valor - recoiled on their heads for the simple reason that this army was but turned loose to starve. It would have been far better for the Greek soldiers to have gone to German prison camps, and far better for the country, too. The troops would at least have had something to eat once a day. As it is, they now swarm in misery and rags over a land despoiled. Finally, the commandeering of all private motor transport (and even fishing vessels, for a time) and the destruction of rail communication, deprived the cities of their normal means of supply, and large centers like Athens and Salonika can no longer be fed by the abundant fisheries in Greek waters or receive the benefit of the still fertile market

gardens in certain favored parts of the provinces. The misery of the poor in the cities is certainly greater, nearer the absolute zero of subsistence, at present, than that of the peasants, despite the greater spoliation of the country districts. When I left Athens on June 5th there had been much talk in the German-controlled press of the willingness of the Reich to help the puppet government solve the situation, but no real step had been taken or seemed likely to be taken to that end. Greece is the poorest of European countries. Only 13 percent of her surface is arable land. She is facing real starvation, imminent starvation, and her people not only see that this state of things followed on the German invasion (the "New Order"), but have been sickened by the spectacle of German soldiers in the bun shops eating cream puffs from both hands.

The anti-German attitude of the people has been sharply underlined by a popular propensity to cheer and distribute flowers and candy, cigarettes, etc., to British prisoners in transit through Athens, despite official threats and even wholesale arrests. The controlled press, as well as the German military authorities, has soundly lectured the public in this connection, expressing a rather naive surprise at the same time that the Greeks will not recognize their "real" friends. Following the mysterious disappearance of the German flag from the Acropolis (which had been desecrated with the Swastika the moment the first German troops entered Athens), the whole city was placed on curfew hours. Everybody must be home by 10 o'clock in the evening. As the Greeks love to sit out in the open air cafes most of the night in summer, this has been a real punishment, but if the Germans want the Greeks to regard them as friends, as they say, here again is a false step. Many Greeks are beginning to think that no way can ever be found to get along with the Germans,

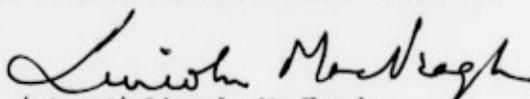
unless it be abject submission, and to regard the possibility of the Italians coming in with something like hope, on the theory that between Mediterranean peoples there is always at least a chance of understanding.

Many developments in Greece appear to parallel those in other German-occupied countries. For instance, there has been an obvious lack of coordination between the civil and military authorities,- between the army command, the Gestapo and the Foreign Office representatives,- and this has led to much confusion and an increase of popular indignation, because of the frequent countermanding of orders and regulations. Then too, the Germans brought their own currency into Greece, specially printed marks of no value outside the country, and with these the troops have bought up practically all the supplies<sup>s</sup> in the shops, leaving in exchange for a large part of the country's wealth mere paper. These so-called "marks" are valued arbitrarily at the Reichsmark rate of exchange fixed prior to the war, 50 drachmas to one mark. Their uncontrolled issue, however, and the fact that in the Italian occupied sections in the west of Greece, liras have been issued at a fantastically high rate, has created an impossible situation for the Bank of Greece. The puppet Finance Minister called on me just before I left and told me among other things, that he was attempting to correct the Italian rate and had received a promise from the Germans to canalize the new marks through the Greek bank of issue, so that at least he might have knowledge of the amount of currency in circulation, but apparently the situation still remains unsettled. Finally, another well known feature of the occupation has been the attempt of the Germans to "buy" control of all important industrial enterprises and businesses. Pressure of various kinds seem to have brought them almost complete success in this matter. I have heard that they urged in a number of cases that

it would be to the advantage of the Greeks to yield control quickly, since the Italians might come in at any time and apply confiscation! Pressure was put on Greek ship owners to instruct their captains in all parts of the world to submit to German control, but it seems likely that the masters, at least in most cases, heard the instructions of the legitimate Greek government with greater sympathy, and have placed their ships in British hands.

When the Greek forces surrendered to the Germans in the north, it was understood in Athens that the step was taken expressly to avoid surrender to the Italians, whom the Greeks had defeated. The terms of the armistice, however, were never published, and the Germans promptly allowed the Italians to occupy the whole west coast as far south as the Gulf of Corinth, including the province of Epirus and the Ionian Islands, while at the same time they turned over to the Bulgars, who were not at war with Greece (if they had been, Turkey would have been obliged to fight on Greece's side), the whole of Thrace and eastern Macedonia as far as the Struma. These two cynical violations of the "friendship" professed, constitute perhaps the greatest gaucherie in an occupation singularly maladroit and ill-conducted. The resentment they have caused is universal in Greece and incurable.

To sum up, Greece is now more pro-British than at any time previously, because she has had the German myth exploded in her face. Instead of civilization, order and discipline, she is experiencing an ill-coordinated and shoddy tyranny, with whose insincerities and inconsistencies she finds it impossible to cope rationally, and under whose violent and uncontrolled rapacity she risks starvation.

  
(signed) Lincoln MacVeagh.  
American Minister.

Cape Town  
South Africa  
August 20<sup>th</sup> 1941

My dear President,

I avail myself of the opportunity of the visit on special mission to the United States of my minister for Mercantile Marine, Mr. Stavros Theofanides, to express to you my feelings of cordial friendship and to say again how happy I was meeting your son in Crete last May.

It was gratifying for me to read the announcement of your meeting with Mr. Winston Churchill and I deeply

appreciate the principles established  
in your joint declaration of war and  
peace aims.

I am looking forward to  
the pleasure of availing myself of the  
kind invitation of your Government  
to visit your Country. That visit will  
be an occasion for me to express  
to you, personally also, the deep  
gratitude of Greece for the continued  
sympathy and generous aid extended  
to my country and my people by

the United States Government and  
the American Nation.

With all cordial wishes,

I am  
sincerely yours

George. T. K.

PSF 9100 60

The Hon. T. D. Roosevelt

President of the United States of America

Washington

S.T.P.

PSF Greece

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF PROTOCOL

October 17, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL WATSON

With reference to the President's memorandum of October 15, 1941, I am returning herewith the letter which the King of Greece sent to the President, together with a draft of a suggested reply.

If the draft meets with the President's approval, I shall be pleased to have it forwarded in an appropriate manner to King George.



George T. Summerlin

Enclosure:  
Original letter from  
the King of Greece,  
with draft reply.

PSF *George Folder*  
1-41

October 22, 1941.

Dear King George:

I was delighted to receive your note of August twentieth, which was presented to me by Mr. Stavros Theophanidas whom I had the pleasure to receive recently, accompanied by your Minister in Washington.

It was indeed gratifying to learn from Mr. Theophanidas of your safe arrival in England, and I assure you that it will be equally gratifying to have you visit the United States. I have discussed your proposed visit with your Minister who has no doubt by this time fully informed you.

With kindest regards and best wishes,  
Very sincerely yours,

His Majesty,  
George II,  
King of the Hellenes,  
London, England.

dj

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file personal

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

December 11, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR THE NECESSARY ACTION

F. D. R.

*FSF  
Greece Folder*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

December 10, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

The Greek Minister, Mr. Diamantopoulos, called on me yesterday and left the attached note, addressed to you on behalf of his Government, expressing the indignation of the Greek people at the perfidious attack by Japan against the United States. I informed the Minister that I would be very glad to lay this communication before you immediately, and made known to him the appreciation of this Government for the prompt and generous sentiments which his Government has expressed.

The Minister also handed to me a note stating that the Greek Government had informed the Government of Japan that since Japan was at war with Great Britain and the United States, diplomatic relations between Greece and Japan were severed by the Greek Government.

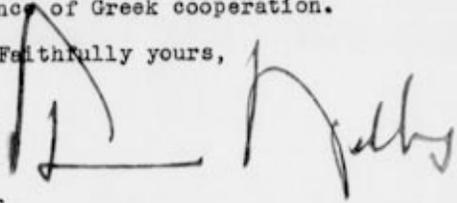
The

The President

The White House.

The Department is also making appropriate acknowledgment of this evidence of Greek cooperation.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'R. Kelly', written over the typed phrase 'Faithfully yours,'.

Enclosure:

Note No. 3590,  
December 9, 1941.

Department of State

NE

BUREAU  
DIVISION

ENCLOSURE

TO

Letter drafted 12/10/41

ADDRESSED TO

The President

PSF Greece

ROYAL GREEK LEGATION  
WASHINGTON

No. 3590

MESSAGE FROM THE ROYAL GREEK GOVERNMENT  
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

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The Greek Government, interpreting the true sentiments of the whole Greek Nation, express to you, Mr. President and to the Government of the United States, their admiration for your untiring efforts to preserve an honorable peace. Failure in that worthy objective is another manifestation of the spirit which permeates and rules the policies of the Axis powers. The unprovoked attack of Japan in the course of diplomatic negotiations looking to a friendly solution of different points of view between the two nations further demonstrates the stealthy methods of the Axis, of which my own country was also a victim. The Greek people resent this perfidious act, and share your confidence and that of the brave and noble American people for complete victory, which you, Mr. President, have made certain by your  
decisive

decisive and inspired policy and forethought, and for which the American people have pledged themselves, resolute, determined and united as never before in the history of your glorious country.

Washington, D.C. December 9, 1941.

PS F Greece  
fill personal

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

February 12, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR  
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

This was brought in by the  
Greek Minister and I talked the  
situation over with him. I do  
not know whether this calls for  
a reply or not. What do you  
think?

F. D. R.

2-4-42

TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT,

On behalf of my distressed and suffering countrymen, may I appeal to you, Mr. President, as the head of the great American Nation, whose beneficent help and humanitarian ideals have contributed so much to alleviate man's suffering throughout the world, to inaugurate relief for Greece by supplying its eight million inhabitants with the bare necessities of life. If this relief is not granted immediately the present appalling situation will continue and thousands more of my countrymen will surely die of starvation. An outstanding citizen of your country could, with the aid of the International Red Cross Committee, rally the necessary support and thus prevent what threatens to be one of the great tragedies of modern times.

Due to the fact that the quickest possible way of supplying Greece is the purchasing and transporting of food-stuffs from the Middle East, principally from Turkey, I venture  
to suggest

to suggest that the American personality in question be provided with the necessary funds and be entrusted with the task of coordinating and supervising on the spot the whole effort.

GEORGE II.

London,

February 6, 1942.

REMARKS OF THE GREEK MINISTER

1. The conditions prevailing in Greece, according to recent and reliable information, are simply appalling.
2. According to the same sources the average number of deaths per day in the more densely populated sections of Greece, especially in Athens and Piraeus, is placed at over 1000. Infantile mortality is spreading, due to an epidemic of diphtheria.
3. It is obvious that the state of things undermines the health, the morale and the courage of the whole Greek Nation. And if these conditions are not remedied immediately, one may justifiably ask in what situation the final victory will find the Greek people who have already sustained so many sacrifices for the Allied cause.
4. In spite of the wonderful work and results accomplished for more than a year by the Greek War Relief, the fact

the fact remains that today, funds and wider action are urgently required if the good will thus far manifested towards the Greek Nation by the American and British Governments and peoples are to produce salutary and immediate results.

Washington, D.C. February 6, 1942.

175 F Greece Field

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 17, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR

HON. GEORGE T. SUMMERLIN

I would suggest that the King of Greece and Colonel Levidis should come to Hyde Park on Friday, June 26th, arriving there any time after 2 P.M., and spend the night. I think he wants to leave Saturday afternoon so as to get to Ottawa on Sunday morning, the 28th.

I will meet him at the Poughkeepsie Station or, if he is coming from New York, he can come directly to the house by automobile.

F. D. R.

**THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON**

June 15, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

Mr. Summerlin said they would appreciate it if they could have the answers to the following questions regarding the King of Greece's visit to Hyde Park:

1. What time are they expected at Hyde Park?
2. Are they invited just for the day or to spend the night?
3. If to spend the night, what would be a proper time for them to leave and return to New York?

GGT

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 29, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The King of Greece handed me the enclosed last Friday, and I think we should answer these to him and his Prime Minister before he leaves.

Will you prepare something?

The illustrated booklet is secret for the reason that its disclosure now might involve innocent people still in Greece.

F. D. R.

Copy of a Secret official publication of The Royal Hellenic Government, No. 121, in re Conditions in Greece-Confidential Photographic Record, memorandum written on the letterhead of the Prime Minister of Greece, dated Washington, D. C., June 15, 1942, in re The Drafting of Greek Subjects, memorandum written on the letterhead of the Prime Minister of Greece, dated Washington, D. C., June 15, 1942, in re Financial Problem, memorandum  
(over)

initialed "E.J.T.", dated Washington, D. C., June 12, 1942, in re aid for Greece, and a photostatic copy of Senate Resolution No. 324, In the Senate of The United States, 5/17/42, reading as follows: "Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that Northern Epirus (including Cortyzal), the Twelve Islands of Aegean, and the western coast of Asia Minor, where a strong Greek population predominates, should be awarded by the peace conference to Greece and become incorporated in the Kingdom of Greece".

x394

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

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enclosed last Friday, and I think we  
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Copy of a Secret official publication of the Royal  
Hellenic Government, No. 121, in re Conditions in  
Greece-Confidential Photographic Record.  
Memorandum written on the letterhead of the Prime  
Minister of Greece, dated Washington, D. C.,  
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Memorandum written on the letterhead of the Prime  
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(over)

Initialed "E.J.T.", dated Washington, D. C., June 12, 1942, in re aid for Greece, and a photostatic copy of Senate Resolution No. 324, In the Senate of

No. 121

~~SECRET~~

# CONDITIONS IN GREECE

Confidential Photographic Record

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
THE ROYAL HELLENIC GOVERNMENT

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
THE ROYAL HELLENIC GOVERNMENT

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED

Confidential Photographic Record

# CONDITIONS IN GREECE

No. 121

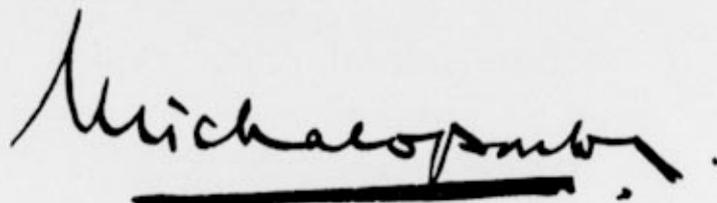
~~SECRET~~

initialed "E.J.T.", dated Washington, D. C., June 12, 1942, in re aid for Greece, and a photostatic copy of Senate Resolution No. 324, In the Senate of The United States, 5/17/42, reading as follows:

THIS collection of photographs tells its own terrible story. It shows hungry men and women waiting in queues for a morsel, children trying to get a little warmth from the exhalations of a drain, and death by starvation in all its horrible forms.

Such is the "New Order" which Germany has brought to Greece. By it the Greek race is threatened with extermination.

More help is urgently needed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michalopoulos", with a horizontal line underneath it.

A. MICHALOPOULOS

*Under Secretary of State  
for Information in the  
Greek Cabinet.*

*April 20th, 1942*

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION



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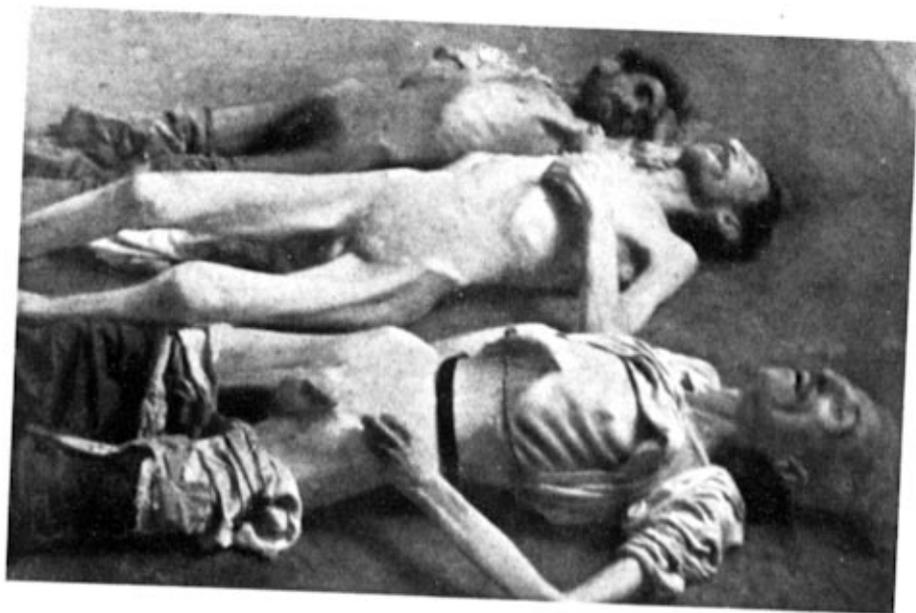
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

July 3. 1942

My dear Mr. President:

There is enclosed herewith for your consideration, and for signature if you concur, a copy of a letter addressed to the King of Greece acknowledging the receipt of certain documents which he handed to you on June 26.

Copies of the three memoranda regarding the drafting of Greek subjects in the United States, the financial problem of the Greek Government, and post-war aims of Greece were also handed to me and to Mr. Welles by the Greek Prime Minister, and are receiving the Department's attention, in consultation with the other branches of the Government concerned.

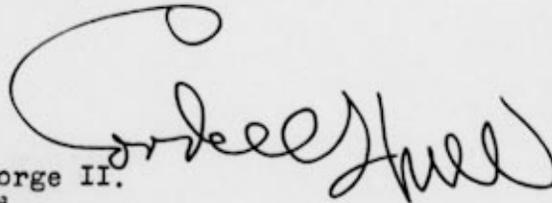
Faithfully yours,

Enclosures:

To His Majesty George II.  
Memoranda returned.

The President,

The White House.



**Department of State**

BUREAU | **NE**  
DIVISION |

**ENCLOSURE**

TO

Letter drafted **7-1-42**

ADDRESSED TO

**His Majesty  
George II,  
King of Greece.**

Department of State

BUREAU  
DIVISION

NE

ENCLOSURE

TO

Letter drafted 7/1/42

ADDRESSED TO

His Majesty  
George II,  
King of Greece.

Greece Folder

July 3, 1942

Your Majesty:

I wish to express my appreciation for the documents which you left with me on June 26, 1942, consisting of a secret photographic record of conditions in Greece and three memoranda regarding the drafting of Greek subjects in the United States, the financial problem of Greece, and the post-war aims of Greece.

I understand that Mr. Tsouderos has handed copies of these memoranda to the Secretary and the Under Secretary of State and that they are already receiving the attention of the appropriate officials of this Government.

Cordially yours,

*(Signed) Franklin D Roosevelt*

His Majesty

George II,

King of Greece.

*Signed original of this letter sent to the Secretary of State 7/6/42  
hm*

6-15-42

The Drafting of Greek Subjects

The Greek subjects in the United States amount to one hundred thousand. The drafting of these men for our Army in the Middle East presents difficulties due to the distance and the consequent problem of transporting them then becomes dangerous and expensive.

We are hoping that we shall be permitted to draft these Greeks in America and to concentrate and train them here in groups in American army centers under American officers together with Greek officers of lower rank.

These Greek troops could be incorporated into larger American units as this is being done in the Middle East where Greek brigades are incorporated into British divisions. The armament, equipment and maintenance of these troops in the Middle East is borne by the British under a system similar to the Lease-Lend.

If the above suggestion were accepted, the drafting of Greek subjects could be extended to South America also, whence it would be convenient to transport the recruits to serve in the Greek regiments in this country.

Washington, D. C. June 15, 1942.

Financial Problem

The Greek public expenditure increases daily for the following reasons:

- a) Our armed forces are constantly increasing by the continuous addition of new volunteers escaping from Greece. It is to our interests, both for Greece and the Allied cause, to strengthen our armed forces to the highest degree. The armament, equipment and maintenance of the Army, Navy and Air Forces, are taken care of by Great Britain through a system similar to the Lease-Lend. However, all other expenditures of the armed Greek forces - salaries, etc. - burden the Greek budget. Today the monthly expenditure for this purpose approximates 200,000 Pounds.
- b) The needs for relief of the refugees (women and children) are substantially increasing daily because, due to starvation the inhabitants escape, especially from the Greek Islands, coming to the Middle East. The expense for their support burdens us, because the help of the Red Cross in this direction is limited. I estimate the yearly expenditure for the support of the refugees who have arrived up to this time, at 200,000 Pounds. In addition to this, one can add the expense required for the evacuation of the children from Greece, should this materialize.
- c) The expense for revictualling Greece, for the most part, is also the burden of the Greek Government. Up till now, the foodstuffs sent from Turkey were paid for by the Greek War Relief. It seems, however, that the means of this Organization are not adequate to continue these payments. Consequently, the Greek Government will have to continue, as a guarantor, to make these payments.

To meet such large expenditures, Greece has limited income - namely, whatever she collects annually from our mercantile marine, or from taxes, or from sharing in freight receipts. This amount does not exceed by a great margin yearly the amount of 1,800,000 Pounds. This income is daily diminishing due to the loss of boats through torpedoing.

Financial Problem - p.2

The Greek Government still has on deposit a balance which is a little over two million pounds.

From the above statements, it follows that the Greek Government will soon find itself facing financial difficulties unless the expenditures for the refugees, the evacuation of children and of the sending of foodstuffs to Greece will be met either by money provided by philanthropic organizations (Red Cross, etc.) or by credits in dollars based on the system of Lease-Lend.

On the above matters, we should appreciate Your Excellency's counsel.

Washington, D. C. June 15, 1942.

6-12-42

The Prime Minister of Greece

MEMORANDUM

1. The Greek Government is confident that the United States of America, which has already manifested so much sympathy toward the struggling Greek Nation, will, together with its ally, Great Britain, give to it all possible assistance when the time comes for the reestablishment of an enduring and just peace.
2. The recognition of our rights would constitute the most concrete encouragement in the hard struggle against oppression and hunger which the Greek people are today waging with such fortitude and daring. The Greek, naturally sensitive, is ready to endure everything to support the ideology of the Allies, knowing that his sacrifices will ultimately benefit his country as well.

Enemy propoganda anticipating this psychology, is endeavoring, with its usual sinister lying, to discourage the Nation, by giving currency to and advocating the idea that our great Allies in the hour of victory will look only to their own interests and that by imputing responsibility for Bulgaria's Acts only to its rulers, our powerful friends will favor Bulgaria.

3. The national claims of Greece are clearly outlined by experience and the teachings of recent history. What Greece desires more than anything else is to be assured that in a moment of international confusion, it will not again become the victim of aggression from the North. Four times during the last thirty years Greece sustained

wholly unprovoked similar attacks: in 1913, in 1916, in 1940 and in 1941. The Greek people would regard it as the most flagrant injustice against them if in the negotiations for peace these harsh precedents were not taken into account.

4. The establishment of a post war collective security and the realization of the Balkan Union to which Greece has been a faithful adherent ever since 1912 will undoubtedly make more effective than was heretofore possible the opposition against the greedy aspirations of successive invaders. However, no matter what form this collective security shall take, it becomes clearly necessary that those nations which are exposed to attack, as is Greece, be strengthened in the best possible manner against aggression so that in the event of an unprovoked attack against them they will be able sufficiently to protract their own defense, until effective aid can reach them, thus too, alleviating the task of international assistance. It is known that the situation created in the Balkans in April, 1941 would have been entirely different if geographical conditions at the Greek-Serbian-Bulgarian front did not enable the enemy, easily and within a very short time to prevent contact between the Greek and Yugoslav armies.
5. Consequently it is indispensable that in the realignment of boundaries in the Balkan Peninsula these needs be taken into consideration. The extension of the Greek boundaries in the Northeast to the Rhodope Mountains and in the Northwest to the Adriatic, and a comparable

readjustment of the Yugoslav boundaries, would materially assist Greece and Jugoslavia against any Balkan assault. It is clear that the strengthening of the Greco-Yugoslav Combination which always and in the nature of things, was steadfastly attached to the Allied democratic nations in all international crises will redound to the benefit of these Powers and will greatly lighten their strategic and political problems in Northeastern Europe.

6. Fortunately the territories to be affected by these suggested changes are very recent additions to the Nations of which they are now a part, having been appended to them since the Balkan Wars. This annexation was at best made at the expense of the principles of nationality and the security of peace. The ethnological composition of those sections even today, notwithstanding the ad interim intentional and forced changes made by their present masters, is not such as to constitute a barrier to the proposed readjustment in the interest of Balkan Peace, especially as the extent of the territory involved is insignificant.
7. It is necessary moreover to note that such a readjustment is dictated by important considerations of political expediency. The nations which have provoked the present calamity and those which have aided and abetted it out of a disposition to plunder and pillage, must suffer the consequences of their conduct. Only thus can they be made careful in the event of similar circumstances arising in the future. On the contrary if those nations

under the guise that they have been misled by the unwise counsel of their leaders, be placed in the same category with their victims, a bad precedent will be established for all and the wrongdoers of today would be encouraged to disregard their international obligations again, at the expense of their neighbors. A thorough and impartial investigation will reveal that the people of these nations cannot be absolved from responsibility, and the imputation of culpability solely to the leaders is untenable. Their rulers represent the national will which has always been dictated by a violent nationalism and which since 1912 has repeatedly manifested itself to disturb the peace of the Illyrian Peninsula. If the opposite were true the people would surely find ways of protesting against and opposing from the beginning and during the war the policies of Germany.

## II

8. In addition to the realignment of boundaries above mentioned, the questions which more directly concern the Greeks, and which we respectfully submit for your favorable consideration are:
- a. The question of N. Epirus,
  - b. That of the Dodecanese,
  - c. That of Cyprus, and
  - d. That of the economic stability of Greece so that it may not after the war suffer a serious crisis either because of over population or

because of inadequate production.

9. With reference to N. Epirus and the Dodecanese there is a detailed discussion in the introduction (signed by me) contained in the Greek White Book, published in London last month, about an Italian attack. We attach hereto two relative notes and a pertinent excerpt from this introduction. The analysis of those questions indicates clearly that both Epirus and the Dodecanese are Greek provinces, occupied by the enemy for almost 22 years, without right whatever. Consequently the matter relates to Greek territories just as for a year now the mainland of Greece has been occupied and oppressed by three enemies. There is nothing therefore to justify the enemy in continuing that occupation. In addition to our old claims to these provinces, our rights to them have been recognized by a series of international acts dating between 1914 and 1920, which remain unexecuted because of the violence and the stealth of the Italians.

### III

10. The question of Cyprus of course is different. It does not concern a demand arising out of the war and one might say that mention of it in this memorandum could be omitted. However, as our object is to submit a full and complete picture of Greek desires and aspirations for the information of the American Government we deemed it proper to include it. Moreover when the time comes, this question could well be settled directly between us and Great Britain, which has knowledge of it. This island is occupied and progressing under the guidance

of a friendly nation, just as was the case with the Ionian Islands, whose return to Greece has been the cause of our profound gratitude toward Great Britain. The latter in 1915 offered to return Cyprus to Greece on condition that Greece abandon its neutrality and side with the Allies. Greece then did not accept that condition. However, since that time twice has she abandoned her neutrality, without imposing any conditions, and with all the means at its disposal fought on the side of the Allies for the same cause and against the same enemies. When peace was made in the last great war there was signed between us and Italy a separate agreement about the Dodecanese where mention is made about the concurrent return to Greece of Cyprus and Rhodes.

Five-sixths of the population of Cyprus, ethnically as well as in religion and language are Greeks. That one-sixth of the population is Turkish is no reason why the five-sixths of the Cyprians should not be permitted to enjoy the right of self-determination, which has been vouchsafed to the peoples.

The history of the last two great wars has shown that the strategic importance of that island is much less significant than is the naval and geographic location of the whole of Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean. During the last two world wars, Greece voluntarily offered to and did play its proper part which history and the geographical position of the country dictated. Consequently the

union of all the islands with Greece, whose Greek character is clear from every point of view and cannot be questioned, did give Greece great power and did engender the obligation that it continue the same policy in the future by the side of the Allies. Moreover, this matter can be adjusted by special agreement.

#### IV

11. The economic stability of Greece is constantly precarious due to the mountainous composition of its soil and the consequent inadequacy of production. Notwithstanding the industriousness of its inhabitants, production is not sufficient to meet the needs of the country. Moreover, the effort of the people to raise sufficient wheat is constantly thwarted by the persistent increase in population, the birth rate in time of peace substantially exceeding the death rate.

Thus the population problem facing Greece is one of the most serious facing any European country, and the continued increase in population will in the near future create a difficult situation if adequate measures are not now adopted for its proper solution.

Of course, if Eastern Thrace, which due to its Hellenic character, had been awarded to Greece by the Treaty of Sevres, had remained a part of Greece, then such a problem for us would not exist today owing to its wheat production. Hence Greece, in the peace that is to come, must secure its economic stability in order to escape in the near future complete economic suffocation and the social and political

incongruities arising therefrom. Consequently the question of emigration of the surplus population must occupy the attention of the government equally with other national problems.

The present government does not demand colonies for the solution of this problem. Nevertheless it seems that some countries sparsely populated must be designated as places where the right of emigration shall be open and that this right be accorded as well to the Greeks whose emigration could serve no political purpose. One of those provinces is Cyrenaica, which as it appears from the map, faces Greece and where in the past flourished prosperous communities. Moreover, the problem of emigration of nations which have a surplus population to countries which are under populated does not concern Greece alone. The stabilization of peace will depend in a large measure from the careful and just solution of this problem too, generally considered. The Allies must win not only the war, but the peace also.

V

12. Continuing what has been stated in the preceding paragraph relative to the economic stability of Greece, its government is deeply anxious as to how it shall face the complicated situation of economic ruin which immediately after the war will prevail in Greece. All its prewar economic structure will have deteriorated if it is not completely destroyed due to the war and from the intensive and long usage of all the means of production and communication. Thus put, the whole problem along with the urgent question of food replenishment

of the country which is suffering from starvation, presents a truly gigantic problem, especially in view of its limited products and, in general, means of exchange. Only by the cooperation of our great companions-in-arms will it be possible for this problem to be solved in time with the establishment of peace.

Greece is a country which can serve as a center of enterprises with Northern Europe as its field of activities through which it would be possible to find speedily and soundly the necessary capital in order to make available in Greece economic reorganization and the indispensable imports for the adjustment of its various obligations.

Washington, D. C. June 12, 1942

E. J. T.

9-19-41

Excerpts From the Introduction of  
"The White Book" Published in London

On landing Dodecanese May 5, 1912 Commanders Italian forces General Ameglio, Admiral Presbitero declared following to Greek Archbishop Bishop: We assure you most categorically that at war's conclusion your islands which only provisionally occupied be granted autonomous regime. We give this assurance as soldiers and christians you may regard statement as gospel words.

After few weeks began banishment imprisonment Greek islanders. At Balkan war's outbreak Italy seized opportunity concluding advantageous peace with Turkey which allowed Italy not evacuate Dodecanese till disappearance all opposition Libia - enabling prolongation of occupation.

Italian opposition also implacable at Adriatician junction where for millenia historical geographical ethnological strategic economic boundary of Hellenism been set. When in 1912 victorious Greek forces reached Valona, Italy vetoed further progress. Greek Government yielded forcemajeur limiting Greek occupation to indisputably Greek Districts Argyrokastro Koritza but even there Greece's irrefutable claim soon questioned by Italy who exerted pressure on great powers with Austria's complicity contriving Greek evacuation of those districts. Greece again yielded forcemajeur but local inhabitants on own initiative uptook arms to preserve liberty Greek blood being shed again as it was in 1940, 1941 for third time. Corfu protocol May 17, 1914 fruit of

northern Epirotes struggle provided safeguard for autonomy two Greek inhabited northern Epirus Districts regarding schools, churches, military service administration generally. Protocols International recognition embodied in declaration dated July 18, 1914 communicated to Greek Government by six great powers Athens ministers. October 1914 at allies invitation and Italy's assent Greece again sent army into two districts to preserve order.

Italy taking advantage Greece's internal difficulties arbitrarily occupied northern southern Epirus, occupation lasting two years being marked by harsh cruelties towards unfortunate Greek population. At conclusion World War Greece in forefront of victorious powers, thanks to part played by Greek army in Macedonia where enemy's collapse started. Wars end coincided with one of those short intervals on which Italy relied to gain time at difficult moments with deliberate intention repudiate pledged word at first opportunity. Veniselos Tittoni agreement signed July 29, 1919, general settlement outstanding questions. Italy recognized Greek rights in Dodecanese Northern Epirus in return for heavy Greek sacrifices. Calm soon broken. Few hours before signature Sevres Treaty Italy showed reluctance honour signature of July 29, 1919. It was necessary Veniselos threaten leave peace conference to oblige Italy sign Treaty August 10, 1920 ceding Dodecanese to Greece. Italy also compelled accept decision of British American French delegations peace conference recognizing justice of Greek views regarding Northern Epirus. Italy used GrecoTurkish War 1920, 1922 as pretext defer fulfilment conditions 1920 Treaty and 1919 agreement and when Greece lost war Italy unilaterally denounced Sevres. Treaty concerning Dodecanese. Simultaneously in Northern Epirus 1913 events repeated

with Italy exerting pressure to ensure GrecoAlbanian frontier disadvantageous to Greece. Relative protocol signed Florence January 27, 1925. After Epirus Italy's aim gain foothold on Corfu. For this she staged one of the most infamous examples international violence. August 1913 Tellini murdered near GrecoAlbanian frontier under highly suspicious circumstances. Italy immediately presented Greece ruthless ultimatum recalling Austrain 1914 ultimatum. Italian navy bombarded demilitarized Corfu killing several mostly refugee children and occupied island. Small countries solidarity League Nations and Britains firm attitude compelled Italy evacuate Corfu after obtaining from Ambassadors Conference satisfaction to all demands including half million pounds indemnity. Although international agreements regarding cession of Dodecanese Northern Epirus unfulfilled Greece still held two contractual pledges. As regards Dodecanese Article 15 Lausanne Treaty under which Turkey renounced rights to islands and famous Article 16 same Treaty stipulating settlement. Dodecanese question between interested parties condition clearly referring to Greece as party entitled to them by reason of populations purely Greek nature and Italy as having taken islands from Turkey. As regards Northern Epirus Albanian Declaration October 2, 1921 regarding minorities pledging Greek character Argyrokastro Koritza be preserved. Italy strenuously attempted invalidate pledges.

Settlement envisaged Article 16 never materialized. When 1928 Veniselos made friendly overtures to Italy latter specifically promised any movement seeking denationalization Greek populations under its sovereignty would cease but situation deteriorated. Greece honouring pledge dissolved Dodecanese Northern Epirote organizations within her territory although some originated ottoman rule period or served philanthropic purposes. Italy initiated system harshest persecution everything Greek directly in Dodecanese indirectly in Northern Epirus through instruments of policy. Persecution two fold. Positive method consisted uprooting Greek element by unwarrantable oppression enforcement laws ruinous to agriculture and cattlebreeding imposition harsh, taxation compelling Greeks emigrate seek better fortune distant countries like Belgian Congo East Africa. Negative method consisted reservation fertile districts Rhodes Epirus for Italian settlers. Simultaneously violences rigorous pressure sought compel remaining Greeks forswear everything Greek. Greek languages use a crime, Famous schools like Venetokleion Amarantion, Hippocraton even primary schools closed, Greek children obliged betray national family traditions and be tortured in ways of Fascist youth organizations. Same happened Northern Epirus. In prewar period over two hundred Greek schools existed by 1925, halves thereafter showed continuous decline as follows: Bistop school years 1925-26 to 1933-34 schools numbered 78, 68, 66, 60, 63, 64, 43, 10 zero; teachers numbered 113, 102, 95, 85, 83, 82, 50, 11 zero. Greece compelled appeal League and Court International Justice. Case upheld by decision April 6, 1935, some schools reopened but number greatly reduced - teachers, pupils working in atmosphere terrorism. Northern Epirus Greeks drew scant hope from years 1935-40. With rest of nation they shared martyrdom 1941.

## AIDE-MEMOIRE

In continuation of yesterday's conversation concerning the Dodecanese, I note what follows:

1.- On April 22, 1912 the Dodecanese was occupied by the Italians on a temporary basis only.

2.- On July 29, 1919, the Venizelos-Tittoni agreement was signed, concerning the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula. By this agreement Italy cedes to Greece the sovereignty of the islands in the Aegean occupied by her.

3.- On July 22, 1920, Italy denounced the agreement. But in consequence of a protest by Greece, made a few days later, Italy through her diplomatic representative in Athens, informed Monsieur Venizelos that the denunciation must be considered null and void.

4.- On August 10, 1920 the Greco-Italian treaty of Sevres stipulated that the Dodecanese would be ceded to Greece with the exception of Rhodes, which would also be ceded to us after the eventual cession of Cyprus to Greece by Great Britain.

5. - This Sevres Treaty was not carried out by Italy on various pretexts and finally Italy denounced it with no reason.

6.- The Lausanne treaty of 1923 (art.15 and 16) settles this question as follows :-

In virtue of art.15 Turkey definitively resigns all her rights on the Dodecanese in favour of Italy. Art.16 stipulates that the question of the Dodecanese will be settled between the interested parties, clause concerning the Greek rights.

Consequently this question is one whose solution  
concerns Greece and Italy alone.

London, September 19, 1941.

## AIDE-MEMOIRE

On the question of Northern Epirus I give the following summary of existing international instruments recognizing Greek claims:

1.- On July 18, 1914 the representatives of the Great Powers in Athens communicated the following to the Greek Government: "The undersigned have the honour to bring to the knowledge of H.E. the Foreign Minister of Greece that the Governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Italy and Russia have accepted the agreement which has been reached in Corfu between the International Commission and the representatives of the Epirotes regarding the future of Northern Epirus."

2.- In September 1914 the British Minister in Athens requested the Greek Prime Minister to send troops to Northern Epirus to restore order. Monsieur Venizelos accepted conditionally upon the full consent of the Italian Government. The Italian Government agreed to the occupation of N.Epirus by Greece. This was effected and order was restored.

3.- Article 7 of the secret agreement signed in London on April 26, 1915, between Great Britain, Russia, France and Italy, provided for the permanent cession of N.Epirus to Greece..

4.- On March 30, 1919, at the Peace Conference, the Committee entrusted with the study of territorial questions regarding Greece, submitted a report, on the basis of which the Central Commission for Territorial Questions, on April 9, 1919 adopted the views of the above Committee, which were favorable to Greece.

5.- On July 29, 1919 by the Venizelos-Tittoni agreement (art.2)

concerning the Mediterranean and Balkan Peninsula, Italy abandoned her reservations as regards the N.Epirus question and undertook the obligation to assist Greece in this matter.

6.- On December 9, 1919 in a British-French-American memorandum bearing the signatures of Sir Eyre Crowe, Clemenceau and Polk, the claim of Greece regarding N.Epirus were recognized and on January 3, 1920, Italy, by a specific memorandum, signified her adherence to the British-French-American memorandum.

7.- On May 17, 1920 the Senate of the United States of America unanimously voted that N.Epirus and the Dodecanese must be ceded to Greece by the Peace Conference and must be united with Greece.

8.- In 1921, Italy profiting by diplomatic conditions unfavourable to Greece, succeeded in obtaining the non-execution of the above decisions.

9.- Italy since then - that is for over twenty years - has employed every conceivable means of rooting out every trace of Greek civilization in N.Epirus.

London, September 19, 1941.

66th Congress  
2d Session

## Senate Resolution No. 324

In the Senate of The United States  
May 17, 1920

### Resolution

**Resolved,** *That it is the sense of the Senate that Northern Epirus (including Corytza), the Twelve Islands of the Aegean, and the western coast of Asia Minor, where a strong Greek population predominates, should be awarded by the peace conference to Greece and become incorporated in the Kingdom of Greece.*

*Attest:*



*John A. Gerry*  
Secretary

MAYFAIR 8860  
TELEGRAMS: CLARIDGES, LONDON

Greece - 1942  
Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> 1962

Claridge's  
Brook Street, W.1

My dear Mr. President,

a short while ago I happened to pick up an old American silver Beaker, made about 1700, by a certain Anthony Isaac of Newport, Rhode Island. Your lovely collections immediately came to my mind, and I am hoping you will care to accept it as a souvenir and a small token of gratitude for all your kindness and understanding shown me, as well as all you did for us during my visit to your lovely country.

Claridge's  
Brook Street, W.1

The loss of the Duke of Kent has been a terrible blow to everybody in this country, and particularly to his family and all his many friends. We miss him badly.

A few days ago I saw Mr. Winston Churchill, who, in spite of a sore throat, was in splendid spirits and in a combative mood! There are quite a few signs now, thank God, indicating a more successful future I feel. The splendid work done by your Forces in the Pacific and various other activities over the globe seem to point to the dawn of better times.

I just heard there is a favourable and  
sure opportunity of sending it early next week,  
and hope it reaches you safely

So very often do I think back to our  
interesting talks and miss them. My  
experiences in the U.S. were precious to  
me and I only regret I could not have  
seen more and met more interesting people  
(a tre quiet!). But I hope a kindly fate  
will some day permit me to come again.  
In the mean time I have the very  
happiest memories of a thrilling visit and  
the wonderful hospitality shown me by the  
people and their splendid President.

I enjoyed so much seeing Martha over here. I am sure she will give you all her news herself.

I hope you are keeping well and that the Simms is behaving itself!

Would you please kindly remember me to Mrs. Roosevelt? and give her my best regards.

Wishing you the very best of good luck

I remain, dear Mr. President,

very sincerely your friend

George I. R.

[G. R.]

Private

for

the President.

S. D. R.  
11

Greece - 1942

His Excellency

The President of the United States of America.

From

The King of the Hellenes.

October 3, 1942.

Dear King George:-

On my return from a trip to the Pacific Coast, I find your delightful letter and that wonderful old American silver cup. It is lovely in its design and workmanship and I am placing it with one or two other old pieces of silver of the same period -- one of them the work of a great-great-great uncle of mine who was a silversmith in New York City more than two hundred years ago.

Except for the usual politics in an election year, things are going well over here with our increasing production of munitions, and I agree that on the whole the general world situation seems to become more hopeful as the months go by.

Marthe, as you know, is safely back but she has suffered a good deal from the old allergic trouble. She and the children are back at Pook's Hill. She accepted a new sub-chaser at the Navy Yard here just before I went away -- and I hope that by Spring time I shall have a similar vessel for your Navy. I am sure you will have no trouble getting officers and a crew to man her.

I hope much that you will come  
back soon and pay us another visit.

With my warm regards,

Always sincerely,

His Majesty  
George II,  
King of Greece,  
Claridge's,  
London.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

*greece folder  
1-42*

December 8, 1942

My dear Tony:

Thank you very much for your letter of November 6, 1942, to which was attached a copy of "Salute to Greece" which the Greek Prime Minister asked you to forward to me.

Please transmit the enclosed acknowledgement to Mr. Tsouderos.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Enclosure:

Letter to Greek Prime  
Minister.

The Honorable  
Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, Jr.,  
American Ambassador near the  
Government of Greece,  
Care of the American Embassy,  
London.

*Sent to the Secretary of State for delivery  
12/9/42  
hm*

P  
Y

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 8, 1942

My dear Mr. Prime Minister:

You were very kind to send me, through Ambassador Biddle, a copy of "Salute to Greece".

I have examined with great interest this anthology of cartoons relating to Greece's resistance to the Axis. It recalls most graphically the inspiring loyalty and heroism of the Greek people, which, in a particularly dark hour, restored to the minds and hearts of civilized men everywhere new courage, determination and hope.

Believe me, my dear Mr. Prime Minister, with my thanks and best wishes,

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

His Excellency

Emmanuel J. Tsouderos,

Prime Minister of Greece,

London.

*Original copy of letter sent to Mr. Biddle  
for delivery to the Prime Minister through Ambassador  
Biddle.*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

December 7, 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

In response to your memorandum of December 1, 1942, there are attached herewith a suggested letter to the Greek Prime Minister, together with a note asking Ambassador Biddle to transmit the letter to Mr. Tsouderos.

Enclosures:

1. Letter to Greek Prime Minister for President's signature.
2. Note to Ambassador Biddle for President's signature.

CH

**Department of State**

BUREAU  
DIVISION

**NE**

ENCLOSURE

TO

Letter drafted **12/2/42**

ADDRESSED TO

**The President**

*Greece folder  
1-42*

1)  
*hm*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

December 1, 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR  
THE STATE DEPARTMENT

Please prepare reply for my signature to Dr. Tsouderos. This, we shall send to the Prime Minister through Ambassador Biddle.

F. D. R.

Enclosures

Letter from Hon. Tony Biddle, Embassy of the U.S.A., 40, Berkeley Square, London, W.1, 11/6/42, to the President, enclosing a copy of "Salute to Greece" a collection of cartoons published in British newspapers which consecrate the memory of the Greek victories over the Italians. This book is sent to the President by The Prime Minister of Greece, Dr. Emmanuel Tsouderos.

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The White House  
Washington

*Longman Greece file*

DEC 25 10 18 AM 1942

W3 115 GREEK GOVERNMENT VIA COML

LONDON DEC 24 1942

NFT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

(WASHNDC)

MAY I ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR ADDRESS TO YOU MR PRESIDENT AND MRS ROOSEVELT AND ALSO TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MY MOST SINCERE AND CORDIAL WISHES STOP THE WHOLE GREEK NATION IS CONTINUING THE STRUGGLE ITS CONFIDENCE IN VICTORY UNSHAKEABLE STOP ITS SONS ARE PROUD TO BE FIGHTING BY THE SIDE OF THE SOLDIERS OF THE GREAT AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IN THEIR MAGNIFICENT STAND FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE AGAINST THE POWERS OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION STOP MAY THE ALMIGHTY GRANT THAT BEFORE LONG THE HEROIC EFFORTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FURTHERANCE OF THEIR IDEALS BE CROWNED WITH ALL SUCCESS

GEORGE 11 R.