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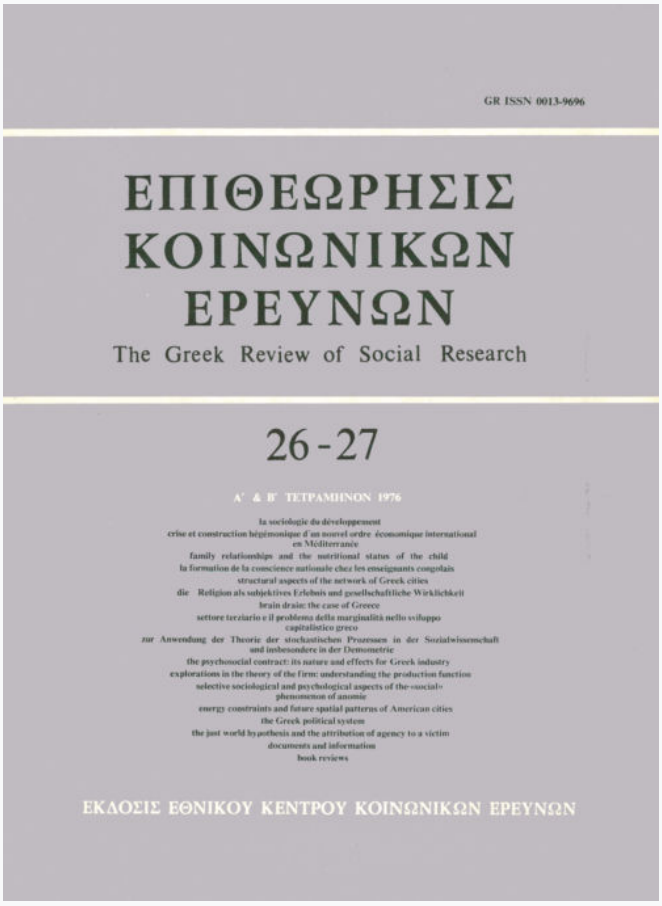

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the Greek political system

Its Strengths and Weaknesses during a Century of Free Political Life

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«It may be right to begin at the beginning in any kind of study, but not in history.»

BURCKHARDT

The siege and conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 is one of the most significant events in world history. This conquest brought about consequences altogether different from those of the great invasions of the barbarians during the fifth century. As a result of the invasions, the civilized Mediterranean world was separated in two parts; its Western part fell into the hands of the barbarians, whereas its Eastern part, with Constantinople as its great political center created the Greek Byzantine Empire which for over ten centuries was to be the center of the civilized world, preserving ancient civilization for modern Europe. Throughout the Middle Ages Constan'inople magnetically attracted the barbarians and successfully resisted their attacks. The conquest, however, of the Empire's capital by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 gave them a hegemony over the East for centuries and it almost changed the course of world history.

«The conquest of Constantinople,» a prominent byzantinologist wrote, «was most significant for a variety of reasons but also because the siege has been the first won through the use of artillery, a new weapon for that period, that science marked out the fatal date of the months of April and May 1453, as the significant time that closes the Middle Ages and opens the period of modern history.»[1]

But long before the siege of Constantinople and as a result of the Crusades, a serious political conflict arose between East and West in addition to the ecclesiastical dispute that brought about the schism of the churches in 1053. The invasion and domination of a large part of the Near Eastern area by the Crusaders resulted in the strong resentment and bitterness of the Latins by the Greeks. «To the Greeks,» Edward Gibbon wrote, «the Latins were the most odious of heretics and infidels; and the first minister of the empire, the great duke, was heard to declare that he had rather behold in Constantinople the turban of Mohammed than the pope's tiara or a cardinal's hat. A sentiment so unworthy of Christians and patriots was familiar and fatal to the Greeks....»[2] If one then recognizes at the time of the conquest of Constantinople three distinct civilizations, the Western, the Near Eastern, and the

1. Schlumberger, G. L., *La Siège, la Prise et le Sac de Constantinople par les Turks* (Paris, Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1814), 11.
2. Gibbon, E., *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York, n.d., The Modern Library, Random House, Vol. III), p. 761.

Middle Eastern in their respective stages of development, one must ask the question: when and in what way the Near Eastern world made its mental reorientation toward the West? Historians seem to agree that about the third quarter of the seventeenth century this reorientation was well under way among both the Russians and the Greeks, and Toynbee strongly suggests that among the latter, where there was no «enlightened monarch» like Peter the Great to give it an impulse, its origins are more mysterious and more interesting.

An accurate and precise explanation of changes and mental reorientations in the development of civilizations, although a question of great historical and intellectual interest, is beyond the scope of this work. However, it is reasonable to believe that since the end of the seventeenth century the Western civilization has exerted a profound influence upon the Near Eastern world. The Western political idea of nationality undoubtedly has been a primary force in European politics throughout the eighteenth century and after, and its influence was soon felt in other areas of the world. The power of the Western political idea of nationality was too great to be ignored; in addition, the religious toleration manifested in the West affected most profoundly the political, economic, religious and intellectual life of the European societies and helped to create the image of an «Enlightened Europe» the world over. It was in this light of the image of Europe that the Greek hatred for the «Latins,» so fatal and detrimental to the destiny of the Greek Byzantine Empire, had completely disappeared. Just before the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Greek National Assembly meeting in the ancient port of Epidaurus (Peloponnesus) on January 27, 1822, «the first year of independence» to work out its first provisional constitution, issued a manifesto to the peoples of Europe. Western culture and influence were strongly manifested in the appeal of the people who took arms against their tyrant.

> The war we are carrying on against the Turk is not that of a faction or the result of a sedition. It is not aimed at the advantage of any single part of the Greek people; it is a national war, a war the object of which is to reconquer the rights of individual liberty, of property and honor, rights which the civilized people of Europe, our neighbors, enjoy today.... Bulding upon the foundation of our natural rights, and desiring to assimilate ourselves to the rest of the Christians of Europe, our brethren, we have begun a war against the Turks.... firmly resolved to attain our end, to govern ourselves by wise laws.... believing it to be unworthy of us, as descendants of the glorious peoples of Hellas, to live henceforth in a state of slavery fitted rather for unreasoning animals than for rational beings.... It should not, therefore, appear astonishing that we were not able from the very first to proclaim our independence and take rank among the civilized peoples of the earth, marching forward side by side with them...[1]

A great political thinker and the founder of modern constitutionalism, John Locke,[2] in his famous work shortly after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 rather prophetically asked: «Who doubts but the Grecian christians, descendants of the ancient possessors of that country, may justly cast off the Turkish yoke which they have so long groaned under whenever they have the power to do it?» The answer to this question came about one hundred and thirty years later. The Greek War of Independence was indeed a significant historical event not only in terms of a rebirth of the Greek nation, but primarily because a revolutionary movement in that part of the world had most consciously applied the Western national idea. This view is strongly shared by historian Toynbee who saw the Greek Revolution of 1821 as perhaps the first movement in this region by a conscious application of the Western national idea, «a movement more revolutionary than any other in that area at the time and the Western idea most dominantly expressed».[3]

Thus, it seems that the Greeks in their national revolution against the medieval despotic Empire responded the way Locke had anticipated many years before. Adamantios Koraes, followed by many others, aroused profound interest in the «Enlightened Europe,» and the strongly desired assimilation with the rest of Christian Europe was now in full development. What seems to be even more significant is that such assimilation was sought by the Greeks, not only in terms of military techniques, administrative and economic organization but more profoundly in terms of education. The process of Westernization in the Near East, preceding by many years that of the Middle East, was clearer and more substantial than in the latter, because all pre-existing difficulties which could have possibly hindered such an influence had already been removed. In addition, the military intervention of the Allies at a crucial point of the Greek Revolution, four years after it began, decisively determined the coming into political existence of the Greek state. The Treaty of London of 1827, by which Great Britain, France and Russia pledged themselves to demand an armistice from both parties (Greeks and Turks), following the protocol of April 4, 1826, by which internal security for the Greeks was secured on payment of an annual tribute to Turkey, clearly represented an open European intervention in favor of the Greek cause. Finally, the Protocol of 1829 providing for the

1. *British and Foreign State Papers* (London, J. Harrison and Sons, 1829, Vol. IX), p. 629.
2. Locke, J., *Two Treatises on Civil Government* (London, George Routledge and Sons, 1887), p. 292.
3. Toynbee, A., *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (Boston and New York, Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1922), p. 17.

political organization of the freed Greek territory as a hereditary monarchy under a Christian prince to be chosen by, but not from, the dynasties of the three Protecting Powers under the suzerainty of the Porte, and the London Protocol of 1830, by which the frontiers of the newly created Greek state were established, constituted strong and positive manifestations of Western interest and influence in the form of an open political and military intervention in that part of the world.

a. Greece in early nineteenth century

In 1830, after years of struggle against the Ottoman Empire, Greece became an independent state in Europe. The courage of the Greeks who rose against a despotic tyrant in order to free themselves and enjoy the fruits of liberty in a new national life fills the period of the Greek Revolution, and it has already acquired legendary proportions in the history, of this nation. Nonetheless, such a great love for freedom, and the acts of self-denial that characterized this whole revolutionary period, could not bring about the rebirth of the Greek nation without substantial assistance from the Great Powers in the form of both military and diplomatic intervention in favor of the Greek cause.

The independence of the small Greek state was guaranteed by Great Britain, France, and Russia, and two years later Greece's frontiers were finally arranged. Peloponnesus, present central Greece, and some islands of the Aegean Sea were the territories of the newly-born state. Epirus, Thessaly, and Macedonia remained under Turkish sovereignty, the Seven Ionian Islands under a British protectorate; Crete was joined to the Egyptian pashalik of Mehemet Ali until 1840, when, against the wishes of the Christian Cretans (a majority of the island's population) it was restored to direct dependence upon the Turkish Empire. William Miller, a historian, remarked: «The poorest portion of Hellenism was awarded to Greece, the richest was left to Turkey, the seeds of four future wars were sown, and a feeling of unrest created, for the cramped body of Hellenism lay uneasily upon the Procrustean bed which diplomacy had cynically constructed for it.»[1]

The Ottoman Empire reached its zenith in power and culture throughout the sixteenth century; both, however, began to degenerate during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At the time of the Greek War of Independence (1821), it was clear that the decadent Ottoman Empire was torn internally by anarchy and a growing discontent of its Christian subjects. The Greek Revolution was the outcome of forces aspiring for a national revival but as a concrete racial movement was obscured beneath an ecclesiastical designation. Marriott remarked in his work that «to the Turks the social and political differential has always been not race but religion. Every one who was not a Moslem, unless he were an Armenian or a Jew, was a Greek.»[2] The manifesto of the Greek National Assembly to the peoples of Europe in 1822, however, not only declared that the war against the Turk was a national war «to reconquer the rights of individual liberty, of property and honor,» but it also explicitly stated the strong desire of the Greek revolutionaries to «assimilate ourselves to the rest of the Christians of Europe.»[3] It is historically significant that the Greek population survived the annihilation of the Greek Empire; a great number of Greeks rose to important positions of influence under the Ottoman Empire. «The creation or toleration of such an *imperium in imperio,*» an English scholar wrote, «might from the first have seemed of doubtful wisdom... but throughout the Ottoman dominions, the theocratic basis of Greek unity had been deliberately maintained by the policy of the Ottoman conquerors.»[4]

The Greeks throughout four centuries of Ottoman rule became attached to their religion by a double tie of faith and national sentiment. This became possible thanks to the policies of the Islamic Empire, and yet, as Phillips remarked «the most intolerable of all tyrannies is that which expresses itself, not in isolated acts of violence, but in a consistently applied system of contemptuous toleration.... In dealing with a conquered people, Machiavelli had said, one must either crush or conciliate. The Turks had done neither. They had made their rule as galling as possible to the pride of the subject race, while they had neither destroyed its organization nor even, in some cases, deprived it of its weapons».[5] The loose organization of the dominions of an Empire, whose companions for over two centuries were decay and degeneration, was seriously challenged by a national revival of the Greeks who demanded their political independence and their freedom from the Turkish yoke. In this they succeeded after a continuous struggle of eight years.

John Kapodistrias, a man of commanding experience from the island of Corfu, became the first President of Greece, elected to this office for a pe-

1. Miller, W., *Greece* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 28.

2. Marriott, J., *The Eastern Question* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 197.

3. *British and Foreign State Papers* (London: J. Harrison and Sons, 1829), Vol. IX, p. 629.

4. Phillips, W., *The War of Greek Independence*, 1821-1833 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1897), p. 6.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

riod of seven years by the National Assembly of Troizen (Peloponnesus). His election to the presidency in 1828 seemed to provide the still-fighting nation a leader of European culture and experience. Kapodistrias soon was murdered, probably because of his autocartic ideas in governing the country, and for a brief period of time the country was ruled by his less intelligent and less educated brother, Agostino Kapodistrias. However, it was rather clear that the newly-born nation could not be ruled by a President because of the strong national characteristic of individualism, an individualism that was further accentuated by the unbridged differences between highlanders and islanders, seafarers and agriculturists, Phanariotes (from Phanari of Constantinople) and autochthonous chieftains. At the same time, no Greek royal dynasty existed to provide a Greek King. Thus, the Kapodistrias brothers, before the first was murdered and the second ousted, turned to two foreign dynasties alien in religion and completely unrelated to the country, to find a King who could give unity to the nation.

The London Protocol of 1829 had excluded the possibility of a hereditary monarch to be chosen from the royal dynasties of the Powers guaranteeing the independence of the country. The first King of Greece had to be found somewhere else. The future King Leopold I of the Belgians refused the offer made to him; it was accepted by Otho, a young Bavarian prince. As the King was not yet of age, when he assumed the throne in 1833, the real power of governing the new nation was entrusted to a regency of five Bavarians. In addition to the regency, the Protecting Powers sent their resident representatives to observe and advise the government of the small kingdom.

b. the bavarians and their reforms in Greece

King Otho and his Bavarian advisers were rulers of a country long enslaved and governed by conquerors; it was naturally devoid of resources of material progress. Hundreds of years of successive subordination to different foreign rulers had produced a Byzantine tendency to plots and machinations. The new regime of King Otho and the regency had all power to govern the country and introduced a new administrative system by dividing the whole state into prefectures and the prefectures into provinces. A centralized system of municipal government was established, resembling closely the then existing European bureaucratic model. Under the Turkish tyranny, local autonomy had received the approval of the Sultans and has been considered by many historians as the most promising and outstanding feature of the nation in captivity. The regency made a significant effort to establish a system of public education, compiled an educational code, took positive steps in favor of agriculture, industry, maritime commerce, and communications; it also provided the basis for an economic policy of the new state, reformed the monetary system, and gave to the country a panal and civil code.

The regency was also instrumental in bringing about a drastic reform in the organization of the church. The church in Greece was recognized as an autocephalous institution, entirely independent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. This organizational reform was not in accordance with the canons of the Great Church of Constantinople, and took place without the latter's consent, but it was modeled after the church of the Russian state. The supreme ecclesiastical authority was vested in the Holy Synod composed of five archbishops under the protection of the King. The Patriarch of Constantinople did not recognize this autocephalous institution created in 1833. A severe blow to the religious hegemony of the Great Church of Constantinople, this most drastic step of the Bavarian regency created an animosity between the mother Church and the Church in Greece. This breach was not healed until twenty years later and for a long time was thought by some as a sacrilegious act and by others as a completely justified ecclesiastical policy of the newly-born Greek state.

The program of ecclesiastical, administrative, economic, and legal reforms was badly needed and the regency should be credited for initiating and putting it into effect. Errors were made in the first basic steps of organizing the new state, but such could not always be avoided, especially in organizing a newly-freed nation whose national character and mentality were foreign to the Bavarian reformers. The various political factions which were created in the last years of the War of Independence became more crystallized during the period of the Bavarian rule and their strong resentment against it reached an explosive point in the fall of 1843.

On September 3, 1843, Greek politicians and military men staged a coup d'état against the Bavarian rulers and carried it out successfully. In this historical but nonetheless bloodless uprising in Athens, the revolutionists demanded that King Otho grant constitutional liberties and convoke a constituent national assembly. The King rather reluctantly promised to meet these demands, and a new cabinet, entirely Greek this time, came to power under the chairmanship of A. Metaxas. Great Britain and France expressed their satisfaction in the new developments, but the Russian Czar, obviously dissatisfied with the change, relieved his ambassador in Athens from his diplomatic duties.

The coup d'état of September 3, 1843, is rightly regarded by Greek historians, lawyers, and politicians as the birthday of Greece's constitutional system. Greece, thus, succeeded in the first stage of political development along Western lines. However, it would be rather absurd to dismiss the importance of the reforms introduced by the Bavarians and the effect they had in the country's life. In addition, the opening of the University of Athens in the seventh year of Otho's royal rule (1837) was of great significance. It became Greece's great center for higher education and, soon enough, this new Attic Academy became the principal factor of a spiritual regeneration.

Greece lived under the constitution of 1844 for almost twenty years. In reality, the whole constitutional engineering that took place at that time should be more accurately viewed as a compromise between King and Assembly. The Parliament was organized into a Lower House and a Senate. Under the prevailing political conditions and circumstances, however, the King and Protecting Powers remained the ultimate source of sovereignty. Rewarding as it might be the fact that the country enjoyed a constitutional stability from 1844 to 1862, national and international events of that period did not contribute to a normal and peaceful development of Greece's political life.

The various political factions in the country, already formed during the first few years of Otho's rule, developed during this period into political parties. The constitutional extension of the franchise to all male adults in 1843 helped in the formation of political parties and gave to the Greeks a command of their own destinies. However, it is significant to note that the national objective of unifying, under the political sovereignty of the national state, all Hellenic territories still found outside of it was too strong a desire to be ignored or compromised by the Greeks and their political parties. King Otho was ready to lead the movement of liberation to the neighboring areas of Thessaly and Epirus, but England and France, not willing to see Turkey's territorial integrity impaired, exerted all their pressure on Greece. Applied diplomatically and militarily, it threatened King Otho with forced abdication in the event that he would not order the Greek revolutionaries to withdraw from these areas. The King, whose rule was so much resisted ten years earlier for being too autocratic, became, in the face of a new national tragedy, the center of love and affection of the bitterly disappointed Greeks.

Otho's popularity thus reached an all-time high but it did not last long; the outbreak of the Austro-Italian war of 1859 created great difficulties for him. A Bavarian himself, he could not hide his sympathies for Austria, but the Greek people, very enthusiastic for the Italian cause, highly suspected the King's Austrophil views. The opposition to Otho's government became strong in the domestic political scene; it tried to embarrass the government and it seemed at the time that it could count on a strong and widely-spread democratic feeling of the people, rekindled by the achievements of Garibaldi in southern Italy. The opposition's political leaders, having the enthusiastic support of the student body of the University of Athens, systematically attempted a strong anti-dynastic propaganda and showed the same missionary zeal for the theoretic beauties of the French Revolution, which, inspired the fighters of the War of Independence.[1]

c. Greek national expansion and the parliamentary regime

Otho's deposition created a new political situation and during the interregnum of 1862-1863 a provisional government directed the affairs of the country until a National Convention could elect a king. The difficulties of selection which faced the National Assembly in December, 1862 were great. Otho had no offspring and no Greek wanted to see one of his Bavarian relatives occupy the throne. However, it is equally true that under the then existing political conditions in the country and because of the absence of a personality commanding the traits of great leadership, a change from Monarchy to a Republic was practically impossible. England's offer to Greece—made even before Otho's deposition—of the seven Ionian islands, was too attractive to be ignored by the provisional government. The Greek government, wishing to capitalize upon this offer, and in order to create a friendly attitude toward England and secure her favor, conducted a plebiscite. The result of this plebiscite was to offer the Greek throne to the English prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, instead of the Duke of Leuchtenberg whom England disliked. In spite of the ratification of this popular vote by the National Assembly, in the hope that the government of England would recognize it as a *fait accompli*, this government refused the offer. The plebiscite's result in favor of prince Alfred provoked France's and Russia's protest; English diplomacy triumphed once more by excluding the Duke of Leuchtenberg, and subsequently helped in the choice of prince George of Denmark, who became the second «Greek» King in October, 1863.

1. Svolos, A., «L'Influence des idées de la Revolution Française sur les constitutions Helléniques de la Guerre d'Indépendance,» *Revolution Française*, New Series, IV, 4 (1935), pp. 340-355.

As soon as the King arrived, new elections were proclaimed and the delegates chosen immediately took part in the second national assembly (ethnosynelefsis) to work on the new constitution. Meanwhile, in May, 1864, the Ionian islands became officially part of Greece and their representatives participated in the new constitution making. This new constitution, finally adopted in October, 1864, established a parliamentery monarchy. With the Senate abolished, the unicameral Parliament was the organ of popular sovereignty (laocratia). The King maintained some of his rights under the new constitution, which as a whole was far more liberal than the previous one.

The first parliamentary election was held in April, 1865, but none of the cabinets, formed during this first period, enjoyed political stability. The political frictions among the political parties, as well as rumors about possible uprisings against the new regime, hardly helped the country to enter a most needed period of normal parliamentary life. Three cabinets succeeded one another in a period of two years, and during the third one under the leadership of Voulgaris and Delegeorges, the Cretan revolution began. This revolution's diplomatic consequences had a most significant effect on Greece. With the exception of Russia, the other Powers did not seem to favor the revolution although the Greek government made special efforts to create the most favorable conditions for its success. Nevertheless, three years of struggle against the Turks and a series of negotiations between the Protecting Powers and Turkey did not change the island's Turkish rule.[1]

During the next twenty-five years from 1868 to 1893, the political life of Greece was one of cabinet instability. In terms of this country's foreign policy, one could see a sincere desire to establish cordial relations with Turkey. Yet in 1878, an invasion of Greek troops to liberate Thessaly almost caused a new war between Greece and Turkey. This unsuccessful attempt was rewarded two years later when the Treaty of Berlin (1880) awarded Thessaly and Epirus to Greece.

Charilaos Tricoupes appeared to be the most outstanding Greek politician throughout this period. He tried to conduct Greek foreign policy with one basic objective in mind, the interests of Hellenism still under captivity. He also attempted significant economic reforms leading to economic reconstruction of the country and was instrumental in putting into effect a military reorganization on solid foundations. In order to materialize his ambitious economic program, he reverted to extensive foreign loans and rather excessive taxation, fully conscious of the unpopularity of the latter. Significant economic reforms were badly needed in order to solve the country's chronic economic problems but could not be financed without foreign capital. At the same time, foreign capitalists whose investments were in great demand were invited to invest their money under the condition of full control of Greece's public finances. Tricoupes, after hopeless efforts to attract more of this foreign capital and unable to meet the foreign capitalists demands, officially declared the bankruptcy of the Greek state in December, 1893. The declaration of bankruptcy was detrimental to the country's interests from the international point of view, grouping all foreign capitalists against Greece, but it also resulted domestically in the devaluation of the Greek currency, in greater inefficiency of the administrative apparatus, and in the deterioration of discipline in the armed forces.

The very unpopular economic measures of Tricoupes' cabinet resulted in his resignation. Deligiannes, his party in the majority in Parliament after the elections of 1895, became the new prime minister. His main effort was directed at achieving some kind of compromise with the foreign capitalists who had invested their money in the country. In this he was successful and also attempted to start a program of economic reconstruction. Deligiannes, however, being unable to resist the strong popular excitement against Turkey, caused by the latter's massacre of thousands of Armenians, seemed to advocate a philopolemic policy. The Deligiannes' cabinet, under pressure from all directions and faced by the «National Society» of ambitious army officers forcing the government's hand, ordered the capture of the island of Grete by the Greek fleet, though without declaring war against Turkey.

All efforts made to limit the consequences of the new conflict were unsuccessful and on April 5, 1897, Greece and Turkey were at war. This war resulted in a great military defeat of the Greek Army. An armistice on May 8, 1897, was made possible through the mediation of Russia's Czar Nicholas II and was followed by the Treaty of Constantinople of November 4, 1897. Greece was obliged to pay Turkey war reparations amounting to 100 millions gold francs. Her defeat had another consequence, the partial reform of the «régime des capitulations,» limiting substantially the rights and privileges of the Greek consular authorities in Turkey.

In order to be able to pay war reparations to

1. It must be stated here that the reading of the German diplomatic correspondence with regard to the Cretan question clearly reveals, in this writer's opinion, a pro-Greek policy of the British government strongly opposed by a pro-Turkish policy of the German government. For detailed information, see *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914* (From Bismark's fall to 1898) selected and translated by E.T.S. Dugdale (New York and London : Harper and Brothers, 1929), Vol. II, pp. 446-470.

Turkey, Greece was granted the necessary amount by the Powers at a 2% interest, but at the same time, due to the insistence of Germany and Austria, an «International Economic Commission» was established in Athens, to secure the interests of foreign capitalists who lent their money.[1] The Treaty of Constantinople, however, did not provide a solution to the Cretan question. With the favorable intervention of Great Britain and Russia, and because of the refusal of the Cretan people to lay down their arms unless a solution was found, the Greek prince George (the King's second son) was appointed High Commissioner of the island. A little later the Turkish garrisons were forced by Great Britain to evacuate Crete. This decision met with the approval of all the other Powers, except Germany and Austria, and gave great encouragement to the Cretan people, who thought that their national aspirations would soon be materialized.

Thus, the nineteenth century came to a close and the twentieth century began with Greece's intensified effort to realize her national expansion to the north and bring within her national boundaries the Hellenic areas still under captivity. A new struggle, known in history as the «Macedonian Struggle,» took place in the first few years of the century. This struggle could be considered in terms of historical significance second only to the War of Independence. Its historical chapter was successfully closed during the Balkan Wars (1912-13). In the meantime, the situation in Crete changed significantly because of the revolution of Therissos (1905). A revolutionary convention there declared the union of the island with Greece. Eleftherios Venizelos, one of the protagonists of this revolution, was destined to become the most outstanding statesman of modern Greece until his death in 1936.

The political life of Greece during the first part of the twentieth century presented the same characteristics as the preceding period. Greek parliamentarism did not function ideally, although an effort was made, in the midst of so many thorny problems, to provide the country with the only possible form of government for so intensely political a people. It would be reasonable to say that this parliamentary form of government could have provided an example to other countries more advanced in civilization and less successful in the art of government; nonetheless, the numerous conflicts among the major European Powers throughout this period found fertile soil and at times their resolution in a country which, as it has already been observed, lay uneasily upon the Procrustean bed because of their antagonisms, machinations, and diplomatic maneuvers. It is, therefore, in the light of these peculiar complexities, that one should evaluate the merits of the Greek parliamentary governments during this most difficult period. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the Greek historians, pronouncing his judgment for that period, remarked, «During the fifty year's reign of George I twelve political leaders altogether governed the country... none of whom was justified by his contemporaries... One after the other, small and great, they descended into their graves with bitterness on their lips and sorrow in their souls.»[2]

In the Greek parliamentary elections of November, 1910, Venizelos, until then premier of the autonomous island of Crete, headed the Liberal Party of Greece and won a landslide victory. The new Parliament was charged with the additional responsibility to revise the constitution of 1864. The revision was accomplished and the new constitution was ratified in January, 1911. The new constitutional reforms introduced the system of parliamentary committees, made it illegal for professional military people to take active part in politics, declared membership in Parliament incompatible with the holding of office in certain private enterprises, and strengthened the independence of the judiciary; they recreated the Council of State, made elementary education compulsory, and guaranteed the right of assembly, and of freedom of speech and of press.

Venizelos' foreign policy was one of moderation in its relations with Turkey; it also manifested a desire to improve relations with Bulgaria. Greece's military strength in 1911 was the greatest achieved since her independence, and her alliance most desirable to her neighbors. Thus, in 1912 secret military treaties were concluded between Serbia and Bulgaria and later between Greece and Bulgaria. The complete ignorance of the Turkish government about these treaties and the very provocative stand of the Young Turks against the Sultan's regime speeded up the explosion of the first Balkan war. During this war, however, it became rather clear that the allied countries could not avoid the conflict once victory over Turkey was achieved. «Ferdinand,» Roucek said, «joined the First Balkan War against Turkey, hoping to obtain part of Macedonia and a frontage on the Aegean and he miscalculated Bulgaria's further chances by striking against his allies in the Second Balkan War of 1913.»[3] In the meantime, King George I was assassinated in Thessaloniki

1. For an illuminating discussion of the serious financial problems of the Greeks, see, Levandis, J., *The Greek Foreign Debt and the Great Powers, 1821-1898* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944).

2. Aspreas, G., *The Political History of Modern Greece* (Athens: Greece, 1922), p. 241 (In Greek).

3. Roucek, J., *Balkan Politics* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1948), p. 119.

(1913) and crown prince Constantine became King and supreme commander of the Greek forces. The two Balkan wars resulted in the territorial expansion of Greece to the north in Epirus and Macedonia, and Crete was finally united with Greece.

The centuries-old conflict between Greece and Turkey, in spite of the former's territorial expansion, continued throughout the first World War. The expansionist policies of the Greek governments of this period and of that immediately following the war are a matter of historical record. Not entirely unbiased, in this writer's opinion, but with adequate documentation, Cosmetatos seriously attempted to evaluate the events of this period and their historical consequence in a work published ten years after the end of the first World War.[1] The unity of the Greek nation throughout these years was seriously impaired by the fact that Venizelos' policies several times were opposed to the policies advocated by the King, and resulted in the final failure of Greek national expansion. This antagonism created a tense political atmosphere in Greece and saw the formation of two political groups, the Venizelists (Liberals) and the Royalists (Populists), which polarized political life over the next twenty-five years. External forces greatly contributed to this polarization, but Greek political leadership of this period was not blameless for the catastrophic results.

The Greek military defeat resulted in the massive deportation of one and a half million Greeks from Asia Minor.[2] Greece's inability to absorb productively the mass of the refugees necessitated a series of drastic measures. Thanks to the mobilization of world philanthropy, particularly American, and with assistance by the League of Nations, the foundations were established for the refugees' restitution. However, this great influx of Greek population from the other side of the Aegean sea, taking place at a time when the national crisis had reached its climax, sharply divided the nation in two political camps. It also revived and highly intensified the old conflict between the so-called «autochthonous» and «heterochthonous» and profoundly affected the balance of power in the political life of the country. In addition, territorial changes and economic sanctions were imposed on Greece by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. Greece had to return Eastern Thrace and some of the islands of the Aegean sea to Turkey and was also obligated to pay her for damages illegally caused by the authorities in Asia Minor. Even more, as Professor Roucek put it, «the Lausanne settlement of 1923 placed a tremendous strain upon the morale of the country.»[3]

At the end of 1923, after the greatest failure of militant Greek nationalism, the revolutionary government of S. Gonatas under strong pressure of democratic elements led by the leader of the revolution, N. Plastiras, forced King George II to leave the country and made Admiral P. Koundouriotes provisional President. The reason given for the coup d'état was that the King's resignation from the throne was a national necessity. The royal dynasty of Glücksburg was thought to be responsible for the delayed participation of Greece in the war on the side of her natural allies. The revolutionary government also felt that the return of King Constantine, in spite of the Entente's objections, was responsible for the loss of Asia Minor and East Thrace and the expulsion of the Greek population from Turkey.

The years 1923-1926 were ones of great political instability in Greece. On March 25, 1924, the national assembly, in the election of which the royalists had not participated, declared Greece a republic and the plebiscite of April 13, 1924, approved this assembly's declaration. The political instability of the first year of the republic came to an end when General Th. Pangalos with the army's support came to power. His assumption of power was approved by the national essembly, after guarantees had been given by the general that he would not violate the established form of parliamentary government. Very seldom, however, have promises of military men to respect the parliamentary institutions been kept and Pangalos' case was no exception. He soon dissolved the Parliament, imposed preventive censorship, and took a number of other illegal measures, thus preparing the establishment of his personal dictatorship. A year later, when Pangalos thought himself firmly established, another general, G. Kondylis, with the support of the garrison of Athens, overthrew Pangalos' cabinet and imprisoned him. He soon formed a new cabinet, and after reinstituting Admiral Koundouriotes to the presidency of the republic, proclaimed new elections from which his party abstained.

The adoption of a system of proportional representation in the parliamentary elections of November, 1926, did not make it possible for any single political party to gain a majority in Parliament. Those elections resulted in a new cabinet, called «ecumenical.» The main objective of the ecumeni-

1. Cosmetatos, P., *The Tragedy of Greece* (Translated fromGreek into English by E. W. and A. Dickes, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1928).

2. For some interesting aspects of the life and civilization of the Greek ethnic group in Asia Minor, see, Karl Dietrich's work: *Hellenism in Asia Minor* (Translated from the German by Carroll N. Brown, New York: Oxford University Press, 1918).

3. Roucek, J., *Balkan Politics*, p. 186.

cal cabinet was to attempt a solution to a number of economic problems. The stabilization of the Greek currency, the balance of the budget and a series of measures to achieve the refugees' restitution were of the greatest importance. Having failed to solve these acute problems the cabinet was replaced by another one of wide coalition; the new cabinet faced problems of the same magnitude and finally brought the revolutionary period to a close in June, 1927 when it completed the drafting of the republican constitution.[1]

The cabinet's economic policy was termed successful at the time, but it was not accompanied by the prosperity of the masses. E. Venizelos, greatly encouraged by the popular resentment against the government's austere economic measures, became active in politics once again after four years of absence from the political arena. Successfully obtaining the approval of the President of the Republic to a dissolution of Parliament, E. Venizelos proclaimed new elections under the majority system (single member constituencies). After a landslide victory, winning 225 out of 250 seats, he formed a new cabinet in August, 1928. For the first time in the constitutional and parliamentary history of Greece, a cabinet ruled the country over a period of four years in a highly constructive manner and with great success both at home and abroad.[2] Prospects of Balkan co-operation increased, and as Professor Padelford has observed, «Venizelos' return to power in Greece infused a more liberal attitude into Balkan diplomacy.»[3] There was an indication, however, that the new regime was not established on solid foundations. This writer believes that Kaltchas accurately interpreted the precariousness in which the republican regime found itself when he said:

> The Greek Republic was not grounded in widespread popular opposition to the institution of monarchy. It emerged from a military disaster which marked the end of a century of Irredentist expansionism, and for which king Constantine was held responsible by a large part of the defeated army and the Greek people... Precisely because to the Republicans rank and file — possibly more than one half the Greek people — the Republic was synonymous with Venizelos, it did not command the allegiance of the other half, whose loyalty to King Constantine's memory was as intense as their hostility to the Cretan statesman.»[4]

To be sure, the four years from 1928 to 1932 in the political life of Greece can be termed a period of true parliamentary dicratorship. However, in the period between 1933 and 1935, the Parliament, although still a sovereign body, played a less effective role until it was finally abolished in August 4, 1936, when General J. Metaxas became the absolute dictator of the country. Argyropoulos, writing in 1936 and describing the great parliamentary crisis of the two preceding years, said that «the crises of the regime were doubled by the crises of parliamentarism. These crises had a dual character: a crisis of general order, which was the crisis of parliamentarism raging everywhere, and a crisis specifically Greek, because the country did not want or could not be governed but only through one responsible leader.»[5]

Thus, Greek parliamentarism, which was established in 1864, closely following the model of Western parliamentarism and which survived numerous great crises throughout the years, came to an end in August, 1936. Detailed analysis and evaluation of the parliamentary system of government under which Greece lived for over seventy year cannot be undertaken in this work. It is this writer's opinion, however, that the brief historical analysis made in the preceding pages indicates the problems the parliamentary system had to face and the factors which determined its success as well as its failure.

d. the Metaxas' dictatorship

The dark period of Greek politics — the dictatorship of General Metaxas (1936-1941) — was perhaps the natural outgrowth of a number of symptoms of abnormality which characterized this country's political life. As an English writer observed, these symptoms were accentuated between 1933 and 1936.[6] Metaxas' rising to power, however, was greatly facilitated by a most impressive historic coincidence, the eclipse of the protagonists of the previous twenty years (Kondylis, Venizelos, Tsaldaris), who all died within the first six months

1. For the constitutional engineering of this period in order to complete the Constitution of 1927, see, Miller, W., «The Completion of the Greek Republic,» *Contemporary Review*. CXXXVI, 763 (July, 1929), pp. 40-46 and Mirkine-Guetzevich, B., «The Constitutional Question in Greece,» *Political Quarterly*, Vol. VI, 3 (July-September, 1935), pp. 411-416.

2. Miller, W., «Greece Since the Return of Venizelos,» *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. VII (1929), pp. 468-476.

3. Padelford, N., *Peace in the Balkans* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 8.

4. Kaltchas, N., *Introduction to the Constitutional History of Modern Greece* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1940), pp. 149-150.

5. Argyropoulos, P. A., «La réforme constitutionelle en Grèce,» *Revue des Sciences Politiques*, Vol. LIX (janvier-mars 1936), p. 15.

6. Waterlow, S., «The Decline and Fall of Greek Democracy, 1933-1936,» *Political Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII, 2 (April-June, 1947), pp. 95-106, and Vol. XVIII 3 (July-September, 1947), pp. 205-219.

of 1936. His whole political career, nevertheless, was not that of a statesman but of a political opportunist. His military training and his inability to further his political objectives within a parliamentary framework were instrumental in orienting him towards the establishment of a dictatorial regime. He achieved his objective in a coup d'état on August 4, 1936. His dictatorial regime, which lasted almost five years, was the longest in Greece's political history. Metaxas, presiding over a cabinet whose members were some of the most unsuccessful and disillusioned parliamentarians of the preceding period, abolished the individual's constitutional liberties. He also dissolved the existing political parties, closing their headquarters, and instituted a governmental paternalism of the worst kind, consciously attempting to imitate the then «glorious» Nazi and Fascist regimes in their ideological emtpiness, their politico-economic structure, and their military character and organization.

Membership in the political organization of the Greek youth (National Organization of Youth) became compulsory throughout the entire system of public and private education in Greece including colleges and universities. A similar organization of the young workers in the so-called Work Battalions, the compulsory as well as «voluntary» contributions for «a strong royal air force,» the well-planned and organized festivals to honor the new regime, and the dectator's appeal to make the country's economy self-sufficient («not even a span of soil should remain uncultivated»), were all measures tending to mobilize the country on purely totalitarian lines and for totalitarian objectives. On the other hand, the silencing of political leaders, after the political parties were dissolved, was accomplished either by their imprisonment in or exile to the small inslands of the Aegean sea under the close supervision of the regime's secret police. There was, however, a significant improvement of the Greek economy throughout the period 1936-1940. Among the results achieved were increased production domestically and a higher rate of exports, a better system of communications and transportation, some relief of the chronic discontent of the farmers, and the adoption of an elaborate system of social insurance which included pensions and socialized medicine. A consistent policy of military preparedness throughout the troubled years preceding World War II, and the successful resistance of Greece under the leadership of Metaxas against the invasion of fascist Italy further enhanced the prestige of his regime.

The Metaxas government had adopted a policy of neutrality in the war between the Western Powers and the Nazi and the Fascist regimes. On October 28, 1940, however, the Greek dictator was faced with an ultimatum from fascist Italy. He rejected it and managed to mobilize effectively the Greek armed forces which counter-attacked the invaders. Over a period of six months, the Greek army won a number of significant military victories. The allied cause was greatly helped by the Greek resistance which, nonetheless, came to an end within twenty days after the German attack on April 6, 1941, and thus the country entered a period of occupation.