

J. T. MALAKASSES, B.A., M.A., Ph. D.

ZERVAS' OUSTING FROM THE GOVERNMENT IN 1947 BY THE AMERICANS BECAUSE OF HIS ALLEGED COLLABORATION WITH THE GERMANS

(From his appeal to President Truman to his humiliating rejection by ambassador MacVeagh).

The fragile and uneasy peace concluded by the Varkiza Agreement was to be of short duration indeed, if it was to be left to the tender mercies of the government of Athens. An administration with no roots whatsoever in the country, forced to depend on the British military forces of occupation, was bound on a program not of national reconciliation but on the material destruction of its opponents, the Eamik majority of the population. The cost of such an enterprise, a large scale civil war with no quarters for even suspected partisans of EAM, would be prohibitive indeed, if the «December» war was to be taken as an indication.

Under these circumstances Britain, on the heel¹ of her December intervention¹, had to committ substantial military and financial resources on a long range program, to the detriment of her other obligations both at home and her possessions abroad, if she was going to sustain the regime installed in Athens by her armed forces. In that task she had to rely gradually to Washington both because of her own diminishing influence in world affairs and because the American position after the demise of president Roosevelt reflected the new orientation of the United States foreign policy. The new occupant of the White House president Truman was to inaugu-

1. «Creece, of course, was central to Britain's strategic interests. Within a month of the liberation of Athens, Churchill made clear to Eden that Britain, having paid the price for freedom of action in Greece, should not hesitate to support the Royal Hellenic government under Papandreou. He fully expected a clash with EAM, and intended not to shrink from it. When confrontation occurred, Churchill opposed any political solution to the problem, and instead prepared to impose his own». Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, Princeton, 1980, pp. 222-223. It must be emphasized, of course, that the author is of right wing moderate proclivities and his work was undertaken with the puprose to refute the new left historians.

rate aggressive trends in the foreign policy of Washington calling for the energetic participation of the United States in the shaping of the war-torn countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Truman was to be the architect of an aggressive and at times hostile policy toward the Soviets, the prime mover in the establishment of the so-called «cold war», in his desire to force Stalin to accept for the countries of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union the inroads of American capitalism or open door policy¹.

The United States, by the end of 1945, for all intents and purposes was actively becoming involved in the Greek affairs gradually but methodically replacing Britain as the defender of the corrupt regime of Athens². Greece, becomes the testing ground for the Truman administration's policies of confrontation with the Soviet Union³. Throughout 1946 the signs of this new orientation in Washington's foreign policy multiplied. The spreading of the British army occupation of the Greek country-side, instead of pacifying the land, on the contrary provoked wide-spread anarchy and lawlessness. The hurriedly recruited members of the Greek national guard accompanied by marauding rightist bands, under the cover provided by the British military forces, instituted a state of white terror in the Greek provinces. Persecution, beatings, pillaging and wanton murder of former followers of the EAM became a daily and an alarming occurrence in Greece:

Rightist civilians in ASTAKOS have taken the law into their own hands presumably as a result of the explosion in the

1. See the work of the founder of the school of the new left in American historiography William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, rev. ed., New York, 1962.

2. The financial commitments of the United States to sustain the British continued occupation of Greece were progressively increasing in 1945-46 at an alarming pace, indicative of the determination of the Truman administration to replace Britain as the leading force Greece. UNRRA had contributed an amount of \$ 420.000.000 chiefly of US origin by the end of 1946. «The US has extended a surplus property credit of \$ 45.000.000, together with an Export - Import Bank loan of \$ 25.000.000 and the Federal Reserve Bank has extended short-term loans secured by Greece's gold holdings with the Bank. The US Maritime Commission has granted a credit of \$45.000.000 for the purchase of ships to replace Greece's lost tonnages». National Archives of the United States, NNMM, CIA reference box, series «ORE» 1947.

3. This thesis is advanced by Kunobolm who believes that the cold war owes a great deal to the increased American interest in the areas of Iran, Turkey and Greece, and not only in the affairs of Eastern Europe.

ELAS arms dump on June 5. They entered the civil prison without interference from the Greek National Guard soldiers on guard, removed several supposed communist prisoners and beat them up. One of these thus attacked have died¹.

And all of these acts were sanctioned, if not protected by the British military occupation forces:

Western and Central Macedonia are now practically completely occupied by British units and National Guard troops. A few clashes have been reported. For example in Kilkis² the National Guard broke up KKE HQ on 12 March; in Edhessa on 8 March they tried to disperse a KKE demonstration, with one corpse resulting; in Verria on 9 March an ELAS memorial was pulled down overnight, for which EAM blamed the National Guard, and on 13 March occurred a clash in which 5 civilians were killed including the local secretary of EPON, though it is not clear by whom³.

The terror was widespread with no province escaping the revenge of the British protected national guardsmen and rightist bandits:

Continued beatings of leftists by Greek National Guard soldiers is causing increased tension in LEPHKAS... The EAM Committee called on «Z» Coy of 2 Royal Fusiliers who arranged a meeting between EAM and Nationalist Committee...⁴

This deteriorating state of civil disorder, in Greece was coupled with the growing inability of the British sponsored governmental forces to overcome the passive resistance of the bulk of the rank and file of the rural population. That was the cause of increased concern in the

1. National Archives of the United States, RG 38 *Records of the Office of the Chief of the Naval Operations*. Report by the American Assistant naval attache at Patras lieut. E.H. Griffith of June 18, 1945.

2. In another report of the same incident the following were reported: «It is reported from Kilkis that on the night of 14/15 March a party of officers and enlisted men raided the KKE offices, and that on March 17 in Salonika a few members of a newly arrived brigade attacked vendors and readers of the Left newspapers...». *Ibid*, Report by the naval attache of the United States of March 30, 1945.

3. *Ibid*, of March 24, 1945.

4. *Ibid*, of June 25, 1945.

American military. In the fall of 1946 the top echelons of the Defence Department in Washington were expressing their fears that the «worsening» situation in Greece could have meant the «loss» of Greece to western powers.

General Chamberlin of the intelligence division of the War Department in a memorandum to the chief of the Plans and Operations Division general Norstad emphasized the preoccupation of the American military with the developments in Greece and in fact went as far as to propose concrete measures to «contain» that danger. Stopping sort of suggesting the employment of the American armed forces, general Chamberlin proposed the granting of material and credit to the governmental forces of Athens and assistance in the way of military equipment via the British¹.

The problem was intensified and the Truman administration was squarely addressing itself to the issue when at the end of 1946 it became apparent that the British could not any longer sustain financially the government of Athens. Indeed, throughout 1946 Secretary of State Byrnes had taken the initiative to assure the British government that the United States was to assume the economic responsibility of the operation to keep the government of Athens afloat².

In Greece proper the American influence was making itself felt substituting the British as the leading power in the country. The role of the United States in the making of the Greek governments of Athens was not only acknowledged by the British but it was certainly felt by the Greek politicians. The latter in every way possible sought to win the favor and gain the sponsorship of the American officials in Greece which they considered as *sine qua non* for their attainment of authority, and the continuous enjoyment of it.

Early in 1947 at the time of the officially proclaimed American involvement in the internal affairs of Greece, the Truman Doctrine, a member of the coalition government of Maximos, N. Zervas, the former head of EDES, became a subject of severe criticism in the American press. An American of Greek origin, Kouvaras, who had served in Greece during the war as an officer of the U.S. army, a special agent of the OSS, in a

1. *Ibid.* Memorandum for general Chamberlain by general Lauris Norstad director of Plans and Operations of December 17, 1946.

2. «All competent observers on the economic as well as on the political and military sides have agreed that the restoration of public confidence is essential to the economic recovery; public confidence cannot in fact be restored except by asserting the state's authority over rebel bands who as yet are defying it». *Ibid.* Appendix «A» to the British aide memoire to the State Department of February 1947.

hearing at the United States Senate on the proposed Truman Doctrine on March 31, 1947, flatly accused Zervas as a German collaborator of the type of Michailovich of Yugoslavia¹. Testifying under oath and insisting that his testimony becomes part of the official minutes of the hearings, ex-agent Kouvaras submitted to the Senate a most incriminating German document attesting to an understanding that existed between the German armed forces in Epirus and Zervas' EDES². This self-revealing document was a memorandum of the general staff of the German 22nd Army Corp, to the general headquarters of the XXII German army corp:

After a few days³ Zervas put an end to the hostilities and since then he observed a neutral attitude and did not followed anymore the instructions of the British to begin once again his attacks against the German troops...The blowing of mines, the explosions and the general activity of sabotage against our lines of communication in the southern sector, (one controled by the

1. «Zervas began as a Democrat and ended as a royalist. He began with patriotic motives and ended as a German collaborator. This is the fate of the various Michailovichs. They attempt to swim against the current and the current moves them to another direction than the one that they wished». K. Kouvaras, *O.S.S. me ten Kentrike tou EAM*, Athens, 1976, p. 211.

2. «Zervas collaborated even if he did not liked. But he collaborated in order to save himself and and his organization...At the beginning that collaboration was probably accidental but that happen during the clash between the ELAS and Zervas. Zervas was attacking the ELAS on the one side and the Germans on the other... Later that coordination became systematic until a situation was created between the 22nd German Mountain Army Corp in Epirus and Zervas according to which no one of the two parties would bother the other. Zervas' partisans were coming into contact with the Germans in the same places without fear from either side. Zervas' partisans were coming through the German lines and the opposite. In Yiannena the store depots of Zervas were near the headquarters of the German army. A Zervas' lieutenant send to the commander of the German garrison in Arta a German soldier who had been captured by the 'ELAS' and had been set free by Zervas, partisans. The prisoner accompanied a note to the effect: 'EDES' forces attacked from behind the communists who during their flight abandoned the German soldier. We sincere fascists do not bother you...we do not have anything against the German troops... we are fighting only against the communists and the Eamites». The man who signed the above K. Voidaros participated actively after the liberation in the terrorist orgy which was unleashed by the right against the EAM...». *Ibid*, pp. 212-213.

3. The author here refers to the battle of Menina. On that clash the reader should consult the views of a prominent member of the EDES general Kamaras and especially a letter of his published in *TA NEA* on August 26, 1975. See also the work of Ch. Kainourgios, *Dafnes kai Dakrya*, Athens, 1981, pp. 476-477.

EAM) continued, while in the area controlled by Zervas there was not a sabotage...¹

Continuing along the same lines the memorandum, not strangely, in harmony with British evaluations on the subject, more or less defined the role of EDES, at least as they wanted to be:

An important factor for the change of the aforementioned situation would be if the western powers could have forced Zervas to abandon his up to now loyal stand and use his forces for attacks against the German army. We must also await continuous activities, military by the Greek communist bands in all the area under the control of this corp, if those forces (communist bands), do not be kept at bay with frequent mopping up operations against them by the forces of Zervas².

Needless to say, that testimony, with the accompanied publicity put Zervas in very hot waters, as far as the American public and the Truman administration was concerned. That a key member of the coalition government in Greece who was in charge of a very sensitive post, that of minister of public order, and was persecuting, jailing and sending into exile by the thousands former cadres of the resistance organization EAM, was an alleged German collaborator was to say the least preposterous. That a bloody civil war being unleashed in the country with the explicit guidance and assistance of the United States government to be headed by persons who had allegedly compromised themselves with the Germans if nothing else was putting the Truman administration in an embarrassing position.

The vibrations of Kouvaras' revelations in the United States Senate were to have their impact on the American-sponsored government of Athens. Zervas' position was becoming more vulnerable as a of that administration as the American influence was rising. With no refutation by any responsible agency in the United States forthcoming, Zervas seing his political future endangered chose to appeal to not less a personality than to president Truman himself. In a letter³ addressed to president Truman of April 12, 1947, after extolling Greece's he-

1. Kouvaras, *O.S.S. me ten Kentrike tou EAM*, pp. 2442-2443.

2. *Ibid*, p. 243.

3. National Archives of the United States, State Department, 888-Greece (conf.).

roic sacrifices during the war, which of course, no one was challenging, and which Zervas was attempting to monopolize, was forced to admit that the resistance in Greece was common thus conceding that EAM fought as well something that was an anathema to the rightists. A statement of special value since the government was then conducting a war of extermination against the greatest part of the «nation», that in the words of Zervas had struggled against the Germans.

However, in that letter Zervas could not and did not fail to emphasize the main characteristic of his organization that set him apart from the EAM. He admitted that himself and his organization «...nationally and within the the framework of Allied interests led the struggle»¹, that is he did follow the dictates of the British faithfully. How is then he protested that he is being slandered in the chambers of the United States Senate. Calling himself «the leader of the true National resistance» he implored president Truman to verify this by calling on the «services» of the «allied» countries.

Calling the attention of the President that «articles slanderous» by «a certain Mr. Kouvaras which are directed against me appear to originate from official American sources», Zervas appeared to demand that «the American Government to verify the accuracy or the falceness of such documents, if they exist, of its services, and to make such clarifications and statements as may remove the calumny against a member of an Allied Government»². Hinting on the fact that he had been decorated for hid services by the British and the American governments Zervas considered that it was president Truman's obligation «to rehabilitate» him «a soldier who for more than three years has served the Allied cause».

Of course, if «Allied cause», was to be interpreted as furthering the British interests Zervas was once again in the right in his demand for «rehabilitation». Playing further on the communist phobias of the American administration Zervas was clever enough to attribute the accusations to an «international communist conspiracy» which wanted to slander the leader of the EDES.

That letter, sealed, accompanied with a request written in Greek and addressed to the American ambassador Mr. MacVeagh, was taken to the American embassy by the private secretary of Zervas. The minister of Public order, ignoring the usual diplomatic precedures wanted the Ame-

1. See the text of the letter. *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.*

rican embassy to forward the letter to president Truman. That request after considerable deliberations, involving the secretary general of the ministry of Public Order Stavropoulos was denied¹. Finally, ambassador MacVeagh «persuaded» Zervas not to proceed with the sending of his letter to president Truman².

As it may be expected the Kouvaras' testimony at the Senate hearings created a sensation with the American public which could not but effect adversely Zervas' position with the American embassy in Athens. By the late summer of 1947 both the American Mission and the embassy were directing the affairs of Greece as those of a country under trusteeship. Never before in the history of the modern Greek state a foreign country, with the exception of the German occupation a few years earlier, had such an overwhelming influence on the destinies of the Greek nation. The formation of a government and the composition of its members to the minutest detail were to have the approbation of the chief of the American Mission and the American ambassador. Ambassador MacVeagh was the prime mover behind the Greek government's reshuffling of September 1947, if not the one who dictated it along with governor Griswold of the economic mission:

In addition, as regards the general make-up of the Government to be formed my government has already repeatedly stated that extremists, whether of the right or left, do not inspire it with confidence. Accordingly, you will doubtless also wish to entrust no portfolios to men who are regarded in this light by *your foreign friends on whose support for the preservation of Greece's integrity and independence today so much depends...* The choice is yours, but I feel that you should at least know that a coalition headed by your party but oriented toward the center would be vastly more popular and acceptable to American opinion than a government of exclusively or even mainly rightist complexion and that you might find it useful, from the all-important viewpoint of reassuring American opinion as well as liberal opinion in

1. «When the matter was reported to Mr. Keeley, I was instructed to get in touch with Mr. Stavropoulos and explain to him the Foreign Service Regulations concerning the forwarding of letters from Foreign officials through the diplomatic pouch. But if the letter in question was of such importance as to go through the diplomatic pouch then it should be unsealed and the State Department's approval be requested before forwarding». *Ibid.*

2. «Ambassador saw Zervas May 9 and persuaded him not to send note». *Ibid.*

Greece, to prevail on centrist rather than on rightist personalities to take over the key ministries of War and Public Order¹.

The not so veiled reminder of ambassador MacVeagh that Tsaldaris depended on «his foreign friends» otherwise Greece would succumb to the «enemy» namely it could not survive the internal pressures, had not escaped the Greek politicians who were flocking to the American «factor» as the ambassador or Mr. Griswold was called eager to offer their services and win their favor. Stephanos Stephanopoulos seemed to be the confidant of the American «factor» and was the go-in-between of the two groups. In that capacity Stephanopoulos had a conference with Mr. Griswold on August 23, 1947, on the impending government change. Stephanopoulos was authorized by Griswold to transmit to Tsaldaris a written summary of the conversations which more or less had the character of a dictate:

A less broad Government with Tsaldaris, Gonatas and Zervas is inadmissible, as it is bound to cause a bad impression to the American Public Opinion, and will consequently harm the Greek cause, particularly on the eve of the General Assembly of the United Nations, where we shall have only formal and not material support².

And just to make his point clear beyond the shadow of a doubt Griswold added, that in the case that the American advice was not headed the aid could probably end:

Deputies and Senators are to arrive in Greece in September to see for themselves the progress of the work of reconstruction; they are very powerful factors and pronounced in favor of a broadened Government. Consequently in the event of a contrary solution, they can unfavorably influence continuation itself of the Aid³.

1. «Letter of August 24 (1947) from Ambassador MacVeagh to Mr. Tsaldaris setting forth in general terms American views with regard to the formation of a new Greek Government». *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.* «Enclosure No. 3 to Despatch No. 5362 dated September 2, 1947, from the American Embassy, Athens, subject: «American Conversations Related to the Greek Cabinet Crisis of August 23-29, 1947, and Public reactions thereto».

3. *Ibid.* «Summary of conversation, August 25, between Governor Griswold and Mr. Stephanopoulos».

The categorical rejection by the Americans of the person of Zervas and the leakage to the Greek press of it had forced the later to take a public stand which brought him into direct head on collision with the Americans. On August 27, 1947, Zervas' political party «The National Party of Greece», after urging all the political leaders to repudiade the accusations against Zervas as «calumnies» took a broadside against the Americans:

which, it is said, are being adopted by the Allied factor
which has been intervening actively lately in an intolerable manner¹.

This public indignation by Zervas against the Americans and their high handed methods of intervening in the affairs of the country were certainly at variance with his efforts in private to appease them and win their favor. For the very next day August 28, 1947, Zervas appealed to the American ambassador MacVeagh in a desperate effort to win American approval of his future as a member of the government thus inviting American interference which his party was publicly castigating. The answer of MacVeagh which follows is a monument of the American imperialism at work in a depended country and at the same time a degrading picture of the political leadership of the time, Zervas' in particular:

General Zervas called on the Ambassador, and in some perturbation asked why it appeared that Americans have no confidence in him. He elaborated at some legth on his patriotic and allegedly democratic record.

In reply the Ambassador spoke textually as follows:

General Zervas should understand that there is nothing personal involved in this matter. However, with all due respect to him as a man and a patriot, the fact is that both press and public in the United States are, rightly or wrongly, overwhelmingly of the opinion that he has dictatorial and fascistic tendencies at variance with the ideals of our democracy. Hense it is said that he does not inspire confidence as a member of any Government proposing to collaborate closely with the United States.

1. Report of MacVeagh to the State Department of September 2, 1947. *Ibid.*

General Zervas is a Greek cabinet minister and not responsible to the American Ambassador, who therefore does not presume to criticize him, but only to answer his question as to the lack of confidence which he has felt to exist. If he looks for the reasons for the widespread American belief in his tendencies as above described, he may find it in such things as the tolerance which Americans feel he has shown toward the activities of right-wing bands, his use of the Gendarmerie which they feel has discriminated against republican elements of the population, and in his recent mass arrests which have greatly shocked American opinion. Altogether, while he may think he as in all things acted rightly, he should perhaps not be surprised at the American attitude if he will take into account the American character.

The General replied to the above with attempted explanations of his actions, but the Ambassador refused to enter into details. In the ensuing exchange, the General asked that the Ambassador authorize a statement that he has not pressed for the exclusion of General Zervas from the Cabinet, and the Ambassador said that he has not participated in the selection of any individual for Cabinet positions but has only expressed his Government's views that the new Government to be formed should be as wide as possible. On the other hand he said he has stated that General Zervas does not inspire confidence in the United States, and if this is to be changed, it is for the General himself to change it by convincing the American people he is in fact a true democrat. The Ambassador would authorize no statement. In conclusion, the Ambassador advised the General that he might well start the process of convincing the American people of his democratic tendencies by treating the American journalists better, and not calling them Communists when they are by no means such. When the General said he would like first to obtain the confidence of the Ambassador, the latter replied that this could do him little good, since while the Ambassador reports to his Government, the journalists report to the people, and the people elect the Government. The General replied that he would try to follow the Ambassador's advice, and regretted that hitherto he had neglected his American contact, including the Ambassador himself¹.

1. «Summary of conversation, August 28, between Ambassador MacVeagh and General Zervas». *Ibid.*

Zervas' party commented on the castigating conversation with Mr. MacVeagh as follows:

The talk lasted for an hour and a half and was very cordial. Among other questions the governmental issue was discussed. Mr. MacVeagh emphasized that the American Government is not intervening. He only stressed the wish of his Government that the new Greek Government about to be formed should be based on as broad a democratic foundation as possible¹.

The deliberations for the formation of a government of national unity as the Americans were describing it continued at a frantic pace where the role of the American factor was assuming proportions that only in a protectorate could be justified:

At about 1 a.m. after I was (Governor Griswold), undressed and ready for bed Venizelos and Canellopoulos called at their request. They appeared frantic at Tsaldaris who they described as a bull—dog... Tsaldaris, they said, had agreed to Papandreou as Minister of War but later reversed himself. In addition he said army morale was rapidly declining. I preached moderation and pointed out that whoever formed a Government would have to take a lot of Populist Party into his Government².

Not only Venizelos and Canellopoulos visited Governor Griswold that day but also the prime minister of December '44 fame Papandreou. He like the others before wanted to promote his own candidacy and win the American approval for it. Papandreou sought the position of the minister of War but apparently his credentials were not sufficient as far as Griswold was concerned:

At nine o'clock I called at his request on Papandreou whom I had never met. He stated that he thought that the leaders would succeed in getting together probably with himself as Minister of War. Thereafter we discussed largely military problems on the apparent, assumption by Papandreou that he would hold the war portfolio. He was emphatic in stating that Greece

1. *Ibid.* Report of MacVeagh to the Secretary of State of September 2, 1947.

2. «Summary of conversations, August 29, between Governor Griswold and Messrs. Venizelos and Canellopoulos and General Zervas' Secretary. *Ibid.*

needed a dynamic American policy in winning the war. I stated that his discussion of the situation was in accord with our thinking; that if the party leaders agreed on a General as Minister of War, I hoped that he would make sure that the general chosen would hold similar views¹.

Papandreou was sounding Griswold also for the position of Zervas in the government to be formed. The former governor of Nebraska could not be more blunt in the rejection of any idea that Zervas could become a member of the new government. Going as far as to insinuate that the amount of the American military aid would be conditional to Zervas' remaining in the cabinet Griswold empowered Papandreou to bring this to the attention of Maximos still the prime minister:

He (Papandreou) then touched on Zervas. I again remarked on the bad effect on public opinion Zervas' appointment as Minister of Public Order would have on the United States, and commended on the importance of complete cooperation between the three ministers of War, Public Order and Air. I requested Papandreou to tell Maximos that if Zervas were not Minister of Public Order so that a really good team could be placed in these three posts, the Mission could probably make arrangements with regard to the military which would be more helpful to Greece².

Griswold's objections to the person of Zervas were leaked by Venizelos to the latter resulting in a last ditch effort by Zervas to appease the Americans. On the afternoon of the same day when Venizelos and Papandreou had talks with Griswold Zervas' secretary visited the mission and requested a meeting of the panicky general with Griswold the same evening³. The secretary was given this in the form of a written answer:

Governor Griswold is very sorry indeed that he is unable to see General Zervas tonight because of personal engagements. He asked me to say that he had no personal feelings with regard to the General, but that, as explained by Ambassador MacVeagh to the General yesterday there is strong public opinion which,

1. *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

justified or not, is against Zervas in the United States and in other countries like France and England which are friends of Greece; that he had felt for this reason that if General Zervas became Minister of Public Order, it would be very unfortunate for Greece and might even affect adversely the work which the American Mission is trying to do for Greece¹.

That the United States were so much determined not to permit Zervas to enter the new government on account of his record going as far as to threaten withdrawal of the mission's military aid was a terrible blow for the later. He knew, irrespective of the fact that Venizelos² was faintly supporting him, that his political future had been sealed in as long at least as the Americans were running the country. Zervas had no allusions on the matter. His ousting from the government was a reality that no indigenous forces at his disposal could avert. His «nationalist» credentials that had worked miracles for him and his followers had proven to be his downfall. In a meeting on the next day with Griswold, Zervas a beaten man did not press any longer his candidacy. He only spoke about his «democratic» traditions only to be rebuked that Griswold personally was a conservative.

General Zervas called by appointment at his request to tell me what an excellent democrat he is and how his family has fought for democracy for six hundred years. I commented that I personally was rather a conservative but that I was convinced as was my government that under existing conditions Greece needed the broadest possible Government with fundamentally a centrist view - point. General Zervas made no reference or inquiry regarding my attitude towards his participation in the Government³.

1. *Ibid.*

2. «He (Stephanopoulos) said that Venizelos had informed the group that he had talked with me that morning and that I approved Zervas as Minister of Public Order; that the other leaders had agreed that if I approved they had no objections. Stephanopoulos was clearly perturbed and asked if Venizelos' statement was correct. I replied that apparently he had misunderstood my remarks but I would not embarrass Venizelos by denying it. I explained that I had said that I thought Zervas should not be in the Cabinet because of the adverse effect on the public opinion abroad were he to continue....». *Ibid.*

3. «Summary of conversations, August 30, between Governor Griswold and Messrs. Helmis, Zervas and Stephanopoulos. *Ibid.*

A strange sequel for a man, that had risen to prominence because of his identification with the interests of a foreign power, England, to be led into political oblivion in a degrading way by another foreign power whose interests no doubt he was so eager to serve.

That his political future was compromised and ended because of his alleged collaboration with the Germans, something that even in the midsts of a civil war where the former resistance fighters were mercilessly hunted as «bandits», by former collaborators of the Germans, was the core of his rejection by the Americans is beyond the shadow of a doubt. The political cost to the Truman administration from Kouvaras' startling revelations would have been indeed forbidding taken the unpopularity of his «Doctrine» with the liberals in the United States and the outcry against Zervas because of his totalitarian methods as minister of public order.

A SEQUEL TO THE ZERVAS' EXPULSION AND MR. AVEROFF'S EARLY VERSION OF «FIRE AND THE AXE» IN THE DISTRICT OF EPIRUS

Zervas' unceremonious ousting from power by MacVeagh did not discourage the British - annointed leader of resistance in Epirus. In the early part of 1948 he undertook a trip to Washington to lobby for his political future with the power in dominance in his country. However, the brutal methods that the general had employed in his tenure of office as minister of Public Security, and his simplistic extermination policies against all those perceived as «unreliable», not only had embarrassed the American policy makers on the spot, but made him an anathema with American liberal newspaper personalities. Not unlike the events that were to take place almost twenty years later with other war lords of the type of Zervas, i.e. the assortment of Vietnamese generals flocking to Washington to court the favor of the American military establishment, newspapermen associated with THE WASHINGTON POST, had undertaken, at times, a fierce campaign to expose what it was perceived as corruptive influences in American policies in dependencies like Greece.

On February 12, 1948, the Defence Department was besieged with persistent inquiries by the press about the furtive activities and lobbying of Zervas. For the general having been utterly dismissed by the State Department as a liability to the American interests in Greece, was attempting to win favor with the American military, selling himself as the most capable person to win the war for the Americans in Greece:

Colonel J. R. Pierce,...Deputy Chief, Public Information Division Department of the Army, telephoned Colonel Graling stating that Jack Norris, specialty writer, Washington Post, had inquired of PID most insistently, for information concerning General Napoleon Zervas, Greek Army Retirer, presently in the United States, with regard to General Zervas' activities and particulrly his association with members of the the Department of the Army.

Colonel Pierce states that the matter has reached such a point that he must, as spokesman of the Department of the Army, give the Washington Post reporter and specialty writer answers to questions which he has specifically placed before PID¹.

1. National Archives of the United States, Military Intelligence, 1242, G-2-335. 11- Greece -12 Feb. 48 (28 Jan. 48). Memorandum by colonel Francis J. Graling,

No doubt the Pentagon sensitive to the accusations raised against Zervas wanted to keep his distance, at least publicly, from a man identified as a fascist. The big eastern papers, N.Y. TIMES and WASHINGTON POST having gotten wind of Zervas' visit were clamoring for an explanation of his doings at the Pentagon. The questions submitted by Jack Norris of the WASHINGTON POST were demanding, potentially embarrassing and could have raised havoc with the Department's public image as advancing fascists and former German collaborators:

The questions which Mr. Norris has submitted are as follows:

- a. Has General Zervas visited Department of the Army officials or conferred with them?
- b. HAS HE HAD ANY BUSINESS DEALINGS OF ANY DESCRIPTION WITH OFFICIALS OF THE U. S. Army?
- c. Are there any future plans that General Zervas might confer with officials of the U.S. Army?
- d. If the answer to «c» is «yes», they on what subject or subjects will he confer with Army officials?

And the crowing question: «Does the Department of the Army know of any business that Zervas has in this country?»¹

Following feverish consultations with the State Department, Mr. Mr. Baxter of the Near Eastern Division², the Department of the Army refuted any knowledge of Zervas' whereabouts in Washington³. The De-
Foreign Liaison Officer, Department of the Army, General Staff of February 12, 1948, p. 1.

1. *Ibid.*

2. General Timberman, chief of the Operations Divisions of Plans and Operations of the general staff was also consulted.

3. «Colonel Graling pointed out that, of course, we would not know if officers had seen General Zervas socially and/or privately, that there was always the possibility that some Army officers may have known him in their previous service and been on a friendly basis with him to the extent that he might have looked them up or they might have looked him up. Colonel Pierce stated that that possibility was recognized, and he felt that the answers should be made on an official basis as to whether or not there had been official contacts between General Zervas and the U. S. Army, but that the word «official» should be avoided in making reply to the questions, because Norris would immediately come back and say «have any Army officers conferred with Zervas unofficially?» *Ibid*, p. 2. So much was the Department of the Army worried about the press getting wind of Zervas activities that colonel Graling «listened in on telephone conversation when Colonel Pierce replied to Mr. Norris and the answer was «no» to all questions proposed». *Ibid*, p. 3.

partment if it had not lied outright it was kept in ignorance, to say the least, of the patronage that the general was enjoying among, apparently influential American officers. For a few weeks later Zervas not only visited with «various United States Officers in Washington» but he was received by the Secretary of Defence himself¹.

There the «No. 1 Greek enemy of all Communists», as these early devotees of senator McCathy exuberantly described the mercurial general, elaborated on his ideas how to combat «communism» in Greece:

In view of the serious menace represented by Communists and their sympathizers in the rear or base areas, it has been a mistake to deal softly with such groups and to seek TO PROVE GUILT AS A PREREQUISITE TO DETENTION OF SUSPECTED INDIVIDUALS. GREEK COMMUNISTS AND SYMPATHIZERS SHOULD BE ARRESTED ON SUSPICION AND HELD UNTIL PROOF OF INNOCENCE MIGHT BE ESTABLISHED².

And just as to give a good measure of his methods and their effectiveness Zervas added the following, which incidentally seemed to appeal to his listeners:³

The soft policy toward Greek communists hitherto insisted on by the British and United States advisers is believed to have materially increased the military burden of the Greek Government. IN THE PROVINCE OF EPIRUS, WHERE GENERAL ZERVAS EXERCISES A GREAT THOUGH UNOFFICIAL MEASURE OF CONTROL, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE LONG BEEN SO THOROUGHLY ERADICATED AS TO CONSTITUTE NO LOCAL PROBLEM⁴.

1. «Memorandum to the Secretary of Defence: Some Comments made by General Zervas to various United States Officers in Washington, and during his visit to office of Secretary of Defence on 27 February». *Ibid*, RG 330, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defence CD 6-2-32. p. 1.

2. Zervas not only was to combat communism in Greece and wipe the country clean but he offered advice as how to overthrow the socialist governments in Eastern Europe: «Regarding intelligence nets extending outside Greece, General Zervas stated that in the countries under Soviet domination real opposition movements are developing and the various anti-Communist groups tend to unite and organize. These groups form the basis for effective counteraction whether for intelligence or operations». *Ibid*, p. 3.

3. «General Napoleon Zervas was the principal non-Communist resistance leader against the Germans in Greece». *Ibid*, p. 1.

4. *Ibid*.

To the changrin, however, of the Pentagon Zervas' good services could not be used as very aptly was explained: «This feeling (that Zervas was the No. 1 Greek enemy of Communism), has spread to American «liberal» circles, and vicious, generally unfounded, charges have been made against General Zervas in the American press and in some official United States documents»¹.

However, pressure was now applied by the Pentagon to the State Department to have the general reinstated Greek politics. A memorandum of the items discussed at the Pentagon with Zervas was submitted to Lois Henderson, Assistant Secretary of State. State Department's analysis of the pros and cons of the Zervas had certainly a devasteting effect on the scheming American military:

MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY:

Mr. Henderson has read this.

He is in complete sympathy with the ideas expressed therein-but he added that, UNFURTUNATELY, Zervas has matters on his past record which make it difficult to back or boost him, although he would like to see it.

For example, they have records of furtive activity on Zervas' part with the GERMANS....

According to Mr. Henderson, the American Press, and he mentioned Paul Porter, have, and would continue to, blackmail Zervas- also some of Griswold's people².

For all intents and purposes the fate of Zervas' political future was sealed at least during the period of the intence American presence. Nevertheless, at precise the same time when Zervas was selling his candidacy and ideas to Washington in his home territory, Mr. Averoff³, a member of

1. Unfortunately for the authors of these comments, those accusations were contained, also, in the official transcripts of the Nuremberg trial of war criminals, precisely in the trial of the German commander of Epirus. Also the State Department's study on the British policy in Greece, published at *TA NEA* provides a vivid account of Zervas' shaddy deals during the occupation of Greece.

2. Mr. Henderson who lives in Washington, and is more than 90 years old was gracious enough to discuss some of these items with me and his refusal to go along with Defence Department reccomendations on Zervas; the later's dealing with the Germans, etc.

3. In a paper by the chief of the American military mission to Greece to the ambassador, the swift change of party allegiances by Greek politicians was such

the liberal party, as he eagerly emphasized, in a coordinated effort was striving to enhance the general's image and political base in Epirus with the Americans. On March 18th, 1948, Dwight P. Griswold, chief American mission to Greece wrote this despatch to the Secretary of State in Washington:

I have the honor to inform the Department that on March 3, General Van Fleet, Brigadier Steel (of the British Military Mission), Mr. Moffat, Special Assistant, Colonel Smith, Military Attache, and several JUSMAPG and USAG officers accompanied General Yiadzis on a trip to visit certain Corps and Division Headquarters. The party visited... VIII Division Headquarters at Janina... There are transmitted two memoranda by Mr. Moffat on matters of general political as well as military interest of which he was informed on these trips¹.

There at Yiannena Mr. Averoff, on his own initiative, called upon general Van Fleet where he sought to convince the American general of the benefits to be accrued by a virtual transfer of the authority of the army and the central government to former EDES chieftains thus inviting an indiscriminate pogrom and reprisals against all those perceived as «communists» or leftists by these vigilantes:

At Janina Mr. E. V. Averoff called upon General Van Fleet. Mr. Averoff is a Liberal Deputy from Metzoven. He explained that he was the only Liberal Deputy from Epirus and had been requested by Mr. Sophoulis to spend as much time as possible in the area, encouraging the civil population. He had, he stated, three points he wished to lay before the General:

1). The morale of the NDC battalion(s) in Epirus is, he said, very poor because the men are older and have families which need to be taken care of....

2). That although a Liberal Deputy not sympathetic with Mr. Zervas, he felt that there are a number of men who had served in the Resistance movement under Zervas whose services should be utilized in the

an endemic phenomenon in Greek political life at the time, that was simply incomprehensible to them. In that respect Mr. Averoff's protestations of his being a liberal was as hollow as Zervas insistence of being a «democrat».

12. National Archives of the United States, Records of the Office of the Department of the Army, no. 04501190 of March 18, 1948.

army. He stated that they had been excellent fighters, knew the country well, and because of their experience with ELAS were familiar with communist guerilla tactics. He urged that some of the better ones should be brought in the army for use in that area with the rank of captain or even major. He had he said, furnished a list of the names of such leaders to the War Ministry¹.

Mr. Averoff's advice to the Americans if was to be followed, could have meant, of course, not only the lowering of the prestige of the army and the authority of the government, along with a reign of terror by the former discredited chieftains of EDES, but would be used as a vehicle for the designs of general Zervas to return to power. As far as the military value of such a scheme was concerned the military debacle of EDES and its flight to Kerkyra in '44 was probably as a good evidence as any for the utter dismissal of it. But Averoff's advice would have also legalized what was already a reality plaguing Epirus at the time:

At a luncheon given by General Antonopoulos, Commander VIII Division Colonel Thomas Fleming, U.S. Army Adviser to the VIII Division, told me that ZERVAS HAD A PRIVATE ARMY IN EPIRUS. He had been unable to ascertain the exact number but thought it might be a little less than 1,000. The men he said are fully equipped and uniformed like the Greek army except that they wear green berets... They are financed by «contributions», furnished by local businessmen, etc².

These paramilitary units whose actual strength was not even known to the most competent authority the commander of the VIII division, would be augmented by their chieftains with regular army commissions. However, what Mr. Averoff was proposing was neither original nor his own in spite of his prestatements about his distance from Zervas, his being liberal etc. And this was not the reason, of course, that it did not merit the attention of the Americans. The Americans on the spot judiciously maintained their distance from Zervas and reacted cautiously³ to feelers like those of Mr. Averoff's since they were a privy to Zervas' not so covert ambitions to use his influence in Epirus and become a military dictator. His first step was to create

1. Memorandum by Dwight P. Griswold, Chief American Mission to Greece to the State Department of March 16, 1948. *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.*

3. The State Department refused to have anything to do with Zervas while at Washington and his frantic efforts to have an audience with Truman were equally unfruitful.

a «Guerrilla» army, precisely of the type that Mr. Averoff so diligently was imploring Van Fleet to adopt. In a secret memorandum to ambassador Grady, General Van Fleet had this to say on the proposals put forward by Averoff on behalf of Zervas:

The principal difficulty to be overcome is the low standard of operational efficiency in the Greek army. This can be only corrected by an intensive program of training and education which the JUSMAPG and the British Mission have already been undertaken. UNTIL THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED A GUERRILLA TYPE ARMY SUCH AS PROPOSED BY GENERAL ZERVAS, WOULD ACTUALLY BE MUCH LESS EFFECTIVE THAN THE PRESENT ONE, FOR THE REASON THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF PRESENTLY UNTRAINED AND UNSCHOOLED COMMANDERS (exactly those proposed by Mr. Averoff), and units would have to operate over long distances for considerable periods of time independently or semi-independently, and largely upon their own initiative¹.

Zervas' dictatorial tendencies were quite evident as well. Notwithstanding his «liberalism» Mr. Averoff was advancing the fortunes of a military dictator:

The paragraphs which follow, wrote General Van Fleet to ambassador Grady, are the comments of this headquarters which you may, if so desire, despatch to the State Department:

General Zervas' opinions have been given careful study and it is JUSMAPG's view that fundamentally they offer nothing which have not already been given careful and detailed consideration.

It is observed that, while General Zervas states categorically that a larger army is not needed, he is actually recommending a much larger force. MANIFESTLY, HE DESIRES TO SET HIMSELF UP AS A DICTATOR, CHANGE MANY OF THE EXISTING LAWS AND REGULATIONS AFFECTING THE ARMY, AND SURROUND HIMSELF WITH COMMANDERS OF HIS OWN SELECTION.

SHOULD GENERAL ZERVAS BECOME A SUPREME COMMANDER OR MILITARY DICTATOR IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT HE

16. National Archives of the United States, Records of the Office of the Department or the Army, NNDG 775075.

WOULD SIMPLY CONTINUE THESE ILLS UNDER A DIFFERENT
POLITICAL AND MILITARY CONTROL.

Naturally, the controversial personality of Zervas had received a most serious blow from the accusations of war-time collaboration with the Germans leveled against him but also, in the opinion of the American military in Greece, he was a person «without the background required for major success in winning support among dominant groups in political life or among Greek officers». Of course, this impediment was not judged sufficiently grave by Mr. Averoff in his zeal to persuade the Americans of Zervas' and his captains value, irrespective of the fact that it would have plunged Epirus, to say the least into a bloody state of anarchy and terrible reprisals by Zervas' cohorts. It was the days most dramatic proof, to paraphrase Barry Goldwater, extremism in praise of would be right-wing dictators, was no vice, even at Averoff's Yannina.

1. *Ibid.* Records of the Department of the Army no. 04501190 of March 16, 1948.