

# The Greek Civil War (1944–1949) and the International Communist System

❖ Nikos Marantzidis

## Introduction

The Greek Civil War (1944–1949) was Europe's most intense armed conflict during the Cold War and was also a new kind of "internal" war in which external actors played important roles. The extent of the international involvement was much greater than in most other twentieth-century civil conflicts.<sup>1</sup> The intervention of Western powers in Greece and their extensive assistance to the Greek government, initially by Great Britain and subsequently by the United States under the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, is widely known because of the official intergovernmental nature and magnitude of this assistance. By contrast, the involvement of the Soviet bloc in the Greek Civil War and the material aid the Communist states provided to the Greek Communist Party (KKE) have until recently gone largely unexplored. Until the demise of Europe's Communist regimes and the opening of formerly closed archives, the evidence was so scant that only a few historians had even addressed the question.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, the involvement of the USSR and the East European countries in the Greek conflict was the subject of acrimonious debate during the civil war and its aftermath. On several occasions the Greek government appealed to the United Nations (UN), denouncing the intervention of its Communist neighbors and the assistance they provided to the insurgents. Greek officials endeavored to inform foreign diplomatic missions and international organizations about the Communist regimes' entanglement in the Greek internal conflict. The Special Committee on the Balkans established by the

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1. Amikam Nachmani, *International Intervention in the Greek Civil War: The United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans, 1947–1952* (New York: Praeger, 1990), p. 3.

2. One exception prior to the end of the Cold War is Irène Lagani, "Les Communistes des Balkans et la Guerre Civile Grecque Mars 1946–Août 1949," *Communisme*, No. 9 (Winter 1986), pp. 60–78.

UN General Assembly in October 1947 confirmed the involvement of the northern neighboring countries, especially Yugoslavia, in the Greek crisis. The KKE persistently denied it had received material assistance from the Soviet bloc and claimed that any aid received from abroad had been the result of international solidarity shown by Communists and other “democratic” citizens in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, following the end of the civil war, allegations about the assistance received by the KKE from the USSR and its allies became part of the victors’ rhetoric. Labeling domestic Communists as “foreign-directed bandits” was a constant feature of the post-civil war narrative and was at the core of nationalist ideology until the fall of the colonels’ dictatorship in 1974.<sup>4</sup> Fending off these accusations, KKE stalwarts claimed they had been denied the minimal assistance from abroad that would have enabled them to win.

A consequence of this politically and emotionally charged debate was the construction of yet another historiographic taboo that automatically labeled as ideologically biased those historians who wished to investigate the question of foreign assistance to the insurgents. After the downfall of the Greek junta in 1974, when revisionist tendencies dominated scholarly circles as well as the realm of public history, the majority of Greek historians avoided the issue in order not to be identified with the victors of the civil war, whose image had suffered on account of their alleged association with the anti-Communist dictatorship of the military junta (1967–1974).<sup>5</sup>

The pendulum of historical research thus swung to the other side. Unlike the traditionalist school of the 1950s and 1960s, which had emphasized Soviet and East-bloc geopolitical strategy, the dominant trend after 1974 focused on the domestic political and social causes of the civil conflict. As a

3. Van Coufoudakis, “The United States, The United Nations, and the Greek Question 1946–1952,” in John O. Iatrides, ed., *Greece in the 1940s: A Nation in Crisis* (London: University Press of New England, 1981), pp. 275–297; Nachmani, *International Intervention in the Greek Civil War*, pp. 129–142; and Thanasis Sfikas, *To “Cholo Alogo”: Oi Diethnis Synthikes tis Ellinikis Krissis 1941–1949* [The “Lame Horse”: The International Circumstances of the Greek Crisis 1941–1949] (Athens: Vivliorama, 2007), pp. 209–243. For the KKE’s response to the Greek government’s denunciations, see Greek Temporary Democratic Government, “Ipomnima tis Prosorinis Dimokratikis Sinelefsis pros ti Geniki Sinelefsi tou OIE” [Memorandum of the Greek Temporary Democratic Government to the UN General Assembly], 15 August 1948, in *To KKE. Episima Keimena, 1945–1949* [KKE. Official Documents, 1945–1949], Vol. 6 (Athens: Synchroni Epochi, 1987), pp. 471–474; and in French on the international propaganda work, Gouvernement Démocratique Provisoire de Grèce, “Réponse au rapport de la Commission Spéciale de l’ONU pour les Balkans,” 1948, pp. 12–29, in Archives of Contemporary Social History (ASKI)/Digital Archive DAG 13844.

4. Eleni Paschaloudi, *Enas Polemos Choris Telos: I Dekaeitia tou 1940 ston Politiko Logo 1950–1967* [A War without End: The 1940s in Political Discourse, 1950–1967] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2010), pp. 43–44, 67–68.

5. See Giorgos Antoniou and Nikos Marantzidis eds., *I Epochi tis Sigchisis. I Dekaeitia toy ’40 kai I Istoriografia* [The Time of Confusion. The 1940s and Historiography] (Athens: Estia, 2008), pp. 28–45; and, Nikos Marantzidis and Giorgos Antoniou, “The Axis Occupation and Civil War Bibliography: Changing Trends in Greek Historiography: 1941–2002,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 223–231.

result, Soviet-bloc strategy and support for the Greek Communist insurgents was often judged to have been either insignificant or at best a minor factor in the conflict.<sup>6</sup>

The demise of Europe's Communist regimes and the opening of once-sealed archives in numerous countries spawned a new era in the study of the Greek Civil War. Thanks to the plethora of new sources, previously unknown aspects of the conflict came to light, and several myths were discredited. In particular, the formerly closed archives contain significant revelations about the extensive involvement of the Soviet bloc.

This article reviews the available literature and presents new evidence from the archives of former Communist countries (mainly the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania) regarding the role of Communist regimes in the Greek conflict. The new primary material enables us to reexamine foreign involvement in the development of the Greek Civil War, looking at the Communist bloc as a whole and not merely at individual countries. By providing detailed evidence of the assistance given to the Greek Communist insurgents, this essay demonstrates that the role of the Soviet bloc was large and substantial, that it required close cooperation and coordination among the participating Communist regimes, and that the entire undertaking was carried out with Moscow's knowledge and direct support. Thus the article illuminates not only the Greek Civil War in its broader context but also the margins of the Cold War; The article validates the belief of U.S. officials in the late 1940s that in helping the Greek government defeat the Communist insurgency they were in fact containing the further expansion of Soviet power.

## **The International Communist System and the Beginning of the Greek Civil War**

Archival sources and memoirs have established that well before the end of the occupation of Greece in the Second World War many of the KKE's highest officials had decided that the time had come to seize power.<sup>7</sup> This conviction

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6. Peter Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism 1941–1949* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 1.

7. Yannis Ioannidis, *Anamniseis: Provlimate tis Politikis tou KKE stin Etniki Antistasi 1940–1945* [Recollections: Problems in the KKE Policy during the National Resistance 1940–1945] (Athens: Themelio, 1977), pp. 289–290; Grigoris Farakos, ed., *Dekemvris '44* [December '44] (Athens: Filistor, 1996), p. 86; Grigoris Farakos, *O ELAS kai I Exousia* [ELAS and Sovereignty] (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2000), pp. 144–174; Dimitris Konstantakopoulos and Dimitris Patelis, *Archeia ton Sovietikon Mistikon Ypiresion 1931–1944, Fakelos Ellas* [Archives of the Soviet Secret Services 1931–1944, File Greece] (Athens: Livanis, 1993), p. 167; and John O. Iatrides, "Revolution or Self-Defense? Communist Goals, Strategy and Tactics in the Greek Civil War," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 5–9.

was reinforced by the arrival of the Red Army in areas north of Greece in pursuit of the retreating Wehrmacht troops. Senior KKE members sought to persuade the Soviet forces to cross into Greece.<sup>8</sup> In one instance, the KKE's secretary for Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Giorgos Erythriadis, met with Bulgarian Communist Party members as well as Soviet Marshal Fedor Tolbukhin in Bulgaria in August 1944 and made such a request. Other KKE members looked to Balkan comrades elsewhere. KKE Politburo members Stergios Anastasiadis and Andreas Tzimas visited Yugoslavia as well as Bulgaria in November 1944 to seek support for actions they were contemplating.<sup>9</sup>

During the uprising in Athens in December 1944, the Greek Communists appealed to the Soviet and Balkan Communist parties for support, but their efforts proved in vain. On 8 December 1944 the Bulgarian Communist leader Georgi Dimitrov forwarded to Moscow a request for assistance from a senior KKE cadre, Petros Roussos, but after receiving a negative reply from Soviet leaders, Dimitrov told the Greek Communists he could not offer them aid.<sup>10</sup> Yugoslavia's refusal to send help seems to have surprised KKE leaders, because senior Yugoslav Communists had pledged their backing only a month before the uprising in Athens.<sup>11</sup> Conceivably, the British military intervention in Athens, which eventually brought about the defeat of the insurgents, worried the rulers in Belgrade, who feared a similar development in their own country.<sup>12</sup>

In May 1945, the return to Athens of KKE leader Nikos Zahariadis from a Nazi concentration camp signaled a new phase in the Greek party's quest for closer ties with the Communist parties in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Soviet and East European officials began to focus on Zahariadis's aspiration to seize power in Greece. By the end of 1945, the KKE leader was exploring new tactics for the proposed insurrection, beginning with a search for military and

8. Grigoris Farakos, *B' Pagkosmios Polemos: Scheseis KKE kai Diethnous Kommounistikou Kentrou* [World War II: Relations between the KKE and the International Communist Center] (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2004), pp. 122–141; and Ioanna Papathanasiou, "To Kommounistiko Komma Elladas stin Proklisi tis Istorias 1940–1945" [The Communist Party of Greece Challenged by History 1940–1945], in Christos Chatziiosif and Prokopis Papastratis, eds., *Istoria tis Elladas tou 20ou Aiona* [The 20th Century History of Greece] (Athens: Vivliorama, 2007), Vol. 3b, p. 134.

9. Papathanasiou, "To Kommounistiko Komma Elladas stin Proklisi tis Istorias 1940–1945," p. 134.

10. Georgi Dimitrov, *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933–1949*, ed. by Ivo Banac (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 345; Iatrides, "Revolution or Self-Defense?" p. 17; and Jordan Baev, *O Emfyllos Polemos stin Ellada: Diethnis Diastasis* [The Civil War in Greece: The International Dimension] (Athens: Filistor, 1997), pp. 71–89.

11. Milan Ristović, "L'insurrection de décembre à Athènes: Intervention britannique et réaction yougoslave (décembre 1944–janvier 1945)," *Balkanica*, Vol. 37 (2006), p. 272.

12. Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito Speaks: His Self-Portrait and Struggle with Stalin* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1953), p. 238.

financial support from foreign Communist sources, which would enable the insurgents to be better organized and more assured of success. In January 1946, a KKE mission headed by Mitsos Partsalidis arrived in Moscow to seek political advice and promises of material assistance.<sup>13</sup> Following consultations, the Soviet leaders advised their Greek comrades to pursue a two-prong strategy—continue political agitation while also preparing for armed struggle—but did not clarify which of the two paths should prevail. According to John Lewis Gaddis, Moscow’s expansionist ambitions at that time extended far beyond Greece, although no timetable for achieving them had been set.<sup>14</sup> The Soviet Union’s proposed strategy for the KKE to pursue double and parallel policies was implemented in such a way that, if one avenue failed, an alternative would be put forward. At any given moment the policy with greater prospects of success would be pursued.<sup>15</sup> In game theory terms, Moscow was promoting both the optimal outcome (monopoly of Communist power in a country) and a suboptimal result (Communist participation in governments of national unity, acceptance of parliamentary legitimacy, elections, etc.). Opting for one policy did not necessarily preclude switching to the other. Moreover, passing from one option to another depended on local and international circumstances as well as on the estimate of the adversary’s comparative strength and likely reactions. Communist leaders were aware that such estimates always contained a margin of error.

Tensions between Communist parties and Moscow frequently arose from disagreements concerning the amount of risk that had to be taken in order to make the best policy choice. At times Moscow pressed for more caution and then at other moments opted for more decisive action. On the other hand, even when Moscow was more reserved, the leaders of some Communist parties assumed that the circumstances were favorable for them to seize power and pressed Moscow to support them and to take greater risks (e.g., Josip Broz Tito and Enver Hoxha in 1944, Zahariadis in 1944–1946, and Palmiro Togliatti in 1947–1948). The interaction between the two opposing tendencies often led to incoherent results. Preparations for military action were not easily reconciled with efforts to make the most of diplomacy and political means. This uneasy dual strategy was bound to be short-lived. The Greek case of the years 1944–1946 is arguably the most characteristic example of such a short-term dual strategy.

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13. Artiom Ulunian, “The Soviet Union and the Greek Question, 1946–53,” in Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons, eds., *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–1953* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 146.

14. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 31.

15. Pierre Barral, *Il y a trente ans, la guerre froide* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1996), p. 41.

**Table I.** Multiple Options of the International Communist System in Europe after World War II

	<i>Optimal Choice</i>	<i>Suboptimal Choice</i>
Risk-Free	Exclusive exercise of power with Western tolerance or concessions (e.g., Bulgaria, Yugoslavia)	Participation in governments of national cooperation and acceptance of democratic norms (France, Italy)
Limited Risk	Seizure of power following coups d'état—Western intervention improbable (e.g., Hungary, Czechoslovakia)	
Significant Risk	Opting for civil war without clear indications of success (Greece)	

Gradually, the pace of events accelerated and took a new direction. As described by the Greek historian Philippos Iliou, Zahariadis's visit to Czechoslovakia in March 1946, his meetings with Tito, and later his secret encounter with Iosif Stalin in the Crimea were intended mainly to explore the possibility of concrete Soviet and East European aid for the armed struggle in Greece. The responses he received were positive.<sup>16</sup> In April 1946, during his meeting with Bulgarian Communist leader Dimitrov in Sofia, Zahariadis submitted specific requests for assistance that were forwarded to Moscow the next day. Zahariadis asked the Soviet Union to approve the creation of guerrilla and officer training centers to accommodate 8,000 guerrillas in Yugoslavia and 2,000 each in Albania and Bulgaria. He also requested army supplies (mainly from Yugoslavia), printing presses, newsprint, and communications equipment.<sup>17</sup>

From that moment on, before the formation of the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG), which was announced in October 1946, and well before the declaration of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan in March 1947 and June 1947 respectively, which reflected the deepening Cold War, the Soviet and East European Communist parties were entangled in the Greek armed conflict. The conflict escalated gradually and cautiously, especially from the Soviet perspective. It would be naive to suggest that a Communist

16. Philippos Iliou, *O Ellinikos Emfylios Polemos: I Embloki tou KKE* [The Greek Civil War: KKE's Involvement] (Athens: Themelio, 2005), p. 23.

17. Ioanna Papathanasiou, "Itimenos Protagonistis: to Kommounistiko Komma Elladas sta Chronia 1945–1950" [The Defeated Protagonist: The Communist Party of Greece in the Years 1945–1950], in Chatziiosif and Papastratis, eds., *Istoria tis Elladas tou 20ou Aiona*, Vol. 4a, p. 252.

insurrection could have erupted in Greece in 1946 without the express agreement of the leaders of the Soviet and Balkan Communist Parties. It would be equally naive to assume that such support to the KKE insurgents would have been unconditional and would not have depended on the fluctuations of international geopolitics, especially in a region as volatile as that of southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. The Greek Communists had to demonstrate that they could gain the upper hand in the domestic balance of power quickly and by force of arms. Were they to achieve this, support from foreign Communist parties would prove to have been a wise choice; if not, their foreign patrons would likely reevaluate the efficacy and timing of their actions.

Accordingly, from mid-1946, the USSR began to show greater flexibility on the Greek matter, indicating a broader policy reorientation. In October 1946, in a note to Stalin, several of his top advisers—Lavrentii Beria, Anastas Mikoyan, Georgii Malenkov, Andrei Zhdanov, and Mikhail Suslov—recommended the dispatch of funds, food, and medical supplies to the Greek insurgents.<sup>18</sup> Zahariadis later declared that he had discussed with the Soviet leadership a broad plan of action, bearing in mind the need to avoid British intervention in the conflict.<sup>19</sup> These discussions signaled a gradual shift in Soviet policy from passivity to a cautious endorsement of the KKE's aggressive ambitions.

The change in the Soviet Union's position had direct consequences for the leaders of the other East European Communist parties, who began to take concrete steps regarding the unfolding situation in Greece. In the autumn of 1945, the Bulgarian party's interest in KKE activities increased. Dimitrov proposed to Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov in Moscow that material assistance be sent to the Greek comrades who "are working well."<sup>20</sup> Soon thereafter, in November 1945, Molotov ordered Dimitrov to send \$100,000 to the KKE (the money was eventually paid by Moscow).<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, the Bulgarians became increasingly active in dispatching supplies and all manner of assistance to the Greek insurgents. After mid-1947, assistance increased significantly. Kostas Siaperas, the KKE's representative in Bulgaria during the civil war, reported with satisfaction that "our friends are supplying us with everything. They give us as much and as such as we probably do not receive

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18. Ulunian, "The Soviet Union and the Greek Question, 1946–53," p. 147.

19. Lefteris Eleftheriou, *Sinomilies me to Niko Zachariadi: Moscha Martios–Ioulios 1956* [Conversations with Nikos Zahariadis: Moscow, March–July 1956] (Athens: Kentavros, 1986), p. 35; and Iatrides, "Revolution or Self-Defense?" p. 22.

20. Jordan Baev, *Mia Matia ap'Exo: O Emfylios Polemos stin Ellada* [A View from Outside: The Civil War in Greece: Documents and Sources], trans. by Yorgos Siakantaris (Athens: Filistor, 1999), p. 97.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 107–108.

from anywhere else.”<sup>22</sup> In the fall of 1947 the Bulgarians made available to the DAG fifteen trucks to facilitate the transport of supplies from Bulgaria to insurgent forces. The shipments entered Greece by way of nine entry points along the Greek-Bulgarian border and consisted of army equipment, provisions, paper supplies, sanitary equipment, and other items.<sup>23</sup>

At that same time, Tito also became more active in supporting the Greek Communists. On 25 August 1946 two senior KKE officials, Yiannis Ioannidis and Petros Roussos, went to Belgrade to try to restore contact with the Yugoslav Communist Party and establish communication with the Soviet Union to request aid for the insurgency. Among the issues discussed were relations between the KKE and the Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front (*Narodni osvoboditelen front*, or NOF). On 14 October 1946, Ioannidis met with Ivan Karayanov, a Yugoslav Communist official, and Aleksandar Ranković, the Yugoslavia minister of internal affairs who was also a leading member of the Yugoslav Politburo. While in Yugoslavia, Ioannidis signed a special “accord of union” between the KKE and NOF.<sup>24</sup> Under the compromise agreement, the NOF would cease to demand the formation of independent Slavo-Macedonian units among the ranks of the Greek insurgents, and in return the KKE would accept that Slavo-Macedonians could maintain their own centralized political leadership.<sup>25</sup> This step amounted to de facto recognition of the NOF. Despite this major concession to the NOF, the accord represented a positive step for the KKE, which could now recruit Slavo-Macedonian autonomists in the northern region of Greece and could count on Yugoslavia to control them to a large degree.<sup>26</sup> But some thorny issues between the KKE and the NOF could not be settled so easily. Throughout the

22. Kostas Siaperas, “Ekthesi pano sti douleia mas” [Report on our work], 26 January 1948, in ASKI/Digital Archive DSE/001.08.019.00086.

23. “Kostas Siaperas, “Ekthesi pano sti douleia mas” [Report on our work], 7 March 1948, in ASKI/Digital Archive DSE/KKE’s Special Services Abroad, 001.08.019.00090. ASKI contains an abundance of material regarding the dispatch of aid from Bulgaria to the KKE from 1947 to 1949. These documents illustrate from various perspectives the level of interest and involvement of the neighboring Communists, as well as the KKE’s particular influence upon its neighbors.

24. Spyridon Sfetis, “Anepithimiti Sumachoi kai Anexelegktoi Antipaloi: I Schesis KKE kai NOF sti Diarkeia tou Emfyliou 1946–1949” [Undesirable Allies and Uncontrollable Foes: KKE’s Relationship with NOF during the Civil War 1946–1949], in Spyridon Sfetis, ed., *Opsis tou Makedonikou Zitimatou ston 20o Aiona* [Aspects of the Macedonian Question in the 20th Century] (Thessaloniki: Vantias, 2001), p. 168; and Iakovos Mihailidis, *Ta Prosopa tou lanou: Oi Ellinoyougoslavikes Schesis tis Paramones tou Ellinikou Emfyliou Polemou 1944–1946* [The faces of Janus: The Greek-Yugoslav Relations in the Eve of the Greek Civil War (1944–1946)] (Athens: Ekdoseis Patakis, 2004), p. 164.

25. Andrew Rossos, “Incompatible Allies: Greek Communism and Macedonian Nationalism in the Civil War in Greece 1943–1949,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (March 1997), pp. 60–62.

26. Lagani, “Les Communistes des Balkans et la Guerre Civile Grecque,” p. 64; and Tasos Kostopoulos, “To Makedoniko sti Dekataia tou ’40” [The Macedonian Question in the 1940s], in *Istoria tis Elladas tou 20ou Aiona*, Vol. 2, pp. 397–398.

civil war the KKE was compelled to walk a tightrope between two irreconcilable goals: on the one hand, appealing to the domestic audience in traditionally nationalistic terms and national unity, on the other hand, satisfying the demands of a significant portion of the political elites of Macedonia's slavophone population that constituted the most cohesive group within the DAG. In addition, strong personal and social prejudices, national antagonisms, and Yugoslavia's external pressure on the Slavo-Macedonians created a complex mosaic of antagonisms and conflicting loyalties.<sup>27</sup>

In the early postwar years, Tito's regime had found itself in an unusually strong position to pursue a dynamic "internationalist" policy. Among Moscow's European "satellites" Yugoslavia's ruling party enjoyed the greatest acceptance and prestige from the Soviet Union and other Communist states. In Moscow's eyes Tito's regime was a bastion of peace and democracy.<sup>28</sup> No other Communist party, with the possible exception of the Bulgarian, received more praise from its Soviet comrades. The esteem enjoyed by the Yugoslav party was linked partly to its achievements during the wartime resistance against the Germans but stemmed even more from the rapid process of Stalinization that had been introduced toward the end of the war and had been largely completed by 1946. By placing the "Yugoslav path" on a pedestal, Moscow signaled to the other Communist parties what it considered the model for transitioning to socialism. Relations between Soviet and Yugoslav officials had reached their apogee by the time of the announcement of the Marshall Plan in June 1947. The Yugoslavs—in contrast to the ambivalence and caution shown by leaders in Poland and Czechoslovakia—immediately and categorically denounced the U.S. plans for the continent's economic recovery.<sup>29</sup> This different response to Washington's initiative resulted in the acknowledgment of a special regional role for Tito, who gradually assumed responsibility for coordinating foreign Communist involvement in the Greek crisis. A special center for the management of the Greek question was established in Yugoslavia. A leading KKE member, Ioannidis, represented his party, and Leonid Baranov and Vasilii Mosevich represented the Soviet party. Later, Zahariadis also joined the group.<sup>30</sup>

In 1947 the bulk of supplies sent to Greece—weapons, ammunition, and provisions—was transported from Yugoslavia. Initially, the weapons were of German origin in order to conceal the identity of the actual suppliers. Aid ar-

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27. Lagani, "Les Communistes des Balkans et la Guerre Civile Grecque," p. 64.

28. Leonid Ia. Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Soviet Bloc," in Gori and Pons, eds., *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–1953*, p. 224.

29. Vojin Majstorović, "The Rise and Fall of the Yugoslav-Soviet Alliance 1945–1948," *Past Imperfect*, Vol. 16 (2010), p. 145.

30. Papathanasiou, "Itimenos Protagonists," p. 260.

iving from Albania and Bulgaria also was forwarded to the Greek insurgents through Yugoslavia.<sup>31</sup> In addition to weapons, Yugoslavia supplied the KKE with ample support for its propaganda needs: the Communists' Free Greece Radio Station was transmitting from Yugoslav territory, and Yugoslavia also provided financial assistance for travel, accommodation abroad, contacts, and other services.<sup>32</sup> All told, the aid constituted an impressive amount and variety of materiel and other support, revealing the Yugoslavs' confidence in the prospects of the Greek insurrection.<sup>33</sup>

Albania's Communist regime also did not fail to carry out its duty to - display international solidarity toward its struggling Greek comrades. In April 1945, following the KKE's accord with Hoxha, approximately 400 KKE cadres, victims of persecution by the Greek authorities, found refuge in Rubik, Albania. They remained there until October 1945 when they were transferred to the Balkan guerrilla training camp in Bulkes, northwest of Belgrade.<sup>34</sup>

According to Serbian historian Milan Ristović, more than 5,000 people passed through Bulkes, a typical Vojvodina village that became known as a major guerrilla training camp and detention center, with a reputation that

31. Ivo Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 35.

32. Milan Ristović, "To Zitima tis Yougoslavikis Stratiotikis Voitheias pros to Dimokratiko Strato Elladas 1946–1949" [The question of the Yugoslav Military Aid to the Democratic Army of Greece, 1946–1949], in Ioannis Mourellos and Iakovos Mihailidis, eds., *O Ellinikos Emfylios Polemos, mia Apotimisi: Politikes, Ideologikes, Istoriografikes Proektaseis* [The Greek Civil War, An Evaluation: Political, Ideological, Historiographic Ramifications] (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2007), p. 99. In March 1949, following the Tito-Stalin clash and the KKE's alignment with the Cominform's commands, the radio station was moved to Bucharest. Anna Matthaïou and Popi Polemi, "Oi Diethnis Xsxeis tis Dimokratikis Elladas Mesa sto 1948: Mia Ekthesi tou Petrou Roussou" [International Relations of Democratic Greece during 1948: a Report by Petros Rousos], *Archeiotoxio: Periodiki Ekdosi ton Archeion Synchronis Koinonikis Istorias*, Vol. 2 (June 2000), pp. 4–40.

33. On Yugoslavia's involvement in the Greek Civil War and the question of military aid sent to the DAG on behalf of the Yugoslavs, see Nicholas Pappas, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Greek Civil War," in Wayne S. Vucinich, ed., *At the Brink of War and Peace: The Tito-Stalin Split in a Historic Perspective* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), pp. 219–237; Elizabeth Barker, "The Yugoslavs and the Greek Civil War of 1946–1949," in Lars Baerentzen et al., eds., *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War 1945–1949* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1987), pp. 225–248; Ivo Banac, "The Tito-Stalin Split and the Greek Civil War," in John O. Iatrides and Linda Wrigley, eds., *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and Its Legacy* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 258–273; Vasilis Kontis and Spyridon Sfetos, eds., *Emfylios Polemos: Egrafa apo ta Yougoslavika kai Voulgarika Arheia* [Civil War: Documents from the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Archives] (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 2000); Milan Ristović, *To Peirama Boulkes: "I Elliniki Dimokratia" sti Yougoslavia 1945–1949* [The Bulkes Experiment: "Greek Democracy" in Yugoslavia 1945–1949], trans. by Andrianos I. Papadrianos (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidoi Afoi, 2006); and Iakovos Mihailidis, *Ellino-Yougoslavikes Scheseis tin Periodo tou Ellinikou Emfyliou Polemou (1947–1949)* [Greek-Yugoslav Relations during the Period of the Greek Civil War (1947–1949)] (Athens: Ekdoseis Patakis, 2007).

34. Ioannidis, *Anamniseis*, p. 373; and Christos Kainourgios, *Sta Adita tou Emfuliou: Stratopeida Roubik kai Boulkes* [The Civil War's Inner Sanctum: The Rubik and Bulkes Camps] (Athens: Iolkos, 2003), pp. 61–62, 77.

transcended the borders of Yugoslavia.<sup>35</sup> Bulkes, however, soon became infamous for its inhumane, corrupt system of governance and iron-handed control over the lives of its inhabitants. Such camps were also set up in Bulgaria, in the villages of Ivailograd and Svilengrad as well as in Berkovitsa.<sup>36</sup> Despite the Greek government's vociferous protests regarding the existence of these training camps in Balkan countries, the guerrilla centers continued to operate until the very end of the civil war in the summer of 1949.<sup>37</sup> In February 1949 the Greek government, as well as other Western sources, reported the existence of camps with 3,000–4,500 DAG fighters in Albania, 1,000–3,000 in Yugoslavia, and 2,000–3,000 in Bulgaria.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the creation of camps for the assembly and training of DAG reservists, insurgents' quarter-master centers were located in the territories of neighboring countries. For example, DAG units on the Evros River maintained not only supply stores on Bulgarian soil but also other installations such as sheep pens and stables.<sup>39</sup>

The involvement of the Balkan Communist regimes in the Greek Civil War was institutionally ratified in August 1947 at Bled, Slovenia, where Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania agreed to continue to provide aid to the DAG. According to Greek and French diplomatic sources, the military chiefs of staff of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania formally committed their governments to provide any assistance required by the DAG for its armed struggle and to organize within their own territories military training camps and hospitals for the insurgents. They said they would urge the governments of Hungary and Romania to assist the DAG as well, and they indicated that the Albanian government would allow the KKE to use one of its naval bases. The military chiefs also indicated that Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania would appoint an advisory committee to the DAG High Command and that this committee would have to consent to any change or removal of DAG commanders.<sup>40</sup>

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35. Ristović, *To Peirama Boulkes*, p. 16.

36. Lagani, "Les Communistes des Balkans et la guerre civile Grecque," p. 67; and Nikos Marantzidis, *Dimokratikos Stratos Elladas, 1946–1949* [The Democratic Army of Greece, 1946–1949] (Athens: Ekdoseis Alexandria, 2010), p. 44.

37. Nachmani, *International Intervention in the Greek Civil War*, p. 33.

38. "Rapport Militaire," from Col. E MG Ch. Daniel, Swiss air attaché, 24 February 1949, in Documents Diplomatiques Suisses, DODIS 4080, Légation de Suisse en Grèce; and Lagani, "Les Communistes des Balkans et la guerre civile Grecque," pp. 77–78.

39. "Kostas Siaperas pros Marko" [Kostas Siaperas to Markos], 28 November, 1948, in ASKI/Digital Archive DAG (DSE)/001.08.020A.00101; and Ioannis Kiosses, *Anamniseis apo ta Matomena Chronia tou Emfyliou Sparagmou 1946–1949* [Recollections from the Bloody Years of the Civil Rending 1946–1949] (Xanthi, Greece: Spanidis, 2000), p. 98.

40. Lagani, "Les Communistes des Balkans et la guerre civile Grecque," pp. 68–69. At the Bled meeting, the Macedonian issue was apparently discussed as part of a broader plan to reshape the region. According to older publications, the KKE accepted a new drawing of Macedonia's boundaries in exchange for aid. See R. V. Burks, *The Dynamics of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ:

Stalin approved the agreement and said it did not need to be publicized because its aims could be better achieved without publicity.<sup>41</sup> Dimitrov's declaration from Romania a few months later, in early 1948, that a Balkan-Danubian federation was being prepared and would include Greece indicates the depth of involvement of the KKE's Balkan comrades in planning for the future of Greece and also confirms that they aspired to provoke the wider destabilization of Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Even before the founding of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) in September 1947, contacts between the Greek Communist leaders and their East European comrades had intensified. In particular, Zahariadis's meetings in May 1947 with the highest leaders of the Soviet Communist Party, initially including Zhdanov and Suslov and later with Stalin, were significant for the development of the relationship and the active involvement of the USSR in providing support to the Greeks. Soviet leaders, who up to that point had avoided an open commitment to assist the Greek insurgency, gave Tito and Zahariadis the green light to move forward with the civil war and provide assistance to it.<sup>43</sup>

In short, by the end of 1946 and during the first months of 1947, ruling Communist parties had taken concrete steps to offer active support to the Greek comrades' cause. Not coincidentally, a congress of a Communist party in Western Europe, the French, was chosen as the forum for a formal announcement by the KKE's representative, Miltiadis Porphyrogenis, in June

Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 99–101. Much as it makes sense, this claim—at least as it pertains to the KKE's position on frontiers—has not yet been confirmed by archival data.

41. Frederick Voight, *The Greek Seditio* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1949), p. 211; Dimitrov, *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933–1949*, p. 421; and Banac, *With Stalin against Tito*, pp. 37–41.

42. Baev, *Mia Matia ap'Exo*, pp. 154–155, 228. Stalin reacted to Dimitrov's declaration with a stern telegram pointing out that such public statements were not helpful to the people's republics and instead benefited the Anglo-Americans. Interestingly, Stalin did not object specifically to Greece's inclusion in the proposed confederation of people's republics but to the naming of all three countries: "The section of your announcement in the press conference in Romania that concerns the federation or confederation of People's Republics that would include Greece, Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc., is perceived by Moscow as damaging. It causes injury to the countries of new democracy and assists the struggle of the Anglo-Americans against these countries." See Dimitrov, *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, p. 435. Regarding Dimitrov's decision to make such a public announcement, see, among others, Vasilis Kontis, *I Aggloamerikaniki Politiki kai to Elliniko Provlima 1945–1949* [Anglo-American Policy and the Greek Problem 1945–1949] (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1984), pp. 339–340.

43. The Russian historians Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov suggest that Zhdanov was negatively disposed toward Zahariadis's appeals: "There are still great battles ahead of us," he is said to have reminded the Greek leader. Moreover, according to the same authors, Zhdanov advised Zahariadis to play the nationalist card mainly against the United States and Britain. See Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 127–128. This exchange is not recorded in the publications of the Greek minutes of that meeting. According to Ioanna Papathanasiou, who has published a portion of the minutes of the meeting, The Greek record has been altered and falsified. See Ioanna Papathanasiou, "To 1/3 tou Ellinikou Edafous sta Cheria mas" [One Third of Greek Territory in Our Hands], *Ta Nea* (Athens), 22 May 1999, pp. 12–15.

1947, of his party's intention to create a distinct government with its own state.<sup>44</sup> This was part of a scenario that related to the “Lakes” (Limnes) strategic plan, most likely conceived by Yugoslavia, which was officially approved by the KKE in September 1947. The plan provided for the creation of a regular army of 50,000–60,000 troops that would capture and control wide areas of northern Greece with Thessaloniki, the country's second-largest city, as its core.<sup>45</sup> The Lakes/Limnes plan, which had been drafted as early as April 1947, represented the crystallization of Zahariadis's military and political contacts with Tito and was the result of Moscow's commitment to support the insurgency.<sup>46</sup> According to Vojtech Mastny, the plan had been sent to the Soviet Communist Party, where it was approved by its Central Committee.<sup>47</sup>

Already in late February 1947, as Operation Lakes/Limnes was being prepared, U.S. Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson was explaining to startled congressional leaders that Moscow's pressure on Greece and elsewhere “had brought the Balkans to the point where a highly possible Soviet breakthrough might open three continents to Soviet penetration.” A Communist victory in Greece would render Africa, the Middle East, and Europe vulnerable to Soviet influence, with Moscow “playing one of the greatest gambles in history at minimal cost.” Acheson's grandiloquent language, based on sketchy intelligence from Greece, helped persuade congressional leaders to endorse the Truman Doctrine and ultimately the strategy of Soviet containment.<sup>48</sup>

## The Cominform and the Greek Civil War

The founding of the Cominform at a meeting in the Polish town of Szklarska Poręba on 22–27 September 1947 constituted a reordering of the international Communist system under Moscow's control and initially in coordination with the Yugoslav Communists. The aim was to minimize the dissenting

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44. “Logos tou M. Porfyrogeni sto sunedrio tou KK Gallias sto Stasvourgo” [Speech of M. Porfyrogenis at the French Communist Party's Conference in Strasbourg], *Rizospastis* (Athens), 28 June 1947, quoted in *To KKE: Episima Keimena, 1945–1949*, p. 442. Officially, the establishment of the temporary government was announced on 23 December 1947. The decision had been taken by the KKE Politburo a few weeks earlier.

45. Iliou, *O Ellinikos Emfylis Polemos*, pp. 204–211.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 189; and Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 35.

48. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 219. For Acheson's key role in the formulation of the strategy of containment, see Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); James Chase, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998); and John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).

tendencies that had become apparent following the dissolution of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1943. The establishment of the Cominform should, therefore, be seen not as Moscow's direct reaction to the Marshall Plan but as a move intended to bring Eastern Europe and the main Western Communist parties more tightly under Soviet control. It is now apparent that the Soviet leadership had been planning to create such an organization since the beginning of 1946, and perhaps earlier.<sup>49</sup> Two factors seem to have inspired this decision: first, Moscow's concern about international developments immediately after World War II, and, second, Stalin's belief that rigid control would enable the USSR to manage the new state of affairs in Eastern Europe and prevent any "contamination" from the West.<sup>50</sup>

The Cominform differed significantly from its Comintern predecessor. Compared to the Comintern's impressive performance, the Cominform's organizational weaknesses soon became all too apparent.<sup>51</sup> The most important differences, however, extended beyond organizational matters. The fundamental goal of the Comintern had been worldwide revolution, whereas the Cominform had Europe as its frame of reference.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, all of the Comintern's officers were absent from the Cominform except one: Zhdanov, who had become Stalin's closest aide.<sup>53</sup>

According to the testimony of those present, Zhdanov was the Cominform's key personality and head of negotiations.<sup>54</sup> The Soviet official presented to the assembled delegates a report that divided the world into two hostile camps.<sup>55</sup> In addition to laying out this zero-sum conception of world politics, his report gave the Communist parties in Eastern and Western

49. Anna Di Biagio, "The Establishment of the Cominform," in Giuliano Procacci, ed., *The Cominform: Minutes of the Three Conferences 1947/1948/1949* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1994), p. 14; Anna Di Biagio, "The Marshall Plan and the Founding of the Cominform, June–September 1947," in Gori and Pons, eds., *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, pp. 208–209; Silvio Pons, "Stalin, Togliatti and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 2001), p. 15; and Mark Kramer, "Stalin, Soviet Policy, and the Consolidation of a Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe," in Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), p. 80.

50. Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 125; and Kramer, "Stalin, Soviet Policy," p. 81.

51. Lilly Marcou, *Le Kominform: Le Communisme de guerre froide* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1977), pp. 1–2, 73–75.

52. Souria Sadekova, "Andrei Jdanov et le mouvement Communiste international," *Communisme*, No. 53/54 (1998), p. 69.

53. Eugenio Reale, "The Founding of the Cominform," in Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko Lazitch, eds., *The Comintern: Historical Highlights: Essays, Recollections, Documents* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966), p. 257.

54. *Ibid.*

55. The report was published in the first issue of the Cominform's official organ. See A. Jdanov, "Sur la situation internationale," *Pour une paix durable pour une démocratie populaire*, 10 November 1947, p. 1.

Europe specific tactical instructions about what they should do internally. Leaders of the European Communist parties at the Szklarska Poręba meeting quickly discerned Zhdanov's strong position as Stalin's omnipotent representative and behaved accordingly.<sup>56</sup>

The Yugoslavs, represented by Milovan Djilas and Edvard Kardelj (the second and third in command after Tito), played a salient role at the Cominform's founding congress, where they were treated as "stars." Yugoslavia was second only to the Soviet Union at the conference, and the decision to transfer the Cominform's headquarters to Belgrade served to confirm Yugoslavia's importance in the international Communist system.<sup>57</sup> Cooperation between the Yugoslavs and Zhdanov during the congress was close and conspicuous. Some matters addressed at the congress had already been discussed well in advance by Zhdanov, Malenkov, Djilas, and Kardelj. Numerous sources indicate that two concepts of political action were put forward during the conference. The first, a "pluralist" approach, envisioned the formation of left-wing coalition governments in which Communist parties would participate. The main proponents of this concept were Poland's Władysław Gomułka and Czechoslovakia's Rudolf Slánský.<sup>58</sup> The second concept, which ultimately prevailed, advocated the establishment of single-party regimes that would copy the Soviet model. The main proponents of the second approach were the Yugoslavs, supported by the Soviet delegation.<sup>59</sup>

The French, Italian, and Czechoslovak parties found themselves on the receiving end of strong criticism regarding the political choices they had made up to that point. The criticism pertained to three main issues: (1) the tendency the three parties had shown toward broad left-wing policies and participation in coalition governments that eroded the Communists' influence; (2) their fascination with parliamentarianism and parliamentary procedures; and (3) their notion of a national path to socialism—that is, the belief that di-

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56. Sadekova, "Andrei Jdanov et le mouvement Communiste international," p. 70.

57. Marcou, *Le Kominform*, pp. 53–54. On the Yugoslavs' principal role within the Cominform and their close relationship with the Soviet delegates, see also Geoffrey Swain, "The Cominform: Tito's International?" *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Summer 1992), pp. 641–663; Majstorović, "The Rise and Fall of the Yugoslav-Soviet Alliance 1945–1948," pp. 148–150; and Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Soviet Bloc," pp. 230–231.

58. On the harsh criticism of Gomułka for "devaluing the USSR's role in the struggle against international imperialism" and his subsequent political isolation, see Inessa Iazhborovskaia, "The Gomułka Alternative: The Untravelled Road," in Gibianskii and Naimark, eds., *The Soviet Union and the Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*, pp. 135–137. Rudolf Slánský did not meet with a good end. In 1952, together with other high-ranking members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, he was executed after being charged with conspiracy and other political crimes. On this matter, see Karel Kaplan, *Report on the Murder of the General Secretary*, trans. by Karel Kovanda (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1990).

59. Marcou, *Le Kominform*, p. 53.

verse models of socialism could exist apart from that of the USSR. How times change! The parties that had been accused of “sectarianism” in 1942 because of their reluctance to accept the national front policy were a few years later accused of the opposite position: “*liquidarisme*” (submerging themselves within coalitions) and “parliamentary bedazzlement.”<sup>60</sup>

The Cominform’s founding conference devoted a good deal of attention to the Greek issue. However, the KKE was not invited to the meeting. Some historians incorrectly interpret the KKE’s absence and the listing of Greece in Zhdanov’s report as belonging to the capitalist camp as signs of Soviet opposition or at least of a chilly stance toward the Communist insurgency in Greece. In reality, the lack of invitations to the KKE, as well as the Chinese Communist Party—and the consignment of China and Greece to the capitalist camp in Zhdanov’s report—indicate a decision to maintain a strategic distance from countries engaged in civil warfare. Inviting such parties to the conference could have been exploited by Western governments, which could have denounced the insurgents as “agents and proxies of foreign Communist parties and forces.”<sup>61</sup> This cautious position is reflected in the first edition of the official Cominform publication *Pour une paix durable pour une démocratie populaire*, which makes no mention of the Greek and Chinese civil wars. The French historian Lilly Marcou has referred to this omission as a “deafening silence.”<sup>62</sup> A dramatic shift on this issue soon took place, however, going from silence to spectacular publicity. From 1948 through the end of 1949, the Cominform’s official organ mentioned Greece more than 50 times. Twelve articles were dedicated exclusively to the Greek situation.<sup>63</sup>

Although the KKE was not present at Szklarska Poręba, the issue of the Greek Civil War and aid to the Greek insurgents was discussed at length by the invited participants. The declassified proceedings reveal strong support for the Greek party. Given the importance of Yugoslavia at the conference, the seriousness with which delegates discussed the armed struggle of the KKE is not surprising. They praised Yugoslavia’s policies in the Balkans, especially its

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–58; and Di Biagio, “The Establishment of the Cominform,” pp. 20–22. For a discussion of the Cominform’s founding conference from the perspective of those accused of pursuing incorrect policies, see the book by the Italian representative: Eugenio Reale, *Avec Duclos au banc des accusés: La réunion constitutive du Kominform, Szklarska Poreba 22–27 Septembre 1947* (Paris: Plon, 1958); and Reale, “The Founding of the Cominform,” pp. 254–266. Reale was expelled from the Italian Communist Party in 1956.

61. Marcou, *Le Kominform*, p. 43; Di Biagio, “The Establishment of the Cominform,” p. 25; and Iatrides, “Revolution or Self-Defense?” p. 26.

62. Marcou, *Le Kominform*, p. 80.

63. Ioanna Papathanasiou, “The Cominform and the Greek Civil War, 1947–49,” in Philip Carabott and Thanasis D. Sfikas, eds., *The Greek Civil War: Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 62.

active support of the Greek insurgency.<sup>64</sup> When Kardelj spoke, he explicitly underlined the need for political and other assistance to the Greeks.<sup>65</sup> However, the most significant point in his speech lay in the comparison he drew between the “wrong way”—which, in his view, had been followed by the Italian and French Communist Parties—and the “right way” of the Greeks.<sup>66</sup> Every important issue of concern to the Communist world had to be presented in the form of a theoretical model. There could be no spontaneous political assessment of a given situation or development. For the Cominform, events in Greece validated the thesis of the “two enemy camps” outlined in Zhdanov’s report.

The alignment of the rest of the delegations with the Yugoslav position regarding the Greek Civil War was confirmed in the speeches of the other participants. Vulko Chervenkov, the Bulgarian representative, announced the Bled agreement of August 1947 between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria as the start of an important phase in Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations, adding that “decisions were taken at Bled on coordinated action and common defense of peace in the Balkans.”<sup>67</sup> After recalling that Romania had taken concrete measures to help the Greek people, the Romanian leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej added an even more radical idea: he proposed that “giving aid to the Greek Communist Party is obligatory upon all other Communist parties, without writing that in a resolution.”<sup>68</sup> Finally, Gomulka, the delegate of the Polish party, argued that the Greek question must become the banner of the struggle of all Communist parties and democratic forces.<sup>69</sup>

The Greek Civil War thus became the first armed confrontation of the two hostile camps on European soil. The delegates at Szklarska Poręba were convinced of this, and they worried that the defeat of the KKE could trigger a series of negative developments for other Communist parties and regimes. Balkan representatives, especially the Albanians and Bulgarians, were particularly concerned about such a possibility. The senior Bulgarian official Traicho Kostov voiced his concerns to Stalin during an important meeting in Moscow in February 1948: “We think that if the partisan movement in Greece fails, it would create a very difficult situation for the rest of the Balkan countries.”<sup>70</sup>

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64. Di Biagio, “The Establishment of the Cominform,” p. 31.

65. Kardelj’s speech is reprinted in Procacci, ed., *The Cominform*, p. 303.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

67. Chervenkov’s speech is reprinted in Procacci, ed., *The Cominform*, p. 103.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 403.

69. Gomulka’s speech is reprinted in Procacci, ed., *The Cominform*, p. 425.

70. Meeting at the Kremlin involving Stalin, Molotov, Zhdanov, Malenkov, and Valentin Zorin for

He was also concerned about the possible reaction of the United States if Greece were to be drawn into the Communist camp: “Will the Americans allow the victory of the partisans?” he asked at another point of the meeting. “No one will ask them,” was Stalin’s confident reply. The Soviet leader then elaborated: “If there are enough forces to win and if there are people capable of using people’s forces, then the struggle in Greece should be continued.” Uncharacteristically, Stalin was willing to concede that this was precisely what had happened in China’s case. Even though he had advised Mao Zedong to reach a compromise with the nationalist Chang Kai-shek, Mao did not comply but instead gathered forces and pushed ahead: “The Chinese proved to be right, and we were wrong.”<sup>71</sup>

Stalin was concerned about only one thing: the risk of destabilization of the Communist regimes in the Balkans, particularly Albania and Bulgaria. Even though it was clear that the optimal solution in Greece was the KKE’s exclusive takeover of power, Stalin sought to limit the danger and uncertainty involved in the undertaking. He did not wish to risk losing the achievements of the previous years in the Balkans: “But one shouldn’t think,” he declared to Kostov, “that if nothing comes up in Greece, everything else is lost. The neighboring countries have to be the last to recognize the insurgent government of General Markos. First, let the others recognize it.”<sup>72</sup> The term “guarded internationalism,” coined by Czech historian Pavel Hradečný, clearly describes the position of the international Communist system toward the KKE’s armed insurrection at that time. Peter Stavrakis likewise calls this policy “prudent expansionism.”<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the establishment of the Cominform had an immediate practical consequence for the Greek Communists. The Polish party chief Bolesław Bierut and Tito met in 1947 and agreed to send significant quantities of aid to the Greek guerrillas from then on. According to the Polish historian Paweł Piotrowski, the agreement resulted in an operation known as “Transport,” which started in September 1947 and lasted until mid-1948. Only a small circle of individuals, among whom Poland’s General Wacław Komar played a decisive part, knew about the operation.<sup>74</sup> Komar had been a particularly active member of the prewar international Communist movement. From 1927 to

the USSR; Dimitrov, Vasil Kolarov, and Traicho Kostov for Bulgaria; and Kardelj, Djilas, and Vladimir Bakarić for Yugoslavia, in Dimitrov, *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, p. 442.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

72. *Ibid.*

73. Pavel Hradečný, “Zdrženlivý internacionalismus: Občanská válka v Řecku a československá materiální pomoc Demokratické armádě Řecka,” *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 2003), pp. 58–92; and Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism 1944–1949*.

74. Paweł Piotrowski, “Wywiad PRL-u do końca wierny mocodawcom,” *Polska The Times* (Warsaw), 24 October 2007, pp. 26–27.

1931 he was an officer of the Soviet Red Army, trained in intelligence operations. During that period he had been a fellow student of the future KKE General Secretary Nikos Zahariadis at the Party School (KUTV) in Moscow. Subsequently, he spent five years in Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, participating in Comintern intelligence networks. In 1937 he was sent to Spain to command the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. In 1939 he joined the Polish army in France, where the Germans arrested him the following year. He spent the rest of the war in a concentration camp, returning afterward to Poland, where he assumed the leadership of the Polish army intelligence services.<sup>75</sup>

Supplies intended for the Greek insurgents were being sent from Poland to Yugoslavia by train and were depicted as having come from the Yugoslav army.<sup>76</sup> As part of the operation, at least ten planeloads of radio equipment and explosives were sent to Yugoslavia, and guns, medicine, and other supplies were transported there by train and were then transshipped to the KKE. The weapons were of German and Italian origin in order to avoid accusations that supplies for Greek guerrillas came from Communist countries.

The situation changed dramatically in mid-1948 when the international Communist movement confronted a grave crisis: the Tito-Stalin clash and the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform. (The various interpretations of the causes and timing of the Soviet-Yugoslav split presented in the voluminous literature on the conflict are beyond the scope of this article.<sup>77</sup>) The KKE tried to maintain its erstwhile ties within the Communist world but soon found itself forced to choose sides. For the party's Stalinist leaders, the only option was to remain faithful to Moscow. No other choice was viable. Despite efforts to influence the intra-bloc balance (one wonders in what possible direction?), the KKE's relations with the Yugoslavs soon descended into mutual suspicion and gradually became openly hostile, exacerbated by the Macedonian question and the demands of the Slavo-Macedonian nationalists for autonomy. In October 1948, Ranković complained to Roussos, the foreign minister in the Greek insurgent "government," that "our relations have recently worsened, comrade Zahariadis seldom visits, and you . . . were absent

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75. George Sanford, *Military Rule in Poland: The Rebuilding of Communist Power, 1981–1983* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 58–59; and Ithiel de Sola Pool, *Satellite Generals: A Study of Military Elites in the Soviet Sphere* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1955), pp. 76–77.

76. Piotrowski, "Wywiad PRL-u do końca wierny mocodawcom," pp. 26–27.

77. See Leonid Ia. Gibianskii, "The Beginning of the Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Cominform," in Procacci, ed., *The Cominform*, pp. 465–481; Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Soviet Bloc," pp. 222–245; Leonid Ia. Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Split and the Cominform," in Naimark and Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe 1944–1949*, pp. 291–312; Majstorović, "The Rise and Fall of the Yugoslav-Soviet Alliance," pp. 132–164; and Perović, "The Tito-Stalin Split," pp. 32–63.

for a long time.”<sup>78</sup> Sounding disappointed, Roussos replied that, indeed, “our work has been made more difficult, but not because we wished it to be.”<sup>79</sup> Despite the falling-out, Yugoslav assistance to the insurgents remained significant throughout 1948.<sup>80</sup> Because of institutional inertia and the Yugoslavs’ vain effort to keep the Greek comrades on their side, aid from Yugoslavia continued to reach the KKE. However, it gradually diminished, and by the end of the civil war in 1949 it had completely stopped, as had communication between the two sides. Yugoslavia’s borders were closed to DAG traffic, compelling the Greek Communists to turn for help to the other Communist states.<sup>81</sup>

### **The Cominform’s Material Aid after the Tito-Stalin Split: Operations “S” and “R”**

Eventually the other East European countries took responsibility for the bulk of support to the KKE and its army. This was a large and exceptionally complex task, whose economic, logistical, political, and intelligence dimensions have come to light only in recent years. Officials from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania met numerous times with Roussos and Ioannidis to organize the transport of aid to the Greek guerrillas. At these meetings, crucial decisions were taken regarding the type and amount of assistance to be provided and the methods of transportation to be employed. Until recently, the available sources had yielded evidence for three such meetings, starting with one on 8 September 1948 in Warsaw.<sup>82</sup> According to the Russian historian Artem Ulunyan, the participants at this meeting, acting on behalf of their respective countries, offered assurances regarding the total fulfillment of the DAG’s needs and decided to establish a special committee, based in Warsaw, for the coordination of the supply of arms and ammunition. The minutes of an earlier meeting, which took place on 10 March 1948, were recently located in the Romanian archives.<sup>83</sup> After the Warsaw meeting of September 1948,

78. Iliou, *O Ellinikos Emfylios Polemos*, pp. 303–323. The correspondence between the two parties is revealing. See Kontis and Sfetas, eds., *Emfylios Polemos*, pp. 128–146.

79. Iliou, *O Ellinikos Emfylios Polemos*, pp. 303–323.

80. “Report of Major-General Jovan Kapicic to Al. Ranković on Yugoslavia’s Aid to the Democratic Army of Greece during 1948,” in Kontis and Sfetas, eds., *Emfylios polemos*, pp. 125–127.

81. Nikos Zahariadis, “Aux partis frères Communistes et ouvriers d’Albanie, Bulgarie, Hongrie, Pologne, Roumanie et Tchécoslovaquie,” 29 July 1948, in Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN) (Warsaw)/PPR Komitat Centralny, 295/XX-51.

82. Ulunian, “The Soviet Union and the Greek Question, 1946–53,” p. 152.

83. “Dare de seama asupra sedintei speciale,” 10 March 1948, in Arhivele Nationale ale Romaniei (ANR) (Bucharest)/Fond CC al PCR, dos. 36/1948, pp. 32–39.

two more meetings followed: one in Prague on 20–21 January 1949 and the other in Budapest a month later, on 15–16 February.<sup>84</sup> These meetings were for technical and coordination purposes. A list of needed assistance was drawn up jointly with the Greeks.

At the meeting on 10 March 1948, the delegates of each of the five Communist parties agreed to assume responsibility for organizing and delivering the aid: Bedřich Geminder, Colonel Stanislav Palla, and Jiří Gregor from Czechoslovakia; Alexandru Moghioroș from Romania; two officials each from Poland and Hungary, and Ioannidis and Roussos from the KKE. The cost of the operation was estimated at \$11 million. A fund was established for the purchase of arms, ammunition, and other military supplies from foreign arms dealers so that the Communist countries could deflect accusations of supplying arms to the insurgents. The fund initially secured a total of \$2.5 million, of which Poland contributed \$2 million and Hungary \$500,000. The officials in charge decided that the money would be used mostly for buying ammunition, which was considered a matter of urgency by the KKE representatives. For the remaining items on the list, the four ruling Communist parties were to contribute supplies from their own stores.<sup>85</sup>

Considering the dangerous nature of these operations and the limited resources available, the “guarded internationalism” demonstrated by the Balkan and East European Communist states was crucial for the progress of the civil war. Significant sums of money and resources were withdrawn from struggling economies in the midst of their recovery from a disastrous war in order to finance a wide spectrum of activities beyond their borders. The support provided to the KKE fell into five categories: (1) the transfer of weapons, ammunition, medical supplies, items of personal hygiene, food, clothing, field equipment, telecommunications equipment, vehicles, and other supplies; (2) transfer of money to the KKE through West and East European banks; (3) the training of officers and combatants in camps established in the Communist states; (4) the treatment of wounded insurgents at East European hospitals; and (5) the transportation and care of children and adults whom the DAG was removing from rural areas of northern Greece and resettling in the Communist countries.<sup>86</sup>

Beginning in the summer of 1948, after Yugoslavia had been expelled from the Cominform, Poland embarked on a new operation, codenamed “S.” This was a much larger effort coordinated by the Second Bureau (Military

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84. Ulunian, “The Soviet Union and the Greek Question, 1946–53,” p. 152.

85. “Dare de seama asupra sedintei speciale,” pp. 32–39.

86. Marantzidis, *Dimokratikos Stratos Elladas*, pp. 29–51.

**Table 2.** Weapons and Supplies Sent to the Democratic Army of Greece on Ships of the Polish Merchant Marine, November 1948–August 1949 (in tons)

<i>Shipment Date</i>	<i>Ships Name</i>	<i>Cargo</i>	<i>Country of Origin</i>				<i>Total Tons</i>
			<i>Poland</i>	<i>Czechoslovakia</i>	<i>Romania</i>	<i>Hungary</i>	
7 Nov 48	<i>Stalowa Wola</i>	Weapons, Provisions, Various Supplies	225 400	275			500 400
13 Jan 49	<i>Lechistan</i>	Weapons, Provisions	10 655	350	260 50	120 505	740 1,210
26 Feb 49	<i>Narwik</i>	Weapons, Provisions	185 1,760	95 50	700 500	200 1,365	1,180 3,675
27 Mar 49	<i>Borystaw</i>	Weapons, Provisions	110 2,815	230 30	760 650	30 810	1,130 4,305
13 Apr 49	<i>Wisła</i>	Weapons, Provisions	35 590	100	300 940	20 225	455 1,755

15 Apr 49	<i>Karpaty</i>	Fuel			3,500	3,500
13 May 49	<i>Olaszyn</i>	Weapons,	75	245	140	30
		Provisions et al.	200	10	80	480
18 Jun 49	<i>Kosciuszkó</i>	Armaments,	290	450	580	25
		Various Provisions	1,835	20	760	880
7 Jul 49	<i>Batlyk</i>	Armaments,	210	550	400	75
		Various Provisions	4,035	100	635	745
25 Jul 49	<i>Karpaty</i>	Fuel			1,115	1,115
2 Aug 49	<i>Kosciuszkó</i>	Weapons,	100	460	750	10
		Provisions	520	25	75	400
20 Sep 49	<i>Kosciuszkó</i>	Weapons,	135	15	15	45
		Provisions,	240	85	2,075	1,040
TOTAL		Weapons,	1,375	2,770	3,905	555
		Provisions	13,050	320	10,380	6,450
						30,200

Source: Gen. Komar Report to "Prezident Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Ob. Bierut Boleslaw," 19 January 1950, in CA IPN (Warsaw) / Seria "K"/14/04, pp. 25-31

**Table 3.** Weapons Sent from Poland, October 1948–August 1949

<i>Flight Date</i>	<i>Weight in Kilograms</i>
8 October 1948	1,600
19 January 1949	1,800
5 March 1949	1,450
7 April 1949	1,500
26 April 1949	1,940
2 May 1949	1,600
3 June 1949	1,500
18 June 1949	1,800
28 June 1949	1,800
2 July 1949	1,650
5 July 1949	1,600
8 August 1949	1,800
TOTAL	20,040

**Table 4.** Cost of Poland's Assistance to the Democratic Army of Greece, 1948–1949

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Cost in Zloty</i>
Foodstuffs	745,000,000
Clothing	750,000,000
Minesweeping Equipment	195,000,000
Car Equipment	30,000,000
Battle Equipment	3,000,000
Transport Costs	980,000,000
Management Costs	55,000,000
Cost of Weapons from German Warehouses	780,000,000
Set-up Costs for Dziwnow Hospital and Care for the Wounded	200,000,000
TOTAL	3,738,000,000

Intelligence) of the General Command of the Polish Army to provide supplies for the formation in Greece of a guerrilla army of 50,000 men.<sup>87</sup> Polish archives indicate that in the space of a year, from October 1948 to September 1949, twelve transport ships left Poland carrying 14,000 tons of war supplies and fuel, 30,000 tons of food, and other items. Another twelve shipments left Polish airports, carrying explosives and medical supplies. The entire operation cost the Polish government 4 billion zloty (roughly \$16 million).<sup>88</sup>

From the spring of 1948 to the autumn of 1949, Czechoslovakia undertook its own major effort to support the DAG. The operation, codenamed “Ř” (for “Řečko,” the Czech name for Greece), was directed by Geminder, the head of the International Department of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) who was also a veteran of the Comintern and was educated in Moscow. Throughout the operation, Geminder reported to Klement Gottwald, who was both chairman of the KSČ and president of Czechoslovakia, and to Slánský, the General Secretary of the party. Also involved were the deputy minister of finance, Bedřich Spáčil, and Lieutenant Vladimír Drnec, who assumed the financial aspects of the undertaking. Colonel Palla was responsible for the acquisition of arms and other military supplies and for their delivery to Greece. Finally, Gregor was responsible for the deployment of all other goods (food, equipment, etc.).<sup>89</sup>

Apart from this material assistance, which remained a closely guarded secret, the East European governments did their best to mobilize international support for the Communist cause in Greece. In 1948, KKE information bureaus functioned in Paris, London, New York, Sofia, Prague, Bucharest, and Warsaw. They were financially supported by the local parties and by the KKE’s own fund collections.<sup>90</sup>

Citizens’ committees to assist the “struggling Greek democratic people” were organized in Eastern as well as Western Europe. According to Roussos, in 1948 such committees existed in seventeen countries including Communist countries, France, Italy, the United States, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Canada. However, according to Roussos, “[I]t is evident that the work of the support committees is bigger and firmer

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87. “Komar gen. bryg Rapport,” Rozkaz Organizacyjny NR 00233, Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 23 April 1949, in Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (IPN) (Warsaw)/001103/3; and Piotrowski, “Wywiad PRL-u do końca wierny mocodawcom,” pp. 26–27.

88. “Komar gen. bryg Rapport.”

89. Gheminder and Slánský were arrested in November 1951 and executed in December 1952 on charges of organizing an “anti-state treason conspiracy center.” See Pavel Hradečný, “Czechoslovak Material Aid to the Communist ‘Democratic Army of Greece’ in the Years 1948–1949,” *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer/Autumn 1999), pp. 366–368.

90. Wasos Georgiu, “Au secrétariat du Parti Ouvrier Polonais,” 21 January 1948, in AAN, PPR Komitat Centralny 295/XX-52.

**Table 5.** Cost in Czechoslovak Koruny of Materials Sent or Made Available by Czechoslovakia to the Democratic Army of Greece under Operation “Ř”

<i>Type of Goods</i>	<i>Total Value of Goods</i>	<i>Value of Stored Goods</i>
Rifles	143,979,537.30	29,892,161
Bullets	558,981,147.80	196,767,124.05
Explosives	990,471	253,600
Sanitary materials	5,843,379.25	491,059.50
Communications equipment	5,033,074.62	—
Foodstuffs	12,537,193.30	—
Uniforms	47,001,784.44	1,436,604.21
Means of Transport	62,440,939.60	8,706,164.71
Optic Materials	3,070,293.80	2,576,010.70
Miscellaneous	2,873,351.12	1,536,570.32
Transport Costs	6,205,893.55	29,892,161
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>848,957,065.78</b>	<b>241,659,294.59</b>

Source: Národní Archiv, Prague, KSČ, ÚV, 100/24, F. Klement Gottwald, k. 99, n. 1142.

in the Peoples’ Republics.”<sup>91</sup> In Eastern Europe the committees consisted of important personalities within the Communist regimes (e.g., Dimitrov’s wife, Rosa, was a member of the Bulgarian committee) who sought to rally the public in order to collect the largest possible quantities of supplies for the Greeks. They appealed to their fellow citizens to contribute in cash or in kind. However, apart from attempts to mobilize the public in Eastern Europe, these committees were for the most part a cover for intense state activity to fulfill the needs of the DAG.

To appreciate the magnitude of the supplies collected for the DAG, we need to take account of several factors. The assistance to the DAG generally had to be kept secret, in sharp contrast to the official and much publicized U.S. aid to the Greek government. At one point, the Czechoslovak intelligence service discovered that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had assigned agents to watch the transport of arms going through Hungary and Czechoslovakia and to report on the sender, recipient, and content and more

91. Matthaiou and Polemi, “Oi Diethnis Scheseis tis Dimokratikis Elladas mesa sto 1948,” p. 13.

broadly on how these were to be distributed.<sup>92</sup> Fear of discovery led to additional conspiratorial measures, particularly in Poland, the country from which many of the supplies originated. Consequently, the operation required much more effort and time than would have been required if the Tito-Stalin split had not occurred and the aid could have been shipped through Yugoslavia. There is good reason to believe that, for practical reasons, some of the weapons and other assistance never reached the intended destination. The emphasis on secrecy affected every move of the coordinating committee and also explains why meetings were held in different countries.

Furthermore, for some time the Communists of Central and Eastern Europe did not have absolute power and authority to act. In contrast to their comrades in Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania, and Bulgaria, who by 1945–1946 had imposed single-party authoritarian regimes, the other Communist parties were in coalition governments with non-Communist parties and politicians. They enjoyed a smaller margin of autonomy and had to contend with state agencies and institutions not under their control.

By early 1949, Soviet officials had started searching for ways to end the civil war in Greece. The insurgency had not only failed to meet the expectations created by its leadership but was becoming a potential destabilizer of the region in ways that might benefit the United States and its allies. The Greek government's military preparations to invade Albania, ostensibly in pursuit of retreating insurgents, highlighted the need for a compromise settlement initiated by the Communist side and had a direct impact on the amount of aid supplied.<sup>93</sup> In early April 1949, Zahariadis was summoned to Moscow, where he was given the bad news: the insurgency had to end. Upon his return to the KKE's headquarters on Mt. Grammos on 19 April 1949 he reported what Stalin had told him. The supply of aid to the DAG was immediately halted, and passage across the Greek-Albanian and Greek-Bulgarian borders was blocked.<sup>94</sup> In May 1949 the borders were briefly and unexpectedly reopened, and the flow of aid was resumed as the KKE again prepared for a large counteroffensive. These twists and turns in the insurgents' actions were the result of a change in the USSR's stance closely related to international developments, in particular to Gromyko's failure to persuade U.S. officials to accept the opening of peace negotiations on the Greek crisis. This setback reveals the

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92. "Dare de seama asupra sedintei speciale," pp. 32–39.

93. Vasilis Kontis, *Sosialistika kratoi kai KKE ston emfylio* [Socialist states and the KKE in the civil war] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2012), p. 280.

94. Giorgis Vontitsios-Gousias, *Oi aitias gia tis ittes, ti diaspsi tou KKE kai tis Ellinikis avisteras* [The causes of the defeats, the split of KKE and of the Greek left] (Athens: Kakoulidis, 1977), p. 501; Mitsos Partsalidis, *Dipli Apokatastasi tis Ethnikis Antistasis* [The Double Restitution of the National Resistance] (Athens: Themelio, 1978), p. 199; Kontis, *Agglo-amerikaniki Politiki*, p. 382–388; and Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism 1944–1949*, pp. 181–185.

difficulty the Soviet Union had accepting the end of armed conflict in Greece.<sup>95</sup>

For the KKE and its dwindling army, however, the situation had become desperate and irreversible. Following the decisive defeat of the guerrilla forces on Mt. Grammos in the summer of 1948, and especially after the resounding failure of the DAG in the battle to seize the town of Florina on 12 February 1949, events steadily and inexorably led to the collapse of the insurgency. In reality, long before the last desperate battles were fought, the KKE's forces had been shrinking while those of the Greek government had been gaining strength as its numbers, command structure, weapons, discipline, and morale improved enormously.<sup>96</sup>

## Conclusions

Recently declassified archival materials from Eastern Europe and Greece concerning the KKE enable us to offer concrete if preliminary estimates of the extent of East-bloc involvement in the Greek Civil War. These documents cast doubt on the assertions of revisionist historians who seek to downplay the support the DAG received from abroad and to minimize the importance of the political, military, and financial aid supplied to the insurgents. The new documentary evidence shows that throughout the conflict the KKE acted in close cooperation with the East European Communist regimes, through permanent representatives whose aim was to coordinate the KKE's efforts with its sister parties and to maximize politically and materially the aid it received from them. The DAG was completely dependent on the military assistance provided by its foreign patrons. The launch of a full-scale insurgency was possible only because of outside support. Without a steady influx of weapons, ammunition, provisions of every kind, and other supplies, and without the training and sheltering of combatants in neighboring territories, as well as the hospitalization of the wounded across the borders, the Greek Civil War would have ended much sooner—if it had even started at all.

Militarily, the end of the civil war came in August 1949 on the rocky slopes of the picturesque Mt. Grammos. However, the KKE did not immediately concede defeat. In September 1949, Zahariadis sent a letter to Stalin informing the Soviet leader of the DAG's retreat, mostly into Albania. At the same time, he expressed his intention to "maintain and enforce partisan strug-

95. Kontis, *Sosialistika Kratoi kai KKE ston Emfylio*, p. 282.

96. Charles R. Shraeder, *The Withered Vine: Logistics and the Communist Insurgency in Greece, 1945–1949* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), pp. 249–267.

gle throughout the country.” He also proposed to strengthen the KKE’s forces abroad “politically, organizationally, and militarily.” Finally, he said, “because we will develop a mass popular struggle, we will maintain partisan activity throughout the country by having our forces on standby abroad and according to developments in the international situation we will be able, at the right moment, to broaden the armed struggle once again in order to overthrow monarchist fascism.”<sup>97</sup>

The KKE leaders’ refusal to accept the decisive defeat of their army had negative consequences for both the party and the country. In Greece, the DAG dispersed several hundred guerrillas around the country, thus contributing to the perpetuation of the personal tragedies of its remaining combatants and the prolongation of a civil-war atmosphere and the government’s harsh security measures.

The final support provided by the Communist regimes to the insurgency was the acceptance of thousands of insurgents as refugees, many of whom settled permanently and never returned to Greece. Moreover, in the Soviet-bloc countries, the KKE attempted to establish training camps for guerrillas who would eventually infiltrate Greece to sabotage and undermine the regime.

The policy of “perpetual readiness,” which depicted the party’s decisions and military setbacks of August 1949 as merely a temporary suspension of the armed struggle until conditions were right for a new offensive, remained the KKE’s fundamental position until Stalin’s death in 1953.<sup>98</sup> This line was not just “a motto for internal consumption,” nor did it simply reflect the party’s need to adjust to the new situation following military defeat.<sup>99</sup> Adapted to Greek circumstances, it corresponded exactly to the fallback position in the conflict with the West as laid out by the Cominform at its first congress in September 1947. As for the West, and particularly for the Truman administration, the defeat of the Communist insurgency in Greece represented a major victory in the newly adopted strategy of containing the expansionist aggression of the Soviet Union and its proxies.

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97. “Pros tin KE tou KKSE, gia to S. Stalin” [To the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, To Comrade Stalin], quoted in Iliou, *O Ellinikos Emfylios Polemos*, pp. 270–272.

98. In September 1949 the KKE Politburo resolution was published under the title “Progress of the Situation and Duties of the Democratic Army of Greece,” *Demokratikos Stratos*, Vol. 9 (September 1949), pp. 597–601. A few weeks later, on 9 October 1949, at the sixth plenary meeting of KKE’s Central Committee, the key decisions were encapsulated under the motto, “with the gun at the ready.”

99. Ioanna Papathanasiou, “To Oplo Para Poda: Lektiki Polemiki i Politiki Anasigkrotisis” [With the Gun at the Ready: Verbal Polemic or Political Reorganization], in Ilias Nikolakopoulos et al., eds., *O Emfylios Polemos: apo ti Varkiza sto Grammo Febrouarios 1945–Avgoustos 1949* [The Civil War: From Varkiza to Grammos, February 1945–August 1949] (Athens: Themelio, 2002), p. 142.

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