

Few Roses in Athens

Greece in the 1940s: A Nation in Crisis, edited by John O. Iatrides, *Hanover, New Hampshire and London, England: University of New England, 1981. 444 pp. \$35.00.*

IF THE GOVERNMENT of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou and his Pan-Hellenic Socialist Union (PASOK) had wished for a scholarly justification of their policies, this volume might have been created for them. As it is, however, *Greece in the 1940s* just happened to come along as Papandreou came to power, pledging vaguely but firmly that "Change!" was the order of the day. And, as change is much desired by restless voters in many places, and within Greece notably so, a new era has come to Hellas.

But, change from what and to what? Well, obviously, away from much that is criticized and more or less convincingly exposed in this volume, edited skillfully by John Iatrides, a professor of international politics at Southern Connecticut State College. He states in his Introduction that "the events of the 1940s shook the state to its very foundation and left an indelible mark upon its internal development and external orientation."

The book is a result of a 1978 symposium arranged by the Modern Greek Studies Association, which had been organized ten years earlier for "the promotion of modern Greek studies on an international scale and to the systematic advancement of research in all areas of neohellenism." Professor A. Lily Macrakis, who served as the Association's President from 1977 to 1979, acknowledges support from many quarters, including a "generous contribution of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

The book consists of more than twenty essays, beginning with a historic overview by Nicolas Svoronos (Sorbonne) and concluding with an examination of the ideological impact of the Civil War by Constantine Tsoucalas (University of Paris). There is consistent emphasis on the influence of foreign powers on Greek internal affairs; the work is divided in two sections, respectively

entitled "Occupation, Resistance, and the British" and "Liberation, Civil War, and the Americans." The book is meticulously organized; notes cover eighty-two pages.

While the contributors deal with different aspects of recent Greek history and thus throw light on topics as varied as the demobilization crisis and the emergence of a "new bourgeoisie," an undertone of irritation with Britain and the United States can be detected. It is all quite muted and well-mannered, and it would be unfair to say that the two Allied powers are regarded as uniformly ill-advised, selfish or villainous, or that the Communist Party and its front organizations are given the benefit of all doubts; still, one gets the impression that few of the contributing scholars are kindly disposed toward Messrs. Churchill, Truman, and their representatives.

What is one to make, for example, of "U.S. Intervention in Greek Trade Unions, 1947-1950" by Adamantia Pollis (New School for Social Research), which denounces efforts by the American Federation of Labor to counteract Communist infiltration of the postwar labor movement in Greece but fails to identify the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) as the successor of the Comintern's old Red Labor International (founded in 1925, dissolved as part of the "united front" policy in 1935, succeeded by the WFTU in 1945)? Pollis groups the WFTU with the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) as joint targets of the AFL's ire and efforts.

In order to avoid a reviewer's partisanship, I turned to C. M. Woodhouse's paper, "The National Liberation Front and the British Connection." Woodhouse served with the British army in Greece during World War II; he was parachuted into the countryside to help organize anti-Nazi resistance. His essay, curmudgeonly in manner and puckish in tone, paints a picture of jungle-like confusion inside Greece, matched by a long-standing vendetta between the British Foreign Office (FO) and the clandestine Special Operations Executive (SOE). Woodhouse relates that the FO did not recognize the reality of Communist control over the National Liberation Front (EAM) until

there was no major alternative to EAM when it was needed to distract the Germans from Allied landings in Italy. He makes SOE sound secretive, manipulative, and naive.

The British wanted to see the monarchy restored to Greece. The majority of contributors to this volume seem to regard this aim as wicked, although the royal family turned out to be enormously popular after its return, at least for several years. What emerges is a picture of destruction of political democracy during the pre-war régime of John Metaxas, polarization during Nazi occupation, and British-U.S. efforts to arrange (the tenor of this book suggests "impose") a structure of parliamentary democracy on the emotion-torn populace.

The Greek tendency to blame anything that goes wrong on outsiders (British intelligence officers, CIA station chiefs, NATO, EEC, multi-national corporations) is reflected in the essays of several contributors. Professor Lawrence S. Wittner, dealing with "American Policy toward Greece, 1944-1949," is highly critical of U.S. efforts to bolster Greece against communism. He concedes, somewhat reluctantly, that "American actions were not necessarily evil, of course, and the conduct of the Greek left was not always humane, wise or blameless."

What the majority of essays ignore is the Eastern European situation at the time of political and civil-war developments within Greece. Where there had been hope that parliamentary democracy might be established, such as in Czechoslovakia, Communist leaders acting through ministries of interior and justice set up repressive régimes, followed by purges and executions during the last years of Stalin's life. The bloody crack-downs in Hungary and, later, in Czechoslovakia followed. Need the word "Poland" be mentioned?

While in the other Balkan countries communism took over with Stalinist force, the

Communist Party of Greece sought to follow their example. The Stalin-Tito split and Stalin's paranoia-driven purges caught up with the Greek Communists, so that even civil-war leader Markos Vaphiadis ("General Markos") and party chief Nicholas Zahariadis continued their lives in obscurity. Professor Iatrides notes these developments in his essay, "Civil War, 1945-1949: National and International Aspects," observing that "the insurgents were in contact with representatives of the communist parties of Albania and Yugoslavia" and occasionally "Bulgarian authorities." The Communist army's headquarters "was in direct contact with Yugoslav authorities in Skoplje and in Belgrade." He writes that Zahariadis did not view this "Democratic Army" as "the socio-political instrument for a genuine popular revolution," but as a "pliant tool for a much-delayed attempt to seize power by military force."

The argument here is eminently topical. With few adjustments one might write Nicaragua instead of Greece. Iatrides, whose own contributions to this volume are exceptionally well-documented, writes that "the American involvement in the Greek civil war was based on the assumption that the crisis was the direct result of Soviet expansionism," but even he fails to look at parallel events from Bulgaria up to East Germany. Soviet expansionism was indeed under way in the Balkans, just as more recently in Afghanistan.

Greece in the 1940s, by focusing exclusively on the Greek scene and British-American involvement, places excessive emphasis on the interests of the Anglo-Saxon powers. If those villains in London and Washington had not done what they did, Athens might now look like Sofia—more roses, less pollution, and unrelenting repression.

Reviewed by MARTIN EBON

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Russell Kirk, the author of *Decadence and Renewal in the Higher Learning*, *The Conservative Mind*, and many other works, is director of the social-science program of the Educational Research Council of America and president of two foundations. He is the founding editor of *Modern Age*, serving the beginning period, 1957–1960, and now the leading exponent of philosophical conservatism in America.

Marion Montgomery is professor of English at the University of Georgia. His long poem, "At Al Johnson's Lake," is in a recent issue of *Southern Review*, and Sherwood Sugden & Company has just released his *Why Poe Drank Liquor*, the second volume of his trilogy called *The Prophetic Poet and the Popular Spirit*.

Thomas Molnar is presently visiting professor in the department of religious studies at Yale University and professor of European and intellectual history at C. W. Post College. He is the author of numerous books; his latest include *Theists and Atheists: A Typology of Non-Belief*; *Tiers-Monde, Ideologie, Réalité*; *Politics and State: The Catholic View*; and *The Pagan Temptation*.

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Andrew W. Foshee, professor of economics at McNeese State University, is researching the history of agrarian thought and its affinity with Socratic economics.

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