

**‘IN A RATHER EMOTIONAL STATE’? THE LABOUR PARTY AND BRITISH
INTERVENTION IN GREECE, 1944-45***

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As the Second World War drew towards a close, the leader of the Labour party, Clement Attlee, was well aware of the meagre and mediocre nature of his party’s representation in the House of Lords. With the Labour leader in the Lords, Lord Addison, he hatched a plan whereby a number of worthy Labour veterans from the Commons would be elevated to the upper house in the 1945 New Years Honours List. The plan, however, was derailed at the last moment. On 19 December Attlee wrote to tell Addison that ‘it is wiser to wait a bit. We don’t want by-elections at the present time with our people in a rather emotional state on Greece – the Com[munist]s so active’.¹ A couple of months later, Sidney Dye, the prospective candidate for South-West Norfolk, reported to his constituency Labour party (CLP) on the annual Labour party conference, held in December 1944. That conference had discussed all manner of significant issues, such as the future of the Churchill Coalition government, the general election programme, the policies of a future Labour government and the issue of ‘progressive unity’, but, according to Dye, ‘[t]he item which aroused most enthusiasm during the whole Conference was the Greek question’.² This reflected the view of Chuter Ede, a Labour junior minister in the Coalition, who found that there was ‘intense indignation’ within the party, the conference as a whole being ‘undoubtedly very perturbed at the Greek situation’.³

By the end of the war in Europe, of course, Greece had faded into the background of Labour mindsets, although it was to resurface periodically after 1945. The party went on to win a sweeping victory at the July 1945 general election; the Attlee governments of 1945-51 would be remembered widely as Labour’s most successful period in office. This article does not set out to suggest that the events of late 1944 and early 1945 in Greece were of seminal importance at the 1945 election. Such a claim would be palpably absurd. Nevertheless, it does suggest that the issue possessed – albeit briefly – the potential to derail the carefully crafted

unity that enabled Labour to put up such a strong fight in 1945. A powerful concatenation of circumstances conspired to create a crisis of significant proportions for the party. The decoupling of those adverse factors meant that the crisis could soon be overcome, as attention returned to the economic and social issues on which there was much more harmony. But there were some significant legacies for Labour from the crisis, not least insofar as it foreshadowed some of the foreign policy controversies that would mark the Attlee years. Analysis of Labour's crisis over Greece shows a great deal about the mood of the Labour party as it approached the end of the war in Europe.

I

Greece's troubles had not begun in 1944, of course. A weak parliamentary system finally succumbed in 1936, when a dictatorship was established under Ioannes Metaxas. In October 1940, Italian forces began an invasion. Despite British help, the Greeks were defeated in April 1941, and subjected to occupation by Italian, German and Bulgarian forces. This occupation lasted for more than three years, with disastrous results for Greece.⁴ As David Close has argued, the Germans were able to destroy existing authority, but were not strong enough to build an alternative social or economic system, and '[t]he outcome was near-anarchy, which left traditional elites bereft of power, but gave ample scope to the organizing abilities of the small Communist party'.⁵ By late 1943, civil war was erupting between the main resistance forces. These were, on the one side, the Communist-dominated National Liberation Front (EAM) and its armed force, the National Popular Liberation Army (ELAS), and, on the other, the anti-Communist National Democratic Greek League (EDES). Although this first round of civil war was brought to a halt by the Plaka Agreement in February 1944, it was clear that considerable difficulties would attend the liberation of the country from German control.⁶

By September 1944, the Germans were withdrawing from Greece, but they did so slowly, and in a way calculated to foment civil war in their wake. British forces reached Athens on 14 October 1944.⁷ The British, already committed to armed conflict with the Germans on two

fronts, were anxious not to get embroiled in direct warfare in Greece and the Balkans, and so followed at the rear of the German withdrawal, rather than attempting to precipitate it. This meant that in large parts of the country, a situation arose in which EAM/ELAS could take power as the Germans withdrew and before the British arrived. Even in the Athens area, British attempts to persuade ELAS to disarm proved abortive. The Prime Minister of the Greek government-in-exile, George Papandreou, arrived in Athens four days after the British, but soon found it difficult to keep his disparate coalition administration together. On 2 December, the EAM members of his government resigned, unable to agree terms for the demobilization of resistance fighters.⁸

These events were the prelude to the escalation of violence known in retrospect as the *Dekemvriana* (December events). On Sunday 3 December 1944, Greek police fired on unarmed EAM demonstrators – many of them children and youths – in Syntagma Square in Athens, resulting in at least ten deaths and more than fifty injuries.⁹ British troops stationed in armoured cars nearby failed to intervene, for reasons which remain unclear. Many journalists witnessed the scenes, and, the next day, *The Times* was only one newspaper among many that carried a critical account of the events.¹⁰ US Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius joined the critics, much to the chagrin of the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill.¹¹ In the early hours of 5 December, Churchill telegraphed the British commander, General Ronald Scobie, to ‘act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress.... We have to hold and dominate Athens. It would be a great thing for you to succeed in this without bloodshed if possible, but also with bloodshed if necessary.’¹² This secret document was soon leaked to the American press, the *Washington Post* publishing it on 11 December to predictable fury.¹³ Churchill’s views and mood at this point could well be summed up by his comment to a meeting of ministers later on 5 December, that ‘[i]f it [was] true that there were children in the procession of EAM, their parents [were] much to blame for having exposed them to the dangers of rioting and shooting in the streets’.¹⁴

However, Scobie's initial attempts to order ELAS to disarm were ignored, and it began to take over most of the police stations in the Athens area. A week later, serious attacks on British forces began. The British fought back, however, shelling the city – from the Acropolis, among other places – and using Spitfires to strafe ELAS strongholds in its suburbs. Increasingly outgunned, ELAS forces were soon withdrawing from Athens, taking with them hostages who were marched many miles north into ELAS-controlled territory in the mountains. Some perished. Alongside the military push, there was a new political initiative when Churchill and his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, visited Athens on Christmas Day 1944 and agreed to appoint Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens as Regent for the exiled King George II. This was a significant change of heart by Churchill, who up until this point had made no secret of his preference for a restoration of the monarchy, and who had been critical of Damaskinos in particular. On 3 January, Damaskinos appointed the titular head of EDES, General Nikolaos Plastiras, as Prime Minister. ELAS forces were cleared from Piraeus on 5 January and from Athens the following day; and on 11 January, a truce between the British forces and EAM/ELAS ended what had, in effect, amounted to the second round of the Greek Civil War. By 18 January, there were 75,000 British troops in Greece. In February, by the Varkiza Agreement, EAM agreed to demobilize its forces and participate in both a British-guaranteed plebiscite about the future form of government, and elections. What appeared then to be a settlement turned out, of course, to be little more than an extended ceasefire. In the event, real stability remained elusive. The March 1946 elections were boycotted by the left, and by the middle of that year armed conflict had resumed. This third and final round of the civil war only came to an end with the defeat of the Communist left in October 1949. But in February 1945 all that lay in an unknown future, and the British could believe, or at least hope, that Varkiza meant that the crisis was over. It also marked the end of one of the most significant internal crises endured by the Labour party during the whole of the Second World War.

II

On 1 December 1944, two days before the events in Syntagma Square, the Labour MP for North Lambeth, George Strauss, had launched a strong attack on government policy towards Greece, which he attacked as a policy 'of drift, a steady drift, in the wrong direction'.¹⁵ But Labour's leaders, serving in the war cabinet with Churchill, were fully committed to government policy regarding Greece. Indeed, it is important to note, in what follows, that there was no significant split within the war cabinet on party lines at any point over the next two months where policy on Greece was concerned. Although, as will become clear, considerations of party were not far from the minds of some ministers – notably Churchill – there were no significant political divisions in the cabinet room.

But away from the war cabinet, Labour reactions to the Syntagma Square shootings were swift. Strong protests were registered in parliament. On 5 December, half a dozen Labour MPs, including Aneurin Bevan and Emanuel Shinwell, joined the Communist MP, William Gallacher, the Common Wealth leader, Sir Richard Acland, and the Independent Socialist, Tom Driberg, in harassing Churchill with questions over the Athens shootings.¹⁶ Then, on 8 December, Seymour Cocks, Labour MP for Broxtowe (Nottinghamshire), moved an amendment to the King's Speech criticising government policy on Greece. The motion was, of course, heavily defeated, by 279 votes to 30. But there were worrying portents for Labour's leaders. No fewer than 23 Labour MPs – around 1 in 7 of the total – had voted against the government, contrary to the advice of the parliamentary Labour party (PLP) to abstain. They were also voting in common cause with Members seen as beyond the pale by the party leadership, particularly Gallacher. Yet, at the same time, they were by no means all easily dismissed as being on the left: although they did include leftists like Bevan, S. O. Davies and Alexander Sloan, they also included others, like J. J. Davidson, Dan Frankel and Agnes Hardie, who were much more centrist figures within the party.¹⁷ Meanwhile the tone of some of the Labour speeches was very strongly critical of government policy, and this gave Churchill a chance to make a resounding and somewhat partisan attack, which was rather

worrying to Labour's leaders.¹⁸ Attempts by the PLP chairman, Arthur Greenwood, to get Churchill to say something conciliatory, and so ease the predicament of the PLP leadership, were thrown back in his face, as Greenwood subsequently complained.¹⁹

But this was not only, or even mainly, a revolt within the parliamentary Labour party (PLP). Constituency Labour parties fell over themselves to pass resolutions attacking British policy. Out of the 60 constituency and city Labour parties – roughly 10 per cent of the total – whose records I have been able to consult for this period, no fewer than 29 passed resolutions critical of British policy on Greece. Clearly, these were not the only parties to do so, and a rate of almost fifty per cent from a large and largely random sample suggests considerable grassroots anger. No other issue in the whole of the war period – not even the Beveridge Report – aroused so much spontaneous feeling in so many local Labour parties so quickly.

No fewer than eight out of the sample of 60 parties passed resolutions in the first five days after the Athens shootings. Meeting on 5 December, Huddersfield CLP expressed 'alarm' at the situation in Greece, 'where British troops and diplomacy are being used to support & enforce the undemocratic & reactionary policy of an unpopular government', and calling upon the Labour party, both inside and outside parliament, to oppose such policies.²⁰ On 6 December, Cambridge Trades Council and Labour party (TCLP) expressed its 'great concern' at the shootings, and demanded that 'British troops should not be used to retain the present reactionary and undemocratic Government in power',²¹ while Salford central Labour party agreed to send a telegram of protest to Attlee.²² Both parties agreed to hold public protest meetings. The next day, Birmingham BLP passed an emergency resolution attacking British policy.²³ On 8 December, Windsor CLP expressed its dismay at British policy, and repudiated the PLP for not opposing it,²⁴ while Newport CLP broadened the attack to condemn 'the support being given to the reactionary forces in liberated areas of Europe by the British Foreign Office';²⁵ North Lambeth CLP also passed a critical motion.²⁶ The next day (9 December), Wolverhampton Bilston CLP added its voice to the furore with a resolution

attacking British policy on Greece.²⁷ Trade union reactions were also strong. The general executive council of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), meeting on 6 December, said that it was 'deeply concerned at the grave situation' in Greece, and called for free elections to be held as soon as possible.²⁸ On 11 December, the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) 'register[ed] an emphatic protest' against British policy, which, it said, would prove 'disastrous' to both the war effort and the future of Greece.²⁹

All this might not have mattered so much, had it not been for the fact that the Labour party's annual conference was due to convene on Monday 11 December. There was a rich irony here. The conference should have met in May. However, the government had requested that where possible such meetings should be postponed, to reduce the amount of rail and road traffic in southern England so that preparations for D-Day could proceed apace. Labour party leaders and managers, who had been fearing a strong challenge to the electoral truce, had accepted postponement with alacrity.³⁰ Now, however, they faced an even stronger challenge on an issue that would not have registered earlier in the year. As they arrived in London over the weekend of 9-10 December, all the major trade union delegations had private discussions about Greece.³¹ As the conference convened, CLPs were still passing resolutions strongly critical of British policy.³² On Wednesday, 13 December, the conference was due to debate Greece. The conference arrangements committee (CAC) received a number of very strongly worded resolutions. Among these were motions from major unions such as the TGWU and the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR). However, it was decided by the CAC, in consultation with the party's national executive committee (NEC), that none of these resolutions would be taken. Instead, debate would centre on an NEC resolution which turned out to be a masterpiece of understatement: as the acting chairman of the party conference, Harold Laski, later put it, it did not have 'a single adjective in it'.³³ The resolution 'deeply regret[ted] the tragic situation which ha[d] arisen in Greece' and asked the British government to do its utmost to secure an immediate armistice and the resumption of talks between all the various resistance groups, 'with a view to the establishment of a provisional national

Government, which would proceed to a free and fair General Election as soon as practicable'. It also looked forward to 'the establishment of a strong democratic system which will bring peace, happiness, and reconciliation to our generous and heroic Greek Allies'. No amendments were allowed, and in the event the resolution was passed by the huge majority (2,455,000 votes to 137,000) – after all, it was so pious and well meaning that it was difficult to oppose it.³⁴

The debate did not pass without controversy, even so. The railwaymen, in particular, protested against the failure to call their resolution. The NUR general secretary, John Benstead, stressed his loyalty to the Minister of Labour and National Service, Ernest Bevin, as the representative of organized labour in the Coalition government, but also warned that 'the Labour Movement will not always be satisfied with milk and water resolutions', and stressed that there had been 'nothing more repugnant' to British workers than 'the utilisation of our splendid British boys to shoot down the Greek guerillas [sic]'.³⁵ L. Plover, of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, condemned Churchill's 'very inglorious' performance on Greece, and stated that if the PLP did not change its line, 'some of us will have to leave [the] Party'.³⁶ It was significant that neither Benstead nor Plover was on the left, still less a fellow-traveller – they were, in fact, both right wingers. They clearly feared that, unless the leadership did something to help them by differentiating themselves from Churchill's policy, they would come under very strong pressure from the left in their respective unions.³⁷ In reply, Bevin stressed that he, like all other Labour ministers, was committed to government policy in all areas, and emphasized that 'if we win at the next General Election, as I hope we shall, we shall find that we cannot govern this world by emotionalism, it will call for hard thinking and great decisions, tremendous will power will have to be applied, and the Labour Movement will have to learn to ride the storms of life as these great issues arise from time to time'.³⁸ This was a powerful performance, but it called forth some criticism, especially from Aneurin Bevan, who attacked Bevin for an account of events in Greece that had been 'garbled and inadequate where it is not unveracious', and who had lined up with the only three other

bodies in the world to have supported British actions, ‘namely, Fascist Spain, Fascist Portugal, and the majority of the Tories in the House of Commons’. While stressing that he did not wish to break up the Coalition, Bevan also argued that Labour ministers should try to ‘exercise a more decisive influence upon the conduct of our affairs or else leave the Tories to do their own dirty work themselves’. The alternative was for Labour to become utterly compromised by the time of the election, to such an extent that it would be unable to put forward any independent critique of reactionary policies.³⁹ The executive’s choice of the popular miners’ MP, James Griffiths, to reply to the debate showed that it was nervous as to the extent to which the centre, as well as the left, of the party might be influenced by such criticism. The fact that Bevan had, the previous day, been elected as a constituency party representative to the NEC at his first attempt, suggested that old methods like threats of expulsion were no longer appropriate where he was concerned.⁴⁰ It is hard to believe that he was not helped in gaining last-minute support by his strong attacks over Greece prior to the conference.

The annual conference resolution was intended as a means of uniting the party behind the leadership. In a few cases, it worked, as when the South Wales Regional Council of Labour supported it on 18 December.⁴¹ But in the South Wales town of Pontypridd that very same day, the MP, Arthur Pearson (very much a leadership loyalist), was given a rough ride by his constituency party when he tried a similar tack. He argued that the situation in Greece was being brought under control, and that he could not wholly condemn the government’s action because ‘it had been a Cabinet decision and Attle [sic], Morrison and Bevin had had a share in it’. But this failed to convince members of his party, who voted to send a strongly-worded resolution attacking the government to the Foreign Office.⁴² On the same day, Stafford CLP passed a resolution condemning government policy on ‘the liberated countries, particularly Greece’ as in ‘direct contradiction’ of the aim of ‘free[ing] the world from Fascism and Nazism’, and ‘a needless sacrifice of human lives’.⁴³ Before the end of the year, there were also strongly-worded resolutions from Rotherham, Sheffield Brightside, Liverpool TCLP, and

Greenwich.⁴⁴ Even the Labour peers put forward a motion in the House of Lords on 21 December regretting British policy and attacking ‘military action against our Greek allies’ as ‘shameful’.⁴⁵ The first two weeks of January saw a continuation of the process. On 4 January, the national committee of the Co-operative party, which was close to Labour, adopted a resolution criticising British policy, calling for concerted action between the Allies, and condemning Churchill’s ‘abusive references to the character of ELAS’.⁴⁶ West Lewisham passed a resolution attacking British policy, although an attempt to include a call for the withdrawal of Labour ministers from the government in protest was narrowly defeated. In Nottinghamshire, Broxtowe CLP proudly backed its MP, Cocks, in criticising government policy on 13 January, and the next day Ipswich CLP ‘strongly protest[ed] against the government’s Greek policy’, and ‘demand[ed] that the people of Greece should be allowed to form their own Government without interference’.⁴⁷

III

The strength of the Labour reaction might seem surprising, in retrospect. It was not due to any particularly significant longstanding Labour enthusiasm for Greece. It is true that one mildly prominent member of the party, Philip Noel-Baker, MP for Derby and at the time Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport, owned land in Greece, and, according to his biographer, considered the country ‘his spiritual home’.⁴⁸ But in neither of these characteristics was he typical of Labour party members at large. (Noel-Baker sounded his constituency secretary and considered resignation, but decided, ultimately, to remain in the government.)⁴⁹ The October 1936 party conference, preoccupied as it had been with the recent outbreak of civil war in Spain, had had nothing at all to say about the establishment of the Metaxas regime in Greece.⁵⁰ Of course, the war had changed things to some extent. The National Council of Labour had issued a strong statement expressing its ‘detestation of the cowardly and despicable act of wanton aggression’ represented by the Italian invasion of 1940, and praising the ‘gallant resistance to Nazi and Fascist tyranny’ being shown by the Greeks.⁵¹ In October 1942, the NEC issued a strong statement on the second anniversary of

the Italian attack, praising Greek resistance and pledging Labour's support for the Greek people against their oppressors.⁵² But even though this clearly represented an increase in attention towards Greece as compared with the pre-war situation, it came nowhere near accounting for the extent of Labour's reaction to the *Dekemvriana* in 1944.

The extent of Labour outrage is partly explicable simply by reference to the events of 3 December. Greek police firing into an unarmed crowd comprising mainly children and young people was enough to appal all but the most 'hard-headed' (to use Bevin's phrase) Labourites, especially when they had been demonstrating on behalf of an organization that had taken a leading role in the resistance to Axis occupation. Humanitarian concern and political principle appeared to come together to condemn the actions of the Athens police; and yet the latter were the forces receiving British government support. Moreover, there was a ready response from Labour activists because virtually all CLPs had now recovered from the relative inertia that had characterized many of them in 1941 and 1942.

But there were other factors at work, too. First, there was concern about the general nature of the Coalition's foreign policy. T. D. Burridge has suggested that Labour could afford its crisis over Greece precisely because it had achieved 'general agreement over German policy'.⁵³ However, this perhaps underestimates the extent to which there was still doubt within the party in the country about the precise details of Labour's post-war policy. As Isabelle Tombs has shown, 'Socialist "Vansittartism"' was not merely an aberration of a few eccentrics around William Gillies in Labour's International Department: many prominent Labour figures, including the prominent NEC member (and MP for Motherwell), James Walker, were leading figures in the movement for a harsh peace settlement with Germany.⁵⁴ Such ideas were anathema to many throughout the party at all levels, but especially to the bulk of the party's left wing. In October 1944, the City of Leeds LP carried unanimously a resolution attacking the Morgenthau Plan of the pastoralization of Germany and attacking anti-German revanchism more generally.⁵⁵ There was concern, too, about the line being taken towards

Franco's Spain. The overwhelming majority of Labour people saw little distinction between Franco, the victor of the bloody Spanish Civil War (1936-39), on the one hand, and Hitler or Mussolini on the other. Yet diplomatic relations remained intact; worse still, to Labour ears, was that Churchill, in a speech in the Commons on 24 May, had praised Spain for remaining 'absolutely friendly and tranquil' while Allied forces were landing in North Africa in November 1942.⁵⁶ A number of CLPs begged to differ, passing resolutions attacking Franco.⁵⁷ Issues about the nature of successor regimes in liberated countries had already arisen in 1943, in regard to Italy, and were to prove a constant theme of Labour protests about Greece.⁵⁸ Had the war been a war against fascism, and a step towards a socialist society, or merely an attempt to restore the pre-war status quo minus disruptive forces like Nazi Germany? Viewed in this context, events in Greece took on a rich and threatening significance for many Labourites.

Allied to this, there were specific Labour fears about Churchill's past record. In particular, there were frequent references to his role as chief advocate of intervention against the Russian Revolution after the First World War.⁵⁹ The ILPer John McGovern summed up what many Labour people thought when he suggested that '[t]he Prime Minister has that kink in his nature. He loves wars.'⁶⁰ Worse still, of course, these concerns were easily related to what was, by now, a firmly-established the Labour narrative of the inter-war period: of how the 'Homes for Heroes' promises of the Great War had been betrayed by the post-war Coalition, of how that government had also botched the peace settlement with results culminating in a second world war, of how a return to the gold standard had led to the 1926 General Strike and the subsequent Trade Disputes Act, and so on. And at all the points of that compass, Churchill had been a major proponent of the now damned policies. This made him an enemy of the Labour movement and, so far as most of its members were concerned, the working class. Only in opposition to the appeasement of Germany and Italy, according to this narrative, had Churchill and Labour come together. Now, with Germany and Italy almost beaten, the grounds for co-operation were disappearing and the old fundamental differences resurfacing.

Thus even where they still praised his record in the early part of the war, his Labour critics now argued that Churchill was reverting to type, a reversion that Seymour Cocks pledged himself to overcome in an ironic peroration in the Commons:

So, if it is necessary to fight the Prime Minister, we shall fight him on the beaches, on the hill-sides, on the Floor of the House, in the Division Lobbies, on the hustings and at the ballot box, and in the name of liberty we shall defeat even the man who, four years ago, did so much to defend the liberties of this Island.⁶¹

Churchill's conduct during the crisis itself did little to ease such concerns, and much, at least initially, to exacerbate them. There was much Labour comment, in parliament and outside, about the Prime Minister's 'truculence' in his statements about Greece.⁶² It was perhaps not surprising that he showed little patience with longstanding critics such as Gallacher, Shinwell and Bevan. But the PLP leadership was clearly rather perturbed by his unwillingness to accommodate their own difficulties. On 5 December, for example the deputy chairman of the PLP, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, tried to get Churchill to acknowledge that there was public concern over events in Athens, and to undertake to keep parliament informed of developments there. Churchill's reply was couched in vigorous terms, to say the least. Pressed further by another Labour MP, Churchill turned to sarcasm:

[It was indeed] a shocking thing that there should be firing by police forces on unarmed children. That is a matter which we should all reprobate. We should also reprobate the massing and the leading of large numbers of unarmed children to a demonstration, the scene of which had been banned by the Government, in a city full of armed men and liable at any moment to an explosion.

Pethick-Lawrence later returned to try to wring some kind of statement from Churchill that he could use to pacify his increasingly angry MPs, saying that the British government should in future make its support for the Greek government conditional on the latter's adoption of 'a conciliatory attitude' towards all its people. Churchill's reply was again less than diplomatic:

‘Oh, yes certainly, a conciliatory policy, but that should not include running away from, or lying down under, the threat of armed revolution or violence’.⁶³ His language in the debate of 8 December was no more calculated to cool passions, attacking ‘mob law, with bands of gangsters, armed with deadly weapons’; stating that ‘[d]emocracy is no harlot to be picked up in the street by a man with a tommy gun’; telling the House that ‘[d]uring the war, of course, we have had to arm anyone who could shoot a Hun’; and proudly confirming that in 1928 he had supported Mussolini ‘in the sense of making speeches to say that it was a very good thing that Italy was not plunged into Bolshevism’.⁶⁴ None of this was likely to silence his critics; indeed, it aroused fierce Labour protest.⁶⁵ Nor did it make the Labour leadership’s job of party management any easier: but then again, it was not calculated to do so. As the exasperated Greenwood said, Churchill seemed to be ‘fomenting ideological differences inside his own Government’.⁶⁶

Churchill himself subsequently admitted that, at times, such as in his 4.50 a.m. telegram to Scobie on 5 December, his tone was ‘somewhat strident’. Although he sought to defend this on the grounds that a strong lead was needed, it is hard to avoid the view that the effect was not entirely the result of sober calculation.⁶⁷ He had been unwell: in early September 1944 the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who saw him frequently at close quarters, felt that the premier was ‘very definitely ill’ and was ‘doubtful how much longer he will last’, adding that ‘[t]he tragedy [was] that in his present condition he may well do untold harm!’.⁶⁸ His seventieth birthday on 30 November probably did little to cheer him. The failure of victory in Europe to arrive, as had been expected, in 1944 had caused him real disappointment: the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes in September 1944, although rapidly contained, had come as ‘a nasty shock to the allied commanders and publics’, and contingency planning in late November for the war ‘dragging on late into 1945’ was hardly likely to improve the premier’s mood.⁶⁹ The V-1 and V-2 attacks on London and the South-East were causing real concern within the highest echelons of government, and the fact that casualty figures were being kept a closely guarded secret demonstrates ministers’ anxiety.⁷⁰ Churchill was also,

without doubt, needled by American criticism of events in Syntagma Square.⁷¹ But domestic criticism, especially from erstwhile Establishment newspapers like *The Times*, vexed him further.⁷² As Greece became more and more of a preoccupation during December, Churchill himself became increasingly overwrought and ‘hopelessly overtired’.⁷³ Finally, he was undoubtedly upset that Labour’s NEC had, on 7 October, issued a statement to the effect that at the post-war general election Labour would ‘go before the country with a practical policy based upon ... Socialist principles ... and ... invite the electors to return a majority pledged to support a Labour Government to implement that policy’; this declaration of impending independence was endorsed by the party’s annual conference on 11 December.⁷⁴ This would mean an end to the Coalition and increased uncertainty as to the role that Churchill might find for himself in post-war politics. None of this was conducive towards him being conciliatory towards Labour.

There was more to it than vexation, however. It seems likely that there was an element of calculation in Churchill’s attitude towards Labour at this point. He had long taken the view that the key issue was to win the war, and that post-war concerns would have to take care of themselves. This failure to engage with ‘post-war’ had never satisfied some Conservatives, and was convincing fewer and fewer as the end of the war approached. With the Conservative organization reviving by the end of 1944, Churchill was coming under increasing pressure to provide his party with a lead. It therefore seems likely that he was deliberately truculent with his Labour critics in order to push them into more extreme positions, to compromise them – or rather to allow them to compromise themselves – by taking up positions that were so pro-ELAS that they would embarrass the party once the dust had settled in Athens. He also knew that, given the continuing commitment of the Labour leadership to the Coalition, this would open up all kinds of divisions within the Labour party.

Conversely, however, many Labour people also remained dubious as to the good faith of their leaders, particularly over the future of the Coalition government. There had been a significant

level of Labour criticism of the electoral truce ever since it had been concluded in September 1939. By early 1944 the volume of protest was rising, and if the 1944 party conference had been held, as planned, in the spring, there would have been a powerful revolt against it. The appearance of prominent Labour MPs on Conservative platforms in by-elections contested by independent socialists (as at West Derbyshire in February 1944) was taken particularly badly. So too were policies like Defence Regulation 1AA, promulgated by Bevin as Minister of Labour and National Service in April 1944. DR1AA was supposedly aimed at ‘Trotskyist’ agitators who were stirring up unofficial strike action, particularly in the coal mines, but it aroused some Labour hostility on the grounds that it was a severe infringement of workers’ rights. Bevin’s name was sufficient to ease many Labour fears – at a meeting of the City of Leeds Labour party in May 1944, for example, Alderman George Brett was able to secure the defeat of a hostile motion by calling on delegates ‘to support Ernest Bevin and his colleagues of the TUC and in the Government, rather than persons with no sense of responsibility towards the war effort’.⁷⁵ But others were not so easily reassured, and by late June 1944 resolutions had been received by party headquarters from 111 CLPs and union branches protesting against the Regulation.⁷⁶ Penistone CLP (south Yorkshire) was fairly typical in condemning it as ‘a flagrant transgression of everything the rank and file of the Labour and Trade Union Movement have fought for’.⁷⁷ In parliament, Bevan was especially critical of DR1AA, and led a revolt against it. Twenty-five MPs opposed the government, sixteen of them Labour; of those sixteen, eight were to vote against the government on 8 December over Greece. The remaining nine comprised many of those non-Labour leftists who would join Bevan and the others over Greece – for example, Acland, Driberg, Gallacher and McGovern. For his role in the Labour rebellion, and more particularly for his attacks on trade union leaders who accepted the Regulation, Bevan was hauled over the coals by a joint meeting of the TUC general council, the NEC and the PLP, and almost expelled from the party.⁷⁸

Many Labour people simply did not believe that their leaders wished to leave the Coalition after the war, and feared that the party would be tied to a Coalition manifesto at any post-war

election. In these circumstances, the idea that Labour ministers could be trusted on Greece was rather fanciful to some of the party's members. It was no coincidence that, on the very day after it debated Greece, the party conference rebelled against the NEC to pass, against the latter's advice, the proposal of Reading Labour party that the party's programme for the next election should include specific pledges to the nationalization of 'the land, large-scale building, heavy industry, and all forms of banking, transport and fuel and power', as well as the democratic control of 'national assets, services and industries' to include workers' and consumers' representation.⁷⁹ Many union delegations in particular, would have been mandated in advance to support the resolution. But the furore over Greece the previous day probably helped the resolution to be passed, first by swaying those delegates who were not so mandated, and secondly, by hardening the resistance of delegates, mandated or not, to the NEC's pleas that the resolution should be remitted to it for further consideration. As Stephen Brooke has noted, this was the only time between 1942 and the end of the war, with one exception, that a sizeable portion of the trade union bloc vote aligned itself with the left. That the exception had been the vote over Communist affiliation in 1943 would hardly have reassured Labour's leadership.⁸⁰

Many in the Labour movement were also becoming fearful of a more general Conservative party recovery. From 1943 onwards, Conservative spirits were starting to revive somewhat after the shocks of the early part of the war. Some Conservative backbenchers began to make clear their hostility towards some of the fruits of 'wartime consensus', such as the Beveridge Report.⁸¹ Bevin's Catering Wages Bill, although passed into law in 1943, elicited a vocal Conservative opposition in parliament.⁸² The failure to make progress towards the amendment or repeal of the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act was another signal that the Conservatives had not forgotten their pre-war positions.⁸³ And the enthusiasm with which some Conservatives greeted Friedrich von Hayek's anti-socialist tract *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) suggested that rumours of a drastically changed Conservative party had been exaggerated.⁸⁴

Added to this were fears of a revival of the far right in Britain. In late 1943 or early 1944, Knutsford (Cheshire) CLP sent a resolution to the NEC expressing concern about ‘the Fascist drift’ of the Coalition government.⁸⁵ This might seem far-fetched, but the point is that Labour party members and supporters all over Britain were becoming fearful that the ‘war against fascism’ might not, after all, see the destruction of that ideology. The Fascist leader, Sir Oswald Mosley, had been imprisoned without trial in 1940 under Deference Regulation 18B; his release, on health grounds, in October 1943 provoked massive criticism from all sections of the Labour movement. Constituency parties, in particular, were vocal in their attacks, in some cases launching personal attacks on the Labour Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison. A Mass-Observation report of January 1944 reported that ‘[u]nderlying the growing cheerfulness of war-outlooks in the past year has been this deepening anxiety about the future. The Mosley release provided a symbol and a focus for these anxieties, crystallising all that was most disturbing in private feeling and allowing it public expression.’ It also noted that ‘[q]ualitatively, the outburst of feeling which preceded and followed the release [of Mosley] was probably the strongest which Mass-Observation has encountered in seven years’ work’.⁸⁶ Morrison’s refusal thereafter to answer questions about the chances of Mosley’s reinternment, or to release details of the conditions under which he was kept under a form of house arrest, only served to increase irritation.⁸⁷

Had this been an isolated event, its impact might have been less. But it came in the context of continuing pressure against DR18B. In retrospect, of course, it could be argued that internment without proper trial hardly chimed in with the principles of liberty and the rule of law for which Britain claimed to be fighting.⁸⁸ Mass-Observation found in 1944 that the powers given to the authorities by the Regulation had ‘never been really accepted by more than a very narrow majority’ of the population.⁸⁹ There was, certainly, considerable sniping at the Regulation from Conservative MPs like Sir Ernest Graham-Little and Sir Irving Albery.⁹⁰ Albery, in particular, was not afraid to raise the matter of the MP for Peebles and Southern

Midlothian, Captain Archibald Ramsay, who had been detained in 1940.⁹¹ Interned at Brixton prison, Ramsay repented none of his anti-semitic views,⁹² and so his release, in September 1944, aroused significant anger within the Labour movement. Many Labour people appear to have shared the Communist MP Willie Gallacher's comment that it was 'the most shameful thing [he had] ever heard of'. Gallacher was suspended from the Commons for refusing to retract his description of Ramsay as 'this unspeakable blackguard' and 'a rabid anti-Semitic [sic]'.⁹³ Significantly, however, the attack on Morrison was then taken up by Shinwell, Driberg, D. N. Pritt and John Mack, the last three of whom were to vote against the government's Greek policy in the division of 8 December.⁹⁴ (Driberg, Shinwell, Pritt and Gallacher were to join the Liberal MP Geoffrey Mander in an attack on Morrison over the near-fascist Right Club that October.)⁹⁵ The release of people like Ramsay was seen by on the centre and left of British politics as related to a perceived revival of anti-semitism in Britain, which also suggested that fascism might not be beaten, but merely in remission.⁹⁶ It is instructive that the quarterly meeting of the NUR, meeting in December 1944, as well as passing an emergency motion on Greece, also recorded, and endorsed, a number of resolutions from branches protesting against Ramsay's release.⁹⁷

Finally, Communist activity must be taken into account. It would be wrong to see Labour's crisis over Greece as being in some way directed by the Communist party. Labour concerns about Greece and the situation there were real enough, and reflected the democratic socialist and trade union values of the party. However, Labour leaders and officials had spent a generation driving Communists out of the party, and by 1939 felt they had largely succeeded in doing so, even despite the continual pressure from the Communists for co-operation in a popular front from late 1934 onwards. Their reasoning – that Communists had different aims and methods from Labour, and that there could be therefore be no permanent common ground between the two – had a strong basis in common sense, as did their view that collaboration with Communists would bring more electoral problems than benefits. However, the expansion of the Communist party during the war, as well as the closely related fact that the Soviet

Union, and particularly the Red Army, were seen in a relatively favourable light, had created serious problems in maintaining that pre-war anti-Communist settlement. There had been real fears that the 1943 Labour party conference might vote to allow the Communist party to affiliate to Labour. While that proposition had been defeated, more votes were cast in favour than at any previous Labour conference, and had included those of some trade unions, most notably the Miners' Federation.

Political gossip late in 1943 suggested that Labour fears of the Communists remained real, particularly over issues like the release of Mosley.⁹⁸ Concern about 'front' organizations remained, as could be seen with the swift proscription of the 'Victory for Socialism' group that emerged in the summer of 1944.⁹⁹ Some unions and constituency parties continued to press the notion of 'progressive unity' hard, as 'a good thing' in itself and, in some cases, because they argued that they could not otherwise see any way of defeating the Conservatives at the post-war general election. Common Wealth was also pressing for some form of unity.¹⁰⁰ The party leadership, and the NEC in particular, maintained a wall of opposition to such talk.¹⁰¹ However, issues continued to arise which put the matter back on the political agenda: one which was much exercising the party by the latter part of 1944 was the application of the fellow-travelling MP D. N. Pritt for readmission to the Labour party, talks about which were progressing throughout the period of Labour's crisis over Greece.¹⁰² The AEU, although not under Communist control, was pressing hard for 'progressive unity', and although, for the time being, it was prepared to do so within the party's rules and to eschew formal links with the CPGB, there were always concerns as to whether it might at some stage 'break out' into a more combative line.¹⁰³ Therefore the Greek issue presented a real challenge of party management. It had the potential to cut across the loyalties of Labour MPs. Not just left-wingers, but pacifists, ethical socialists, and those in a radical Liberal tradition could make common cause with the Communist, Gallacher, Common Wealth MPs like Acland and Hugh Lawson, and independent Socialists like Driberg. If that could happen at Westminster, under the noses of the party whips, what might be happening out in the country?

Perhaps one case study will illustrate further the extent to which all these issues were interconnected. In Rotherham, the trades and Labour council (TLC) acted as the constituency Labour party. In November 1943 it passed a resolution unanimously condemning the release of Sir Oswald and Lady Mosley.¹⁰⁴ Three months later, it passed, again without opposition, a resolution which condemned the action of any Labour MP who took an active part in the by-election campaign of any Conservative candidate.¹⁰⁵ Although a proposal to denounce the adoption of DR1AA in June 1944 was defeated by 51 votes to 30, the size of the minority suggested considerable misgivings.¹⁰⁶ That October, the release of Ramsay excited a unanimous resolution of condemnation.¹⁰⁷ Little surprise, then, that the meeting in December 1944 denounced British policy in Greece in no uncertain terms, and demanded that British troops be sent to fight instead ‘against the common enemy – FASCISM’. In a mood of anger, it also passed resolutions supporting the demand that the government accredit a war correspondent for the Communist *Daily Worker*, and calling for the unity of all progressive forces, including the Communist party, with Labour at the next general election.¹⁰⁸ (Significantly, the latter was rescinded – on the grounds that it was against Labour party rules – at the next meeting, which was held *after* the conclusion of the January truce in Greece.)¹⁰⁹

Although Rotherham is unusual in allowing us to chart all its concerns so closely, it was clearly not untypical of the wider Labour movement’s attitudes at this time. Mass-Observation found the wider public, certainly, had severe misgivings about what was going on in Greece, and ‘[t]he idea that we [Britain] were supporting the near-Fascists everywhere cropped up repeatedly’. People drew parallels with Spain in the 1930s, and also suggested that the trouble in Greece was only ‘a foretaste of what was to be expected after the war’.¹¹⁰

IV

Labour’s crisis over Greece did not disappear overnight. In the first month of the new year, some CLPs that had already passed resolutions on Greece did so again, trying to keep up the

pressure on the leadership: Windsor, for example, did so on 18 January 1945.¹¹¹ For some, like Liverpool TCLP, perceptions of Plastiras, the new Greek Prime Minister, as ‘reactionary’, and his government as being ‘totally unrepresentative’, or even having ‘monstrous aims’ kept the fires of anger burning.¹¹² Stafford CLP refused to be placated by headquarters reassurances even after the January truce had been agreed, criticising the use of British forces ‘against the friends of democracy’.¹¹³ For others, though, there was no follow-up to the first resolution, suggesting that interest was short lived.¹¹⁴ A month after Pontypridd TCLP had passed its resolution strongly critical of government policy, for example, its chairman was expressing his disappointment at the TCLP’s failure to conduct any real propaganda about Greece.¹¹⁵ By the second half of January, for most Labour parties, the issue was disappearing, or at least retreating, quite rapidly: on 20 January Wolverhampton Bilston passed a resolution congratulating the party nationally on its stance on Greece, implying that the crisis had been overcome, not least thanks to Labour itself.¹¹⁶ On the same day, Walthamstow borough Labour party treated a resolution received from a trade union branch regarding Greece as being, effectively, out of date.¹¹⁷ Halifax CLP continued to record interest later than most: on 8 February, its executive committee agreed to draft a resolution to be discussed by its annual meeting on 22 February. However, the Varkiza agreement of 12 February appeared to render any such resolution otiose, and none was discussed at the annual meeting.¹¹⁸

Why did the crisis die down? The most obvious answer is that the situation in Greece itself changed. The appointment of the Regent removed the fear that Churchill would try to restore the King before a plebiscite could be held on the future of the monarchy. Damaskinos’s appointment of Plastiras was seen by some Labour people as a provocation, but the conclusion of a truce between his government and EAM/ELAS on 11 January – just eight days after his appointment to the premiership – seemed to suggest to others that there was nothing inherently and incurably repulsive about the new regime. Over the following month,

Greece moved towards the Varkiza agreement, which seemed to offer some hope of a more permanent settlement.

With the core issue fading away, the peripheral elements that had coalesced with it to intensify Labour's Greek crisis began to disperse. One important factor here was an easing of relations with Churchill. On the day before the 11 January truce, the NEC discussed Greece at length. Bevan played a leading role, and Shinwell proposed a resolution for publication, to the effect that unless EAM was included in the Greek government, Britain should withdraw its troops immediately. However, Hugh Dalton was able to show that Shinwell's motion went beyond the party conference resolution, and instead secured a vote of 11 to 6 in favour of sending a deputation to see Churchill to discuss the matter further.¹¹⁹ By now, Churchill felt that he had his critics on the run, given the favourable turn of events in Athens, and his initial reaction appears to have been negative.¹²⁰ A combative draft reply to Morgan Phillips, the Labour party secretary, continued the political points scoring of the last month, with references to 'the Communist conspirators and their dupes' whose attacks had been a major burden to the government at 'a critical stage in the war'.¹²¹ However, the reply appears to have been held back pending approval from the war cabinet, which met later that day. The meeting was a long and difficult one, and covered a wide range of serious foreign policy problems.¹²² Ultimately it was agreed that Churchill should see the Labour delegation, on the understanding that he would not be expected to go into detail on the position in Greece.¹²³ Labour members of the war cabinet were certainly acting in tandem with Dalton here, and made a crucial difference. It seems likely that, for all his triumphalism, Churchill was persuaded that the situation remained potentially difficult, and that there was now more than ever a need to ensure broad support for British policy in Greece: in short, the search for party advantage would have to be put to one side, for the time being at any rate.

The delegation, comprising Greenwood (chairman of the PLP), Laski (acting party chairman), Griffiths and Bevan, with Phillips also in attendance, visited Downing Street at 3 p.m. on

Monday 15 January. Careful planning was required by Number 10 staff: Churchill demanded that the delegation should all be seated prior to his entry, so that he would not have to shake hands with Bevan.¹²⁴ Greenwood introduced the discussion, but otherwise said little, leaving Laski, Bevan and Griffiths to make statements in turn before Churchill came in at the end. A number of themes emerged from the comments of the Labour speakers. One was to emphasize to Churchill the extent of Labour's difficulties with the wider party over the issue. There had been no shortage of efforts to control the problem; the fact was that it was very hard to contain the pressure that had built up. Second, concern was expressed about the *bona fides* of the various trade union leaders who were now emerging in Greece and claiming that they had the right to speak for non-Communist workers. As Laski said, some of these appeared to have had good relations with the Metaxas regime, and as he said to Churchill, 'I am sure you will forgive us if we feel a certain lack of enthusiasm for Fascist trade unions'. Some fears were expressed about Plastiras, although Churchill was at pains to emphasize that the Regent remained in control.¹²⁵

But common ground was also found. There was, for example, all-round condemnation of hostage taking by EAM/ELAS. As the meeting continued, relations warmed. Where Churchill had previously been provocative, he was now somewhat more conciliatory. There was even some banter: when Laski tried to reassure Churchill that the NEC had not tried to increase his difficulties, the premier replied: 'I hope you will not ask me for a certificate', to which Laski's response was: 'I shall be in very great danger if I received [sic] a certificate'. Churchill declared his total support for 'full fair, free, universal suffrage, the secret ballot, no intimidation, full discussion; nobody can hustle me off that'. The meeting closed, notably, with an anti-American consensus. When Churchill denounced criticism over Greece from the Americans, who, he claimed, 'take no responsibility in these matters, who, instead of wishing to come and share the burden of the difficulties, find it much easier to stand on the bank on the other side if the thing goes right; if it goes wrong they come in and criticise', Bevan responded eagerly that Labour had 'rebuked the American Administration for its conduct',

while Laski commented tartly that ‘specialising in moral declarations is one of the characteristics of the United States’. Finally, they agreed an anodyne public statement, which said only that they had met and had a ‘full and frank discussion’ on Greece.¹²⁶ The meeting had been a success: Churchill felt able to tell the war cabinet later that day that the discussion had been ‘very friendly’, that the points raised by the Labour members had been ‘very minor’ and that he had reassured them that free elections were the desired outcome so far as the government was concerned.¹²⁷ The next day, after hearing Laski and Griffiths report back to the Labour party’s International Sub-Committee, Dalton felt that Churchill had ‘captivated and, to a considerable extent, persuaded them’.¹²⁸

One suggestion that had emerged in the meeting between Churchill and the Labour delegation was that a Labour party fact-finding mission should be sent to Greece, in order to establish the credentials of union leaders and also simply to make contact with those of like mind.

Churchill had rejected the idea on the grounds that it must include all parties or none, but had added that he had been thinking of appointing ‘a trade union delegation of a non-party character’.¹²⁹ He had in fact been considering such a deputation for a few days, and had suggested it to the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) Sir Walter Citrine, on 12 January.¹³⁰ After initial reluctance, Citrine decided to go, forming a TUC delegation which also included Benstead of the NUR, George Bagnall of the Wool Textile Workers, and George Chester of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (NUBSO). Of course, this was anything but a truly ‘non-party’ delegation. Given the close links between the TUC and the Labour party, there could be no doubt that whatever Citrine and his colleagues produced would be intended to play mainly to a Labour audience. Furthermore, Citrine was selected safe in the knowledge that he would be most likely to produce a report highly unfavourable to EAM/ELAS and broadly in line with British official thinking. A moderate of long standing, he had also developed a firm reputation as a ‘commonsense’ critic of communism abroad as well as at home. In 1935, he had travelled to the Soviet Union, and published on his return a highly critical account of the Soviet system, as a corrective to the writings of enthusiasts like

the Webbs.¹³¹ In 1940, he had visited Finland while it was at war with the USSR, and had returned to write another book strongly critical of the Soviets.¹³² He was therefore the obvious choice to lead the delegation to Greece.

Three days after Churchill's meeting with the Labour party delegation there began a two-day House of Commons debate on the war situation and international policy: inevitably, Greece loomed large. Opening the debate, Churchill was still quite provocative, but was less truculent than he had been previously, although he was not slow to point out how the emergence of more and more information from Greece regarding ELAS's conduct was steadily weakening the position of the government's critics.¹³³ The speech, which lasted for more than two hours, was the best, 'rhetorically', that his private secretary, John Colville, had heard him make 'since 1941 or even 1940'.¹³⁴ Attlee wound up the first day's debate with a 'commonsense' type of speech, replete with racial stereotypes such as '[w]hen you are dealing with people like the Greeks, who are rather temperamental perhaps, ... you should never try to judge them exactly on your own basis'.¹³⁵ Above all, he called for a distinction to be made between Fascists and right-wingers: the former would not be acceptable in a Greek government, but the latter would, if the Greek people wanted them.¹³⁶ Acland moved a vote of censure on the government; but only seven votes were cast for it, as against 340 for the government. Only five of those seven – Cocks, Sloan, W. G. Cove, David Kirkwood, and Alfred Salter – were Labour MPs. The other two were the Communist, Gallacher, and the fellow traveller, Pritt (the two Common Wealth MPs, Acland and Hugh Lawson, acted as tellers).¹³⁷ There was not a sudden mass conversion of the December rebels to the government's position: of the 30 MPs who had opposed the government then, only one (the Independent, Eleanor Rathbone) now voted with the government. But the key point was that only 4 of the 23 Labour rebels in December now maintained their rebellion to the point of opposing the government in the division lobbies (Kirkwood had not voted on 8 December). Even Bevan, who made a powerful speech in which he did not stint at attacking one of the Prime Minister's claims as 'a grotesque piece of Churchillian rubbish' did not vote in the division.¹³⁸ His speech was far

less divisive of Labour than his previous effort, and drew strong praise, doubtless for this reason, from the loyalist Griffiths.¹³⁹ It is notable that Bevan's strong rhetoric was now directed firmly outside the Labour party, which was bound to improve his position vis-à-vis the party leadership. There was clearly a desire on the part of Labour MPs, aside from the handful of irreconcilables, to avoid division on the issue. The minuscule size of the vote for Acland's motion merely exposed the weakness of the government's parliamentary critics.

It only remained for Citrine to apply the *coup de grâce*. By now, most of mainstream Labour was prepared to accept the verdict that would be delivered by the TUC delegation to Greece. The National Union of Mineworkers, although sorely troubled by events in Greece, agreed on 18 January not to act on a demand from its Scottish Area – where Communist influence was relatively strong – for immediate agitation on Greece, on the grounds that since their letter had been received, the Labour delegation had visited Churchill and the TUC delegation appointed to visit Greece.¹⁴⁰ As Jack Tinker, the long-serving, right-wing, Miners-sponsored MP for Leigh (Lancashire), said on 19 January:

I am content to be guided by what the man at the head of it, Sir Walter Citrine, has to report when the delegation comes back. I have so much confidence in him that I believe that he will give a true version to this country of what is taking place in Greece.¹⁴¹

Dye told South West Norfolk CLP on 3 February that they 'should be able to obtain a truer picture of the Greek affair when Sir Walter Citrine, Mr J Lawson MP & the other people who had gone to Greece, came back & gave their reports'.¹⁴² The AEU executive took a similar line.¹⁴³

The TUC party visited Greece between 22 January and 3 February. Part of their time was spent trying to decide which individuals and groups could form the basis of a new (and

effectively non-Communist) trade union movement in Greece.¹⁴⁴ This was the start of the process detailed by Peter Weiler whereby the TUC took the lead in fostering anti-Communist unionism in Greece and, indeed, in other parts of the world.¹⁴⁵ However, the greater part of Citrine's attention appears to have been taken by other matters. In particular, he returned to Britain replete with stories of ELAS atrocities. In a series of articles and a broadcast, he launched severe criticisms of the pro-Communist resistance. An article for the *Daily Herald* on 8 February mentioned ELAS atrocities and stressed the need for the trade unionists on both sides of the Greek divide to work together in the future: Citrine also stated that he believed that the role of ELAS in the resistance had been exaggerated. Ultimately the Greeks would need to help themselves by coming together to rebuild their country.¹⁴⁶ A similar message, put rather more starkly, emerged in his article 'I saw ELAS with the mask off', published the next day in the *Daily Mail*. Here, there was less talk of trade unions, and more of atrocities.¹⁴⁷ The war cabinet also ensured that Citrine was afforded the opportunity to broadcast on the BBC about his experiences.¹⁴⁸ That same day – 9 February – the delegation's 24-page report was published as a sixpenny pamphlet. Entitled *What We Saw in Greece*, it was given extensive press coverage. Although much of the report was occupied with accounts of meetings with Greek trade unionists, there was a very definite bias towards discrediting ELAS. The photographs' captions were telling: 'In the ruins made by ELAS'; 'Exhumed bodies of murdered civilians'; 'The death roll at Peristeri'; 'Grim spectacle at Peristeri' (Peristeri was a cemetery where around 250 bodies of victims of ELAS had been exhumed). Much was also made of the 'cruel' treatment of hostages by ELAS, and also of the complaints of British troops against ELAS guerrillas.¹⁴⁹ Citrine was also ruthless in seeking to expose what he saw as myths about the way in which the crisis had been handled. On the basis of a series of discussions between the TUC party and British troops stationed in Greece – many of whom, of course, had been trade unionists in civilian life – he came up with a list of conclusions which tore apart many of the arguments that Labour people had advanced against British policy:

The answers given by the soldiers confirmed beyond any doubt whatever, that there was a deep sense of grievance against certain sections of the British press, and particular Members of Parliament; that it was grotesque to describe what had taken place in Greece as the use of reluctant troops on the side of reaction against a democratic people; that practically all the ELAS forces were in civilian clothes, and it was almost impossible for our troops to tell who were civilians and who were not; that many women, and even nurses, had undoubtedly concealed and carried weapons; that whilst there might have been isolated cases of reprisals by individual policemen, there was no evidence whatever of any organized or large scale reprisals; that both fear and intimidation were present among the Greek people, both before and after the fighting; that the oath alleged to have been sworn by every ELAS recruit did not correspond to the conduct shown by ELAS in the fighting; ELAS were the dirtiest fighters our troops had encountered.¹⁵⁰

In particular, the idea much pressed by the left in December – that British soldiers who had volunteered to fight fascism were now unhappy at being asked to fight anti-fascists instead¹⁵¹ – was discredited as it became clear that most of the troops with whom Citrine had spoken hated ELAS and its tactics. Benstead, for his part, contributed an article along similar lines to his union's paper.¹⁵²

Two points need to be made here. The first is that there can be no doubt that Citrine had been intended to come to these conclusions. In particular, he was fed information by the British Embassy in Athens which could only push him in one direction. The Embassy had made a priority of ensuring that Citrine and his party were taken to Peristeri, for example, and continued to send him information – including translations of Communist attacks on him – even after he had returned to Britain.¹⁵³ Peter Weiler criticizes Citrine strongly for allowing himself to be so manipulated.¹⁵⁴ He may be right to do so, but this matters less, in the context of this paper, than the fact that Citrine's reactions were, to a large extent, ones that could be

shared by a large part of the British Labour movement and working class. This was confirmed also by the reports that came back from Jack Lawson, the Durham miners' MP. He had been part of a parliamentary delegation to Italy, which the government had sent on to Greece after the ceasefire there. As with Citrine, it was unlikely that Lawson, a moderate miners' MP with a longstanding antipathy towards CPGB activity within the Durham Miners' Association and in his own constituency, would return to Britain showing sympathy towards anything linked with Communists. Indeed, he came back with plenty of 'shocking stories from our own troops about the [ELAS] atrocities'.¹⁵⁵ As early as December, Mass-Observation had found that many people, and particularly the less politically conscious, had been most troubled, where Greece was concerned, about the fate of British troops in Greece.¹⁵⁶ Labourites at all levels were well aware of the potential salience of this issue and of the danger of being seen to side with Greek guerrillas against ordinary British soldiers, most of whom were working-class conscripts. To a large extent, therefore, the Citrine mission, combined with the end of the fighting in Greece and the apparent improvement in relations with Churchill symbolized by the treatment of the NEC delegation, applied a strong brake to Labour criticism of the government's policy on Greece.

By late January, in any case, some of the major concerns of the left appeared to have been calmed. Churchill's acceptance of Damaskinos as Regent eased – although it certainly did not remove – fears that the Prime Minister had learnt nothing from 1919-20. The shape of the post-war settlement became a little clearer following the Yalta conference, which ended on 11 February. And any idea that Labour's leaders were still hankering after a continuation of the Coalition now seemed increasingly implausible, as the party continued its pre-election planning and as headquarters urged the constituencies with ever greater vigour to get ready for the polls. Additionally, there were very real problems for the leadership's critics keeping protest going on a relatively arcane issue, on which they had little real expertise, especially as victory in Europe and the general election approached. Combined with this, there was an increasing desire within the party to minimize divisions in the run-up to the election. It may

be that the running of an editorial warning of a possible snap general election in the January 1945 edition of *Labour Organiser* had been a none-too-subtle ruse by Transport House (which now controlled that journal) to try to scare rebels into line.¹⁵⁷ But ironically, the conduct of Churchill during the Greek crisis, which had threatened to divide the party, ultimately helped to unite it. It reminded Labour party members from Attlee downwards of those features of both Churchill and the Conservative party that were worth defeating; and the only way in which Labour was likely to be able to do that was by closing its ranks and uniting in the face of the common enemy. As Greece began to look less of a moral crusade and more a matter of shades of grey, it rapidly lost place to the powerful iconic images which were impelling Labour to unite to fight the Conservatives, such as the post-1918 'betrayal', the General Strike, the Trade Disputes Act, '1931', unemployment, Munich, and Dunkirk.

Meanwhile, there was a reduction of Communist pressure on Labour over Greece. At least some of the running about Greece had been made by the Communists, who had seen it, rightly, as a good issue around which to appeal for united action by 'progressive forces'. The Soviet government, however, was not terribly concerned about Greece, and this was particularly so once Stalin and Churchill had outlined the so-called 'Percentages Agreement' in Moscow in early October 1944, by which Greece fell outside the Soviet sphere of influence.¹⁵⁸ Some British Communist leaders might have begun to work out that the Soviets were not overly concerned with Greek affairs, given their lack of stated support to EAM/ELAS during the *Dekemvriana*.¹⁵⁹ For a time, however, the party felt able to agitate on the subject regardless. However, the Yalta conference of February 1945 confirmed that Greece was not a major concern for the USSR, or for British Communists. The party leader, Harry Pollitt, signalled as much to his members when he published a sixteen-page pamphlet on Yalta in March 1945, which only included one, largely reassuring, reference to Greece: 'In Greece, the dictatorial attitude of General Plastiras is being restrained, the trials of collaborationists are being pressed forward, and the rebuilding of trade unions assisted.'¹⁶⁰

Such signals from the top clearly limited the extent to which Communist pressure remained an issue for Labour.

But Labour's crisis over Greece had not arisen due to Communist pressure, and it was not because of an easing of that pressure that it came to an end. Rather, it was a combination of events in Greece with the choices and actions of party leaders, managers and activists that helped to achieve that closure. There was virtually no mention of, let alone argument about, Greece at the May 1945 party conference, and the party's *Speaker's Handbook* for the 1945 general election did not mention the country at all.¹⁶¹ By then, there were other issues at stake.

V

Labour's Greek crisis passed almost as rapidly as it had arisen. But its effects were not merely transient. Its concrete results were not, perhaps, of enormous significance, but it is arguable, at least, that it was of some assistance to the Labour left, in three ways. First, it probably eased the passage of the Reading resolution on nationalization at the 1944 party conference, by removing the possibility of key union delegations being persuaded to toe the leadership line, and reducing the chances of its being remitted to the NEC as the latter requested. Secondly, it reminded the party leadership that it must not depart too far from the party's basic principles, or compromise too far with the rest of the Coalition. Indeed, in amply demonstrating some of the less appealing aspects of Churchill (so far as Labour was concerned) it contributed still further to the stiffening of the party's resolve against continuing the Coalition. And, finally, it also marked a stage in Bevan's own progress towards the cabinet room as Minister of Health in the Attlee government. In mid-1944 Bevan had come close to being expelled from the party over his opposition to DR1AA. Now, he was becoming a key figure, in tune with the feeling of much of the party's rank and file, a fact confirmed by his election to the NEC in December 1944. Despite continuing spats between him and the party leadership, Bevan could now not be easily ignored.¹⁶²

But, far more important than all that, Labour's crisis over Greece illuminated a number of important features of both the Labour party and the wider left during the last winter of the war, but also more generally. It was significant because it showed how a foreign policy issue could impact very seriously on the Labour party if the circumstances were right (and especially with the party conference falling as it did). It demonstrated Labour's continuing concerns about the Communist party and the disruptive potential of its cries for 'progressive unity'. Ultimately, however, it also showed the limitations that there were on grassroots influence over the party leadership, the difficulties of sustaining rank-and-file pressure, and the potential that there was for the party's bosses to *manage* discontent. In these respects, little, if anything, had changed since the later 1930s. The impact of Greece owed almost everything to a unique concatenation of circumstances. Once that began to break down, the issue's salience was rapidly diminished. Although there were to be echoes of the crisis later in the decade, over Greece itself in 1946 and also over issues such as the Nenni telegram in 1948, they would prove easier for the party managers to handle than the events following the *Dekemvriana*.¹⁶³ The crisis over Greece suggests, even so, that the Labour party's mood in the last winter of the Second World War was rather febrile. This was not a party burgeoning with self-confidence: in some ways, it was clearly troubled by the prospect of the end of the war, and realized that it faced difficult times ahead. But it was also a party that contained enough people with the will and ability to try to overcome problems, and not simply succumb to them. Labour was not emerging from the war without weaknesses, but it did have one vital political asset, perhaps the most vital of all – an overriding will to win power.

Labour's interest in Greece had been greatly excited by the events of December 1944. A country that had scarcely been on the party's agenda, before the Second World War, suddenly burst onto Labour's consciousness, and remained part of its mental map for some time thereafter. Greece would give Labour at all levels much to ponder during the Attlee years, (as it descended into the third and final round of civil war between 1946 and 1949, and with the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947), and again in the period of the Wilson

government (with the establishment of Colonels' dictatorship in 1967). These events would arouse argument, debate and condemnation within the party.¹⁶⁴ Yet the levels of anger, disputation and fervour which arose as a result of the 'second round' of the Greek Civil War in 1944-45 were never to be repeated. That was because, at root, the extent of Labour's crisis over Greece in that last wartime winter was at least as much about the future of Labour as it was about the present and future of Greece. As Jim Griffiths said to Churchill on 15 January 1945, '[i]t was immediately the situation in Greece, but it is much more than that'.¹⁶⁵

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* Thanks are due to the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which helped to fund the research upon which this article is based; to Dr Jon Davis and Dr Paul Corthorn, for inviting me to present the findings at their conference on 'Labour and the Wider World' at Anglia Polytechnic University in July 2004; and to two anonymous readers for their extremely valuable comments.

¹ Attlee to Addison, 19 December 1944, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Addison papers, MS Addison dep. c. 190, fo. 40. For a tart, if not libellous, assessment of the Labour peers, see *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940-45*, ed. B. Pimlott (London, 1986), pp. 508-9, entry for 27 Oct. 1942.

² South West Norfolk CLP, special conference 3 Feb. 1945, Norfolk Record Office, Acc 2001/145/1.

³ Chuter-Ede diary, 13 Dec., 11 Dec. 1944, British Library, Add. 59700.

⁴ On the German occupation, see especially M. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven and London, 1993).

⁵ D. H. Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (London, 1995), p. 83.

⁶ H. Vlavianos, *Greece, 1941-49: From Resistance to Civil War: The Strategy of the Greek Communist Party* (London, 1992), p. 34.

⁷ For an excellent analysis of the British role in Greece in the last winter of the Second World War, see L. Baerentzen and D. H. Close, 'The British defeat of EAM, 1944-5', in D. H. Close (ed.), *The Greek Civil War, 1943-1950: Studies in Polarisation* (London, 1993), pp. 72-96.

⁸ Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, p. 368.

⁹ Ibid., p. 352. Close suggests sixteen were killed: Close, *Origins of the Greek Civil War*, p. 137.

¹⁰ *The Times*, 4 Dec. 1944.

¹¹ M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume VII: Road to Victory, 1941-1945* (London, 1986), pp. 1096-8; A. J. Foster, 'The politicians, public opinion and the press: the storm over British military intervention in Greece in December 1944', *Journal of Contemporary History*, xix (1984), 453-494, at 455.

¹² W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (6 vols., 1948-54), VI:252.

¹³ Foster, 'The politicians, public opinion and the press', 468; Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume VII*, p. 1098.

¹⁴ *Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940-45*, p. 810, entry for 5 Dec. 1944.

¹⁵ *House of Commons Debates*, 5th s. [HCDeb] 406, c. 241, 1 Dec. 1944. Although now back in the fold, Strauss had been expelled from the party in 1939, along with Bevan and Sir Stafford Cripps.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, c. 356-65, 5 Dec. 1944.

¹⁷ I am grateful to an anonymous reader for emphasising this point. The 23 were F. J. Bellenger, Aneurin Bevan, F. G. Bowles, Seymour Cocks, W. G. Cove, J. J. Davidson, S. O. Davies, John Dugdale, William Foster, Dan Frankel, Agnes Hardie, T. F. Hubbard, J. B. Hynd, John Mack, Hector McNeil, W. H. Mainwaring, Cecil Manning, John Parker, Dr Alfred Salter, Alexander Sloan, R. W. Sorensen, G. R. Strauss, and Evelyn Walkden. Percy Barstow acted as a teller.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 908-1014, 8 Dec. 1944.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, c. 1859-60, 20 Dec. 1944.

²⁰ Huddersfield CLP, executive committee 5 Dec. 1944, British Library of Political and Economic Science [BLPES], film 211, reel 144.

²¹ Cambridge Trades Council and Labour party, monthly meeting 6 Dec. 1944, Cambridgeshire Record Office, 634/09.

²² Salford central LP, delegate meeting 6 Dec. 1944, BLPES, film 211A, reel 97555/3.

²³ Birmingham borough LP, meeting 7 Dec. 1944, Birmingham Reference Library, Special Collections.

²⁴ Windsor CLP, general committee 1 Dec. 1944, Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 832/3.

²⁵ Newport CLP, delegate meeting 8 Dec. 1944, Swansea University Library, MNA/POL/14/3.

²⁶ North Lambeth CLP, management committee 8 Dec. 1944, BLPES, North Lambeth Labour party papers, 1/3.

²⁷ Wolverhampton Bilston CLP, executive committee 9 Dec. 1944, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, D/LAB/3/1.

²⁸ Transport and General Workers' Union, general executive council, 6 Dec. 1944, Modern Records Centre [MRC], MSS 126/T&G/1/1/22.

²⁹ Amalgamated Engineering Union [AEU], executive council, 11 Dec. 1944, MRC, MSS 259/1/2/97.

³⁰ Labour party national executive committee [NEC] special meeting 16 May 1944, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester [LHASC], NEC papers, box 21.

³¹ 'Notes of a deputation received by the Prime Minister on Monday, 15th January, 1945, from members of the Labour Party Parliamentary Committee', 15 Jan. 1945 [Labour delegation to Prime Minister, 15 Jan. 1945], The National Archives [TNA]: Public Record Office [PRO] PREM 4/81/4.

³² See e.g. Sheffield Hallam CLP, annual meeting 11 Dec. 1944, Sheffield Archives, LD 1564/3.

³³ Labour delegation to Prime Minister, 15 Jan. 1945.

³⁴ Labour party, *Labour Party Annual Conference Report [LPAR], 1944* (London, 1944), pp. 143, 150.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

³⁷ D. Howell, *Respectable Radicals: Studies in the Politics of Railway Trade Unionism* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 352-3, 355; see also *Railway Review*, 15, 22 Dec. 1944.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 148-9.

⁴⁰ M. Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography* (2 vols., 1962-75), I:491; *LPAR*, 1944, p. 131.

⁴¹ South Wales Regional Council of Labour, regional executive committee, 18 Dec. 1944, National Library of Wales, Labour party (Wales) records, 4.

⁴² Pontypridd TCLP, meeting 18 Dec. 1944, Birmingham Reference Library, film A329.942978LAB, reel 97137/5.

⁴³ Stafford CLP, divisional management committee 18 Dec. 1944, Staffordshire Record Office, D1371/2.

⁴⁴ Rotherham Trades and Labour Council, meeting 19 Dec. 1944, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Archives and Local Studies Section, 443/G; Sheffield Brightside CLP, executive committee 20 Dec 1944, Sheffield Archives, LP(B) 8; Liverpool TCLP, meeting 21 Dec. 1944, BLPES, film 211A, reel 97572/8; Greenwich CLP, general committee 28 Dec. 1944, Greenwich Heritage Centre, GLP 1.3.

⁴⁵ *LPAR*, 1945, p. 43.

⁴⁶ Co-operative Union Ltd., *Co-operative Party: Report to the Annual Conference, 30 Mar. to 2 Apr. 1945* (London, 1945), pp. 7-8.

⁴⁷ Broxtowe CLP, council meeting 13 Jan. 1945, Nottinghamshire Record Office, DD/PP/6/6; Ipswich CLP, delegate meeting 14 Jan. 1945, Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich), GK 400/1/1/4.

⁴⁸ D. J. Whittaker, *Fighter for Peace: Philip Noel-Baker, 1889-1982* (York, 1989), pp. 270, 266.

⁴⁹ Noel-Baker to H. J. T. Russell, 15 Dec. 1944, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, Noel-Baker papers, NBKR 1/126.

⁵⁰ *LPAR*, 1936, passim. Of course the Greek *coup* had not involved the overthrow of a government of the left.

⁵¹ *LPAR* 1941, p. 9.

⁵² *LPAR* 1943, p. 40.

⁵³ T. D. Burridge, *British Labour and Hitler's War* (London, 1976), p. 123.

⁵⁴ I. Tombs, 'The victory of socialist "Vansittartism": Labour and the German question, 1941-5', *Twentieth Century British History*, vii (1996), 287-309.

⁵⁵ City of Leeds LP, general committee 20 Oct. 1944, West Yorkshire Archive Service (Leeds), WYL 853/4/21.

⁵⁶ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume VII*, p. 777.

⁵⁷ See e.g. Southampton CLP, executive committee 25 Aug. 1944, Southampton Archive Services, D/LAB/Box 3; Greenwich CLP, general committee 14 Nov. 1944, Greenwich Heritage Centre, GLP 1.3; Pontypridd TCLP, meeting 3 Dec. 1944, Birmingham Reference Library, film A329.942978LAB, reel 97137/5. See also James Griffiths on the subject: *HCDeb*, 407, c. 585-6, 19 January 1945.

⁵⁸ See e.g. Rhondda West CLP, executive committee 9 January 1945, National Library of Wales, Rhondda Labour party records, 4; Swansea Labour Association [borough Labour party], 'Annual Report for the Year Ending March, 1945', Apr. 1945, BLPES, Film 211A reel 97580/11.

⁵⁹ See e.g. *HCDeb*, 406, c. 947-8; 407, c. 479, 18 Jan. 1945; c. 570, 585, 19 Jan. 1945.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 406, c. 970, 8 Dec. 1944.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 407, col. 479, 18 Jan. 1945.

⁶² See e.g. Pontypridd TCLP, meeting 18 Dec. 1945, Birmingham Reference Library, film A329.942978LAB, reel 97137/5.

⁶³ *HCDeb*, 5 series, 406, c. 358-60, 5 Dec. 1944.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 927-8, 938, 8 Dec. 1944.

⁶⁵ See e.g. *Ibid.*, c. 947, 8 Dec. 1944.

⁶⁶ Parliamentary Labour party meeting, 7 Dec. 1944, LHASC, parliamentary Labour party papers; *HCDeb*, 406, c. 995, 8 Dec. 1944.

⁶⁷ Churchill, *Second World War*, VI:252.

⁶⁸ Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, *War Diaries 1939-1945*, ed. A. Danchev and D. Todman (London, 2001), p. 590, entry for 9 Sept. 1945.

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- ⁶⁹ P. Calvocoressi, G. Wint and J. Pritchard, *The Penguin History of the Second World War* (Harmondsworth, 1999), p. 551; Alanbrooke, *War Diaries*, p. 630, entry for 28 Nov. 1945.
- ⁷⁰ War cabinet conclusions 18 Sep., 9, 16, 30 Oct., 1944, TNA: PRO, CAB 65/41 123 (44), 134 (44), 137 (44), 142 (44).
- ⁷¹ Churchill to Roosevelt, 15 Dec. 1944, in *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, ed. W. F. Kimball (3 vols., Princeton, N.J., 1984), p. 457.
- ⁷² Churchill, *Second World War*, VI:255; Foster, 'The politicians, public opinion and the press', 464, 467-9.
- ⁷³ J. Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, 1939-1955* (London, 1985), p. 537, entry for 21 Dec. 1944.
- ⁷⁴ *LPAR*, 1944, pp. 37, 112-18.
- ⁷⁵ City of Leeds LP, general committee 17 May 1944, West Yorkshire Archive Service (Leeds), WYL 853/4/21.
- ⁷⁶ NEC 28 June 1944, LHASC, Labour party NEC papers, box 21.
- ⁷⁷ Penistone CLP, committee of management 20 May 1944, BLPES, Film 211 reel 97135/1.
- ⁷⁸ See PLP meetings 3 May, 10 May, 17 May, 24 May 1944, LHASC, parliamentary Labour party papers; joint meeting of Trades Union Congress general council, NEC and PLP administrative committee, 28 June 1944, LHASC, NEC papers, box 21; J. Campbell, *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism* (London, 1987), pp. 132-5.
- ⁷⁹ *LPAR*, 1944, pp. 163, 167-8.
- ⁸⁰ S. Brooke, *Labour's War: The Labour Party during the Second World War* (Oxford, 1992), p. 71.
- ⁸¹ See e.g. *Parliament and Politics in the Age of Churchill and Attlee: The Headlam Diaries, 1935-1951*, ed. S. Ball (Cambridge, 1999), p. 344, entry for 2 Dec. 1942.
- ⁸² A. Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin* (3 vols., London, 1960-83), II:235-6.
- ⁸³ Lord Citrine, *Two Careers* (London, 1967), pp. 241-4.

⁸⁴ R. Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931-1983* (rev. edn., London, 1995), pp. 91-8.

⁸⁵ *LPAR*, 1944, p. 114.

⁸⁶ Mass-Observation, file report, 'Mosley and after', 1 Jan. 1944, University of Sussex, Mass-Observation Archive, FR 1990.

⁸⁷ *HCDeb*, 395, c. 226, 30 Nov. 1943; 396, c. 1919, 10 Feb. 1944.

⁸⁸ For a sensitive discussion of the whole issue, see A. W. B. Simpson, *In the Highest Degree Odious: Detention without Trial in Wartime Britain* (Oxford, 1992).

⁸⁹ Mass-Observation, file report, 'Mosley and after', 1 Jan. 1944, University of Sussex, Mass-Observation Archive, FR 1990.

⁹⁰ See e.g. *HCDeb*, 398, c. 47-8, 14 Mar. 1944; 399, c. 947-8, 27 Apr. 1944; 399, c. 1580, 5 May 1944; 400, c. 1501, 1539, 8 June 1944; 404, c. 951-2, 2 Nov. 1944.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 400, c. 48, 16 May 1944.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 397, c. 1894, 7 Mar. 1944; 401, c. 816, 29 June 1944. On 1 June 1945, a motion was to appear on the House of Commons Order Paper in Ramsay's name, demanding the reintroduction of Edward I's Statute of Jewry of 1290, by which all Jews had been expelled from England: see *ibid.*, 411, c. 491-2, 1 June 1945.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 403, c. 42-4, 26 Sept. 1944.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 44-8, 26 Sept. 1944; 406, c. 1011-12, 8 Dec. 1944.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 403, c. 1925-7, 12 Oct. 1944.

⁹⁶ See e.g. Eleanor Rathbone's comments about anti-semitic propaganda in Hyde Park: *ibid.*, 404, c. 1526, 9 Nov. 1944; see also the controversial decision to grant a licence under the War Charities Act to the 18B (British) Aid Fund: *ibid.*, c. 950, 2 Nov. 1944.

⁹⁷ NUR, quarterly meeting, 4-9 and 11-16 Dec. 1944, MRC, MSS 127/NU/1/1/35.

⁹⁸ See e.g. A. J. Sylvester to David Lloyd George, 28 Dec. 1943, House of Lords Record Office, Lloyd George papers, LG/G/25/2.

⁹⁹ J. S. Middleton, circular ‘to secretaries of affiliated organisations’, 2 Aug. 1944, LHASC, Labour party papers, NEC box 21.

¹⁰⁰ NEC organisation sub-committee 15 Nov. 1944, LHASC, Labour party papers, NEC box 21.

¹⁰¹ See e.g. minutes of joint meeting of elections and organisation sub-committees ‘to consider problems arising out of a communication from the Amalgamated Engineering Union proposing a conference on “Left Unity”’, 5 July 1944, LHASC, Labour party papers, NEC box 21.

¹⁰² NEC elections sub-committee 14 Nov. 1944, LHASC, Labour party papers, NEC box 21; Pritt diary 28 Dec. 1944, BLPES, Pritt papers 1/3. For Pritt’s continuing Communist links, see record of conversation between William Rust and Harry Pollitt, 27 Nov. 1944, TNA: PRO, KV 2/1064, telephone check TB 2151.

¹⁰³ AEU, executive council, 11, 18 Dec. 1944, 6 Mar. 1945, MRC, MSS 259/1/2/97-8.

¹⁰⁴ Rotherham Trades and Labour Council, meeting 23 Nov. 1944, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Archives and Local Studies Section, 443/G.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, meeting 22 Feb. 1944.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, meeting 27 June 1944.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, meeting 24 Oct 1944.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, meeting 19 Dec. 1944.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, annual meeting 23 Jan. 1945.

¹¹⁰ Mass-Observation, file report, ‘Greece’, Dec. 1944, University of Sussex, Mass-Observation Archive, FR 2190.

¹¹¹ Windsor CLP, general committee 18 Jan. 1945, Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 832/3.

¹¹² Liverpool TCLP, meeting 18 Jan. 1945, BLPES, film 211A, reel 97572/8; see also Rhondda West CLP, executive committee 9 January 1945, National Library of Wales, Rhondda Labour party records, 4; Birkenhead TCLP, monthly meeting 10 Jan 1945, Liverpool Record Office, M331 BLP/1.

¹¹³ Stafford CLP, divisional management committee 17 Jan. 1945, Staffordshire Record Office, D1371/2.

¹¹⁴ See e.g. Huddersfield CLP, executive committee 2 and 16 Jan. 1945, BLPES, film 211, reel 144; Salford central LP, delegate meeting 3 Jan. 1945, executive committee 31 Jan. and 28 Feb. 1945, BLPES, film 211A, reel 97555/3.

¹¹⁵ Pontypridd TCLP, meeting 15 Jan. 1945, Birmingham Reference Library, film A329.942978LAB, reel 97137/5.

¹¹⁶ Wolverhampton Bilston CLP, executive committee 20 Jan. 1945, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, D/LAB/3/1.

¹¹⁷ Walthamstow borough Labour party, executive committee, 20 Jan. 1945, Waltham Forest Archives and Local Studies Library, Acc 8559 BLP/3.

¹¹⁸ Halifax CLP, emergency executive committee 8 Feb. 1945, executive committee 15 Feb. 1945, West Yorkshire Archive Service (Calderdale), TU 28/2.

¹¹⁹ *Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, p. 822, entry for 10 Jan. 1945.

¹²⁰ Colville, *Fringes of Power*, p. 551, entry for 11 Jan. 1945.

¹²¹ Churchill to Morgan Phillips (draft), 12 Jan. 1945, TNA: PRO 4/81/4. That this was an unsent draft is suggested by the letter that clearly *was* sent: anon. to Morgan Phillips, 13 Jan. 1945, *ibid.*, acknowledging receipt of Phillips's letter of 11 Jan. and giving the time and date when the delegation would be received.

¹²² Earl of Avon, *The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning* (London, 1965), p. 506.

¹²³ War cabinet conclusions, 12 Jan. 1945, TNA: PRO CAB 65/49/5 (45).

¹²⁴ Colville, *Fringes of Power*, p. 552, entry for 15 Jan. 1945.

¹²⁵ Labour delegation to Prime Minister, 15 Jan. 1945.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ War cabinet conclusions, 15 Jan. 1945, TNA: PRO CAB 65/49/6 (45).

¹²⁸ *Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, p. 823, entry for 16 Jan. 1945.

¹²⁹ Labour delegation to Prime Minister, 15 Jan. 1945.

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- ¹³⁰ War cabinet conclusions, 15 Jan. 1945, TNA: PRO CAB 65/49/6 (45); Citrine, *Two Careers*, p.210; Citrine diary notes, 12-16 Jan. 1945, BLPES, Citrine papers, 4/11.
- ¹³¹ Sir W. Citrine, *I Search for Truth in Russia* (London, 1936).
- ¹³² Sir W. Citrine, *My Finnish Diary* (Harmondsworth, 1940).
- ¹³³ *HCDeb*, 407, c. 396-428, 18 Jan. 1945.
- ¹³⁴ Colville, *Fringes of Power*, p. 553, entry for 18 Jan. 1945.
- ¹³⁵ *HCDeb*, 407, c. 491, 18 Jan. 1945.
- ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, c. 493, 18 Jan. 1945.
- ¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, c. 609-12, 19 Jan. 1945.
- ¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 570, 19 Jan. 1945.
- ¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, c. 584, 19 Jan. 1945.
- ¹⁴⁰ National Union of Mineworkers, 'Annual Report and Proceedings for the Year 1945', p. 4, national executive, 18 Jan. 1945, Swansea University Library, MNA/NUM/1/2/1. The newly-formed NUM had replaced the old MFGB at the start of 1945.
- ¹⁴¹ *HCDeb*, 5 series, 407, c. 543, 19 Jan. 1945.
- ¹⁴² South West Norfolk CLP, special conference 3 Feb. 1945, Norfolk Record Office, Acc 2001/145/1.
- ¹⁴³ Amalgamated Engineering Union, executive council 8, 16 Jan., 6, 27 Feb. 1945, MRC, MSS 259/1/2/98.
- ¹⁴⁴ Churchill to Citrine, 19 Jan. 1945, BLPES, Citrine papers 4/11; Citrine, *Two Careers*, pp.210-11; Citrine diary notes, 22 Jan.-3 Feb. 1945, BLPES, Citrine papers, 4/11.
- ¹⁴⁵ P. Weiler, *British Labour and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA., 1988), esp. pp. 129-64.
- ¹⁴⁶ 'Article for *Daily Herald*', 8 Feb. 1945, BLPES, Citrine papers, 4/11.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Daily Mail*, 9 Feb. 1945.
- ¹⁴⁸ War cabinet conclusions, 26 Jan. 1945, TNA: PRO CAB 65/49/10 (45); Citrine, 'Script for BBC', n.d. [Feb. 1945], BLPES, Citrine papers 4/11.

¹⁴⁹ Trades Union Congress, *What We Saw In Greece: Report of the TUC Delegation* (London, 1945).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵¹ See e.g. *HCDeb*, 5 series, 406, col. 1595, 19 Dec. 1944, questions by W. G. Cove, F. G. Bowles, E. Shinwell and E. Summerskill.

¹⁵² Benstead, 'What I Saw in Greece', *Railway Review*, 16 Feb. 1945.

¹⁵³ J. H. Peck to Citrine, 10 Feb. 1945, BLPES, Citrine papers 4/11; D. Balfour (British Embassy, Athens) to Citrine, 7 Feb. 1945, *ibid.* The only mention of their visit in the memoirs of the Ambassador refers to Peristeri: see Sir R. Leeper, *When Greek Meets Greek* (London, 1950), p. 139.

¹⁵⁴ Weiler, *British Labour and the Cold War*, pp. 137-8.

¹⁵⁵ *Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, p. 828, entry for 6 Feb. 1945; PLP meeting 7 Feb. 1945, LHASC, PLP papers.

¹⁵⁶ Mass-Observation, file report, 'Greece', Dec. 1944, University of Sussex, Mass-Observation Archive, FR 2190.

¹⁵⁷ *Labour Organiser*, 276, January 1945. The editorial in the next edition was headed 'No Snap Election': *Labour Organiser*, 277, February 1945.

¹⁵⁸ M. Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War* (London, 1986), pp. 233-4.

¹⁵⁹ A. Nacmani, 'Civil war and foreign intervention in Greece, 1946-49', *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxv (1990), 489-522 esp. 496; Baerentzen and Close, 'The British defeat of EAM, 1944-5', p. 92.

¹⁶⁰ H. Pollitt, *The Crimea Conference: Safeguard of the Future* (London, 1945), p. 10.

¹⁶¹ *LPAR*, 1945, pp. 12, 82-3, 107-19; Labour party, *Speaker's Handbook*, 1945 (London, 1945).

¹⁶² *HCDeb*, 5 series, 407, col. 493, 18 Jan. 1945.

¹⁶³ Barstow, Cove, Davies, and Mack were all signatories; Cocks and Sorensen were approached, but refused to sign. See D. Howell, 'Special note: the Nenni telegram', in K. Gildart and D. Howell (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography, volume XII* (London, 2004), pp. 31-45.

¹⁶⁴ See *LPAR*, 1947, pp. 160-3, 172-82; *LPAR* 1948, pp. 23-4, 189-200; *LPAR* 1967, pp. 74, 229-36.

¹⁶⁵ Labour delegation to Prime Minister, 15 Jan. 1945.