2009 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 97–117
STUDIA TERRITORIALIA IV

BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY: GREEK-GERMAN RELATIONS IN RETROSPECT

KATEŘINA KRÁLOVÁ

Abstract

The relations between Greece and Germany have evolved from age-long cultural ties between the people of both countries. As early as in the early modern period, Germans turned to the traditions of ancient Greece and its language. The presence of Greek scholars in German schools and universities led to a rise in interest in the ancient culture. With the Industrial Revolution, German lands became an important trade partner for Greece and their privileged position was hardly hit by military conflicts of the twentieth century. The study attempts to summarize the evolution of relations between the two countries from the birth of the Greek national movement at the beginning of the eighteenth century until their stabilization after the Second World War. The arrangement of the chapters follows the chronological sequence of events, which underscores the transition from the traditional cultural contacts to political and economic cooperation in the modern era.

Keywords: Greece, Germany, external relations, tradition, modernity

Introduction

The relations between Greece and Germany evolve from age-long cultural bonds between the people of both countries. As early as in the Middle Ages, Germans turned to the traditions of ancient Greece and its language. The presence of Greek scholars in German schools and universities contributed to deepening the German interest in the ancient culture. Germans also recognized the Byzantium as the bearer of Eastern Christian tradition.

German lands played an important role during the founding of modern Greek national state via military support of numerous Philhellenes, as well as via the first modern Greek sovereign, who came from Bavarian Wittelsbach Dynasty.

With the Industrial Revolution, German lands became an important trade partner of Greece and their privileged position was hardly hit by military conflicts of the twentieth century. In spite of Nazi terror and damages caused by the Second World War, Greece proved able to come to terms with this past and soon became one of the first partners of the Federal Republic of Germany not only in terms of trade, but also in the political arena.

In the historical reflection on the development of modern Greece, the German role is often neglected despite the fact that the Germans had participated to a considerable extent in the formation of cultural, political, legal, and economic institutions of modern Greece.

The following study attempts to summarize the development of relations between the two countries from the birth of the Greek national movement at the beginning of the eighteenth century until their stabilization after the Second World War. Individual chapters address main areas of German influence on the evolution of the first national state in the Balkans. The arrangement of the chapters reflects the chronological sequence of events, which underscores the transition from the traditional cultural contacts to political and economic cooperation in the modern era.

Philhellenism: Struggle for the Birth of Modern Greece

The end of the eighteenth century witnessed the French Revolution and the transition of the Enlightenment into Romanticism. Under such influence, Europe began to look for new paradigms. Many thinkers, particularly intellectuals from Western Europe who identified themselves with neo-classicist ideals, turned to the intellectual legacy of ancient Greece. Western Philhellenes, keen on Greek antiquity, promoted liberal thinking in the spirit of national revival.[1] Western interest in Greece was inspired by German archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), who perceived ancient Greek architecture as one of the foundations of European culture. Winckelmann's theory motivated other German humanists and romanticists, including Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, and Hölderlin, whose

[1] Pavel Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka* (Praha: Lidové noviny, 1998), 269.

works then generated an increased public interest in the restoration of the Greek state, through which they sought to revive the cultural roots of European civilization.[2]

Rebellions in the territories under the Ottoman rule concurrently gave rise to national liberation movements that aspired to break up the Ottoman Empire and to create national states. Greece soon established itself as the leader of the liberation movement in the Balkans. At the initial stage of this struggle, Germans, already deeply influenced by Philhellenism, conveyed their sympathies to modern Greeks who in their eyes represented the personification of ancient Greek heroes.[3] Germans were among the first volunteers who had set out from the French port of Marseilles to support the Greek battle against "dark Turkish dominance."[4] On the Greek soil, however, the volunteers were confronted with a reality that was completely different from their romantic ideals.

As Hans Eideneier describes:

"The Philhellenes set out to find their Greeks in places like Sparta, Athens, Olympia, Delphi, or Thermopylae. There, if they actually managed to locate these places, they found a population who did not remember those sites at all, who did not speak the language studied at Central European grammar schools, and who referred to themselves as to the Romaios."[5]

The activities of the Philhellenes were instrumental in the creation of modern Greek statehood, as they contributed to the revival of ancient thought. At the same time, the Philhellenes gathered financial resources to support Greek liberation movement – in this context, we must not forget the contributions by the Bavarian King Ludwig I, himself an enthusiastic Philhellene – and some even directly participated on the Greek side in armed conflicts.[6] Although the inexperienced Central Europeans

---

[2] See Paulos Tzermias, *Die Identitätssuche des neuen Griechentums: eine Studie zur Nationalfrage mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Makedonienproblems* (Freiburg: Univ.-Verl., 1994), 14.

[3] See A. Vakalopoulos, "Der Philhelenismus der Deutschen während der Griechischen Revolution von 1821," *Balkan Studies* 207 (1986): 47.

[4] See Johannes Irmscher, "Griechisch-deutsche Beziehungen vom 13. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart. Eine erste Übersicht," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* IV/3–4 (1966): 357.

[5] See Hans Eideneier, "Hellenen und Philhellenen", in *Griechen und Deutsche: Bilder vom Anderen*, ed. Kirsten Fast and Jan Peter Thorbecke (Stuttgart: Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1982), 64. For Romaios, see also Heinz Richter, "Zwischen Tradition und Moderne: Die politische Kultur Griechenlands," in *Politische Kultur in Westeuropa,* ed. Peter Reichel (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1984), 155–57.

[6] See Olga Lazaridou, "Von der Krise zur Normalität: Die deutsch-griechischen Beziehungen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der politischen und wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen

did not always understand the military strategy, they nonetheless helped considerably strengthen the Greek rebels.[7] Yet the European participation in the liberation movement had not been officially appreciated by the Greek side until 1843 when the Greek veterans of the liberation struggle appealed to the Bavarian King Otto von Wittelsbach to adopt a constitution and to expel the remaining foreigners, including the Bavarians, from the country, with the exception granted to the Philhellenes who had fought on the Greek side.[8]

Nonetheless, the historical experience of the Philhellenes during the period of national upheaval that reflected the age-long marginalization of the historical development in the Balkans discredited the image of modern Greece in the eyes of German public. As German historian Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861) wrote:

"In Europe, the race of the Hellenes was wiped out, not a drop of pure, unmixed Hellenic blood runs through the veins of the Christian citizenry of today's Greece. The modern Greeks are, if they are not Albanian, actually Slavs."[9]

Paradoxically, Fallmerayer's words in fact prompted the Greeks to create their own modern identity by effectively combining their ancient past with Byzantine-Christian traditions, Athens with Constantinople, and an ancient Hellene with a medieval Romaios. The legacy of nearly four centuries of Ottoman rule was also, in essence, suppressed. The newly established Greek state that comprised territory only slightly larger than the Peloponnese and Attica decided that incorporation of all ancient territories populated by Greek diasporas was the main objective.

From the beginning, the geopolitical ambition of the modern Greece was degenerating into a utopian plan to reconstruct the Byzantine Empire of five seas and two continents. This "Great Idea" (*Megali Idea*) became the new doctrine and, for the next one hundred years, it often overshadowed domestic problems of political, social, or economic character. With a language reform, new, so-called pure, Greek language (*kathareuousa*) was created, combining ancient Greek elements with Greek that was commonly

(1949–1958)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Bonn 1992), 80–81.

7 See Misha Glenny, *Balkán 1804–1999* (Praha: BB Art, 2003), 47.

8 See Hagen Fleischer, *In Kreuzschatten der Mächte – Griechenland 1941–44: Okkupation – Resistance – Kolaboration* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter-Lang Verlag, 1986), 39.

9 See Jakob Phillip Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart/Tübingen: Cotta, 1830–1836), 9.

used by the people at that time. However, since only the intellectual elite had a command of *kathareuousa*, the new language in fact caused an irreconcilable social gap.[10]

One may object that an analysis of modern Greek nation building is not essential to the study of relations between Greece and Germany. However, our Central European perception of history often prevents us from understanding the complex issue of national revival of a society with strong traditions of Greek antiquity and Byzantium. The fact that the Greeks were repeatedly attempting to build their own state on the foundations of Athenian democracy, while at the same referring to the Byzantine-Orthodox tradition, cannot be ignored. The evolution of Greek state is thus closely linked to the events of the remote and often rather mythical past.

The Modern Greek State and the "Foreign Factor"

The Greek resistance movement of 1821 envisioned that the victory over the Ottoman Empire would be followed by creating of an independent republic with its own constitution. However, the Great Powers were dismayed by the "Great Idea" concept and decided rather to intervene and establish a monarchy that would be in fact under their control. The influence of the Great Powers thus fundamentally determined the future form and the development of political system of modern Greece. External intervention went considerably beyond common European practices and became the central element of its political life. Greek society coined its own term for this phenomenon: "foreign factor" (*xenos paragontas*).[11]

The external interference in Greece remained constant and high for decades. From the establishment of modern Greek state in 1830 till the early 1860s, England, France, and Russia exerted influence over Greek politics. In 1832, Otto von Wittelsbach, the son of Bavarian King Ludwig I, was installed to the Greek throne as the first Greek monarch, thus establishing the first significant link between the Greek and the German peoples. Otto was an acceptable candidate for both sides. At the same time, the Great Powers agreed that governmental affairs would temporarily come under the

[10] See e.g. Richter, *Zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, 145–66.
[11] See Paulos Tzermias, *Politik im neuen Hellas: Strukturen, Theorien und Parteien im Wandel* (Tübingen: Francke, 1997), 13; Richter, *Zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, 148.

authority of Council of Regents, comprising of three Bavarian Germans who were to represent Otto before he would reach maturity.[12]

Count Joseph Ludwig Armansperg became the president of the council. Munich professor Georg Ludwig Maurer covered legislative, religious, and education-related affairs. Major General Karl Wilhelm Heideck was put in charge of military and security matters. However, personal relations between the regents were tense. Eventually, Armansperg emerged victorious from the power struggle and succeeded in persuading Otto to dismiss the other two regents. In this way, Armansperg secured his own position as the Greek "Arch-Chancellor." In the end, his excessive rise in power became the reason for him being recalled to Bavaria. The governmental affairs were then passed on to Ignazio Rudhardt, but in the meantime the title of "Arch-Chancellor" had been abolished with Armannsperg's departure. In December 1837, the government finally came under the direct rule of Otto I, who finally came of age.

In an effort to stabilize the new system, a series of changes of political, legislative, and administrative character were carried out in Greece during the 1830s. King Otto I dissolved irregular military and paramilitary divisions that posed threat to his rule and replaced them with a regular army. Several Bavarian divisions, later supplemented by a number of mercenaries, became its core element. The presence of Bavarian armed forces in Greece was provided for by a Bavarian-Greek treaty of friendship and alliance from November 1832, as well as by an agreement between the Great Powers and Bavaria from May 7, 1832.[13]

The Council of Regents paid special attention to legislative issues under the guidance of Georg von Maurer, a specialist in French law and German civil rights. Despite the fact that Maurer stayed on the Council for no more than just seventeen months, he managed to frame the foundations of modern Greek legal system. Under his leadership, four legal codes were drafted, passed, and eventually put into effect: the penal code, the code of judicial proceedings, the penal order, and the civil judicial order.

---

[12] For more on Otto's era, see Paulos Tzermias, *Neugriechische Geschichte. Eine Einführung* (Tübingen: Francke, 1986); Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Modern Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*; Christopher M. Woodhouse, *Modern Greece. A Short History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986); and Wolf Seidl, *Bayern in Griechenland. Die Geschichte eines Abenteueurs* (München: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1970), among others.

[13] The number of Bavarian soldiers exceeded five thousand. See Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 301–2.

With regards to terminological inadequacies of modern Greek language, the laws were drafted in German and published together with their Greek translations. For a long time, the above-mentioned codes continued to influence the development of Greek legislation and many of them remained valid until the recent past.[14]

The era of Otto's rule was not an easy period for the Greek population. The originally weak and uncertain young king quickly transformed into a resolute and energetic ruler with absolutist inclinations. In September 1843, a bloodless revolt of Athenian garrisons together with the demands of Greek oligarchy compelled the ruler to adopt a constitution and to establish a constitutional monarchy. Nevertheless, Otto often disrespected the new constitution. He curbed the freedom of the press and interfered with the election and legislation process in order to resume his absolute power. Persecution of officials and magistrates as well as of civilian population who opposed the monarchy became a characteristic trait of Greek politics during the following decades.[15]

In February 1862, a military coup of dissenting officers in Nafplion brought about the end of Bavarian Dynasty's rule in Greece. Otto was superseded by Wilhelm Christian Ferdinand Adolf of the Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glückburg family, who accepted the name of Georgios I. Neither France, weakened by the Revolution, nor Russia, exhausted by the Crimean war, could prevent England from installing her own candidate to the Greek throne and from becoming de facto sole protector of Greece. Britain held her protective hand over Greece till 1947 when it was replaced by the United States. Greece did not achieve true sovereignty until the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974.[16]

---

[14] For more on the legal system see Vassilios Skouris, "Beziehungen der griechischen und der deutschen Rechtswissenschaft in der Nachkriegszeit," in *Proceedings of the Symposium Organized by the Institute of Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki and Ouranoupolis, 1989 "Griechenland und die Bundesrepublik Deutschland im Rahmen Nachkriegseuropas"* (Thessaloniki: Institute of Balkan Studies, 1989), 71–80.

[15] See Tzermias, *Die Identitätssuche des neuen Griechentums*, 69. See also Monika Yfantis, "Die deutsch-griechischen Beziehungen 1949–1955" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Düsseldorf 1999), 16–18; Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 307–8.

[16] See Tzermias, *Die Identitätssuche des neuen Griechentums*, 42–44; Richter, *Zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, 149–50; Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 325–26.

Culture and Education

The cultural background of Greek national revival during the Ottoman era was shaped by scholars of Greek origin who resided in European centers of education and were inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Classicism under the influence of the French Revolution. Eugenios Voulgaris (1716–1806) was among the most prominent Greek philosophers of the Enlightenment. His opinions and modern approach to teaching philosophy made him a frequent target of attacks from the Greek Orthodox Church, which accused him of atheism. After teaching in numerous schools of philosophy, Voulgaris finally departed to Leipzig. There he became acquainted with the works of Voltaire and published *Logika*, a book on both ancient and modern philosophy.

European events at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the Greek struggle for liberation stimulated a wave of Philhellenism in Western Europe. Western inspiration manifested itself in particular by using ancient as well as modern Greek themes in numerous romantic works of leading European artists. Modern Greece was born during the era of Romanticism. Lord George Gordon Noel Byron (1788–1824), English writer who laid down his life in the fight for the establishment of modern Greece, became its guiding spirit.[17] Fallmerayer's racial theory about the origins of Greeks paradoxically helped to define modern Greek state *vis-à-vis* the rest of the Balkans.

Classicist ideas, however, often clashed with romantic philosophy. Disputes were sparked primarily by Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744–1803) work, which emphasized the value and significance of folk art as the original national culture. Thus, a contradiction in the national identification between Greek antiquity and Byzantium emerged, which on one hand opened up far-reaching disagreements between the Orthodox Church and liberal intellectuals and on the other hand stimulated a boom of Greek literature and philosophy.[18]

Otto I deserves credit for unprecedented development of Greek culture, which, in the long run, was significant also in that it allowed for strengthening of Greece's relations with the German lands. Together with the monarch, Greece received a large group of German scholars, architects,

[17] See Glenny, *Balkán 1804–1999*, 47.
[18] See Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 339–47.

and artists who had a substantial influence on the formation of modern Greek society. The first Greek university was established in Athens in 1837, only three years after Otto had declared it the capital city. In its organizational structure and architectural layout, the Athens University resembled the university in Göttingen. Seven German professors were included in the first professorial board. In addition to this, the foundations of the Athens Technical College (*Polytechnion*) were laid.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the architecture of Athens underwent substantial changes. Stamatis Kleanthis and German architect Gustav Eduard Schaubert, with whom Kleanthis became acquainted during his studies in Berlin, designed the city's new urban plan. Together with German architect Leopold von Klenze, archaeologist Ludwig Ross, and Danish architect Theophile Hansen, Schaubert later took part in the reconstruction of ancient Acropolis.[19] The Old Royal Palace (currently the seat of the parliament) was designed by Friedrich Gärtner in 1836.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Athens' architecture was perhaps most noticeably influenced by grandiose neo-classicist constructions by German architect Ernst Ziller. Originally an assistant to Theophile Hansen, Ziller became the designer of the New Royal Palace (the Maximou Palace, currently the official residence of the prime minister) built as the seat of King Constantine I, as well as of the Athens City Theatre and Stathatos Palace (currently the Cycladic Art Museum). From 1872 to 1882, Ziller was professor at the National Technical University in Athens; in 1884, he became the director of the Institute of Public Edifices. During his life, he gave rise to over six hundred public and private buildings in Greece. Ziller's name is also inherently linked to the activities of German archaeologists working in Greece. Ziller designed the building of the German Archaeological Institute (*Deutsches archäologisches Institut*) in Athens, opened in 1874, which till nowadays houses the most extensive part of archaeological research in Greece. His work also includes the Troy Palace (*Iliu melathron*), the seat of the prominent German archaeologist and discoverer of Troy and of Mycenaean treasure, Heinrich Schliemann (currently the Numismatic Museum).[20]

---

[19] Schaubert's plan prevented implementation of a design to alter the Acropolis into a royal palace by another German architect, Karl Friedrich Schinkel. See Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 361.

[20] For Ernst Ziller, see Friedbert Ficker, Gert Morzinek and Barbara Mazurek, *Ernst Ziller – Ein sächsischer Architekt und Bauforscher in Griechenland; Die Familie Ziller* (Lindenberg i. Allgäu: Kunstverlag Josef Fink, 2003).

Archaeological discoveries of ancient Greek monuments generally bolstered the classicist architecture. These excavations were essential to the understanding and mastering the elements and construction techniques of Greek antiquity. The main representatives of German archaeology included not only the aforementioned Heinrich Schliemann, but also Wilhelm Dörpfeld and Adolf Furtwängler. Dörpfeld took part in the excavations in Olympia, where he designed the local museum, while Furtwängler worked in Mycenae, Olympia, and Aigina.

With the departure of the Wittelsbachs, Greek-German cultural relations came to a standstill. However, Berlin, Munich, Leipzig, and Vienna continued to be the target destinations for Greek students and scholars. In the late nineteenth century, linguist Manolis Triandafyllidis, pedagogue Alexandros Delmuzos, and philosopher Dimitris Glinos completed their studies in Germany. On their return to Greece in 1910, these scholars founded the Society for Education (*Ekpeaideoutikos Omilos*), which aimed at carrying out a reform of the education system. During the era of Viennese modernity, Konstantinos Christomanos, teacher of modern Greek language who resided at the Emperor's court in Vienna, recorded his reflections on his lessons and journeys with the Emperor in *To vivlio tis autokrateiras Elisavet* ("The Book of Empress Elisabeth"). Nikolaos Gyzis, who became a professor at the Munich Academy, ranks among the founders of modern Greek painting. The foundations of modern Greek sculpture were laid by Ioannis Vitsaris, who, after completing his five-year study program in Munich in 1870, evolved from expressing classicist ideals to forms of Romanticism and Realism.[21]

With Constantine I rising to the Greek throne in 1913, the relations between Greece and Germany experienced a breakthrough. The new ruler was not only fond of Germany because he studied at the Potsdam Military Academy, but also because of his marriage to Princess Sophie, sister of the German Emperor.[22] Family ties and German education enabled the two countries to forge a close relation. General Ioannis Metaxas, the authoritarian leader of Greece from 1936 until his death in 1941, also studied in Germany, at the German Military Academy of the Prussian general staff in Berlin.

[21] For modern Greek culture, see A. Antoniadis, *Synchroni Elliniki Architektoniki* (Athens: Ejdoseis Karagkouni – Anthropos + Chronos, 1979); Ch. A. Christou, *I Elliniki Zografiki 1832–1922* (Athens: Ethniki Trapeza tis Elladas, 1981); L. Politis, *Istoria tis Neoellinikis Logotechnias* (Athens: Morfotiko Idryma Ethnikis Trapezas, 1980).

[22] See Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschattenchatten der Mächte*, 44.

Metaxas's policies were heavily influenced by his sympathies to fascist Italy and later Nazi Germany.[23]

The German School in Athens (*Deutsche Schule Athen*), founded by Wilhelm Dörpfeld in 1896, experienced a considerable expansion during the first half of the twentieth century. Its growth was especially noticeable during the Metaxas dictatorship, when attendance of German classes greatly increased due to night classes for adults. In 1939, Department of German Philology and Literature was founded at the Athens University under the direction of German linguist Rudolf Fahrner. Not surprisingly, in order to study Roman languages and English, Greek students had to wait some more years.[24]

Generally speaking, the interest in German language courses was increasing. After its establishment in 1934, the German Academy in Athens (*Deutsche Akademie*), the predecessor of today's Goethe-Institut, started out with only eighteen students. At the outbreak of the Second World War, there were already eleven branches of the Academy established throughout the entire Greece. In some provinces, the courses of German enjoyed greater popularity than courses offered by English and French institutes, which had been founded earlier. For instance, during Nazi occupation, over three thousand university students attended the German courses at the Academy's branch in Thessaloniki.[25]

Despite the heavy burden of Nazi occupation and the long civil war, Greece was the first country from the territory occupied by Nazis to resume relations with Germany. The positive development was induced particularly by accession of Paul I and his energetic wife Friederika, granddaughter of German Emperor Wilhelm II, to the Greek throne in 1947. Therefore, as early as in 1951, the German Archaeological Institute in Athens reopened. The resumption of the Institute's activities was rather unique, as it preceded reopening of other important regional branches, such as the one in formerly allied Rome, or the one in neutral Istanbul. During the following year, archaeological excavations in Olympia opened again. In 1955, Greece officially put the Institute under German patronage.[26]

---

[23] See Lazaridou, *Von der Krise zur Normalität*, 84.

[24] See Hagen Fleischer, "Der Neubeginn in den deutsch-griechischen Beziehungen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg und die Bewältigung der jüngsten Vergangenheit," in *Proceedings of the Symposium Organized by the Institute of Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki and Ouranoupolis, 1989 "Griechenland und die Bundesrepublik Deutschland im Rahmen Nachkriegseuropas"* (Thessaloniki: Institute of Balkan Studies, 1989), 81–84.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 92.

Similarly, religious and educational institutions in Greece soon resumed relations with Germany. In 1952, the very first branch of the Goethe-Institut opened in Athens and bilateral student exchanges began to flourish. Owing to a considerable assistance of Queen Friederika, the restoration of German evangelical parishes followed. In 1953, Greece received the first post-war German pastor. Not long afterwards, in 1956, the Athens German School reopened. In the same year, after concluding a cultural agreement between Greece and the Federal Republic of Germany, construction of new representative Goethe-Institut building in Athens commenced. The Goethe-Institut was not only to provide German language courses but also to take care of the (from Germany's perspective) much-needed cultural enlightenment.[27]

Political Evolution in the Shadow of Wars

After the establishment of modern Greek state, Germany was not involved in Greek politics as one of the patron Powers – it was involved only indirectly through Otto von Wittelsbach of Bavaria, the first Greek king. After his abdication, the political relations between the two countries were quelled.

At the end of the nineteenth century, meetings of the European Great Powers, so-called Berlin congresses, convened to address the critical situation in the Balkans. The first congress, which took place in 1869, debated the issue of Greek and Turkish minorities in Crete. The results of the second congress, which was assembled after the Russo-Turkish war of June 1878, included a revision of the peace treaty of San Stefano and a proposal for readjustment of borders between Greece and the Ottoman Empire to the benefit of the former. Later on, as bilateral Greek-Turkish talks nearly flared up into another military conflict, the Great Powers met again in Berlin in 1881. Under their pressure, the Ottoman Empire was forced to cede the territories of Thessalia and the Artha district in Southern Epirus.[28]

The ties with Germany forged by King Constantine I held firm over the course of the First World War. Under the influence of Constantine's German wife and with the support of part of the Royal Army, the king was not willing, even under pressure of the Great Powers, to abandon his friendly

[27] Ibid., 93–99.
[28] See Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 322–25; Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschattenchatten der Mächte*, 43.

neutrality towards Germany. Part of the liberal political scene, led by the Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos abandoned king's policy and moved to Thessaloniki, declaring support for the Entente Powers. In October 1915, Venizelos gave approval to the British and French units to land in Greece. King Constantine responded by granting a permission to land to the Central Powers, thus creating a situation of national schism. Great Britain, however, was not to tolerate Constantine's pro-German politics any longer. Together with Venizelos, the allied army forced Constantine to abdicate and to leave the country. Constantine's son Alexander was then appointed his successor. In early July 1917, Greece declared war on Germany.[29]

Close ties with Germany were re-established after Ioannis Metaxas, a right-wing extremist, was appointed Greek prime minister in April 1936. Metaxas, influenced by ideas of German National Socialism, did not hide his Germanophile inclinations. Only a month after assuming control over the government in Athens, the Reich's minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels accepted invitation for an official visit to Greece.[30] At the beginning of the Second World War, Metaxas, in fear of Mussolini's expansive intentions, turned to both London and Berlin with a request for intervention. Metaxas's hopes of eliciting help from Germany counted on his reputation of a long-time advocate of pro-German orientation and on his personal credit of fostering cultural and economic relations with the Reich. Hitler, however, was not willing to act against the interests of allied Italy.[31]

In April 1941, German *wehrmacht* invaded Greece (operation Marita) and occu-pied the northern part of the country – the regions of Macedonia and Thessaloniki. The southern provinces of Greece became part of the Italian occupation zone while the eastern Macedonia and Thrace were occupied by Bulgaria. Following the capitulation of fascist Italy in September 1943, all of Greece came under the control of German armed forces.[32]

Initially, Germany promoted – relatively successfully – a "soft" occupation policy, not least because of Hitler's admiration for ancient Greece. Germany's power in Greece was thus designed to contrast with the harsh approach of

---

[29] See e.g. Tzermias, *Neugriechische Geschichte*, 123.

[30] See Hagen Fleischer, "Die 'Viehmenschen' und das 'Sauvolk'. Feindbilder einer dreifachen Okkupation: der Fall Griechenland," in *Kultur –Propaganda – Öffentlichkeit: Intentionen deutscher Besatzungspolitik und Reaktionen auf die Okkupation*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, Gerhard Otto and Anabella Weismann (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1998), 135.

[31] See Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 421.

[32] 508 AR 9381/88 Zentrale Stelle Ludwigsburg (ZLS), 130 JS 4/88 (Z) Zentralstelle Köln.

the Italians.[33] However, the situation quickly changed after German landing in Crete (operation Merkur) in late May 1941. Germans clearly sensed that initial apparent Greek sympathies were only pretended out of necessity. For the first time, the activities of the armed Greek resistance movement and of the guerrilla groups became widespread. The National Liberation Front (*Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*) soon turned into the key element of the left wing and liberal opposition during the occupation.[34]

The Nazi swiftly adapted their occupation policy by shifting from "mere" propaganda to terror aimed against the highland guerrillas. Such policy inflicted great suffering upon the civilian population. In winter 1941–1942, Greece had to cope with a widespread famine that caused death of several hundred thousands. Starting from mid-December 1943, Greek Jews were being arrested in order to carry out the "final solution to the Jewish question." The last transport of Jews from the Greek territory to Auschwitz took place in June 1944. In total, sixty thousand Greek Jews fell victim to the Holocaust, which comprised about 80 percent of the Jewish population in Greece.[35]

At the end of summer 1944, Soviet Red Army entered Bulgaria. Therefore, on August 28, 1944, Hitler issued an order for immediate withdrawal of German troops from Greece. The balance sheet of the German occupation was appalling: nearly 1,600 villages were burned down and one million Greeks were left without shelter. Only a quarter of the national railway network remained operable. Most of the infrastructure, including stations, ports and even the Corinthian Channel, were destroyed. Moreover, over 120 thousand Greeks died as victims of so-called retributive measures (*Sühnemassnahmen*). Among the Greeks, the total loss of lives amounted to 520 thousand people, which represented 7.2% of the pre-war population.[36]

Paradoxically, Greece was one of the first formerly occupied countries to promote post-war reconciliation with Germany. Greek civil war of 1946–

---

[33] After the Greek victory of "Ochi" over Italy on October 28, 1940, the Greeks resisted the occupation of their country by the defeated Power. Besides the initially non-violent German occupation policy, which, as a result, contributed to the growth of the resistance movement in Greece, there was also the fact that after the defeat of the Greek army, the victorious Wehrmacht only disarmed the captive men and non-commissioned officers and sent them home – unlike in the case with, for instance, the defeated Polish or French armies. See N. Svoronos, ed., *I Ellada 1936–1944. Diktatoria – Katochi – Antistasi* (Athens: Morfotiko Institouto ATE, 1989), 360.

[34] Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 436.

[35] Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 41.

[36] Wolfgang Schumann, ed., *Europa unterm Hakenkreuz. Die Okkupationspolitik des deutschen Faschismus (1938–1945)*. Band 6 (Berlin: Hüthig, 1992), 76.

1949 and the escalating conflict between the East and the West provided stimuli for normalization of relations. Greece's pro-Western government took a radically anti-communist stance primarily for domestic reasons. With regards to anticipated economic benefits of rapprochement with Germany, the blame for the devastation of Greece thus could have been propagandistically transferred from the Nazi occupants to the communist opposition.

Post-war stabilization of Greek-German relations started with reopening of Greece's general consulate in Bonn and Germany's consulate in Athens in March and December 1950 respectively. Both consulates were upgraded to Embassies in the spring of 1951. Greece then officially terminated the state of war with Germany. Speculations surrounding the alleged role of Werner von Grundherr, the first German Ambassador to Greece, accused of involvement in the *Endlösung* during his wartime activities in Denmark, could not cause damage to the re-established ties between the two countries.[37]

The consensus on the Cold War anti-communist stance that governed policy of both countries in the 1950s was solidified by official visits of German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to Greece and of Greek Prime Minister Alexandros Papagos to Germany in 1954. Although Papagos had spent the war years in the Dachau concentration camp, as prime minister he demonstrated his admiration for the German "working spirit and discipline, and especially for the military attributes of the German people." According to Papagos, alliance with the Federal Republic would represent a definite contribution to the West's security.[38] Bonn later showed appreciation of Papagos's effort in the reestablishment of relations by providing funds for publishing Papagos's wartime memoirs in Germany.[39]

Two years later, Greek royal couple received the German President Theodor Heuss. This high-level visit represented the first official reception of Germany's head of state abroad since the end of the Second World War. In 1956, both states concluded an agreement on cultural cooperation.[40]

While dealing with the issue of punishing war criminals, Greece was

[37] On Grundherr, see Yfantis, "Die deutsch-griechischen Beziehungen," 111–16.
[38] See Fleischer, *Der Neubeginn*, 99–103.
[39] Alexandros Papagos, *Griechenland im Kriege 1940–1941* (Bonn: Schimmelbusch, 1954).
[40] See e.g. Yfantis, "Die deutsch-griechischen Beziehungen," 255; Siegrid Skarpelis-Sperk, "Last – Verantwortung – Versöhnung. Politische Perspektiven für das zukünftige Verhältnis Deutschlands zu Griechenland," in *Versöhnung ohne Wahrheit? Deutsche Kriegsverbrechen in Griechenland im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Karl von Giebeler, Heinz A. Richter and Reinhard Stupperich (Mannheim: Peleus, 2001), 91.

aware of the potential profit from future cooperation with the Federal Republic. Therefore, Athens opted for unofficial "compensation" and handed over all relevant prosecution documents to Bonn, thus transferring the responsibility of legal prosecution of war criminals to Germany. In the end, however, all the proceedings in Germany had been discontinued as the actions became time-barred.[41]

In between 1952 and 1955, both Greece and Germany were admitted into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Only a few years later, in 1958, Greece concluded an Association Agreement with the European Economic Community. In the following decade, the Federal Republic became the main target for Greek labor migration. Then, in 1967–1974, when military junta took over the power in Greece, Germany also became the refuge for Greek political exile.[42] Later on, Germany supported the admission of democratic Hellenic Republic into the European Community. Greece finally joined the EC on January 1, 1981.

Economic Relations

The establishment of modern Greek state at the beginning of the nineteenth century paved the way to modernization of local conditions. During the Bavarian rule, postal services and new Greek currency (drachma) were introduced. Emphasis was placed on renewing the country-side. The first soil-improving methods were implemented to the rural areas. Road, sewage system, and public building construction became the most important long-term contributions to the development of the Greek countryside. Several German businesses set up operations in Greece; however, their share of Greek foreign trade remained marginal until the end of the nineteenth century.[43]

The rectification of the dismal political and economic conditions was declared priority for Charilaos Trikoupis's government. During the period of 1875 to 1895, Trikoupis served seven times as prime minister of Greece while

[41] See Willi Dressen, "Deutsche Sühnemassnahmen und Vergeltungsaktionen in Griechenland im Spiegel der deutschen Strafverfolgung," Ibid., 31–41.

[42] Statistics shows that every tenth Greek spent a longer part of his life in exile. See Pantelis M. Pantelouris, *Die deutsch-griechischen Nachkriegsbeziehungen*, http://www.hellasproducts.com/news/dg/pantelouris.htm.

[43] Lazaridou, "Von der Krise zur Normalität," 293; Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 304.

holding other offices in the meanwhile, too. The increase of his popularity was related to the recovery of Greek economy and living standards. Trade, banking, and shipping experienced rapid growth. Local agricultural products, such as olives, olive oil, and raisins, were among popular exports. However, industrial production was developing slowly and was limited to shipyards, weaving mills and spinning factories, mining, and food production. In addition, there was an improvement of infrastructure, as new roads and railways were built. The Greek government assigned majority of contracts to foreign companies.[44]

Due to the boom of German industry, Germany strengthened her position on Greek market. However, despite the rapid growth of German exports in 1880–1913, Greece continued to remain the least important trading partner of Germany in the Balkans. Greece experienced a trade deficit with Germany until the First World War, which caused, for a certain period of time, total disruption of relations. Having overcome hyperinflation in the first half of the 1920s, financially stabilized Germany soon evolved into Greece's main trade partner.[45]

The second half of the 1920s provided a further push to the expansion of trade between the two countries. Greek export to Germany soon exceeded the import from Germany. Furthermore, on August 31, 1928, Greek-German Trade Agreement was negotiated. The implementation of a clearing mechanism in the mid-1930s was instrumental in boosting mutual trade exchanges and thus bringing the two national markets even closer. Major German companies, such as *AEG*, *Siemens*, and *IG Farben*, set up their plants and branch offices in Greece.[46]

Trade relations between Germany and Greece experienced further expansion under the Metaxas regime in the mid- and late 1930s. Only in between 1935 and 1936, Greek export to Germany increased by 27 percent. Germany imported mainly tobacco, which later became a key "political factor," as well as minerals (ores, marble) and raisins. Greece, for its part, was primarily interested in importing German black coal, iron, and industrial goods. In 1938, exports to Germany represented over 40 percent of the total

---

[44] Tzermias, *Die Identitätssuche des neuen Griechentums*, 372–80; Hradečný, *Dějiny Řecka*, 317–20.

[45] R. Schönfeld, "Wirtschaftliche Kooperation unter Kriesenbedingungen – Deutsch-griechische Handelsbeziehungen in der Zwischenkriegszeit," in *Die Entwicklung Griechenlands und die deutsch-griechischen Beziehungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Bernhard Hänsel (München: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1990), 124.

[46] Lazaridou, "Von der Krise zur Normalität," 293.

volume of Greek exports. Awarding strategically important contracts to German companies and hiring German consultants for the construction of naval fortifications confirmed Greece's interest not only in mutual trade, but also in military-strategic cooperation.[47]

In the following year, however, the virtual peak in Greek-German relations was overcome. Metaxas was subjected to an increased pressure from England to restrain his contacts with the Nazis. At the same time, German government began to curb its activities in Greece. An export agreement with *Rheinmetall*, German arms producer, worth 50 million Reichmarks, was being revoked. German deliveries of coal and iron to Greece were also swiftly reduced. Despite strong pressure from Germany, Greek exporters continued to supply chrome to London, claiming the lucrativeness of the British offer. Just as before, most Greek trade flotillas sailed under the flag of the British Isles. Moreover, Greek tankers imported fuel from Romania to supply the Allied navy. British ships, anchored in Greek ports, were supplied with German coal. Greek weapon factories, such as the *Poudererie et Cartoucherie Hellénique*, built almost entirely under the supervision of German specialists using German machinery and materials, operated for the British customers as well. Arms and ammunitions produced for fictitious Turkish enterprises were loaded at night on French ships coming from Beirut.[48] After the war broke out, economic relations were completely terminated.

The Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1944 caused serious damage to the Greek economy. Inflation reached astronomical heights. A "forced loan" (*Zwangsanleihe*) from the National Bank of Greece to Germany exhausted national gold reserves worth several millions of Reichsmarks. This "loan" was never paid back. Virtually all Greek agricultural production ended in the Reich. Several Greek regions were severely afflicted by famine.[49] In Greek consciousness, the experience of Nazi occupation gave rise to certain contempt for Germany.[50]

During the initial post-war years, Greek-German economic relations were practically null. While Greece was being troubled by civil war, the Allies divided Germany into occupation zones. The economies of both Germany

---

47 Schönfeld, "Wirtschaftliche Kooperation," 131–34.

48 Ibid., 136.

49 See Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*; Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte*.

50 See Kirsten Fast and Jan Peter Thorbecke, eds., *Griechen und Deutsche: Bilder vom Anderen* (Stuttgart, Darmstadt: Württembergisches Landesmuseum Stuttgart und Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, 1982).

and Greece lay in ruins. Situation only normalized at the beginning of the 1950s while the two countries began to restore their mutual relations motivated by open efforts to reconcile with the past.[51]

With the end of the civil war, Greece's demand for foreign goods increased. Thus, imports from Germany were resumed. However, their quantity hardly matched the pre-war levels. In 1949, German exports were merely 50 percent of what they were in 1929, and 21 percent of the amount in 1938.[52] The resumption of the export of Greek tobacco became the most contested commercial issue. The so-called Tobacco Agreement (*Tabakabkommen*) of October 26, 1950 proved decisive for restoring bilateral trade.[53]

The post-war export of tobacco was threatened by the imposition of a special tax on tobacco in Germany. This issue initiated not only trade, but also political negotiations. In exchange for lifting the tobacco tax and for regular purchase of raw tobacco, Greece showed willingness to make concessions in reparations and to support Germany's bid for membership in international organizations. After lengthy bargaining and escalating of demands, post-war Germany succeeded in gaining its first ally. On November 11, 1953, Greek-German agreement on economic cooperation was signed where Germany pledged to provide 200 million Deutschmarks for restoration of Greek economy, with participation of German companies such as *Krupp*, *Hydrocarbon*, *Stahlunion Export*. The agreement was to serve primarily to the execution of major investments or construction projects, such as the power station in Ptolemais, brown coal mines, oil refineries, etc.[54]

Metallurgy and construction machinery, electric devices, metals, metal products, and automobiles became the main articles imported from Germany, together with chemical fertilizers, medicine, and other pharmaceutical products and, initially, coal. In addition to tobacco, Germany, for its part, imported agricultural products such as wine, cider, dry fruits, tropical fruits, olives, and nuts from Greece. Germany was also eager to import leather and furs as well as raw materials, such as nonferrous metals and bauxites. Bilateral trade enabled to fill in the gaps in local industries and agriculture.

In spring of 1957, the bilateral relations grew tense due to the arrest of Maximillian Merten in Athens. From 1942 to 1944, Merten held a position

---

[51] See Dimitrios Delivanis, "Die deutsch-griechischen Handelsbeziehungen," *Südosteuropa-Jahrbuch*, Band 2 (München: Südeuropa-Gesellschaft, 1958), 152.
[52] Ibid., 146.
[53] For Tabakabkommen, see Yfantis, "Die deutsch-griechischen Beziehungen," 65–99.
[54] Ibid., 154–69. See also Lazaridou, "Von der Krise zur Normalität," 130–59.

of advisor to the military administration in Thessaloniki where he was in charge of economy and administration of the city. After the war, Merten was accused of committing war crimes in Greece. West Germany protested against his arrest. After all, he spent nearly two years in custody. His trial took place from February 11 to March 5, 1959. Merten was charged with murder, violation of habeas corpus, violence against Greek and Jewish populations, and confiscation of Jewish property. Greek court sentenced him to twenty-five years in prison.[55]

In November 1957, during the preliminary hearing of the Merten case, the Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis visited Bonn in order to conduct talks on future investments and on Germany's political support for Greece's position in the Cyprus conflict. On November 27, 1958, another agreement on economic cooperation was signed. Under this arrangement, the Federal Republic pledged to provide Greece with a loan of 200 million Deutschmarks, additional funding of long-term investment projects totaling 100 million Deutschmarks, and technical assistance. Two months later, Greek Parliament approved so-called abolition act, according to which Greece ceased prosecution of war criminals – with the exception of Merten.[56]

Max Merten had to wait until November 1959 amnesty of war criminals allowed him to be transported to Germany. In March 1960, an agreement on reparations in the amount of 115 million Deutschmarks was signed. Germany also agreed to provide Greece with economic aid in the form of a special loan. Upon his return to Germany, Merten was arrested; however, he was once again released a few days later. His case was dismissed because of lack of evidence. Later, Merten actually received financial compensation (*Heimkehrerentschädigung*) from the German state for the time he spent in Greek prison.[57]

The Merten case concluded a period of mutual talks, during which Greeks sought maximum financial compensation instead of demanding direct reparations. Germany welcomed the opportunity to avoid direct reparations as well as the public debate about its Nazi past. Since the 1960s, the Greek-German economic relations had stabilized. New factors emerged

[55] See Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*; Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte*.

[56] See Susanne-Sophia Spiliotis, "An Affair of Politics, Not Justice: The Merten Trial (1957–1959) and Greek-German Relations," in *After the War was Over. Reconstructing the Family, Nation and State in Greece, 1943–1960*, ed. Mark Mazower (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 293–302.

[57] See Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*; Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte*.

to have a positive impact on financial flow from the Federal Republic of Germany to Greece: an influx of resources from the Greek emigrants living in Germany and from the tourist industry. To this day, Germany remains Greece's main trading partner.

Conclusion

Over the past two centuries, Greek-German relations have been experiencing ups and downs. Germans indisputably established themselves in the Greek society not only through the accession of Bavarian Wittelsbach Dynasty, but also through cultural and social influence supported by traditional German Philhellenism that arose mainly from the fascination with the ancient past. In the twentieth century, Germany's interest shifted to political and economic spheres. Germany not only resumed the traditional cultural relations, but also began to look for political support and trade benefits in Greece. Germany was aware of the significance of support to an allied state. At the same time, it profited from Greece's growing dependence on German economy.

The Second World War can be regarded as a climactic event. The German aggression of 1941 crippled the mutual ties to such a degree that their normalization after the Second World War seemed almost impossible. Essentially, however, the Second World War removed traditional ties and thus created space for new political developments that were soured by Greek resentments over Nazi occupation, but prospered through economic cooperation. Owing to political talks at the highest level, Greek-German trade began to flourish and cultural contacts were restored. Germany represented a supporter of Greece's participation in world arena.

Greek society regarded the Federal Republic as a stabilizing factor in its democratic transition. For decades, Greek citizens have immigrated to Germany in hopes of improving their economic situation. At the same time, Germany served as a refuge for Greeks who feared political repression during periods of political crises. The era of political-economic regeneration of the 1950s to the 1970s helped both countries to open a new chapter in the mutual relations. The new level of Greek-German cooperation brought Greece into the European Community and enabled both countries to forge standard political relations based on partnership and cooperation. Thus, to a considerable degree, Germany's influence in the Balkans supported Greece's transformation into the present-day democratic state.