

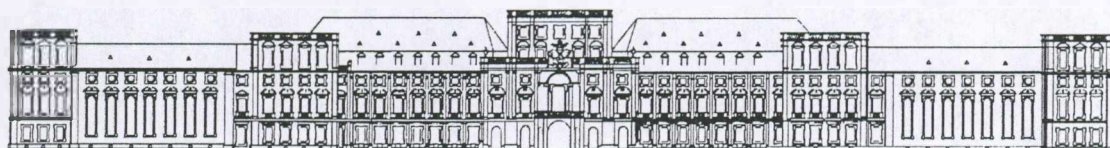
T H E T I S

Mannheimer Beiträge
zur
Klassischen Archäologie
und Geschichte
Griechenlands und Zyperns

Herausgegeben von
Reinhard Stupperich und Heinz A. Richter



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Redaktion: Archäologie, Antike - Reinhard Stupperich; Geschichte - Heinz A. Richter
Anschrift: Historisches Institut der Universität, Schloß, D - 68 131 Mannheim
stupperi@rumms.uni-mannheim.de oder hrichter@rumms.uni-mannheim.de

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Das griechische Memorandum zur „Washingtoner Conference on Holocaust-era Assets“: Vor- und Nachbemerkungen von

Hagen Fleischer

Im Anschluß an die Londoner Konferenz 1997, die das Thema „Nazigold“ einem allseits akzeptablen Abschluß nahebrachte, beschlossen die Veranstalter, den Fokus auf „*assets other than gold*“ zu erweitern. Ansprüche, die über ein halbes Jahrhundert offen geblieben waren, sollten auf einem neuen internationalen Forum, in Washington, rückhaltlos zur Diskussion gestellt und – vor Ende des Millenniums - einer Lösung zugeführt werden. Tatsächlich trafen sich, vom 30.11.-3.12.1998, unter der gemeinsamen Federführung des State Department und des US-Holocaust-Museums die Delegationen von 44 Staaten sowie der 13 wichtigsten einschlägig aktiven „NGOs“ (Non-government organizations). Die neuen Schwerpunkte der *Washington Conference on Holocaust-era Assets* betrafen die Themengebiete geraubte Kunst, Versicherungsansprüche und Gemeindegut, aber auch „Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research“. Wie die treibende Kraft hinter der Konferenz, der (damalige) Under Secretary of State, Botschafter Stuart Eizenstat, in seinem *Opening Statement* betonte, „*all nations must be willing to take a long-delayed and serious examination of the events of the past*“. Nur ein schonungsloser und oft schmerzlicher Lernprozeß gewähre die Basis für ein künftiges ehrliches und gerechtes Zusammenleben der Völker.

Die deutschen Delegierten zollten diesen Erklärungen pflichtschuldig Beifall, und sie ernteten ihrerseits Applaus, wann immer sie der Zusammensetzung und dem Hauptanliegen des Auditoriums in ihren eigenen Verlautbarungen Rechnung trugen. Hingegen konnten sie es sich leisten, Forderungen aus der peripheren Kategorie „Other Claims“, hinter denen keine „Lobby“ stand, mit Schweigen zu übergehen. Dazu gehörte namentlich das dem Plenum vor der ersten Sitzung unterbreitete¹ griechische Memorandum, das sich – von den separat niedergelegten Forderungen der jüdischen Gemeinde Saloniki abgesehen – auf den seit einem halben Jahrhundert überfälligen „Besatzungskredit“ konzentrierte. Der griechische Botschafter in den USA (und ex officio Delegationsleiter) A. Philon erneuerte das Anliegen in seiner Schlußansprache. Der deutschen Seite wurde ihr Schweigen allerdings dadurch erleichtert, daß bei den vorbereitenden Besprechungen in London, die damalige griechische Delegation(sleitung) - noch ohne Experten zur Besatzungsgeschichte - es versäumt hatte, die Thematik ausdrücklich auf die Tagesordnung für Washington setzen zu lassen.

Doch ohnehin besteht das offizielle Deutschland darauf, die Reparationsfrage habe sich – 50 Jahre nach Kriegsende – „durch Zeitablauf und die Veränderung der Situation in Europa erledigt“. Bereits im Vorfeld der Einigung instruierte das Auswärtige Amt in einer Verschlusssache alle Botschaften axiomatisch, die „Reparationsfrage [habe] ihre Berechtigung verloren“; die auf 23 Seiten ausgewalzte und seitdem *ad nauseam* nachgebetete „Argumentationshilfe“ kann hier nicht im einzelnen untersucht werden. Verblüffen muß etwa in diesem Zusammenhang die „ergänzende“ Feststellung, „daß der nunmehr in Gang gekommene Prozeß der Herstellung der deutschen Einheit, der Reparationsfrage zu neuer Aktualität verholfen hat, wiederum nicht das Verdienst der Kriegsgegner von 1945 ist“.

Unbestreitbar das Verdienst der einstigen Kriegsgegner (bzw. deren „Prominenz“) war jedoch das von den Westmächten – unter Federführung der USA - organisierte Londoner Schuldenabkommen (LSA) von 1953. Die dort erzielte „Wiederherstellung der (bundes)deutschen Kreditwürdigkeit“ war im Kontext der amerikanischen Pläne, den Bonner Teilstaat zum antikommunistischen Bollwerk auszubauen, die moralisch-materielle Voraussetzung für die betriebene Remilitarisierung. Die gefeierte „Regelung der deutschen Auslandsschulden“ war jedoch selektiv: „geregelt“ wurden die Bedienung der umfangreichen deutschen Verpflichtungen ~~auf dem~~ internationalen (primär angloamerikanischen) Anleihemarkt sowie die Nachkriegsschulden (Besatzungskosten und humanitäre Hilfe), an denen wiederum die gleichen Gläubigerstaaten (bzw. ihre Wähler) interessiert waren. All diesen Belastungen schien die westdeutsche Wirtschaft aber nur gewachsen, sofern die lästige Reparationsfrage „vom Tisch“ war. Da ein formeller Verzicht gegen den Widerstand der „kleinen“ Alliierten nicht durchzudrücken war, einigten sich Bonn und die Westmächte auf eine bewußt schwammige Formulierung, die de facto gleiches bewirkte.

Artikel 5 des LSA, der die „*Prüfung der aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg herrührenden Forderungen [...] bis zu der endgültigen Regelung der Reparationsfrage zurück*“ stellte, spielte auf eine Friedensregelung mit einem wiedervereinigten Deutschland an; eine solche wurde aber angesichts der gegebenen Machtverhältnisse und der zementierten Spaltung des Kontinents kaum erwartet. Intern verwiesen amerikanische und deutsche Experten in diesem Zusammenhang daher auch wiederholt auf die „griechischen Kalenden“, die es ja im antiken Kalender bekanntlich nicht gab...

1 Die im Folgenden als „Dokumentation“ abgedruckten Texte von Hagen Fleischer und Gabriella Etmektzoglou entsprechen im Wortlaut dem offiziellen Text. Daher verzichteten die Vf. auf Einschübe und zusätzliche Erläuterungen, gerade auch in den Anmerkungen. Als Ersatz hierfür möge diese kurze Einleitung dienen.

Die Politiker und Diplomaten der Bonner Republik machten von der „Rechtswohltat“ des LSA regelmäßig Gebrauch, sobald es galt, Forderungen ehemaliger Feindstaaten abzublocken. Und dementsprechend herrschte Unruhe, wenn in Phasen der Entspannung das Gespenst einer europäischen Sicherheits- und Friedenskonferenz zu geistern begann. Von (unter Diplomaten) seltener Offenheit² ist der Brandbrief eines deutschen Botschafters an das AA, der dringend vor der stets virulenten „*Begehrlichkeit [sic] unserer jetzigen Partner und einstigen Gegner*“ warnte. Bislang sei es zwar gelungen – mittels des LSA – „*dank des Entgegenkommens unserer amerikanischen Freunde, die gewaltigen Reparationsforderungen [...] bis zum Abschluß eines Friedensvertrages zurückzustellen, d.h. unsere Gegner des letzten Weltkrieges ad kalendas Graecas zu verträsten.*“ Jede Diskussion einer umfassenden Sicherheits- und Friedensvereinbarung, die „*gewissermaßen den Abschluß des Zweiten Weltkrieges und der durch ihn in Europa aufgetakelten Probleme darstelle*“, gefährde jedoch die in zwei Jahrzehnten bewährte Strategie: „*Eigentlich müßte es doch unser Interesse sein, diesen Zwischenzustand des Nichtzustandekommens eines Friedensvertrages so lange wie möglich aufrechtzuerhalten, um diese Forderungen unserer einstigen Gegner durch Zeitablauf einer Verwirkung oder Verjährung zuzuführen. Anders ausgedrückt: Man sollte schlafende Hunde nicht wecken.*“ Auf die besorgte Frage des Botschafters, „*wie das Auswärtige Amt zu diesem Fragenkomplex*“ stehe, beruhigt ihn der führende Reparationsexperte, in Bonn teile man seine Auffassungen „*vollauf*“.³

Als es dann wider Erwarten 1990 doch noch zu dieser Einigung kommt (und allerorten die „Hunde“ zu „bellen“ beginnen), verschanzt sich die Bundesregierung ganz im Sinne der eben zitierten Ausführungen hinter dem Axiom, die Frage habe sich „*durch Zeitablauf erledigt*“. Die gleiche Argumentation hatte Bonn übrigens über zwanzig Jahre hinsichtlich der aus dem *Ersten* Weltkrieg herrührenden, vergleichsweise minimalen, griechischen Forderungen vertreten – garniert mit auch aus der jetzigen Diskussion bekannten sachfremden Hinweisen auf (im Rahmen von NATO und EG) geleistete Wirtschafts- und Militärhilfe – bis man 1974, *sechs Jahrzehnte nach Kriegsbeginn*, durch Schiedsgerichtsspruch zu einem Vergleich und zu Zahlungen gezwungen wurde. Im Zusammenhang mit dem *Zweiten* Weltkrieg wäre zudem die – völkerrechtlich strittige – Verjährung ohnehin zumindest für jene Jahrzehnte anzuhalten,⁴ in denen eine Einklagung aus den oben skizzierten Gründen nicht möglich war oder sogar bewußt hintertrieben wurde.

Bei der in diesem Jahr neu entbrannten Diskussion um die griechischen Entschädigungsforderungen für Kriegsverbrechen⁵ wurde und wird von offizieller deutscher Seite wiederholt auf das Globalabkommen von 1960/61 hingewiesen, mit dem angeblich alle griechischen Ansprüche abgegolten seien. Hier handelt es sich entweder um Chuzpe oder um kaum weniger skandalöse Unkenntnis. Tatsächlich waren der griechischen Regierung nach monatelangem Feilschen um Geld und Gegenleistung (erzwungener Verzicht auf Verfolgung deutscher Kriegsverbrecher) 115 Millionen DM bezahlt worden; Entschädigungen erhalten sollten aber nur „*Opfer typisch nationalsozialistischer Verfolgung im Sinne des § 1 BEG*“, also namentlich Verfolgte aus rassischen und religiösen Gründen. Diese, wie betont wurde, „*freiwillige*“ (und nicht in Erfüllung einer völkerrechtlichen Verbindlichkeit vereinbarten) Wiedergutmachung erfolgte auch gegenüber den anderen betroffenen Weststaaten, da sie als vereinbar mit dem LSA angesehen wurde.⁶ Sieht man von dem die Griechen wenig überzeugenden Argument der „*leeren Taschen*“ ab,⁷ so bleibt als einziger akzeptabler deutscher Einwand jener übrig, der ans Gefühl – die neu begründete Partnerschaft bzw. Freundschaft mit Griechenland – zu appellieren scheint. Damit aber läßt sich allenfalls gegen die Reparationsforderungen argumentieren, die seit 1990 zum Dauerbrenner der meisten griechischen Medien (mit sich gegenseitig

2 Eben deshalb diente dieser Text (ohne Nennung der Aktenstelle) dem Vf. wiederholt dazu, die deutsche Position transparent zu machen (Memo „Wiedergutmachungskonferenz“ in Delphi, Juni 1998, WDR, 17.6.98, Athener Zeitung, 15./22.10.1999, u.a.); aus dem gleichen Grund wurde das Zitat dann - mit oder ohne Nennung des Fundortes/Finders - von anderen Autoren übernommen, die zumeist fälschlich annehmen, es habe sich um den deutschen Botschafter in Athen gehandelt.

3 PAAA, Ref. 507, vol. 1253: Deutsche Botschaft Luxemburg 269/9.4.1969 und Antwort Dr. Rumpf, April 1969.

4 Vgl. die Anhaltung der Verjährung bei Kriegsverbrechen für jene Periode, in denen eine Verfolgung unmöglich war.

5 Bereits 1957 dozierte die Rechtsabteilung des AA: „*Wenn man davon ausgeht, daß die meisten sog. [sic] Kriegsverbrechen im Rahmen und in Ausführung militärischer Maßnahmen von Organen des Deutschen Reiches begangen wurden, so ist kein Raum gegeben, entsprechend dem Wunsch der griechischen Regierung eine globale Entschädigungsregelung zu treffen. Es handelt sich vielmehr, falls die Entschädigungsansprüche überhaupt begründet sein sollten [...], um Forderungen völkerrechtlichen Charakters, die nur von Regierung zu Regierung geregelt werden können, was aber im vorliegenden Fall durch Art. 5 des Schuldenabkommens einseitigen [sic] nicht möglich ist. Sollte es sich dagegen bei den Kriegsverbrechen nicht um hoheitliche militärische Akte von Organen des Deutschen Reichs, sondern um Exzesse einzelner Angehöriger der deutschen Besatzungsmacht handeln, so steht einer Geltendmachung von Schadenersatzforderungen zivilrechtlicher Art gegenüber solchen Einzelpersonen nichts im Wege. [...]. Hierbei kann es sich aber nur um eine geringe Anzahl von Fällen handeln*“ (PAAA, B 86, vol. 572, AA, Ref. 507, 30.9.57).

Zu den „sogenannten“ Kriegsverbrechen und der ausstehenden Sühnung - kein einziger Deutscher wurde von deutschen Gerichten wegen in Griechenland begangener Kriegsverbrechen verurteilt! - vgl. insbesondere: Loukia Droulia / Hagen Fleischer (Hgg.), Von Lidice bis Kalavryta. Widerstand und Besatzungsterror. Studien zur Repressalienpraxis im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Berlin: Metropol-Verlag 1999, passim. (namentlich Beiträge Messerschmidt, Fleischer, Rondholz)

6 PAAA, B 86, vol. 1271, AA, Ref. V7 (Dr. Rumpf), 19.10.70. Rumpf läßt in dem Memorandum keine Zweifel: „*Die Frage etwaiger Leistungen an Partisanen, Widerstands- und Untergrundkämpfer sowie an die Opfer von Geiselerchießungen ist [...] eine reine Reparationsfrage, d.h. diese Schäden hängen mit dem Krieg zusammen. Für sie gilt das Moratorium des Art. 5 Abs. 2 des Londoner Schuldenabkommens, sofern Entschädigung überhaupt in Frage kommt.*“

7 In der griechischen Presse wurde wiederholt herausgestellt, daß Deutschland diese Defensivposition aufgibt, sobald die Pressionen einer mächtigen Lobby oder der internationalen Öffentlichkeit die Schmerzgrenze überschreiten, wie kürzlich wieder in der Frage der Entschädigung für Zwangsarbeiter – obwohl jene, wie betont wird, trotz aller erlittener Unbill keinen Vergleich aushielten mit den Opfern der infernalischen Blutbäder von Distomo, Kalavryta, Kommeno, etc.

hochreichenden Milliardenbeträgen) entwickelt haben. Tatsächlich wäre die Athener Regierung gut beraten, das Gesetz des Handelns durch einen formellen Verzicht auf (ohnehin nicht durchzusetzende) Reparationen in die Hand zu nehmen, obwohl in der Nachkriegsbilanz Griechenland im Vergleich zu den anderen Opfern deutscher Aggression mit Abstand am schlechtesten abgeschnitten hat. Voraussetzung bzw. Gegenleistung für einen solchen innenpolitisch kostspieligen Verzicht müßte die Bereitschaft der Bundesregierung sein, die bisherige Mauertaktik in Sachen Besatzungskredit aufzugeben, die mit der ansonsten beschworenen „neuen Freundschaft“ keinesfalls zu vereinbaren ist. In bilateralen Gesprächen über diesen völkerrechtlich anders liegenden (und international keinen Präzedenzfall bewirkenden) griechischen Anspruch ließe sich eine Kompromißlösung ausarbeiten. Denkbar wäre die Gründung einer Stiftung zur Aufarbeitung der weitgehend verdrängten gemeinsamen Kriegsvergangenheit sowie die Bildung eines Fonds, aus dem ein Infrastruktur-Projekt von symbolischer Bedeutung finanziert werden könnte, insbesondere aber Entschädigungen an bislang ignorierte Opfer des deutschen Besatzungsterrors. Die treuhänderische Übernahme des Fonds und der Abschlagszahlungen⁸ seitens der griechischen Regierung (unter Mitwirkung der Interessenverbände) könnte den toten Punkt überwinden, an dem sich die bilateralen Beziehungen infolge der quantitativen und qualitativen⁹ Eskalation privater Forderungen und Klagen derzeit befinden.

Zugleich würde die deutsche Bereitschaft zur Verhandlung über den seinerzeit den Griechen abgepreßten „Besatzungskredit“ im Rahmen einer allgemeinen historischen Flurbereinigung dem absurden Zustand ein Ende setzen, daß die „Reichsschuld gegenüber Griechenland“ – durch Vertreter des NS-Regimes anerkannt und Anfang 1945 auf 476 Millionen Mark berechnet¹⁰ – von den demokratisch gewählten Regierungen der Bundesrepublik, der Rechtsnachfolgerin des Deutschen Reiches, bislang schroff ignoriert wurde.¹¹

8 Im Anklang an die Entschädigung der Opfer „typisch nationalsozialistischer Verfolgung“ durch das oben erwähnte Abkommen von 1960/61.

9 Hier sind namentlich die Bestrebungen auf Beschlagnahmung der deutschen Kulturinstitutionen auf griechischem Boden zu nennen. Die infolge jahrzehntelanger deutscher Verschleppungsstrategie verständliche Erbitterung der griechischen Opfer richtet sich nunmehr (z.T. politisch funktionalisiert) gegen das ungeeignetste Objekt, da insbesondere das Archäologische Institut sowie die Goethe-Institute auch in schwierigen Zeiten die positivsten Exponenten deutscher Präsenz waren.

Nicht zur Diskussion steht andererseits ein juristisches Vorgehen gegen jene Konzerne (Bergbau, Tabak, etc.), die an der rücksichtslosen (und im wörtlichen Sinne oft über Leichen gehende) Ausbeutung des besetzten Griechenlands führend beteiligt waren, aber kein deutsches Staatseigentum darstellen.

10 Vgl. das nachfolgende griechische Memo zur Washingtoner Konferenz.

11 Treffend und nicht ohne Humor definierte ein deutscher Botschafter, auf die entsprechende Frage des Vf., die deutsche Haltung: „Ganz einfach: Wir wollen nicht zahlen. Aber, bitte, zitieren Sie mich nicht ...!“

Greek Memorandum on Holocaust-era Assets

Introduction

Greece became involved in the Second World War on October 28, 1940, when Fascist Italy launched an unprovoked invasion of Greece. The aggressors, however, were defeated by the Greek army and thrown back into Albania. This first setback for the Axis made inevitable the assault by the Germans, who came to rescue their Italian allies, and safeguard their rear pending their invasion of the Soviet Union. The Wehrmacht invaded Greece through Bulgaria on April 6, 1941, and crushed the resistance by the exhausted defenders as well as a British (and Commonwealth) expeditionary force. By the end of the month they had overrun the mainland and then, in May, conquered Crete against fierce resistance offered by Commonwealth forces and the local population. The tripartite (German – Italian – Bulgarian) enemy occupation lasted for 3 ½ years, during which Fascist suppression and exploitation stimulated development of a strong resistance movement, and soon guerrilla bands sprang up all over the country. In early November 1944, the Greek mainland was free again, while several islands remained under German Occupation up to May 1945.

H.F.

I. Greece's Occupation Costs and Forced Loans During World War Two

During the Second World War the Axis demanded from occupied Greece huge sums of money contributions. While in most occupied countries the annual costs of occupation corresponded to their defense appropriations before the German invasion,¹² the size of Greece's levy in 1941/42 represented 113.7 % of the country's national income.¹³ To cover the financing of direct occupation costs, credits, supplies and services, billeting of troops, transportation and the like, every Greek citizen had to contribute monthly 78 RM, an amount which, according to a computation by the Reichsbank, represented the highest per person monthly contribution in occupied Europe.¹⁴ In addition to direct monetary contributions, the Axis demanded large credits from the Bank of Greece. The funds advanced by the Greek Bank of issue in the form of loans were used to finance defense works;¹⁵ make payments to individuals and institutions for services to the Axis authorities; pay for requisitioned commodities and for stock purchases in mines and industrial enterprises; and cover other 'besatzungsfremden' expenses.¹⁶

The German Wehrmacht devoured the lion's share of Greece's direct contributions and credits. On average, the army expended 51.9 % of the total amount, the navy 35.7 % and the air force 12.4 %.¹⁷ The Italian armed forces spent only half as much as the Germans for occupation costs despite the fact that their troops numbered 160,000 and those of the Germans 80,000.¹⁸ Available evidence indicates that poor management and the ambitious undertaking of unfeasible defense projects by the Wehrmacht account for the high expenditures.

The Agreements on the Levying of Occupation Costs and Forced Loans

1) *Vertrauliches Protokoll betreffend deutsch-italienische Vereinbarungen über Griechenland vom 14. März 1942*, signed by Carl Clodius, Deputy Chief of the Economic Policy Department of the German Foreign Ministry, and Amadeo Giannini, Chairman of the Italian Government Committee.¹⁹ According to this protocol, Greece was to make a monthly part-payment (*Abschlagszahlung*) of 1.5 billion drachmas for both armies. The

¹² Thomas Reveille, *The Spoil of Europe. The Nazi Technique in Political and Economic Conquest* (New York: Allen & Unwin, 1942), pp. 103-07.

¹³ The German Plenipotentiary of the Reich in Greece, Altenburg, to the German Foreign Office (AA), 25 Sept. 1941, BA-MA Wi IC 1/9. Norway's occupation costs for the same period - the highest in occupied western Europe - represented 69 % of its national income, Belgium's 24 %, and Holland's 18 %. See Altenburg, *Stellungnahme zum Memorandum über Griechenlands volks- und staatswirtschaftliche Lage*, 25 Sept. 1941, BA-MA, Wi IC 1/9.

¹⁴ *Übersicht der Reichsbank*, 9 Apr. 1943, ZStAP, film no. 2308.

¹⁵ Especially during the African campaign of 1942/43, when Greece served as a transit and supply base for the African corps, the Wehrmacht did not differentiate between rationing and billeting expenses of the stationed troops and the costs of defense constructions required by the war against Britain. See Oberregierungsrat Dr. S. Nestler, *Das Finanzwesen einschliesslich der Besatzungskosten in Griechenland während der deutschen Besatzungszeit 1941-1944*, p. 91, PA-AA, *Sonderbevollmächtigter Südost, Dienst. Athen*, vol. 7. Article 49 of the Hague Convention does not state categorically that contributions must be in proportion to the country's resources, but it has been asserted by prominent writers that occupation costs cannot be charged in order to meet war expenses or for the enrichment of the occupier. See James W. Garner, *International Law and the World War*, vol. II (London: Longmans & Green, 1920), pp. 114-15. L. Oppenheim argues that "contributions might not be demanded extortionately, but exclusively for the needs of the army, in order, for instance, to pay for requisitions, or for the administration of the locality in question". See *International Law. A Treatise*, vol. II: *Disputes, War, and Neutrality*, H. Lauterpacht (ed.), 7th ed. (London: Longmans, 1952), p. 412.

¹⁶ The levying of forced loans with a provision for repayment has been recognised by some specialists on international law as a nominal legal device for which, however, the rules on contributions must apply, i.e. forced loans must be in proportion to the country's resources and cannot be charged in order to meet war expenses or for the enrichment of the occupier. See Ernst H. Feilchenfeld, *The International Economic Law of Belligerent Occupation* (New York/London 1971), p. 46. See also Law 1580/1942, *Greek Government Gazette (EK)*, 1942, 1, pp. 1151f.

¹⁷ Nestler, *Finanzwesen*, p. 92.

¹⁸ In September 1941 Altenburg calculated that each German soldier cost the Greek state RM 10 = 600 drs. per day while each Italian cost only RM 5,20 = 312 drs. See *Stellungnahme*, p. 2. The Wehrmacht explained this discrepancy by the fact that they had navy, air force, motorized, and special units stationed in Greece, while the Italians had only infantry, artillery, and cavalry units requiring much lower maintenance costs.

¹⁹ Text in PA-AA, *HaPol-Akten, Verträge, Italien*, vol. 1.

Bank of Greece was obliged to advance additional funds and to open an interest-free loan account for each occupation power for this purpose.²⁰

Main negotiations leading to this agreement:

Deliberations about the levying of direct occupation costs were initiated by the Italians in June 1941, and by August the Axis authorities had decided to demand from the Greek government a monthly contribution of 1.5 billion drachmas plus 700 million drachmas for billeting. In September 1941 the monthly total was raised to 4.2 billion because the Wehrmacht had begun an expensive program of internal transportation and harbor improvements. The German Plenipotentiary of the Reich in Greece, Günther Altenburg, the Regio Plenipotenziario d'Italia per la Grecia, Pellegrino Ghigi, and the Greek Minister of Finance, S. Gotzamanes, pressed for a reduction of Axis demands by noting that the problem of inflation was becoming disastrous.²¹ In January 1942,²² at a conference in Rome, the Italians repeated to Carl Clodius, Deputy Chief of the Economic Policy Department of the German Foreign Ministry, that the OKW should freeze monthly occupation cost payments to 1.5 billion drachmas, to be shared equally between the two armies.²³ Bilateral deliberations of German and Italian government committees were opened in Berlin in March 1942, and a Confidential Protocol was signed by Clodius and Amadeo Giannini which stipulated that: effective January 1, 1942, Greece was to make a monthly part-payment (*Abschlagszahlung*) of 1.5 billion drachmas for both armies. The Bank of Greece was obliged to advance additional funds and to open an interest-free loan account for each occupation power for this purpose. Inevitably, the policy of demanding unlimited credits from the Bank of Greece increased the rate of issue of paper money, to which the government resorted to finance the new indemnity.

2) Agreement between Germany, Italy, and Greece of December 2, 1942

The March protocol was revised on December 2, 1942. The Greek government, now under Prime Minister Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, and the Axis powers reached a settlement which was supposed to stay in force until March 31, 1943. According to its terms, the Greek contribution, set at a billion and a half by the March agreement, would be monthly adjusted to the purchasing power of the drachma, but would not exceed a maximum of 8 billion (4 for each army) for occupation costs and 4 billion monthly (2 for each army) for billeting. To cover additional expenses, the two armies demanded access to credits from the Bank of Greece, to be advanced upon request to an interest-free credit account (*Sonderkonto*). Germany and Italy agreed to begin repayment of the credits in April 1943, in the form of monthly instalments equalling 10 per cent of the total borrowed since March 31, 1942.²⁴ Finally, Greece had to finance transportation costs as well as road and railway construction and supply the occupation armies with construction materials at requisition prices.

Main negotiations leading to this agreement:

A) Negotiations in Berlin and Rome (September-October 1942)

The Wehrmacht blatantly disregarded the March agreement. Its spending escalated rapidly between May and July 1942. In June, the Greek government announced to Altenburg that in view of an expected budget deficit of 29 billion drachmas for fiscal 1942/43 (without counting the 58-billion-drachma occupation costs), the Council of State had decided to stop payments to the Axis until discussions of a new arrangement were held between the three governments.²⁵ Gotzamanes presented Mussolini with a new plan: the military authorities would limit their

²⁰ *Vertrauliches Protokoll vom 14. März 1942*, pp. 83-102. The Bank of Greece was also obliged to make direct payments to individuals and institutions in all administrative districts for services rendered to the Axis authorities. See Law 1580/1942, *Greek Government Gazette*, 1942, 1, pp. 1151-52.

²¹ Altenburg to the AA, 25 Sept. 1941, BA-MA, Wi/IC1. 9; Funk to the AA, telegram no. 5203/1-17 V of 29 Sept. 1941, PA-AA, HaPol IVa Griechenland, Finanzwesen 16-1, vol. 8. See also Bertoni to Ghigi, 22 Sept. 1941, Ufficio Affari Finanziari, *Capacità di pagamento della Grecia*, ASDMAE, Serie Affari Politici 1931-1945, Grecia, B 21, fasc. 2.

²² During this month, in anticipation of a meeting with the Italians, representatives of the AA, the RWM, the RFM, and the Four Year Plan had held talks on the issue of financing occupation costs in Greece. The most debated topic was whether the Reich should formally accept responsibility for German operation costs in Greece. See Vermerk über eine Sitzung im Auswärtigen Amt am 15. Januar 1942 bei Gesandten Clodius, and Währung und Finanzen in Griechenland, Vermerk Ref. V/3, 15 Jan. 1942, BA, R 2/312, frames 138-41.

²³ R. Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Gabinetto A. P., Uff. Grecia, *Riunione italo-germanica per le questioni finanziarie della Grecia*, Documentazione, 20 Jan. 1942, ASDMAE, Serie Affari Politici 1931-1945, Grecia, B 21, fasc. 2. See also Gab.A.P.-Grecia, express letter no. 08404 of 22 Jan. 1942, *ibid*, fasc. 16.

²⁴ Nestler, *Finanzwesen*, pp. 87-89, 162-64; Soterios Gotzamanes, *Katochikon Daneion kai Dapanai Katoches* (Salonica 1954), pp. 26-28; Neubacher/Altenburg, telegram no. 3016, 21 Dec. 1942, PA-AA, Büro St.S., Griechenland, vol. IV, pp. 81703-04; and Dertiles, "Arithmoi," pp. 501-04. To calculate the change of the purchasing power of the drs. the average price of bread, noodles, pulse, oil, meat, fish, fresh and dried fruits, raisins, potatoes, milk, vegetables, and wine observed at the four Saturdays of each month were considered. The prices of 14 March 1942 were set in the index as 100.

²⁵ Gotzamanes to Altenburg, letter no. 1239, 20 June 1942, PA-AA, HaPol IVa Griechenland, Finanzwesen 16-1, vol. 8; von Graevenitz, telegram no. 1376, same date, PA-AA, Büro St.S., Griechenland, vol. 3, p. 81293.

cash requests to the amount needed to pay the troops, and the Greek state would deliver needed provisions free of charge.²⁶

The Greek cabinet was coerced to provide additional funds for August, but it threatened to resign unless the astronomical indemnities demanded by the Germans were reduced immediately and the Reich government relieved Greece economically either by delivering commodities or by granting some sort of credit. Fiscal 1942/43 was expected to close with a deficit of 33.7 billion drachmas, apart from occupation costs,²⁷ and the Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance asked for permission to travel to Berlin and Rome and present their viewpoint on the issue of occupation costs. Indeed, on September 17, the Greek delegation arrived in Berlin, but deliberations ended in deadlock. The Reich representatives' "decisive stand-point" was to ensure the safe operation of the supply route via Greece to Africa and sustain all other operations required by the war effort in the Mediterranean. Translated into numbers, this meant 31 billion drachmas monthly for German occupation costs alone, which raised the total to over 50 billion.²⁸ Before the conference came to a deadlock, the Italians proposed that additional expenses, especially the supply of the armies in North Africa, should be financed by proceeds from levies on articles imported from Germany and Italy.²⁹ The Axis should carry the costs of the additional imports and also furnish consumption goods for the troops and building materials. Finally, to achieve fiscal stabilization, the parity of the drachma vis-à-vis the RM and the lira should be kept unaltered.³⁰ The Reichsfinanzminister and the president of the Reichsbank agreed only on the last two points.³¹

The stalemate reached in Berlin was not resolved when deliberations continued in Rome. On October 17, Ribbentrop decided that it would only be possible to come to an agreement "through the dispatch of both a German and an Italian personage to Greece, equipped with special full authority in the economic and financial sphere, who can work together, on the spot, in closest association with the Greek government, police, etc., and can enact unified measures with the full support of the executive occupation authorities."³² In late October 1942, the two Special Plenipotentiaries, Dr. Hermann Neubacher and his Italian colleague, Alberto D'Agostino,³³ ended talks in Rome and proceed to Greece. In agreement with D'Agostino, Neubacher abolished rationing, lifted price controls, and stopped all exports of foodstuffs from the country as well as purchases by the occupation forces.³⁴ He also demanded a cut in Wehrmacht expenditures.³⁵

B) Agreement with Logothetopoulos, December 1942

Neubacher's efforts to arrest inflation and reduce occupation costs were doomed to failure following the Allied landings in Morocco and Algeria in November 1942 and the defeat at Stalingrad (November 1942 - January 1943). Tsolakoglou foresaw that the Axis civil administration would not keep the upper hand for long in the formation of economic policies and in December 1942 resigned. Following a cabinet reshuffle in December 1942, Gotzamanes and the new Prime Minister, Professor Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, were induced by Altenburg and Neubacher to continue the payment of occupation costs. The March protocol was revised on December 2, 1942. According to the new agreement, which was supposed to stay in force until March 31, 1942, the Greek contribution, set at a billion and a half by the March agreement, would be monthly adjusted to the purchasing power of the drachma, but would not exceed a maximum of 8 billion (4 for each army) for occupation costs and 4 billion monthly (2 for each army) for billeting. To cover additional expenses, the two armies

²⁶ Gotzamanes intended purchases at fixed, lower prices and not at the exorbitant prices of the black market, which would reduce the costs of occupation and enable the state to tax retailers' excessive profits. Note Verbale no. 736/42/Nst/Lö, 6 June 1942, Greek Foreign Ministry Archive (A.Y.E.)/1942/Occupation Government (KK)/Oikonomika; and copy no. 6106/42 of a wire message from the German embassy in Rome, 9 July 1942, PA-AA, HaPol IVa Griechenland, Finanzwesen 16-1, vol. 8.

²⁷ Gotzamanes to the AA, memorandum, 20 Sept. 1942, HAETE, series XXXII, file 19.

²⁸ 5.75 billion drs. for the army, 19.35 for the navy, 4.9 for the airforce, 15 for services rendered to the Axis, and 8 for the Italians. Telegrams no. 3800 and no. 3818 of 4, 5 October 1942 from Clodius/Mackensen to Ribbentrop: PA-AA, Büro St.S., Griechenland, vol. 3, pp. 81487-93.

²⁹ Copy of *Schema di accordo italo-tedesco per la Grecia*, 8 Oct. 1942, ASUSSME, Carteggio del Ministero della Guerra - Gabinetto 1924-1945 (repertorio H-1), B 36, cartella 1 (1942). This agreement was never signed. See also Mackensen, telegram no. 3659, 25 Sept. 1942, PA-AA, HaPol Wiehl, Aufbaukosten Griechenland, pp. 468801-04, and WO Athen to the Wehrwirtschaftsamt/OKW, 15 Oct. 1942, BA-MA, RW 29/98.

³⁰ Clodius/Mackensen to Ribbentrop, telegram no. 3800, 4 Oct. 1942, PA-AA, Büro St.S., Griechenland, vol. 3, pp. 81487-89.

³¹ Despite inflationary developments in most parts of occupied Europe Germany kept the exchange rates constant since this was one of the professed claims of the "New Order". RWM Funk defended Hitler's opinion that for the above reason no change of the RM's parity to the devaluated currencies of the southeastern countries should take place. RFM von Krosigk, sceptical about the results of Neubacher's mission, favored a devaluation of the drachma. See von Krosigk to Funk, 28 Dec. 1942, BA, R 2/315, frames 104-105. To avoid a revision of the official exchange rates and a further depreciation of the Greek currency while at the same time stimulating exports, the Reich ministries of finances and of the national economy decided to form a monopoly company, the *Deutsch-Griechische Warenausgleichsgesellschaft*, Degriges, which together with the corresponding Italian firm *Società Anonima Commerciale Italo-Greca* (Sagic) would equalize import and export prices internally and effect a strict control of foreign trade prices with the aim of stimulating exports and reducing excessive profits on imports. See Hermann Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag Südost, 1940-1945. Bericht eines fliegenden Diplomaten* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1956), pp. 81-82.

³² ADAP, E, IV, no. 64, p. 107.

³³ D'Ajeta to Ghigi, telegram no. 254/1713 R, 22 Oct. 1942, ASDMAE, Serie Affari Politici, 1931-1945, Grecia, B 20. In May 1943 D'Agostino was replaced by Dr. Vincenzo Faggiuoli, president of the Soc. An. Mineraria Monte Amiata and of the Società Italiana per il Commercio Estero.

³⁴ Rationing of foodstuffs shipped to Greece under the auspices of the IRC remained in force. Prices of luxury items and of commodities important to the war effort remained also under control.

³⁵ WBfh. Süd-Griechenland, Special Order no. 393/42 g, BA-MA, RW 29/98.

demanded access to credits from the Bank of Greece, to be advanced upon request to an interest-free credit account (Sonderkonto).

3) Agreement between Germany, Italy, and Greece of January 25, 1943

The question of Greece's occupation costs reopened in January 1943. The Axis demanded the opening of a second interest-free account (Sonderkonto II). From January to March 1943, the Bank of Greece advanced an extra 20 billion drachmas per month (one third to the Italian and two thirds to the German forces).³⁶

During the first four months of 1943, funds from the two special accounts made possible the continuation of all major defense works in the Peloponnese, Crete, Lemnos and Salonica; the settlement of most debts the armed forces had accumulated at the closing of 1942; and a substantial pay increase for the troops.

4) Agreement between Germany, Italy, and Greece of May 18, 1943

The new collaboration government of Ioannes Ralles (April 1943-October 1944) accepted on May 18, 1943 the Axis revision of the December 2, 1942 agreement which had set 8 billion drachmas as the maximum monthly direct contribution of the Greek state to the Axis.³⁷ The new protocol did not set a limit to the amount the Axis could collect as occupation costs or a credits.

Background to the Agreement

In May 1943 the British had successfully diverted the attention of the OKW from Sicily as the principal target of an Anglo-American invasion and had caused them to focus on Greece. The Germans were making preparations to resist an Allied landing without Italian participation since, after the surrender of Axis forces in North Africa in May, not only the fighting value but the allegiance of the Italian troops had become questionable.³⁸ Troop augmentation and extensive fortification projects increased the demand for monthly Greek payments. German political and military pressure was brought to bear upon the new collaboration government of Ioannes Ralles (April 1943-October 1944) to accept a revision of the recent agreement which had set 8 billion drachmas as the maximum monthly direct contribution of the Greek state to the Axis.

In June, Axis occupation costs stood at 65 billion drachmas, i.e. 10 % of the notes in circulation. Without a continual flow of foodstuffs from the Reich Neubacher had no means of protecting the free market from the repercussion of an accelerating inflation. The situation deteriorated further after the landing of Anglo-American troops in Sicily. Of course the Germans realized that Operation Mincemeat had been a "ruse de guerre," but Hitler remained convinced that an assault on Greece was "increasingly possible."³⁹ In Directive No. 48 of 26 July, he ordered the defense of its entire coastline. Germany lacked sufficient resources to meet its simultaneous military commitments in the USSR, the Balkans, and the threatened Italian peninsula. The costs of the defensive preparations along the Aegean, Ionian, and Adriatic shores had thus to be covered by inflationary drachmas. Göring had ordered the construction of additional airfields in Greece and insisted that Ralles' government provide the required 6 million drachmas in gold.⁴⁰ Thus the collaboration regime was obliged in July to make payments of 67 billion drachmas to the Wehrmacht and of 40 billion to the Italians.⁴¹ Measures had to be taken to increase the daily printing capacity of the money press to 8-10 billion drachmas.

5) German Occupation Costs Policy After Italy's Withdrawal: Greek-German Agreement of October 1, 1943

In accordance with the German-Greek agreement of October 1, 1943, after the Italian surrender, Germany collected Italy's former share of direct occupation costs, loans, and billeting expenses.⁴² But the credits proved inadequate to support the expanded forces. Compared to 75,000 German soldiers stationed in Greece in March 1942 there were now 173,000 army, 13,700 SS, 58,000 air force, 29,000 navy, 18,000 Italian volunteers, and 54,695 Bulgarians stationed in the country.⁴³ The Reich could postpone the inevitable collapse of the Greek economy only through the sale of gold at the Greek stock market until August 1944.⁴⁴

³⁶ Neubacher/Altenburg to Ribbentrop, telegram no. 280, 26 Jan. 1943, PA-AA, Büro St.S., Griechenland, vol. 4, pp. 81763-66; and Nestler, *Finanzwesen*, pp. 89-90.

³⁷ Nestler, *Finanzwesen*, p. 170. The agreement of January 25, 1943 had not altered this stipulation.

³⁸ KTB/OKW, vol. 3, part 2, p. 1612.

³⁹ Luther Craig, "German Defensive Policy in the Balkans, a Case Study: The Buildup in Greece, 1943," *Balkan Studies* 23 (1982), pp. 414-15.

⁴⁰ Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag*, pp. 93-94.

⁴¹ Nestler to the RFM (Dr. Breyhan), *Lagebericht für Juli 1943*, 5 Aug. 1943, BA, R 2/310, frame 132. See also Fagioli to R. Guariglia, letter no. 3241, 30 July 1943, ASDMAE: Gabinetto, A.P. Ufficio Grecia, 1943, B 1.

⁴² Neubacher to Ralles, Note Verbale no. 5326-III-102-Nst/Lö, 25 Oct. 1943, printed in Nestler, "Finanzwesen," pp. 172, 117, 91. Part of this amount was used to cover the costs of the Bulgarian troops, which on 7 July 1943 had been allowed to occupy the rest of Greek Macedonia with the exception of Salonica.

⁴³ BA-MA, HGrE, 65023, 65024/2. Bulgarian soldiers stationed in the annexed Greek territories are not included.

⁴⁴ The Four Year Plan organization granted Neubacher four million RM in gold per month for the next half-year, which was sold at the bourse and the internal free market. The drachmas collected by this method financed in fall/winter 1943-44 between 16 to 72 % of the Wehrmacht's monthly expenses, giving a break to the printing presses. See Hahn, *Griechische Währung*, pp. 27-32, 39-40, and 50-59; and Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag*, pp. 87-90. With the exception of Greece and Albania, German gold as a means of currency stabilization and for the payment of clearing debts was used only in satellite countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, and the Protectorate. See Willi A. Boelcke,

The ruin caused by Axis economic policies in Greece is almost inconceivable. In addition to about 300,000 deaths due to hunger between 1941-1944, the loss of the national wealth was estimated at \$17,871 million.⁴⁵ Between April 1941 and October 1944 the note circulation had increased 68,457,984.76-fold, rendering the Greek drachma worthless.⁴⁶ In the postwar years subsequent Greek governments have rightly defended the view that Axis⁴⁷ commitment to paying back the remaining \$3.5 billion of the wartime credits was legally binding.⁴⁸ To date, there has not been a change in this position.

Gabriella Etmektzoglou

II. Damage and "compensation"

WW II and enemy occupation had wrecked the monetary and financial mechanisms of the country and disintegrated the administrative machinery. Even worse, it had caused a decrease (compared with normal development) estimated at about ten percent in the population of Greece – taking into consideration, apart from "regular" war casualties, the deaths from starvation, the resistance struggle and reprisals, the brutal murder of 60,000 Greek Jews (83% of the pre-war Jewish population), and a dramatic fall in the birth rate. According to neutral estimations, at least every third Greek suffered from infectious diseases (particularly malaria, tuberculosis and typhus); in some regions the percentage of people ill exceeded 50%, especially among children. Housing conditions were desperate. 423 villages and small towns had been burnt and destroyed entirely, and more than 3,000 others had been destroyed partly – leaving every fifth Greek homeless. Livestock had been reduced by more than half, agricultural production had declined sharply, over 80% of the rolling stock had been demolished or removed, 73% of (mercantile) shipping was sunk: Most bridges, port installations, and railways had been blown to pieces,⁴⁹ and the same was true for the infrastructure of Greece.⁵⁰

About 76% of the total losses of the country's national wealth was attributed to action by the German occupiers, an estimated loss of 10.45 billion (i.e. milliard) US dollars.⁵¹ "Direct war damage" in Greece was estimated at \$ 7.18 billion on the basis of 1938 levels. The economic staff of the British, French and US embassies in Athens recognized these calculations as remarkably "reasonable".⁵² At the Paris Conference on Reparations in late 1945, however, held to decide on the distribution of German reparations, the claims by the great powers mainly based on such categories as "contribution towards the total Allied war effort" and to the subsequent victory ("war expenditures, man-years spent in the armed forces, and war production") carried more weight than claims by the minor occupied countries based on sufferings, death, destruction, and resistance. Greece, in particular, objected to this reasoning and, as a result, Greece's small share of reparations, but eventually was persuaded to sign the Paris agreement. The assets, which Greece received through the "Inter-Allied Reparation Agency" during the subsequent years, amounted to 24 million dollars.⁵³

The London Debts Agreement (LDA), 1953, and its aftermath.

In the late 40s and early 50s the strategic importance of the Western German rump state increased as fast as the rising perception of the Communist threat. The USA, in particular, considered the newborn F.R.G. a bastion needing to be fortified materially and morally. One of the conditions for this was the "re-establishment of normal economic relations"⁵⁴ between West Germany and other countries, which required German readiness to meet its external debts within the framework of an international agreement. The scope of this agreement, however, was confined to post-war debts arising from the economic assistance furnished Germany by the three Western powers since May 1945 as well as to German pre-war debts, of which the lion's share was owed the same powers. Reparation-like claims were excluded in order not to jeopardize the stability of the F.R.G. However, the agreement did more than just exclude. After much discussion on details of formulation, its famous article 5,

Die Kosten von Hitlers Krieg (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1985), pp. 118-22.

45 Constantine Doxiadis, *Such was the War in Greece*. Series of Publications of the Department for Reconstruction, no. 9 (Athens 1947), p. 45.

46 (April 1941 = 100); See Hahn, *Die griechische Währung*, p. 41.

47 Italy paid reparations of \$105 million and ceded to Greece the Dodecanese islands, and Bulgaria's compensation was fixed at \$45 million. See U.S. Department of State, *Traité de Paix avec l'Italie* (Wash., D.C., 1947), vol. 1, pp. 1, 29, 99-103.

48 See, for example, Angelos Angelopoulos, *To Oikonomiko Provlima tis Ellados. These kai antimetopise* (Athens 1945), pp. 34-40; same author, *Oikonomika: Arthra kai Meletes 1946-1967* (Athens 1974), p. 34, pp. 188-210.

49 From 3 to 28 October 1944 only, the Wehrmacht blew up 52 major street bridges, 68 railway bridges, 42 railway stations, while 73 of the remaining train engines and 505 carriages were hurled over cliffs, in order to save explosives (BA-MA, Freiburg: Army Group E, Gen. der Pioniere, 31.10.44 geh.)

50 See, e.g., Conference sur les Reparations: Dossier remis par la Grèce. Paris 1945.

51 Greek memo 388 1/19.10.45, e.g. in Archives Diplomatiques Paris [AD], Europe 1944-60, Grèce, vol. 57).

52 "It might first of all be remarked that in the Embassies' opinion the Greek authorities have done a creditable job. [...] Broadly speaking, a genuine effort has evidently been made to keep the estimates of the damages and losses suffered within fairly reasonable limits." (Public Record Office [PRO], London: British Economic Adviser's Office, Athens, 1.12.1945; National Archives and Records Agency [NARA], US embassy Athens, 7.3.46).

53 Later on, after bilateral agreements with Athens in 1960/61, the Federal Republic of Germany [F.R.G.] "voluntarily" paid 115 million German marks to "compensate" a very limited category of war wrongs, i.e. meager payments to "Greek citizens who were victims of National Socialist persecution measures for reasons of race, religion, or ideology" as well as 4,8 million marks for German seizure of tobacco stocks during the occupation.

54 Agreement on German External Debts, App. A.

paragraph 2 determined that “considerations of claims arising out of the Second World War [...] shall be deferred until the final settlement of the problem of reparation.” This was done despite it being pointed out by smaller states that “the provision that these claims were to be deferred until the final settlement [...] meant that the Agreement did in fact deal with them although they were outside its scope.”⁵⁵

In fact, Anglo-American (in particular American) insistence on this formulation sought to protect the new German ally in this aspect, and both powers were satisfied that “time works in favor of Germans.”⁵⁶ Obviously, some kind of peace agreement with a reunited Germany was a necessary condition for any “final settlement” of the reparation issue - hardly before “the Greek Calends”, since this was not expected to happen under the prevailing circumstances of global polarization.

In 1990, when, against every expectation, the two German states began the process of unification, their governments made considerable effort and finally succeeded in avoiding the very “peace treaty” which had been considered a prerequisite for reaching the long overdue “final settlement” of the reparation issue. This current interpretation referred in part to another convention which the three Western powers and the Federal Republic of Germany had agreed on before the LDA.⁵⁷

However, the archives of the four major Western powers (including Germany) contain many records which leave no doubt that the LDA negotiators did not necessarily consider the settlement of war claims to require a peace treaty in its strict sense, but had a more general meaning in mind.⁵⁸

Clearly, the “2 and 4 agreement” between the (then) two German states and the four principal allies of the anti-Hitler-coalition *de facto* was nothing less than the “settlement” or “similar arrangement” asked for four decades before.

The difference between German occupation costs and the forced loan

German occupying authorities used an extreme interpretation of their “war expenses”, which they then inflicted upon occupied Greece. These “war expenses” far exceeded the “occupation costs” foreseen by international law, for they included “all expenses of the war waged within the occupied country or from this country.”⁵⁹ This included German operations in the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, as well as the occupation of Southern Albania, which was subordinate to the German high command in Greece. Of the costs within Greece, 50% or more of the Greek payments were used for fortifications and similar “construction projects”. In contrast to public German assertions that these projects were mainly for the purpose of “Greek reconstruction”, the final German report⁶⁰ admitted that no more than 1.2% were “in common German and Greek interest”. Even Hitler himself stressed the point that out of the Greek payments only “the smallest part was used for the costs of occupation” but for construction projects which were “of decisive importance for the African War”, i.e., in particular for the reinforcements and supplies for the German “Africa-Corps”.⁶¹

In the “Confidential Protocol” of March 14, 1942 high-ranking officials of the German and Italian foreign ministries had committed themselves to paying the “credit” back to the Athens government in installments and began doing so in 1943. Internal German communications constantly used terms such as “credit” and “Reichsverschuldung” (debt of the Reich). This was particularly important when, in early April 1945, the economic experts of the former German embassy in Athens submitted their voluminous final report on “Economic Administration in German-occupied Greece” to the Foreign Ministry (and the president of the Reichsbank), with the explicit indication “for future use”. In this report, they made serious efforts to calculate the German “debt towards Greece” which they finally estimated as equivalent to 476 million German marks.⁶²

Hence, Greek representatives were right when they stressed, at any given opportunity (e.g. the Paris Conference, the London Debts Agreement, post-1953 and post-1990 periods), that the forced loan extracted from Greece was not part of “regular” occupation costs and that the claim for repayment of that “loan” was different from claims for reparation. In addition, it should be stressed that all the revisions of the original German-Italian “Confidential Protocol” were agreed on with Greek participation (the Athens government recognized by the

55 PRO: Explanatory talks, 29.1.53 (Netherlands' representative).

56 NARA, State Department, 3 1.10.52. There is much similar evidence in German records.

57 However, the *Convention on the Settlement of Matters Arising out of the War and the Occupation* (Bonn, 26.5.52) was far from outspoken in this issue. See: Chapter 6, Art. 1: “The problem of reparation shall be settled by the peace treaty between Germany and its former enemies or by earlier agreements concerning this matter”. In addition, this convention was binding only for its four signatory states, not on the other states that signed the LDA.

58 During the negotiations, the parties involved referred likewise either to “the event of German unity being attained” or to a general “peace settlement”. Subsequently, after signing the LDA, the US delegation recapitulated in a summary to the State Department that “reparations and analogous claims relating to World War II should more appropriately be dealt with in the context of a peace treaty or similar arrangement, which is not feasible at the present time in view of existing world political conditions.” The leader of the German delegation, H.J. Abs, even went public with an almost identical statement. (Quotations from a forthcoming monograph by Hagen Fleischer, member of the Greek delegation.)

59 See Political Archives, Auswärtiges Amt [PA-AA], Bonn: E.g. conferences in the AA, 24.6.42, 28./29.9.42; Rintelen, 22.8.42 and, in retrospect, final report (Nestler), April 1945, p. 91.

60 Ibidem, p. 103. Characteristically, the German ambassador Altenburg and the special emissary Neubacher often complained about the huge amounts spent for “entirely meaningless” projects, to the grave detriment for the Greek currency and economy.

61 PA-AA, telegrams AA/St.S. 1065/4.9.42, 1140/20.9.42, and many others.

62 PA-AA, Nestler, pp. 106 ff.

Axis powers).⁶³ Even if this contractual obligation on the German side would be considered of limited strength, because of the anomalies of that period, repayment of an enforced “loan” has at least equal validity with the restitution of arbitrarily removed property.

Even the German Foreign Ministry top secret memo on “German unity and the reparations issue”, sent to all embassies abroad as a guide on how to counter any move to resume that very issue, admitted that, deriving from several German-Allied treaties, there still remained a German obligation for restitution of assets taken away during WW II.⁶⁴

Final remark

With one exception, the Bonn government responded to all war claims placed and substantiated after German unification by countries, which had signed the London Debt Agreement. These responses were made either by some kind of material compensation - for obvious reasons usually disguised as “humanitarian relief” or binational “foundations”- or, at least, by entering negotiations on the subject. The one exception is Greece.

Hagen Fleischer

63 These agreements had provided for readjustment according to inflation and hence referred to calculations in stabile currency.

64 Deutsche Einheit und Reparationsfrage”, Ortez Nr. 34/29.5.1990, 012-9-312.74 VS-MD, p. 10.