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## Eleftherios Venizelos, British Public Opinion and the Climax of Anglo-Hellenism (1915–1920)

**Abstract:** The paper analyses the construction of a more than favourable image of Eleftherios Venizelos in Britain in 1915–1920. Although Venizelos was highly praised and popular in Britain since at least 1913, his effort to bring Greece to the side of the Entente in 1915 made him exceptionally popular in Paris and particularly in London. Traditions of British philhellenism have been analysed, particularly the influence of two associations: the Hellenic Society founded in 1879 and, especially, the Anglo-Hellenic League established in 1913. The latter helped boost Venizelos's image in Britain, but it also paved the way for Anglo-Hellenism, the belief of some influential Britons that the fate of modern Greece is inseparably linked with Britain. *The Times* leaders/editorials and key articles on Venizelos in 1915–1920 have been analysed to demonstrate the level of support and admiration that Venizelos gradually attained. The role of Ronald Burrows and the group of experts around *The New Europe* is particularly analysed in terms of how the image of Venizelos and Venizelist Greece was constructed. The degree of admiration for Venizelos in Britain has been dealt with through a number of periodicals and newspapers published in Britain during the Great War and through Venizelos's biographies published in Britain with an aim to show how he became a widely respected super-celebrity. The views of leading British statesmen and opinion makers also indicate a quite high degree of identification with both Venizelos and Greek war aims in Britain in 1915–1920. The climax and the collapse of Anglo-Hellenism in 1919–20 are analysed at the end of the paper. When Venizelos lost the elections of November 1920, Anglo-Hellenism disappeared as a relevant factor in British politics, journalism and diplomacy.

**Keywords:** Eleftherios Venizelos, Ronald Burrows, Anglo-Hellenism, Anglo-Hellenic League, *The Times*

During the Great War the Kingdom of Greece was one of the small countries for which the British public showed great enthusiasm, especially in the period of 1915–1920. This kind of sympathies did not characterise the preceding period in which philhellenes were many but unable to dominantly shape British public opinion.

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What was Greece's image in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century? There were many influential philhellenes in Britain on the eve of the First World War, gathered particularly around the Hellenic Society, but there was also an opposite trend, especially observable in the works of David George Hogarth. Arnold Toynbee came to believe, in 1912, in "the soundness of racial prejudice" and began to "religiously preach mishellenism" to any philhellene he came across, although his real aversion to modern Hellenism arose only in 1920.<sup>1</sup>

Modern British philhellenism was at its peak in 1915–1920. What was peculiar about this phenomenon was that it did not come as a result of affection for a modern Greek writer or an artist, but for a politician. The politician was Eleftherios Venizelos. His political rise was meteoric. In August 1910, he entered the Hellenic Parliament, in October, he was prime minister of Greece. He immediately enforced new elections and in December 1910 won a landslide victory having secured 307 out of 362 seats in the Hellenic Parliament, as head of a new party – the Liberal Party.<sup>2</sup> From then on, he remained an unavoidable factor in Greek politics. He headed Hellenic governments six times (Oct. 1910 – Mar. 1915; 23 Aug. – 5 Oct. 1915; June – 20 Nov. 1917; 24 Jan. – 19 Feb. 1924; July 1928 – May 1932; and Jan. – Mar. 1933).

Although he demonstrated no bellicose inclinations whatsoever on the eve of the Balkan Wars, once the Great War proved to be a world conflict Venizelos looked for a chance to bring the Hellenic Kingdom into the war on the side of the Entente. This, naturally, made him popular in London and Paris. He had already been noticed and highly praised for his integrity during the London Conference of 1913. When the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers in November 1914, the Entente was compelled to strike back by launching, in February 1915, the Dardanelles Expedition. This encouraged Venizelos to attempt to bring Greece into the war. The opposition he met from King Constantine resulted in his resignation on 6 March 1915.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1915, however, Venizelos won the parliamentary election, taking 184 out of 317 seats, and was back in power before the end of August. How good his reputation was in Britain at that time may be seen from the cartoon "The Return of Ulysses" published in the *Punch* of 23 June 1915 in which he was depicted as a new Odysseus. Upon Bulgaria's entry into the war, Venizelos de-

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Richard Clogg, "The British School at Athens and the Modern History of Greece", *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 10 (1993), 95.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Gardikas Katsiadakis, "Venizelos's Advent in Greek Politics, 1909-1912", in P. Kitromilides, ed., *Eleftherios Venizelos: the Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 99–100.

<sup>3</sup> See Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85; N. Petsalis Diomidis, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference (1919)* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1978), 34.

cided that the 1913 Military Agreement with Serbia became enforceable. King Constantine, however, considered that Greece was under no obligation to Serbia since a world war was in progress, and the Agreement of 1913 could not have envisaged such a course of events. Faced with the resistance not only of the King but also of the General Staff, by early October Venizelos had decided to resign again, which caused dissatisfaction in the Entente camp.

The most important consequence of the dispute between Venizelos and King Constantine was that the Allies accepted his suggestion to send in troops, and their disembarkation near Salonika began on 3 October 1915. That was the basis for the subsequent Salonika or Macedonian Front.

### *Venizelos, British pro-Hellenic sentiments and the Anglo-Hellenic League*

Pro-Hellenic societies had substantial pre-WWI traditions in Britain. On 16 June 1879, the Hellenic Society was formed at Freemason's Tavern in London. It had 112 original members and additional fifty who joined at the founding meeting. Although it was a society interested in Hellenic antiquities, it also promoted modern Greece. Among the Society's five aims number 2 and 3 were: "(2) To be a medium for the publication of Memoirs on all things Greek, both ancient and modern. (3) To promote the study of the ancient and modern Greek language and literature."<sup>4</sup> The first governing body of the Society elected in January 1880 included the Bishop of Durham as its president, the Earl of Morley, J. Gennadios and the Master of Trinity College among its vice-presidents. Among its Council's members were a bishop, several clergymen and Oxbridge professors, four MPs, including A. J. Balfour, and Oscar Wilde.<sup>5</sup> Among forty-three officers of the Society only one was ethnic Greek: J. Gennadios. The Society supported very much the establishment of the British School at Athens in 1886, and later.

At least since the time of Byron there was a line in British public opinion that connected ancient with modern Hellenes, and the same was the case in other European countries. During the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s Western publics sympathised with the Greek rebels, and they were joined by 1,100 foreign volunteers. Among them more than a hundred were Brits, and at least twenty-one of them lost their lives.<sup>6</sup> Arnold Toynbee aptly summarised the connection of modern Western civilisation with ancient Hellas:

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<sup>4</sup> George A. MacMillan, "An Outline of the History of the Hellenic Society", Part 1, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 49/2 (1929), ii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* iv.

<sup>6</sup> William St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free. The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (London: OUP, 1972), 355–356.

That portion of contemporary humanity which inhabits Western Europe and America constitutes a specific society, for which the most convenient name is 'Western Civilization', and this society has a relationship with Ancient Greek society which other contemporary societies – for instance, those of Islam, India, and China – have not. It is its child.<sup>7</sup>

This kind of perception was certainly not restricted to Britain. Cultural elites in other centres of Western civilisation (Munich, Vienna, Berlin, Paris or Washington) felt the same way since the age of Classicism. What gave additional flavour to British identification with Hellas was the Oxbridge system of education with very developed classical studies and very wide knowledge of Homer, Thucydides and Plutarch among its students. To identify with modern Hellenism was therefore not theoretically too difficult. What prevented this to happen between the 1830s and 1880 was Britain's Turkophile policy. Once it was abandoned, after Gladstone's electoral victory in 1880, there was more understanding in Britain for Greece and other Balkan Christian states and increasingly less for the Ottoman Empire. The very establishment of the Hellenic Society came just after the Agitation, a movement in British society that identified with the liberation of Balkan Christians and against the positions of the Disraeli government, which had been in office in 1876–1880.

A part of the same stream was the Anglo-Hellenic League. In 1963, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Anglo-Hellenic League, Sir Steven Runciman properly echoed feelings of British philhellenes: "For many centuries, even before the days of Lord Byron, the British have felt a special sympathy and debt to Greece, the mother of our civilization and the inspiration of our poets."<sup>8</sup> The League was an important pro-Hellenic association which was to play a major role in the pro-Hellenic and pro-Venizelist propaganda efforts during the Great War. It was founded in 1913 in London. Its main initiator was Ronald M. Burrows (1867–1920), principal of King's College London in 1913–1920. In this capacity Burrows "became powerhouse of academic propaganda in favour of national self-determination for the peoples of Eastern Europe."<sup>9</sup> The League whose aim was to defend the "just claims and honour of Greece" assisted in boosting a wave of Hellenophilia that developed in Britain during the Great War.

To change Greece's image one needed to personalise it. Burrows and other British philhellenes found a hero symbolising both ancient Hellas and modern Greece who was suitable for being presented to the British public. He

<sup>7</sup> Arnold Toynbee, "History", in R. W. Livingstone, ed., *The Legacy of Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 289.

<sup>8</sup> Sir Steven Runciman, "Foreword", in *Views of Greece* by James Skene (London: Anglo-Hellenic League, 1963), 3. In 1962 the League had about 500 members.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Clogg, "Politics and the Academy: Arnold Toynbee and the Koraeas Chair", *Middle Eastern Studies* 21/4 (Oct. 1985), 3.

was Eleftherios Venizelos. His participation at the London Conference in 1913 earned him a good reputation and provided him with the opportunity to establish good connections in Britain. His personality and diplomatic abilities were noticed both by British statesmen and by other Balkan politicians and diplomats. Chedomille Miyatovich/Čedomilj Mijatović, who joined the Serbian delegation semiofficially, observed:

Of all the Balkan delegates, Greece's first delegate, Mr. Venizelos, made the best impression in diplomatic circles and in London Society. He looked a born gentleman, of fine manners, consideration for others, dignified, yet natural and simple.<sup>10</sup>

Some British journalists were equally impressed:

I recall that famous dinner given to the Balkan delegates in London in the midst of the First Balkan War when all our hopes were so high and I remember how the personality of the man [Venizelos] stood out from the commonplace figures of his colleagues.<sup>11</sup>

How high was Burrows's esteem for Venizelos may be seen from his poem in 42 lines entitled "Song of the Hellenes to Veniselos the Cretan", published in *Manchester University Magazine in January 1913*. The song was prompted by the First Balkan War, the liberation of Aegean Greek islands and the entry of Greek army into Salonika:

Veniselos, Veniselos,  
Do not fail us! Do not fail us!  
Now is come for thee the hour,  
To show forth thy master power.  
Lord of all Hellenic men,  
Make our country great again.<sup>12</sup>

At the end of the song Burrows likened Venizelos to Pericles:

Great in war and great in peace,  
Thou art second Pericles!<sup>13</sup>

The Anglo-Hellenic League was focused primarily on British Greeks. Ever since its inception in 1913, one of the leading things that the Anglo-Hellenic League was doing was actually promoting Venizelos in Britain. Between 1913 and the end of 1918 the Anglo-Hellenic League published 37 pamphlets

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<sup>10</sup> Chedomille Mijatovich, *The Memoirs of a Balkan Diplomatist* (Cassel and Co., 1917), 237.

<sup>11</sup> A. G. G., "M. Venizelos and his Conflict with the King", *The Daily News and Leader*, 17 Apr. 1915.

<sup>12</sup> George Glasgow, *Ronald Burrows: A Memoir* (London: Nesbit & Co., 1924), 161.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 162.

and in most of them Venizelos was mentioned and celebrated and four of them were exclusively dedicated to Venizelos.<sup>14</sup>

The Anglo-Hellenic League defined its five aims in Article 3 of its rules:

- 1) To defend just claims and honour of Greece.
- 2) To remove existing prejudices and prevent future misunderstanding between the British and Hellenic races, as well as between the Hellenic and other races of South Eastern Europe.
- 3) To spread information concerning Greece and stimulate rest in Hellenic matters.
- 4) To improve the social, educational, commercial and political relations of the two countries.
- 4) To promote travel in Greece and secure improved facilities for it.<sup>15</sup>

Burrows offered the shortest possible definition of the League's goals, calling it "a fighting society of keen friends of Greece" in a letter written in April 1919.<sup>16</sup>

A list of officers of the League from 1915 indicates that the patron of the League was Prince Nicholas of Greece, its chairman William Pember Reeves, director of the London School of Economics, and among members of the Executive Committee were, in addition to Reeves, Dr. Ronald Burrows, Principal of King's College, and Prof. Gilbert Murray of the University of Oxford. In the very process of the League's establishment main initiators were also two Anglo-Hellenes, D. J. Cassavetti and A. C. Ionides. The League had a special branch in Athens, established in December 1914,<sup>17</sup> and a Ladies Committee. The list of the League's members published in 1915 takes up sixteen and a half pages containing 613 names, including 36 life members who paid subscription for this distinction in the amount of 10 pounds.<sup>18</sup> The next list published for 1916 covers 577 members, including Arnold Toynbee.<sup>19</sup> By the end of the war the number of members remained stable (580), with some new prominent members such as Sir Arthur Evans.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Pamphlets of the Anglo-Hellenic League: Pamphlet no. 19, "Eleftherios Venizelos and English Public Opinion" (1915), 29 p.; no. 28, "Speech of Mr. E. Venizelos to the people delivered in Athens on Sunday, August 27, 1915 [Greek and English]" (1916), 15 p.; no. 30, "Venizelos and his fellow countrymen, by P. N. Ure" (1917), 14+1 p.; and no. 35, "England's Welcome to Venizelos" (1917), 20 p.

<sup>15</sup> Rules of the Anglo-Hellenic League, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Richard Clogg, "The 'Ingenious Enthusiasm' of Dr. Burrows and the 'Unsatiated Hatred' of Professor Toynbee", *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook IX* (1993), 79.

<sup>17</sup> Statutes of the Anglo-Hellenic League. Athens Branch, 1914.

<sup>18</sup> The Anglo-Hellenic League. List of Members, 1915, 1-17. Rules of the Anglo-Hellenic League (s. l., s. a.), 7 p.

<sup>19</sup> The Anglo-Hellenic League. List of Members, 1916, 1-16.

<sup>20</sup> The Anglo-Hellenic League. List of Members, 1919, 1-18.

The League's members were mostly British Greeks. Among 36 life members in 1915 one finds the most prominent Greek families in the Isles including: Calvocoressi, Embricos, Eumorfopoulos, Ionides, Pallis and Ralli. Greeks from Greece accounted for only about two per cent of the membership. The fact that the League was very much an organisation of Greek diaspora in Britain was not something that boosted its influence. It, however, strengthened the claims that Greeks overwhelmingly supported Venizelos. If the most influential British Greeks supported overwhelmingly Venizelos, then the claim of Burrows and *The Times* that most of Greeks in Greece did the same persistently during the Great War seemed very plausible. The League served to support the rising star of Venizelos. But his star was not created by the League. It emerged as a sentimental response based on long traditions of classical scholarship in Britain, but also from the need to personalise the allies.

Unavoidable British comparisons between the modern Greeks and the Hellenes did not always produce very favourable results for the former. Ancient Roman satirical writers produced a comic version of Greeks, the so-called *graeculi* (little Greeks), an image that was still in the air on the eve of the Great War and occasionally (mis)used by comparing the modern with the ancient Hellenes.<sup>21</sup> Venizelos, however, could easily be imagined as a modern copy of Odysseus, and had a typically Hellenic beard known to British admirers of antiquity from the busts of the Antonine era. His manners and education were within the best standards of Victorian England and he himself displayed Anglophile sentiments. Taken together his physical appearance, his way of conduct and manners, and his openly displayed Anglophilia, made an excellent combination for the creation of his public image in Britain. Through the activities of the Anglo-Hellenic League as a kind of his PR agency, his positive image was easily strengthened and disseminated in the British press.<sup>22</sup>

The membership of the League was mostly Greek, but its British members were quite influential and it was them that launched something that could be termed Anglo-Hellenism: the belief that the fate of modern Greece was inseparably tied to England and that England had a mission to support the revival of modern Hellenism. During the Great War, when the activities of the League and of *The New Europe* magazine overlapped, Anglo-Hellenism influenced this

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<sup>21</sup> See e.g. D. G. Hogarth, "The Eastern Mind", *The Monthly Review* 15 (Apr. 1904), 113–128. David G. Hogarth, *A Wandering Scholar in the Levant* (London: John Murray, 1896). In the latter text (p. 191) Hogarth compares the Greek Cypriots with the ancient Hellenes and finds them to be similar to *graeculi* who passed down "the road of racial decay these two thousand years."

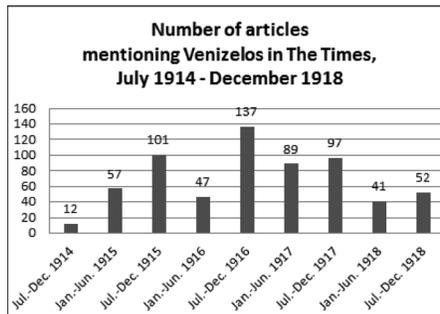
<sup>22</sup> Slobodan G. Markovich, "Anglophiles in Balkan Christian States (1862–1920)", *Balkanica* XL (2009), 127.

weekly as well. This meant that several relevant opinion and even decision makers got imbued with the spirit of Anglo-Hellenism.

### *The Times* on Venizelos

The leading British quality daily played a very important role in the establishment of an excellent image of Venizelos in Britain. The Cretan had been known to the readers of *The Times* at least since 1901, when the newspaper began reporting on his Cretan activities. The Times Digital Archive records that by the end of June 1914 the London daily had mentioned him in at least 406 articles.<sup>23</sup> Between July 1914 and the end of 1918 Venizelos was mentioned in additional 633 different articles in *The Times*. In terms of quality rather than quantity, he was mentioned twenty-nine times in leaders and editorials, all of which depicted him in superlatives in the period between March 1915, when he was mentioned for the first time in a leader during the Great War, and the end of the war, and in some twenty letters mostly written by members of the Anglo-Hellenic League, particularly by Burrows and Sir Arthur Evans.

As early as 1901 *The Times* mentioned Venizelos as “a man of remarkable ability”.<sup>24</sup> When in December 1910 he won elections for the Revisionary Chamber, J. D. Bouchier, correspondent of *The Times*, called him “master of the situation in Greece”, and noticed that he was welcomed “as the saviour, the regenerator of Greece, and has even been compared with the long expected Messiah”, concluding that a “gigantic task” was laid “before the Cretan Hercules”.<sup>25</sup>



<sup>23</sup> Using four different spellings: usually Venizelos, less frequently Venizelos, three times as Venezelo, and only once as Veniselos. The numbers of articles mentioning Venizelos in *The Times* in the chart contain all four spellings. This number is not the same as the actual number of articles, which is higher. This is due to the system of optic character recognition which is still not fully efficient for articles from the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. The same goes for the British Newspapers Archives.

<sup>24</sup> “Crete”, *The Times*, 5 Apr. 1901, p. 3 e.

<sup>25</sup> “M. Venizelos” (From Our Correspondent in the Balkan Peninsula), *The Times*, 13 Dec. 1910, 5.

However, special interest in Venizelos developed, as the chart above suggests, only in the winter of 1915, with the Dardanelles Expedition. Venizelos's readiness to enter the war on the side of the Entente made him very popular in Britain. When he failed to do that, he resigned, and *The Times* was disappointed at the downfall of "the great Minister who saved the country and the Monarchy five years ago", but concluded: "all the news available tends to show that Mr. Venizelos will be supported by the whole force of national opinion."<sup>26</sup> The question that then appeared was what his next move would be. In April, a leader in *The Times* encouraged his re-activation: "The character and the history of the only great statesman whom modern Greece has yet produced forbid us to imagine that he can prefer his own tranquillity and ease to the public good", and expressed hopes that in the coming elections "the nation whom he has saved" would "reaffirm the confidence they showed him in the great constitutional crisis of 1910."<sup>27</sup> The previous analysis was confirmed by William Knight's letter to the editor informing the readers that the late King of the Greeks George likened Venizelos to Pericles.<sup>28</sup>

The Greek elections held in June 1915 were followed with huge attention. One should bear in mind that *The Times* had appreciation for King Constantine and just before elections it stated in its leader: "King Constantine, it need hardly be said, understands the duties and the position of a Constitutional Monarch in a highly democratic State too well not to bow to the considered will of the country."<sup>29</sup> When the news appeared that Venizelos won another landslide victory, satisfaction was openly displayed: "For Great Britain and her Allies the chief cause for satisfaction lies in the knowledge that the destinies of Hellenic people will again be controlled, in so far as any one man can control them, by an experienced patriot of proved ability and farsightedness."<sup>30</sup> He was called "a statesman with insight into the real issues of the European struggle", as someone who will work for Greece "and for Europe".<sup>31</sup>

Venizelos took up the position of Prime Minister of Greece again in August 1915. In early October a new conflict with King Constantine emerged. On 4 October, Venizelos addressed the Hellenic Parliament and said that Greece might automatically implement the stipulations of its military alliance with Serbia from 1913 "without any necessity for waiting a declaration of war by

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<sup>26</sup> "The Crisis in Greece", *The Times*, 10 Mar. 1915, 11.

<sup>27</sup> "M. Venizelos in Retirement", *The Times*, 10 Apr. 1915, 9.

<sup>28</sup> "M. Venizelos", *The Times*, 13 Apr. 1915, 9.

<sup>29</sup> "The Greek Elections", *The Times*, 14 June 1915, 9.

<sup>30</sup> "The Decision of Greece", *The Times*, 17 June 1915, 9.

<sup>31</sup> "M. Venizelos and his Rivals", *The Times*, 22 June 1915, 9.

the Central Powers in accordance with the precedent set by Italy".<sup>32</sup> His pro-Entente attitude encouraged France and Britain to begin the landing of Allied troops at Salonika, although Venizelos made a formal protest. His resignation on 6 October 1915 prompted the London daily to publish his character sketch of a man "of irresistible charm in conversation". He "wielded a personal influence that went far to secure recognition for his high moral character and steadfastness of purpose". Yet, a man of such qualities was forced to resign, and *The Times* claimed in a rather worried tone that the sequel could show if his patriotic efforts would "remain solely as an isolated episode to remind future generations of Hellenes what their country might have been".<sup>33</sup>

In early November *The Times* summarised the situation in Greece where King Constantine had "twice over baffled British diplomacy and compromised British military schemes", and assessed it as notorious that "in Greece, as in other Balkan kingdoms, Governments depend more on the Sovereign than on the Parliament."<sup>34</sup> In December both King Constantine and Venizelos addressed the British public. On 5 December 1915, special correspondent of *The Times* had an audience with King Constantine who gave him an interview.<sup>35</sup> Two days after the publication of the interview Venizelos also gave an interview to the same correspondent.<sup>36</sup> Reaction of *The Times*, published at the same page with Venizelos's reply, indicated that the Greek king was still held in esteem in Britain, and the British daily somewhat naively put a question: "If Sovereign and statesman can collaborate in contributing to our columns important declarations upon the position and policy of their common country, is it too much to hope that they may even now find some way to work together for the welfare of the Hellenic cause, which we believe them, each in his separate way, to have equally at heart?"<sup>37</sup>

It became obvious very soon that there would be no joint policy of the Greek king and Venizelos. In April 1916, *The Times* mentioned "renewed activity of the Venizelists".<sup>38</sup> It also reported that the new organ of the Liberal Party *Kirix* reached "an unprecedented circulation for Athens".<sup>39</sup> The surrender of strategically important Fort Rupel to the Bulgarians on 26 May 1916 provoked

<sup>32</sup> "Allied Troops at Salonika", *The Times*, 6 Oct. 1915, 9.

<sup>33</sup> "M. Venizelos. A Character Sketch", *The Times*, 7 Oct. 1915, 11.

<sup>34</sup> "A Deplorable Ambiguity", *The Times*, 4 Nov. 1915, 9.

<sup>35</sup> "Attitude of Greece. The King on his Policy. Special statement to *The Times*", *The Times*, 7 Dec. 1915, 9.

<sup>36</sup> "M. Venizelos. A reply to King Constantine", *The Times*, 11 Dec. 1915, 9.

<sup>37</sup> "King Constantine and M. Venizelos", *The Times*, 11 Dec. 1915, 9.

<sup>38</sup> "M. Venizelos's Return to Public Life", *The Times*, 21 Apr. 1916, 3.

<sup>39</sup> "Late War News. A Venizelist Campaign", *The Times*, 4 Apr. 1916, 7.

the blockade of Greek ports by the Entente and the Greeks were warned: "Their friends in the West may only hope that they will weigh well the consequences of their decision before it is too late."<sup>40</sup> Relations to the King cooled in June when a "significant incident" was reported. On that occasion rioters in Athens attacked Venizelists and their newspapers and Greek secret police attacked an employee of the British Legation in Athens.<sup>41</sup>

In late August 1916, *The Times* reported on "Great Athens Protest Meeting" against the Bulgarian invasion, and it offered a chance to Venizelos to address the protesters and to repeat his pro-Entente positions and as it was reported his appearance provoked "a tremendous outburst of cheering."<sup>42</sup> Several days later correspondent of *The Times* for the Balkans expressed hopes that Romania's entry into the war on the side of the Entente lent "confidence to the party of M. Venizelos", and that it would "hasten the inevitable participation of that country in the war on the side of the Entente."<sup>43</sup> It is characteristic of Venizelos that just before leaving Athens with Admiral Condouriotis to lead the movement that would secure Greece's alliance with Britain, France and other allies, he sent a special message to the British public through *The Times*. The newspaper called the message "a supreme appeal". It was actually a statement written by Venizelos and given to "the well informed correspondent at Athens" who had already been known for his pro-Venizelist stance. In the statement he wrote:

It has long been known that my policy as head of the Liberal Party aimed at the intervention of Greece on the side of the Entente Powers against their attacking enemies. I have always maintained that the interests and fortunes of Greece were dependent upon her traditional friendship with the Entente Powers.

Then he repeated the history of his efforts to bring Greece into the war, mentioned the betrayal of Kavala and the loss "of the greater part of Greek Macedonia", and claimed that he urged the king to rescue his country and even offered to retire. Obviously aware of the deep distrust in Britain of antimonarchical and revolutionary movements, he insisted: "Do not think that I am heading a revolution in the ordinary sense of the word. The movement now beginning is in no way directed against the King or the Dynasty." He tried to assure the British public that everything was to induce the King to "come forth as King of the Hellenes" and, once he had done it, "all of us, shall be only too glad and ready at once to follow his Flag as loyal citizens..." At the end of the statement he revealed the real purpose of this "supreme appeal": "I feel sure that we may count on the

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<sup>40</sup> "The Bulgarians in Greece", *The Times*, 30 May 1916, 7.

<sup>41</sup> "A Significant Incident", *The Times*, 16 June 1916, 9.

<sup>42</sup> "King Constantine's Policy. Great Athens Protest Meeting", *The Times*, 30 Aug. 1916, 6.

<sup>43</sup> From Our Correspondent in the Balkan Peninsula, "Nearing a Climax in the Balkans", *The Times*, 5 Sep. 1916, 9.

sympathy and good will of the free English people towards us in the mission we are setting out to accomplish.”<sup>44</sup>

The next day *The Times* published Reuter’s news from Canea (Chania) in Crete about the Proclamation of the Provisional Government by Venizelos and Condouriotis.<sup>45</sup> Some ten days later G. Ward Price informed the readers of the leading London daily that Venizelos arrived in Salonika, that the crowd shouted “zito” (“long live”), and that “M. Venizelos was engulfed by his admiring fellow-citizens directly he landed, and he was borne along in the heart of the jostling throng”.<sup>46</sup> On 21 November, four weeks after the first message of Venizelos, *The Times* published another one in which it called the Greek statesman “leader of the National Defence movement”. In this second statement Venizelos thanked the Allies and expressed his “sincere gratitude to the Allied Press and peoples who have been so ready with their keen and sympathetic support of our national struggle”. Again he was careful not to make impression of any anti-dynastic policy. At the end of the letter he defined Greece’s national aims:

We wish to fight of our national interests side by side with our natural and traditional friends.

We wish to make good, as far as we can, the harm that we did to heroic Serbia by the nonfulfillment of our obligations.

We wish finally to ensure in the future the right to be a free people, the masters of our own destinies.

In a word, we are struggling for precisely those principles, for the triumph of which over Prussian militarism the Allied Powers are waging their great war.

Venizelos’s message ended with an appeal to the great powers to grant Greece “that material and moral support of which we are in need to enable us to bring our struggle to a successful conclusion”.<sup>47</sup>

Britain and British opinion makers found themselves in an awkward position. Since March 1915 they had campaigned for Venizelos to be head of government, but of the government in Athens. Instead they got him as the head of a government in Salonika that gathered pro-Allied Greek officers and politicians, but who were all hostile to the official government in Athens, the only one in Greece that Britain officially recognised. This duality could not last long.

On 1 and 2 December 1916, incidents with casualties took place in Athens when Allied troops disembarked upon the refusal of the Athens government to accept the ultimatum of French Admiral Dartige du Fournet. Even a century later it is not easy to know what exactly happened on the ground in central Athens. For the purposes of this text it is not of prime importance who deceived

<sup>44</sup> “M. Venizelos. Message to The Times. A Supreme Appeal”, *The Times*, 27 Sep. 1916, 9.

<sup>45</sup> “Greek Provisional Government”, *The Times*, 29 Sep. 1916, 6.

<sup>46</sup> G. Ward Price, “M. Venizelos’s Arrival at Salonika”, *The Times*, 11 Oct. 1916, 8.

<sup>47</sup> “M. Venizelos”, *The Times*, 21 Nov. 1916, 9.

whom and who provoked the shooting around the Zappeion. What is more important is how the events in Athens were perceived in the Entente capitals. The events of 1 and 2 December were described as “treacherous attacks made by King Constantine’s troops”.<sup>48</sup> They were seen in such light by all the sections of British public opinion, “and the last vestiges of respect” for the Greek king were destroyed in London and Paris.<sup>49</sup> *The Times* later summarised the events as they were seen in Britain: “Dec. 1, 1916. – Allied troops landed at Athens fired on by King Constantine’s troops; several killed. Reign of terror at Athens. Venizelists tortured.”<sup>50</sup>

Burrows was very explicit after the events of 1 and 2 December, offering his answer to the question, “What should we do?” He demanded, first, that the Isthmus of Corinth be seized, second, that all of Greece north of the Peloponnesus be evacuated by the Athens government, and third: “to recall Venizelos to Athens, with or without a Regency, and to acknowledge his government fully and absolutely as a Sovereign Power.”<sup>51</sup>

In December 1916 the friends of Hellas, in a letter to *The Times*, demanded action in favour of Venizelos, essentially the dethronement of King Constantine. Their letter appeared ten days after the formation of the new British government headed by David Lloyd George. It was signed by Lord Cromer and nine scholars, who apologised for not passing it on to be signed by other scholars due to the urgency of the situation. Among the signatories were Ronald Burrows, J. B. Burry, Arthur Evans and James Frazer. It starts in a sentimental vein: “We, whose love of Greece, is founded in gratitude for all that Europe owes to Greek literature, art, and history...” That lyrical introduction is followed by a clear political programme defined for Greece. To them, Venizelos “represents the views and wishes of a sound majority of the Greek people at home and abroad. We have therefore sympathised most keenly with him, as patriot and statesman, in his heroic endeavour to maintain the leadership, rightfully his, in face of a Court cabal... We feel the strongest indignation and disgust at the barbarity with which his followers have been maltreated.” Since the king and his advisors “have sinned beyond reparation... the Protecting Powers should take the one course which justice, honour, and prudence alike dictate, of insisting on such changes in the political arrangements of Greece as shall once more place the direction of affairs in the hands of M. Venizelos.”<sup>52</sup> This was an appeal of crucial importance. It was not Venizelos that demanded his own reinstatement or

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<sup>48</sup> “Another Note to King Constantine”, *The Times*, 2 Jan. 1917, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Alan Palmer, *The Gardeners of Salonika* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965), 106.

<sup>50</sup> “End of Greek Crisis”, *The Times*, 13 June 1917, 7. For a more balanced view see Palmer, *Gardeners of Salonika*, 104–107.

<sup>51</sup> Ronald M. Burrows, “The Greek Rebuff”, *The Times*, 4 Dec. 1916, 10.

<sup>52</sup> Letter to the Editor, “M. Venizelos and Great Britain”, *The Times*, 16 Dec. 1916, 8 e.

Constantine's dethronement. Very respected Brits who enjoyed the reputation of regional experts asked for it. From that moment the removal of the Greek king was not a less than polite suggestion in Britain, but rather something that could be championed openly.

A *de facto* recognition of Venizelos's provisional government by Lloyd George followed only three days later, and *The Times* leader was quick to support the prime minister emphasising that it was "the best step that could have been taken, and the one most closely in accordance with public feeling in this country",<sup>53</sup>

Prior to the recognition, Ronald Burrows acted as Venizelos's public relations officer. He persistently supplied the British press, particularly *The Times*, with details from the cables he received from Venizelos and was instrumental in creating the atmosphere in Britain that the situation in Greece was critical and that all pro-Entente action would be ruined unless the Allies took immediate action in Greece on behalf of Venizelos. "Two cables have just reached me from M. Venizelos", or "I had just had a cable from Mr. Venizelos" were typical phrases in Burrows's letters and in that way he created the impression in the British public that he was the best informed person in the world on what was happening not only with Venizelos but with the whole Venizelist movement in Greece. As his biographer G. Glasgow noticed: "those cables were sent almost daily from the beginning of Venizelos's revolutionary movement in 1915 till the settlement of the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres just before Burrows died."<sup>54</sup>

Unsurprisingly, when Venizelos's Provisional Greek Government was established in Salonika, Burrows was asked to become a "semi-official representative" of Venizelos in London, the "logical outcome of an already existing situation".<sup>55</sup> He indeed was an unofficial representative of Venizelist Greece in Britain from October 1915 until at least December 1916, when the official diplomatic envoy of the Hellenic Kingdom in London, Joannes Gannadios, submitted his resignation to join the Venizelist camp.<sup>56</sup>

For Burrows the *de facto* recognition of the Provisional Government was only the beginning of his activities. He wanted to see Venizelos as prime minister back in Athens already in his letter of 4 December 1916. In the spring of 1917 he informed the British public about the activities of the royalist government with a clear aim to encourage Britain to depose the king. On 5 May he

<sup>53</sup> Editorials, "The Allies and M. Venizelos", 20 Dec. 1916, 9 b.

<sup>54</sup> Glasgow, Ronald Burrows, 237. Burrows died in May 1920, a few months before the Treaty of Sèvres was signed (10 August), but just after the San Remo conference in April 1920.

<sup>55</sup> Clogg, "The 'Ingenious Enthusiasm' of Dr. Burrows", 81; Glasgow, Ronald Burrows, 238.

<sup>56</sup> "M. Gennadius Resigns", *The Times*, 5 Dec. 1916, 8. Cf. Donald M. Nicol, Joannes Gannadios – The Man. A biographical sketch (Athens: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1990), 21–22.

warned: "bands of irregulars, organized and financed by the Royalist Party, terrorize Thessaly, and threaten our line of communication." Therefore, he championed "a drastic solution of the Greek question". He insisted: "Popular feeling in both England and France is overwhelmingly strong against the King. There is, indeed, no one living man who has done so much to check and thwart our plans." He also urged that all twenty torpedo boats taken from the Athens government be given to Venizelos.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, Constantine fell in June 1917 and left Greece for Switzerland. *The Times* was happy to inform its readers in its editorial that the new king, Alexander, Constantine's son, was understood "to be free from the Potsdam conceptions of monarchy". As far as the Protecting Powers (Britain, France and Russia) were concerned, *The Times* was confident that: "a statesman with a large views and the devoted patriotism of M. Venizelos will gladly work with them and with the new king for the unity and the liberty of the Greek nation."<sup>58</sup> When Venizelos arrived in Athens, *The Times* enthusiastically reported on the impression he had made on his supporters. People of Piraeus came out into the streets to greet their leader and "scenes of almost religious enthusiasm which M. Venizelos always evokes were renewed".<sup>59</sup>

### *Lloyd George's Hellenophilia and England's welcome to Venizelos*

Positions of Burrows and Venizelos were strengthened when a British Hellenophile, David Lloyd George, took the office of prime minister on 6 December 1916. He remained in office until October 1922, throughout the period of crucial events for Greece. Relations between the two statesmen had been established during Venizelos's first visit to Britain in December 1912, and they "served as the basis of his [Venizelos's] policies for the next eight years"<sup>60</sup>. It has been assessed that Lloyd George's "romantic radicalism had been fired by the image of Venizelos".<sup>61</sup> Good relations between the Welshman and the Greek culminated during the talks on Smyrna in 1919, when Lloyd George supported Greek and Venizelos's aspirations.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ronald M. Burrows, "The Situation in Greece", *The Times*, 8 May 1917, 5.

<sup>58</sup> "King Constantine's Fall", *The Times*, 14 June 1917, 7 a.

<sup>59</sup> "M. Venizelos Acclaimed", *The Times*, 25 June 1917, 6.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Llewellyn Smith, "Venizelos's Diplomacy, 1910–23: From Balkan Alliance to Greek-Turkish Settlement", in Kitromilides, ed., *Eleftherios Venizelos*, 148.

<sup>61</sup> Palmer, *Gardeners of Salonika*, 24.

<sup>62</sup> The two statesmen had dinner together on 19 May 1919. Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's personal secretary, noted: "The two have a great admiration for each other, and D.[avid] is trying to get Smyrna for Greeks, though he is having trouble with the Italians

One of the closest associates of Lloyd George was Sir Arthur Crosfield (1865–1938), a liberal MP. He was married to Domini (nee Elliadi/Iliadi), herself “a dear personal friend of Madame Veniselos.”<sup>63</sup> When Arthur Crosfield was created a baronet in 1915, she became Lady Domini. She was known for entertaining the most prominent liberal politicians in her home.

Lloyd George held Venizelos in high esteem and he expressed it on several occasions. On 8 August 1917, at the meeting of the Serbian Society of Great Britain, Lloyd George greeted the prime minister of Serbia:

It is not without note that two of the greatest statesmen in Europe at the present moment have been produced by two comparatively small nations of the East – M. Pashitch and M. Venizelos, to whose far-seeing patriotism we owe so much at the present moment and far more than it is possible for us even to reveal as to the prospects of the future. His steadfastness, his courage, and his insight have kept the soul of Greece alive under most trying conditions.<sup>64</sup>

Venizelos's image in Britain saw a shiny moment during his visit to London in November 1917. Two months earlier *Punch* had made a tribute to Venizelos, portraying him and Kerensky as liberators in the style of *Ex oriente lux*. To a worried Kerensky, Venizelos said with determination: “Do not despair, I too went through sufferings, before achieving unity.”<sup>65</sup> Venizelos was finally able to visit Britain in his capacity as prime minister of the country that joined the Entente powers. On 13 November 1917, he came from Paris with Lloyd George. There was no time to organise a public welcome, but *The Times* wanted to assure him that “the people of this country think it no small thing to have him in their midst”, and that “in M. Venizelos they recognize a singleness of mind that appeals to their profoundest instincts.”<sup>66</sup> The next day *The Times* published the Anglo-Hellenic League's announcement of a public meeting to be held at Mansion House. It was topped by huge letters: “WELCOME TO VENIZELOS (Prime Minister of our Ally Greece).”<sup>67</sup>

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over it.” Cf. A. J. P. Taylor, ed., *Lloyd George. A Diary by Frances Stevenson* (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1971), 183.

<sup>63</sup> Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey. Lloyd George his life and times* (London: Hutchinson, 1954), 196. Crosfield was also very active in the Anglo-Hellenic League. “Madame Veniselos” referred to in the quotation was Venizelos's second wife, Helena nee Stephano-vitch Schilizzi, whom he married in 1921. She came from a wealthy Anglo-Hellenic merchant family. She had supported the establishment of the Venizelos Fund in London in the spring of 1917: “Venizelos Fund”, *The Daily Mirror*, 5 Apr. 1917.

<sup>64</sup> “The Freeing of Serbia. Mr. Lloyd George's declaration”, *The Times*, 9 Aug. 1917, 4.

<sup>65</sup> “Liberators”, *Punch or the London Charivari*, 5 Sep. 1917.

<sup>66</sup> “M. Venizelos in London”, *The Times*, 14 Nov. 1917, 7.

<sup>67</sup> “Welcome to Venizelos”, *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1917, 10.

On 16 November 1917, the public meeting in Venizelos's honour took place in the Egyptian Hall of Mansion House. It was "crowded to the doors and hundreds of people were unable to enter".<sup>68</sup> The meeting was organised under the auspices of the Anglo-Hellenic League. Apart from the lord mayor, it was attended by leading British politicians such as Arthur James Balfour (foreign minister), Lord Curzon and Winston Churchill (minister of munitions), by Mr and Mme Gennadius, Mr and Mme Burrows, and many other distinguished figures. At the beginning Ronald Burrows read the message of the archbishop of Canterbury and then the lord mayor yielded the floor to A. J. Balfour:

Mr. Venizelos has now been travelling through Allied countries for some time. He has seen Rome, he has seen Paris, he has finally come to London; and I do not think that in any Entente capital will he find a warmer welcome than he will find in the capital of the British Empire. [cheers.] And that is not merely because he has shown qualities greatly admired by our race – moderation, courage, love of liberty – but also because he has, from the very beginning of these hostilities, seen with a sure and certain intuition that the cause of nationalities and the cause of international freedom lay in the keeping of the Entente Powers. [Cheers.]<sup>69</sup>

Venizelos knew how to approach Britain's highest classes and to win their hearts for the Greek cause. It can be seen from an excerpt from his speech:

What, therefore, I ask of you, the people of this great country, is not to judge the Greek nation as responsible for the personal policy of the dethroned king, nor to consider the violation of treaty with Serbia as reflecting upon us. [Cheers.] I can assure you that during that protracted and painful crisis, the great majority of the Greek people never approved of that treacherous policy. The good opinion of your great Empire is a precious asset for the Greek people. Ever since their resuscitation to a free political existence, the Greeks have looked for guidance to the great and splendid lessons which British political life offers. In it we have found harmoniously blended personal liberty with that order which ensures progress. All the public men of modern Greece, worthy of that name, have been unanimous in their belief that the edifice which has been reared by the genius of the British people, and which is known as the British Empire, or the British Commonwealth, is the grandest political creation in the life of man. [Cheers.]<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "London Welcome to M. Venizelos," *The Times*, 17 Nov. 1917, 5.

<sup>69</sup> AHL Pamphlet no. 35, *England's Welcome to Venizelos* (London: the Anglo Hellenic League, 1917), 3, 5–6.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 15.

### *Opinions on Venizelos as statesman in the British public*

In January 1915 Venizelos addressed two letters to King Constantine explaining why Greece should join the Allies. Reactions in Britain were more than enthusiastic. Such eulogies were written on the Greek prime minister that the Anglo-Hellenic League felt it appropriate to issue a special publication titled *Eleftherios Venizelos and English Public Opinion*. The editors of this pamphlet were so overwhelmed by positive feelings about Venizelos in Britain that they wrote:

The appreciation shown by the English Press for Greece's great statesman has amounted to an outburst of admiration quite unusual in this country. It would not be easy to recall the name of any foreign statesman to whom such a tribute has been paid in England during his lifetime. A spontaneous and quite independent display of respect so marked and unanimous is not to be passed over lightly, and must afford some consolation to the friends of M. Venizelos for the loss of his country and race caused by his withdrawal.<sup>71</sup>

Naturally, when he was forced to resign the British press wrote very positive of him but expressed some doubts about modern Hellenes. A characteristic article was published in *The Manchester Guardian*: "Now the Greece of to-day owes more to M. Venizelos than to any single man, and if she cannot recognise her debt and her need and insist on his return to power no one from outside can help her."<sup>72</sup>

When the Hellenic Kingdom failed to join the Entente Powers twice, in March and in October 1915, its image immediately deteriorated. The whole thing with the image of Greece in Britain was not merely geostrategic but also contained emotional overtones. As Ronald Burrows pointed out in 1916: "From the moment the war began, there was not a doubt in either country [France and Great Britain] that Greece was a friend, a good friend, and a brave friend... There was no question then in the Western mind of anyone in Greece being pro-German. Up to the beginning of 1915, there was no nation more trusted and believed in than Greece."<sup>73</sup>

Yet, there was one exception to this general trend. Venizelos's efforts throughout 1915 to bring Greece into the war on the side of the Entente strengthened his good reputation in Britain. The following paragraph is characteristic:

For Greece knows that in him she has touched greatness, and that through him she has caught a vision of a nobler destiny than has been hers since the Turk brought his blight upon the Balkans. Venizelos is for the Allies for no mean

<sup>71</sup> AHL Pamphlet no. 19, *Eleftherios Venizelos and English Public Opinion* (London: The Anglo-Hellenic League, 1915), 1.

<sup>72</sup> "M. Venizelos", *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 Apr. 1915.

<sup>73</sup> Ronald Burrows, "Philhellenism in England and France", *Contemporary Review* (July 1916), 163.

thing. He is for them because he knows that with all their deficiencies they stand for freedom, for the moral law in the world against the law of Krupps and that in their triumph is the hope of liberty, of democracy and of the small nationality all over the world.<sup>74</sup>

By the time of his parliamentary victory in 1915 Venizelos had become so popular in Britain that journalists began a search for his noble ancestors, tracing his origin back to the famous fifteenth-century family of Benizeloi (Venizeli).<sup>75</sup> When he took the office of prime minister, the British press was even more sympathetic. The periodical *World* reminded its readers that it had described Venizelos as “one of the most striking personalities among European statesmen” on the occasion of his visit to London in January 1914. In August 1915, it went even further:

No one, however, then thought that all Europe would be watching with painful anxiety the line of policy he might elect to pursue in the course of a great international struggle. Eighteen months ago, therefore, he was a celebrity; now he is almost a super-celebrity.<sup>76</sup>

When he established the provisional government in October 1916, the mood was revived, and this was very much supported again by Ronald Burrows. He praised Venizelos in several articles and championed him through his many and influential private contacts and in frequent letters to all major London dailies, *The Times* in particular. Many others soon followed suite. Burrows, of course, had paved the way, writing as early as May 1915:

The one thing that can be said with certainty is that in the eyes of Europe Venizelos is the greatest asset Greece has possessed since she became a kingdom, and that it will be many years before his successors win, as he has done, the implicit confidence of the statesmen and the people of England and France.<sup>77</sup>

To Britain's monarchist public, however, the legitimate government was in Athens as long as there was a legitimate king in the Hellenic capital, and they naturally tended to assume the subjects' loyalty to their sovereign. Only one day before Venizelos was forced to submit his second resignation to the King, Crawford Price, expecting that Greece was just about to enter the war on the side of the Entente, wrote in *The Pall Mall Gazette*: “There are a great many writers in England today who owe a profound apology to King Constantine of Greece. No personality has been more persistently maligned and misrepresent-

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<sup>74</sup> A. G. G., “M. Venizelos and his Conflict with the King”.

<sup>75</sup> A letter signed by “A Greek” as a reaction to the previous text of Guardian's correspondent, *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 June 1915.

<sup>76</sup> “Celebrities at Home”, *The World* no. 1787, 24 Aug. 1915.

<sup>77</sup> Ronald M. Burrows, “Venizelos and the Greek Crisis”, *The Contemporary Review* (May 1915), 552.

ed in this country throughout the duration of the war.”<sup>78</sup> He repeated similar points in mid-November.<sup>79</sup> Crawford Price was one of the British journalists who changed sides in line with official British policy. Once a champion of King Constantine, he completed a book on Venizelos in November 1916 and called for Allied action in support of Venizelos:

If we are sincere in our devotion to the cause of freedom, justice and righteousness, then this Venizelist movement is one which ought to receive our unstained support and full official acknowledgment. If we are determined in our intention to crush militarism in Europe, then it is illogical to us to support any offshoot of it in the Balkans.<sup>80</sup>

The very existence of a royal government reluctant to take any decisive step towards Greek participation in the war produced in some sections of British public opinion an unfavourable image of the Greeks as a nation,<sup>81</sup> which not even Venizelos's arrival in Athens to take the office of prime minister of a unified Hellas could change. Burrows criticised some British journalists:

No Philhellene can fairly complain of the attitude of the English Press as a whole. There has been a tendency, however, natural enough, to throw Venizelos into high relief by contrasting him with his fellow countrymen. It is a left-handed compliment to one who is Greek of the Greeks, and, above all men, stands for the solidarity of the race. So able a war correspondent as Mr. Ward Price found nothing in the welcome given to the Allied troops by the population of Thessaly, but a proof that ‘the Greek mind has little consistency, and no shame at suddenly renouncing one allegiance to embark on the opposite’.

Burrows was just as displeased with the *Daily Chronicle's* interpretation of the shift of allegiance from King Constantine to Venizelos as a development that “does not impress one with the strength of Hellenic character. The nation ... has shown, on the whole, more resemblance to the Greeks of Juve-

<sup>78</sup> Crawford Price, “Why Greece Held Back. King Constantine's Answer to the Kaiser”, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 Oct. 1915.

<sup>79</sup> “King Constantine was not pro-German; he was before everything pro-Greek. His failure to agree with M. Venizelos was due to the fact that King Constantine is a military man, able to appreciate the situation, while the former is a politician.” “Greek King not pro-German”, *The Evening Standard*, 15 Nov. 1915.

<sup>80</sup> Crawford Price, *Venizelos and the War. A Sketch of Personalities & Politics* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd, 1917), 9.

<sup>81</sup> In a letter to Burrows of 17 November 1916, Venizelos noted that the Entente powers had warned his movement that it “must not assume an anti-dynastic character”. Venizelos believed that “the preservation of the dynasty should be thought a sufficient concession to the ‘sentiments très respectables des Souverains des Alliés de la France.’” Glasgow, Ronald Burrows, 243, 246.

nal than to those of Pericles!"<sup>82</sup> The same ambiguous attitude can also be seen from an article of the famous anthropologist Sir James George Frazer, who described the anathema on Venizelos by the archbishop of Athens as a "barbarous ritual" common to "savages all over the world".<sup>83</sup> This article was intended to portray monarchists in the most unsympathetic way, but it did not help the image of Greeks.

Another important element in pro-Hellenic, pro-Czech and pro-Serbian propaganda was the launching in 1916 of the journal *The New Europe* by R. W. Seton Watson, Ronald Burrows, T. Masaryk and two influential journalists of *The Times*, Henry Wickham-Steed and Harold Williams.<sup>84</sup> It supported the cause of small nations in Europe and, in the Balkans, the war efforts of the Kingdom of Serbia and Venizelist Greece. A. W. A. Leeper wrote, in November 1916, an Allied portrait of Venizelos for *The New Europe*, describing him as "the man who was to prove the most stalwart opponent to Prussianism in S. E. Europe", and "in truth, a prophet".<sup>85</sup> In December Leeper warned about "the growth of anti-Venizelism" in Greece, denouncing the Athens government: "There can be no further compromise with such a Government."<sup>86</sup>

Leeper's opinion carried additional weight since he was placed in charge of the Balkans in the Intelligence Bureau of the Department of Information. He also wrote for *The New Europe* under the pseudonym "Belisarius", mostly on Bulgaria. Since May 1917 R. W. Seton-Watson and Lewis Namier were in charge of Central and Eastern Europe in the same department.<sup>87</sup> In that way contributors to *The New Europe* got a special role in shaping public opinion in Britain, particularly the opinion of decision makers. Not infrequently, however, their points favoured the small nationalities of Central and South-East Europe, including Greeks and Serbs, much more than the Foreign Office was in a position to accept.

Harold Nicolson, explaining later what contributors to *The New Europe* had in mind when promoting small nationalities, admitted that he himself "was overwhelmingly imbued" with the ideas of this journal. Old European states seemed obsolete concepts, new small nationalities were concepts that their emotions were centred on. Speaking of the peacemakers of the Paris Peace Confer-

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<sup>82</sup> Ronald M. Burrows, "Venizelos in Athens," *The New Europe*, 5 July 1917, 373.

<sup>83</sup> Sir J. G. Frazer, "The Cursing of Venizelos," *The New Europe* no. 19, 22 Feb. 1917, 174.

<sup>84</sup> Glasgow, Ronald Burrows, 198–199.

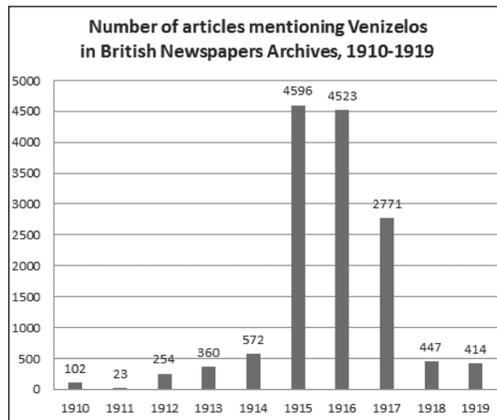
<sup>85</sup> A. W. E. Leeper, "Allied Portrait: (I) Eleftherios Venizelos," *The New Europe* no. 6, 23 Nov. 1916, 183, 186.

<sup>86</sup> A. W. E. Leeper, "The Growth of Anti-Venizelism," *The New Europe* no. 10, 21 Dec. 1916, 314.

<sup>87</sup> Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*. R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary (London: Methuen, 1981), 207.

ence he remarked “that the concepts ‘Germany,’ ‘Austria,’ ‘Hungary,’ ‘Bulgaria,’ or ‘Turkey’ were not in the forefront” of their minds. “It was the thought of the new Serbia, the new Greece, the new Bohemia, the new Poland which made our hearts sing hymns at heaven’s gate.” He admitted that among the writers of *The New Europe* “bias there was, and prejudice”, but added: “But they proceeded, not from any revengeful desire to subjugate and penalise our late enemies, but from a fervent aspiration to create and fortify the new nations, whom we regarded, with maternal instinct, as the justification of our sufferings and of our victory.”<sup>88</sup>

The British Newspaper Archive digitises British historical newspapers and makes them available online. Throughout the 2010s its content grew monthly. The chart below shows the number of articles available at the end of 2017 in which Venizelos was mentioned. This rather incomplete list indicates that Venizelos was mentioned in nearly 13,000 British newspaper articles in the period 1914–1918. Only if one reads at least a few hundred of virtually thousands of articles on Venizelos published in the British press of 1915–1920 can one gain some insight into the admiration showered on him by the British press in that period.



One can only offer a selection of characteristic comments about Venizelos, and an article in *The War Budget* collected several of them:

“The greatest living statesman in Europe” is a colossal claim to make for a man who was almost unknown out of his own country a few years ago. But the claim has been made for Eleftherios Venizelos by a far-sighted English journalist, who has seen and tested samples of all the diplomatic schools.

Another writer, who knows this man even more intimately, says that no other single character has inspired so many of the events which have been written permanently in the history of modern Greece as has M. Venizelos, who first

<sup>88</sup> Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking* (London: Methuen, 1964), 32–33.

planned and then strove with zealous patriotism and most remarkable ability to carry them through.

He is a quiet, reserved, dignified lawyer, who hates war and despises the petty politics beloved of the modern Greek. But as a patriot he has few equals, and certainly no superior in any hand.

Another great title earned unconsciously by this unassuming loyalist is "the Man of the Twentieth Century," a title that sounds too big for any mortal mixture of earth's mould to wear.<sup>89</sup>

As has already been mentioned, the Anglo-Hellenic League did its best to promote Venizelos. The League's annual meetings could not go without expressions of admiration for Venizelos, often pronounced by very prominent Brits. In July 1918 the main speaker was Gilbert Murray, Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford. His speech was reproduced in the League's last wartime pamphlet. He could not fail to mention the Hellenic prime minister, likening him to Themistocles:

It is a remarkable thing and curiously characteristic if other points about Greece that at this moment, when on the whole European statesmanship has not shown very brilliantly... that at a time like that such a small State as Greece should have a statesman quite obviously of the first rank, a statesman whom the greatest Nations in the world would be proud to possess as a leader. [Hear, Hear.] It reminds one of the story of Themistocles, that for the really great career of a statesman you want both the great man and the great nation. It is a hard thing when the great man has not a corresponding strength and extent of territory behind him.<sup>90</sup>

In April 1920, Bonar Law, the leader of the Conservative Party at the time, echoed the opinion about Venizelos created among British politicians during the Great War when he said in the House of Commons: "No single statesman has supported the Allied cause through good report and ill so strongly as M. Venizelos."<sup>91</sup>

Venizelos was so popular in Britain that the other Balkan statesmen who wrote their recollections at the time his popularity was at its peak found it appropriate to include a chapter of admiration devoted to him. Thus, Take Jonescu, a leading Anglophile among Romanian politicians during the Great War and Venizelos's personal friend, thought that the Greek statesman was very much

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<sup>89</sup> "Venizelos the Statesman. A Prophet in the Mantle of the Great Athenians", *The War Budget*, 12 Oct. 1916.

<sup>90</sup> AHL pamphlet no. 37, "Annual General Meeting of the Anglo-Hellenic League, Thursday, 11 July 1918. Address of Gilbert Murray, Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Oxford..." (1918), 15.

<sup>91</sup> S. B. Chester, *Life of Venizelos* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921), 202.

like Shakespeare, and considered him “a true example of human greatness, and of a greatness such that one may unreservedly admire it”.<sup>92</sup>

### *British biographies of Venizelos and a novel*

Within a span of only six years during and immediately after the First World War, 1915–1921, four biographies of Venizelos appeared in Britain, an unprecedented gesture of honour not only to a Hellenic statesman but to any Balkan statesman of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The first biography, from the pen of C. Keroflas, was completed in Greek in August 1915 and then translated into English. Keroflas’s sympathies for Venizelos were more than open, as shown by his preface: “Carlyle would assuredly have included him among his ‘Heroes,’” since he is a man “who, finding his country in the throes of a military revolution, restored it and raised it to the highest triumphs of victory.”<sup>93</sup> Take Jonesco’s admiration for Venizelos was shown in his foreword to the book. *The Morning Post* commented: “It is, indeed, one of the romances of history that the Near East should have produced such a man,” and expressed regret that England did not have a man of such quality: “...What would we not give in England for a statesman who could tell his fellow-countrymen the truth and the whole truth and be prepared to lay down power without regret.”<sup>94</sup>

Venizelos even became the model for a character of a book of adventure fiction. In October 1915 the writer and politician John Buchan, who wrote war propaganda pieces during the Great War, published his novel *The Thirty-nine Steps*. The hero of the novel, Richard Hannay, feels “almost debilitating spleen and like Byron, contemplates a cure in the Balkans”.<sup>95</sup> Hannay read in newspapers about the Greek Premier Constantine Karolides, his incarnation of Venizelos. Karolides “played a straight game too, which was more than could be said for most of them. I gather that they hated him pretty blackly in Berlin and Vienna, but that we were going to stick by him, and one paper said that he was the only barrier between Europe and Armageddon”.<sup>96</sup> The novel is about a German-sponsored conspiracy to assassinate Karolides. In the last months of 1915 alone the novel sold 25,000 copies.<sup>97</sup> Given the wide coverage of Venizelos

<sup>92</sup> Take Jonesco, *Some Personal Impressions* (London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd, 1919), 239–240.

<sup>93</sup> Dr. C. Keroflas, *Eleftheriois Venizelos. His Life and Work*, transl. by Beatrice Barstow (London: John Murray 1915), xv.

<sup>94</sup> “Venizelos. (Published to-day)”, *The Morning Post*, 15 Oct. 1915.

<sup>95</sup> Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 88.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

in the British press of that time, the readers could have hardly failed to grasp whom Buchan used as a model for Karolidis. The novel confirms the assessment of *The World* that by August 1915 Venizelos became “almost a super-celebrity” in Britain.

The second biography, from the pen of Crawford Price, a strongly pro-Hellenic and pro-Serbian British journalist, was completed in mid-November 1916. Its publication in January 1917 took place at the time when the national schism in Greece was at its height but with Crawford Price who changed sides and became a supporter of Venizelos. Inspired by Venizelos’s departure from Crete to Salonika, it was an attempt to strengthen pro-Venizelist feelings in Britain. In conclusion to his preface Price noted: “If we are sincere in our devotion to the causes of freedom, justice and righteousness, then this Venizelist movement is one which ought to receive our unstinted support and full official acknowledgement.”<sup>98</sup>

The other two biographies, published shortly after the First World War, were written by Vincent J. Seligman and S. B. Chester. Seligman’s biography was intended as a study of Greek politics from 1910 to 1918, and it is a clear eulogy of Venizelos. In his dedication of the book to Eleftherios Venizelos Seligman stated that it was meant as “a small tribute of the author’s respect and admiration”.<sup>99</sup>

Finally, Chester’s book was published after Venizelos had lost his premiership. It is prefaced by his hero’s letter and its last paragraph also includes a reference to Carlyle:

Napoleon thought that in a country of large population a man would always be found to meet any national emergency. Since 1914 all the principal nations have been passing through a series of upheavals, but few leaders have come to light, either in the council chamber or in the field, for posterity to rank with the great. In Venizelos the Greeks had at their head one who has given new colour to the principle *de la carrière ouverte aux talents*, or, as Carlyle paraphrased it, “the tools to him who can wield them.”<sup>100</sup>

It speaks a lot about Venizelos’s ability to understand the importance of public relations that he found time to discuss issues of his life with his biographers who were all naturally very thankful to him for that.

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<sup>98</sup> Price, Venizelos and the War, 9.

<sup>99</sup> Vincent J. Seligman, *The Victory of Venizelos. A Study of Greek Politics, 1910–1918* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1920), 5.

<sup>100</sup> S. B. Chester, *Life of Venizelos* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921), 321. One should also add a very sympathetic American biography of Venizelos by Herbert Adams Gibbons, *Venizelos* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920).

### *Anglo-Hellenism on trial in 1920*

British sympathies for Venizelos and the Hellenic Kingdom were particularly helpful during the negotiations in Paris in 1919. At the negotiations the Greek statesman “emerged as one of the giants of the Conference”.<sup>101</sup> It was at the very end of the Great War that philhellenic sentiments of some British diplomats mattered. This Anglo-Hellenism was felt in the new Political Intelligence Department (PID), established in March 1918. It included Sir Eyre Crowe, Allen Leeper, Harold Nicolson and also, at that stage, Arnold Toynbee. Their goals in the Eastern Mediterranean seemed to correspond with those of Venizelos; in other words, the establishment of a Greece of two continents and five seas. The PID team was of crucial importance during peace negotiations in Paris in 1919. Needless to say, Leeper, Nicolson and Toynbee were all affiliated with Seton-Watson’s *New Europe*. The philhellenes reverted to the British Turkophobia of the age of Gladstone, which developed in the 1880s, was the dominant force in British foreign policy until 1908 and was only paused in 1908–1912 when Britain supported the Ottoman governments after the Young Turks took power.

As in London in 1913, so in Paris in 1919 Venizelos was again the star of the conference. He presented Greek claims on 3 February 1919, and his presentation was received so well that Allen Leeper remarked: “We all thought it was the most brilliant thing we’ve ever heard, such amazing strength and tactfulness combined.”<sup>102</sup> In Paris British delegates sometimes acted almost as direct representatives of Venizelos and in championing Hellenic aims clashed with Italy and, to their surprise, they came quite frequently into direct collision with American delegates. However, the main supporter of Greek claims was British Prime Minister Lloyd George or, as Llewellyn Smith, put it: “The Lloyd George factor was crucial in assigning to Greece the mandate to occupy Smyrna.”<sup>103</sup> Greek troops began the occupation of Smyrna on 15 May 1919, and that was the climax of Venizelos’s foreign policy. The Treaty of Sèvres gave Greece almost all of Thrace including the whole Gallipoli Peninsula, the Aegean islands including Imbros and Tenedos, and a mandate over the zone of Smyrna, Tireh, Odemish, Magnisa, Akhissar, Berghama and Aivali. It was stipulated that this zone could become Greek after a five-year period. The Dodecanese, with the exception of Rhodes, were transferred by Italy to Greece.<sup>104</sup>

Harold Nicolson wrote an early analysis of how peacemaking was conducted in Paris in 1919. It was unavoidable that he should mention Venizelos,

<sup>101</sup> Eric Goldstein, “Great Britain and Greater Greece 1917–1920”, *The Historical Journal* 32/2 (1989), 344.

<sup>102</sup> Quoted in Goldstein, “Great Britain and Greater Greece”, 345.

<sup>103</sup> M. Llewellyn Smith, “Venizelos’s Diplomacy”, 161.

<sup>104</sup> Chester, *Life of Venizelos*, 319–320.

whose diplomatic abilities were usually cited as something that contributed very much to the success of the Greek delegation in Paris. Nicolson believed that there was objectivity in decision making in Paris, but had to acknowledge Venizelos's special qualities. "Far be it from me to diminish in anyway the legend of M. Venizelos' consummate mastery of diplomatic technique, or in any way to underestimate the triumph which the personal magnetism of that statesman achieved." Comparing him with Romanian Prime Minister Bratianu, who had all the qualities opposite to Venizelos, Nicolson used the example of Romania to claim that the decisions of the Supreme Council were made "on wholly impersonal grounds."<sup>105</sup> Bearing in mind the special affection of Lloyd George and some other Brits imbued with Anglo-Hellenism for Venizelos and Greece, Nicolson's claim does not seem justified. It should be noted that *The Times* obituary of Venizelos called him "a dominant figure" of the Paris Peace Conference, and added: "it sometimes seemed that his personal influence was such that he had but to ask and all would be given to him."<sup>106</sup>

It was widely expected that after such diplomatic performance of Britain on behalf of Venizelos the Greek statesman would remain a hero of the Greek masses and that he would rule for many years enabling Britain to exert a strong influence in the Eastern Mediterranean with Venizelist Greece as her strategic and chief ally. Venizelos's victory in the 1920 election was taken for granted. The fact was overlooked that he was absent from Greek politics for too long from the end of 1918 until the Treaty of Sèvres was finally signed in August 1920, and that the mobilisation of Greeks for various military operations was not very popular. Also conducive to Venizelos's defeat were the assassination of Ion Dragoumis by Venizelists on 13 August and the death of King Alexander on 25 October 1920.<sup>107</sup>

The news of Venizelos's electoral defeat on 14 November 1920 caused shock and disappointment both in London and in Paris, and was even seen as offensive. The Liberal Party won only 118 out of 369 seats in the Hellenic Parliament.<sup>108</sup> *The Times* in its leader claimed: "We cannot recall since the days of Aristides a more signal example of popular ingratitude or a popular folly." The London daily believed that the Greek voters had had a clear choice between two men of opposite qualities. Venizelos – "the man who saved nation, dynasty, and army in 1910", "the enlightened champion of constitutional freedom at home and of the principles of the Allies and Associates abroad" – was the one they rejected. Instead, they chose the ex-King, "whose long continued treachery and

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<sup>105</sup> Nicolson, *Peacemaking*, 136–137.

<sup>106</sup> "Venizelos", *The Times*, 19 Mar. 1936, 19.

<sup>107</sup> Thanos Veremis and Helen Gardikas-Katsiadakis, "Protagonist in Politics, 1912–20", in Kitromilides, ed., *Eleftherios Venizelos*, 129–130.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 130–131.

flagrant disregard of the Constitution... compelled the Allies to insist upon his resignation”.

The message of *The Times* to the Greek electoral majority was more than clear. The Allies “did not sanction the creation of a Greater Greece for a benefit of a brother-in-law or a nephew of the ex-Keiser.” It was openly admitted: “The confidence of the Allies has received a rude shock. They were quite unprepared for such an exhibition of unsteadfastness, unwisdom and ingratitude.” A clear warning was sent to the Greeks: “If the Greeks ratify the course they have chosen at the polls, they must take the consequence on their own shoulders.”<sup>109</sup>

As has already been observed, “Venizelos’s guiding principle was to associate Britain with his main goals.”<sup>110</sup> Similarly, Britain associated her goals in the eastern Mediterranean with Venizelos’s expected long tenure as prime minister of Greece. His electoral defeat therefore signalled the end of Britain’s staunch commitment to a Greater Greece.<sup>111</sup> Once the new Odysseus, Pericles and Themistocles was no longer prime minister of Hellas, British regional plans which counted on new Greece as a key ally in the eastern Mediterranean collapsed.

Both Britain and Venizelist Greece won twice in 1918–20: on the battlefield and at the end of the Great War, at the Paris Peace Conference. But in 1920–22 they both were defeated in their aspirations in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the early 1920s Britain had to face the following situation in the Balkans and its vicinity: 1) the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the creation of which Britain had very much helped at the end of the war, was abandoned to the French sphere of influence; 2) a disillusioned Bulgaria saw the results of the peace treaties as the final abandonment of the Gladstonian admiration for Bulgarians and therefore could not look at Britain in a friendly way; 3) an offended and nationalistic Turkish Republic emerged and its creation was undermined by Britain in every possible way; and 4) the country that was supposed to be the British main regional ally, Venizelist Greece, found itself heavily defeated by Turkey, abandoned by Britain, with its pro-British liberals now in the Opposition, and with the British new Odysseus, Venizelos, in exile in 1920–22.

Ronald Burrows died on 14 May 1920. *The Times* titled his obituary quite appropriately “a champion of Greece”.<sup>112</sup> By the end of the same year Venizelos would leave Greece. Thus, in 1920 the great British enthusiasm for modern Hellenism suffered two major blows. Anglo-Hellenism, so prominent among British intellectuals, journalists, diplomats and politicians in 1916–1920, suddenly evaporated, and the strong and prominent interest in the fate of mod-

<sup>109</sup> “The Greek Elections”, *The Times*, 17 Nov. 1920, 13.

<sup>110</sup> Robert Holland and Diana Markides, *The British and the Hellenes. Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850–1960* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 180.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Goldstein, “Great Britain and Greater Greece”, 356.

<sup>112</sup> “Death of Dr. Burrows. A champion of Greece”, *The Times*, 17 May, 1920, 16.

ern Hellenism displayed in Britain during the Great War and its immediate aftermath was eclipsed by other domestic and foreign issues. That interest was concentrated on the person of Venizelos, and without the main protagonist in command it disappeared even quicker than it had emerged.

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