

Aide-memoire on the Dodecanese

Previous papers for purposes of reference:

Our memorandum handed over by M.Tsouderos to Sir Alexander Cadogan on September 29, 1941.

Reply by Sir Orme Sargent to Mr.Simopoulos dated October 4, 1941 (Ref.1876I/II7/22).

Memorandum handed to Sir Orme Sargent by Mr.Simopoulos dated April 28, 1942.

Reply by Sir Orme Sargent to Mr.Simopoulos dated May 12, 1942. (See in particular paragraph 2 of this letter).

The legal position in regard to the twelve islands is briefly set out in our Memorandum of September 29, 1941, handed over to Sir Alexander Cadogan.

Although the Greek landing in Smyrna and the expedition in Asia Minor were undertaken by Greece under a mandate by the Allies, Italy denounced the Greco-Italian Treaty of Sevres of August 10, 1920 on the Dodecanese without any valid reasons. Nevertheless, art.16 of the Lausanne Treaty recognized implicitly our rights on the islands, while art.15 explicitly stated that Turkey renounces her rights on the Dodecanese in favour of Italy. It will be remembered that art.16 left it to the interested parties - Greece and Italy - to settle the matter between themselves.

During the interval between 1923 and the Italian aggression against Greece in 1940, not only did Italy do everything in her power to shelve this issue by avoiding any conversations with Greece with a view to implementing art.16 of the Treaty of Lausanne, but furthermore, she adopted all possible measures to colonize the islands with Italians by compelling Greek inhabitants to emigrate, a policy obviously aiming at the artificial modification of the ethnological structure of the islands.

The occupation of Corfou in 1924, on the flimsy pretext of the murder of an Italian General, the Italian propaganda for the inclusion of Samos in the Italian Impero, the occupation of Albania and the promises given to Albanians of aggrandisements to the detriment of Greece, the incident of Tinos and several other provocations known the world over, culminated in the invasion of Greece by Italy in October 1940, with the object of bringing about further mutilations of the Greek territories in the mainland and in the islands.

From a military point of view Italy lost the war against Greece. Nevertheless, the Greek Government are basing their claims on legal, political, ethnological and ethical grounds; on the principles of self-determination proclaimed by the allied statesmen in the war of 1914-18 (14 points of Wilson) and, during the present world war, on the principles of the Atlantic Charter.

Greece has not only played her part to bring about the present happy opportunities but she is also even now actively co-operating with her great Anglo-Saxon allies in the undoing of the Axis in the Mediterranean theatre of war.

In the opinion of the Greek Government the present operations should be extended to the Dodecanese as soon as possible, i.e. as a natural continuation of the African campaign; in that case it would be only fair that the Greek forces should participate in them. No doubt such is also the intention of the Allied Governments who cannot help realizing that the Greek nation would not be able to understand the exclusion of Greek units from the Allied Anglo-American forces (armies, navies and air squadrons) which will eventually be despatched to the Aegean. Our forces, which are having an honourable share in the liberation of African deserts, will no doubt be offered the opportunity and the honour of participating in the liberation of the Greek islands.

Incidentally, these operations could not create any misgivings in the neighbouring countries because of the existing relations of friendship between us and the fact that the occupation of the Dodecanese will be an element of security for the inhabitants of the mainland who will be freed from the constant menace of seeing the islands used as a possible bridgehead against their independence and security.

The participation of the Greek forces in these operations should have as their corollary the administration of the islands, after their liberation, by Greek authorities, not excluding elements recruited locally.

No military consideration could justifiably deprive the Dodecanese of their rights under the Atlantic Charter. An early action for the liberation of the islands is likely to forestall untoward complications, in that it will make it unnecessary for our Anglo-American allies to have recourse to, or to accept the offer of, factors which are alien to the cause in question or, to say the least, which have only an indirect or a strategic interest in it. Such a course would ~~be~~ put in jeopardy the rights and the welfare of those most concerned, while it would reopen between our neighbours and ourselves old feuds which had so happily been dispelled.

London 17 November 1942.