

A SHORT HISTORY OF
MODERN GREECE

1821—1956

by
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thanks of the House. He had indeed deserved well of his country. By the decisions of the Peace Conference Greece had obtained territories which she had long coveted. She had become the predominant Power in the Ægean, and her domains extended from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. The ideal of a Great Greece seemed at last to have become a reality.

At the same meeting of the Chamber it was announced that a dissolution would take place and elections would be held in the autumn, and that all restrictions on civil liberty would be abolished.

On 25th October a new factor was introduced into the situation by the death of King Alexander, who died of blood-poisoning as a result of the bite of a pet monkey. The difficult question of the succession to the throne was thus raised, and in the interim Admiral Koundouriotis was chosen to act as Regent. The Crown was offered to Prince Paul, Constantine's third son, but refused on the ground that his father and eldest brother had never renounced their rights to the throne. It thus became clear that the main issue of the coming elections would be the question of King Constantine's return—'Constantine *versus* Venizelos'.

The elections took place on 14th November 1920. To the surprise even of the Royalists, out of 370 members only 120 Liberals were returned, and, though they still constituted the largest single party, they had to acknowledge defeat. M. Venizelos resigned and left the country.

It is difficult to account for the rejection of one who had been the saviour of his country and had so greatly enlarged the bounds of the kingdom. He had no doubt lost authority by his long absence fighting his country's battles at the Conference table. The compulsory retirement of officers and officials and the suppression of administrative abuses had caused discontent, which was fostered by Royalist propaganda. Perhaps also, as the Greeks of old grew tired of hearing Aristides called 'the Just', so the ordinary Greek citizen had grown weary of the praises of which M. Venizelos was the continual object in the European press. But the chief cause of his defeat was doubtless the war-weariness

M. Venizelos returns to Athens.

Death of King Alexander.

The Elections of Nov. 1920.

Defeat of M. Venizelos.

Library

of the country whose army had been mobilized almost continuously since the outbreak of the Balkan Wars ; it was hoped that a change of régime might result in a cessation of hostilities and the return of the soldiers to their homes. An arrangement by which soldiers on active service in Asia Minor and Thrace were enabled to record their votes gave the Army an opportunity to express its sentiments and was no doubt prejudicial to the Venizelist cause.

On 5th December a plebiscite was held, which overwhelmingly decided in favour of the recall of King Constantine. The

Recall of King Constantine.

Supreme Allied Council had, on 2nd December, warned Greece in vain of the consequences which the return of King Constantine would entail and refused him recognition and withdrew the financial assistance which Greece was receiving. On 19th December, however, he returned to Athens and was received with every demonstration of enthusiasm by the fickle populace. A new Cabinet was formed with M. Rallis as Prime Minister.

The restoration of King Constantine failed to fulfil the hopes of those who had voted in its favour and bring peace to

The attitude of the Entente Powers.

Greece. The establishment of Greek sovereignty in Asia Minor was only possible if Greece had the support of the Entente Powers. The unanimity of these Powers waned when once the Versailles Treaty had been signed, and their individual interests began to emerge ; and nowhere did they diverge more than on the question of the Near East. Great Britain was averse to giving open support to the Greeks against Turkey, whose ruler was Caliph of Islam, for fear of reactions upon her Musulman subjects in India and elsewhere ; France, in her anxiety about Cilicia, was desirous of keeping on good terms with Turkey ; Italy, who had been promised the reversion of territory in Asia Minor, had always been opposed to the growth of Greek influence in the Levant.

Meanwhile the power of Mustapha Kemal was continually increasing and had enabled him to establish a 'Nationalist'

Growing strength of Turkey.

Parliament at Ankara independent of the Constantinople Government and to challenge the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres. Greece would obviously need a powerful army to hold the frontier of

the territory and to withdraw population in involving the

In February was attended

The Conference on the Near East in London.

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the territory allotted to her in Asia Minor ; on the other hand, to withdraw was difficult and would expose the large Greek population in Asia Minor to the vengeance of the Turks, besides involving the abandonment of the idea of a ' Greater Greece.'

In February 1921 a Conference was held in London, which was attended by a delegation from Greece, headed by M. Kalogeropoulos, who had recently succeeded M. Rallis as Premier, and two Turkish delegations, one from Constantinople and one from Ankara.

This recognition of Mustapha Kemal's Government added enormously to his prestige, especially as the Constantinople delegates left the presentation of the Turkish case entirely in his hands. The French and Italian representatives made no secret of their pro-Turkish leanings. A proposal to send out an Inter-Allied Commission to examine the problems of Thrace and Smyrna on the spot was rejected by the Greeks ; and an elaborate compromise, by which Turkey was to retain the sovereignty over the Vilayet of Smyrna, while the city was to be garrisoned by Greek troops and a Christian Governor was to be appointed by the League of Nations, failed to recommend itself to either of the rival claimants. The representative, however, of the Greek General Staff expressed the opinion that the Greeks would be able to establish themselves in Asia Minor within three months and persuaded Mr. Lloyd George as well as the Greek delegation to take his view. But the encouragement of the British Prime Minister was not destined to be implemented in the form of active assistance, and the Greeks were unwise in taking it to mean more than it was ever meant to imply.

The new Chamber, which held its first meetings in February 1921, consisted chiefly of members of various parties who were united only in their hatred for M. Venizelos. It declared itself a National Constitutional Assembly and spent its time discussing a variety of questions connected with changes in the administration and in passing measures for the indemnification of those who claimed to have suffered for their political views under the Venizelist régime. They voted large increases in the King's Civil List and passed a measure substituting the ' popular ' language in the schools for the more ' classical ' form of Greek

Meeting of the Greek Chamber, Feb. 1921.