

TOLMIROS SKAPANEAS  
HOMENAJE AL PROFESOR  
KOSTAS A. DIMADIS

ΤΟΛΜΗΡΟΣ ΣΚΑΠΑΝΕΑΣ  
ΑΦΙΕΡΩΜΑ ΣΤΟΝ ΚΑΘΗΓΗΤΗ  
ΚΩΣΤΑ Α. ΔΗΜΑΔΗ

Edición de  
*Isabel García Gálvez y Olga Omatos Sáenz*



Vitoria-Gasteiz

2012

© DE ESTA EDICIÓN:  
Sociedad Hispánica de Estudios Neogriegos  
Vitoria-Gasteiz

TÍTULO ORIGINAL:

Isabel García Gálvez-Olga Omatos Sáenz (eds.), *TOLMIROS SKAPANEAS. Homenaje al profesor K. A. Dimadis / ΤΟΛΜΗΡΟΣ ΣΚΑΠΑΝΕΑΣ. Αφιέρωμα στον καθηγητή Κ. Α. Δημάδη*. Vitoria-Gasteiz, Sociedad Hispánica de Estudios Neogriegos, 2012.

COLABORA: *Susana Lugo Mirón*

MAQUETACIÓN: *Isabel García Gálvez y Augusto de Bago*

ISSN: 1137-7003

DEPÓSITO LEGAL: Gr. 82-97

Ninguna parte de esta publicación, incluido el diseño de la portada, puede ser reproducida, almacenada o transmitida por ningún medio, ya sea eléctrico, mecánico, óptico o reprográfico, sin permiso previamente expreso de las editoras.

# The Scramble for Cultural Supremacy in Greece. Great Power Campaigns on Neutral Grounds, 1936-1940

Hagen Fleischer  
University of Athens

«Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν,  
καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος.»  
[In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.]  
Κατὰ Ἰωάννην [John] 1:1

Only scant attention has been paid to cultural propaganda on the eve (and in the early stages) of WW II. This is particularly due for comparative investigations<sup>1</sup>. The success or otherwise of such propaganda, however, can not be judged in isolation, but must be contrasted with the achievements of the principal rivals in the field. This case study focuses on the strategies of the Great Powers, their different intentions and means of implementation, all of which became progressively clearer during the late 1930s when the ambiguous twilight of appeasement was increasingly illuminated by lightning flashes from the gathering storm.

Greece serves as a lens to clarify analogies and diversities because –in the words of American observers– «the Greek front» was, before actual fighting broke out, «contested more hotly» than probably any other country. The amazing «amount of effort expended by the leading European Powers to cultivate [her] friend-

I. García Gálvez-O. Omatos Sáenz (eds.), *TOLMIROS SKAPANÉAS. Homenaje al profesor K. Dimadis / ΤΟΛΜΗΡΟΣ ΣΚΑΠΑΝΕΑΣ. Αφιέρωμα στον καθηγητή Κ. Δημάδη*. Vitoria-Gasteiz, Sociedad Hispánica de Estudios Neogriegos, 2012, 167-180.

ship» was caused by the strategic position of this otherwise weak state, «holding the key» to «this part of the world where trouble brews easily».² In addition, as the «cradle of European culture» Greece had a sentimental value that increased its importance beyond its actual strategic importance.

WW I had confirmed the longstanding cultural predominance of France throughout the region. In the 1930s French culture was still paramount, maintained both through the abundance of supply (from state, secular, and religious institutions) and the practice of having French the only foreign language taught in Greek public schools. The abundant supply stimulated demand and influenced attitudes. Many «middle class Greeks [...] den[ie]d themselves the necessities of life in order that their children may be taught the French language, no matter whether they learn anything else or not».³

This virtual monopoly of French culture, however, was challenged by newcomers who also were aware of the political value of cultural activity abroad. The lavishly funded propaganda of Fascist Italy was followed by Nazi Germany's attempts for «cultural revanchism», closely associated with the Reich's increasing economic penetration into the Balkans, gradually absorbing the area within its «informal empire».

The most conspicuous German propaganda success was, 1936, the transfer –supervised by film director Leni Riefenstahl– of the Olympic flame from ancient Olympia to the Berlin games and Hitler's subsequent commitment to personally finance German archaeological excavations at Olympia. The French equivalent was the ceremonious burying of Baron de Coubertin's heart at the Altis (Fleischer 1998, 142). More important, in the long run, was the stunning rise of the *German Academy* for spreading German language

---

<sup>1</sup> This study is mainly based on British, French, German, US and Greek primary sources, in particular from The National Archives, Kew, UK [henceforth NA], The National Archives and Records Administration, Maryland, USA [NARA], Bundesarchiv, Berlin [BA], Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin [PAAA], Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris [AMAE], as well as from other archives quoted by the author elsewhere. See, in particular: Fleischer, 1998 and 1999. For German cultural policy, see also the dissertation of my student Fedra Koutsoukou, *Die deutsche Kulturpolitik in Griechenland in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus (1933–1944)*, Berlin, Metropol, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> NARA, Rg 59: 868.4212/7, US Legation Athens, April 28, 1937; 768.00/33, Dept of State, May 26, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 768.00/33, Dept of State, May 26, 1938.

and German spirit –in defiance of the cultural blockade imposed on the *Reich* by the Versailles treaty. In the Mid-Thirties, the Academy had more outposts in Greek towns than in any other country.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, German became the preferred foreign language at the Athens University and was being established the only foreign language required at the polytechnic, developments cheered in Berlin as «the sound of French columns collapsing» (Thierfelder 1943, p. 172).

As a result, in spite of the considerable increase in French expenditure, the *Service des Oeuvres Françaises à l'Étranger* repeated its complaint about the «inferiority of the program of expansion of French culture.» Since Italian and German intellectual propaganda was «not only in competition, but in open battle with our own», French spending on cultural matters was declared «a mission of National Defense» (McMurry/Lee 1947, 27 f.). Increased expenditure brought increased attendance, but, in the same year, the Institut Français was confronted with new competition from Germany, Britain, and Italy, all of which founded cultural institutes in Athens.

Great Britain, in contrast to the fascist powers, entered the cultural competition reluctantly. The cultural propaganda program, that London had operated during WW I was considered a necessary evil «in a national emergency». It was shut down, as soon as the war ended, since the concept of promoting political aims through propaganda means was frowned upon as «uncongenial to the British» (McMurry/Lee 1947, 146). This opinion extended to include cultural dissemination, since «British culture, unlike French, 'does not travel,' except when embodied in the person of a Briton».<sup>5</sup>

From 1935, however, London received increasing warnings that it was essential to «combat» the aggressive cultural endeavors of the fascist regimes which, backed by «relentless economic penetration», were «aiming at a cultural and commercial, followed by a political» domination of Greece. In order to forestall permanent damage, «counteraction of the same kind» was considered imperative, meaning primarily the spread of English culture through its language which had sunk to fourth place, behind French, German, and Italian. In particular German «was rapidly becoming the first foreign language» in Greece. Under such auspices, London agreed on «the necessity of fighting fire with fire» in order to defend its «otherwise doomed» position in the region and the world: Since investing in

---

<sup>4</sup> BA, R 51, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> NA, F.O. 395/536, P 3481, aide-memoire, 17.10.1936.

cultural propaganda was considered «every bit as important as material re-armament»<sup>6</sup>, the budget for the recently founded British Council rocketed. The return of the Anglophile George II from 12 years of exile in Britain to the Greek throne in late 1935 –even by means of a fraudulent plebiscite– was considered an additional asset. This did not change when the king and General Ioannis Metaxas, supplanted parliamentary democracy with dictatorship in August of 1936.

In 1937, centenary celebrations for the University of Athens became a field for propaganda competition. Jean Zay, the French Minister of Education, «skillfully made use of Greece to glorify» his own country,<sup>7</sup> as his German counterpart, Bernhard Rust had not so successfully attempted. The British ambassador, however, stole the show, when he announced the endowment of a «Byron chair» at the celebrating institution. H. V. Routh, the first holder of the chair, soon became the spearhead of the British counter-attack. At the end of a strategy letter to the British Council, using the hearty vocabulary of the period, he wrote, «In this way we can, in a year or two, completely knock the bottom out of any other foreign propaganda. We have the most important language, the most money behind us, and we are a much better set of fellows».<sup>8</sup>

Soon, «the British take the lead [...] at the ungrateful game of self-advertisement», according to Lincoln MacVeagh, the U.S. minister in Athens. Referring to the loss of British prestige caused by the fall of Ethiopia to Italy, he further commented that London «attempted to develop the fine hand for lack of the big stick».<sup>9</sup> MacVeagh, a confidant of President F.D. Roosevelt, remained aloof, indulging in malicious observations about the cultural scramble among the old European powers. In doing so, he was facilitated by the official U.S. policy which still left international cultural activities almost exclusively to private institutions.

In general, cultural competition was played out over a broad field. All the powers frequently brought prestigious academicians, writers, and artists to Greece. Scholarships were awarded to promising students in order to win them over for lifetime. Fellowship grants and honorary doctorates were distributed to Greek scholars

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*; F.O. 395/531: P 2319, P 4251, and others.

<sup>7</sup> NARA, Rg 59: 868.4212/7, US Legation Athens, April 28, 1937.

<sup>8</sup> NA, BW 34/8: Routh, letter 15.1.1938 to Colonel Bridge.

<sup>9</sup> NARA, Rg 59: US Legation Athens, 768.00/33, April 29, 1938.

and others, despite resentment by some host universities when scholarly standards were sacrificed for political considerations. Outstanding theatrical troupes from England, Germany, and France were subsidized to perform, so that Greek actors began to complain about unfair competition. Concerts, movies, exhibitions of art or books, and archaeological excavations were all exploited for political gain. When the Greek Soccer Association sought an excellent foreign coach for its national team, the British won the competition over the Germans. The British Council paid for the new British coach, despite Foreign Office muttering that including «football under the general heading of 'culture' is to make the term somewhat elastic» (Fleischer 1998, 147-148). The Germans countered by taking over the training of the dictatorship's infamous but effective Special Security police—a considerable gain, though even less associated with culture.

Language, however, was considered of primary importance. All the competing powers promoted establishment of university chairs reflecting, beyond their language and literature, also their «glorious» history, their institutions, politics and industrial production. In the same vein, the Foreign Office concluded that political prestige and influence were «founded on such knowledge as the public can acquire. If its only source of knowledge is the distorted picture presented to it by foreign cultural propaganda [...], then our reputation will gradually dwindle». Only «through some knowledge of our language», would the foreigner be able to grasp «the past and present of British political and cultural civilization and achievement.» Only with language as the key, «some mental contact [...] between ourselves and the foreigner» could be established; «and the earlier in life this contact has been made, the more reliable it will be».<sup>10</sup>

In spite of this postulate, on the pre-school and school level the British felt inferior to the Germans. The latter's envied precedence was attributed to the superior intellectual caliber of their nurses and governesses, who nevertheless were content with lower pay and comfort than their Western rivals. British and French agencies suspected, as they had during WW I, a German master plan to exert lasting influence upon the children of the upper and middle classes (Fleischer 1998, 138-139, 175). In fact, from the dawn of the century Berlin had subsidized the German schools in Athens and Thessa-

---

<sup>10</sup> NA, F.O. 395/536, P 3481, aide-memoire, 17.10.1936.

loniki, as well as evening classes for a wider public (but hardly governesses), with these very intentions. The two German schools, however, were overshadowed not in quality but in numbers by French, Italian, and even American institutions.

In this context, the foundation or resurrection of various bi-national friendship associations –most of which, significantly, had first emerged on the eve of WW I– were of special consequence. These societies attempted to rally well-respected people sympathetic to the patronizing power, promoting the latter's language, culture, and interests to the Greeks, who usually resented *direct* foreign propaganda. This was particularly so for the Greek-Italian Society, whereas France «attempted to bolster her somewhat waning political prestige» by the generous sponsorship of a Franco-Hellenic League.<sup>11</sup> The most successful, however, was the Anglo-Hellenic League, reanimated in 1937, «with a desire to absorb British ideas». The league offered free instruction in the English language for 150 pupils, secretly subsidized by the British Council. This endeavor was intended to fill a serious gap, since minister Waterlow and others had felt uncomfortable that England «allow[ed] the Americans to represent our language and inheritance by the keen and generous patriotism of individuals». Through the League, London tried to launch «education on British lines and to counteract the present [...] predominance» of the other powers in this field.<sup>12</sup>

In autumn 1938, an «Institute of English Studies» (IES) was founded «on the lines of the existing higher educational establishments». Special attention was paid to the «good, effective German educational work» which was highly regarded, in contrast to «inept Nazi propaganda». Before the year was over, the IES, housed in spacious, new premises, had 4.000 students, a figure exceeding by thousands that of the rival establishments in Athens. «The demand for the teaching of English, at the nominal charge of only two shillings for some six months, appeared to be insatiable». Rejection of 2.000 applicants led to «riots and window-breaking».<sup>13</sup>

When fighting broke out in Europe, Greece remained neutral, making it even more of a target for propaganda. In late September, 1939, the BBC World Service established a Greek section, following the Italian lead. Two months later the Germans began broadcast-

---

<sup>11</sup> NARA, Rg 59: 768.00/33, Dept of State, May 26, 1938.

<sup>12</sup> NA, BW 34/8: Hardie, 3.6.1936, Waterlow, 29.6.1937.

<sup>13</sup> NA, F.O. 395/655: British Legation Athens, 12.1.1939; P 147, 22.2.1939.



ing in Greek. All these stations tried, often with unconventional methods, to be heard on as many of the 50.000 radios (Stefanidis 1992, 196) in the country as possible, many of them in cafés, influencing large audiences.

As early as in 1938, the German Foreign Ministry had echoed Hitler's statement that «the foremost task of cultural policy was to cultivate and to deepen political achievements.» Now this was applied to military victories. Memories were vivid of the psychological disaster the Reich had suffered during WW I through the inferiority of its self-advertisement. In consequence, Berlin agencies asked for «the strongest activation» of propaganda. In the non-belligerent states, where outright political propaganda met with little sympathy, priority was given to *kulturpolitik* as a «neutral, unobtrusive, low profile» means of influence (Fleischer 1998, 148, 150). This need for cultural proselytism was repeatedly endorsed and would support the provision of ample funds to promote «contemporary German culture» throughout the war, even in periods of military setbacks and economic austerity. Inter-agency disputes were not confined to Germany and usually revolved in all planning centers around practical considerations about the nature and political-economic usefulness of cultural activities, the best means to be used, the lack of funds, the selection criteria for pupils and teachers, and the final benefit for the initiator.

In this «struggle for the soul of Greece» and the Balkans (Thierfelder 1940, *passim* and Thierfelder 1943, 173), all powers used new methods or refined old ones. The International Branch [AO] of the Nazi party delegated renowned scholars –qualified, in this very order, «politically, in respect to character, and professionally»– to exert «propaganda in the widest sense by taking personal influence» (Fleischer 1999, 331). Among these undercover agents were the byzantinologist Franz Doelger (who would soon come back with the Wehrmacht) and the historian Helmut Berve (who searched for convenient analogies between ancient Sparta and eternal Nazism). The powers did not content themselves, however, with promotion of their own aims. It seemed equally important to frustrate enemy purposes. Officials, journalists and others were bribed. Students were planted as informers or agents provocateurs in the hostile institutions.

British agencies, in particular, were divided on the issue. In contrast to military authorities and a large faction in the Foreign Office, the British Council retained scruples about getting involved with political propaganda –even in 1940, when W. S. Churchill, the new prime minister, «mobilized the English language and sent it into

battle».<sup>14</sup> The statement by the director of the IES that his teachers had «no positive duties outside school hours», however, provoked angry reactions in London against «this flatulent nonsense».<sup>15</sup> Surprisingly, similar, though naturally less outspoken arguments can be found in the German cultural records as well. Although, the Berlin Foreign Ministry repeatedly urged all foreign missions that war propaganda ought to employ methods that in peacetime were considered ignoble, rude, or primitive, some courageous representatives of German culture succeeded, until 1943, in keeping their spheres of action relatively free of political compromise (Fleischer 1998, 151; Scholten 2000, 73). To some degree they found cover in the «cultural section» of the Foreign Ministry.<sup>16</sup>

Among the competing powers, only France had a *defensive* strategy –in spite of her running program of «intellectual and moral *expansion*»– approved by the Chamber and Senate in December 1939 (McMurry/Lee 1947, 32). French institutions continued only to protect the high level of cultural influence they had established over the previous hundred years against Italo-German incursions. Conversely, France's «Latin rival», Italy, conducted its ambitious campaign of cultural indoctrination aggressively and «on the most ostentatious and [...] expensive scale possible». Despite the effort, Italian propaganda was seed sown on barren ground, since for most Greeks their Western neighbour was the object of suspicion and fear. Italian rule of the Dodecanese Islands since 1912 clearly was intended to denationalize the Greek population. In 1923, Mussolini's attempt to annex Corfu was the first example of Fascist aggression and, in April 1939, annexation of Albania was not the last. Within Greece, the pompous Italian propaganda usually defeated its aim, as the ideological stamp was even clumsier than the German one (Fleischer 1998, 145-146). Last but not least, many Greeks –including leading figures of the regime– took more offense at the Catholic than the Fascist elements of Italian propaganda. The Orthodox Church played a dominant role in Greek society, and memories of the great

---

<sup>14</sup> According to President J. F. Kennedy while declaring Churchill an Honorary Citizen of the United States.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. NA, BW 34/9: British Council, 20.10., 25.10.1939; BW 34/15: Burn, 29.6.1940.

<sup>16</sup> The second man of section «KultPol» belonged to the inner-German resistance: Dr. Hans-Bernd von Haeften, executed after the failure of the anti-Hitler plot in July 1944.

schism in 1054 and subsequent acts of «papal treason» were vivid, so any promotion of other religions seemed suspect. The French clerical schools occasionally encountered similar obstruction, whereas the Germans took advantage of their institutions traditionally being without religious tinge.

Overall, the Anglo-German «shadow war» became the dominant struggle, dwarfing long-standing French-Italian rivalry, even before the military collapse of France. Soon it expanded beyond Athens. Since the capital, with the intelligentsia and the business world largely pro-Western, was difficult, Berlin tried to gain strongholds in provincial centers, focusing on the tobacco growing and processing north. There, the Germans –by far the best customers of the country’s main export article– did their best to identify regional economic interests with the outstanding importance of the German language. The German Academy soon developed branches in most of the lesser cities. Correspondingly, British officials on the spot urged their superiors in London: «The need for establishing strong ‘annexes’ in German-threatened [...] northern Greece is imperative»: More teachers in more towns ought to be installed «to confront the Germans» (Fleischer 1999, 331).

As for the branches of the German Academy, the ideological permeation was deeper in the north. The Athens parent institution which had been founded in the early 1930s largely retained its old, partly pre-Nazi staff and had a much less ideological character than the newer outposts in the North, most of them founded after the war had begun. These were staffed by younger instructors, who used Goebbels’s writings to teach their pupils «contemporary German». Yet even those heralds of the New Germany tried to prepare the soil for «the understanding [...] and the solidarity we want» by camouflage, using –in their own words– an «inconspicuous propaganda which trickled in drop by drop». Language teaching alone could not succeed in winning over student minds. Excursions, tea parties, and «other occasions of informal gatherings» gave the desired opportunity «to touch upon timely topics» such as the brutal shelling of Warsaw by the highly superior Luftwaffe. Quite obviously, language ability was reduced to a secondary criterion for awards. It seemed much more important to reward those students who had proved themselves staunch and unwavering adherents of German culture, whatever this meant in 1940 (Fleischer 1999, 330).

In the contest for supremacy, both sides did not shrink back from choosing strange bedfellows. In the traditionally «red» city of Kavalla, harbor and center of the important tobacco industry, the

German institute had a rush of applicants, taking advantage of the recent Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, while their advertising campaigns consciously used «anti-plutocratic» stereotypes.<sup>17</sup> In order to turn the balance, the British made much use of their contacts within the dictatorship's youth movement EON, despite occasional ideological scruples. Regardless of the fact that the Anglophile tendency in Greek politics, embodied in the Venizelist Liberals, stood in opposition to the Metaxas regime, London took the risk that few Venizelists would turn to Germany, the enemy from WW I. Certainly, there was no such risk for the Jewish population, particularly numerous in Thessaloniki. German reports referred to the high percentage of Jewish pupils among the English (and French) clientele, expressing hopes that such successes in quantity would prove «Pyrrhic victories» for the enemy institutions. The idea was, not entirely unfounded, that Jewish predominance would alienate many of the «better» Christian families, making them more susceptible to German propaganda (Fleischer 1999, 331).

Relations with the Greek regime were an ambiguous issue. In the dual dictatorship, General Metaxas had a pro-German past but was firmly devoted to King George II, who was «London's man». Although the British retained some doubts about Metaxas's reliability as well as about the «quasi-fascist» regime,<sup>18</sup> practical considerations prevailed. Concluding that it was «no use kicking against the Government if we wished to continue our cultural work in Greece,» they «shut eyes» to internal repression and other «disagreeable elements of the regime», as long as its foreign policy served British interests. As for culture specifically, it was decided that, «on balance», the advantages of collaborating with the regime and its sub-organizations, such as EON, «outweighed any odium we might incur through our association with» them.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, the Germans kept hoping that it would be possible to separate the two constituents of the Greek regime, particularly when matters appeared favourable for the Wehrmacht. In such a

---

<sup>17</sup> NA, BW 34/3: Irvine, 27.3.1940. – German propagandists sometimes were quite outspoken, when extolling both powers' foreign policy: «Both Berlin and Moscow are in favour of a strong Greece» (von Niebelschütz, broadcast to Greece, 8.12.1939, PAAA, R 67555).

<sup>18</sup> BW 34/15: Burn, Report on Greece, 29.6.1940.

<sup>19</sup> NA, BW 34/9: British Legation Athens, meeting 4.3.1939. Cf. Stefanidis 1992, 187.

case, even a complete swing in Greek public feelings in favour of the Reich could be expected, while these feelings had been judged «extremely anti-German» in September 1939. Indeed, after the French defeat, in summer 1940, German officials were cheered by the swing in their favour supposedly to a high of 75%, only to be followed by a new drop in consequence of Italian provocations and, in October 1940, the Italian invasion.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of Hitler's declaration to remain neutral in Mussolini's «parallel war», for the vast majority of Greeks the Germans had been reduced to being friends of the enemy. Still, in order not to provoke the Reich, the Greek regime closed down –in November 1940– all foreign institutes for «security reasons» but clearly differentiated with regard to the enforcement of these new rules. The omnipresent police surveillance of all aliens was stricter applied to Germans. In consequence, most Academy teachers were called back to the Reich.

In contrast, the regime turned a blind eye to British evasion of the order to close down. Specialized teaching programs were held, notably in hospitals and the Naval Cadet College. Small groups of «bona fide» students were organized and taught in private houses. The British Council was approached by the Greek Teachers' Training College, which wished to obtain information about English educational methods. Since Greek schools traditionally were run on the 19<sup>th</sup> century German model, this approach was regarded as of outstanding importance by the British, who responded readily.<sup>21</sup> Even a British-Greek cultural convention was signed in December, 1940, while a few months earlier it had been postponed largely to avoid pressure for a similar convention by the Germans but also because of inner-Greek dissension and British hesitations.<sup>22</sup>

At least one strong faction of the ethnocentric Metaxas regime –notwithstanding its increasingly pro-British stand in matters of politics and strategy– detested all «western» cultural influences almost equally. Characteristic for this attitude was the outburst by the General Army Staff in 1939, lumping together all foreign cultural institutions as «organized centers for espionage, religious propaganda, influencing public opinion in favour of foreign countries and even for purely antinational activities»: In consequence, this «plague»

---

<sup>20</sup> BA, R 51/55: Lektorat Thessaloniki, 25.11.1940.

<sup>21</sup> NA, BW 34/9: Paton, 8.6.1941.

<sup>22</sup> NA, BW 34/12, *passim*.

had to vanish from Greece. Even though the Foreign Ministry, in reply, warned against «xenophobe generalization» (Fleischer 1998, 187-188), some of these thoughts would reappear after the war, culminating during the anti-intellectual crusade under the military dictatorship of 1967-74 but certainly not limited to this (Cf. Fleischer 2011, passim).

## Epilogue

On the eve of the German invasion in April 1941, the champions of British culture evacuated the country, just when they had finished recording a complete course of English Lessons for the Gramophone. They hid the recordings (matrices) in Athens<sup>23</sup> because they were certain they would come back. In contrast, Germany had lost the «battle for Greece's soul» definitively on April 6, 1941 when the Wehrmacht invaded Greek soil.

During the following three and half years, the «cultural policy» of the three occupying powers, with few notable exceptions, degenerated into a mere function of rival neo-colonialist concepts. This was most obvious with Bulgaria, which tried to seal its de facto annexation of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace by continual attempts to outlaw Greek culture and de-Hellenize the population. A similar, although less brutal, policy was adopted by the Italian authorities in those regions they were considering for annexation, in particular the Ionian Islands. In general, the Italians, as did the Germans, anticipated the unique opportunity to snatch «cultural hegemony» away from France. Some heralds of German culture even considered the Wehrmacht destined to renew the legacy of the «ancient Hellenic tribes» –allegedly, according to Hitler himself, of Germanic origin. They had invaded Greece from the north, as had the Wehrmacht now, and they had bestowed a new cultural quality upon the indigenous population, just as the Germans would do again.<sup>24</sup> On Crete, which the High Command of the German Marine wanted to keep as a permanent naval base after the victorious war, strategies were discussed about to force the Greeks to learn German, «in order to understand our will together with our word».<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> NA, BW 34/9: Paton to British Council, 8.6.1941.

<sup>24</sup> *Deutsche Nachrichten für Griechenland*, 15.5.1941.

<sup>25</sup> *Veste Kreta*, 1.8., 10.8.1943.

Similar plans were conceived for the prospective «German port» of Thessaloniki, and the Macedonian capital became one of the three major European bastions of the German Academy –along with Paris and Florence (Fleischer 1999, 333-334).

Most Greeks, however, were resistant to any pretensions of their occupiers, and demonstrated their preference for the only accessible cultural institution on the other side. With Britain absent, the low-voiced presence of defeated France, in the form of the French Institute in Athens, attracted many more Greeks than the flamboyant activities of their new masters. In the summer of 1944, however, French officials predicted that they would face a more formidable challenge to their traditional cultural predominance in Greece after the triumphant return of «Anglo-American propaganda» to the liberated country.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, even before war was over, a new struggle for cultural and linguistic supremacy began, this time with France confronting the joint forces of the new transatlantic superpower and the European power that had been most effective in the last prewar phase. Although Britain and the U.S. were uneasy allies –agreeing only on promoting their language to primacy (and in patronizing the Athens government in the lasting civil war against the Left)– the outcome was a foregone conclusion (Fleischer 1998, 163-191).

## Bibliography

- FLEISCHER 1998. H. Fleischer, «Europas Rückkehr nach Griechenland. Kulturpolitik der Großmächte in einem Staat der Peripherie». In: H. Heppner and O. Katsiardi-Hering (Eds.), *Die Griechen und Europa*. Vienna, 125-191.
- 1999. H. Fleischer, «Zwischen Goebbels und Goethe. 100 Jahre deutsche kulturelle Präsenz in Thessaloniki und Mazedonien», *Thetis. Mannheimer Beiträge zur Klassischen Archäologie und Geschichte Griechenlands und Zyperns*, vol. 5-6, 321-339.
- 2011. Χ. Φλάισερ, «Οι Έλληνες και οι «άλλοι». Λεξικογραφικές ερμηνείες εθνικής ταυτότητας». *Νέα Εστία*, τχ. 1844, 910-936.

---

<sup>26</sup> AMAE, Guerre 1939-45, Vichy-Oeuvres, vol. 40: Délégué en Turquie du Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française, Ankara, 22.6.1944.

MCMURRY/LEE 1947. R. E. McMurry-M. Lee. *The Cultural Approach. Another Way in International Relations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

SCHOLTEN 2000. D. Scholten, *Sprachverbreitungspolitik des nationalsozialistischen Deutschlands*. Frankfurt et al.: Peter Lang.

STEFANIDIS 1992. Γ. Στεφανίδης, «Preaching to the Converted: The British propaganda Campaign in Greece, 1939–1941». In: Institute for Balkan Studies (ed.), *Greece and the War in the Balkans (1940–41)*, Θεσσαλονίκη: IMXA, 183-203.

THIERFELDER 1940. F. Thierfelder, *Um die Seele des Balkans. Kulturpolitisches Reisetagebuch*. Berlin.

— 1943. F. Thierfelder, *Ursprung und Wirkung der französischen Kulturinflüsse in Südosteuropa*. Berlin.