

Church of Greece under Axis Occupation

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Helen and George Anastasakis.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the response of the Church of Greece to enemy occupation during the Second World War. Historically, in periods of crisis, especially during Ottoman rule (1453–1821) and the Greek War of Independence (1821–1830), the Greek people looked to the church to help them preserve faith and culture. In some cases, church policy played an important role in the very physical survival of the Greek nation. In the period under consideration, the leadership of Archbishop Damaskinos helped the Greek church rise to the occasion once more. Education, training, ability, perseverance, and political acumen made Damaskinos the ideal prelate to lead the nation. In essence he became an ethnarch, a phenomenon with which Greek society was thoroughly familiar.

Drawing upon contemporary official sources from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the British Foreign Office, the US State Department, and the Archive of the Greek Holy Synod, as well as pertinent published primary and secondary literature, the dissertation explores attempts by the church leadership to maintain a precarious balance between capitalizing on opportunistic moments to gain concessions from the enemy occupiers and opposing the latter's policies deemed detrimental to the wellbeing of state and society. For example, Damaskinos and his colleagues used skillful diplomacy with the Axis and Greek political power groups ranging from the extreme left to the extreme right to wrench important concessions for the benefit of the beleaguered population ravaged by a nationwide famine. Church leadership also utilized more imaginative forms of passive or active resistance against Axis policies on vital issues such as the Holocaust and ethnic policies in the Bulgarian-occupied territories of the country. Despite significant differences between the Greek case and those of other territories in Axis-

occupied Europe, the response of Damaskinos and his colleagues is instructive in helping us understand how and why traditional institutions such as the church provide indispensable service, guidance, and protection in moments of social upheaval and distress.

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Introduction

Organized religion plays an extraordinary role in society during periods of crisis. Despite the encroachment and growth of secularism in Europe in the last two centuries, religion made its own significant contribution during World War II. This was especially the case in Greece, a traditional and predominantly rural society, where the political elites either remained inactive during the Axis occupation or fled the country. Of course, religion played an important role in other countries as well. Differences in Axis policy toward different nations under occupation and preexisting conditions, such as the nature of church-state relations, made the Greek case unique. Regardless of issues that distinguished the Greek case from the rest of occupied Europe, religious leaders in general were forced to confront problems normally outside the ecclesiastical realm, issues such as the Holocaust, famine, reprisals, and the general deterioration of life for their flock. For this reason, historians of organized religion in particular and of the topic of collaboration and resistance in occupied Europe in general will find the response of the Greek Orthodox Church to the occupation significant both as a comparative case study and as essential to our understanding of why the subjected people of Europe reacted the way they did during the years of Axis rule (1939-1944).

For instance, in Greece, ecclesiastical authorities, headed by Archbishop Damaskinos, did not openly support the occupation regimes established by the Germans. This was in contrast to what happened in Vichy France under Marshal Petain where the majority of the Catholic hierarchy compromised. In other words, none of the leaders who headed these German-appointed governments possessed the gravitas or popularity of the

marshal.¹ Also, while divided over how to respond to the occupation, the Greek hierarchy was not divided on theological or ethnic matters, as was the case in places such as Yugoslavia, with its diverse ethnic and religious makeup. Although Greece had two important ethnic minorities, the Jewish and Muslim communities, differences between these communities and the Christian majority, while never on the scale of those in places such as Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union, were temporarily shelved in light of brutal Axis policies which tended to unite the population against the occupiers.²

The tripartite occupation of Greece by Italy, Germany, and Bulgaria posed interesting and unique problems for the Greek clergy. For instance, as Germany had no apparent territorial aspiration in Greece, there was no effort to subvert or completely control the church.³ Of course, they attempted to limit the content of sermons to spiritual

¹ While the Catholic clergy supported the regime openly, the Protestant leadership was divided in their response to the Marshal. It must also be noted that the Protestant Church, although fareing better under the Third Republic, continued to mistrust the intentions of the French state. For more on church-state relations in France see W.D. Halls, *Politics, Society, and Christianity in VichyFrance* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1995), Philippe Burin, *France under the Germans*, trans. Janet Lloyd, English Edition ed. (New York: The New Press, 1996), 210-227, Vesna Drapac, *War and Religion : Catholics in the Churches of Occupied Paris* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), and John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France, the French under Nazi Occupation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 53-59, Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1941-1944* (New York: Knopf, 1972).

² For more on church-state relations in occupied Yugoslavia see the two works by Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), and *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: the Chetniks* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975).

³ In contrast, according to recent studies of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches during World War II, the Germans pursued a strict policy toward religion in those territories due to their long-term plans for the occupied territory. In particular, they became directly involved in efforts to create an autocephalous Byelorussian church, despite the lack of local initiative or interest among the hierarchs. While in the Ukraine, the Germans decided to side with one of the two Ukrainian ecclesiastical factions that emerged during the occupation. In both places, the occupation authorities tried to limit the number of church services and demanded permission before the appointment of new bishops and other matters. For more information on church-state relations in the occupied Soviet Union see Wassilij Alexseev and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *The Great Revival: The Russian Church under German Occupation* (Minneapolis: Burgess, 1976), Harvey Fireside, *Icon and Swastika, the Russian Orthodox Church under Nazi and Soviet Control* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), Alexander Dallin, *German Rule of Russia: A Study in Occupation Policies, 1941-1944* (London: Macmillan, 1957), Leonid Rein, "The Orthodox Church in Byelorussia under Nazi Occupation (1941-1944)," *East European Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2005): 13-46, Karel C. Berkhoff, "Was There a Religious Revival in Soviet Ukraine under the Nazi Regime?," *Slavonic & East European Review* 78(3): 536-567 (2000).

matters, but that seemed understandable. In contrast, the Bulgarian occupation authorities, hoping to annex the territory under their control, banished the residing ecclesiastical hierarchs from Greek Macedonia, Thrace and Yugoslav Macedonia.

Historians of the Axis occupation of Greece, led by John Hondros, Hagen Fleischer, and Mark Mazower, have only touched on the role of the Church of Greece during World War II. Typically, they record briefly the response of Archbishop Damaskinos and, to a lesser extent that of metropolitan of Thessaloniki Gennadios and of Zante, Chrysostomos. Instead, much of the attention focuses on the response of the clergy to the Holocaust and Damaskinos' negotiations with the occupation authorities and question regarding a potential Damaskinos Regency in postwar Greece.

Despite the significant contribution played by the church during World War II, the institution has not received much scholarly attention. Apart from the study of Antonios Sanoudakis, *Ekklisia kai Antistasi (Church and the Resistance)* focusing on the Church and the resistance in Crete, this topic has by and large been dominated by the work of popular historians. Early literature consisted by and large of studies that condemned or remained silent about the resistance, especially the role played by the church in national guerilla bands, such as the communist-led EAM/ELAS (National Liberation Front/National People's Liberation Army). Another common theme was the predominance of memoirs by hierarchs or biographies. While crucial in understanding the response of the clergy, these accounts are limited by the fact that the emphasis on the individual, though important, does not provide analysis of how the individual hierarch's contribution during the occupation reflects the larger response of the clergy. Also, these

early attempts at telling the story did so without access to archival material, such as US State Department, British Foreign Office, and captured German documents.

Civil War and the persecution of the left in the immediate postwar period played a fundamental role in the first studies of the church during the occupation. The early literature, represented by Ilias Venezis' biography of Damaskinos, *O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos, Oi Chronoi Douleias (Archbishop Damaskinos, Years of Slavery)* and Konstantinos Vovolinis, *I Ekklisia eis ton Agona tis Eleftherias (The Church in the Struggle for Freedom)*, while providing invaluable documentation and factual information about a number of the important protagonists, they lack analysis of the response of the clergy or, as in the case of Vovolinis, express a bias against the resistance by condemning EAM and omitting the involvement of the clergy in the movement. Venezis' study, however, remains an essential source. It is the only one that utilizes the personal archive of the archbishop, and contains parts of the important correspondence between the archbishop and the Axis occupation authorities, and between the British and Greek government-in-exile. These studies, because of their general (Vovolinis) or narrow (Venezis) scope, do not provide an analytical framework of the contribution of the church. A few other brief studies on the church during the period, amount to synopses of the response of Damaskinos and other hierarchs both at the individual level and through institutions such as EOHA (National Organization of Christian Solidarity), provide a few important details not found elsewhere. In addition to these attempts, regional studies of the response of the church leadership and a number of postwar memoirs by clergymen provide useful insight into the nature of their response to the occupation and the rationale behind their relationship both with the Axis authorities and

the resistance at the local level. On a number of occasions, these leaders played an intermediary role between the population on the one hand and the resistance and the Axis authorities on the other.

The fall of the military dictatorship in 1974 led to a flood of memoirs and secondary literature, including works on the church and the resistance. Among the most important published primary sources that touch on the role of the church are Kostas Pentedekas, *I Amfikleia Stin Ethniki Antistasi, 1940-1944* (*Amfikleia in the National Resistance, 1940-1944*), Mihalis Papakonstantinos, *To Chroniko Tis Megalis Nyhtas* (*Chronicle of the Long Night*), and, most importantly, Archimandrite Germanos Dimakos, *Sto Vouno me to Stavro, Konta ston Ari* (*In the Mountains with the Cross, Near Aris*). The work by Dimakos (2004) is the only memoir by a clergyman who played an important role in a number of organizations in the resistance. He participated in the National Solidarity and in the Panclerical Union, and was a confidant of Aris Velouchiotis, a military captain and the most significant leader in ELAS.

Among the most significant secondary works are Dimitrios Kailas, *I Ekklisia kai i Antisiasi* (*Church and the Resistance*), and Georgios Karagiannis, *I Ekklisia apo tin Katohi ston Emfylio* (*The Church from Occupation to Civil War*). Kailas' work provides valuable information about the efforts of the clergy in the resistance movement EAM, those who lost their lives for their participation or sympathies for the "movement," and important documentation relevant to the Panclerical Union.

Reduced to an arm of the state by constant civil intervention in ecclesiastical affairs, and restricted to the spiritual realm after centuries of political involvement, the leadership of the church appeared unprepared for the overwhelming task awaiting it on

the eve of enemy occupation in the spring of 1941. However, the flight of the legal government, the refusal of traditional elites, themselves cast aside by the Fourth of August Regime of General Ioannis Metaxas, to engage either in a struggle against or collaborate with the Axis (where possible), and the ineptitude, indifference, and outright corruption of the successive occupation governments left the population leaderless. Consequently, before the Axis took control of the country, government officials and the general population began to look to the nation's ecclesiastical leadership as the only remaining authority capable of wielding any influence over both society and the occupation authorities. Despite its economic and other weaknesses, the church hierarchy played an extraordinary role during the period, one that came closest to the ethnarchic role bestowed on the Patriarch of Constantinople and his subordinate bishops and metropolitans by the Ottoman leadership after the collapse of the Byzantine empire and that of rebel leaders that emerged during the Greek War of Independence. Despite being thrust into this position of power and influence, the leadership of the church, led by its charismatic and politically astute prelate, Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou, the institution split over how to respond to problems created by enemy occupation. A majority of the upper clergy (many of whom resettled in Athens during the occupation), motivated by a desire to provide for the population and to preserve the cultural and religious identity of modern Greece against the brutal and irredentist policies of the three Axis partners (Italy, Germany, and Bulgaria) occupying the country, established a close working relationship with the occupiers. On the other hand, a minority of the upper clergy, led by Metropolitan Ioakeim of Kozani, and many of the lower clergy, motivated by patriotism and a desire to contribute to the struggle to liberate their country,

sympathized with or joined the active resistance against the Axis, especially the National Liberation Front (EAM) and its various organizations (particularly its philanthropic wing, National Solidarity (EA). Despite the leadership role played by the Greek Communist Party (KKE), whenever possible EAM promoted participation of the clergy. In many cases, clerics did not straddle one path or the other blindly, but took actions that one could identify as acts of ‘collaboration’ and ‘resistance’ depending on what circumstances demanded. For instance, the archbishop had a continuous working relationship with the occupation authorities, even publishing encyclicals calling for cooperation and the surrender of arms to the occupying power, and condemning acts of sabotage. But he did not hesitate to undermine Axis policy, when he deemed it necessary. For example, he provided assistance to Greek Jews, and openly opposed Axis policies of reprisals against innocent members of society. He also protested Bulgarian ethnographic policy and general excesses in northern Greece. At the same time, there were members of the clergy who acted as a mediating force with the occupation authorities, while simultaneously assisting the resistance. Ultimately, despite this division among the clergy over the appropriate path toward returning Greece to its prewar geographic integrity and national sovereignty, the clergy focused its energies on preserving the spiritual, physical, and cultural wellbeing of the nation. Unfortunately, the polarization of society that led to civil war also consumed the church, leading to a continuation and hardening of the division within the church created by differences over how to respond to the crises created by enemy occupation. For those who deemed it their patriotic duty to follow the path of active resistance, their involvement (especially in EAM), led directly to their disgrace and, in many cases, removal from office or worse. However, the emergence of

at least three ecclesiastical figures to temporary political posts, Archbishop Damaskinos as regent of Greece (1945-1946), Eirinaios of Samos as president of a government committee (September-October 1943), and Agathangelos, Metropolitan of Kydonias and Apokoronis (near Hania, Crete) as temporary Governor General and Minister of Crete (September 1944-May 1945) testifies to the growing influence of the church, especially the upper clergy, during the period of Axis rule.

The dissertation argues that traditional interpretations of the church, during this period, fail to capture the complexity of the circumstances and how they determined the response of the clergy. Led by Damaskinos, the clergy's goal to preserve life demanded that they make choices considered distasteful or unacceptable. They pursued opportunistic cooperation with the occupation authorities when necessary, and, they condemned acts of sabotage in response to the execution of hostages. Damaskinos and other hierarchs also maintained a neutral or friendly stance toward the resistance, offering assistance to some bands, while also maintaining contact with the Greek government and their British allies in Cairo from 1942 until the end of the occupation. Similarly, a majority of the clerics who joined the resistance served in the welfare organization National Solidarity and/or played a mediating role in the military wing of the organization, the National People's Liberation Army (ELAS). A number of clerics who served in the organization or sympathized with and/or assisted the organization continued to intervene on behalf of the local population with the occupation authorities. In short, local circumstances demanded that the clergy play a multifaceted role in order to ensure the wellbeing of the population while still fulfilling their patriotic duty to the nation.

In order to understand popular expectations and the role of the institution of the Church during the occupation, a brief historical introduction of church-state relations during periods of crises will demonstrate how the church leadership, despite the limitations placed on it by modern Greek legal tradition and the encroachment of secularism, continued to wield influence on the population beyond the spiritual realm and informed expectations of the church leadership during the occupation. This I attempt to do in the first chapter. This sketch is followed by a biographical sketch of Damaskinos (Chapters 2 and 3), whose leadership in the aftermath of the Corinthian earthquakes of April-May 1928 and his diplomatic mission to the United States as Patriarchal Exarch in 1930-31 demonstrated that the population welcomed the increased role of energetic, competent, and intelligent clergy to address national issues. In addition, his building and leading of the relief organization, the Autonomous Organization for the Earthquake Victims of Corinth (AOSK) proved a valuable experience for the establishment and building of the nationwide relief organization, The National Organization of Christian Solidarity (EOHA) during the occupation. However, despite reaching such heights, the conflict that emerged around the archiepiscopal election of November 5, 1938, revealed the persistently troubling precedent of secular intervention in ecclesiastical affairs established with the creation of the modern Greek state in 1832 and the unequal relationship between the state and church. The Archiepiscopal Question or Controversy, as it became known by later historians of the church, and church-state relations developed in four stages: 1) the election of Damaskinos as archbishop on November 5, 1938; 2) the annulment of his election and banishment to the Phaneromeni Monastery on the island of Salamis (April 1939-April 1941), after refusing to accept the annulment; 3) his

restoration to the archiepiscopal throne after the convening of a special synod by the first occupation government of Prime Minister Georgios Tsolakoglou; and 4) the failed attempts of his rival and deposed prelate, Chrysanthos Philippidis, and his supporters to orchestrate the fall of Damaskinos at the end of the war.

The second part of the dissertation examines the role of the clergy from the final days of armed hostilities between Greece and the Axis (April 1941) to the immediate post-occupation period (1946). Chapter four demonstrates, through three case studies—Metropolitan Spyridon Vlahos of Ioannina, Metropolitan Eirinaios Papamihail of Samos, and Archbishop of Athens and all Greece Chrysanthos Philippidis— that the church hierarchy already began to play an extraordinary role in Greek society beyond those permitted by the modern Greek state. Spyridon began the center of armistice discussions with frontline generals, including Georgios Tsolakoglou and Panagiotis Demestihias, which the hierarch justified because of the precarious position of the Greek army and the fear of vengeful reprisals to be committed by Axis armies for continued, though fruitless, resistance. In Athens, the departure of the Greek government and the king on April 23, 1941 to Crete was followed by a period of frantic discussion among the remaining government officials, including Chrysanthos, over how to approach the Germans upon their imminent arrival. Chrysanthos' general aloofness and refusal to participate in the committee that surrendered the city four days later, despite numerous pleas from government officials, reflected his stubborn nature and his failure to appreciate the seriousness of the situation and the need for compromise. A series of events during the last days of April ultimately led to his removal in July in favor of Damaskinos. These events included his refusal to perform the doxology after the German arrival; a tense and

fruitless meeting with the leader of German forces in Athens; and, most importantly, his refusal to swear in the first occupation government of General Georgios Tsolakoglou. Despite his refusal to participate in the political decision-making and his eventual dethronement, the local political elites expected him to play a role at that critical stage.

The following section (chapters 5, 6 and 7) deals with the nature of church-state relations during the period of the occupation. Chapter five examines the relationship of the church with the occupation authorities on the one hand, and with the Greek occupation governments and the population on the other. Popular expectations of the Church, especially of Damaskinos, were unrealistically high from the outset. His active negotiations with the occupation authorities over numerous issues, including the liberation of prisoners, better working conditions for workers, and intervention regarding other matters, convinced the population that the archbishop could fill the political void the inept occupation government failed to fill from the onset. These expectations led crowds of people to beg for the archbishop's assistance to intervene on their behalf. For their part, the Greek governments wanted the church to support openly their regimes in an effort to increase their legitimacy and popularity, something Damaskinos, astutely, refused to do. For their part, the occupation authorities had two basic expectations of the church: to keep the population passive and to encourage cooperation with the occupation authorities. Although they hoped that the church leadership would denounce the resistance, especially EAM, it remained satisfied with its silence. The church leadership itself, especially Damaskinos, became keenly aware that circumstances demanded that he play an extraordinary role, something he expressed in some of his correspondence with the Greek government-in-exile. Chapter six examines the efforts made by the Church to

mitigate the most brutal aspect of enemy occupation, the execution of Greek hostages as part of a reprisal strategy meant to discourage further opposition to the Axis authorities. Chapter seven deals with the most pressing matter facing the church during this period: procuring a source of food and creating the infrastructure necessary to distribute it to the neediest members of society. Toward this goal, Damaskinos attempted to negotiate the procurement of a consistent source of foodstuffs in the second half of 1941. In late December of that year, he established the National Organization of Christian Solidarity (EOHA). Despite these valiant efforts, the church could not prevent the death of thousands of Greeks during Axis reprisals and the death of 250,000 Greeks from famine or famine-related causes. The inability to prevent the tragic death of many Greek citizens notwithstanding, the church made a valiant effort to save as many as they could by remaining in constant contact with the occupation authorities and by enlarging the meager resources it could muster. EOHA, for example, expanded from a local Athenian-based organization to a nationwide institution that included soup-kitchens, daycare centers, women's clinics, etc.

Chapters 8 and 9 describe the church's involvement in both passive and active forms of resistance against the Axis. Despite their willingness to cooperate with the occupation authorities for the wellbeing of society, Damaskinos and his colleagues did not hesitate to oppose policies deemed detrimental to the state. Differences over how to express this opposition, however, led to a split within the church. Chapter eight examines the response of the church leadership to two policies it deemed amoral and detrimental to the wellbeing of the state. These were the Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia and Thrace and the Holocaust. The Church expressed its opposition in two ways: formal

verbal and written protests to the occupation authorities (the only possible solution to the Bulgarian crises due to the expulsion of a majority of the clergy from that area of Greece) and subversion. Regarding the first matter, the church's efforts had symbolic value, as Berlin's need for Bulgarian occupation troops trumped any concerns articulated by the Greek ecclesiastical leadership and those of German diplomatic officials in Greece. Regarding the Holocaust, Damaskinos and those colleagues who followed his example, had better, though only slightly, results in their effort to stymie the German deportation of the Jewish population to Poland. The outcome of some of these efforts was simply amazing. Among the best examples were incidentally in Athens, Volos, and the island of Zakynthos. In all three cases, over 50 percent of the Jewish population survived the war. Discouraging, however, was the fact that many of Damaskinos' colleagues either remained silent (Ioannina and Corfu) or failed to move beyond strong pleas against this inhumane policy. Events in Thessaloniki epitomize this unfortunate turn of events.

A number of clerics, however, decided that the best path to pursue was sympathy for or active involvement in the resistance. Motivated by patriotism and the frequent brutality they witnessed on a daily basis, Ioakeim, metropolitan of Kozani and a few other hierarchs joined thousands of middle or lower clergy in becoming involved in liberating the country from foreign rule. A majority of the clergy served in a supporting role, primarily in the organization EA. In addition, the ecclesiastical leadership in the movement organized the Panclerical Union in an effort to improve the social and economic status of the lower clergy, especially those residing in the countryside. In the EAM-controlled or popularly known 'Free Greece,' the resistance movement included

legislation for the church to demonstrate that the movement intended to incorporate the church in a postwar political arrangement in Greece.

By October 18, 1944, the day of liberation, the nation found itself economically and physically decimated, politically polarized, and its future uncertain. EAM-ELAS had become a powerful nationwide movement that some estimate enjoyed the support of over 500,000 Greeks. Continued efforts by EAM to ensure its influence in postwar Greece led to the disastrous December Events (December 1944-February 1945). In the aftermath, Damaskinos, appointed regent on December 31, 1944, could not maintain the neutral stance toward EAM-ELAS the way he had managed to do during the occupation. A reaction to EAM's policy of kidnapping Greek citizens, including many women and children, and other atrocities provided the anti-communist political elites and their British patrons the political ammunition to push the communists out of any future government (Churchill had already signed then "Percentages Agreement" with Stalin in October 1944). The defeat of EAM in the December Events led to the organization's persecution and elimination from political and social life. Part of this process of 'cleansing' Greek society of socialism included a persecution of clerics who sided with the resistance during the occupation. Ultimately, the official church, led by Damaskinos, fell in line with the new 'reality' of postwar Greece by expunging any traces of EAM's influence and by removing those considered a threat to the postwar church.

In short, the dissertation, utilizing both published and unpublished sources, provides a more nuanced picture of the response of the clergy to occupation and its impact on Greek society both during the period of Axis rule and the immediate post-occupation period. Hopefully, this will provide a measured and useful analysis of the

response of organized religion to the challenges and atrocities during the period of World War II and the occupation. Damaskinos' emergence as regent at the end of the war demonstrated the growing influence and expansion of the church's hierarchy during the period under consideration. It also exemplified the continued influence of the church during this period of crisis. The symbiotic relationship of the resistance and the church, despite the reservations of the hierarchy and the outspoken opposition of a few within its ranks, demonstrated that under the conditions of occupation, the Greek Communist Party understood that gaining the support of the church could pay, and indeed did pay, handsome dividends for the movement. For those within the church that joined EAM, they saw it as an opportunity to fulfill their patriotic duty. Through their participation in EA, they could perform a philanthropic and religious role and avoid, for the most part, performing acts considered un-canonical or unpatriotic. Despite the ability of the majority of the hierarchy to maintain a neutral position toward the movement, events that followed the occupation forced Damaskinos and his colleagues to adopt a more open opposition toward the movement and gradually eliminate its presence in the church by dethroning three hierarchs and by punishing a number of members of the lower clergy. Other parish priests suffered a far more tragic fate, dying at the hands of either rightwing or leftwing bands. Despite these losses, the church proved to play an expansive and critical role during the occupation both through cooperation with the Axis and their Greek allies and through its unique form of resistance.

Chapter I

Historical Background:

Church State Relations from the Ottoman Period to the Eve of World War II (1453-1939)

Traditional interpretations of the autocephalous Church of Greece since its establishment in 1833 present this institution as a tool of the Greek state. Modern Greece's founding fathers, wanting to reduce the role played by organized religion in political affairs, legally bound the church to the state and limited its role to spiritual affairs. Moreover, some secular leaders hoped to weaken the allegiance of the population to the institution by substituting for faith as the main criteria of identification with their faith with that of secular nationalism. This assault on the power of the church and its influence in society met with limited success for several reasons. For four centuries prior to independence, ecclesiastical leaders played a crucial role in preserving Greek culture during Ottoman rule. This made religion synonymous with Hellenism, and Greeks continued to see the church as a powerful political and social force. As Charles Frazee put it: "What they [secular leaders] misjudged was the ability of their Greek countrymen to absorb both Hellenism and Orthodoxy, in fact, to identify them."⁴ Another factor influencing the continued reliance of the population on the church is its lack of faith in the state, due to the failure of the political establishment to provide, on a consistent basis, even basic public goods to the population. In short, powerful traditional perceptions of the Church and the shortcomings of secular authorities prevented the elimination of the Church as a

⁴ Charles Frazee, "Church and State in Greece," in *Greece in Transition: Essays in the History of Modern Greece, 1821-1974*, ed. John Koumoulides (London: Zeno, 1977), 134.

social and political force—especially during periods of crisis. World War II and the Axis occupation provided the strongest example of the continued power and influence of the Church of Greece during such periods of crisis.

This chapter traces the development of church-state relations in Greek history from the fall of Constantinople (1453) to the eve of World War II (1939-1945). This development has four important phases. First, during the initial period (1453-1821), the patriarch of Constantinople became an ethnarch, a role that included administrative as well as legal responsibilities. For much of the period these responsibilities required the church leadership to act as intermediary between the population and the Ottoman authorities. In addition, the church played the role of national custodian, preserving the religious and cultural identity of the Greek-speaking population by maintaining Greek-language schools and publishing a rich body of literature. Second, the period of the Greek Revolution (1821-1830) saw a division within the church and the emergence of the role of clergyman as rebel leader because some members of the clergy played an important role during the early stages of the independence movement. Third, the period between the later stages of the revolution and the enactment of the first church constitution of modern Greece in 1833 saw efforts by secular authorities to turn the church into a department of state and limit its role to spiritual affairs. These efforts met with partial success, as the state managed to reduce the role of the church in governmental affairs, even though the church continued to wield significant influence in broader social and political life. Fourth, the final section of the chapter demonstrates how the failures of the modern Greek state to establish an efficient bureaucratic machinery capable of meeting the demands of the population allowed the church to play a role in

society exceeding what was prescribed by the constitution. This historical background elaborating on the role of organized religion in Greek tradition is essential to understanding how the Greek Church intervened in political and social life during World War II.

Among the most important popular images of a Greek hierarch remains that of ethnarch or national leader, a role established by historical fact and a series of myths based on the response of the church hierarchy during the period of Ottoman rule (1453-1833). Emerging during Hellenism's greatest crisis (the fall of Constantinople in 1453), the image aided the Greeks in their conviction that these leaders could be effective champions during periods of crisis well after the creation of the modern Greek state. During the declining years of the empire beginning in the thirteenth century, Byzantine political elites attempted to curb the advance of the Ottoman Turks by eliciting the assistance of other Christian states, especially from western Europe. From time to time, Byzantine emperors attempted to heal the "Great Schism" between the eastern and western churches by agreeing to subject the Eastern Church to Rome.⁵ Their efforts remained ineffectual due to the strength and influence of a powerful group of clergy, who represented the general population's disapproval of this policy. Some historians argue that opponents of union with Rome were partly motivated by 'ethnic' reasons, believing that such a policy posed a threat to their identity. Among the most important members of the clergy who successfully thwarted the efforts of the secular authorities was Georgios Scholarios (better known historically by his ecclesiastical name Gennadios), who later

⁵ These efforts culminated at the Council of Florence in 1439. Popular rejection of the terms of the council, however, thwarted these efforts.

became Patriarch of Constantinople.⁶ This individual caught the attention of the conquering sultan, who hoped to exploit this anti-Western sentiment among the Greek population to ensure their fidelity to the new Ottoman state.⁷

Mehmet II, aware of the potential financial value of tax revenues from his Greek subjects and wary of a Western response to the taking of the city, hoped to establish a strong bond between the Greek population and the state. Influenced by Islamic tradition and conscious of the anti-Western sentiment among the Greek population, Mehmet elevated Gennadios to the position of Patriarch of Constantinople and expanded the role of Patriarch to that of ethnarch or national leader.⁸ According to Islamic tradition, Mohammed and his successors called for the respect of the *Ahl al-Kitâb* or religious communities that possess ‘holy scriptures,’ such as Christians and Jews. Islamic states permitted these communities to practice their religion openly and enjoy semi-autonomy in return for paying their taxes and remaining loyal to the state. The millet system, as it is best known, became the standard approach adopted by most Muslim states, including the

⁶ Dean Kostantaras, *Infamy and Revolt, the Rise of the National Problem in Early Modern Greek Thought* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006), 36, Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 102-111, 168-188, Theodore Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, vol. 1, Bibliotheca Fraeca Aevi Posterioris (Brussels: De Meester, 1952), 1-26.

⁷ Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, 1-9, Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, 165-185.

⁸ Professor Zakyntinos best articulates this position: “One may fairly add that the recognition of the privileges of the Patriarch of Constantinople was a political act since, by associating the Orthodox Church with himself and by encouraging the schism within Christendom, Mehmet II made united action by the Christian world difficult and thus frustrated the crusading policy pursued by certain European powers.” Dionysios Zakyntinos, *The Making of Modern Greece: From Byzantium to Independence* trans. K.R. Johnstone (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976), 50. Contemporary sources and documents failed to be saved to posterity, leading several historians to challenge the nature of the agreement made between Mehmet and Gennadios. Halil Inalcik counts among those scholars who question whether Mehmet gave the Church such extensive powers in his arrangement with Gennadios. He states that no sultan would willingly relinquish his power over a group of his subjects, as described in most traditional accounts of the event. Halil Inalcik, “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans,” *Turcica* 21-23 (1991), 407-436.

Ottoman empire, to govern their non-Muslim subjects.⁹ Though considered tolerant for its time, this system treated members of these communities as second-class subjects at best.¹⁰ Moreover, the endemic arbitrariness of the Porte and local Ottoman officials, especially after the seventeenth century with the onset of decentralization, meant the empire's Greek subjects never felt completely secure. Despite its shortcomings, the system permitted the Greek community to maintain its cultural and religious identity throughout four centuries of Turkish rule, thanks largely to the efforts of the church and a select group of Greek intellectuals in the Diaspora.¹¹

The well-established bureaucratic tradition of the Orthodox Church and the Ottoman theocratic form of government made the institution the ideal vehicle to ensure that its flock paid taxes regularly and remained faithful to the state. Prior to 1453, the church, legally speaking, concerned itself exclusively with the spiritual well-being of its flock. Under the Ottoman system, it became a lay administrator, judge, and tax collector for the Orthodox community. As Steven Runciman put it: "He [the patriarch] had become the local Caesar as well as the deputy to God."¹² The nature of the system meant that Christian subjects of the empire had little direct contact with the Ottoman state.¹³

⁹ According to Steven Runciman, the Sassanid Empire constitutes the first empire to employ this policy to govern their non-Muslim subjects. Runciman, *Great Church in Captivity*, 78.

¹⁰ These restrictions were placed on the non-Muslim subjects meant to reinforce their status as second-class subjects. These communities could not bear arms, wear distinctive clothing, or ride on horseback. The only exception to the last restriction was the Patriarch, who could wear distinctive clothing and ride a horse. Papadopoulos, 1-7.

¹¹ Runciman comments on the disparity between the terms of the agreement and the actual treatment of the Orthodox subjects of the empire. "The constitution arranged between the Conquering Sultan and the Patriarch Gennady's for the Orthodox millet soon proved to be more effective on paper than in fact." Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, 186.

¹² The system put considerable strain on the clergy and obliged them to accept roles they were not trained to fulfill. This factor forced them to use the services of laymen experts. These experts, in turn, began to wield unhealthy influence over the Church and its leadership. The position of the Patriarch always remained uncertain. Runciman states: "He was the ruler of the Orthodox but he was the slave of the infidel Sultan. Too much time had to be spent in placating his master, at the expense of the welfare of the Church. In addition to secular influence, the hierarchy initiated a policy of paying a monetary gift to the Sultan

These developments caused mixed feelings among the population toward the hierarchy, especially as corruption within the church grew in proportion to its role as a bureaucratic institution. Ambitious clergymen continually increased the financial burden of their flock from whom they expected funds to pay as well as bribe Ottoman officials for political favors.¹⁴ The emergence of wealthy Greek class during the Ottoman regime compounded the negative problems confronted by the church. Epitomized by the Phanariotes, these wealthy Greeks symbolized the harmful influence over ecclesiastical affairs by both Greeks and Turks. Due to their financial support of the Church.¹⁵ Greek intellectuals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, moved by excessive and unjust practices, and motivated by Enlightenment ideas, articulated this resentment toward the church.¹⁶ Among Greek intellectuals, Adamantios Korais (1748-1833) was probably the most severe critics of abusive church practices.

Korais and other Greek intellectuals believed that the church remained the impediment on the road to political emancipation from Turkish rule and the establishment of an independent Greek state.¹⁷ Still, Ottoman policies, which became harsher as the

when they ascended to their ecclesiastical throne.” Steven Runciman, *The Orthodox Churches and the Secular State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 28-9.

¹³ According to D.A. Zakynthinos, “this authority (the Church’s) related, first and foremost, to civil cases connected with the religious life such as marriage, divorce, wardship of minors and so forth. But other kinds of civil cases were also brought before the ecclesiastical courts whenever the litigants were Christian. In its administration of justice the Church based itself on canon and Byzantine law. Zakynthinos, *The Making of Modern Greece : From Byzantium to Independence*, 48-9.

¹⁴ Runciman, *Great Church in Captivity*, 386-8.

¹⁵ Ibid., Papadopoulos, *History of the Greek Church and People*, 131-150.

¹⁶ Critics emerged from both western-educated Greeks and churchman disgusted with the general state of the church leadership. Two of the most important documents critical of the hierarchy from the period are *Neoteri Geographia* (New Geography) and *Elliniki Nomarchia* (Greek Rule). Authorship of both documents remains unclear, but some historians state two monks penned the former.

¹⁷ Adamantios Korais, considered the father of the Greek enlightenment, attempted to identify the Greeks of his period to those of the ancient Greek city-states rather than the predominant view, which identified his contemporaries with Orthodoxy and the Byzantine empire. He remained highly critical of his the church throughout his life. Runciman, *Great Church in Captivity*, 393-398. For more on the Greek Enlightenment and the emergence of Greek nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century see Stephen Chaconas. *Adamantios Korais, A Study in Greek Nationalism* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), Paschalis Kitromilides.

Ottoman government shifted from an efficient expanding empire to a declining one, led the population to continue to lean on the church leadership. The fact remained, however, that the arbitrary policies of the Ottoman state, which became harsher as the Ottoman government shifted from an expanding to a decaying empire, led the population to continue to depend on the Church leadership.¹⁸ Reliance on the hierarchy continued to inform relations between the Church and the general population well after independence. After all, governmental arbitrariness did not end with the creation of the modern Greek state.

In addition to playing the role intermediary between the Greek population and the Ottoman authorities, the Church's contribution to the preservation of the Orthodox faith, Greek culture and the Greek language ensured the maintenance of the distinct identity of the Greek population. This role of cultural 'custodian' won the Church the admiration and respect of its apologists and critics alike.¹⁹ The official position of the Church today continues to emphasize the important role played by the Church and the sacrifices made

The Enlightenment as Social Criticism, Josipos Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), George Henderson, *Revival of Greek Thought, 1620-1830* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), Raphael Demos, "The Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment, 1750-1820," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19(4) (Oct. 1958), 523-541.

¹⁸ Recent scholars challenge this interpretation by looking at Ottoman court records, which indicate that many Greeks chose to have their cases heard by Muslim courts when dissatisfied with the decision of an ecclesiastical court. The fact remained, however, those popular accounts, which held the most influence among a majority of the population, of the Church as arbiter during the Ottoman period allowed little room for such nuances. Most popular accounts attempt to provide a general statement about the church, omitting details which may challenge the role of the church as cultural guardian. For popular interpretations of the church during the period, one should consult: Konstantinos Vovolinis, *Ekklisia Eis Ton Agona Tis Eleftherias, 1453-1953 (The Church during the Struggle for Liberation, 1453-1953*, 2 ed. (Athens: Kleisounis, 2002), Spyros Melas, *Matomena Rasa : Papaflessas, Grigorios E, O Palaion Patron, Athanasios Diakos (Bloodied Robes: Papaflessas, Gregory V, Old Patras (Germanos), Athanasios Diakos)* 3ed (Athens: Bires, 1975).

¹⁹ Men such as Korais acknowledged the important played by the Church, but felt the institution, shaped by Byzantine and Ottoman tradition, lacked the proper mindset necessary to establish a modern independent nation. Papadopoulos shares the views of Korais, but views it from a more positive light, an issue that will receive more attention later in the chapter. Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, 157-8.

by its clergy during this period.²⁰ Even education was closely identified with the church throughout much of the Ottoman period. The establishment and maintenance of educational institutions in the empire became central in this effort. Church schools existed throughout the empire, including two colleges in Constantinople, three in Ioannina, two in Thessaloniki, and one each in Philoppopolis, Mount Athos, and Kastoria. These institutions trained talented Greeks to administer to the needs of the population.²¹

A rich body of ecclesiastical literature counted among the greatest benefits of the church's effort to preserve Greek culture. Conscious of the importance of the printed word, the reformer Patriarch Cyril I Loukaris established the first Greek printing press in the East in 1627.²² His efforts contributed to the church's effort to produce a number of important works of literature, chiefly theological in nature. In fact, ecclesiastical literature constitutes the majority of the Neohellenic literature produced during the period

²⁰ More recent popular historians such as Vakalopoulos reinforce this popular perception that the church, which ensured the preservation of the distinct Hellenic identity throughout the Ottoman period. Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Nea Elliniki Istoría, 1204-1985 (Modern Greek History, 1204-1985)* (Thessaloniki: Vaniás, 1988), 66-96.

²¹ Some historians challenge this interpretation of the Church. They argue that the state of most of these church institutions, especially in the last two centuries of Ottoman rule, declined precipitously. Moreover, that the church only contributed partially to preserving Greek culture, but that others such as the 'logoioi' who studied in western Europe played a significant role as cultural custodians. Though sympathetic to the plight of Church, Professor Steven Runciman painted a bleak picture of the level of education within the Ottoman empire. And the consequences, he argues, had devastating effects on the intellectual development of the population. "It was in its failure to provide a proper education for its flocks and, in particular, for its clergy that the Orthodox Church of the captivity committed its worst fault. Even if the Patriarchs themselves had not begun the habit of paying huge sums to the Turks for their own personal advancement, it is unlikely that the Turks would ever have allowed the Church to accumulate enough wealth for it to endow many schools." Steven Runciman. *The Great Church in Captivity*, 224-225. In addition, the prominent nineteenth century Greek historian, Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos wrote, "The traditional religion never ceased to be one of the main moral forces behind the Greek people, but it does not solely and by itself represent Greek civilization." Zakyntinos, *The Making of Modern Greece: From Byzantium to Independence*, 50.

²² *Ibid.*, 146.

of Ottoman rule.²³ As Theodore Papadopoulos reminds us, “The quantity of the literary production actually known constitutes an indication of the maintenance throughout the whole period, of a serious literary tradition, and of a great number of learned men.”²⁴

Many of these intellectuals or *logoioi* lived outside Ottoman controlled territory and helped pave the way for the Greek Enlightenment. For example, they advanced the cause of changing the curriculum of Greek schools in general and ecclesiastical schools in particular. Theophile Korydalleus is a typical representative of this group.²⁵ Born in Athens in 1561, Korydalleus later studied in Padua before returning to teach at the Patriarchal Academy in Constantinople. He promoted important changes to the curricula of the church-sponsored schools.²⁶ This was in many respects the expected role of church leaders in traditional society. Understandably, they have always been referred to as teachers, fathers, and shepherds.²⁷ Frequently, these progressive clerics came into conflict with the more traditional elements of the church. A conflict that became more serious during the years immediately preceding the revolution of 1821.

On the whole, as a conservative institution, the church rejected western thought that espoused a direct challenge to the existing political system. It maintained that supporting such ideas posed a serious threat to the moral fabric of society. After all, the Ottoman empire permitted the Christian population to practice of the faith. Furthermore,

²³ Papadopoulos states, “Investigation of Neohellenic literature concentrate generally their attention on the few products which may be characterized as properly literary, but they completely neglect the most important part of the literary production of this period, viz. ecclesiastical literature, now, it is unquestionable and may be statistically established that the most important part of the intellectual activity of the period consists in theological and liturgical works, and there constitute the trunk of the Greek cultural development under Turkish domination.” Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, 124.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Dean Kostantaras, *Infamy and Revolt*, 7.

²⁶ Ibid., 41-3.

²⁷ Ibid.

Enlightenment ideas posed a serious threat to the position of the church as the leading bureaucratic force of the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman empire. In short, Enlightenment ideas ran counter to the canons of the faith.

This ecclesiastical position raised the ire of many Greek intellectuals, who criticized the church for its servility to Ottoman authority and for opposing the creation of an independent Greek state.²⁸ Religious leaders adhered to the view that education rather than secular democracy remained the vehicle that would lead to the creation of a Greek state, though more on the lines of a restored Byzantine empire rather than a modern nation state. The intellectual divisions, however, that arose earlier in the Ottoman period led a group of clergymen to sympathize with many of the ideas of the Enlightenment. Even this group, however, remained divided over when and how to establish such a state. This division within the Church led to both the desire for the creation of a separate autocephalous Greek Church and the emergence of a new image of the church leadership during periods of crisis, that of clergyman as rebel leader.

The response to the ideas of the Enlightenment was swift and vigorous. In 1777, for instance, patriarch of Constantinople, Sophronios II condemned the teachings of Voltaire.²⁹ The attack against these ideas continued and intensified after the French Revolution. Starting in 1797, the Church began issuing encyclicals to its various congregations, instructing them “not to be deceived involuntarily and through lack of attention and not to be deceived by that Satanic snare...spread covertly and craftily in the

²⁸ The greatest example of this critical literature published by Greek intellectuals opposed to the church's relationship with the Ottoman empire was Korais' Paternal Teachings. For a discussion of the debate between the conservative elements of the Greek elite and Korais, one should consult Richard Clogg, "The 'Dhidhaskalia Patriki' (1798)": An Orthodox Reaction to French Revolutionary Propaganda," *Middle Eastern Studies* 5, no. 2 (1969), 87-115, _____, *The Movement for Greek Independence, 1770-1821 : a Collection of Documents* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976).

²⁹ Zakyntinos, *The Making of Modern Greece : From Byzantium to Independence*, 170.

name of Liberty.”³⁰ The same year, the patriarch of Constantinople Gregory V resurrected the Patriarchal Press with the permission of the sultan to combat the spread of these ideas by such individuals as the popular revolutionary Greek poet Rhigas Velestinlis.³¹ Among the most controversial publications of the resurrected press was the *Paternal Teachings* in 1798, a pamphlet that best articulated its position regarding the spread and influence of these ideas. Greek intellectuals, led by Adamantios Korais, who responded with a pamphlet titled *Fraternal Teachings*, used the church’s publication as evidence that the institution remained reactionary and, more importantly, an impediment to the creation of a modern state.³²

Pointing to this document as evidence of his servility to the state and its short sightedness is justifiable, to an extent. The rationale, however, behind the stance of the church, appears consistent with its *ethnarchic* role. The church’s mission throughout the period was to preserve the Hellenism which existed in 1453, deeply steeped in Orthodox theology and in the context of a multi-ethnic empire. Papadopoulos articulates the church’s position as follows: “To preserve what had survived the catastrophe (the fall of Constantinople), and this it did by submitting to the inexorable necessity, and by negotiating with the conqueror; now this task, of preservation of the surviving Hellenism, we can say that the Church carried out, through many vicissitudes, rather or less

³⁰ Ibid., 170-1.

³¹ Among the first publications of the new press was the *Chrisianiki Apologia* (1798). The author intended this to be “preventive medicine for all those who, by the mercy of God, had not yet drunk of the Voltairean poison.” In addition, the Patriarch in August 1798 encouraged his subordinates in Crete “to remain utterly obedient to their indulgent Sultan, telling them of the murder of priests and the destruction of monasteries by the French in Egypt and counseling them to shun ‘the much-trumpeted Satanic liberty.’” Clogg, “Dhidhaskalia Patriki.”, 92-4.

³² Ibid., 98-9.

successfully by adapting itself to the conditions imposed by necessity.”³³ While he explains what events influenced the mindset of the church throughout the period of Ottoman rule, he goes on to discuss how it later prevented the official Church from playing a similar role in the war of independence. As he describes the situation, “...when the modern national conscience awoke, the Church could not be expected to assume a role, that of fostering and conducting the Revolution, which was directly in contradiction with its nature and constitution...for the Church’s role had ended there.”³⁴ It should also be remembered that a number of Greek revolts against the Ottomans, instigated by outsiders such as Empress Catherine II of Russia, ended in failure and resulted in the harsh punishment of the rebels by the Ottoman authorities. Despite false promises by Russia, many clerics understood any future revolts required foreign intervention in order to succeed, a prospect that seemed unlikely, as recent events have proved.³⁵ In short, the official church opposed these ideas and any discussion of open revolt, which many of these ideas encouraged, both for pragmatic and ideological reasons.

The ambiguous position of the church toward revolutionary ideas and the revolution itself is further attested by the church’s attitude toward the Philiki Etaireia, the organization responsible for launching the Greek War of independence. The majority of

³³ Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, 157.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 157-8.

³⁵ The memory of brutal reprisals after failed revolts against the Ottoman state, no doubt, influenced the publication of this document. Professor Runciman argues that the author, no doubt, was influenced by this fear when publishing the document. “From the practical point of view also the *Exhortation* was not unjustified. The Turkish Empire might be in decadence,; but it had succeeded so far in crushing every revolt against its authority. The Cyprus rebellion of 1764 had fizzled out. The Morean revolt which Catherine II of Russia had encouraged in 1770 had ended in disaster and the rebels sternly punished. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, 395. Douglas Dakin, *Greek Struggle for Independence: 1821-1833*, 1st ed. (London: Batsford, 1973), 26.

the hierarchy, including Patriarch Gregory V, remained informed about the organization and its intentions.³⁶ His response reflects the general attitude of the conservative majority within the hierarchy. They refused to join the organization both for ideological and political reasons, but they failed to inform the Ottoman authorities of their knowledge of the organization or its plans. The members, representing the official church, primarily the patriarch of Constantinople and other members of the upper clergy residing in the capital, refused to join the organization on ideological grounds. It represented the very ideas the church had struggled against since the second half of the eighteenth century, and remained, as Papadopoulos explained, incompatible with their ecclesiastical worldview.³⁷ Politically, joining such an organization potentially threatened not only the individual hierarchs but also--more importantly--the institution of the patriarchate. The repercussions of joining could be disastrous for all Greek subjects of the empire, a sacrifice they could not make, even if they desired to take that path. It is worth emphasizing, nevertheless, that despite their refusal to join the organization, they failed to inform the authorities, for the most part, about its activities. This point is important to keep in mind because it parallels a similar stance taken by many hierarchs including Archbishop Damaskinos during World War II. Like their predecessors in the early nineteenth century, many sympathized with the patriotic intentions of the communist-led resistance, but their personal beliefs and their concerns regarding the consequences of

³⁶ Most historians agree that Gregory received information about the organization, while others even claimed that members approached him about joining. Christopher Woodhouse, *Greek War of Independence: its Historical Setting*, ed. Sir Maurice Powicke, Hutchinson University Library: History (London: Hutchinson House, 1952), 50.

³⁷ Referring to an 'official church' acting for all Orthodox clergy remains problematic because local hierarchs remained relatively autonomous from the central authority in Constantinople. Here, however, I make the distinction to differentiate the Patriarch and his supporters on the one hand and more independent-minded clerics such as metropolitan of Old Patras, Germanos on the other hand.

joining such a movement for themselves and their flock, prevented them from taking that step.

Despite the “official” opposition of the church to the nationalistic ideas motivating the establishment of the organization, the latter grew, and successfully enlisted a number of prominent members of the clergy.³⁸ The Philiki Etaireia, a revolutionary organization established in 1814 and responsible for fomenting the revolution of 1821, became the most important byproduct and articulation of these ideas among the Greek subjects of the empire. Counting members of the clergy among its ranks became critical for the organization’s legitimacy, as the support of the church likely appealed to a population that identified itself as Christians and depended on the leadership of the clergy. Moreover, two important clerics, metropolitan of Old Patras, Germanos (Paleon Patron Germanos) and Archimandrite Gregory Dikaios (Papaflessas), became synonymous with the revolution and entered the pantheon of revolutionary heroes. They both created the enduring image of the cleric as rebel leader and helped solidify the institution of the church as a central actor in the revolution. So, at least, it developed in the Greek imagination.³⁹ Despite the fact that these individuals are equally identified with Greek independence, they represented two extreme positions within the clerical faction of the Etaireia. Germanos represented the hierarchs who viewed the prospect of armed revolt with the utmost caution, arguing that only under ideal conditions should such a venture be pursued. For this reason, he played a less active role in the early

³⁸ According to George Frangos, the clergy made up 10% of the organization’s members. George D. Frangos, “The *Philiki Etaireia*: A Premature National Coalition,” in *The Struggle for Greek Independence* ed. Richard Clogg (London: Macmillan, 1973), 87.

³⁹ Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, *I Ekklisia tis Ellados: Apo Archis mehri tou 1934 (the Church of Greece: From Its Origins to 1934)*, trans. Vasileios Karagiorgos, 3 ed. (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 2000), 195-205.

activities of the organization. His counterpart, Papaflessas, however, played an active role in the leadership of the organization and was personally responsible for recruiting many Greeks to the cause.⁴⁰

Another issue that portended a division within the hierarchy before the revolution was the Porte's assault on the growing strength of the klephts/armatoloi. These individuals typically played the role of local mountain police during the day, while robbing the populace the authorities paid them to protect at night.⁴¹ Due to the growing popularity of the writings of the revolutionary poet Rhigas Velistinlis, this group emerged in popular lore as the Greek 'robin hoods' of the Ottoman empire. Many Greeks considered it their patriotic duty to support these armed bandits. The Ottoman authorities, observing the disrupting influence of this group, launched an all out assault on the brigands. Hoping the Church could legitimize their assault in the eyes of the Christian subjects, the authorities demanded that the patriarchate cooperate in this endeavor. The patriarchate, pressured by the Porte, excommunicated all known armed bandits and any clergymen who supported them. They also instructed their subordinate metropolitans and bishops to pursue a similar course in their sees. Many local hierarchs obeyed these orders half-heartedly. Local priests, infuriated by the official church's orders, refused to obey and continued to support the local 'heroes.' This development is important because it reflected two important issues: the growing alienation between the

⁴⁰ Contemporary sources on the activities of these two individuals during the period are highly bias, typically hagiographical in nature. The secondary literature, especially in Greek, paints an overly-sympathetic picture of these men. This literature predominately consists of popular histories of the revolution, the church, or biographies of the men. The following are among the most well-known: Melas, *Matomena Rasa : Papaflessas, Grigorios E, o Palaion Patron, Athanasios Diakos (Bloodied Robes: Papaflessas, Gregory V, Old Patras (Germanos), Athanasios Diakos)*, Konstantinos Vovolinis, *Ekklesia Eis Ton Agona Tis Eleftherias, 1453-1953 (the Church During the Struggle for Liberation, 1453-1953)*, 2 ed. (Athens: Kleisounis, 2002), Papadopoulos, *I Ekklesia tis Ellados*, 200-205.

⁴¹ For the best account of the klephts, one should consult John Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

upper and lower clergy; and, more importantly, the fact that local priests came, typically, from among the village's population. This fact also explains why local priests played a leadership role when villages rose in rebellion against the Ottoman authorities in the winter and spring of 1820-21.⁴²

Thus, on the eve of the war, a division emerged both between members of the hierarchy on the one hand and the upper and lower clergy on the other hand. In the case of the hierarchy, a difference existed primarily between members residing in the capital and those of central and southern Greece. The official church, led by the patriarch remained committed to a worldview developed centuries earlier when the Church's main mission was to preserve the remnants of Hellenism which remained when Constantinople fell in 1453. This worldview explains why the patriarchate became a vehicle to preserve the *status quo*, resisting the influence of Greek revolutionary writers such as Adamantios Korais and Rhigas Velistinlis. Other hierarchs, exemplified by metropolitan of Old Patras, Germanos, sympathized with these ideas and joined the Philiki Etaireia.⁴³ These men, who had closer ties with both local Turkish and Greek elites, perceived revolt as a possible vehicle for independence. Still, this latter group, saw a potential revolution with reluctance. Like their more conservative colleagues in the capital, they were mindful of

⁴² There is some debate over the attitude of the clergy toward the klephts. Papadopoulos contends that the church, especially the patriarch, supported the Ottoman effort to eliminate this group. He states, "the general impression produced by such accounts is that the clergy acted as obedient instruments for carrying on the policy of the tyrant; not an instance of reaction or of secret report of the Klephts on behalf of the ecclesiastical authorities is reported in the annals of this and other campaigns for the extermination of the Klephts." Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, 148-9. Runciman, in contrast, points to this issue as evidence of a division within the hierarchs in Constantinople and their colleagues in the provinces and parish priests. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, 391-398.

⁴³ Historians sympathetic to Gregory and others opposing these ideas argue that the issue that distinguished these groups remained their attitude toward armed revolt. Gregory and like-minded Greek elites believed, rather credulously, that the Ottoman empire remained in a steady decline, which would eventually end with their handing over power to the Greeks. This policy, of course, encouraged patience, while Germanos, though to a lesser extent, and Papaflessas believed armed revolt offered the only path toward independence.

the repercussions of failure. This explains why other actors more willing to risk these consequences, forced their hand when hostilities broke out in late 1820. Parish priests, in contrast to the powerful Greek hierarchs, generally sided with the rest of their communities, a development portended by their response to the Ottoman authorities' attack on the klephts a few decades earlier.

In the final analysis, three important factors created an atmosphere conducive to revolution: the writings of individuals such as Korais and Righas began to influence all sectors of Greek society; the Philiki Etaireia provided an organization capable of channeling these forces, even if they lost control of events after the revolution began; and a continent-wide famine exacerbated the popular mood.⁴⁴ The growing influence of the ideas of Greek revolutionary thinkers, who acted as conduits for the ideas coming from France and other parts of Europe, were partly expressed by the growing popularity of the klephts and the growing influence among Greek educated elites of the works of Adamantios Korais. The Philiki Etaireia, though only established in 1814, grew considerably in six years and included prominent Greek elites, local klepht leaders, hierarchs such as Germanos, and prominent local military chieftains. Famine-like conditions ensured that the local population remained restless and resentful of local leaders.⁴⁵ The unwise decision of the Ottoman authorities to increase the financial burden on the local population by increasing rather than reducing their financial burden led to growing resentment and the fomenting of revolution.⁴⁶ Despite this explosive atmosphere, the Greek revolutionary leaders needed a catalyst to spark the revolution.

⁴⁴ Thomas Gallant, *Modern Greece*, ed. Jeremy Black, Brief Histories (London, New York: Arnold and Oxford University Press, 2001), 13-16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, J.D. Post, *The Last Great Subsistence Crisis in the Western World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). Cited in Gallant, 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

They found this when Ali Pasha, the powerful Ottoman governor of Epirus, refused to accept a summons from the Ottoman sultan Mahmud II for an audience at the capital, preferring to instigate a civil war rather than surrender his fiefdom.⁴⁷

Ali Pasha of Ioannina remains an enigmatic and complex personality in the historiography of the period. Between the last decade of the eighteenth century and 1820, he had amassed immense power and wealth, which some argue rivaled that of the sultan himself.⁴⁸ The latter, hoping to reestablish central control of the European territories of the empire, viewed Ali Pasha as an impediment to his reforming strategy.⁴⁹ Thus, in the fall of 1820, after negotiations broke down, sultan Mahmud sent a large force to eliminate this threat. In addition to forces gathered in Constantinople, local military leaders, including those of the Peloponnesus and other neighboring regions left to help subdue the rebel. This left the local military garrisons weak and poorly led. During this period of bickering between sultan and governor, Ali met with a local member of the Philiki Etaireia in April 1820, the Greek interpreter of the Russian consul in Patras, Ioannis Paparrigopoulos. At this meeting, the two discussed the possibility of a Greek uprising and of assisting Russia in conquering the European territories of the empire. Paparrigopoulos went to Russia to sound out the tsar's government. He also encouraged Ali Pasha to inform the local kapitanioi (military leaders) and Greek church leaders of his plans. Since such a plan could not commence until the following spring, Ali needed to provide a temporary diversion. Ali's second son, Veli Pasha, sent the prominent

⁴⁷ For more information about Ali Pasha one should consult: Katherine Elizabeth Fleming, *Muslim Bonaparte* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), Dennis Skiotis, "The Greek Revolution: Ali Pasha's Last Gamble," in *Hellenism and the First Greek War of Liberation (1821-1830): Continuity and Change*, ed. John Anton Diamantopoulos, John Petropoulos, Peter Topping (Thessaloniki, Greece: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1976).

⁴⁸ Skiotis, "The Greek Revolution: Ali Pasha's Last Gamble." 97-9, Gallant, 16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 97-8.

kapitanios of Rumeli Odysseus Androutsos to the Peloponnesus to discuss the matter with the local leaders. This group led by Germanos and other notables, knowing the duplicitous nature of Ali Pasha, sent a message stating their concerns to the kapitanios, who in turn decided to side with the Ottomans.

By September, the situation became dire for Ali Pasha as the bulk of his Albanian army deserted him, leaving him only three thousand men to defend Ioannina.⁵⁰ These unfolding events led another prominent member of the Etaireia, Papaflessas, to claim that another plan was needed.⁵¹ Things, however, took a turn for the better for Ali Pasha. His artillery successfully repulsed numerous Ottoman attacks, prolonging the siege into the winter. In addition, Ali bribed seven of the ten Ottoman commanders to switch sides. Ottoman fortunes suffered another blow when the Greek kapitanioi, who had provided men to the sultan, also switched sides, launching revolts of their own. This shift began with the Souliotes, who staged their revolt in December 1820. From there, the revolt spread throughout the Greek-speaking lands. By the beginning of 1821, events turned completely against the Ottomans. These developments took place without the guidance of the Philiki Etaireia, an important fact that has received little attention in popular accounts of the war.⁵² More importantly, neither of the two prominent clerics Papaflessas or Germanos participated in the revolt at this early stage.

While revolt broke out in Epirus, the Society's Central Committee met in October 1820 in Ismail, Bessarabia in southern Russia to discuss the possibility of launching a revolt in the Peloponnesus. Those present were Alexander Ypsilantis, the man appointed to lead the revolt, Papaflessas, and several others. Papaflessas' presence indicates that

⁵⁰ Ibid., 100-105.

⁵¹ Letter from Dikaios (Papaflessas) to Alexander Ypsilantis September 1820. Cited in *ibid.*, 104.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 106.

clergymen served in the upper echelons of the organization, despite the exhortations of the patriarchate. After attending the meeting, the cleric traveled to Constantinople to gather funds and arrange for the upcoming venture. His presence roused the suspicions of the Ottoman authorities, forcing his friends to smuggle him out of the city.

Meanwhile, Ypsilantis discovered that the organization had been betrayed, which forced him to launch the revolution from the Danubian Principalities rather than from the Peloponnesus. Papaflessas, unaware of this change of plans, held several meetings with the Peloponnesian etaireists, which included Metropolitan Germanos, at the beginning of December 1820. The group reacted coolly to the plan, stating that they wanted assurances of Russian involvement and time--until the next spring--to prepare for the revolt. The discouraged Papaflessas' mood improved, however, when the Turkish Vali of the Peloponnesus, Khursi Pasha left to assist in the subjugation of Ali Pasha to the north, which reduced one major concern of the local etaireists on January 5, 1821. The Peloponnesian leaders, however, sent several agents to determine Russia's response to the revolt. In short, while Papaflessas committed himself to the revolution after the meeting in Bessarabia, Germanos remained a reluctant member of the committee, awaiting assurances of Russian assistance.⁵³

Thus, events failed to materialize according to the plans of the organization's leadership. These events proved critical as the locus of the early revolt shifted to the Peloponnesus, where the local church played an important role in the first year of the revolution.⁵⁴ Ypsilantis crossed the Pruth River into Wallachia on March 6 with a band of 4,500. They hoped the local Romanians would join the revolt, but the latter refused.

⁵³ Ibid., 54-58.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 62-3, Woodhouse, *Greek War of Independence: Its Historical Setting*, 51-2

Soon after, Tsar Alexander I, who was attending an international conference in Laibach, denounced the endeavor. With this news, Ypsilantis' gamble was doomed almost as soon as it began. Events in the Danubian Principalities surprised the patriarch and the Ottoman authorities, and the latter surrounded the patriarchate before Gregory could convene a meeting of the synod to discuss the matter.⁵⁵ The Porte instructed Gregory to excommunicate Ypsilantis and his followers, which the Patriarch did promptly. Gregory also encouraged his flock to remain faithful to the authorities, though secretly he encouraged Greeks to flee from the city and join the uprising.⁵⁶ As for his own fate, he understood that the authorities intended to punish him for the transgressions of his flock, despite his lack of personal involvement. According to the prominent church historian Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, he informed a congregation of Greeks in the capital after Ypsilantis launched his revolt: "As for me, I believe that my end is approaching, but I must stay at my post to die, and if I remain, then the Turks will not be given plausible pretext to massacre the Christians of the capital."⁵⁷ By April, the sultan decided to execute Gregory. Thus, on Saturday April 10, after he performed the Divine Liturgy in preparation for the Easter vigil, Ottoman troops surrounded the building, dragged him out, and executed him along with several other presiding hierarchs.⁵⁸

His death, along with a series of apocryphal stories about him recanting his denunciation of the revolution shortly before he expired, led Greeks to identify him as an *ethnomartyr*, and later placed him in the pantheon of heroes of the revolution. Historical

⁵⁵ Dakin, 58, Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece, 1821-1833*, 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁷ Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, "I Ekklisia Konstantinoupoleos kai i Megali Epanastasis tou 1821 (the Church of Constantinople and the Great Revolution of 1821)," *Theologia* 21 (1950), 42. Cited in Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece, 1821-1833*, 28.

⁵⁸ Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece, 1821-1833*, 30-3, Melas, *Matomena Rasa : Papaflessas, Grigorios E, o Palaion Patron, Athanasios Diakos (Bloodied Robes: Papaflessas, Gregory V, Old Patras (Germanos), Athanasios Diakos)*, 182-7.

records, exemplified by his ardent struggle against the spread of revolutionary ideas among his flock, indicate that he needed little encouragement from the Ottoman authorities to excommunicate Ypsilantis and his followers. Though he may have harbored some sympathies for the organization, he refused to join or openly support such an endeavor for two reasons: he took his oath to the sultan as ethnarch seriously; moreover, he understood that the denunciation of the revolt by the Russian tsar, a repetition of the disastrous events of 1769-70 was a likely possibility. Still, the popular perception of the patriarch is that of a holy martyr persisted, and during World War II, both hierarchs who cooperated with the authorities, such as Damaskinos, and rebel movements looked to him as a model. Damaskinos understood that his refusal to denounce the resistance movements and his opposition to German policies such as the Holocaust could lead to his death. Resistance leaders, in contrast, stated that clerics who fought for the resistance would have a similar martyr's death if they perished at the hands of the Axis authorities.

Gregory represents the ideal of the image of the hierarch as ethnarch. He believed that maintaining a relationship with the Ottoman authorities, in the tradition of Gennadios Scholarios, remained the most significant task of his caste during the Ottoman period. This group needed to preserve Hellenism during this period of crisis. Thus, he encouraged the spread of education among his flock and a prudent approach toward eventual statehood. He sympathized with the Philiki Etaireia, but considered its aspirations dangerous and premature. In short, his actions during the period represent the image of the ideal ethnarch, focused on preserving the cultural and religious integrity of his flock, the task bestowed on the hierarchy during the Ottoman period.

As stated above, once the ‘official’ revolution broke out in the Peloponnese on March 25, 1821, Gregory and Papaflessas played a central role in the unfolding of events, which evolved rapidly. The regional Ottoman governor, Kemal Bey, requested the prominent Greek dignitaries, including Old Patras Germanos, to meet him in the city of Tripolis for their scheduled bi-yearly meeting.⁵⁹ He wanted to determine their response to Ali Pasha’s revolt. This frightened the dignitaries, who started toward Tripolis on March 18. Fearing for their lives, the group stated they received a letter from a Turk dissuading them from attending the meeting, stating that the governor intended to execute them. Thus, according to tradition, the group stopped at the Agia Lavra monastery where Old Patras Germanos raised the standard of the cross signaling the beginning of the revolution.⁶⁰ Professor Frazee astutely observes that Germanos’ act “gave the revolution its great symbol when he raised a banner with the cross on it.”⁶¹ Recent scholarship contends that Germanos likely did not raise the flag on that day and, more importantly, if he had, it was not to signal the beginning of a revolution.⁶²

After the events at Agia Lavra, Germanos returned to Patras at the head of a Greek force of a thousand armed men, which succeeded in taking the city. He remained a military leader in the Peloponnese for the first year of the revolution. Therefore, his role changed to that of diplomat and politician. He and Georgios Mavromichalis, the son of the powerful military leader Petrobey Mavromichalis, went on a diplomatic mission to

⁵⁹ Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece, 1821-1833*, 18-9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Christopher Woodhouse writes in his history of the revolution, “it is said that on 25 March the bishop raised the standard of the cross at the monastery as a signal of revolt; but it is also said that he did not do so until he had returned to Patras, which he re-entered accompanied by a red flag with a black cross. Legend is confused, and many things are said; but what is certain is that the bishops and many of supporters did not intend that general revolution should be the response to his gesture.” He goes on to state that it was fervent revolutionaries such as Papaflessas that forced the hand of moderates such as Germanos. Woodhouse, *Greek War of Independence: Its Historical Setting*, 56-7.

Rome in late 1822, in hopes of gaining the support of the papacy.⁶³ The mission failed, and Germanos returned to revolutionary Greek-controlled territory by late February 1823. He attended a number of national assemblies that convened from 1823-1827, but his role diminished considerably as a revolutionary leader⁶⁴ The passing of Germanos represents a general trend which saw the role of the church reduced considerably for two important reasons: the church lost many of its brightest and strongest leaders during the revolution; and, the secular leaders of the revolution, jealous of the powerful role of the church, attempted to devise ways by which they could minimize the institution's power in the newly created state. Popular accounts, however, focus on Germanos' participation and, in particular, the fact that he gave the revolution its most powerful symbol when he raised the standard of the cross.⁶⁵

Papaflessas' career differed considerably from that of the sagacious metropolitan. Despite his flaws, lack of military experience and ultimate failure in battle, this individual personified the image of the cleric as rebel leader. Most accounts focus on his role in the Philiki Etaireia and his death. The manner of his death elevated him into the pantheon of revolutionary leaders. His life reflected that of the majority of the lower clergy, as the shepherd of his flock, which they represented both in temperament and worldview. After committing himself to the revolution, Papaflessas became deeply involved in the military and political developments in the early years of the revolution until his death on the battlefield in 1824. Many scholars criticize Papaflessas for contributing to the civil strife

⁶³ Frazee, 58-60.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 60-5.

⁶⁵ For traditional accounts of the role of Germanos during the war, one should consult the following: Melas, 209-276, Vovolinis, *Ekklesia eis ton Agona tis Eleftherias, 1453-1953 (the Church During the Struggle for Liberation, 1453-1953)*, 113-116, Papadopoulos, *Ekklesia tis Ellados (Church of Greece)*, 196-7.

that erupted among revolutionary elites in 1823, leading to a civil war.⁶⁶ The civil war provided an excellent opportunity for the Ottomans to regroup and land a powerful force of 6,000 led by Ibrahim Pasha in the southwest corner of the Peloponnesus.⁶⁷ Hoping to atone for his involvement in the civil war and desperate to impede the progress of Ibrahim Pasha, Papflessas led a group of 3,000 men to meet the numerically-superior force at the small town of Maniaki, Messenia. Nearly half his men, unfortunately, abandoned Papaflessas once the enemy engaged his force. Despite this mass desertion, he and his men fought bravely, suffering heavy casualties but also inflicting considerable losses on Ibrahim's force. The losses inflicted on the Egyptians reinvigorated the Greek forces, which realized that the invading army was not invincible.⁶⁸

The popular account of the heroic death of Papaflessas remains a critical part of revolutionary mythology. According to popular belief, Ibrahim asked for the recovery of his body, which, when found, was acephalous. Upon seeing the headless corpse, the military commander ordered his soldiers to reattach the head and allegedly kissed both cheeks of the vanquished and exclaiming that he hoped to die at the hands of such a brave man. The powerful image of the rebel priests created by such men played a critical role in determining the attitude of the national resistance toward the church during World War II. Papflessas' death, however, also reflects the attitude of many lower clergy who supported the revolution. In the words of Christopher Woodhouse, priests such as Papaflessas "were not so much spiritual fathers as men of the people, epitomizing all the qualities and faults of their flock."⁶⁹

⁶⁶Dakin, *Struggle for Greece*, 124.

⁶⁷Ibid., 123-4.

⁶⁸Ibid., 135. Melas, 123-129, Woodhouse, 109.

⁶⁹Woodhouse, *Greek War of Independence: Its Historical Setting*, 53.

Posterity has honored Papaflessas, Germanos, and Gregory V, but two other issues need exploring before one can understand the full extent of the church's contribution to the struggle: the contribution of the lower clergy and the monasteries on the one hand, and the legitimacy the church provided to the struggle on the other hand. These factors are critical, as both played a significant role in determining the behavior of the resistance movements toward the church leadership during World War II. First, many of the monasteries in the Peloponnese and other regions involved in the struggle provided supplies, men, and sanctuary for desperate rebels. Megaspilaion ranks among the greatest examples of the contributions made by the monastic communities. The monastery raised money for the struggle from the early days of the war. The community even provided soldiers to assist in the raising of a siege on a nearby town. Greek refugees also used the monastery as a haven from the pursuing Ottoman authorities.⁷⁰ Monasteries played a similar role during World War II, especially in Crete, where the resistance thrived.

Parish priests in the Peloponnese, who numbered about 2,400, enthusiastically joined the revolution.⁷¹ These men, epitomized by Papaflessas, were members of their community and, as such, typically shared their general attitude. When a village decided to side with the revolutionaries, the parish priests typically led the men of the community into battle. A parallel trend developed during World War II, as a majority of the clerics

⁷⁰ Even monasteries that remained either neutral or permitted the Ottomans to occupy their territory, a group of clergy within the community left to join the monastery. Mount Athos presented an ideal example of the conflict within the monastic communities over how to respond to the revolution. In the early months of the revolution, when Russian aid failed to materialize and the Tsar and the Patriarch of Constantinople condemned the revolution, the abbots decided to take the prudent course of negotiating with the Ottoman authorities. The terms included the acceptance of a small Ottoman garrison, payment of 150,000 piastres in return for providing amnesty to those refugees who sought sanctuary on the Holy Mountain. Despite these developments, many monks left to join the revolution. Frazee, *Independent Church of Greece*, 41-5

⁷¹ Frazee, "Church and State in Greece", 130.

who openly sided with the resistance were parish priests who shared the patriotic fervor of their fellow villagers. Regional differences, however, played an important role in shaping the attitude of the village communities toward the resistance.

Secular leaders, including local economic and military elites understood that the church provided legitimacy to their struggle. When one considers that Greeks during this period identified themselves as Christians first, the support of the church seemed a powerful tool at their disposal. And, as the natural leaders of the Greek millet, their participation helped transform the struggle from a secular movement for independence into a religious struggle against the Ottoman infidel. For instance, in the Ionian islands, then under British occupation, Orthodox clergy ranked among the staunchest supporters of the struggle. The British governor of the islands complained about this development in an address to the House of Commons in 1822:

...pastors of religion in these States, who, in defiance of the pure principles of the Holy Gospel, which inculcate universal charity and benevolence, publicly, in the face of this Government, offered up on the present occasion, prayers for the destruction of the Ottoman Power, thus blasphemously adding even the voice of religion, to increase an unfortunate irritation, already too prevalent.⁷²

In addition, Germanos' leadership role in civilian and military affairs represents a larger trend in the Peloponnese, where Greeks usually called on bishops to play a similar role in their see. Most declarations issued by the make-shift governments included the name of at least one bishop and a number of lower clergy.⁷³ While individual bishops provided legitimacy to the movement, the religious symbolism present at the various military and

⁷² Maitland, Sir Thomas. *Returns to an Address of the Honorable House of Commons by Sir Thomas Maitland and the Senate* (London, 1822), 3. Cited in Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece, 1821-1833*, 43.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 18-21.

civilian gatherings also illustrates the powerful role religion played in these early years. For instance, the French consul, C. Pouqueville observed that an icon of Christ was raised in the square of Agios Georgios and a cross put above the Turkish mosques. He later observed the monks of the Megaspelaion monastery leading an army in the hymn of the Trisayion. After he observed these acts, he concluded: “The Revolution had become a Holy War.”⁷⁴ Recent scholars criticize this interpretation of the revolution as a holy war, because they argue that clerics joined the revolution as ‘Greeks’ rather than as clerics. Most Greeks identified themselves first as Christians and then as members of a local village or region, and this makes such arguments debatable at best.⁷⁵

In short, monasteries and parish priests, for the most part, enthusiastically supported the revolution either by serving as soldiers, gathering supplies or money, or providing sanctuary for desperate revolutionaries evading the Ottoman authorities. Even in the case of Mount Athos, the decision of the abbots to cooperate with the Ottoman authorities reflected the attitude of part of the community as evidenced by the exodus of monks to join the revolution. Parish priests, community leaders before the revolution and supporters of local klephts, joined the revolution because they acted as members of the Orthodox community. These developments parallel trends during World War II, with the exception of Mount Athos, whose leadership feared and despised the communist-led resistance and preferred cooperating with the Germans. Finally, revolutionary leaders understood that the support of the church, both by the physical presence of clergymen in

⁷⁴ Francois Pouqueville, *Histoire de la Régénération de la Grèce* (Paris, 1825), II, 333-4, Cited in *ibid.*, 20-21.

⁷⁵ One should consult the following scholars for a more detailed analysis of this interpretation of the revolution. Kitromolides, "'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans," Veremis, *Greece : The Modern Sequel, from 1831 to the Present*.

their ranks and the signature of clergymen on their official documents, gave their movement legitimacy and transformed the war into a religious struggle.

The Greek War of Independence created serious problems for the Church. It weakened its financial, political, and administrative power. Many of the thirty-eight hierarchs either lost their lives or went into exile. The impact on the lower clergy proved even greater. The loss of many clerics created serious organizational problems for the church.⁷⁶ Financially, the church had expended much of its wealth supporting the revolution, or lost much of its revenue by the destruction of its property.⁷⁷ Aware of the weakening position of the church and the growing secularization following the revolution, civilian and military leaders, jealous of the pre-revolutionary power of the church, began to institute legal and administrative changes that culminated in the Church Constitution of 1833. In short, the circumstances of the revolution transformed the church from a powerful political, social, and economic force into an institution reduced to an arm of the state. An exploration of this transformation is important for understanding the nature of church-state relations in modern Greece from 1833 to 1940. Despite the weakening position of the church, its leadership continued to wield considerable influence in political and social affairs.

⁷⁶ Charles Frazee argues that at least five prelates lost their lives in the territory occupied by the revolutionaries, while as high as eighty hierarchs lost their lives throughout the Ottoman empire. Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece, 1821-1833*, 43-4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

The schism between the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Autocephalous Church of Greece in the liberated territories also weakened the Orthodox church in general. More importantly, it made it dependent on the secular authorities. After the execution of Gregory V on Easter Sunday 1821, the sultan appointed a number of successors to the patriarchal throne who continued officially to condemn the revolution. Revolutionary clerics and their secular allies in the Peloponnesus and other liberated territories criticized the pleas by the various patriarchs to abandon the struggle, and responded by anathematizing Gregory's successor Eugenios. The Greek revolutionaries also responded by treating the patriarchate as vacant for most of the revolution.⁷⁸ Several decades passed before the two sides reconciled with the acceptance of the Patriarchal Tomos in 1850.

The culmination of this policy came with the Church constitution of 1833 under the government of King Otto, established the nature of church-state relations in modern Greece. Thus, the development of policy toward the church from the latter years of the revolution to the promulgation of the Church constitution is the story of the evolution of a new type of captivity for the Church of Greece. Legally speaking, the latter became a tool of the state.

During the revolution, four national assemblies convened, of which the latter two are significant for determining the nature of church-state relations in independent Greece. External and internal pressures caused by civil war and military circumstances forced the first two national assemblies to disband before ecclesiastical affairs received adequate attention.⁷⁹ The third National Assembly met in Epidaurus in April 1826. Despite the fact

⁷⁸ Ibid., 44-5.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 50-61.

that military circumstances forced the assembly to disband early, the governing committee made an important decision about church-state relations; they decided that the churches in the liberated territories should break with the patriarchate of Constantinople and form an autocephalous church governed by a synod.

By 1827, the intervention of Russia, France, and Great Britain on the side of Greece, exemplified by the battle of Navarino in May 1827, ensured the independence of the new Greek state. The fourth and final national assembly met in Frozen before Navarino. At that time, a new committee was formed to explore ecclesiastical affairs. Especially, the committee came to the following conclusions: 1) the church should be ruled by a synod of three to five bishops, which should reside in the capital; 2) the church's constitution should be based on the Apostolic Canons and Holy Councils; 3) the institution would also work closely with the government to ensure the obedience of the citizenry and refrain from concerning itself with political matters. The final point illustrates the growing secularization of the revolution and, in particular, the growing influence of the secular leadership. The committee submitted its report to the Committee of Religious Affairs, but its contents never officially received the attention of the assembly. The assembly concluded its work by drafting a constitution. In this document, article 24 firmly articulated the limited role envisioned for the church in the new state. It banned the clergy from civil and military functions, thus endangering the spiritual authority of the church.⁸⁰ Charles Frazee aptly concludes that the stated rationale behind the decision "was a subterfuge aimed at getting the bishops out of the government by delegates jealous of their pre-revolutionary authority."⁸¹ Seeing through the purpose of the article, the prelates in attendance protested,

⁸⁰ Ibid., 67-9.

⁸¹ Ibid., 69.

which forced the assembly to suspend the article until President Ioannis Kapodistrias (chosen by the assembly) arrived to govern the country. This successful ecclesiastical intervention amounted to the last gasp of an institution which refused to accept the powerful current transforming it into a tool of the state.

President Kapodistrias, during his short term in office (January 1828-September 1831), promulgated a series of laws that seriously reduced the power of the church in secular affairs. The creation of an independent judiciary based on the western European model to replace the old church courts of the Ottoman period counted among the most important pieces of legislation aimed at reducing the power of the church in civilian affairs. Kapodistrias faced strong resistance from the hierarchy, but in the end he prevailed. Each prefecture had a justice of the peace and a lower court. Later, he established courts of appeal in Tripolis and Mykonos. Only cases related to marriage and divorce remained in the church's jurisdiction. He also tried to address a number of other pressing issues facing the church, including the training of clergyman and relations with the patriarchate of Constantinople, but with little success. Despite his early death by assassination on September 27, 1831, Kapodistrias started the formal process of whittling away the power of the church, especially in judicial affairs.⁸²

During Kapodistrias' presidency, France, Russia, and Great Britain began looking for a suitable candidate to become king of Greece. Only after their initial candidate, Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, declined, did they choose Otto Whittelsbach, the sixteen-year-old son of King Ludwig of Bavaria. Due to his young age, a regency was appointed to rule until he became of age. The group arrived in Nafplion (the capital of the new state) on January 18, 1832. The group could not come soon enough: the death of Kapodistrias

⁸² Ibid., 69-88.

unleashed general chaos and uncertainty throughout the country.⁸³ The regency, having little knowledge of Greek affairs, sought to create a Greek state based on its own image of an efficient state. In the process, they failed to seek the opinion of the Greek elites.⁸⁴

Georg Maurer, a Bavarian professor of law and a government official, left his mark on church-state relations in modern Greece, though the promulgation of the Church Constitution in 1833. This document firmly transformed the Greek Church into a tool of the Greek state. Specifically, the document included clauses which eliminated the hierarchy from governmental or judicial jurisdiction, prevented it from communicating with foreign states, and established an ecclesiastical governing system which ensured that the state played a role in all aspects of church affairs, even internal church matters considered outside the scope of secular politics. The state hoped to use the Church to assist in its state-building process. This powerful document, whose spirit informed church-state relations until 1943, was the culmination of the growing secularism that came to dominate the revolutionary struggle in the final years of the revolution.

Upon his arrival in Greece, Maurer found the church in desperate straits. Thousands of priests and bishops had lost their lives in the revolution, leaving many communities without a parish priest and half of the ecclesiastical sees vacant.⁸⁵ Ecclesiastical educational institutions did not exist, and, according to Maurer, only ten of every thousand priests could write their name.⁸⁶ Hoping to attain reliable information about the status of the country's monasteries and churches, and suggestions for the

⁸³Ibid., 91-99.

⁸⁴Ibid., 100.

⁸⁵Vovolinis, *Ekklesia eis ton Agona tis Eleftherias, 1453-1953 (the Church During the Struggle for Liberation, 1453-1953)*, 120. Cited in *ibid.*, 101.

⁸⁶Georg von Maurer, *Das Griechische Volk in Offentlicher, Kirchlicher und Privatrechtlicher Beziehung vor und nach dem Frieheitskampfe* (Heidelberg: 1835), 153. Cited in *ibid.*, 101.

improvement of the organization of the clergy, Maurer summoned a commission in Nafplion. The growing concern over relations between the new church and Constantinople remained a burning issue both for the state and the church. Maurer, representing the general sentiment of the regency, wanted to establish an independent Greek church. He, therefore, appointed like-minded committee members to ensure the outcome of their deliberations and report accordingly.⁸⁷

Among the most influential committee members was Theoklitos Pharmakides. Born in a small Thessalian village in January 1784, he received an extensive education, which included stops at the Patriarchal Academy in Constantinople. After his ordination as a deacon in Larissa in 1802, he traveled to the Danubian Principalities. Pharmakides was ordained a priest in 1811 in Bucharest. Over the next eight years he traveled extensively throughout western Europe. During his travels, he learned Latin, French and German and wrote and translated a number of works from those languages into Greek. His reputation as a scholar came to the attention of the governor of the Ionian Islands, Lord Guilford, who asked him to teach at the Academy of Corfu in 1819. To familiarize himself with Western Theology, before taking up his post, he spent some time at the theological school at Göttingen, where he stayed until the revolution broke out in 1821. He later played an extensive role in the revolution, including serving on a governmental assembly and publishing a newspaper.

Maurer used Pharmakides' expertise to gain a basic understanding of Orthodox doctrine and legal precedents. On the recommendation of the famous Greek scholar Georgios Gennadios, Maurer invited Pharmakides to Nafplion to assist him in formulating church legislation. Pharmakidis argued that the Greek state needed to establish an

⁸⁷ Ibid., 101-102.

independent church because continued dominance by Constantinople would encourage continued Turkish and Russian influence on the country's ecclesiastical affairs. He drafted a constitution for Maurer based on the canons of the Orthodox faith. Maurer, however, had his own ideas as about the potential role of the church in the new state. Based on his legal training and Bavarian government experience, he understood the role of the church to be that of a department of state. Before the committee met, the regency had already established a Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs to govern the church. In essence, the ministry came to dominate church affairs, even internal affairs considered exclusively ecclesiastical in nature.⁸⁸

The commission began its session in April. It concluded, among other things, that Greece needed to establish a church independent of Constantinople. Considering Maurer's careful selection of the members of the commission, their report was a mere formality. The ministry passed a series of regulations that further limited the areas of the church's independence. For example, it prohibited the institution from communicating with foreign ecclesiastical bodies without the government's consent, and the church did not have the right to convoke an assembly without prior consent from the government. Such rules and regulations foreshadowed the nature of church-state relations officially articulated in the Church Constitution of 1833.⁸⁹

Otto, though still young, understood the need to limit the power of the church, especially of the hierarchy. In a letter to his father he expressed his thoughts on the matter as follows: "The spiritual authority of the clergy in the country could become dangerous to the secular ruler if the upper clergy attached themselves to a party, since the whole clergy

⁸⁸ Ibid., 104-106.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 106-7.

might bring over the people to their side and against him.”⁹⁰ Succeeding Greek governments forced the clergy to toe the government line because they understood how powerful its influence remained in the country. World War I and the National Schism between the Royalists and the Venizelists that it created, provide an important example of the continued presence of the church in political affairs, despite the prohibition of clergymen from holding official positions in the government.

Understanding the importance of the general approval of the hierarchy, the government summoned a synod on July 15 to discuss the creation of an autocephalous Church of Greece. Frazee, among other church historians, argues that a majority of the bishops present were either not canonically appointed or refugees from the Ottoman empire.⁹¹ After seven hours of discussion, the synod approved the government’s decision to create an autocephalous Church of Greece. Frazee wryly concluded about the synod’s approval: “After eleven centuries of unity, the Church of Greece had taken the momentous step of officially separating itself from the patriarchate of Constantinople in less than seven hours.”⁹² Having legally established the Greek church as independent and autocephalous, Maurer made the final revisions to his constitution in the days following the meeting of the synod.

A week after the synod convened, Maurer published the document. As expected, it stripped the church of much of the power it held during the period of the Ottoman empire, severed it from the church of Constantinople, and firmly defined the role of the church in

⁹⁰ The letter from Otto to his father Ludwig dated May 13, 1832 is cited in Frazee, 110, and in Hans Rall, "Die Anfänge des Konfessionspolitischen Ringens um den Wittelsbacher Thron in Athen," in *Bayern: Staat und Kirche, Land und Reich*, ed. Otto Schottenloher (Munich: Karl Zink Verlag, 1961), 193.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹² Two of the greatest opponents of the constitution, Chrysostomos Papadopoulos and Konstantinos Oikonomos both point out this problem, and how it poses serious questions regarding the validity of the document. Both cited in *ibid.*, 112.

the newly created Greek state. The Greek church became an institution that differed little from other departments of state, with the bishops “being relegated to the status of office boys in the governmental bureaucracy.”⁹³ Besides confirming the government’s decision to establish the Church of Greece as autocephalous, the document contains a number of provisions that deserve attention. Articles two through four states that a government-appointed synod would rule the new church. Essentially using the Russian model, Maurer ensured the fidelity of the church by establishing the position of the royal procurator to act as the eyes and ears of the state at synodal meetings.⁹⁴ According to the constitution, the procurator needed to attend all synod meetings, “and every act in his absence shall be null and void.”⁹⁵ As a further insult, the procurator had the right to introduce new business, which took precedence over all other business. In another humiliating article, the government instructed the synod to act as a watchdog for the state, and to ensure “that priests do not engage in political affairs or in any way take part in them.”⁹⁶

Attempting to curtail the financial and political power of the monasteries, Maurer promulgated a law in September 1834 which closed the sparsely-populated smaller monasteries, confiscated their estates, and sold the property. The funds gained from these sales went into an ecclesiastical and education fund. The government also passed a series of laws regulating the internal affairs of monastic communities, by establishing stringent rules for the elections of abbots. Moreover, the government also wanted to control the movement of monks, who travelled throughout the country selling icons and rendering

⁹³ Ibid., 117.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 113-4.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ For the text of the constitution, one should consult the *Efimeris tis Kyverniseos*, 1 August, 1833, no.23, pp. 169-174. Cited in Frazee, 113-115.

other money raising services for their establishments.⁹⁷ In short, desperate for funds and wanting to curtail the power and influence of monastic communities, the government passed a series of laws that severely weakened the financial and political base of these communities.

Most historians of the church during this period condemned the government's heavy-handed treatment of the church, which, they argued, transformed the church into a tool of the state and disregarded the canons of the church. Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, considered among the most important hierarchs and church historians of modern Greece, describes the situation as follows: "The Constitution is altogether foreign to the canons of the Orthodox Church, contrary to its traditions and its historical past."⁹⁸ And Charles Frazee concluded: "In all, there were twenty-five articles, each of which made the church more subservient to the state. If ever a church was legally stripped of authority and reduced to complete dependence on the state, Maurer's constitution did it to the Church of Greece."⁹⁹ In short, Maurer produced a document which with few exceptions informed church-state relations for over a century. Damaskinos' Church Constitution of 1943 presented the first substantial revision to Maurer's document.

Church-state relations remained complex throughout the next century, as successive governments demanded the support of the church, especially of its hierarchy. Political elites understood that the hierarchy, because of its powerful influence, did not simply constitute a group of ordinary bureaucrats. Two important examples of government intervention in ecclesiastical affairs illustrates the complexity of the relationship between

⁹⁷ Ibid., 120.

⁹⁸ Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, *Istoria tis Ekklisias tis Ellados (A History of the Church of Greece)* (Athens: 1920, 1923), 104. Cited in Frazee, 117n.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 114.

organized religion and politics in modern Greece: the National Schism (1917-1923) and the Archiepiscopal Election of 1938. In both cases, the government deemed its intervention in ecclesiastical affairs crucial to the interests of the state.

The National Schism of 1915-1923 divided the nation both geographically and politically, pitting King Constantine I against his prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos. After remaining neutral during the first year of World War I, king and prime minister disagreed over how to proceed. Constantine believed that benevolent neutrality toward the Central Powers, which he believed the likely victors of the war, remained the most prudent course of action. Venizelos, in contrast, believed that joining the Entente served the nation's best interest for it ensured the retention of the newly-gained territories won during the Balkan War of 1912-13.¹⁰⁰ Geographically, the majority of the king's supporters resided in the regions of 'old Greece' (territorial boundaries of Greece before 1913, including the Peloponnesus, Attica, etc.), while those of Venizelos resided in the 'New Territories' (Eastern Macedonia, Thrace, Crete, etc.). Venizelos resigned after numerous failed attempts to persuade the king to accept his position. After accepting his resignation, Constantine called for elections that only brought Venizelos' Liberal party an increased majority in parliament. The results of the election failed to persuade the king to yield to his prime minister, who, in turn, again tendered his resignation. Refusing to submit to his strong-willed prime minister, Constantine called for new elections. The Liberal party abstained, which led to the election of an unpopular royalist government. By September 1916, Venizelos decided to establish a rival government in Thessaloniki after the Athens' government permitted the Bulgarians to annex territory in Greek Macedonia.¹⁰¹ With the

¹⁰⁰ Nanakis, "Venizelos and Church-State Relations", 158.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

support of the Entente, who forced the king and his government to abdicate, Venizelos established his government in the capital the following June.¹⁰²

The Church of Greece failed to remain above the struggle, despite its legal obligation to do so. Events over the next seven years had devastating effects on the church hierarchy. Pseudo-legal actions taken by the two political factions made a mockery of the church canons. During the period, successive governments appointed three different archbishops and replaced a number of other hierarchs based on their political leanings. Like the rest of the nation, the church's sympathies were divided along geographic lines, with the exception of a number of *Venizelists* residing in 'old Greece'.¹⁰³ Theoklitos Minopoulos, archbishop of Athens and all Greece, brought the church into the struggle when he excommunicated Venizelos after he formed his rival government in 1916.¹⁰⁴ Once he reestablished control in Athens, Venizelos understood that he needed to replace Theoklitos with someone sympathetic to his cause. Political intervention in ecclesiastical affairs, though commonplace in modern Greek history, required legal dressing.¹⁰⁵ On June 18, 1917 Venizelos, through his minister of religion and education, I. Dingas, convened an ecclesiastical council in Thessaloniki, composed of sympathetic clerics, such as Metropolitan Gennadios of Thessaloniki to discuss the matter.¹⁰⁶ The council, made up of predominantly of Venizelists, counseled the minister to rescind article 13 of law 201, which dealt with the make-up of the Holy Synod, and to require a new synod with bishops who had not participated in the excommunication. This act ensured that Venizelos received

¹⁰² Dakin, *The Unification of Greece, 1770-1923* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), David Leon, *Greece and the Great Powers* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974).

¹⁰³ Giorgos Karagiannis, *Ekklesia kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)* (Athens: Pontiki, 1997), 32-3.

¹⁰⁴ Nanakis, 358, Karagiannis, 34, Frazee, *Church and State*, 139.

¹⁰⁵ Karagiannis, 37-8, Frazee, 139-40, Nanakis, 359-60.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

ecclesiastical support for his actions and a church compliant with his wishes.

Unsurprisingly, a new synod convened, dethroned Theoklitos and confined him to a monastery while handing out lesser punishments to the other priests who had participated in the excommunication.¹⁰⁷

In 1920, after Venizelos' Liberal Party lost the general elections, the new royalist government reinstated Theoklitos and the hierarchs deposed three years earlier.¹⁰⁸ At the end of the war, Venizelos' decision appeared to yield considerable benefits to the nation. They acquired eastern Thrace and permission to occupy Smyrna.¹⁰⁹ Hoping to secure its recently-awarded territory in Asia Minor and to annex Constantinople, Greek forces attempted to destroy the newly created Turkish nationalist force of Kemal Ataturk. A devastating defeat at the hands of Ataturk's forces in August 1922 created a political crisis, which ended with a military coup by Colonel Nikolaos Plastiras and the abolition of the monarchy in favor of a presidential republic.¹¹⁰ The coup temporarily ended the National Schism. The period closed with the second dethronement of Theoklitos on November 27, 1922 and the punishment of some of his supporters after refusing to accept the new government.¹¹¹ The Plastiras government oversaw the election of seven *Venizelist* metropolitans, including the newly-elected metropolitan of Corinth of Athens, Damaskinos Papandreou.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., Karagiannis, 35.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919, Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Karagiannis, 40-42, Frazee, 140-1.

¹¹² Damaskinos helped establish and lead a ecclesiastical organization, the Panclerical Union, whose controversial activities remain a contested topic among church historians of the period. The man and his organization will receive more attention in the following chapter. The organization met with the Plastiras

The events discussed above illustrate that the church remained a powerful institution, despite the secular limitations placed on its power. Maurer and his successors intended the church to remain a tool of the state and its hierarchy faithful bureaucrats. Subsequent events, however, illustrate that the hierarchy, as acknowledged by Otto nearly a century earlier, wielded more influence than intended by the secular authorities. An important question, however, remains: how much freedom did the church possess during the period? Andreas Nanakis summarized the position of the Church as follows: “The church had a specific role within the structure of the state: to minister to the religious needs of the people and to accept the current political regime in the national center; a role that effectively gave it no room to maneuver.”¹¹³

No doubt, the pressure within the hierarchy and from the reserve officer corps influenced Theoklitos’ decision and that of his supporters to excommunicate Venizelos, but their experience during the first two years of the schism and the general sentiment of the majority of the clergy toward the authority of the king illustrates that the clergy’s agency in the excommunication was not inevitable. Many of the clerics involved in the excommunication experienced a different war from those in the ‘New Territories’. They served, predominantly, in agrarian regions and felt the full brunt of the Entente blockade and bombardment of Athens. This experience, no doubt, colored their attitude toward Venizelos and his supporters.¹¹⁴ And, more importantly, the hierarchy perceived the king as “representing continuity with the Byzantine emperor, with whose name were linked legends and traditions that acted as strong ideological antibodies sustaining the Greek

government only days before the government appointed Damaskinos and several of his colleagues metropolitans.

¹¹³ Nanakis, "Venizelos and Church-State Relations", 359.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 360-1.

people and Hellenism throughout the period of Ottoman domination.”¹¹⁵ If Theoklitos and the other clerics involved perceived the king as the legitimate ruler of the country, how much pressure needed to be placed on these individuals to excommunicate Venizelos? Moreover, their decision to act, despite the motivation, constitutes a blatant political act, illustrating that clergymen acted as politically active Greek citizens, despite the legal limitations. In short, pressure, both internal and external, influenced the excommunication of Venizelos, but the personal experience of the clerics involved, and the general attitude of the clergy played an important role in influencing their decision to engage in the political struggle.

The period between 1923 and 1938 saw the passing of a series of important pieces of legislation regarding church-state relations, including the constitutions of 1923, 1931, and a series of restrictive laws under the 4th of August regime of Ioannis Metaxas in 1936. The tumultuous interwar period witnessed a number of unstable political regimes, three dictatorships, the creation and destruction of a republic and the abolition and restoration of the monarchy, and so many military coups that the act finally led to popular indifference. Influencing and compounding the political instability was Greece’s substantial foreign debt, refugee problem from the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, and uncertainty about the country’s security and international standing. The church’s position, unfortunately, appeared to fluctuate, at least on paper, as much as the political situation. The blatant interference by the Metaxas regime on the eve of the Second World War, reinforced the powerful grip the state maintained on the internal affairs of the church.

The first constitution, promulgated under the Plastiras government (1922-23) reduced secular interference in ecclesiastical affairs by permitting the church more

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 360.

flexibility in its internal affairs such as the election of new hierarchs, reducing the position of the procurator to an advisory capacity, and permitting the hierarchy to meet yearly in October to discuss the general business of the church.¹¹⁶ These acts were revolutionary considering that since 1833 the synod required government permission to convene an ecclesiastical meeting. Furthermore, it ensured the church's obedience by providing its agent, the procurator, with veto powers at synod meetings. Political instability, however, nullified the church's newly granted freedoms. Plastiras fell from power in June 1925 when another military officer, General Theodore Pangalos, staged a coup and established his own dictatorship. He immediately suspended the church constitution and restored government control of the church. In August 1926, Pangalos fell from power, but the constitution of 1923 was not restored. In 1931, Venizelos, in his last term as prime minister, promulgated a new constitution, one which strongly resembled the constitution of 1923. The hierarchy received more influence over the election of church leadership, the procurator's role again became an advisory one, and the hierarchy gained permission to convene every three years without prior government consent.¹¹⁷

In November 1935, after a rigged plebiscite, the country 'decided' to restore the monarchy and recall Constantine's eldest son, George II, from exile to ascend the throne.¹¹⁸ Only nine months later, on August 4, 1936, George II permitted General Ioannis Metaxas, a trusted supporter, to establish a royal dictatorship. These events had a negative impact on the church, as the new government wanted to control all aspects of life, especially influential institutions such as the church. Metaxas passed a series of restrictive laws,

¹¹⁶ Frazee, "Church and State," 141.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 141-3.

¹¹⁸ Thanos Veremis, *The Military in Greek Politics: From Independence to Democracy* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997).

which included reducing the church's control over the election of new bishops and, made the general church assemblies powerless.¹¹⁹ An interesting decision by the government, however, after the death of Archbishop Chrysostomos Papadopoulos on October 22, 1938 created a new conflict between church and state. On November 1, Metaxas promulgated a new law permitting the hierarchy to elect a new archbishop, but needed the ratification of the king within fifteen days.

On November 5, 1938, the hierarchy convened in the metropolitan church in Athens to elect Chrysostomos' successor. Two candidates emerged: the popular and strong-willed Metropolitan Damaskinos of Corinth and the erudite and polyglot, patriarchal representative to Greece, Chrysanthos Philippidis. Metaxas wanted Chrysanthos to win the election for he feared Damaskinos' strong-will and democratic leanings, and instructed his minister of religion, Mr. Georgakopoulos to use his influence to ensure his election.¹²⁰ After a close vote, Damaskinos emerged the victor by a vote of 31 to 30.¹²¹ Frustrated by his failure, Metaxas decided to have the election annulled, despite a plea from Damaskinos and over half the hierarchy to refrain from interfering in ecclesiastical affairs. After governmental pressure, the Highest Governing Court followed the dictator's order and annulled the election.¹²² Metaxas convened a 'special' synod composed of twelve members, and asked them to provide a list of three names to the government. He insisted that the list exclude Damaskinos' name. Ultimately, Metaxas appointed his candidate, Chrysanthos as archbishop on December 1, 1938. Thus, on the eve of World War II, the

¹¹⁹ Frazee, 144.

¹²⁰ His involvement in the election will receive more attention in the following chapter.

¹²¹ Considerable debate exists regarding the election; specifically, the legality of one of the electors, who a high ecclesiastical court dethroned for simony months earlier. The hierarchy's failure to elect his successor created a problem. The composition of the electoral body will receive more attention in the following chapter.

¹²² The political maneuvering by Metaxas to influence the decision of the court will receive more attention in the following chapter.

state reasserted its control over the church by ignoring the legislation of the past twenty-five years which seemingly released the church from state control.

In short, Maurer's document endured, despite a few modifications, in spirit for over a century. The legal changes made to the position of the Church in Greece typically lasted a few years before the most liberal laws were either rescinded or suspended by authoritarian governments, such as those of Generals Pangalos and Ioannis Metaxas. Despite the weak position of the Church in the realm of high politics, the National Schism illustrates that the Church remained a powerful force that successive governments attempted to control and conform to their own wishes. Church influence in political affairs, however, did not translate to direct confrontation with political leaders. The scandalous treatment of the church during the National Schism and the archiepiscopal election of 1938 reinforced the inequality of the relationship. In the field of high politics, secular authorities prevented the church from establishing an independent position, especially during periods of political turmoil.

Exclusion from high political office, however, did not mean a complete emasculation of the church. Strong-willed hierarchs continued to wield considerable influence in social and political affairs, especially when state policies disappointed the citizenry. Dating back to the Ottoman period, a series of unequal relationships between powerful notables and other members of society dominated political and social life. Better known as clientelism, this patron-client relationship endured during the first century of Greek independent statehood.¹²³ This policy led to popular distrust of the central

¹²³ Based on the person of the godfather, at the village level, complex clientelist relationships, rather than ideology determined the make-up of the government for much of this period. Powerful clients provided career and educational opportunities, and access

government, which was “viewed as predatory in that it extracts resources and compliance in often irascible ways.”¹²⁴ Because clients view the state in such a way, it encourages them to engage in “profiteering, tax evasion, and speculation.”¹²⁵ As a result, political parties remained little more than fronts for the interests of an individual or family, making ideological differences between these parties irrelevant or nonexistent. Because this individualistic approach toward political life dominated Greece, successive governments focused little attention on providing public goods to society. In short, the Greek population turned to traditional elites such as local notables through clientelist networks that worked far more effectively than trying directly to cooperate with the state bureaucracy.

Political instability also contributed to the successive governments’ inability to provide basic public goods to the population. From the establishment of the Greek state, conflicts with the foreign-born royal dynasties, infighting among political elites, and, after World War I, the intervention of the military in politics contributed so as to destabilize the government machinery. This process intensified during the interwar years.

A series of costly foreign policy decisions, motivated by the irredentist policy of the ‘Megali Idea,’ which led to the Asia Minor Catastrophe, consumed many of the nation’s resources which were needed for internal improvement. Remaining on war footing for over a decade (1912-1923), a massive refugee crisis caused by the Greek army’s disastrous defeat at the hands of the Turkish nationalist forces in Asia Minor, and perpetual indebtedness to foreign powers also contributed to the uncertain atmosphere that permeated

to scarce resources in return for the loyalty of their client base. Thus, the population depended on their patrons, rather than the state bureaucracy to receive much needed services and opportunities. Political life for the patron meant access to scarce resources, which can then be redistributed to his client base. Legg, *Modern Greece*, 91-92.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Greek life during the period. Thus, when natural and man-made disaster struck, Greeks had little faith in the bankrupt political system, and, instead, turned to traditional regional elites. The Corinthian earthquake of April 1922 provides an excellent case study of the failings of the Greek state and the potential power traditional elites, as individuals who had access to precious resources, continued to wield.¹²⁶

Church hierarchs counted among the most important regional leaders. These men achieved power by possessing powerful political, familial, and ecclesiastical patrons, who ensured that they had access to precious resources. Despite the hagiographical literature written about hierarchs in Greece, these men needed powerful political allies to attain power in a Church controlled by a clientelist-dominated political establishment.

Archbishop Damaskinos provides an excellent example of an exceptionally talented and politically astute man who reached the heights of power in the Church of Greece. His familial and political connections provided excellent opportunities to demonstrate his extensive educational background and exceptional skills. In short, capable clergymen, due to their clientelist ties and the powerful historical role of the Church in the popular imagination, had the opportunity to wield exceptional power in social and political affairs despite the legal limitations placed on the hierarchy by the state.

This is what happened in May 1941, when the Axis occupation of Greece commenced. After decades of dictatorship, disgust with the political establishment, and the power vacuum created by the evacuation of the government, the Greek population turned to a traditional institution whose leaders served them well in moments of crisis in the past and who remained a powerful political and social force in society. The life and ecclesiastical career of Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou represents an excellent example of the

¹²⁶ The earthquake will receive more detailed coverage in the following chapter.

continued influence of church leadership during the interwar period. His responsibilities in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes in Corinth in 1928, and his extraordinary mission to the United State two years later, demonstrate that the state, due to a poor infrastructure and efficient bureaucratic apparatus, created a space for clerics such as Damaskinos to work outside the narrow confines created for the Church by the secular political establishment. This aspect of Damaskinos' life is the subject of the chapter that follows.

Chapter II

The Making of an Ethnarch:

A Biographical Sketch of Archbishop Damaskinos (1891-1949)

*He left Salamina for Athens. The throne awaited him. The Church awaited him. His flock, which was under great distress, awaited him.*¹²⁷

*The Archbishop of Athens and all Greece and Regent Damaskinos Papandreou from Corinth, was undoubtedly one of the most distinguished personages of the last fifty years.*¹²⁸

The two quotes above are indicative of the assessment regarding Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou. The first one appears in the first major biography written about the Archbishop authored by the Greek literary figure Ilias Venezis. It focuses on the period of the Axis occupation (1941-1944). The second is the opening sentence of a general biography written by Siphis Kollias, an important popular writer and church historian. Both are significant studies of the Archbishop, less for their analysis of his life than for the documents they reproduced in their works about this leader of the church. More importantly, they are representative of the mythic image of the archbishop created soon after an untimely death from a heart attack on May 20, 1949 at the age of 59. The extraordinary role played by Damaskinos during World War II made him a hero to Greeks who needed someone or something to look to for hope at a time when the world around them was changing rapidly. The imposing statue of the Archbishop adjacent to the Metropolitan Church in Athens is an expression of the gratitude felt by the Greek

¹²⁷ Ilias Venezis, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos: Oi Chronoi tis Douleias (Archbishop Damaskinos: The Years of Slavery)* (Athens: Estia, 1952).

¹²⁸ Siphis Kollias, *Archiepiskopos-Antivasileus Damaskinos o apo Korinthias : Mia Anepanalipti Ekklesiastiki Morphi (Archbishop-Regent Damaskinos of Corinth: One Unparalleled Ecclesiastical Personality)*, 3 ed. (Athens Petrakis Monastery, 1975).

people for his efforts. As discussed in the previous chapter, the relationship between the nation's population and the Orthodox Church that developed during the Ottoman period and the War of Independence played a powerful part in shaping the perception of the role of the Church during periods of crisis.

The life of Archbishop Damaskinos is indicative of these traditions and their influence on a nation steeped in myths of the past. In particular, his career provides an excellent case study of the persistent power that tradition permits hierarchs to enjoy. Almost immediately after his ordination, the church acknowledged him as one of its most capable leaders by sending him on sensitive and important missions. He increased his prestige within the church by fulfilling his assigned tasks beyond the expectations of his superiors. Damaskinos also earned the attention and support of powerful political personalities such as Eleftherios Venizelos, Nicholas Plastiras, and Panagis Tsaldaris—relationships that ultimately helped shape his ecclesiastical and political career.¹²⁹ These political relationships, however, also contributed to his fall from power in the aftermath of his election as Archbishop in November 1938.¹³⁰ These experiences proved critical to his development as a national leader by the beginning of the Axis occupation in April 1941. Ultimately, an evaluation of his career illustrates that Damaskinos was both a capable leader, but also a product of the political and social instability racking Greece during the first half of the twentieth century. His life and career reflect both the complexity of church-state relations during the period and the powerful influence traditional perceptions of the church hierarchy continued to play in the development of the nation.

¹²⁹ The political animosity between Venizelos and Tsaldaris testifies to his political skills, which allowed him to win the support of these rivals in a clientelist society such as Greece.

¹³⁰ The elections and its aftermath will receive more attention later in the chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the turbulent ecclesiastical career of Archbishop of Athens, Damaskinos Papandreou, as a case study of the continued power and influence of the church in Greek society, and to discuss how his early ecclesiastical career prepared him for the critical role he was destined to play as the leader of the Church during World War II. After he completed his university studies and served in the Greek army during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), Damaskinos joined the priesthood and quickly rose up the ranks to become metropolitan of Corinth in 1922 and archbishop of Athens in 1938. Most biographers attribute his rapid rise to his educational background and his ability as a leader and administrator. He demonstrated these skills in his response to the devastating earthquake that destroyed the city of Corinth (1928) and on his diplomatic mission to the United States as patriarchal exarch in 1930. His performance during these two critical years prepared him for his role as ethnarch during World War II. For instance, in the aftermath of the Corinthian earthquake, his office became the nerve center of all affiliated relief, fundraising, and reconstruction efforts. This experience, which included running a relief organization, proved critical in his efforts to combat the nation-wide famine that crippled Greece during World War II. Moreover, during his mission as exarch, Damaskinos illustrated his diplomatic skills and utilized his legal training to overcome a series of sensitive and complex obstacles—an experience that proved critical in preparing him for the sensitive diplomatic maneuvering he would demonstrate during his dealings with the Axis occupation authorities during World War II. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the years immediately preceding World War II, including the annulment of his election as archbishop of Athens in 1938 by

dictator Ioannis Metaxas and his confinement to the Phaneromeni Monastery (1939-1941).

Most studies of Archbishop Damaskinos are hagiographic in nature.¹³¹ Those focusing on his early life aim at creating an image of a hero as it emerged at the end of World War II. Emphasis is usually on his impoverished roots, his intellectual acumen, and existential struggles. While the assistance of his family receives some attention, this issue is minimized to emphasize the exceptional child who became the ‘savior’ of the nation. At the end of the nineteenth century, when Damaskinos was born, recording births and deaths remained the task of parents and parish priests, and records were not meticulously kept. Debate over the year of Damaskinos birth testifies to the poor record keeping of the period.¹³² Until 1989, Church historians used the 1937 edition of the Ethical and Ecclesiastical Encyclopedia for details about his life prior to his ordination in 1917.¹³³ In 1989, the metropolitan church of Nafpaktos celebrated the forty-year anniversary of his death by publishing a series of articles about his life in their journal *Ekklesiastiki Nafs* (Ecclesiastic Ship). The articles from this popular journal remain the

¹³¹ The most significant of such studies are by Siphis Kollias, Dimosthenis Koukounas, and Ilias Venezis. The definitive study of his tenure as metropolitan of Corinth remains Soterios Thomopoulos’s short biographical sketch. Soterios Thomopoulos, *O Mitropolitis Korinthias Damaskinos (1923-1938): I Polyschidis Drasis tou Dimiourgou tis Neas Korinthou (Metropolitan of Corinth Damaskinos (1923-1938): The Diverse Activity of the Founder of New Corinth)* (Athens: 1963). For his mission to the United States, one should consult George Papaioannou’s essay on the topic and Theodore Saloutos’s discussion of the American Greek Orthodox Church during the interwar period. George Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth," in *History of the Greek Orthodox Church in America*, ed. Miltiades Efthimiou and George Christopoulos (New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, 1984): 122-144, Theodore Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 281-309.

¹³² Most historians argue his birth year was 1891, but a controversy about his age emerged in 1922, when the Plastiras government intended to appoint him metropolitan of Corinth. According to church law, a man had to be at least 32 years of age to qualify for the position of bishop or metropolitan. Thus, his age made him ineligible. Unhappy with this problem, state officials traveled to his village and ‘investigated’ the issue. They discovered a discrepancy in the records, determining that he was actually born in 1890. Dimosthenis Koukounas discusses the issue in his chapter on Damaskinos’ childhood. Dimosthenis Koukounas, *O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos (Archbishop Damaskinos)* (Athens: Metron, 1991), 17-18.

¹³³ "Archbishop Damaskinos," in *Thriskeftiki kai Ithiki Enkyklopaideia (Religious and Ethical Encyclopedia)* (Athens: Martinos, 1937).

main source on his early life.¹³⁴ Similar to the other studies written about Damaskinos, these articles paint a simplistic picture of a heroic figure who overcame great odds to become the leader of the nation.¹³⁵

Damaskinos came from an impoverished family with clerical roots. His uncle, who was an abbot of the Koronis Monastery in the region of Karditsa, became a central figure in his early life and provided the young Damaskinos with much needed assistance during his teenage years. Biographers emphasize his family's poverty and the child's exceptional intellect and work ethic. Despite the obstacles he faced as a child, he succeeded, with the assistance of his uncle, to receive a double degree in Law and Theology from the University of Athens. After graduating from the university, he served with distinction in the military during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913).

Born Dimitrios Papandreou in the small village of Dovritsa in the region of Nafpaktos in 1890, Damaskinos' early life proved difficult, as his family struggled to maintain a subsistence existence. Narratives also highlight the calling of the priesthood that ran in his family,¹³⁶ as indicated by his last name Papandreou. His great grandfather Nikolaos Papandreas was the parish priest of Dovritsa in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. He had two sons, Anthypas and Ioannis; the second was the

¹³⁴ The series of articles published in the journal's quarterly issues covered a number of topics, but those addressing his childhood and early ecclesiastical career were most important because they provided new details about his life unexplored or underdeveloped in previous studies of Damaskinos.

¹³⁵ His work remains the most cited sources about his life. Haralambos Haralambopoulos, *Archiepiskopos Athinon kai Pasis Ellados (1891-1949)*, vol. 4, *Nafpaktiaka Meletimata (Nafpaktos' Studies)* (Athens: Regeneration, 1990), ———, "Oi Rizis tou (His Roots)," *Ekklesiastiki Nafs (Ecclesiastical Ship)*, 20 (1989). Church historian Haralambos Haralambopoulos, who remains the most important scholar of his early life, for instance, contributed an article to this collection and wrote several other studies on his life.

¹³⁶ Haralambopoulos, "His Roots", 29, ———, *Damaskinos Papandreou*, 18-9, Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*, 41-2, Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 17-8.

grandfather of young Dimitrios.¹³⁷ According to Haralambos Haralambopoulos, Ioannis was born around 1805, and participated in the 1821 Greek rebellion against the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁸ He had three children, Nikos, Christos, and Georgios. The first fathered Damaskinos, while his uncle Christos (later to become a clergyman and take the ecclesiastical name of Christoforos) played an important role in the archbishop's early life. The Papandreou family, while among the most respected families in the village, was impoverished. Nikos, for instance, supplemented his meager income by working as a hired hand, finding work as far away as Odessa.¹³⁹

Young Dimitrios received his first eight years of formal education in the small village and the regional capital of Platanos. Damaskinos excelled in the village grammar school, which prompted his father to send him to the gymnasium in the regional capital town of Platanos. According to legend, his father purchased the young boy a pair of new shoes to attend school. Damaskinos, not wanting to wear them out, would walk from his village to Platanos, either wearing an old pair of shoes or barefoot, only putting on the shoes when he neared the outskirts of the city. Unfortunately, someone stole those new shoes. Damaskinos enjoyed telling the story later in his life. The fiction writer Giorgos Athanas wrote a popular short story about the stolen shoes titled "Christmas Shoes."¹⁴⁰ Such stories only added to the legend of the man, contributing to the heroic image immortalized in his bronze statue in Athens. Attending school in the regional capital, however, created a financial burden for the family, as his father paid a local family to

¹³⁷ Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos.*, 18-9, Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*, 41-2, Haralambopoulos, *Damaskinos Papandreou*, 18, ———, "His Roots", 29.

¹³⁸ Haralambopoulos, *Damaskinos Papandreou*, 19.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Thanasis Papathanasopoulos, "Ta Efivika Tou Chronia (His Adolescent Years)," *Ekklisiastiki Nafs (Ecclesiastical Ship)* 20 (1989). Cited in Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 20.

provide room and board for his son. A letter from his father criticizing him for careless spending attests to the difficulty placed on his family.¹⁴¹

His teachers at the gymnasium quickly realized that the young boy had a fertile mind. According to one story, a teacher gave him the following advice: “If you continue with your studies you will become a strong individual, if you abandon them, the Kravaros mountains will be enriched by yet another criminal.”¹⁴² This story illustrates the fact that education, while important, remained a path pursued by the exceptionally bright or the privileged. Most Greek families lacked the resources necessary and required the labor of their children on the family plot or in the family trade. After he completed his studies at the gymnasium, Dimitris seemed destined to become a member of the rural police or a local official. The intervention of his uncle Christoforos, who took his young nephew to live with him at the Monastery of Koronis in the region of Thessaly, ensured that young Dimitrios had the opportunity to continue his studies. He completed his high school education in the town of Karditsa before attending the University of Athens, where he received the aforementioned dual degree in law and theology.¹⁴³

At the time of his graduation, Greece found itself in the Balkan wars (1912-3). The young Dimitrios, likely swept up by patriotic fervor, joined the Greek army. He was among the first soldiers to enter Thessaloniki when Greek forces occupied the city in 1912.¹⁴⁴ At war’s end, many advised Dimitrios to attend the prestigious military academy, *Scholi Evelpidon*, a path that many thought ensured steady employment, a good

¹⁴¹ Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 23.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴³ Haralambopoulos states that his uncle assisted other members of his family, but no one benefitted more from his uncle’s kindness than he did. Haralambopoulos, *Damaskinos Papandreou*, 20-1.

¹⁴⁴ He enjoyed telling this story later in his life. Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 23, Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*, 42.

income, and considerable prestige. He declined, opting instead to join the priesthood. His military experience, no doubt, helped prepare him for the trials and tribulations faced by the nation during his tenure as head of the church. Clearly, he overcame. After his discharge from the army, followed by his ordination, Damaskinos embarked on an ecclesiastical career that saw him rise rapidly up the ranks of the church hierarchy that included his election as metropolitan of Corinth in 1922 at the young age of 32.

The outbreak of World War I was a crucial period for the development of the nation. The disagreement between the Greek king, Constantine I, and his popular prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, known as the ‘National Schism,’ divided the nation for decades. The young Damaskinos became an avid supporter of the charismatic prime minister, and his ecclesiastical career became inextricably tied to the success of the prime minister and his Liberal party.¹⁴⁵

An interesting gap exists in the period between his tenure in the Greek army and his early ecclesiastical career. Biographers of Damaskinos ignore this period, likely due to its political complexity and because addressing this period in his life may force them to reconsider the image of Damaskinos as an exceptional man who remained above politics. Two important historians, Theoklitos Strangas and Giorgos Karagiannis, however, provide interesting insights into the life of Damaskinos during this period and his response to the National Schism. They argue that his meteoric rise from deacon to metropolitan in less than ten years reflects his personal ambition and powerful political ties. His political involvement during the period also helps explain why the Fourth of August Regime annulled his election as archbishop in 1938, which biographers and some

¹⁴⁵ Giorgos Karagiannis, the popular historian of church-state relations, argues that Damaskinos established himself as an avid supporter of Eleftherios Venizelos in 1916, at the height of the National Schism. Giorgos Karagiannis, *Ekklesia kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)* (Athens Pontiki, 1997), 32.

contemporaries consider merely as an arbitrary act of a paranoid dictator. In short, the period provides important evidence for understanding Damaskinos not merely as an exceptional talent but also as a leader and organizer with the ambition and personal ties necessary for one to become an important player in political and ecclesiastical affairs of Greece during the interwar period.

His status during World War I remains contested among scholars. There is even disagreement among them as to when his ecclesiastical career began.¹⁴⁶ Regardless of the exact date of his ordination, Damaskinos caught the attention of politicians and clerics alike in 1918 by completing two sensitive tasks successfully: writing a new constitutional charter for Mount Athos and serving as abbot of the Petraki and Penteli monasteries. In 1918, Mount Athos needed a new constitution. The Greek government feared that the Slavic monks intended to take advantage of the troubled state of affairs and gain control of the holy mountain. Damaskinos appeared as an ideal candidate because of his educational background in law and theology, and was duly appointed. He wrote the new constitution and, according to some accounts, ‘preserved the Greekness’ of Mount Athos. The significance of this act may be exaggerated, but it brought attention to its author.¹⁴⁷

The National Schism may have established Damaskinos as a politically active cleric, but the founding of the Panclerical Union to improve the status of the clergy, especially unmarried ones, made him a powerful force both on the ecclesiastical and

¹⁴⁶ Biographers such as Koukounas and Kollias claim it began with his ordination as deacon by the Metropolitan of Thessaliotis in 1917, while Georgios Karagiannis implies that it began earlier as one of the young clerics residing in “Old Greece,” who supported Venizelos during the National Schism.¹⁴⁶ Though no scholar provides evidence to support his case, it appears likely that he began his ecclesiastical career before 1917. Karagiannis’ position explains why Damaskinos possessed the prestige necessary to establish the important Panclerical Union in 1919, an unlikely act by a recently ordained deacon, despite the opportunities available to individuals with the personal contacts, educational background, and ability of men such as Damaskinos. Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 27, Kollias, 42, Karagiannis, *Ekklesia kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)*, 32.

¹⁴⁷ Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*, 43-4, Gerasimos Konidaris, *Kathemerini*, 11/6/1938.

political scene. As Siphis Kollias' puts it, "This difficult task—a dream of thousands of clerics—was shouldered by the young archimandrite Damaskinos."¹⁴⁸

It is generally accepted that the majority of the clergy lived in abject poverty and lacked an organization that represented their needs to the state. Disagreement comes, however, over the actual intentions and activities of this organization. Georgios Karagiannis, a popular historian of church-state relations, paints a less altruistic picture of the organization. He maintains that the Panclerical Union:

[was] an organization of unmarried priests, who brought together archimandrites, monks, and deacons who supported the Venizelist camp. These individuals will make up the leadership of the church in the coming years, some even reaching the highest positions. Including the organization's president, Archimandrite Damaskinos Papandreou... while its secretary deacon Athinagoras Spyros, will be elected Patriarch of Constantinople.¹⁴⁹

In contrast to the glowing assessment of Kollias, Karagiannis views the organization as a Venizelist front within the Church. Kollias never indicates that the organization had any political leanings or ulterior motives. Karagiannis' assessment, however, appears to have some merit. In particular, it helps explain why both the royal family and its client General Ioannis Metaxas had Damaskinos' election as archbishop annulled in November 1938.¹⁵⁰

Prominent church historian and clergyman Theoklitos Strangas concurs with Karagiannis' general assessment of the organization. His conclusion about the intentions of the organization's leadership is even harsher than that of Karagiannis. The author argues that Damaskinos and his colleagues counted among the many clerics in Athens

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁹ Karagiannis, *Ekklesia kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)*, 40-1.

¹⁵⁰ Many disregard Karagiannis' observations about the organization due to his lack of evidence and 'leftist' leanings.

that concerned themselves solely with their own advancement during the early twenties, while the Greek army and patriotic clerics fought and died in Asia Minor in the fateful summer and fall of 1922.¹⁵¹ The organization, according to the author, paid lip service to the issues mentioned by Kollias, but cared little for the well-being of the impoverished clergy. For him, the group's relationship with the Plastiras government provided ample evidence of their political leanings and selfish intentions. This relationship leads the author to surmise that they used the organization as vehicle, supposedly formed to speak for the clergy, but in fact to secure their place in the hierarchy.¹⁵²

The organization's leadership met with Plastiras in December 1922, days before the revolutionary government appointed three of its members, Damaskinos, Athinagoras, and Panteleimon metropolitans of Corinth, Corfu, and Karystia respectively.

Sympathetic accounts of Damaskinos omit this detail, citing his exceptional service and ability as reasons for his appointment. Karagiannis and Strangas, however, point to this development as evidence that the organization focused more on political rather than social affairs. Karagiannis argues:

Four days after the government meeting of December 16, 1922, Plastiras appointed seven new metropolitans to fill the seven empty sees. All young in age ('the thirty somethings', as their opponents derogatorily referred to them) and among them, Damaskinos Papandreou, who was elected metropolitan of Corinth, Athinagoras Spyros, metropolitan of Corfu and Panteleimon Fostinis, vice-president of the Panclerical Society and personal friend of Plastiras, who was elected metropolitan of Karystia.¹⁵³

The record of the meeting indicates that these men actively engaged in the political struggle of the period. The appointment of Damaskinos to lead the Corinthian Church

¹⁵¹ Theoklitos Strangas, *Ekklisia Ellados Istoría ek ton Pígon Apsevdon, 1817-1967*, 3 ed., 7 vols., vol. 3 (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 2001), 1072.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 1072-3.

¹⁵³ Karagiannis, *Ekklisia kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)*, 41.

appears to confirm the assessment of his critics. Failure by his supporters to place much emphasis on this period in his career in general and his relationship with the Plastiras government in particular pose serious problems to the assumption that his advancement within the hierarchy was based solely on his distinguished record. Despite the ulterior motives leaders had for the organization, little evidence appears that discounts the actual effectiveness of the organization. In short, altruistic intentions may partially explain the intentions of the organization, but the appointment of three of its leaders to powerful ecclesiastical positions four days after the Union's leadership met with Plastiras and Panteleimon's personal relationship with the dictator forces one to acknowledge that the leadership used the organization for both personal motives and to improve the general state of the clergy in Greece. Regardless of the circumstances, church leaders recognized Damaskinos as one of its brightest stars. This assessment was further enhanced by his effective response to the Corinthian earthquake that destroyed the city on the night of April 22-23, 1928.

The first five years of Damaskinos ecclesiastical career proved critical for the young cleric. His educational background and recognized ability as an organizer and leader led politicians and hierarchs alike to rely on him. Despite his skills and education, the complex relationship between church and state, and the inability of the clergy to refrain from becoming politically involved, forced him to take sides during the 'National Schism'. His support for the Liberal party of Eleftherios Venizelos played an important role in his rise in the church. Thus, his political support of Venizelos is likely to have contributed to his rise within the church, especially when one considers the powerful role

clientelism played in Greek society. His skills, however, as an organizer, leader, and administrator earned him the admiration of all parties.

The crises that he faced during his tenure as metropolitan of Corinth proved critical in preparing him for his task as ethnarch during World War II. Traditionally, bishops are among the most powerful regional leaders. Some scholars of the Church consider them local tyrants or despots, especially during periods of crisis.¹⁵⁴ In some cases, the local population expects these men to exceed the bounds placed on them by the state. Damaskinos faced such an opportunity with the devastating Corinthian earthquake of 1928. His central role in the aftermath of the earthquake proved significant for understanding the complex relationship between church and state during this period in Greek history. Ultimately, his response to the crisis led to his appointment as patriarchal exarch to the United States in March 1930 and his election as archbishop and the head of the Greek Church in November 1938.

His tenure as metropolitan of Corinth provided two excellent opportunities for Damaskinos to demonstrate his skills as a leader, diplomat, politician, and fundraiser. First there was the earthquake of April 22/23 1928 which nearly destroyed the city of Corinth. The inability of the state to deal effectively with the crisis created an opportunity for Damaskinos to exceed his role as spiritual leader as he became the leader of the recovery effort in all its facets. Then came the fundraising trip to the United States later in 1928 which allowed him to see the poor state of the Greek Church in America—something he shared with his superiors in Greece and Constantinople. This event, no doubt, contributed to the political and ecclesiastical leaderships' decision to appoint him Patriarchal Exarch to the United States in March 1930. This mission provided an

¹⁵⁴ Mario Rinvulcri, *Anatomy of a Church: Greek Orthodoxy Today* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966).

important administrative and diplomatic experience that benefited him in his later dealings with the Axis authorities during World War II. Furthermore, the sensitive situation in the United States provided Damaskinos with an excellent opportunity to demonstrate his ability to execute a plan with an appropriate amount of tact, determination, and diplomacy. In short, his overwhelming success in dealing with the earthquake and his ability to execute the plan of his superiors in the United States led everyone to acknowledge his exceptional skills.

Even before the earthquake in 1928, the young metropolitan established himself as a vigorous and active member of his community.¹⁵⁵ He understood that the Corinthian church needed reinvigoration, and promised to assist in this task in his opening sermon to his flock on March 23, 1928.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, he understood that socialism and other ideologies posed a serious challenge to the faith of his flock, which he understood had become disenchanted and thus was vulnerable to their influence. He elaborated: "...our society today faces a serious threat from ideas hostile to our holy religion, ideas that, unfortunately, influence the majority of our society, especially the youth and seek the subversion of Christian society."¹⁵⁷ In this opening sermon, Damaskinos was responding to what he perceived to be two serious threats to religion in the aftermath of World War I: the growing influence of communism and the challenge of modernity. The sermon illustrates Damaskinos' appreciation of the importance of his role in a society questioning aspects of traditional faith. His early activities demonstrate how seriously he took his role as spiritual father and social leader of the Corinthian community. Among these is an extensive building program pursued through the auspices of the church. The buildings

¹⁵⁵ Thomopoulos, *Metropolitan Damaskinos*, 11-16.

¹⁵⁶The text of the quote is cited in Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*, 44-46.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 45

erected during his early tenure include a new metropolitan palace, a new theological school, a public clinic, a community center and a lecture hall.¹⁵⁸ This aggressive policy demonstrated to his flock that the Church had the potential to help improve their community in ways outside of the spiritual realm. By this time, many hierarchs became state bureaucrats that confined themselves to paperwork and bombastic sermons from the pulpit during Sunday service and religious holidays. Damaskinos managed to catch the attention of the local population and the national press by refusing to remain the indifferent, hierarch-bureaucrat. A reporter for the Athenian newspaper *Elefthero Vima* provides interesting coverage on the exploits of Damaskinos' early tenure as metropolitan of Corinth:

When I reached Corinth everyone, both from all the political and societal sources, stated that the religious environment is completely different from other regions, and the metropolitan of Corinth, Mr. Damaskinos comes from the brightest ecclesiastical and societal tradition...It is truly comforting that in our embattled church, exist actors and Christian teachers determined, not by empty bombastic sermons to improve society, but with positive and practical works. The Metropolitan of Corinth believes in the dogma of will, books do not confine his thought. He desires the rising of religion and society, not only through superfluous sermons from his bishop's seat in the Church, but also from outside. I support the notion, without hesitation, that we need to gaze into the admirable face of the active Metropolitan Damaskinos with faith and boundless confidence.¹⁵⁹

It was Damaskinos' dominant role in the Corinthian recovery effort after the earthquake On April 22, 1928 that established him as a capable and energetic cleric. His response to the earthquake foreshadowed the dominant position he achieved as the acknowledged moral leader of the nation during the Axis occupation. The earthquake

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 46-7, Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 28, Thomopoulos, *Metropolitan Damaskinos*, 11-13.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Rodas, *Eleftheron Vima (Free Press)*, 11/10/1925. Cited in Thomopoulos, *Metropolitan Damaskinos*, 13-14.

destroyed most of the city's structures, including the metropolitan church.¹⁶⁰

Damaskinos gave a moving sermon soon after the disaster, which instilled hope in his flock. In this sermon, he tried to establish his leadership role by calling upon fellow Greeks to donate funds, clothing and other forms of assistance to their beleaguered co-nationalists.¹⁶¹ Damaskinos immediately became involved in all aspects of the recovery effort within days of the earthquake. Setting up his new headquarters in an abandoned railway car, he directed relief efforts, fund raising, and building projects. His office became the nerve center of the recovery effort. The bustling atmosphere in the railway car led some observers to refer to the railway car affectionately as the 'strategoio' or general headquarters. As a result, his activities won him international recognition, especially in the United States and France.¹⁶²

Damaskinos established the Autonomous Organization for the Earthquake-victims of Corinth (AOSK) to provide temporary housing, food, and basic supplies to the beleaguered population.¹⁶³ This organization, under his leadership, provided much-needed relief for the Corinthian population in the immediate post-earthquake period.¹⁶⁴ Early on, his efforts won him the support of a number of powerful allies. For instance, when the prominent local politician and later prime minister Panagis Tsaldaris requested

¹⁶⁰ For a detailed account of the devastation caused by the earthquake, one should consult Stefanos Vasilopoulos' study of Corinth, *I Korinthos dia Mesou ton Aionon* (Corinth through the Centuries) (Athens: Adelfon Sarri, 1932), 35-42.

¹⁶¹ For the text of the speech one should consult Pysros *I Tragodia mias Istorikis Poleos. I Korinthos eis Ereipia* (The Tragedy of a Historical City, Corinth in Ruble), 5-7

¹⁶² The Greek-American press published a series of articles about his response to the earthquake in the months following the disaster until the end of the year. Based on the support he received from the Greek-American community, Damaskinos decided to travel to the United States in October 1928 on a fundraising mission. The newspapers *Atlantis* and *Ethnikos Kiryx* (National Herald) were particularly supportive, even publishing a series of articles encouraging Greek-Americans to send money to Damaskinos to assist the Corinthian recovery effort.

¹⁶³ For information on the organization and his involvement, please see: Kollias, 55-6, Koukounas, 28-35, Thomopoulos, O Mitropolis Korinthias Damaskinos (1923-1938), 37-41, Haralambopoulos, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*, 24.

¹⁶⁴ For statistical data related to the efforts of the organization, one should consult Thomopoulos, 38-9.

government support for the organization, he referred to Damaskinos' leadership to win the support of his colleagues: "Dear Members of Parliament, if I have confidence in A.O.S.K., it is due to the personality of the metropolitan. If he did not participate in the organization, I, personally, would not vote for it."¹⁶⁵ According to Kollias, the government loaned the organization 800,000,000 drachmas (\$10,000,000).¹⁶⁶ Despite failing to assist everyone in need, the organization symbolized the effort made by the metropolitan to help his flock during its hour of need. Running an organization such as AOSK, no doubt, proved an important blueprint for Damaskinos when he established the National Organization of Christian Solidarity, EOHA, during the Axis Occupation to provide similar services on a national scale.

Damaskinos also proved a tireless and effective fundraiser. Immediately following the earthquake, he pleaded with Greek-Americans to send money to their beleaguered Corinthian brethren—a call well received by the community, which sent thousands of dollars to assist with the recovery effort. Characteristically, he demonstrated his appreciation for their assistance in a short telegram sent to the Greek-American newspaper *Atlantis* on May 13, 1928.¹⁶⁷ He also made a successful fundraising trip to the United State in October 1928, where he successfully procured a loan of ten million drachmas.

While Damaskinos received high praise from numerous sources, the Greek government's response received mixed reviews. Thomopoulos, a biographer of Damaskinos, and the Greek-American newspaper *Ethnikos Kiryx* (National Herald) praised the prompt and effective response to the crisis. Thomopoulos pointed out that, “

¹⁶⁵ Parliamentary Proceedings, December 12, 1928. Cited in Kollias, 55.

¹⁶⁶ Kollias, 55.

¹⁶⁷ "Corinth after the Earthquake," *Atlantis*, 5/13/1928 1928.

whereas the government took appropriate actions, it lacked organization and adequate resources. On the other hand, even though, “he [Damaskinos] had no one to assist him,” he nevertheless soon became established leader of the city after the earthquake. “All government officials, regardless of rank, accept these orders [given by Damaskinos].”¹⁶⁸ Thomopoulos goes on to credit Damaskinos for the existing state infrastructure that functioned during the period. “Due to the [efforts of the] Metropolitan, the government machinery functioned immediately and with great results for the well-being of the earthquake victims.”¹⁶⁹ By citing the newspaper article and commenting on the limitations of the state, the author hopes both to praise Damaskinos and to acknowledge the valiant effort of the government, despite the latter’s inability to cope with the crisis. Failure to distribute the funds allocated to the earthquake victims constituted one of the government’s greatest problems. According to Thomopoulos, the Greek government earmarked 75,000,000 drachmas (\$1,000,000) for the earthquake victims, but the city’s victims only received 50, 000,000 by the end of 1928.¹⁷⁰ In short, despite the initial response of the government to the crisis, lack of funds, a poor bureaucratic infrastructure and the lack of civil leadership prevented the state from responding to the crisis effectively.

Thomopoulos’ praise for the response of the government, however, contrasts considerably with the criticisms of Panagis Tsaldaris, local political leader and People’s Party chief and the royalist news organ in the United States, *Atlantis*. Tsaldaris criticized the federal government in Parliament in June 1928 for failing to provide the necessary

¹⁶⁸ St. Metaxas, “Stratigikon Vagoni (Strategic Wagon),” *Proia*, 5/12/1928.

¹⁶⁹ Thomopoulos, 30.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 31

supplies and emergency aid to the earthquake victims in the immediate postwar period.

He exclaimed:

...the state did not react swiftly regarding the measures taken to assist the earthquake victims. Only the local state government aided the earthquake victims in the period immediately following the earthquake, including those of Nafplion, Patras, and Argos. With the exception of the Red Cross, which sent aid on Monday afternoon, no other relief arrived from the Government. The government learned that Corinth was destroyed, and it should have immediately taken the necessary steps. This did not happen.¹⁷¹

Tsaldaris appears frustrated with a government that failed to appreciate the seriousness of the crisis, leaving the local population dependent on the meager aid provided by local government and the Greek Red Cross. The quote seems to support the claims made by the Corinthians in the *Atlantis* article. The political instability of the period, the refugee crisis, and the abysmal international credit of the Greek government also contributed to its failure to provide the necessary goods to the population. There was a strong sentiment among the local population that the state cared little for their wellbeing. In contrast, many locals seemed to have more confidence in their spiritual leader, who remained active in all aspects of the recovery effort.

Atlantis, which quoted Plastiras' speech, referred to the administrative and political void created by the government's failure and acknowledged Damaskinos' efforts in a number of articles. Local response to the money sent by Greek Americans criticized the efforts of the government and discouraged Greek Americans from sending money to anyone other than the metropolitan. The author cites a firsthand account by A. Georgiou, a Corinthian observing the efforts of Damaskinos, which the newspaper received from a relative living in Massillon, Ohio:

¹⁷¹ "The Question of Earthquake Victims in the Greek Parliament," *Atlantis*, 6/3/1928 1928.

You write us in America a considerable sum of money has been raised. So, be aware that if the money falls into the hands of the *Despoti (bishop)*, we will all be housed and soon; however, if it falls into the hands of the government they will devour it. Our *Despoti* is worthy of much praise. This superman works and tires on our behalf.¹⁷²

Such comments are illustrative of both the skepticism most Greeks harbored toward the state and of their expectations from their religious leaders. In contrast, Damaskinos appeared to possess a reputation for distributing the donated funds democratically, which explains both Tsaldaris' confidence in the metropolitan's running of AOSK and the continuous praise in the press. Later in the letter, Georgiou recalls a public demonstration:

The crowd shouts: 'The money to the Despoti, so that we can be saved!,' Because the government cares for its friends and the wealthy, while we POOR WILL REMAIN OUT IN THE COLD. The Despoti distributes judiciously and states: 'All equal and those who possess their own money should rebuild their houses the way they want with all the extras. The funds, however, collected should be for all!' The Despoti states these things and does them.¹⁷³

The skepticism towards the government arises from the clientelist tradition, according to which friends and the clients of the government receive the majority of the funds provided. Thus, the cynical statement above is in line with the general dislike and distrust of a government that had a long tradition of indifference toward the majority of the population. Damaskinos' presence here indicates that he wielded control over the funds, which he then distributed among the population. Corinthians also portray him as a man of action. His record before the earthquake indicated that the population looked to him to play an important and proactive role in the recovery effort. These popular

¹⁷² "News from Corinth," *Atlantis*, 6/15/1928 1928.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

perceptions are indeed consistent with the image of the hierarch as a powerful and involved societal leader.

Greek newspaper accounts of Damaskinos in the aftermath of the crisis portray a ‘superhuman’ that worked tirelessly for his recently victimized population. These accounts are exaggerated, no doubt, but the overwhelming praise for him indicates that he established and maintained this image among the population. These accounts provide important details about Damaskinos’ standing in the community during the crisis. They also provide insight into the powerful image of the hierarch in Greek tradition. An *Atlantis* article published June 2, 1928 mentions that the metropolitan “has received general administrative control of the earthquake-affected areas of Corinth at the request of the government.”¹⁷⁴ In another account, published in *Eleftheros Typos* (Free Press) of Athens, the reporter comments on his constant presence and boundless energy, despite the desperate state of affairs:

Day and night he works. Among the ruined neighborhoods, which were facing the twin mortal threats of the converging walls of camps between starvation and crying earthquake victims in the midst of tents and selective members of Corinthian society, he always works with the same zeal.¹⁷⁵

By remaining involved in all aspects of the recovery effort from listening to individual grievances to chairing important meetings, Damaskinos illustrated to the distraught population that he continued to work to help them rebuild their lives and the power and influence he had over traditionally governmental affairs such as administrative tasks and the distribution of supplies and funds. His prompt and effective response to the crisis led one local reporter to name him the “Hero of the Corinthian Tragedy.”

¹⁷⁴ "The Victims of the Catastrophe Await Your Immediate Assistance," *Atlantis*, 6/2/1928 1928.

¹⁷⁵ *Eleftheros Typos* (Free Press) 4/27/1928.

Newspaper accounts are also significant as they illustrate that the metropolitan's active role is in line with the expectations of the traditional role of a hierarch during periods of crisis: "With these activities, past and present, not only in ecclesiastical, but also in public affairs [Damaskinos] demonstrates what a bishop worthy of his mission can accomplish, and with the immense influence he has in all aspects of society."¹⁷⁶ The article illustrates that hierarchs continue to maintain a powerful presence in society. By identifying Damaskinos as a cleric worthy of his position, the reporter indicates that many clerics failed to live up to their responsibilities passed down to them by their predecessors. They remained instead monkish bureaucrats who limit their contact with the population. He was hopeful that Damaskinos, "the Jewel of the Church," would serve as an example for other aspiring priests and hierarchs.

Another article published in *Atlantis* deserves attention. It illustrates the power of the traditional roles attributed to the Church and clergymen in the popular imagination. The article manages to contextualize Damaskinos' efforts within this tradition.

Since the period of the revolution, from the period of Gregory, Germanos, and Papaflessas...we have grown unaccustomed to the altruistic heroisms of the cloth. For a long time now, we have not heard that the poor, the unfortunate, the downtrodden, the widows, and the orphans found refuge, assistance, both spiritual and psychological, from representatives of God.¹⁷⁷

He goes on to criticize the failings of the Church as an institution and its leaders in particular. Ending his passage on an optimistic note, he states that Damaskinos again gives hope that men can take on this great responsibility:

The bishoprics are not buildings that house the lofty meaning of our religion. They are simply administrative offices, handling the bureaucratic tasks of the church and nothing else. The misfortune of Corinth, however, has shown something that we have not observed for a long time, a

¹⁷⁶ *Proia*, 5/5/1928.

¹⁷⁷ "The Hierarch and the Earthquake Victims," *Atlantis*, 5/27/1928 1928.

genuine hierarch, a supportive father of his spiritual children. Tireless, courageous, and kind, he supports, assists, houses, and feeds the Corinthians.¹⁷⁸

Later in the article, he explains that Damaskinos does not confine himself to symbolic acts, but intervenes with the political authorities on behalf of his flock:

He stands up to ministers and the powerful, only for the support of the just dispensation of goods. He supports all, runs, helps and provides courage and hope to the hopeless Corinthians. And everyone, including foreigners, friends and enemies, refer to Damaskinos' activities with respect. His works are not only works of philanthropy and Christian love, but also works that raise the stature of the cloth.¹⁷⁹

The author concludes by commenting on the nature of Greek society and their attitude toward the hierarchy. Specifically, he touches upon the deep love and respect they have for the clergy, and, more importantly, their great expectations for their hierarchs. In his final sentence, the author reiterates the fact that people expect these men to play a powerful role in society, even if many fall well short of expectations:

The Greek people are religious and conservative by nature. They respect and revere the representatives of their religion. But despite their reverence, what can the people do, when the same individuals who wear the cloth do not respect themselves? When a hierarch, however, appears worthy of the high ideal, then we salute with special joy this worthy representative of God.¹⁸⁰

For many Greeks, including the author, Damaskinos represented the ideal hierarch who played the critical role in his community when called upon by circumstances.

In many accounts of his post-earthquake efforts, the railway car that he converted into an office became one of the most enduring symbols of his efforts, a physical symbol of hope to the population and the nerve center for the relief effort. It served as a

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

conference room, where government officials, government dignitaries, and Damaskinos met to discuss the future plans for the city. One may go as far as to say that it served as a capitol building for the city in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. In the *Free Press* article mentioned above, the author describes the powerful image of the railway car immediately following the disaster:

From the moment St. Nicholas Church was completely destroyed and the metropolis suffered irreparable damage, Metropolitan Damaskinos did not become a Jeremiah, as to lament over the ruined walls of Jericho...His headquarters was set up in a train car near the destroyed railway station. From there comes the saving instruction, and all victims of the catastrophe turn their gaze toward it.¹⁸¹

The railway car located in the middle of the devastation and near the refugee camps became a physical symbol of stability and hope for a population that lost everything almost instantaneously. As the author indicates, the railway car became a sanctuary and a center of power for the beleaguered population. “Since I made my rounds of all of Corinth, I visited the temporary camps where families gathered in the railway station. There I found the microscopic sanctuary in a small railway car where the amazing hierarch Metropolitan Damaskinos settled.”¹⁸² Damaskinos’ deep involvement in all aspects of the recovery effort, not just its humanitarian elements, made an indelible impression on observers. He stayed in constant touch with the population. He also took time to meet with construction companies, Greek relief organizations, demonstrating that his concerns spread beyond traditional relief and spiritual issues. Thus, he remained an important social, political and spiritual force in the lives of the population throughout the crisis.

¹⁸¹ *Eleftheros Typos*(*Free Press*), 5/27/1928.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

In conclusion, Damaskinos' involvement in all aspects of the relief and reconstruction effort, with the support of the government, illustrates that hierarchs possess the precedent to wield considerable power in Greek society, especially during periods of crisis. The mixed attitude toward the government results from the latter's inability to cope with all of the problems involved with a disaster of this scale. The political instability and empty treasury, no doubt, limited the government's ability to respond to the crisis, but a long precedent of indifference toward the general population also contributed to the state's relinquishing of power to Damaskinos during the crisis. A prominent politician, philosopher, and close confidant of Damaskinos, Konstantinos Tsatsos, reflected on the omnipotence of Damaskinos during the period: "Venizelos, then prime minister, immediately discerned that he was dealing with a powerful personality and allowed him to establish a dictatorship over the Corinthian reconstruction project." Tsatsos insightfully concluded that "the success of his [Damaskinos] work was so great that he earned a reputation as an exceptional administrator."¹⁸³

Damaskinos' fundraising trip to the United States counted among the most important milestones in his career. Though he stayed there only a month, the chaotic state of the ecclesiastical leadership in the new world caught the astute cleric's attention. He reported his observations to the Greek government and the Patriarch of Constantinople. This report accounts for the reason that he was assigned as Patriarchal Exarch to the United States to resolve the crisis within the Greek-American church.¹⁸⁴ This experience proved critical in preparing Damaskinos for his mission as ethnarch

¹⁸³ Konstantinos Tsatsos, *Logodosia mias Zois* (Account of a Life) 2nd Ed. (Athens: Ekdoseis ton Filon, 2000), 313.

¹⁸⁴ Scholars disagree about whether the Church and the Greek government considered him their first choice for the task. This issue will receive further attention later.

during World War II. It forced him to make delicate political and diplomatic decisions without appearing heavy-handed or indifferent to the sensitivity of the situation. His lack of personal interest in the conflict, his appreciation of the importance of the Greek-American press, and his tactful dealings with sensitive hierarchs made him an ideal candidate for the position. In addition, he refused to reap personal benefits from his position and resisted the temptations of his friends to remain in the United States. Personal ambition had prevented his predecessors from accomplishing their mission. Ultimately, he succeeded in resolving the crisis by writing a new Church Constitution for the church of America and replacing three of its hierarchs with bishops from Greece. Many argue that by resolving the crisis in a timely manner, he helped the Church maintain its integrity and influence, especially among the young, which remained in doubt throughout the crisis.

A brief summary of the Greek church in the United States will help explain the basic problems within the institution and how Damaskinos' mission helped to rectify the situation and bring peace to the community. When the Greeks began to settle in the United States in the nineteenth century, the newly founded churches remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. For the Greek-American community in those early years, the local church unified the community and helped maintain the bond between the immigrants and the home country. The church served as the central meeting place, place of instruction in Greek language and culture, as well as the house of God for the Greek parishes or colonies in the United States. A prominent chronicler of the Greek-American community, Theodore Saloutos, underlines the central role of the church in the community: "The kinotites in the early years looked after the welfare of the entire Greek

colony, but its activities centered primarily on the church.”¹⁸⁵ He also concludes that the church and its clergy, all of whom had come from Greece in the early twentieth century helped bind the immigrants to Greece: “In the United States Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy—the one intertwined with the other—served as the cord that kept the immigrant attached to the mother country, nourished his patriotic appetites, and helped him preserve the faith and language of his parents.”¹⁸⁶

Despite the close tie between the community, Orthodoxy and the motherland, neither the Patriarchate of Constantinople nor the Church of Greece understood the challenges of ministering to the newly founded Greek-American community.¹⁸⁷ External problems also reduced the effectiveness of the Patriarchate to provide for the needs of the Greek-American community. Among the greatest problems facing the community were the priests sent to minister to the needs of the population. “These men, under the protection of the priestly robes, behaved in a manner that was unmeritorious in the eyes of God and Christians; some immigrants were led to fear the unscrupulous clergymen more than the lack of a church.”¹⁸⁸ According to one report submitted to the Secretary of State by Miltiades Constantinides in 1908, many of these men “were not Greek Orthodox priests at all and they have no authority to perform a marriage ceremony.”¹⁸⁹ In some cases, Miltiades reports, “a few of these men were ‘plain outlaws’ who came disguised as priests so as to enter the country without too close an examination.”¹⁹⁰ After reviewing the report, the Secretary of State signed an agreement with the Greek state that stipulated

¹⁸⁵ Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 118.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 130.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

priests needed to carry official documentation from the Church of Greece to serve in the United States.¹⁹¹

By 1918 the Greek government and the Greek-American community leaders understood that establishing a central ecclesiastical authority remained the only way to streamline the appointment of priests capable of ministering to the community and resolve any other internal problems facing the churches. Despite the good intentions of the Greek government and the Church of Greece, the National Schism dividing the nation spilled over to the Greek-American community—a fact that posed serious problems to any centrally organized Church organization, despite the intentions of its founders. Venizelos, prime minister of Greece in 1918, sent Meletios Metaxakis, archbishop of Athens and all Greece to the United States to assess the situation and establish a temporary organization that could bring order to ecclesiastical affairs in Greece.¹⁹² After a temporary visit, Metaxakis assigned his assistant metropolitan of Rodostolou, Alexander, to act as temporary head of the American church.¹⁹³ Alexander was born in Nicomedia in Asia Minor. His ardent support of Venizelos further exacerbated the conflict within the Greek-American community by alienating the Greek-American royalist faction.¹⁹⁴ From the beginning, royalist papers vilified him and encouraged royalist priests to ignore his orders. Compounding these problems even further was his abrasive personality and the political instability in Greece. By 1920, Metaxakis was removed and Alexander was asked to return to Greece and report to the Holy Synod. The latter refused to return to Greece. Offended by his rebuttal, the Synod declared him,

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 132.

¹⁹² Ibid., 281-2.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 282-2.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Metaxakis and his followers schismatics.¹⁹⁵ The political bickering among the church leaders only intensified the civil war within the Greek-American community, leading to lawsuits over church property and secession movements.¹⁹⁶ The decision to engage in ecclesiastical affairs further increased the chaos instead of bringing peace to the community. The Holy Synod of Greece also decided to send bishop of Sparta, Germanos Troinos to reestablish its control over the community.¹⁹⁷

Despite their political differences, Alexander, Meletios, and Germanos decided that the community needed its own archdiocese and a seminary to train priests to administer to the needs of the local population. Many considered Meletios the obvious choice to serve as the country's first archbishop, but his election as Patriarch of Constantinople in 1921 prevented his appointment. Though Meletios only remained in the United States for a short time, he made some important changes. He reverted control of the church of the United States to the Patriarch of Constantinople, established a seminary, an archdiocese of North and South America, and oversaw the appointment of its first archbishop, Alexander.

Early on, the new archbishop took positive steps toward restoring peace, but his stubbornness and the royalist efforts to undermine his authority prevented the restoration of peace within the community. Establishing a church constitution for the newly created archdiocese is probably the most important decision made by Alexander. Many considered this a necessary step to restore credibility to the church, which remained the central organization for the promotion of Hellenism in the United States.¹⁹⁸ Royalists

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 285.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 289-90.

and Venizelists, however, failed to resolve their differences, despite the community's desperate need to restore order to the church. The dispute had very negative effects on the Greek-American community as the church was the main institution responsible for preserving the community's distinct identity, especially second generation Greek-Americans. Saloutos summarizes the devastating impact the church struggle had on the young Greek-Americans: "The rancorous civil war within the church was reason for fleeing it. The parish priest had queer notions from the old world, which inspired ridicule instead of respect. Something had to be done, as the farsighted understood; but no one seemed to know just what to do."¹⁹⁹

By the end of 1929, the chaotic state of the religious affairs in the United States forced both royalist and Venizelist leaders to conclude that prolonging the struggle any longer posed a serious threat to the cultural identity of the Greek-American community. The Church of Greece, the Greek government, and the Patriarchate of Constantinople began deliberating over how to resolve the crisis.²⁰⁰ The group decided to create a plan for restoring peace to the Church of America and to appoint a hierarch to execute it.²⁰¹ Finally, it nominated Damaskinos as Patriarchal Exarch to the United States in April 1930 after two other hierarchs declined the position.²⁰² According to Paul Manolis, Damaskinos' appointment "was not without controversy."²⁰³ He received a pre-approved

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 295-297.

²⁰⁰ Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth." 121-125, Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 298-99, Metropolitan of Corinth Damaskinos Papandreou, "The Report of Archbishop Damaskinos of Corinth and the Solution to the Problems of the Church of America," in *The History of the Greek Church of America: In Acts and Documents*, ed. Paul Manolis (Berkeley, CA: Ambelos Press, 2003), 191-2.

²⁰¹ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 191.

²⁰² Both Chrysanthos Philippidis (Patriarchal Exarch to Greece) and Metropolitan of Mytilini, Iakovos declined the position. Ibid.

²⁰³ It appears the Patriarchate hesitated about Damaskinos' appointment for the position, although he provided detailed information about the situation in the United States. This conflicts with the position of most accounts of Damaskinos' mission to the United States. These accounts claim that his fundraising

plan to resolve the problems in the church.²⁰⁴ Exact details about the mission, however, remain obscure.²⁰⁵ Based on the Exarch's report and the secondary literature on his mission, he had considerable flexibility and authority to take any necessary steps to resolve the crisis, including personnel decisions. Ultimately, after months of tactical maneuvering and astute decision-making, Damaskinos restored order to the Church, winning great praise from Greeks in Greece and the United States.

During his short stay in the United States, he demonstrated that he had exceptional ability as a diplomat, lawyer, and politician. Upon his return to Greece at the end of 1930, most Greek hierarchs regarded him as a powerful force within their ranks and a strong candidate to succeed to the archbishopric throne. His admirable completion of a sensitive mission during a period of crisis provided him with valuable experience contending with strong personalities. By successfully diffusing all obstacles confronting him and using an appropriate amount of force, flattery, and diplomacy whenever necessary, he demonstrated that he was capable of dealing with a crisis without alienating important personalities whose assistance he needed to complete his task. These tools served him well in his negotiations with the occupation authorities during World War II.

mission to the United States in October 1928, coupled with the report of his observations to the Patriarchate, led to his appointment as Patriarchal Exarch. For a typical articulation of this position, one should consult Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 32-33, Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth," 125, Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*, 60. Paul Manolis, however, contests that Damaskinos was not the obvious choice of the Patriarchate. He contends that the Greek government forced his appointment on Constantinople after two of their candidates declined the position. Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report."

²⁰⁴ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report."

²⁰⁵ A close reading of the official documents associated with his visit, reveals few specific details. For instance, the Greek politician, Alexandros Papanastasiou mentions that the Patriarchate and the Greek government sent Damaskinos to reunite the Greek Orthodox Church in America in an open letter to the Greek-American community, but fails to mention how he intends to accomplish the task. It appears, rather, that this document and others published after his arrival that the authorities mentioned above gave Damaskinos control of the American church and the power to enact any change he deemed fit (with the approval of the Patriarchate) to restore order. "O Exarchos tou Oikoumenikou Patriarcheiu Mitropolitou Damaskinos (the Patriarchal Exarch Metropolitan Damaskinos," *Mentor*, 06/29/1930, Alexandros Papanastasiou, Open Letter, 3/11/1930. Cited in Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*, 60-1.

Due to the desperate state of affairs, the Greek-American press and the community's leadership welcomed Damaskinos' mission. An excerpt from an article in *Atlantis* published immediately following his arrival expresses this sentiment:

We are encouraged to believe that the dream of all Hellenism in America will come true and that it will see days of peace, love, and harmony in all respects. This longed-for guidance will be provided by Metropolitan Damaskinos, not only because he is the personal representative of the highest Greek Orthodox authorities, but because this is such a serious mission and he has been given wide powers to solve the entire problem.²⁰⁶

The article conveys the relief and hope felt by many about his mission. His lack of personal involvement and his familiarity with the Greek-American community made him an ideal candidate for the position. The paper, despite being a bastion for the royalist cause in the United States, understood the need for outside intervention to restore order to the church. Moreover, it understood the danger posed by the continuation of the struggle.

Upon arriving on May 20, 1930, Damaskinos made the necessary diplomatic visits to the President and Secretary of State to reassure the American leaders that his mission was confined to internal ecclesiastical affairs. He established his headquarters in New York, the center of the Greek-American community in the United States, and began to implement the plan.²⁰⁷ He met with the embattled Archbishop Alexander and conveyed to him the nature of his mission. Above all, he impressed upon him the necessity of his cooperation and the consequences of noncompliance.²⁰⁸

I further added that both the Churches as well as the State will not hesitate to duly honor any benevolent gesture by His Eminence that would facilitate the situation. Likewise, they would not remain indifferent in the case that His Eminence, being unsympathetic to the demand that is thoroughly evident from all quarters, persists in erroneous ways which can obstruct that work of pacification. Finally, I informed Archbishop Alexander that the clear and unrestrained decisions

²⁰⁶ The article is cited in Saloutos, 299. The author cites another Greek-American newspaper, *Eleftheros Typos* (Free Press) from October 20 and November 5, 1945.

²⁰⁷ Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 300, Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 246-7

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 300.

of my mandate preclude their remaining indifferent and they intend to confront all the eventualities that may stem from his demeanor.²⁰⁹

Damaskinos hoped that by simultaneously flattering and threatening his stubborn colleague, he could eliminate a potentially powerful obstacle to his mission. Apparently, he also believed that reiterating the support he had from both the Greek secular and ecclesiastical authorities might discourage Alexander from resisting the Exarch. But, based on the information he received about the Archbishop's stubbornness, he expected him to be a problem. Saloutos conveys that Alexander's stubbornness was a well-known fact: "Well-founded reports indicate that his letters, telegrams, and communications to the Patriarchate had always revealed a contentious and insubordinate spirit."²¹⁰

Damaskinos hoped to overcome the Archbishop's stubbornness. However, Alexander refused to heed Damaskinos' warning, opting to undermine the efforts of the Exarch from the outset.

Alexander decided to challenge the Exarch's authority to remain in power, but Damaskinos' patience and tactics eventually led to success. Alexander refused to respond to a series of letters before openly rebelling against the Exarch, creating a serious problem for Damaskinos.²¹¹ Hoping to undermine the authority of Damaskinos, he issued an encyclical on May 26, which accused the hierarch of attempting to resolve the

²⁰⁹ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 247-8.

²¹⁰ Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 300-1.

²¹¹ Scholars remain divided over the attitude of the other American bishops to Alexander's rebellion. According to Papaioannou, the archbishop gained the support of the other bishops before issuing the encyclical. Saloutos states that the archbishop acted alone. Damaskinos' report appears to confirm Saloutos' conclusion, as the Exarch states that he tried to rally the other bishops after he published his encyclical. Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth", 128-9, Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 300, Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 250.

crisis in dictatorial fashion.²¹² This step displeased Damaskinos, who, in his report to the Greek government, accused Alexander of refusing to acknowledge the division within the church and attempting to undermine the Exarch's mission in order to maintain his office.²¹³ He concluded that Alexander's actions undermined his authority by rejecting the authority of his superiors: "Thus the Archdiocese was completely stripped of its credibility and its authority was completely annihilated, since it had rejected the orders of the Patriarchate."²¹⁴ The Exarch also countered this salvo by Alexander with his own encyclical on May 31.²¹⁵ Alexander maintained a powerful influence, which temporarily prevented Damaskinos from implementing his plan. Damaskinos' encyclical, however, weakened the archbishop's position by influencing one hierarch, the bishop of Boston, Ioakeim, to abandon Alexander on June 6. This break by Ioakeim helped pave the way for the success of the mission by forcing the other members of the American hierarchy to yield to the demands of the Exarch.

To begin with, Damaskinos proceeded to strip Alexander of his position after Alexander refused to relinquish his throne voluntarily.²¹⁶ Despite suffering humiliation, Alexander continued to defy the Exarch, rejecting the latter's attempts to transfer him to a see in Greece. The dethroned cleric, with the support of his two remaining allies in the hierarchy, attempted to bribe Damaskinos with a lofty position in the American church.²¹⁷ Understanding this transparent effort to purchase his support, the Exarch declined, and

²¹² The Exarch identifies the document as Encyclical 7008, but provides neither a reproduction of the text nor a citation in his report. Ibid. 248-9.

²¹³ Ibid. 249.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report".

²¹⁶ Ibid., 260-262.

²¹⁷ Damaskinos commented on the duplicitous intentions of the authors. This effort illustrates the sad state of the church at this time. Political and personal rather than dogmatic issues divided these shortsighted men. The Exarch reproduced the document in his report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ibid., 252-258.

understood that only by filling the vacated archbishopric position could he convince Alexander that his resistance was futile. “It was essential that the path for the hope of repossessing the Archdiocesan throne of America be excluded through the creation of a *fait accompli*. And this deed was not possible to be other than the appointment of a definite archbishop.”²¹⁸

He quickly appointed a successor in order to crush Alexander’s resistance. Many close to Damaskinos encouraged him to stay and inform the Patriarchate and the Greek government that he should fill the vacant position. Understanding that such an act played into the hands of Alexander and his allies, Damaskinos refused, and instead recommended the appointment of Metropolitan of Corfu, Athinagoras, to the Patriarchate on August 8.²¹⁹ It accepted his suggestion, thus ending any hope that Alexander could reclaim his throne.²²⁰ Damaskinos’ response to Alexander’s continued resistance illustrates both his ability to read his adversaries and make quick decisions to eliminate their opposition.

Replacing Alexander, however, was not sufficient to resolve the problem. Damaskinos understood he needed to place Alexander and the other hierarchs in Greek sees in order to ensure that they could not undermine the efforts of the newly appointed archbishop. He therefore transferred Alexander to the metropolitanate of Corfu, thus filling the vacancy created by Athinagoras’ appointment as archbishop of North and South America. Even before appointing Athinagoras Archbishop, he succeeded in forcing the bishop of Chicago, Philaretos, to resign and accept a transfer to the vacant see of Syros at the end of July. Exarch Damaskinos also transferred the Bishop of Boston,

²¹⁸ Ibid., 262, Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth", 129-30.

²¹⁹ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 262-3, Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth", 131.

²²⁰ Damaskinos Panandreou, "Damaskinos Report," 263, Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth," 131.

Ioakeim, to the metropolitan see of Phokis to clear the way for a new clergyman to fill this important post.²²¹ The royalist representative Basil, a man without an official position in the United States, remained a dangerous loose end for Damaskinos. Despite the Patriarchate's decision to lower him to the ranks of the laity, the Exarch understood he could not leave him in America to cause problems for the new archbishop.²²² As Damaskinos pointed out in his report,

Although he had been defrocked, divested of all canonical pastoral competence, and in administrative limbo, he was, however, an influential person. This was partly because of his indefatigable activity and partly thanks to the support of the political faction which was opposed to the canonical church and the newspaper *Atlantis*, which represented its viewpoints. If the canonical Archbishop had been of at least equal ability and an adroit handler of the questions that arose from time to time, Basil would have long ago been compelled to abandon an obviously unequal and futile struggle.²²³

The passage expresses both Damaskinos' astute observation regarding the importance of Basil's position as the leader of the royalist faction and his control of the powerful tool, the newspaper *Atlantis*. Moreover, he understood that failing to transfer him to a metropolitan see in Greece encouraged him to remain in the United States, which may give continued hope to the royalist faction that a rival church may still be established under his leadership. Basil confirmed the Exarch's fears when he informed him that only placement in Greece would compel him to leave. Understanding that he had little choice, Damaskinos encouraged the Patriarchate to restore Basil's rank and acquiesce to his demand. Basil received the metropolitan throne of Drama, thanks to the intervention of the Greek government.

²²¹ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 263-268, Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States.*, 303.

²²² Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 268-9, Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 303, Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth", 133.

²²³ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 268-9.

Damaskinos, however, believed that replacing the leadership of the American church provided only a temporary solution. It failed to restore permanent peace to the church. In his estimation, the establishment of an autonomous church had contributed to the problem. As he states in his report to the Greek government, “Another issue (in addition to the ideological division within the community) was the consequence of faulty organization of the Church of America, concealing beneath the radiant ideological form of autonomy, the rather dangerous personal unaccountability, and from the viewpoint of the hierarchy, administrative anarchy.”²²⁴ His experience led him to conclude that the American church was too young and immature to maintain an autonomous existence, which led him to conclude further that he needed to write a new church constitution before he departed.²²⁵ The new document brought the Church of America closer to the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

During his struggle with Alexander, Damaskinos remained abreast of public opinion, especially the coverage he received in the Greek-American press. In his report, he states the importance of maintaining the public’s support. “At that time, as well as later, the Exarch held the measuring of public opinion to be of the greatest importance, since any solution whatsoever, even ones previously agreed upon, would not find suitable grounds for implementation.”²²⁶ The printed word remained the most important medium of exchange for the Greek American community. The distance separating the disparate Greek-American communities meant that the two central newspapers, the *National Herald* and *Atlantis* played a powerful role in shaping public opinion. “In America the

²²⁴ Ibid., 270-1.

²²⁵ Papaioannou argues that previous historians failed to acknowledge this part of his mission, which he deemed essential to its success. Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth", 133.

²²⁶ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report".

press remains the only means of communication among the members of the *omogeneia*, who are scattered throughout all the vast expanse of the American continent. Its opinion exercises great influence upon public opinion.”²²⁷ Most accounts of his mission indicate that he enjoyed the support of the press, despite some negative press in *Atlantis* and other papers during stretches of his mission.²²⁸ Damaskinos referenced the opposition of *Atlantis* in his report. “During the duration of the Exarch’s mission in America, the policy of the *Atlantis* underwent various changes, sometimes opposing it and sometimes defending it. In the end it marshaled itself on the side of the Exarch.”²²⁹ In addition to *Atlantis*, the Greek-American paper in Chicago, *Ellinikos Astir* (The Hellenic Star) published a sixteen-page issue “filled with letters to the editor from all parts of the United States, protesting the methods of the Exarch.”²³⁰ These two examples are exceptional in their criticism of his handling of the crisis. Damaskinos remained determined to win the support of and utilize the Greek American press to ensure the success of his mission. His concern about his image in the press remained a constant concern later in his career, especially during World War II. For instance, he carefully scrutinized every document either penned by him or attributed to him that appeared in the Greek dailies during the occupation, as he wanted to maintain his image as ethnarch, which was that of a man who remained above the political issues dividing the nation. His attitude toward the press will receive more attention in the following chapter.

Restoring order to the ecclesiastical situation was essential to the bond between the motherland and the newly established immigrant community. Ecclesiastical chaos,

²²⁷ Ibid., 276-77.

²²⁸ Ibid., 278-9, Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 300-301.

²²⁹ Damaskinos, Report, 278-9.

²³⁰ Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 303.

for instance, only exacerbated the increasing gulf between the first and second generation Greek-Americans. Education and a competent group of priests became the central tools needed to maintain this bond. Both for Damaskinos and the Greek government understood that the priests represented both spiritual leaders and educators for the young immigrant community. The Exarch lamented the poor educational background of many of the clerics in the United States. He believed these men and Greek secondary education teachers sent from Greece could successfully establish a well-trained and well-informed group of Greek Americans, if they were properly trained. These Greek-American students, in turn, would be capable of maintaining and perpetuating the bond between the immigrant community and the motherland. According to his report, these Greek Americans would attend Greek primary and secondary schools in the United States, travel to Greece to complete their education, and return to America to propagate love for the Greek fatherland, its history and its civilization.²³¹

Establishing the church as the central vehicle for the type of reforms he envisioned required a strong and capable leadership. One could argue that his choice of Athinagoras was the right one. He and his successors created a strong and influential institution. George Papaioannou, a historian of the Church of North and South America summarizes the significance of Damaskinos' mission as follows: "Not only did he bring the young, tormented Church out of chaos and restore peace and tranquility to American Hellenism, but also set the foundation upon which Athinagoras, Michael, and Iakovos built today's magnificent structure."²³² Damaskinos was a visionary who understood that resolving the ideological crisis dividing the church and writing a new constitution

²³¹ Damaskinos Papandreou, "Damaskinos Report", 288.

²³² Papaioannou, "Damaskinos of Corinth,"134.

provided a solid base, but only partially solved the larger problem, the maintenance of a strong bond between Greece and the immigrant community. Protestant proselytizing and Americanization began to weaken the bond between the young generation of Greek Americans and the motherland. This he believed could be arrested by a serious effort by the young church and the Greek government to train teachers and priests to administer to the needs of the Greek youth. Only through such an effort, could the bond be maintained.

Damaskinos' experiences in Corinth and the United States gave him invaluable training for the difficult road ahead. Not only would these experiences assist him while facing the greatest personal challenge of his life in the events following his election as archbishop in 1938, but they proved indispensable for his mission during World War II. Especially significant are his term as President of A.O.S.K., a precursor to EOHA (though on a smaller scale), and his diplomatic-ecclesiastical mission to the United States. By the time of the death of the Archbishop of Athens, Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, Damaskinos had become a powerful force in the hierarchy and the successor to the aging prelate. His meteoric rise was a reflection both of his popularity within the hierarchy and his growing reputation both in Greece and abroad. The Church needed an injection of energetic and pragmatic leadership and Damaskinos provided just that. Besides the intelligent and strong-willed Chrysanthos Philippidis, patriarchal exarch to the Church of Greece (the handpicked candidate of the monarchy and the dictator Ioannis Metaxas), the metropolitan of Corinth appeared destined to lead the church in the difficult days ahead.

Chapter III

The Ecclesiastical Phoenix: Damaskinos and the Archiepiscopal Controversy

(November 5, 1938-August 10, 1949)

October 22, 1938, the accomplished church historian and Venizelist Archbishop of Greece Chrysostomos Papadopoulos passed away, ending the final obstacle for Ioannis Metaxas, dictator of Greece, to gain control of the Church of Greece. Metaxas hoped to use the church as an administrative and cultural tool to reform Greek society. The election of Damaskinos Papandreou rather than the dictator's candidate, metropolitan of Trebizond Chrysanthos Philippidis created what later church historians refer to as the "Archiepiscopal Question." Refusing to accept defeat, Metaxas used the questionable participation of the Metropolitan of Dryinoupolis, Ioannis Vasilikos, and the case brought against the legitimacy of the election by three hierarchs who supported the candidacy of Chrysanthos to force the Greek Highest Governing Court to overturn the election. After the court annulled the election, Metaxas changed the law dictating the election procedures of hierarchs to secure Chrysanthos' appointment. Damaskinos' refusal to accept the heavy handed intervention of the state finally led to his removal as metropolitan of Corinth and his banishment to the Phaneromeni Monastery on the island of Salamis for nearly two years (May 1939-April 1941). Enemy occupation and the stubborn refusal of Chrysanthos to swear in the first occupation government of Georgios Tsolakoglou led to another government intervention into ecclesiastical affairs; this time, however, Damaskinos benefitted from this blatant intervention of the state in church affairs at the expense of Chrysanthos. Ultimately, efforts by the former archbishop to

overturn the ‘restoration’ of Damaskinos failed due to the immense popularity of his adversary and the tumultuous circumstance of the immediate postwar period. Ultimately, Damaskinos remained in office until his death on May 20, 1949. Interestingly, the state held an official funeral for both men, despite the fact that Chrysanthos, at the time of his death, did not hold a position in the hierarchy of the Church of Greece.

Events surrounding the archiepiscopal election of 1938 led to the publication of numerous studies during World War II and the years immediately following the war. Causing quite a stir in May 1939, the confinement of the popular hierarch to the Phaneromeni monastery on the island of Salamis puzzled many contemporary observers and divided the church. Controversial issues related to the election include the vote of the metropolitan of Dryinoupolis Ioannis Vasilikos, the legality of the state’s intervention, and involvement of the cabinet ministers in pre-election maneuvering. Most political historians of the period view the annulment of the election by the Fourth of August Regime an arbitrary act of a dictator determined to gain control of the only institution remaining outside his control. In line with the rest of the literature about Damaskinos, his biographers portray him as a victim of an oppressive regime. Moreover, most studies written about the election in the late forties and early fifties focus on the illegality of the state’s intervention, paying less attention to the personal reasons prompting the state’s intervention.²³³ They concluded that the state’s intervention went against church and state law. These approaches, however, fail to explain how the

²³³Konstantinos Xenogiannis, "I Eklogi ton Archiepiskopon Damaskinos kai Chrysanthos ex Epopseios Kanonikis," *Epitrisis Theologikou Syndesmou (Yearbook of the Theological Student Union 1957-1958 (1959))*, Nikitas Tsavellas, *I Eklogi tou Archiepiskopou Athinon (5 November 1938) (the Election of the Archbishop of Athens)* (Athens: 1941), Ioannis Panagopoulos, *To Archiepiskopikon Zitima* (Athens: Stefanopoulos, 1946), P. Panagiotakos, *I Eklogi tou Archiepiskopou Athinon kai ton Episkopon en ti Orthodoxon Ekklisia tis Ellados (the Election of Archbishop of Athens and the Bishops in the Orthodox Church of Greece)* (1946).

response of the government fits into the larger context of church-state relations in the interwar period. Since 1917, both royalist and Venizelist governments disregarded the legal rights of the church and made changes to the institution's laws and leadership numerous times, making the intervention of Metaxas appear consistent with the state's behavior toward the church. World War II, the occupation of the country, and Damaskinos' emergence as leader of the nation at war's end, led biographers and church historians to distinguish the acts of the Metaxas regime from the larger context of church-state relations.

Contemporary sources including State Department documents, Metaxas' diaries, and other personal accounts help explain how the state's intervention fits into the larger framework of the relationship between the secular and the sacred in Greece. American Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh's dispatches to Washington reveal the attitude of the regime toward the office, the major candidates, and its plans for the institution within the larger project of 'reforming' the character of the nation by introducing a new Christian Hellenic Civilization. Metaxas' diary provides intimate details about the pre-election maneuvering by his ministers, the factionalism within the hierarchy, his personal feelings about Damaskinos, and his expectations from the successor of Chrysostomos Papadopoulos.

Following two decades of political instability and political turmoil, political events in Greece in 1935 contributed to the emergence of a royalist dictatorship the following year, a dictatorship that maintained tight control over all aspects of civil, military and religious authority. Under these circumstances, General Metaxas' decision to annul the election of the popular, charismatic, and strong-willed Venizelist,

Damaskinos appears consistent with the tradition of church-state relations in Greece. Wanting control of the last bastion of Venizelist support in the country, King George II and his prime minister intended to appoint a hierarch supportive of the monarchy and willing to tolerate the intrusive personality of Metaxas. Scholars attribute the annulment of the election to the arbitrary act of a dictator, failing to see the complicity of the king and the dictator's determination to use the church as a vehicle to reform Greek society. Damaskinos, however, did not fit the mold of the compliant royalist hierarch the government desired. Therefore, Metaxas, who knew that Damaskinos disapproved of his regime, forced the Council of State to annul the election and to ensure control of the church in the future.

Metaxas' dictatorship, which remained obsessed with the reformation of the Greek character and moral values, considered control of the church of paramount importance.²³⁴ Incumbent archbishop Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, an appointee of Plastiras and a well-known Venizelist, remained an obstacle to Metaxas' plans. Removing the popular and erudite hierarch, however, did not seem a prudent course.²³⁵ The diminutive dictator preferred to wait for the elderly cleric to die, and looked forward to the event when severe illness forced the hierarch's hospitalization on October 11, 1938. His death on October 22, 1938 cleared the way for Metaxas to appoint a 'more suitable' candidate. Lincoln MacVeagh, United States ambassador to Greece from 1933-

²³⁴ For the ideology of the Metaxas regime, one should consult Constantine Sarandis, "The Ideology and Character of the Metaxas Regime," in *Aspects of Greece, 1936-1949: The Metaxas Dictatorship*, ed. Thanos Veremis and Robin Higham (Athens: The Hellenic Foundation of Defense and Foreign Policy and The Speros Basil Vryonis Center for the Study of Hellenism, 1993): 147-178.

²³⁵ Ioannis Panagopoulos, a scholar of church law comments on the poor relationship between Metaxas and Chrysostomos. He states Metaxas knew that the stately hierarch disapproved of his regime, but could not depose him without a valid reason. He was a well-established hierarch and academic in Greece; one of the most important historians of Orthodoxy of the twentieth century. Panagopoulos, *To Archiepiskopikon Zitima.*, 13.

1949 and astute observer of Greek affairs, understood the political importance of replacing Chrysostomos with a more pliable candidate and explained the significance in a dispatch to the State Department dated October 24, 1938, two days after the archbishop's death.

The death of Chrysostomos removes the last Venizelist to occupy a commanding position in the Greek state. Many Greeks...regret his departure on political grounds. For, they regard it as almost certain that his successor will be more sympathetic with the monarchy or the government, or both, than was this representative of new Greece.²³⁶

A majority of the population remained hostile to the dictatorship and lamented the loss of the last major opponent of the regime. Greeks understood that the office of the archbishop remained the highest position of moral authority in the nation. His death, therefore, removed the final obstacle to the dictatorship's complete control over the conscience of the nation.

Events surrounding the election of a successor, however, proved far more complex than the dictator envisioned. Despite the government backing of their candidate, Chrysanthos Philippidis, did not have the support of the majority of the hierarchy. Damaskinos, whose popularity, after his success in Corinth and the United States, grew considerably, appeared a worthy alternative to the government's candidate. After returning from the United States, Damaskinos established a growing following within the hierarchy. Among other things, he became the Economic Commissioner of the Church of Greece in 1936.²³⁷ Another problem preventing the dictator from ensuring victory for his candidate was the 1931 Church constitution, which stipulated that the Church hierarchy elected the archbishop. Previously, the government asked the synod to furnish the king

²³⁶ 868/1058 2525 MacVeagh to State Department Oct. 24, 1938 The Archbishop is Dead! Long Live the Archbishop!

²³⁷ Ibid.

and government the names of three worthy candidates for the position, leaving the ultimate decision in the hands of the political authorities. Such a scheme worked well for Metaxas, but feigned disinterest in the outcome of the election led the dictator to refrain from changing the law.²³⁸ This was a decision he came to regret.

Internal divisions within his own government also created problems for the dictator's plan. Apparently, a faction led by Nikolaos Georgakopoulos (Minister of Education and Religion) supported the candidacy of Damaskinos.²³⁹ As a close friend of Damaskinos, he began campaigning for him among the hierarchy, most of whom intended to vote for him anyway. Metaxas instructed his ministers to refrain from interfering in the election. He attempted to express the government's neutrality to foreign officials in *Messenger d'Athenes*, the semi-official organ of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

I desire to define the government's position... We should consider the church free, and also under the sovereign state. Consequently the government considers it its duty not to interfere in purely ecclesiastical questions, such as the election by the episcopate of an archbishop of Athens.... I pray all the ministers to conform... The episcopate must not be influenced in its choice of the proper person, having also all the responsibility in case its choice turns out not to be a happy one.²⁴⁰

Despite emphasizing the importance of maintaining the independence of ecclesiastical affairs, he meant this message to serve as a warning to his ministers to either support the

²³⁸ For the full text of the laws related to the election of hierarchs of the Church of Greece, one should consult Varnavas Tzortzatos Metropolitan of Kitros, ed., *I Katastatiki Nomothesia tis Ekklisias tis Ellados apo tis Systaseos tou Ellinikou Vasileou (Legislation of the Church of Greece from the Establishment of the Monarchy)* (Athens: 1967), 214-218

²³⁹ Dimosthenis Koukounas, *O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos (Archbishop Damaskinos)* (Athens: Metron, 1991), 41, Giorgos Karagiannis, *Ekklisia kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)* (Athens Pontiki, 1997), 51-2.

²⁴⁰ MacVeagh reported in his letter that this passage came from the *Messenger d'Athenes*, a publication he deemed "the organ of the Greek Foreign Office." Lincoln MacVeagh, "The Archbishop Is Dead! Long Live the Archbishop!", (Athens: US Embassy in Greece, 1938).

candidacy of Chrysanthos or remain silent. As minister responsible for the church, Georgakopoulos wielded influence over the hierarchy, but how much pressure he placed on it to elect Damaskinos is difficult to discern. After the affair was resolved, Metaxas remained convinced that his minister schemed for two years prior to the election to insure the election of Damaskinos. His suspicion was well founded.²⁴¹ Thus, on the eve of the election, the two candidates and their respective backers both felt confident of their success and failed to comprehend the scandalous way the affair finally concluded in December 1938.

Two legal developments require analysis if one hopes to understand the complexity of the election and the basis of government intervention in the affair. First, prior to 1931 the government, ultimately, appointed the hierarchs of the church. Initially the government simply appointed the candidates it considered ‘worthy’ of the position. After 1852, however, the permanent seven-member synod that resided in Athens, nominated three candidates to the king, who would, in turn, choose the individual he considered the best candidate.²⁴² The Plastiras government, in December 1922, called for the hierarchy of the Church of Greece to appoint the next head of the church according to his Church Constitution published in the same year.²⁴³ The last legal revision was made with the Church Constitution of 1931, passed under the final Venizelos government. This revision called for the hierarchy of the Church to elect, by simple majority, the future leaders of the Church.²⁴⁴ Metaxas confirmed this last law four days before the

²⁴¹ Ioannis Metaxas and Christos Christidis, *To Prosopiko Tou Imerologio (His Personal Diary)*, 8 vols., vol. 7 (Athens: Gkobostes, 1989). Siphis Kollias, Dimosthenis Koukounas, and Giorgos Karagiannis all agree that Metaxas’ suspicions were well founded.

²⁴² Metropolitan of Kitros, ed., *Church Legislation*, 95-98

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 132, 136-8.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 173-4.

November 5 election. His law, however, included one qualification that, ultimately, provided him with an opportunity to prevent the official recognition of an unwanted candidate. The law required the king to approve, formally, the election of the new candidate.²⁴⁵

Second, Metropolitan Ioannis Vasilikos of Dryinoupolis and Konitsis participation in the election remained the most controversial development in the affair. His having been convicted of simony and reduced to the ‘ranks of the laity’ by a high ecclesiastical court apparently disqualified him from voting, though he filed his appeal of the court’s decision just before the election. A hearing before the Greek Supreme Court to determine his status as an elector took place and the court determined that he could vote.²⁴⁶ To make matters worse, the minister of education and religious affairs failed to inform the dictator of the results of the election and permitted him to vote. According to his diary, Metaxas instructed Georgakopoulos to prevent Metropolitan Ioannis from voting by any means necessary.²⁴⁷ Georgakopoulos, it appears, disobeyed his chief and

²⁴⁵ Ioannis Konstantinidis, *H Ekklesia ton Athinon kata yin Triakontapentaetian (1923-1957)* (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1961), 36, Vasilios Atesis, "I Eklogi tou Archiepiskopou Athinon ypo tis Ierarhias (the Election of the Archbishop of Athens by the Hierarchy)," *Archeion Ekklesiastikou kai Kanonikou Dikaion* 5 (1950).

²⁴⁶ An ecclesiastical court convicted metropolitan of Dryinoupolis, Ioannis of simony and dethroned him on October 11, 1938. He appealed the conviction, and his uncertain status regarding his position called into question his candidacy as an elector-bishop for the upcoming archiepiscopal election. On November 2, minister of education and religion, Georgakopoulos and the royal commissioner assigned to the Holy Synod, Dimitrios Petrakakos asked the Nomiko Symvoulion to review the issue. The court reviewed the issue the following day, and decided by unanimous decision that the metropolitan, due to this legal situation, could participate in the upcoming election. Panagopoulos, *To Archiepiskopikon Zitima.*, 15-6. The story behind the simony charge represents one of the major problems tarnishing the image of the Church, that of hierarchs accepting bribes in return for ordinations or other favors. In this case, the metropolitan accepted a payment by one George Pappas of 3,000 drachmas and a fountain pen in return for his signature on falsified documents related to his wedding. The event led MacVeagh to lament the state of the church and to exclaim: "God save the Greek Church"! 868/1074 February 18, 1938 MacVeagh to State Department "Greece in 1938."

²⁴⁷ Ioannis Metaxas and Christos Christidis, *To Prosopiko tou Imerologio (Personal Diaries, 8 vols., vol. 7)* (Athens: Gkobotest, 1989), 313.

permitted the bishop to vote, despite the fact that a published list of the elector-bishops excluded his name.²⁴⁸

On the fateful day of the election, November 5, 1938, sixty-one hierarchs assembled in the metropolitan church to elect their new chief. Two important details about the makeup of the elector-bishops outside the presence of the metropolitan of Dryinoupolis deserve attention. First, sickness prevented Metropolitan Stefanos Daniilidis of Lemnos from attending. His presence would have changed the outcome of the election and influenced the scandalous developments that followed.²⁴⁹ Second, Chrysanthos Philippidis could not participate because he was not a member of the Church of Greece, though his main competitor, Damaskinos, counted among the elector-bishops.²⁵⁰ By the second ballot, Damaskinos and Chrysanthos were the only two candidates to receive votes: thirty-one votes for Damaskinos and thirty for Chrysanthos. Greek law requires that in the event that the candidate receiving the most votes fails to win the support of the majority of the hierarchy (which occurred due to the absence of the Metropolitan of Lemnos), the government required the hierarchy to hold two more rounds of voting. The results, however, remained the same after the fourth round of voting.²⁵¹ Events following the election remain among the most scandalous of the Fourth of August Regime.

Infuriated by the failure of the election of his candidate, Metaxas took a series of steps to ‘rectify’ the situation. First, he wanted to annul the election, but did not want to

²⁴⁸ Ioannis Panagopoulos states that the name of the metropolitan of Dryinoupolis was left off the official list of electors. Panagopoulos, *To Archiepiskopikon Zitima*.

²⁴⁹ MacVeagh Dispatch, November 14, 1938.

²⁵⁰ According to Church law in Greece, only members of the hierarchy of the Church of Greece were permitted to take part in the election. This fact proved critical, as Chrysanthos lost the election by a single vote.

²⁵¹ MacVeagh Dispatch, November 14, 1938.

initiate the proceedings, thus appearing neutral. Three bishops who voted for Chrysanthos went to him to complain about the election, specifically the fact that Dryinoupolis voted despite his dethronement. With his blessing, these men went to the Highest Governing Court and demanded the annulment of the election on November 9, 1938.²⁵² The court heard the case on November 15 and, after intense government pressure, ruled the election null and void by a vote of eight to seven.²⁵³

In order to gain support for the ‘court’s’ decision, Metaxas had his minister of the Press, Nikolaos Nikoulidis, publish a series of editorials and articles in the nation’s prominent newspapers supporting the government’s decision.²⁵⁴ For instance, *Kathimerini* (The Daily) published an editorial on November 21 in support of the government’s decision: “When the Reverend Bishop of Corinth, Damaskinos, was elected Metropolitan of Athens by one vote—his own and by another, that of a deposed bishop, public opinion immediately declared the election to be void and the archiepiscopal throne vacant.”²⁵⁵ The article also “applauds” the government for listening to public opinion, and expressed the hope that Damaskinos, under the

²⁵² The three bishops who brought the case before the Highest Governing Court were Metropolitan of Mytilini Iakovos, Metropolitan of Fthiotis Amvrosios and Metropolitan of Samos Eirinaios. Siphis Kollias, *Archiepiskopos-Antivasileus Damaskinos o apo Korinthias : Mia Anepanalepti Ekklesiastiki Morphi (Archbishop-Regent Damaskinos of Corinth: One Unparalleled Ecclesiastical Personality)*, 3 ed. (Athens Petrakis Monastery, 1975), 69. Debate remains intense over the incident. According to Siphis Kollias and popular opinion at the time, the disgraced metropolitan voted for Chrysanthos, thus, further legitimizing Damaskinos’ victory. Others, including Damaskinos’ most recent biographer, Dimosthenis Koukounas, believe he voted for Damaskinos. Immediately following the election, MacVeagh received information from a bishop present during the election that he voted for Chrysanthos. In addition, Harold Shantz, U.S. *Charge d’Affairs* informs the State Department that, “The ineligible Metropolitan of Dryinoupolis actually voted for the Government’s candidate, the Metropolitan of Trebizond”! Thus the Government used one of its own votes as the means of securing the annulment of the unsatisfactory results.” 868/1064 Harold Shantz Charge d’Affairs Athens Dec. 5, 1938 The Dictator Takes Charge of Religion and Education in Greece. The fact, however, that the election was close ballot and the lack of concrete evidence supporting either assumption, his choice continues to remain a mystery.

²⁵³ Panagopoulos, *To Archiepiskopikon Zitima*, 44-9.

²⁵⁴ 868/ 1061 November 24 MacVeagh to State Department: “No Archbishop”

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

circumstances, accepts the annulment of the election. “Consequently, public opinion and that of the jurists agree on this point, and there is no doubt but that the Reverend Bishop of Corinth will be of the same opinion, since he voted not knowing the number of votes he would receive.”²⁵⁶ The article concludes with portentous comments about the future of the affair. “It ought to be determined whether the future election of the Metropolitan of Athens is to be held in the same manner, whether all the prelates of Greece are to be convoked again, and if...the State is to resort to the same law and to the same methods.”²⁵⁷

Immediately following the annulment of the election, Metaxas passed an emergency law calling for a special twelve-member synod, rather than the entire hierarchy, to determine the archiepiscopal succession. According to the new law, the king chose the new leader of the church from a list of three candidates provided by the special synod, a law resembling the previous tradition.²⁵⁸ The dictator, however, pressured the synod to exclude Damaskinos’ name, to avoid further humiliation. The new synod complied, providing three names, including that of Chrysanthos. King George chose Chrysanthos and the problem appeared resolved.²⁵⁹

The dictator also instituted a house-cleaning of the ministry of education and religion. He forced Georgakopoulos to resign and exiled. Wanting to maintain his personal control over the church, he took over the office of minister of education and religion, personally.²⁶⁰ In a public announcement, the dictator proclaimed:

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ For a full text of the law, one should consult Metropolitan of Kitros, ed., *Church Legislation.*, 219-224.

²⁵⁹ 868/ 1061 November 24 MacVeagh to State Department No Archbishop, 868/1064 Harold Shantz Charge d’ Affairs Athens Dec. 5, 1938 The Dictator Takes Charge of Religion and Education in Greece

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

I felt that my presence here was necessary. First of all, I shall restore order in the Church, which has been somewhat disturbed recently. And I shall restore order in the permanent fashion, so that even the smallest irregularity cannot occur in the future. Subsequently I shall take up the questions particularly pertaining to the ministry of National education, that is to say, teaching.²⁶¹

His comments about ‘restoring order’ indicate that the ministry possessed too much independence, something he could not permit. He had hoped that the installation of his candidate to the post of archbishop permitted him to refrain from direct state intervention, but this decision ensured that he maintained complete control. Determined to control the education curriculum and the church, he understood that only his personal control over the ministry permitted this possibility.

Metaxas and Chrysanthos hoped that Damaskinos would accept the decision of the Council of State. On December 3, 1938, the Holy Synod under the temporary presidency of Amvrosios of Fthiotis sent a letter informing the metropolitan of the court’s decision.²⁶² Two days later the Synod requested that he return to his ecclesiastical see. However, he remained in Athens.²⁶³ Damaskinos hoped he could appeal directly to Metaxas. After the Council of State annulled the election, he sent a letter to the dictator, with the signature of the majority of the elector-bishops (38), asking him to accept the hierarchy’s decision to elect him archbishop.²⁶⁴ Metaxas, characteristically, failed to respond to the letter, and demanded that he return to Corinth.²⁶⁵ Undeterred, the fiery metropolitan refused to accept the government’s decision, continued to consider himself

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Archive of the Holy Synod, Personal Archive of Archbishop Damaskinos, Letter from metropolitan of Fthiotis Amvrosios to metropolitan of Corinth Damaskinos, dated December 3, 1938.

²⁶³ Archive of the Holy Synod, Personal Archive of Archbishop Damaskinos, Letter from Metropolitan of Fthiotis Amvrosios to Metropolitan Damaskinos dated December 5, 1938

²⁶⁴ For a text of the letter, one should consult: Kollias, 13-17

²⁶⁵ Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos*. 48, Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos*., 73.

the canonical archbishop, even signing all his documents ‘Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Damaskinos.’²⁶⁶ He informed the government that he preferred to retire to a monastery rather than accept its decision.²⁶⁷

Chrysanthos and the Metaxas regime took a number of steps to remove the stubborn Damaskinos from the scene, concluding the matter by taking Damaskinos at his word and banishing him to the Phaneromeni Monastery. Steps toward this goal were taken first by the state then by the Synod. Chrysanthos requested the assistance of the government to resolve the crisis. Wanting to avoid further humiliation, the Fourth of August Regime passed a law demoting any metropolitan who remained away from his see for an extended period without synodal permission. This law was used to remove Damaskinos as metropolitan of Corinth.²⁶⁸ On March 23, the Synod decided to banish metropolitan Damaskinos to the Phaneromeni Monastery on the island of Salamis, an act approved by the king on April 11.²⁶⁹

Damaskinos’ two-year exile made a deep impression on him, but he remained convinced that he was the legitimate archbishop of Athens and all Greece. During his exile, he remained under armed guard, forbidden from having any communication with friends and family. Because of the strict terms of the banishment, few sources exist about his time there. Two men, however, who became longtime supporters of the archbishop, his legal advisor Ioannis Georgakis and the prominent literary figure Angelos Sikelianos,

²⁶⁶ Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos.*, 48.

²⁶⁷ 868/1064 Harold Shantz Charge d’Affairs Athens Dec. 5, 1938 The Dictator Takes Charge of Religion and Education in Greece

²⁶⁸ 868/1079 March 6, 1939 MacVeagh to State Department Archbishop’s Elba, Archive of the Holy Synod, Personal Archive of Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou, March 9 Letter from Holy Synod to Damaskinos informing him of his dethronement as metropolitan of Corinth, March 23 Act of the Holy Synod, the Banishment of Damaskinos to the Phaneromeni Monastery on Salamis, April 11 Royal Decree Approving the Synod’s Decision to Banish Damaskinos, April 11, 1939.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., Kollias, *Archiepiskopos Damaskinos.*, 73, Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos.*, 48.

paint drastically different pictures of the archbishop during his exile on Salamis. He had a simple cell in the monastery with few furnishings. Georgakis described the monastery as a guarded prison. “During my spring vacation...I decided to spend an afternoon from Megalo Pefko in the nearby Salamis and the military camp that surrounded the Phaneromeni monastery.”²⁷⁰ While his conditions did not compare to those of the political prisoners sent to the uninhabited Aegean islands by the Metaxas regime, conditions were difficult. Regarding the furnishings of his cell, Georgakis wrote: “I was in a small cell, which for furnishings had a small table, a boarded bookcase, an ancient ‘though living’ organ and icons.”²⁷¹ During his visit, they discussed the war clouds. The hierarch realized that war had become unavoidable.

Damaskinos: Well, obviously you see the oncoming war?

Georgakis: Yes

Damaskinos: Sometime, even if it is late, Hitler will quarrel with Europe. And then we will also become involved...Oh, those Allies, why can't they realize that which we so easily understand inside of this cell.²⁷²

During the conversation, Georgakis realized that his confinement had a deep impact on the hierarch. His sense of helplessness in light of the situation was especially noticeable. “He covered his face with his hands saying, ‘I am not a helpless bystander, and you must understand that quite easily.’ And, he then pointed to his surroundings. ‘Though, I doubt I will survive to see my land face its violent fate.’”²⁷³

Sikelianos, on the other hand, in the July 1 1941 edition of the literary magazine *Nea Estia*, provides a different picture of the archbishop. During one of his conversations

²⁷⁰ Ioannis Georgakis, "O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos Kai I Ekklesia Kata Tin Katohi (Archbishop Damaskinos and the Church During the Occupation)," in *Omiliai*, 1987 (Athens: 1989)., 58

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

with Sikelianos, Damaskinos acknowledged that for a man of action such as himself, the circumstances of the confinement were initially disheartening. “When after so much action and activity, to which I had been accustomed, I suddenly found myself in the great silence and loneliness that surrounds us, my first impression was that in all certainty my previous life was dissipating into a deep dream.”²⁷⁴ However, once he became accustomed to conditions, he used the time to look within himself, leading him to emerge stronger than ever. “But looking constantly into myself, it was not long before I felt that...in the solitude and silence, there emerged from within me a sense of spiritual and psychological stability that rejuvenated and consolidated all my deepest connections with life.”²⁷⁵

Suffering, in his eyes, and his long days and nights of mediation in the monastery allowed him to reflect on his life, and later he was able to connect his previous life of activity to his period of exile. “My previous life experience [and my time in exile] reconnected with each other in a world of higher spiritual and psychological harmony.”²⁷⁶ So, inspired by his time away from the frenetic life of social and political action, he told Sikelianos that he considered documenting his experience in a spiritual tract. “I thought of writing a book with the title which I would call “The Joy of Pain,” based on the experience of this entire recent period.”²⁷⁷ He also believed that God planned this exile to strengthen him for greater ordeals in the future. “Besides, he concluded, perhaps the Lord, through this experience, is preparing me and training me for other more difficult,

²⁷⁴ Kollias, 82

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 83.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

more solemn and more demanding days.”²⁷⁸ Although, no doubt, Sikelianos idealized his conversations with the archbishop, the passages spoke to the internal strength the latter possessed, which the experience of occupation would test to its limits.

These accounts indicate that the experience of confinement for a man of his stature and experience caused considerable shock to the archbishop. Georgakis’ conversation took place during the spring of 1939, just after the beginning of his confinement. Damaskinos, then, still had his mind on worldly events, as indicated by his references to eminent war clouds looming over Europe. The fact that Georgakis did not seem to have too much contact with him since his 1939 visit might explain the drastic difference in the assessment of the archbishop. That said, a close colleague and friend of Damaskinos, who wrote a long report about the archbishop to Emanuel Tsouderos (prime minister of the Greek government-in-exile (1941-1944) during the occupation, indicated that the experience had a major psychological impact on the hierarch.²⁷⁹

The war and occupation soon saw him return to Athens and, through another government intervention in Greek affairs, restored to his throne in July 1941. Incessant bombardments of Greek shipping by Germany nearly ended his life before he could return to his throne as prelate of the church.

Once he returned to Athens, plans were put in motion to ‘restore’ him to his throne. Soon after his arrival he met Georgakis and other close friends. Georgakis recalls the situation in the small house hosting the archbishop upon his arrival in the capital. “The small area [in the house] was packed with clerics, primarily, and an

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ 1/24/1944 F.O. 371/43677 R1861. Report on the Person of the Archbishop.

atmosphere of anguish. A pressurized eagerness expressed the tension which existed.”²⁸⁰ Themistocles Tsatsos, the brother of his political advisor and later president of Greece, Konstantinos Tsatsos, insisted that Georgakis encourage him to accept the position of archbishop if offered. “He’s waiting for you. Pressure him to accept, to move forward. It is essential.”²⁸¹ When Damaskinos asked him what to do, Georgakis responded with an interesting remark: “Don’t become bogged down, Your Eminence, in metaphysical quandaries. The issues are simple. Have you decided to become a reincarnation of [18]21’ and to have the sole goal of liberating us and, of course, of the Patriarchichal vision?”²⁸² Georgakis continued, “If yes, then go forward without hesitation on your own path, but also toward the nation’s destiny. Our population is orphaned, it will embrace and follow you.”²⁸³ He concludes his response by reiterating his basic argument: “Our nation waits for you to become a leader and a guide in its tragic fate, and not a temporary hierarch only the invaders require at this time.”²⁸⁴ Georgakis’ words articulated the immense expectations the population had of the archbishop during the first months of the occupation, especially by those close to him.

Meanwhile, events taking place in the capital prior to Damaskinos’ arrival helped pave the way for his restoration. As with the questionable events following the election of 1938, the new Tsolakoglou government set in motion a series of events to justify the dethronement of Chrysanthos for his courageous refusal to swear in the new government. On April 27, the Germans entered the capital after forcing the Greek army to surrender on April 23. Among the first acts of Field Marshall von Stumme, the commander of

²⁸⁰ Georgakis, 59.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

German forces entering the capital, was a visit to Archbishop Chrysanthos. The meeting did little to warm the Germans to the stubborn archbishop. His refusal, a few days later, to swear in the new government, however, convinced the Germans that they needed to find a more pliable replacement. Georgios Tsolakoglou, whose wife knew Damaskinos, considered the cleric a possible candidate.²⁸⁵ According to contemporaries, Nikolaos Louvaris, a close friend of Damaskinos and later minister of education and religious affairs in the final occupation government of Ioannis Rallis, encouraged his candidacy to the Germans.²⁸⁶

After deciding on this change, the government used the controversial election of 1938 to provide the ‘legal’ justification for their maneuvering. All too often, the government found willing hierarchs to legitimize their intervention in ecclesiastical affairs. Unlike in the past, however, the ecclesiastical controversy revolving around this particular intervention was genuine, despite the new prime minister’s actual interest in the affair. Tsolakoglou assigned the task of making the arrangements for the change to his minister of education and religious affairs Konstantinos Logothetopoulos. A group of metropolitans went to Prime Minister Tsolakoglou to request a reevaluation of the legitimacy of the election of 1938; the government approved and published a decree stating that it appointed a special synod of twenty-three hierarchs to discuss the matter on June 18. After the ruling of the synod in favor of the legitimacy of Damaskinos’ election as canonical, the Archbishop was restored to his throne on July 5, 1941.

Responses to the dethronement reflected the deep division within the hierarchy.

A number of hierarchs sympathetic to Chrysanthos’ plight sent him letters and telegrams

²⁸⁵ Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, *Idou i Alitheia* (Athens: 1948), 203.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Ioannis D. Rallis, and Georgios I. Rallis, *O Ioannis D. Rallis Omilei Ek Tou Tafou*. (Athens: National Library of Greece, 1947), 24.

expressing their outrage at the intervention of the occupation regime in ecclesiastical affairs and pledged their continued support. Among his most vocal supporters were the metropolitan of Kassandreia, Eirinaios Pantoleon, and Metropolitan Gennadios of Thessaloniki. These letters indicated that the hierarchs who supported Tsolakoglou's decision and served in the special synod were merely tools of the regime and the Germans.²⁸⁷ In contrast to these letters, the Synod received a number of letters approving the actions of the special synod. For instance, on August 11 the metropolitan of Nikopolis and Preveza, Andreas Mantoudis, sent a letter to the Holy Synod that stated among other things: "The published decision of the special synod regarding the Archiepiscopal question is the only legitimate and canonical interpretation."²⁸⁸ Interestingly, on February 5, 1944 two men visited Chrysanthos, who the hierarch identified as the Minopoulos brothers inquired about his willingness to replace Damaskinos, who had fallen out of favor with the Germans due to his connections with the communists.²⁸⁹ Chrysanthos refused stating "It is impossible for me to accept this offer and, if Damaskinos had taken in his hand the scissors and cut the...robe of God, I am not the one who will continue this schism... to the delight of the nation's enemies..."²⁹⁰ Despite the infighting over the legitimacy of the opinion, the hierarchy understood that

²⁸⁷ An interesting exchange between the metropolitan of Thessaloniki Gennadios and Chrysanthos reflects the dissatisfaction of a faction within the hierarchy to these developments. In particular, Gennadios discusses the correspondence he, the metropolitan of Kassandreia Eirinaios. A number of other metropolitans sent telegrams and letters of support to the dethroned cleric. Library of the Holy Synod, Personal Archive of Archbishop Chrysanthos. Letter from Chrysanthos to Gennadios, October 17, 1941. Literary and Historical Archive. Personal Archive of Archbishop Chrysanthos Philippidis. Letters from Gennadios to Chrysanthos, August 8, 1941, August 19, 1941, September 9, 1941, November 4, 1941.

²⁸⁸ Archive of the Holy Synod, Personal Archive of Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou. Letter from the Metropolitan of Nikoupolis and Prevezi Andreas Mantoudis.

²⁸⁹ Tasoulis, 389.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

political rather than ecclesiastical matters determined the outcome of the special synod's discussion.

In the political arena, the two hierarchs involved and the legitimate government understood that the election simply provided an excuse to make the change. The Greek government-in-exile began receiving reports from its ambassador in Ankara about the removal of Chrysanthos in favor of Damaskinos. The reports emphasized the fact that Chrysanthos lost his position due to his refusal to swear in the Tsolakoglou government.²⁹¹ The king and his government had no intention, at the time, to uphold the decision made by the special synod and confirmed by the Tsolakoglou government. Eventually, the king and Tsouderos recognized the fact that Damaskinos' activity, more than the actions of the Tsolakoglou government, established him as the acknowledged head of the Greek church. The government in exile, however, did not make any formal statement regarding the legitimacy of the election of 1938.

A British official, Major Balfour, encouraged his government to pressure the international Orthodox community to recognize Damaskinos as head of the Greek church. However, British ambassador to Greece Reginald Leeper disagreed with this assessment, arguing that this could only complicate matters. "I am not pursuing this suggestion, as I fear that it might involve this Embassy in undesirable ecclesiastical tangles at a time when the Greek political situation is already complicated enough."²⁹² Moreover, he feared that this could also create problems for Damaskinos in Athens. "Furthermore, any such overt support from other Orthodox Churches might well compromise the

²⁹¹ AYE, Political Affairs 1941(10) No.2599 August 6, 1941 Report From Ambassador Rafail to Prime Minister Tsouderos, 6, Second Information Report Regarding the Situation in Greece for the Month of August 1941.

²⁹² R11212/4/19. Letter from Leeper to Foreign Office. October 21, 1943.

Archbishop with the German authorities.”²⁹³ He also acknowledged that Tsouderos and the King already recognized the fact that Damaskinos, because of his duty to the nation, was the *de facto* head of the Greek church. “Both of them (the King and Tsouderos) seem inclined to accept the practical view that Damaskinos’ position has become unassailable, whatever their personal preferences for Archbishop Chrysanthos.”²⁹⁴ Ultimately, Leeper concluded that any such recognition must come after the nation’s liberation. “It will only be possible to establish Archbishop Damaskinos *de jure* after the liberation of Greece.”²⁹⁵ Circumstances at the end of the war, however, prevented the King or his brother and successor Paul to remove Damaskinos before the latter’s death in 1949.

Despite his removal from power, Chrysanthos played an important role in conservative resistance circles struggle to prevent an EAM victory during the war and early postwar period. Among the greatest concerns of these movements was the growing power of the leftwing resistance movement EAM-ELAS. Chrysanthos and his colleagues hoped to prevent the movement from taking power upon a German withdrawal from the country, which by the spring of 1943 became simply a matter of time. His attitude toward the rightwing Security Battalions evidenced his strong anti-communist sentiment and fear of EAM after the war. He, no doubt, supported their efforts, but after the Greek government and the Allies denounced the units in January 1944, the hierarch encouraged members of the organization to either flee to the Middle East or join nationalist movements in Greece.²⁹⁶ However, his fear of a communist takeover led him to propose

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Christos Zalokostas. *Chroniko tis Sklavias*, 104, 293, 298. Cited in Karagiannis, 26.

a different solution: “the Security Battalions, instead of disbanding should remain intact as the final reserve [against the communists].”²⁹⁷ Despite this fear of a communist takeover, the movement made a series of agreements in 1944 ensuring that liberation, at least in its initial stages, remain peaceful.

By liberation day, on October 18, 1944, Damaskinos had become one of the most popular and influential men in Greece. The short-term euphoria that accompanied the end of Nazi rule ended quickly after political tensions exploded between the communist-led resistance movement the National Liberation Front and its military wing the National People’s Liberation Army (EAM-ELAS) and the British and Greek government forces on December 3, 1944. This crisis, referred to by contemporaries and later historians as the Dekemvriana (December Events or Crisis), finally ended with the Varkiza Agreement on February 11, 1945. In the meantime, the unpopular king, in exile throughout the occupation, had been pressured to agree to a Damaskinos Regency until a plebiscite could be held to determine future of the monarchy in the country. Up to the end of December 1944, however, he refused to appoint the prelate as Regent. After a short visit by Churchill and his Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden around Christmas 1944, the British government, threatened to disown him if he refused to appoint Damaskinos. This hard stance by Churchill finally led the king to give way. The king sent a telegram on December 30 appointing Damaskinos as Regent. According to the Varkiza agreement, a plebiscite to determine the king’s fate followed by free elections would restore democracy to the country. Unfortunately, after a visit by Damaskinos to Britain in August 1945 and further discussion in Greece, it was decided in January 1946 that the order would be reversed and that elections would take place on March 31, 1946 followed

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

by a plebiscite. The left, arguing that it was not possible to hold fair elections in this atmosphere finally decided to abstain. Ultimately, a right-wing coalition, led by Tsaldaris' People's Party won the election. The government stated soon after that the plebiscite would be held on September 1, 1946. Due to fear of a possible communist alternative, republicans decided that the monarchy remained the lesser of two evils. As a result, the king received 68% of the vote in the plebiscite and returned to Greece and assumed his duties as head of state on September 28, 1946, thus terminating the Damaskinos Regency.

Chrysanthos had wanted the removal of Damaskinos, even if it did not lead to his own restoration. A group of staunch Chrysanthos supporters attempted to reopen the "Archiepiscopal Controversy" in 1946, but Damaskinos maneuvered to eliminate this threat to his position. He called a meeting of the hierarchy for July 22, 1946 to discuss the matter among other things.²⁹⁸ Although a majority of the hierarchy attended (45), thirteen supporters of Chrysanthos abstained. The metropolitan of Kefallonia Germanos brought up the "Archiepiscopal Controversy" on July 25, three days after the initial meeting called for by Damaskinos three days earlier. After a long discussion, the hierarchy voted 39 to 2 to acknowledge the efforts by the special synod called by the Tsolakoglou to review the validity of the 1938 election.²⁹⁹ Despite the stubborn persistence of Germanos, the hierarchy terminated discussion of the matter for the time being.³⁰⁰ The fact that thirteen members of the hierarchy abstained and two other voted

²⁹⁸ Damaskinos called for the meeting of the hierarchy in a Royal Decree on July 3, 1946 to discuss a number of issues including the church and the new constitution, the reorganization of the church's administration among other matters. Theoklitos Strangas, *Ekklesias Ellados Istoría Ek Pígon Apsevdon, 1817-1967 (History of the Church of Greece from Genuine Sources, 1817-1967)*, 2nd ed., 7 vols., vol. 3 (Athens: Apostolíkis Diakonia, 2001, 1969-1971), 2520-1.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2533-5.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2536.

against recognizing the efforts of the special synod evidenced the continued division within the hierarchy. Chrysanthos, for his part, decided that he would resign his post as archbishop. Toward this, he wrote a letter to the President of the Revised Greek Parliament, Ioannis Theotokis. Theotokis and other members of this group encouraged the hierarch to wait until the king returned before handing in his resignation. Chrysanthos agreed.³⁰¹

Public opinion and local politicians in Great Britain, however, would prevent any such action in Damaskinos' lifetime in light of his activity during the occupation. A letter sent on September 18, 1946 by Alexandros Pallis, a king's advisor in London, articulates the difficulty of acting on the pressure placed on the Greek government to reopen the matter. While he sympathized with the hierarch's position, he stated that international circumstances prevented the king from acting at that time. Among other things, he identified the uproar it may cause in the British press. "Any reopening of the Archiepiscopal Controversy at that time will create a bad impression on public opinion here (London)." In particular, Damaskinos' activity during the occupation made a deep impression on British public opinion. "Damaskinos, due to his activity during the war, had developed some notoriety within some circles, and won the sympathy of many government officials, both among both the conservative and labor parties, as his method of restoration has been ignored." As evidence he cites a meeting in the British Parliament in December 1944. "During a discussion in the House of Lords in December 1944, Lord Long expressed doubts whether 'Damaskinos was the appropriate person to become Regent because he was not the legitimate archbishop, but someone else.'"³⁰² This fact, of

³⁰¹ Tasoulis, 437-440

³⁰² Ibid., 441.

course, Churchill's government ignored when deciding to push Damaskinos on the king in December 1944.

British public opinion, in general, as evidenced by Damaskinos' reception in London in August 1941, indicated that the hierarch had become an international celebrity. "When, later, covering Damaskinos' visit to London, the press here greeted him with flowers."³⁰³ Another powerful indication of his international status was his picture on the October 1, 1945 cover of *Time* magazine. For these reasons, a member of the Conservative party in London informed Pallis that he should not pursue the matter. "A Conservative MP, who had just returned from Greece, expressed the opinion that it was not wise to reopen the Archbishopal Controversy at the time."³⁰⁴

Chrysanthos responded to this letter on October 6. He stated that he appreciated his letter, and included a copy of the September 28 letter he sent to the king tendering his resignation in order to prevent further problems within the church. He stated that "I became comfortable with my resignation, as it is on behalf of the Church, State, and Nation, and for this reason I did not hesitate to offer this sacrifice regardless of Greek public opinion..."³⁰⁵ The hierarch stated that many wanted to cleanse the church actions that tarnished it during the occupation. "[These hierarchs] insisted on the purging of the Church and State of the abomination of the combined acts and laws of the occupation and the restoration of the ethical position of the state."³⁰⁶

Despite the intentions of Chrysanthos and desires of the king, the Greek civil war raging in the country, coupled with British support of Damaskinos, prevented any steps to

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 443

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

be taken regarding the “Archiepiscopal Controversy” after the monarch’s return in September 1946. The reality was that the king possessed neither support within the hierarchy, as evidenced by the synod meeting in July, nor within the government, nor abroad. For this reason, George II had to console himself with an opportunity to offend Damaskinos. This he did in public during the baptism of princess Fredericka on October 19, 1946. He did so by choosing Chrysanthos rather than Damaskinos to perform the ceremony.³⁰⁷

One last possibility appeared to fulfill Chrysanthos’ effort to receive official recognition of his position as Archbishop of Athens. This was the death of Damaskinos on May 20, 1949. Immediately after Damaskinos’ passing, a number of Chrysanthos’ supporters went to then Prime Minister Themistocles Sophoulis to reexamine the matter of his legitimacy as archbishop, but they lacked the numbers in the hierarchy.³⁰⁸ In addition, the government of Themistocles Sophoulis opposed the idea. In the midst of civil war, the government refused to allow this group within the hierarchy to act on his behalf, which would only create further headaches for the regime. Karagiannis succinctly described the position of the regime: “The government of Themistocles Sophoulis did not want to open another front during that critical phase in the civil war, this time an ecclesiastical one.”³⁰⁹ However, the government, to appease his supporters, called for a special synod to discuss the matter less than twenty-four hours after Damaskinos’ death. The matter, however, was not resolved until after the election of Damaskinos’ successor, Metropolitan Spyridon of Ioannina. Finally, on August 10, 1949, the synod acknowledged Chrysanthos as the “former” archbishop of Athens and awarded him an

³⁰⁷ Karagiannis, *Ekklesia Kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)*, 89.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 90. Strangas also discusses the matter. Strangas, 2627

appropriate pension. He passed away, however, a month later, having to enjoy his ‘victory’.³¹⁰

The matter did not end with his death: Dimitrios Antypas, a lawyer by training, wrote that “The occupier overthrew the ecclesiastical leadership, and that a mock ‘Special’ Synod...approved the fall of the legal and canonical ecclesiastical leadership, which carried the signature of the King of Greece, George II and the stamp of the respected Council of State.”³¹¹ In particular, the author felt that the archbishop, who was an exceptional personality and ecclesiastical leader, wrongfully lost his throne.

The significance of the “Archiepiscopal Controversy” for church-state relations is considerable. The deep involvement of the hierarchy in political affairs, both because of their own political views and the determination of the state to control the church, had disastrous consequences for the reputations of both the state and the church. Also, in many ways the struggle between Damaskinos and Chrysanthos concluded, at least for a period of time, the constitutional question and the church. In many respects, this controversy was a direct consequence of the struggle between the royalist and Venizelist factions over Greece’s involvement in World War I. Pressure from Metaxas, for instance, led archbishop Theoklitos to excommunicate Venizelos for his decision to form the Government of National Defense in 1916 in Thessaloniki. His ouster at the hands of Venizelos with the support of a faction of the hierarchy, and his later restoration in 1920 after the return of the royalists to power began a three-decade long period of frequent government involvement in church affairs. Damaskinos and several of his colleagues in the Panclerical Union were appointed as metropolitans by the Plastiras regime in

³¹⁰ Ibid.,

³¹¹ Dimitrios Antypas. *Astrapai en Zofo* (Lighting in the Darkness). (Athens, 1952), 33-42. Cited in Strangas 2408.

December 1922, which led many royalists, headed by King George himself, to view him with enmity. If Balfour's report is to be believed, Damaskinos solidified his position as a Venizelist when he refused the donation of the exiled king for the earthquake victims of Corinth.

Chrysanthos, in contrast, became a close friend and ardent supporter of the monarchy, and, for this reason, became the chosen successor of the ailing Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, even before the latter's death in 1938, by the Metaxas regime. The events of June-July 1941, though not directly related to the constitutional question, nonetheless, reflect the continued belief that direct government involvement in sensitive ecclesiastical affairs became the quickest and easiest solution to a conflict between the hierarchy and the government. Efforts by Chrysanthos and his supporters to overturn the developments in 1941 after the war did little to halt this blatant breach of ecclesiastical law regarding church-state relations.

Also troubling, however, is the willingness of members of the hierarchy to pay lip service to church doctrine to justify their unlawful and forced involvement in political affairs. Even though service to the existing government did not directly motivate their actions, as was the case of the group of hierarchs who went to the Council of State to call for the annulment of the Damaskinos election in 1938, they understood that such an effort only further weakened the position of the church in its relationship with the state by legitimizing the direct involvement of the secular authorities in church affairs rather than attempting to resolve the crises through the synod. The same can be said for those who participated in the "Special" synod that convened in June 1941 to discuss the legitimacy of the election. Although many may have genuinely sympathized with Damaskinos and

his wrongful dethronement on canonical grounds, they understood, as did all the prominent political actors of the time, that the Tsolakoglou government used them to replace the stubborn Chrysanthos.

Fortunately for the church, the population quickly forgot the infighting within the hierarchy and looked to their local ‘Despoti,’ as local metropolitans are affectionately called by their flock, for assistance during the years of enemy occupation. Also, for Damaskinos, his refusal to accept his fate, even after nearly two years of exile, testifies to the strength of his personality. Despite the circumstances of his ascension in 1941, Damaskinos overcame any stigma associated with the circumstances of his restoration by the end of 1941 with his determination to procure foodstuffs for the population and with the creation of EOHA, both of which will receive further attention in a later chapter. Also, his open opposition to Axis atrocities committed against the Greek population, such as the execution of hostages for acts of sabotage committed by the resistance, the persecution of Greek Jews, and by leading the open, though futile, effort to halt Bulgarian aggression against Greek culture and society in their zone of occupation. For the rest of the hierarchy residing outside the capital, the war and the occupation that followed allowed little time to pursue the “Archiepiscopal Controversy.” For instance, metropolitan of Ioannina, Spyridon Vlachos became the central figure in armistice discussions in April 1941 in an effort to halt the devastation caused by Axis bombing and the complete destruction of the encircled Greek army, while Eirinaios of Samos became involved in lengthy discussion regarding the planned response to the oncoming occupation forces on the island.

Chapter IV

A Prelude of Events to Come:

The Expansion of the Role of the Hierarchy in the Final Days of Freedom

(April-May 1941)

This chapter intends to explore the prominent role of the church during the waning months of the war by chronicling and analyzing the powerful role local hierarchs played during the nation's transition from belligerent state to occupied nation. Hitler's decision to intervene in the Balkan theater sealed Greece's fate, as the small Balkan country and its ally Great Britain lacked the resources and manpower to effectively confront the armies of the Axis powers. Awaiting the inevitable defeat of the army and occupation of their territory, political and military leaders continually involved local hierarchs in the decision-making process, a role far exceeding that prescribed to the church leadership by legal precedent in modern Greece. Traditional interpretations of the church during periods of crisis and the acknowledgment of their powerful presence as local community leaders, however, explains why secular leaders (many of whom had little to no popular support due to their connection to the Metaxas regime) turned to the hierarchy in order to cope with the unimaginable challenges awaiting the country. Greece had never faced total defeat and enemy occupation in its young history, which meant that political leaders did not know how to respond to this experience. Their refusal to take an active part in the nation's affairs won them much criticism and marginalized them in the eyes of the majority of the population. Powerful responses to the new and tragic situation by church

hierarchs such as the metropolitans Spyridon of Ioannina, Archbishop of Athens Chrysanthos Philippidis, and Metropolitan Eirinaios Papamihail of Samos reflected the growing role of the church during the period. Their active roles in important political and military affairs foreshadowed the powerful role they came to play during the ensuing dismemberment and occupation of the country. During this transitional period, many Greeks became deeply concerned about the government's inability to cope with the crisis of the war, especially after the death of Ioannis Metaxas. As for the members of the hierarchy, many appreciated the transformation of their role in society; the atmosphere created by the experience of occupation led them to consider their role equivalent to that of a captain of a ship guiding the population through treacherous waters. (Damaskinos, most notably, continued to use this naval metaphor in his communications both with the occupation authorities and the Greek government in exile.) In many cases, the church failed to meet the expectations either of the population or the political and military elite. Despite their shortcomings, the effort by Damaskinos and his colleagues won the admiration of most factions of Greek society and the respect of the German and Italian leadership because they actively pursued issues they deemed integral to the preservation of the Greek nation. However, before we can examine the powerful role played by Damaskinos and other clerics during the occupation, a close examination of the response of these three hierarchs will illustrate that a powerful precedent about the role of the church had already been established.

Prior to Greece's involvement in World War II, Metaxas and his government maintained firm political control of the country. Even during the first few months of the Greek-Italian war, his leadership ensured that the government continued to remain in

control of both foreign and domestic affairs.³¹² German intervention coupled with the death of General Metaxas loosened the grip of the Fourth of August regime, especially at the front. Frontline generals began discussions with local religious and civilian leaders, especially the strong-willed hierarch Spyridon of Ioannina, about the possibility of coming to terms with the Germans. These leaders hoped to avoid Axis reprisals against the country and the signing of a humiliating armistice with Italy.³¹³ After the generals sent a series of frantic telegrams to the Athens government, this group of leaders began to consider taking drastic measures independent of and contradictory to the wishes of the Athens leadership, especially when authorities in the capital failed to heed their warnings about the consequences of the war. Spyridon's involvement in these sensitive and critical military matters represents an example of the growing influence of the church throughout the country. Far away from Epirus, in places such as Athens and Samos, secular leaders also sought the advice of local metropolitans about how to respond to the crisis after the central government either fled (Athens) or failed to maintain contact (Samos) with most of the Greek islands and the Greek mainland. Important issues discussed between these church leaders and secular authorities included the defense of the territories, contact with the Axis authorities, and the formation of temporary administrative and political organizations.

³¹² For detailed studies of the Metaxas regime, one should consult: Thanos Veremis, *The Military in Greek Politics : From Independence to Democracy* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997), Thanos and Robin Higham Veremis, ed., *Aspects of Greece 1936-1940: The Metaxas Dictatorship* (Athens: The Hellenic Foundation for Defense and Foreign Policy, 1993), P.J. Vatikiotis, *Popular Autocracy in Greece, 1936-1941, A Political Biography of General Ioannis Metaxas* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), Spyros Linardatos, *4th of August* 3ed. (Athens: Themelio, 1988), Marina Petrakis, *The Metaxas Myth; Dictatorship and Propaganda in Greece*, vol. 6, International Library of War Studies (London, New York: Taurus Academic Studies, 2006).

³¹³ This sentiment remained universal in the final month of the war and the early days of the occupation, as local leaders preferred to surrender to German forces rather than face the humiliation of coming to terms with the defeated Italians.

By the winter of 1940, Hitler became deeply concerned about his erstwhile ally's blunder in Greece. Italian forces became bogged down in a conflict against a tenacious enemy defending its homeland.³¹⁴ In response, the German chancellor ordered his general staff to plan for the invasion of Greece through Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, codenamed Operation Marita.³¹⁵ After a pro-British government overthrew the regency of Prince Paul of Yugoslavia in March 1941, Hitler decided to launch a simultaneous invasion of Yugoslavia, codenamed 'Operation Punishment'.³¹⁶ On April 3, German forces began their invasion of the Balkans. Simultaneous German invasions through Bulgaria and Yugoslavia made Greece's position untenable. German dominance of the skies only compounded the nation's problems. A series of bombing missions over key civilian and military targets throughout the country exacerbated the anxiety of the population, making many view the situation as hopeless. By April 9, the Wehrmacht occupied Thessaloniki.³¹⁷ In light of these events, capitulation appeared the only solution to avert the army's total destruction and severe reprisals against many of the nation's major cities.³¹⁸ Evidence of the impact of German intervention became apparent by the second week of April, as discipline in the army began to break down and many soldiers deserted. General Pitsikas, the head of Greek forces in Epirus, began sending a series of frantic notes to Prime Minister Koryzidis demanding action by the government. In one note, dated April 18, 1941, he implored Prime Minister Koryzidis, "In the name of God,

³¹⁴ For works on the Balkan Campaign during World War II see: Mario Cervi, *The Hollow Legions: Mussolini's Blunder in Greece*, trans. Eric Mosbacher (New York: Doubleday, 1971), Charles Cruickshank, *Greece, 1940-1941* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1979).

³¹⁵ Francois de Lannoy, *La Guerre dans Les Balkans: Operation Marita* (Bauex, France: Heimdal, 1999).

³¹⁶ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans; Twentieth Century*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 236, Dragisa Ristic, *Yugoslavia's Revolution of 1941* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1966).

³¹⁷ Cervi, *The Hollow Legions: Mussolini's Blunder in Greece*.

³¹⁸ Spyridon Vlachos Metropolitan of Ioannina, Report, January 24 1944.

save the Greek army from the Italians.”³¹⁹ In short, the impact of German intervention created an atmosphere of panic and despair. Viewing the unfolding of events with considerable anxiety, Metropolitan Spyridon of Ioannina and a group of military and civilian leaders began calling for the end of hostilities, a strategy the metropolitan considered imperative for the well-being of the population.

Literature on the response of the church to the conflict and the early days of the occupation is limited. Contemporary sources discuss the response of church leaders to this period, but in the context of an isolated region or situation, failing to reflect on its overall historical significance. For the last months of the conflict in Albania, the memoirs of Lt. General Georgios Tsolakoglou and Field Marshall Alexandros Papagos are crucial. In both accounts, these prominent military men acknowledge that Spyridon played a central role in Tsolakoglou’s decision to sue for peace.³²⁰ In addition, memoirs and recollections by the three clerics who played a central role in the development of events throughout the country, metropolitan of Ioannina, Spyridon, archbishop of Athens, Chrysanthos, and metropolitan of Samos, Eirinaios provide some insight into their thought process and decision making during this period.³²¹ In addition, important information can be gleaned from memoirs of British Liaisons Officers (BLOs) or other foreign observers and prominent Greeks who worked closely with these clerics. For the perspectives of the German and Italian occupiers and the resistance, Axis military and civilian officials, ministers of the occupation governments, and former members of the

³¹⁹ Cervi, 287.

³²⁰ Alexandros Papagos, *The Battle of Greece* (Athens: J.M. Scazakis, 1949), Giorgos Tsolakoglou, *Apomnimonemata (Memoirs)* (Athens: Akropolis, 1959).

³²¹ Eirinaios Papamihail Metropolitan of Samos, *I Dynamis tou Ellinochristianikou Pnevmatos (the Strength of the Helleno-Christian Spirit)*, 5 vols., vol. 3, Meletimata Diafora (Various Studies) (Athens: Kypraios, 1960), Metropolitan of Ioannina, Georgios Tasoulis, *Archiepiskopos Athinon Chrysanthos O Apo Trapezountos; I Ethniki Kai Ekklesiastiki Drasis Tou, 1926-1949 (Archbishop of Athens Chrysanthos of Trebizond; His National and Ecclesiastical Activities)* (Athens: 1972), 369-396.

resistance also provide critical information about this tumultuous period.³²² In addition to these published accounts, archival sources including reports from Greeks fleeing the country and correspondence between the hierarchy and the Axis authorities provide important details about the relationship of church and state during this period.

Secondary literature on these early months, understandably, is also limited. Accounts of the Balkan campaign that discuss the situation at the front and the communication between Athens and the military leadership in Epirus acknowledge the presence and influence of Spyridon, but their scope does not allow for the detailed analysis his role deserves.³²³ Outside the literature on the Albanian front and the invasion of Crete, however, few scholars examined the invasion and occupation of some of the smaller islands and other parts of the mainland. Usually, regional studies provide important factual information, but little about the response of the church. Dimosthenis Koukounas, a popular historian and biographer, wrote a series of short studies of the early months of the war, which include, *The German Invasion and the Armistice, April 1941* and *The German Occupation of Athens and the Battle of Crete*. They both provide important details about the response of Spyridon and Archbishop Chrysanthos in the spring of 1941.³²⁴ These studies, however, are limited because they fail to analyze the significance of their involvement in critical political and military developments. His frequent discussion of his own role illustrates the powerful influence traditional interpretations have on Greek authors about the period. Few histories of the church exist

³²² The diary of Robin Higham, a British diplomatic representative in Athens during the Greece-Italian and Greece-German conflict is especially informative about the state of the Athens leadership. Robin Higham, *Diary of a Disaster: British Aid to Greece, 1940-1941* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986).

³²³ For the situation at the front, Cervi and Cruickshank are especially helpful.

³²⁴ Demosthenes Koukounas, *I Eisodos ton Germanon stin Athina kai i Mahi tis Kritis, Aprilios-Maios 1941* (Patras: Metron, 1983), Dimosthenis Koukounas, *I Germaniki Eisvoli kai i Synthikologisi : Aprilios 1941* (Athens: Metron, 1983).

during the period. *The Memoirs and Eye-Witness Accounts*, the official history of the church during World War II, is an important general study, but its broad scope limits its value as an in-depth analysis. The study also minimizes its discussion of controversial figures such as Spyridon, by failing to address the complexity of his role in the armistice discussions.³²⁵ Histories of the occupation suffer from a similar problem. Though devoting more attention to hierarchs such as Damaskinos, they usually do so in the context of discussion of the famine or the Holocaust. General studies of the history of the Church of Greece provide important details about Spyridon's role, but typically devote little space to his significance.³²⁶

Playing a central role in these critical discussions throughout the first months of 1941, Metropolitan Spyridon became a dominant force in the final days of the Greek-German and Greek-Italian conflict. Motivated by the desperate state of affairs at the front, fearing severe reprisals for continuing the struggle, and lacking faith in the political leadership after the death of General Ioannis Metaxas, Spyridon was convinced that he needed to help fill the political void left by the death of the tenacious general. His active role in these discussions provides ample evidence that the church began to assert itself in the final days of the conflict and foreshadowed the powerful role the institution's hierarchy played throughout the crisis.

A few words about Spyridon's tenure as metropolitan of Ioannina prior to the war may help explain why he possessed the power to influence later developments during the

³²⁵ *Mnimes Kai Martyries (Memories and Eyewitness Accounts)* (Athens: Klados Ekdoseon Epikoinoniakis kai Morphotikis Yperesias tis Ekklisias tis Ellados, 2000).

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

war. He was born in the Pontic city of Hilis in 1873.³²⁷ After receiving his early education in the local grammar school, he traveled to Constantinople to receive his secondary education, before enrolling in the Patriarchal Theological Seminary of Halkis (1895-99).³²⁸ In 1901, after a brief stay in the Galata suburb of Constantinople as a Theology professor, Spyridon was consecrated an archimandrite and assigned to the metropolitan see of Xanthi, in the city of Kavalla. While there, he became actively involved in the Macedonian Conflict, working closely with Greek politicians, such as Stefanos Dragoumis, leading the effort to establish Greek dominance over the area.³²⁹ His activity in Macedonia earned him a reputation as a fervent nationalist and hero. Five years later, he was elected metropolitan of Pella and Konitsa, near the Greek-Albanian border. Once there, he became deeply involved in improving the educational opportunities of the community by establishing a series of educational institutions.³³⁰ His nationalist activities caught the attention of the Ottoman authorities, who sentenced him to death. In 1916, he became metropolitan of Ioannina, where he remained a fixture of the community until his election as archbishop of Athens in May 1949. Possessing a strong personality and deep roots in the community, his parishioners appreciated his active involvement in the improvement of the region. For instance, he pursued the cultural improvement of the city by supporting the building of the Zosimia library and the publication of *Ipeirotika Chronika* (Epirus Chronicles).³³¹ In short, his active involvement in the community for nearly three decades before the war and his patriotic

³²⁷ Konstantinos Vovolinis, *Ekklesia Eis Ton Agona Tis Eleftherias, 1453-1953 (the Church During the Struggle for Liberation, 1453-1953)*, 2 ed. (Athens: Kleisounis, 2002), 214.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid., 215.

career won him the admiration and respect of the secular and military leaders of the community. Thus, on the eve of the war his past activities and powerful office ensured that he would become a central figure in the affairs of the region in wartime.

His active involvement in the armistice discussions, therefore, should come as no surprise. His record prior to the German invasion, especially before the death of Metaxas in late January, indicates that he supported the military's effort against the Italians. For instance, he continually gave impassioned sermons and blessed the efforts of the troops.³³² Besides performing his spiritual duties, however, he remained abreast of all military, political, and social developments. An apologia he wrote in 1944 to the then prime minister Emanuel Tsouderos provides evidence of his intimate knowledge of the military situation. "Winter privation, lack of transport facilities for the supply of rations and war material and the poor AA defenses [contrasted by] the enemy's quick and easy accumulation of stores and men...caused some anxiety to all those in responsible positions."³³³ Armed with this knowledge of the situation at the front, he became deeply concerned about the ability of the political and military leadership to guide the country in wartime after the death of General Ioannis Metaxas in late January 1941. As he explains to Tsouderos: "This concern was increased by Metaxas' death. A large number in responsible circles were hoping that while Mr. Metaxas could find a way, at a crucial moment, to end this unequal conflict."³³⁴ Local British officials in Athens shared the concerns of Spyridon. For instance, Higham notes that the British military mission reported to General Wavell that, "The new president (Alexandros Koryzis) does not possess the personality or the pugnacious optimism of his predecessor. There is a

³³² Metropolitan of Ioannina, *Report*.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

growing feeling of doubt amongst the Greek population as to whether the Army can go on winning without Metaxas.”³³⁵ His knowledge of the preparedness of the military and the psychological state of the senior military leadership indicates that he far exceeded his role as the spiritual leader the government needed to bolster the moral of the troops. His active involvement in critical military and political discussions, however, evidences both the lack of confidence in the political leadership in Athens and foreshadows the growing power of the church.

His lack of confidence in the political and military leadership in Athens led him to take an active role in the last three months of the conflict. He tried to encourage both political and military leaders to find a peaceful solution to the problem, beginning with the king’s visit to the front soon after Metaxas’ death. Rumors of German proposals for the cessation of hostilities on the condition that British troops leave Greek territory seemed to give him hope.³³⁶ He reported and apparently expressed his sympathies of these proposals to the king during his visit. George II refused to consider such proposals.³³⁷ After his visit, Spyridon reported that conditions among senior military officials only worsened. In response, he traveled to Athens to visit Prime Minister Koryzis (Metaxas’ successor) in early February to inform him of his concerns. The prime minister refused to consider surrendering, stating that his country’s fate lay with that of its British ally.³³⁸ His discussion with the king and the prime minister in February 1941 convinced Spyridon that he might need to take matters into his own hands.³³⁹

³³⁵ Higham, *Diary of a Disaster: British Aid to Greece, 1940-1941*, 90.

³³⁶ Vlachos, *Report*.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

Spyridon began to consider turning his attention to the military leadership, bypassing the Athens authorities. Despite his lack of confidence in the Athens government, however, the metropolitan hoped a visit by Koryzis might convince the prime minister that continued resistance was futile.³⁴⁰ Koryzis decided to visit the front soon after his meeting with Spyridon. Though he left deeply discouraged by the deteriorating situation, he lacked the will or the power to change his nation's course. Higham reports on Koryzis response to his visit: "In Athens Prime Minister Koryzis was just back from a tour to the front, where he was shocked by the starving children along the road begging for food in the cold." Later the author provided a partial explanation for the state of affairs. "Few ships were getting through with any food. Most of the Greek merchant marine was in British service outside the Mediterranean and, with the Suez Canal blocked by the new German mines, there was an acute shortage of shipping within the Mediterranean and the Aegean."³⁴¹ The Ioanninan hierarch understood that he needed to intensify his pressure on the frontline generals. He feared that continuing the struggle would likely lead to the collapse of the front and possible Axis reprisals for continuing the struggle. His trip to Athens and the corresponding trip of Koryzis marked the end of the hierarch's confidence in the government's ability to end the crisis. After the Germans invaded Greek territory on April 6, his fears only increased. While he continued to communicate with Athens, either directly or through his military allies, he began focusing his attention on the Greek generals, who, he felt, were more likely to ask

³⁴⁰ Spyridon encourages Koryzis to visit the front, but states the prime minister did not visit the front, sending the crown prince instead. Other accounts indicate that Koryzis returned from reviewing the troops on February 6. Higham, *Diary of a Disaster: British Aid to Greece, 1940-1941*, 86-7.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

the Germans for terms before the army collapsed and the country suffered unnecessary devastation.

Spyridon's constant lobbying for a cessation to hostilities began to bear fruits. According to him, "responsible military commanders began approaching the Government through the Albanian Army Commander Drakos to take some action."³⁴² The government responded by recalling Drakos and other generals sympathetic with his views.³⁴³ By the time of the reshuffling of the leadership, Spyridon's residence became a center of power, as he and frontline generals began planning a strategy to end the conflict.³⁴⁴ Dimosthenis Koukounas describes the atmosphere in Ioannina. "The majority of the commanders of Greek forces congregated in or around Ioannina. With Metropolitan of Ioannina Spyridon Vlachos as the epicenter, the upper echelon of the Greek officers discussed with urgency the necessity of an armistice."³⁴⁵ Plummeting morale and mass desertion also began to weigh on the minds of the military leaders and the hierarch. Germany's invasion also had devastating consequences on the discipline of the army. "Up to that moment, the Greek army was victorious. Now, however, dissolution and desertions began to take their toll. The morale of the soldiers, after so many difficult battles, began to fall."³⁴⁶ Under these conditions, Spyridon intensified his pressure on the frontline generals to act independently of the general staff and the Athens government, and ask the Germans for terms.

He began encouraging these generals to ignore orders from Athens and proceed toward the path of capitulation. For instance, he advised the generals to disobey orders to

³⁴² Vlachos, Report.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Koukounas, *I Germaniki Eisvoli kai i Synthekologisi : Aprilios 1941*, 45.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

transfer an army corps from Epirus to Macedonia “and to act on their own initiative.”³⁴⁷ The response he received from one frontline general, General Platis, expressed how intense and heated the situation had become. Platis informed Spyridon: “[You] spoke before like this and [were] deported. Be careful it does not happen again.”³⁴⁸ In a letter to the prime minister on April 16, he requested him to allow the generals to act independently for the sake of the country.³⁴⁹ His desperate state is fairly apparent from the language of the letter. “I beg you to permit the Epirus military commanders to act independently; do not allow the other forces to influence you, so to maintain the unity of Hellenism and prevent administrative chaos and a lustful Italian occupier.”³⁵⁰ Furthermore, the following day he asked General Georgios Tsolakoglou for a plane to visit Athens to explain the situation to the prime minister. Tsolakoglou denied his request on the grounds that the Axis had destroyed the local airstrip.³⁵¹ Spyridon refused to accept defeat. On the 17th, he sent a letter to general Pitsikas, the commander of the Epirus Army, pleading with him to ask the Germans for terms.³⁵² Spyridon’s language illustrates the impact the ethnarchic tradition played in his decision-making. “After many prolonged verbal attempts, I feel the utmost obligation to write you a final written request. The tragic development of events has reached its final hour and the final moment of the final hour.”³⁵³ This letter amounted to an ultimatum. He felt it his duty to

³⁴⁷ Vlachos, *Report*.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ Tsolakoglou, *Memoirs*, 100.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Spyridon does not mention the airstrip, but acknowledged that he requested to fly and express his concerns to the government. *Ibid.*, Vlachos, *Report*.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 101, Vlachos, *Report*.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

force Pitsikas to act resolutely. Pitsikas, however, refused to heed the advice of the metropolitan.³⁵⁴

In response, Spyridon went to two of his subordinates, Corps Commanders Bakos and Demestihias.³⁵⁵ They agreed to send an ultimatum to the government demanding that they ask the Germans for terms. If the government refused or failed to reply within twelve hours, they would form a temporary government headed by Spyridon and sue for peace.³⁵⁶ A day later Bakos sent a letter to Pitsikas' immediate subordinate, Lieutenant General Georgios Tsolakoglou, imploring him to seize power from Pitsikas and ask the Germans for an armistice.³⁵⁷ In order to place additional pressure on Tsolakoglou, Spyridon traveled with Bakos' messenger Captain Balis. The letter lists a series of objectives the metropolitan and his military allies had. They included forming a temporary government under the leadership of the hierarch.³⁵⁸ Tsolakoglou agreed and sent envoys to SS general Siep Dietrich. He conveyed this news to Pitsikas in a letter. Tsolakoglou stated that he was acting on orders from General Headquarters in Athens.³⁵⁹ This statement was at best a misunderstanding by Tsolakoglou and at worst a blatant lie. Informed of his movements, Papagos sent General Gialistras to arrest Tsolakoglou in Ioannina. Unfortunately, he was not in the city and refused to obey an order from GHQ to appear to meet with Papagos' representative.

Events, however, did not unfold as the metropolitan and his military allies planned. Two developments, in particular, shaped the outcome of events. First,

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Koukounas, *I Germaniki Eisvoli Kai I Synthekologisi : Aprilios 1941*, 57

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 58.

³⁵⁷ Tsolakoglou, 128-9.

³⁵⁸ Vlachos, *Report*, *ibid.*

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

Tsolakoglou sent his envoys to Sepp Dietrich, Commander of the Adolf Hitler SS Division on the morning of April 20, representing only himself.³⁶⁰ That same afternoon, Tsolakoglou and Dietrich signed the first armistice. The terms of the agreement reflected those agreed upon by Tsolakoglou, the Corps commanders, and Spyridon. Final approval, however, needed to come from Field Marshall List. List understood that these terms would offend the Italians, and argued that the decision by the king and Papagos to continue the struggle meant that he could only accept an unconditional surrender of the armies of Epirus and Macedonia. As for the occupation force, he informed Tsolakoglou that he needed to confer with his Italian allies before the issue could be settled. Infuriated by the situation and faced with no alternative, he agreed to the terms.³⁶¹ The humiliating way events unfolded for the Italians was not lost on Mussolini. After complaining to Hitler, the latter forced List to sign another armistice with Tsolakoglou on April 23 in the presence of Italian representatives. Ultimately, the Germans established three zones of occupation: an Italian, a German, and a Bulgarian. With the signing of the third and final armistice, the war ended. From the moment Tsolakoglou sent his envoys, Spyridon lost all influence over events. Frustrated by the singular actions taken by Tsolakoglou and the final terms of the agreement (which went against the terms he and the military leaders agreed to before Tsolakoglou took control), he began to distance himself from the situation. As he explained to Tsouderos in his report:

These heralds, instead of appearing as representatives of a Government as it was agreed and give the telegram as coming from the three Army Corps Commanders and myself, thus showing a unified political action, they handed a telegram coming only from Tsolakoglou representing

³⁶⁰ Vlachos, *Report*.

³⁶¹ *Ibid*.

himself as C-in-C and asking for an armistice, thus giving the impression that it was a purely military act on the part of an army acknowledging defeat and putting down its arms.³⁶²

The passage acknowledged his direct involvement in the armistice discussions and indicates, more importantly, that his involvement represented a political act that exceeded the limits prescribed by Greek law. Tsolakoglou's decision to take sole responsibility for the armistice infuriated Spyridon. He believed that a united position that included the participation of civilian and ecclesiastical figures would make a stronger impression on the Germans. More importantly, he believed that his involvement added political strength to the general's mission.

His frustration with the development of the armistice discussion and the humiliating terms forced upon Tsolakoglou gave Spyridon an opportunity to extricate himself from the situation. He justified his decision to distance himself from the generals in his report to Tsouderos:

On the 25th of April, I was invited by Lt. General Tsolakoglou and Demestihis to form a Government designated by the German HQ. I declined, stating categorically that as a result of Tsolakoglou's action, for which he was entirely responsible, the moment had passed for such sacrifices, which I offered with all my heart for the salvation and the honor of the Greek army and the entirety of the Greek soil. Since both of these things had already been lost, such sacrifices would be unnecessary and aimless.³⁶³

The metropolitan, likely, used this meeting to vent his frustration and distance himself from Tsolakoglou and the other generals. However, admitting his involvement in these discussions indicates that he believed his actions were in line with his role as the leading cleric of the region during this critical period in the nation's history. Regarding the importance of Tsolakoglou's action, the fiery hierarch appeared to overestimate his own

³⁶² Vlachos, *Report*.

³⁶³ *Ibid*.

importance. The metropolitan assumed that if he sent his envoys as representatives of the military commanders and himself (Spyridon viewed himself as a representative of the government), the Germans would agree to the terms that the group agreed upon earlier. Hitler's stroking of fellow dictator Mussolini's ego, prior commitments to Bulgaria, and future military operations rather than the general's selfishness forced Tsolakoglou to agree to these humiliating terms. Despite the rationale behind his decision, Spyridon informed Tsouderos that the unfavorable terms of the armistice led him to refuse to make any future sacrifices that compromised him, most notably serving in a German-sponsored government. This decision proved critical for his career, as the hierarchy later elected him archbishop of Greece in June 1949, a development unfathomable if he had agreed to serve in Tsolakoglou's government.³⁶⁴

Spyridon's involvement in these armistice discussions and agreement to serve in a government reflect a shift in the role of the church during the last months of the Greek-Italian and Greek-German conflict. These discussions also represent the climax of his personal influence during the war. Since the death of General Metaxas, he had become the central force at the front. Frontline generals such as Pitsikas, Demestihias, and, even, Tsolakoglou were hesitant to respond to Spyridon's demands that they act independently of the government. For instance, Tsolakoglou's last-minute decision to take the initiative stands out as an exception to the general development of events. That is not to say that Spyridon's involvement always pleased military and political leaders, especially at the

³⁶⁴ Spyridon served as temporary president of the Holy Synod for a period in 1945, after King George II appointed Damaskinos Regent. Although he did not always serve as temporary president during the absence of Damaskinos, he played an important role in ecclesiastical affairs in Athens at the end of the war, well before his ascension to the position of archbishop on June 4, 1949. Theoklitos Strangas, *Ekklisias Ellados Istoría ek Pígon Apsevdon, 1817-1967 (History of the Church of Greece from Genuine Sources, 1817-1967)*, 2nd ed., 7 vols., vol. 4 (Athens: Apostolíkis Diakonia, 2001, 1969-1971), 2628-9.

front. His 'defeatist' attitude, however, rather than his unlawful interference in military affairs troubled them. His argument with general Platis discussed above reflects the nature of the criticism he received. Here, the general indicates that Spyridon's powerful presence was recognized; and, the nature of his criticism is defined by his 'defeatism' rather than his interference. No other sources of the discussion exist, making his account impossible to corroborate or refute. If this evidence, however, is considered along with the other accounts of the war, such a conversation is plausible. In short, his involvement in military and civilian affairs ranks him among the most influential leaders near the front at the time of the armistice. If his involvement in the armistice discussion represented a single example, one can dismiss his activities as an aberration and attribute it to his powerful personality and standing in the community. However, when considered along with the activities of archbishop Chrysanthos and metropolitan Eirinaios, a different picture emerges, that of a hierarchy truly asserting itself during a period of crisis.

As was the case in Ioannina, the head of the Church of Greece, Archbishop Chrysanthos Philippidis played a prominent role in the events that took place between the departure of the Greek government on April 23 and the first days of Axis rule in the capital. In this case, however, it was the local military and political authorities that sought the assistance of the archbishop, who, according to his personal account, the king designated as his representative. The king invited him to travel with the government to Crete, but the hierarch refused, arguing that he needed to remain in Athens. "My place, as ethnarch, is to remain here to care for the Greek population."³⁶⁵ Thus, he understood

³⁶⁵ Tasoulis, *Archiepiskopos Athinon Chrysanthos O Apo Trapezountos; I Ethniki kai Ekklisiastiki Drasis tou, 1926-1949 (Archbishop of Athens Chrysanthos of Trebizond; His National and Ecclesiastical Activities)*.

that the times called for him to play the role of his predecessors, such as Gennadios and Gregory.

As was the case with metropolitan Spyridon, Chrysanthos had built a reputation as an erudite and influential figure in Athenian society, even if many within the hierarchy considered him aloof. Born Charilaos Philippidis in the town of Gratini in Rodope in 1881, he excelled in his studies, which led him to attend the Theological Seminary at Halkis at the age of 16. He graduated in 1903, at which time he was simultaneously ordained archdeacon and appointed as the Metropolitan of Trebizond.³⁶⁶ Chrysanthos remained in his position for four years, before travelling to Germany and Switzerland for further education for an additional four years. He returned to Constantinople, where he fulfilled a number of positions including the editor of *Ecclesiastic Truth*, the central journal of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.³⁶⁷ In 1913, the patriarch appointed him Metropolitan of Trebizond.³⁶⁸ He ascended the throne at a trying period in the region's history. At that time, and after the beginning of World War I, the Ottoman authorities began to persecute the Greek population. He quickly established a reputation as an advocate for his flock. During the Caucasus Campaign, he declared the city open and undefended when Russian troops entered the city. He also helped establish the Autocephalous Church of Georgia. For all his activities, a Turkish court sentenced him to death in 1921, which forced him to flee to Athens the following year. From then until his contested election in November 1938, he became the permanent representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the Church of Greece. Throughout his diplomatic career, he continuously and admirably pursued the interests of the Patriarchate,

³⁶⁶ *Mnimes Kai Martyries (Memories and Eyewitness Accounts)*, 50-1.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

something that caused him tension with some of his Greek colleagues. In addition to his official duties, he had a productive intellectual career, publishing numerous important works on ecclesiastical history, such as *The History of the Church of Trebizond*.³⁶⁹ After his election in 1938, he became a close collaborator of the Metaxas Regime and King George II. Moreover, during the war he established Assistance for the Families of Soldiers, a philanthropic organization for the families of soldiers fighting at the front, an organization that Damaskinos expanded into what became EOHA.³⁷⁰

His recollection of conversations he had with members of the Athens elites days before the Germans entered the city adds further legitimacy to the emergence of a transformed church leadership. On April 24, the day after the government left for Crete, minister of the interior Maniatakis, the highest ranking civilian official in Athens, ordered the nomarch of Attica and Boeotia, K. Pezopoulos and the mayor of Athens K. Plytas to visit Chrysanthos at his residence. They requested that he join them and the military commander of Athens, General Kavrakou, in the surrendering of the city to the Germans.³⁷¹ Chrysanthos refused to add the weight of his reputation and office to such a venture. He believed it beneath his office. “The archbishop should not participate in the surrendering of a city...I repeat that it is the task of the archbishop to liberate not enslave a city.”³⁷² He states that he gave similar orders when the Russians neared the city of Trebizond in 1916, when he was both metropolitan and temporary administrator of the

³⁶⁹ Vasileios Atesis, *Epitomos Episkopiki Istorias tis Ekklisias tis Ellados apo tou 1833 Mehri Simeron (the History of the Bishops of the Church of Greece Form 1833 to the Present)*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Athens: Papadogiannis, 1969).

³⁷⁰ This organization will receive more attention in a later chapter. However, it is important to note that under the guidance of the archbishop, the organization provided packages to soldiers, funds to their families, and other necessities to soldiers and their families.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

city. In his mind, the two situations warranted the same response.³⁷³ While he refused to ‘tarnish the stature of his position as head of the church by serving in a committee formed to surrender the city, he understood that fighting the German invader would only lead to unnecessary destruction and bloodshed. His obstinacy, while viewed as a sign of resistance to the hated invader, proved detrimental to his career, an issue discussed in great detail in the previous chapter.

The next day, Plytas returned to Chrysanthos’ residence to try to convince him to change his mind. The hierarch, however, informed him that he had considered the request and decided to maintain his position.³⁷⁴ The Athenian political and military leadership, however, believed that his involvement added much needed legitimacy to their committee. According to the son of the head of the nomarch’s office, Professor G. Tsakonas, the nomarch tried one last time on the 26th to convince Chrysanthos that he should join them in surrendering the capital to the Germans.³⁷⁵ His father discussed the issue with the nomarch. Pezopoulos stated that he, the Archbishop, the military governor, and the mayor of Athens should meet at the residence of the archbishop or in his office to discuss the events of the following day. Chrysanthos refused to attend the meeting.³⁷⁶ Despite his refusal to attend the meeting, the nomarch telephoned Chrysanthos and asked him to join them in meeting the Germans the following day, which he explained was meant to, “avoid aggression by the occupation force in the city. We feel very anxious about the fate of the population.”³⁷⁷ The head of the Church

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 375-6.

³⁷⁵ Dimosthenis Koukounas, *I Eisodos ton Germanon stin Athina kai i Mahi tis Kritis (the German Entrance into Athens and the Battle of Crete)* (Athen: Metron, 1983), 39.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

responded by stating that he would send his deacon and hung up the phone, abruptly ending the conversation.³⁷⁸ His refusal to meet with the Germans reveals a proud and aloof streak in Chrysanthos. He considered himself a man of principle, which quickly won him the displeasure of the German occupation authorities. This displeasure contributed to his downfall a few months later.

The group, however, decided to act without his approval and presence, as reports came in that the Germans neared the outskirts of the city. On Sunday, April 27, the nomarch, the military commander, and the mayor surrendered the city to the Germans. Despite his refusal to partake in the surrender of the city, at around 11:00 AM the mayor sent a representative to Chrysanthos to inform him that the Germans wanted him to perform a doxology in the metropolitan church. Infuriated, he dismissed the official.³⁷⁹ The Germans may have felt that the performance of the liturgy might have served as a sign of cooperation between the occupation authorities and the Greek church.

An hour passed before the mayor's secretary visited the metropolitan, and asked him when the German military leadership could visit him. He replied that they could come at 4:00. At that time, Field Marshal von Stumme and Colonel Klem von Hohenberg, the German military attaché and others visited the church leader's residence. Chrysanthos received them standing, refusing to offer them a place to sit.³⁸⁰ According to most accounts, the cleric remained composed. They began with a few pleasantries before Stumme began criticizing the British, and proclaiming that the Greeks showered them with flowers as they passed. Chrysanthos quipped, "Those were not Greeks." Just before he left the two engaged in an interesting dialogue. Chrysanthos: "Be careful not to

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Tasoulis, 377-8.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

wound the pride of the Greeks.”³⁸¹ Stumme replied, “We did not come here as enemies, but as friends, bringing peace to Greece...” Chrysanthos: “General, first, your army invaded a land whose population fought with genuine belief in its freedom and its neutrality, and continues to follow its ideals.”³⁸² Stumme responded angrily: “Don’t my reassurances satisfy you?” Chrysanthos saw through the marshal. “I heard you. Though I think I have the responsibility, as head of the Church of Greece, to invite the German administration to respect the heroic people of this country, so to avoid undesirable episodes.” Infuriated but refusing to show his emotions, Stumme replied: “We are agreed. In this regard, we are certain that the Greek Church will not forget its obligation to guide the Greek people in its obligations and its interest in working harmoniously and with conviction with the military occupation authorities, precisely so that we can avoid undesirable events.” Chrysanthos concluded the conversation with the following statement: “The Greek Church always sides with the Greek people during its struggles, values its faith, and be sure that it will not fail to live up to its responsibilities, especially during the critical occasion.”³⁸³ The men did not exchange pleasantries when the marshal left the building. This conversation provides valuable insight into the mindset of the Germans toward the Church and its role during the occupation. Stumme and other German leaders, likely, realized that the new Tsolakoglou had little authority, which encouraged them to gain the cooperation of the church. While many Greek contemporaries and early chroniclers of the war viewed Chrysanthos’ response as the first official act of resistance against the Axis, its consequences ensured his marginalization during the period.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid.

Chronicling the developments in Athens from the four days between the Greek government's departure and the German entrance into the capital and the response of Chrysanthos provides another example of the growing role of the church. As was the case in Ioannina, though less pronounced, the civil and military authorities wanted to work closely with the local hierarch in order to avoid further bloodshed and destruction. A detail emerging from the account provided by the son of the head of the Nomarch's office, articulates the perceived role of the hierarch as an integral part of the Athenian leadership. Nomarch Pezopoulos asked the author's father what he should do to avoid further bloodshed after the Germans arrive. Tsakonas' father replied, "The leaders of the city needed to meet, meaning the archbishop, the military commander, and the mayor either in the Archiepiscopal residence or this office."³⁸⁴ When considered with the orders by Maniadakis, the civilian and military leaders understood that the head of the church counted among the most important leaders of the country, especially during such a period. After the Germans entered the city, they also wanted to the church to perform the doxology, possibly wanting to legitimize their exploits through this symbolic ritual. While Chrysanthos refused to acquiesce to this request, a similar scene apparently unfolded several weeks earlier when the Germans entered Thessaloniki on April 9. In the case of Thessaloniki, however, the metropolitan of the city, Gennadios both presided over the committee sent to surrender the city and performed the doxology.³⁸⁵ Thus, the Germans had already set a precedent earlier in the war against Greece. The brief conversation between Stumme and Chrysanthos also provides some insight into the attitude of the German occupation authorities, who wanted to minimize the number of

³⁸⁴ Koukounas, *I Eisodos ton Germanon*, 39.

³⁸⁵ Koukounas, *I Germaniki Eisvoli Kai I Synthekologisi : Aprilios 1941*, 26-39.

troops they stationed in Greece. While gaining the support of the church may prove fruitful in the future, the German authorities were satisfied with its cooperation, which they hoped could keep the population passive. Despite all their rhetoric, they had little faith in their Italian allies or that their message of peace resonated among most sections of Greek society. As discussed in the previous chapter, their decision to replace Chrysanthos with Damaskinos reflected their determination to ensure that the head of the church cooperated with the occupation authorities.

Away from Athens and the other major population centers, local hierarchs became central political actors, especially in places that had lost contact with Athens. The Aegean island of Samos represents an important example of this trend. Despite the lack of an immediate military threat, the military and political leadership remained anxious about the future. Based on available sources, it appears that the island's leadership had little contact with the Athens government since it departed for Crete on April 23.³⁸⁶ Thus, cut off from contact with the Greek government, they began to discuss a contingency plan in case of an Axis invasion. Secular leaders included the metropolitan of the island, Eirinaios Papamihail, in these conversations, even holding a number of meetings at his residence. His reputation as a leading figure in Samiot society, like Chrysanthos and Spyridon in their respective sees, led local leaders to hold him in high esteem and to consult with him.

A brief biographical sketch of his early life and ecclesiastical career prior to 1941 may help explain why he had such a high standing among the island's elite. Born in 1878 in the small town of Katrili in Bythina, Eirinaios was born into a family of priests. Both

³⁸⁶ Eirinaios, 13

his father and grandfather served the church.³⁸⁷ He attended grammar and secondary school in his hometown before attending the Theological Seminary at Halkis near Constantinople. He received his degree in theology in 1905.³⁸⁸ From 1905 to 1912 he served in a number of capacities that included a teaching positions and deacon and archimandrite to then patriarch of Constantinople Ioakeim V.³⁸⁹ The following year, Eirinaios received his first holy see as metropolitan of the Dardanelles.³⁹⁰ War broke out the following year, which led the Ottoman authorities to force the Greek population either to leave the country or relocate further into the interior, a path taken by the flock's metropolitan. Despite the temporary respite that came for the cleric and his flock in 1920 with the Empire's defeat, the Asia Minor Catastrophe forced him and his flock to flee to Greece.³⁹¹ After briefly serving as metropolitan of Elassonos (located in Larissa), and studying in Paris for another year, Eirinaios traveled to Athens.³⁹² Once there, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece elected him metropolitan of Samos in March 1926.³⁹³ For the next fifteen years, Eirinaios became a fixture of the community, winning the respect of the local population. As was the case in Ioannina and Athens, local officials turned to their spiritual father for guidance.

Eirinaios became active in military and civilian affairs soon after the Athens government fled to Crete on April 23, 1941. The island lost contact with the national government, leaving local political and military officials to make critical decisions

³⁸⁷ Metropolitan of Siderokastron Ioannis, *I Ekklisia tis Samou :Apo tis Idryseos Aftis Mehri Simeron (the Church of Samos: From Its Establishment to Today)*, 2nd ed. (Siderokastron: Melissa 1990), 93.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 94.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 95.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

including those concerning the impending invasion and occupation of the island by the Axis. This situation brought to the surface expressions of open opposition to the political leadership of the island, all of whom had been appointed by the Metaxas regime. Thus, in the final days of April, prior to the Italian occupation of the island, the metropolitan became involved in serious political and military discussions with the island's elites. This began with a meeting at the metropolitan's palace attended by many local notables concerned about the ability of the regime to handle the crisis. These leaders viewed the nomarch as a divisive figure and a tool of the Metaxas regime, sentiments shared by the metropolitan himself.³⁹⁴ Eirinaios describes the initial meeting he had with local notables during the last days of April. "In this time of struggle, the leadership of the city came to the Holy Metropolis, in order to exchange ideas with the metropolitan."³⁹⁵ Before discussing the meeting itself, the significance of his presence deserves a few words. Eirinaios, it appears from his memoirs of the period, had serious problems with Stamatios Spyrou, the nomarch. According to his account, the relationship between the two men remained tense throughout the Metaxas regime. It was so tense that Spyrou sent a letter to the Holy Synod accusing Eirinaios of dividing the island's leaders into two opposing camps.³⁹⁶ Eirinaios states that the island's notables lacked confidence in the island's government officials, especially the nomarch Stamatios Spyrou.³⁹⁷ Those present decided to form a committee to discuss two serious proposals with the island's military commander: 1) to request that the military commander, Praxitelis Ioannidis, take control of the governance of the island; and 2) to determine what steps needed to be taken to

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 10-11.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 13.

defend the island in case of an Axis invasion.³⁹⁸ Viewing the formation of such a committee as an attempt to undermine the power of the nomarch, the head of the police, Ioannis Bafas, complained about it.³⁹⁹ Despite his protest, the committee visited the local military commander, Praxitelis Ioannidis, and requested that he take the reins of power.

The nomarch understood that he needed the cooperation and advice of the prominent members of the community, despite their lack of confidence in his ability. The majority of the political, military, political and social elite attended the meeting. Among those invited were the police and military commanders Ioannis Bafas and Praxitelis Ioannidis respectively, the naval commander, Evangelos Georgopoulos, and the metropolitan. Surprising some, the metropolitan asked the military commanders about the strength of their forces and the strategy for defending the island. The army commander quipped that that information remained top secret. The naval commander, however, ignored his comrade's comment, informing the metropolitan that the army had 450 guns available for the defense of the island. Eirinaios, however, showed little concern in this information. He was interested more in the strategy, the morale of the local armed forces, and, most importantly, the possible effectiveness of resistance to the enemy. It was determined by the metropolitan and his local allies that resisting an enemy invasion would only bring "total destruction" upon the island. Despite these reservations, the group agreed, unanimously, that everyone would contribute to the defense of the place in order to, "save the honor of the historical island."⁴⁰⁰

Indecision, however, continued to permeate the Samiot elites. On May 3, the island's political and secular leaders returned to the metropolitan's residence to discuss

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 15.

the possibility of an alternative plan. Information, or rumors, that the Axis had occupied Mytilini and Milos created an atmosphere of panic on the island. The nomarch discussed the possibility of forming a governmental committee to help him govern the island. He even mentioned a letter he had received from a number of prominent members of the community asking him to resign. In order to garner sympathy, he suggested that, if the metropolitan wanted, he, the nomarch, would resign his position. Despite these gestures, the metropolitan refused to engage in such discussions. He informed him that he, as the government's representative, did not require a local committee to assist him in governing the island. The naval commander, however, disagreed. "The government in Crete became a fantasy today. Up until today, governmental power came from above, now it will come from below, in a democratic fashion."⁴⁰¹ Eirinaios rejected this type of rhetoric. "It is not time to discuss democratic institutions. When the nation gains its independence, and is in a position to act freely and choose its form of government, then it will also discuss and determine its institutions and provisions of its constitution." He argued that such a step at this point would only worsen matters. "At this moment we are in the midst of a very critical period and state power...The functioning of a committee of individuals, even of notables, likely will undermine or complicate the decisions of state power rather than strengthen it."⁴⁰² In this statement, the hierarch refuses to express his contempt for the ministers of the 4th of August regime. He realized that internal division at a crucial moment of the island's history only benefits enemies of the state. The metropolitan also opposed such a policy because he felt that animosity toward the nomarch by many prominent individuals including himself made such a committee

⁴⁰¹ Metropolitan of Samos, *I Dynamis Tou Ellinochristianikou Pnevmatos (the Strength of the Helleno-Christian Spirit)*.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

impossible. Finally, the only justification for such a policy, in his eyes, was the collapse of the government. This discussion over the status of the nomarch reflected a division within the island's elite over both the form of government and strategy of how to respond to an imminent enemy occupation. Despite his reservations about the man, however, he understood that dissolution within meant disaster for the population of the island as it prepared for enemy occupation.

A day later, the military governor visited the metropolitan to discuss the possibility of forming a committee to consider the terms of a possible German occupation with the German vice-consul on the island. The general stated that some within the ruling elites wanted to form a committee to meet the German vice-consul, and to ask them to occupy the island rather than the hated Italians. Stunned by what he was hearing, Eirinaios informed him that partaking in such discussions was tantamount to treason.⁴⁰³ He goes on to state that declaring the island undefended, as mentioned by Chrysanthos to the Athenian civilian and military leadership at the end of April about the capital, constituted an act of necessity, as there was no means to oppose an invading force.⁴⁰⁴ Willingly surrendering the island prior to the enemy's arrival, however, was another matter. The general appeared satisfied with the metropolitan's response, as he conveyed the hierarch's message to the congregation of the island's elites at the nomarch's office the following day. Despite his reservations, the other individuals continued to consider this option.⁴⁰⁵

The sudden arrival by minister of the Aegean islands, Petros Argyropoulos, on May 6 gave the island's population hope. The minister met with the metropolitan and

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 18-19.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 20.

other elites throughout the day to discuss the possibility of defending the island. Before the metropolitan responded to the question, the others replied in the negative.⁴⁰⁶

Eirinaios concurred with their opinion. He argued that despite the low morale of local military forces, a force of young men of fighting age could be mustered to defend the island. However, the unopposed occupation of neighboring islands, lack of communication with the national government, and the lack of allied reinforcements prevent the formation of a realistic defensive strategy to oppose an enemy landing force.⁴⁰⁷ The minister agreed, but wanted these men to organize a resistance force to the Italians, in order to assist with the war effort in North Africa. Military officials, however, remained unenthusiastic, and the minister left on May 7 disappointed.⁴⁰⁸

The following day Italian forces landed and occupied the island unopposed. Eirinaios made the following comment upon seeing the Italians: "...the population looked on as the island lost its independence, which had not been enslaved, until that hour, since the War of 1821."⁴⁰⁹ He understood both the unprecedented nature of the occupation and also the dangers it entailed. Eirinaios visited the commander of Italian forces a week after they occupied the island. During the visit, the metropolitan explained that he was duty bound as spiritual father of his flock to visit the Italian leader.⁴¹⁰ Here he understands that he needs to serve as intermediary between the occupation authorities and the local population. He confirmed this later when he stated that during the occupation, he, as metropolitan, remained the only moral authority on the island, because

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 20-21.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

he believed the civilian officials were compromised by their dependence on the occupation authorities.⁴¹¹

With the government incapable of handling the transition from wartime to occupation, the three prelates discussed in the chapter became central political actors, participating in highly sensitive political and military discussions. As with other periods in the nation's history, most recently the earthquakes in Corinth of 1928, it had once again been demonstrated that people looked to the hierarchy to exceed its prescribed role and attempt to restore some semblance of normalcy in a time of great influx and change. Although Chrysanthos refused to play the active role played by his two colleagues, the fact that prominent Athenian leaders turned to him reflects this powerful and lasting precedent in Greek society. These events, however, merely foreshadow the role that the hierarchy led by Damaskinos would play during the tumultuous years of the occupation and civil war.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 28.

Chapter V

Unattainably High:

Expectations of the Church of Greece during the Axis Occupation

Even before forming his new government in Athens, General Georgios Tsolakoglou received advice discouraging him from pursuing this path. Prominent politician and later Prime Minister George Papandreou informed him that the church not the military should take the reins of power, as it did during earlier periods of crisis in the nation's history. According to the general, Papandreou had already discussed the matter with then Archbishop of Athens Chrysanthos Philippidis, who he hoped would take on the immense responsibility tradition demanded of him. "...Mr. Papandreou considered and recommended to Archbishop Chrysanthos the need for the reemergence of the [Church according to] national tradition. Thus, he should take over the reins of power. However, this did not take place."⁴¹² Despite Papandreou's apparent disappointment with Chrysanthos' refusal to heed his advice, he remained steadfast in his convictions: "Former Prime Minister Mr. Papandreou confessed that he was the communicator of my intentions and acknowledged the purity of my motives. He did not express his preference to me, which was that the Church had the power not the military government, but he found itself before a *fait accompli*."⁴¹³

The exchange between Papandreou and Tsolakoglou reflected the views of a section within Athenian society who believed that the church needed to establish itself as

⁴¹² Georgios Tsolakoglou, *Apomnimoneumata (Memoirs)* (Athens: Akropolis, 1959), 163.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 166, Koukounas briefly mentions the discussion in the context of the early days of the German occupation. Dimosthenis Koukounas, *I Eisodos ton Germanon stin Athina kai i Mahi tis Kritis (the German Entrance into Athens and the Battle of Crete)* (Athens: Metron, 1983), 38.

guardian of the nation. Even though hierarchs never served in any of the occupation governments, most political actors from Greek government officials to Axis diplomats expected the hierarchy to wield considerable influence and further their interests. State officials believed the institution's support provided a degree of legitimacy to their unpopular regimes. The Greek population, faced with immense difficulties and the absence of political leadership, turned to the institution which they expected would shield them from the uncertainties of the occupation. Early on, for instance, the population hoped the church's intervention could save them from the ravages of the nationwide famine by negotiating with occupation authorities in order to procure foodstuffs. Axis authorities, for their part, also worked closely with church hierarchs, especially archbishop Damaskinos, because they hoped that these ecclesiastical leaders could ensure the passivity of the Greek population. Some German officials even hoped to win the church's support for their war against communism both in Greece and on the eastern front. As for a majority of the hierarchy, they hoped to ameliorate the trials and tribulations created by the war and occupation by cooperating with the occupation authorities and their Greek allies to the extent necessary. Also, they understood passivity could pose serious challenges to the continued influence of the institution in particular, and the preservation of societal norms in general.

The chapter has two goals: to discuss the expectations domestic and foreign agencies and groups of people had of the institution of the church and how these expectations influenced the relationship between the occupation authorities and the church; and to explore the nature and impact of this relationship in determining the ability of the church to live up to its ethnarchic task. Expectations of the church by all the major

actors remained high, and in most cases unrealistic. Based on the actual historical record, the church failed utterly in shielding the population from the impact of the occupation and its consequences, especially the famine.⁴¹⁴ However, despite its failure (largely for reasons beyond its control) the faction within the church that supported this path, which was epitomized by Archbishop Damaskinos and Bishop of Kydonia and Apokoronis Agathangelos Ksirouhakis, came to symbolize the ethnarchic tradition established by hierarchs such as Gennadios and Gregory V. Specifically, these men made every effort to preserve the integrity of the nation. On the surface, one can argue that the relationship between the occupation authorities and the church resembled a classic case of collaboration. An understanding of the traditional role of the church in periods of crisis and the intentions of the church leadership, however, force one to refrain from making such quick judgments. During the Ottoman period, patriarchs viewed their roles as custodian of the faithful. In order to accomplish this task circumstances forced them to become important political actors and a part of the state machinery and, thus, they were required to work closely with the governmental elites. Damaskinos and his colleagues faced a similar situation during the occupation. Confronted with a large enemy military presence, these leaders needed to work with the occupation authorities or flee to the mountains and join the resistance. Most church leaders, both for practical and ideological reasons, chose to remain with their flock and cooperate with the occupation authorities. They believed that remaining with their flock and cooperating with the

⁴¹⁴ The fact that 250,000 Greeks lost their lives from starvation or other famine-related illness evidenced the magnitude of this failure. For more information about the famine and its impact on the population see Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), Dimitris Kitsikis, "La Famine en Grece (1941-1942), Les Consequences Politiques," *Revue D'Histoire de la Deuxieme Guerre Mondiale* 19, no. 74 (1969): 17-41, Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941-1944*, 64 vols, vol. 42 (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006)., ———, "Famine in Occupied Greece: Causes and Consequences," in *Bearing Gifts to Greeks, Humanitarian Aid to Greece in the 1940s*, ed. Richard Clogg (London: Palgrave, 2008): 14-38.

occupation authorities was the only realistic option. Moreover, joining the resistance movement, especially the dominant EAM-ELAS, never became an option for Damaskinos and many of his colleagues because they feared the group's postwar intentions and the consequences for the flocks they would have abandoned.⁴¹⁵

The clerics themselves understood that circumstances demanded they play an extraordinary role in Greek society during this critical period. Led by Damaskinos, hierarchs realized that the local authorities lacked the legitimacy required to negotiate with the occupation authorities or to gain the trust of the population. As spiritual figures and as a source of local power and influence, people saw the church leadership as the only alternative power source. That is, until EAM-ELAS began establishing itself as an alternative center of power, especially in the countryside. Many hierarchs mentioned the close relationship between the church and the nation, and the special role assigned the institution's leadership. Most individuals spoke through their actions, that is i.e., negotiating with Red Cross officials, local Axis authorities, and even communicating with Allied forces throughout the period.

Damaskinos, more than any other individual, referenced the important role he intended for the church throughout the occupation from his enthronement speech on July 11 to a response to a letter from the prime minister of the government in exile Emanuel Tsouderos. Well aware of the circumstances facing the nation, based on Ioannis Georgakis' account of the archbishop's days in the early months of the occupation, Damaskinos understood that circumstances demanded extraordinary tasks of him if he regains his throne. The hierarch understood that the church needed to be the vanguard of

⁴¹⁵ The secretive nature of the organization and the role played by the Greek Communist Party deeply concerned Damaskinos and other clerics who had become alarmed by socialist movements since the Russian Revolution of 1917.

what he termed a social crusade against the forces that strove to undermine the basic structure of Greek society. These forces included ‘foreign ideas,’ famine, and Axis brutality. Both the actions and utterances of clerics such as Damaskinos indicated that these men knew that the population, government forces, and others demanded that the church play a fundamental role in the everyday life of the nation in those trying days of the occupation.

From the final weeks of the Albanian front, clerics began to look toward the difficult times that lay ahead. Individual clerics such as Chrysanthos, Eirinaios, and Spyridon assessed the situation correctly and acted accordingly. Damaskinos, however, gave a voice to this mission from the beginning of his tenure as archbishop. During his enthronement speech he made a plea to the population regarding the necessity of a social crusade against the forces threatening the nation:

The church will react, with all its might, against the ethical crisis, which as a consequence of the general subversion of the way of life, is causing distress to Greek society. [The church] will do everything, in order to strengthen the faith in moral values, in order to thwart the aims of subversive sermons, to invigorate the family unit, to inspire in all respects of duty, to support the revitalized generation in a spirit of clear understanding of the new national destiny, to make known among all classes of the significance of social solidarity and finally to consummate, through the strengthening of a sense of duty for sacrifices and endurance in times of tribulation, so that we may navigate safely through the obstacles of the present moment.⁴¹⁶

This passage intended to inform the nation that the church planned to play a central role in the impending crisis. He understood that people needed the church to be front and center and to lead the country. He also understood that new ideas would challenge the very fabric of Greek society, and that the church needed to muster all its strength and

⁴¹⁶ This was not in the text available, but cited in the initial report of the National Organization of Christian Solidarity in reference to the organization’s mission statement. Ethnikos Organismos Christianikis Allilengyis (National Organization for Christian Solidarity), "Ekthesis Tis Genikis Diefthyneoseos epi ton Pepragmenon tou Protou Etous: Apo to Dekemvriou 1941 mehri Dekemvriou 1942 (Report of the General Administration Based on the Minutes of the First Year (December 1941-December 1942)," (1943), 5.

resources to combat this ideological danger. He similarly challenged the population to rise to the occasion: “the work of social solidarity will be half completed and its fruits rather doubtful and limited, without a parallel brave response of the populace.”

Metropolitans at the regional level similarly called upon the capable and, in particular, the wealthy to play a similar role in the diocese. One can see this, specifically, through their pleas for material assistance and voluntary services. In the end, however, Damaskinos and his colleagues knew that they needed to represent the vanguard of this social struggle in order to inspire the population to follow its lead.

Toward the end of the occupation, Damaskinos explained to Tsouderos the necessity of the head of the church to lead this struggle, without waiting for outside recognition, as that would have been too late and unacceptable to an active individual such as the archbishop. Thus, he responded to the prime minister’s letter that appointed him the king’s representative in Greece in the following way: “The Ship, as always during all trying periods, such as today, is acknowledged by all here as the purest representative of the national soul, not requiring any other external recognition.”⁴¹⁷ By this time, Damaskinos had established himself as a national leader, something he viewed as his responsibility as head of the church. However, he saw his role as a leader among others in Athens, which meant that he needed to work with other members of the nation’s elites to resolve any crises that might develop. “The appointment of the captain, under discussion, would have been important, indeed, if he were to perform political acts or undertake assumed obligations in the name of the nation against third parties, in which

⁴¹⁷ Ilias Venezis, *Emmanuel Tsouderos O Prothypourgos tis Mahis tis Kritis kai i Epochi tou; Apo to Archeion tou, tas Anamniseis tou, apo Alla Keimena tis Istorias (Emmanuel Tsouderos, Prime Minister During the Battle of Crete and His Epoch; from His Personal Archive, His Memoires, and Other Historical Documents)* (Athens: Estia, 1966), 460.

case, his activities require legal recognition. This is not the case today.”⁴¹⁸ Despite his refusal to identify himself as the central figure in Athens, he played the leading role in the capital. Nonetheless, he explained to Tsouderos that he did not need official recognition because he was not negotiating with third parties. Although the hostage issue and the food crisis were internal matters, his negotiations with the occupation authorities were of a diplomatic nature. Based on this assessment, one could argue that he did negotiate with third parties. Moreover, he explained that he could not wait for such formalities, and, more importantly, that he intended to continue his current course of action, because he deemed it in the best interests of the nation. “None the less, independent of the formal appointment, the captain continues to fulfill all his duties in the internal domain, in cooperation with the representatives of the nation, as he has done thus far, in order to maintain the unity and success of national affairs.”⁴¹⁹

Damaskinos understood that he and the nation faced extraordinary circumstances that demanded his role expand beyond that of spiritual leader of the nation. Also, by placing the church at the forefront of the social crusade, one could view this as a call for regional church leaders to begin working to a resolution of this crisis. It must be noted, however, that most of these leaders had already begun taking steps to resolve the crises facing their individual flocks. Specific examples, which will receive further attention later in the chapter, include the German reprisal policy in Crete following the battle for the island, and the resolution of the food crisis that emerged in the days following the fall of the country to the Axis. .

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

One particular group that wanted to establish a working relationship with the church was the occupation government installed by the Germans. Both Axis officials and the local population held occupation governments, despite their intentions, in low esteem. What little sympathy the first occupation government of Georgios Tsolakoglou enjoyed in the early weeks of enemy domination quickly faded as it became evident that they wielded no power, and, specifically could not restrain German plundering.⁴²⁰ The government's inability to halt Axis plundering and the growing fear of an imminent famine guaranteed the resentment of the population. This is clearly reflective in a report sent in September 1941 (only a few months into the occupation) to Secretary of State Cordell Hull by a State Department representative, stationed in Italy but with extensive experience and contacts in Greece: "The Greek central government has literally no popular support among Greeks and little support from Axis authorities. Greeks say conditions could be no worse without a Government."⁴²¹ Later the author specified why the population held these views toward the government. "Certainly the Government has failed to mitigate the rigors of German systematic looting of the country....In short, the Government's lack of authority, subservience and apathy have accelerated economic disintegration of the country to the point where the situation is truly chaotic."⁴²² Popular sentiment, according to a report by Archaeologist Rodney Young, a scholar who spent some time in Greece on numerous archaeological digs and had a number of important connections, considered Prime Minister Georgios Tsolakoglou "a disreputable

⁴²⁰ According to Dimosthenis Koukounas, Tsolakoglou enjoyed fleeting support because of its effort to dissolve or discredit institutions of the Metaxas regime. Koukounas, *I Eisodos ton Germanon stin Athina kai I Mahi tis Kritis (the German Entrance into Athens and the Battle of Crete)*, 39.

⁴²¹ Records of the Department of State relating to internal affairs of Greece, 1940-44 868.00/1128, Report to Secretary of State, Cordell Hull sent September 13, 1941

⁴²² Ibid.

sideshow.”⁴²³ Tsolakoglou and later prime ministers understood that they needed to increase support for their regime by looking to prominent politicians and traditional institutions such as the church for cooperation.

Prime ministers from Georgios Tsolakoglou to Ioannis Rallis, aware of their unpopularity, hoped that church support might alter popular views of their regime as powerless, apathetic, and corrupt tools of the Axis. Many church leaders, however, shared the views of the public and treaded with considerable caution in their dealings with the occupation authorities.⁴²⁴ Indeed, several hierarchs understood that blind patriotism and open resistance to the Axis and their Greek allies benefitted few Greeks. For them, the situation required a semblance of civilian authority if only to ensure the continuation of the bureaucratic machine.⁴²⁵ However, Damaskinos preferred to work independently of the state, or at least he wanted the state to relinquish power to the church over particular issues. For instance, he wanted the government to transfer welfare responsibilities to his organization, EOHA. Therefore, despite withholding its open support, many church officials worked with the Greek authorities for the wellbeing of the population, a policy which forced them to tread the fine line between collaboration and cooperation.

Intense government courting of the church began in the late summer of 1941. A month after Damaskinos ascended his throne, the new prime minister made overtures to the new head of the church. General Tsolakoglou hoped that his close acquaintance with

⁴²³ Records of the Department of State relating to internal affairs of Greece, 1940-44 Report from Rodney Young enclosed in a letter Dewitt Poole to James Dunn April 2, 1942 868.00/1143 ½.

⁴²⁴ Young also describes the sentiment of the church in his report. “The church, too, regards the government with very little respect.” Ibid.

⁴²⁵ These concerns explain why Damaskinos gave his support to Tsolakoglou’s decision to take the reins of power in 1941, even if he had reservations about his strategy to resolve the nation’s immense problems.

newly appointed archbishop, Damaskinos Papandreou, could bolster the fortunes and popularity of the regime. He wished to improve his relationship with the church after suffering the humiliating fiasco of Chrysanthos' refusal to swear in his government. It must be remembered that Chrysanthos had become so popular that people considered his refusal to swear in the new government among the first acts of resistance against the Axis.⁴²⁶ Tsolakoglou hoped the new archbishop would lend his support as a token of his appreciation for his restoration.

On August 22, 1941, Tsolakoglou wrote a letter pleading his case to Damaskinos. The tone of the letter provides insight into both the desperation of the regime and the reasons why the prime minister deemed its support imperative to the legitimacy of the regime. His plea begins with a highly formalistic request for the Church's support for the government's efforts to protect the nation from the dangers created by the war and occupation. "I beseech you in order to ask, through you, for the support of the Greek Church in the struggle to defend the Nation from these encroaching dangers."⁴²⁷ He believed Damaskinos' support was tantamount to the support of the institution. More importantly, he felt that the support of a powerful and popular figure such as Damaskinos added instant legitimacy to his government. After the formalistic request, the general attempts to appeal to Damaskinos' sense of tradition. He seems to think that a brief

⁴²⁶ This notion is referenced by a number of historians of the period. Dimitrios Gatopoulos, *Istoria tis Katahis: Meta Syllogis Istorikon kai Laographikon Anekdoton ton Eton 1940-1944 (History of the Occupation: With Unpublished Collections of Historical and Popular Accounts of the Years, 1940-1944)*, 2 ed., 4 vols, vol. 2 (Athens: Petros Deimeittrakos, 1947), 137-139, *Mnimes kai Martyries (Memories and Eyewitness Accounts)* (Athens: Klados Ekdoseon Epikoinoniakis kai Morphotikis Yperesias tis Ekklisias tis Ellados, 2000), 57, Georgios Karagiannis, *Ekklisia kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)* (Athens: Pontiki, 1997), 58-60.

⁴²⁷ Georgios Tsolakoglou, August 22 1941. Cited in Dimosthenis Koukounas, *O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos (Archbishop Damaskinos)* (Athens: Metron, 1991), 102-106.

history lesson about church's role in periods of national crisis will sway the university-trained theologian and lawyer.

The Orthodox Christian Church for centuries has been interwoven with the Greek Nation. Both during its glorious days and periods of tribulation, the church demonstrated active and boundless national strength, inspiring consistent faith in the future of the race, which it shielded with an impenetrable protective armor from destructive powers.⁴²⁸

Later on in his letter, Tsolakoglou attempts to appeal further to the role of the church during periods of crisis by emphasizing the institution's self-sacrifice during the nation's time of need.

When our nation found itself in a critical state, either because it was involved in difficult struggles or temporarily forced to submit to the invincible power of circumstances, the church always faithfully stood by the nation with self-sacrifice. It has been a comrade during the difficult battles, a companion, comforter, and supporter in its hour of hardship, struggle, and weakness.⁴²⁹

Tsolakoglou hoped that his work with Damaskinos to resolve the food crisis and the Bulgarian problem, would convince the hierarch both of his government's conviction to act resolutely and that of the cleric's need to view his regime as a legitimate representative of the nation. Therefore, he wanted the archbishop to view the working relationship between the two men as representatives of their respective spheres. The prime minister also hoped that his decision to place Damaskinos in charge of procuring foodstuffs reflected his confidence in the hierarch and a sign of his own determination to resolve the crisis.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

Further on, Tsolakoglou repeated his earlier request for the Church's support, reminding Damaskinos that the Church could offer invaluable assistance to both his government and the nation. He also understood that Church support might encourage the Greek population to cooperate with the government, something that Tsolakoglou and the other prime ministers struggled with throughout the occupation. In his eyes, church support could alter the image of the government as a German tool, which would make it more palatable to the public.⁴³⁰

In this effort to [referring to his government's struggle to protect the nation from the vicissitudes of the occupation] combat against the doom threatening our individual and national integrity, I dare ask for the support of our church, which is capable of providing invaluable assistance in consolidating national cohesion, with which is also connected the stability of our religious faith.⁴³¹

Tsolakoglou saw that the circumstances of the occupation shook Greek society to its foundations. He stated that his lack of political experience and petty differences between prominent Greek elites prevented them from rallying around his regime. Therefore, he believed that if Damaskinos rallied the church around him that he may eventually win the good will of the nation and overcome these obstacles. He implored him that the only through ecclesiastical support for his regime can society avert a complete collapse.

Further on, Tsolakoglou made specific demands of the church and Damaskinos.

Permit me, Your Grace, to ask that the clerics be enlightened about my above thoughts, also, about the social welfare activities performed by your patriotic and worthy inspiration, embarking on a passionate crusade to liberate the conscience of the Greeks from the parasites of anti-national ideas

⁴³⁰ Mazower aptly chronicles the struggles the general's government faced in its early months. One of the most colorful and telling examples was the conflict that arose between government representatives and Greek villagers who refused to provide food to these officials. The villagers fired upon government officials, causing the later to quickly retreat. Therefore, Damaskinos' support may alter this image of Tsolakoglou as an Axis tool, or so the general thought. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 27-8.

⁴³¹ Koukounas, *Damaskinos*, 103.

and of the tragic misunderstandings, under whose power we behave fatally toward our national cohesion, our moral equilibrium and to social discipline.⁴³²

In addition, he wanted Damaskinos to instruct his clerics to preach the worthiness of his cause and the magnitude of his sacrifice from the pulpit. “Priests should appropriately explain to the people. That this is the basic position, the principle of my idea and these are the reasons I undertook responsibility and burden of government power.”⁴³³

Knowing Damaskinos’ familiarity with the situation, he concluded with a blatant attempt to appeal to Damaskinos’ vanity. “The Church should remember its significant work during the period of Turkish rule and should undertake a similar remarkable age, which history will record in golden pages.”⁴³⁴ Here, the general is threatening that refusing to support his government will lead to complete chaos. Damaskinos was well aware of the potential consequences of the events facing the nation and the growing threat for a vulnerable population. As a young metropolitan in Corinth in 1923, he commented in his inaugural address on the impact such “anti-national ideas and tragic misunderstandings.”⁴³⁵ The emergence of EAM-ELAS confirmed these fears of the prelate and the Greek government.

Rapidly deteriorating circumstances, the powerlessness of the government to respond, and the lack of popular support forced the prime minister to plead for the support of the church. The letter sheds light both on the desperation created by the inability of the government to cope with the crisis, its serious lack of legitimacy, and the

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ The issue was discussed in some detail in chapter two. He referenced these ideas in his inaugurating speech upon arriving to Corinth in 1923. Siphis G. Kollias, *Archiepiskopos-Antivasileus Damaskinos o apo Korinthias : Mia Anepanalepti Ekklesiastiki Morphi (Archbishop-Regent Damaskinos, Former Metropolitan of Corinth: One Exceptional Ecclesiastical Personality)* (Athens: Petraki Monastery, 1975), 44-46.

hope that the church, through its leader, could revitalize his regime. This letter, however, not only articulated the attitude of this prime minister, but defined the way future prime ministers would approach the church for support. In short, the well-intentioned general hoped that drawing upon traditional images of the church, his personal relationship with the archbishop, and his confidence in the hierarch's ability to confront particular crises facing the nation would lead to church support.

Damaskinos' response to Tsolakoglou four days later was both frank and carefully worded. He wanted to underscore his knowledge of the situation, the problems he had with the regime, but also to acknowledge the sacrifices Tsolakoglou made by signing the armistice and forming a government. Most importantly, he wanted to inform Tsolakoglou why he could not openly support his government despite his intentions and sacrifices because of the destructive impact such a path would have on the reputation of the church. Moreover, giving such support to his regime, according to the cleric, would not improve the situation. Damaskinos also knew that his ascension at the expense of the popular and defiant Chrysanthos caused many individuals question his position and loyalties.⁴³⁶ He wants to make sure that the population did not associate either him or the Church with the Axis and their Greek allies. However, the prelate wanted to cooperate with the regime for the wellbeing of the population, though remaining cognizant that he was treading the fine line between cooperation and collaboration. In short, being the consummate politician that he was, Damaskinos crafted a letter that explained why he refused to lend the government support without deeply offending the general. Thus, he created the justification for a possible relationship with him in the future.

⁴³⁶ The Government-in-Exile and a number of rightwing groups criticized the archbishop as a tool of the Germans when he replaced Chrysanthos with the assistance of the occupation authorities and their Greek allies.

Damaskinos began his response by informing Tsolakoglou that he understood the gravity of the situation and the problems facing the regime. He agreed with some of the general's observations, but chastised him for failing to grasp why his regime remained unpopular:

I consider myself fit from the beginning to declare that I am not convinced that your explanation is responsive to the sentiment of the population against you personally and your government. Without wanting to refute the fact that popular sentiment does not show exceptional sympathy toward the government, I think that this disaffection has less to do with political opinions and crises, and more to do with the severe, almost hopeless, internal situation which began from the first day of the occupation, and its severe consequences.⁴³⁷

Damaskinos criticized Tsolakoglou for his naiveté. He informed the prime minister that the chaotic state of affairs in the nation rather than his lack of political experience and connections have shaped popular views of the regime. Specifically, he wanted to reassure the prime minister that the population's anger comes from the 'almost hopeless, internal situation,' and, implicitly, his government's inability to confront these problems. Keenly aware of the growing unpopularity of the regime, he wanted to explain to Tsolakoglou that action rather than rhetoric would improve the image of the regime.

Despite his chastisements, Damaskinos wanted to acknowledge that he approved the general's decision to sign the armistice and to take on the burden of forming a government.

In regards to these individuals [critics of his decision to sign the armistice], I do not have the slightest difficulty nor the least bit hesitation to confess, with a clear conscience, that I see in them patriotic intentions and noble motives. Because, in truth, it is very difficult, to me at least, to imagine, even in approximation, what could have befallen the country if World War II had not been averted. If a courageous initiative had not been undertaken to bring an end to the bloodshed,

⁴³⁷ This being an official document from office of Archbishop was written in the official style, which used the official 'we'. For the purpose of this dissertation I chose to use the singular I in my English translation. I have followed the same approach for the rest of the Archbishop's official correspondence. Venezis. *Damaskinos*, 91-2.

which, extended without real hopes and without realistically achievable purpose, would have simply increased the number of victims and would have multiplied exponentially the national misfortunes.⁴³⁸

Damaskinos remained a pragmatic man throughout the period. One can even state that the hierarch sympathizes with the general, possibly even admires his sacrifice. The general's decision to sign the armistice epitomized the type of courageous initiative required, in the cleric's eyes, to resolve the crisis facing the nation. For Damaskinos, the wellbeing of the population required sacrifice, action, and courage, rather than empty nationalistic endeavors and empty rhetoric. He understood that Greece had no chance to prevent effectively an Axis occupation, which meant that national preservation required the military and the political leadership to make the unpopular decision to surrender rather than see the immense national suffering exacerbated without accomplishing the ultimate objective of defending the independence of the nation. Spyridon and Eirinaios held similar views about continuing the struggle against the Axis in the spring of 1941. This view also helps explain why he opposed the policy of committing acts of sabotage against the Axis authorities. He believed that the marginal benefits did not justify the immense suffering the Germans inflicted on the innocent population in response to these acts.

The archbishop wanted Tsolakoglou to understand that a swift and active response to the crises threatening the nation needed to be taken.

However, regarding the emerging reality, I do not have the right, speaking with you during this critical moment, to conceal my feelings that, at least in regards to the relief of the popular misfortune, that what was done haphazardly, which should have been done, from the beginning, resolutely and without hesitation. I do not fail to acknowledge neither the magnitude of the problems, nor the political limitations caused by the insurmountable difficulties, nor the extent of

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

the necessary sacrifices, nor the infamous glacial pace of the governmental machinery. These findings do not suffice, alone, to explain the uneasy popular spirit and the restricted results by the chapter of the relief and comfort of the people during the current wintery material and moral crisis.⁴³⁹

His response to Tsolakoglou's complaints about the problems his government faced reinforces his attitude toward the regime itself. This passage explains why he continued to work with the occupation governments despite his misgivings toward working with a regime appointed by the enemy. Specifically, he understood the "political limitations" placed on these regimes, especially that of Tsolakoglou, a man he knew relatively well and respected. The general, in Damaskinos' opinion, failed to appreciate the connection between the government's failure to respond to the crises and the attitude of the population. Archbishop Damaskinos continued to emphasize the need to respond resolutely to the problems facing the nation, while still acknowledging the type of problems the government faced.

In response to the prime minister's comments about the role of the church during this time of crisis, Damaskinos informed him that he knew what role the ecclesiastical authorities needed to play, but reminded him that he needs to remain focused on the task at hand, not on the actions and responsibilities of other institutions:

The Greek Church is always conscious of its responsibility in today's critical period, presently offering its gravitas and its assistance to the needs of the suffering Greek whole. It acts, with a deep conscience, without any current or future aspirations, because it is inspired by the consideration that "it is not a time of words but deeds, and in the end it is not a time for consultation." Popular suffering spreads as a result of the existing difficulties, which threaten the whole governmental system.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ Ibid.93.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

Damaskinos reminded Tsolakoglou that he needed to work actively toward improving the lives of the citizens, because failing to do so threatened the very governmental and social structure of society. He further emphasized the importance of taking action rather than debating the issues in his response to the prime minister's request that the clergy become active agents of the regime.

What benefit will come from pulpit preaching—even if it were permitted to the Church during the present national circumstances—when the substance of the fertile acts will be lacking from the words, the mark of inspired resolve, the justification of the essence of the results? Whence, the ecclesiastical agents will make a case and use rhetoric, when the reality continues the way it is, worsening, which will negate the words? Then will we not face the fear that the Church will be engaged in a useless war of words, and its reputation crushed under the crushing weight of events, from which it will not have the strength to reconcile?⁴⁴¹

Damaskinos also appreciated the consequences of offering the institution's open support. He posed thoughtful and difficult questions to the government regarding its demands of the church. More importantly, he understood that the praising of the efforts of the regime and its good intentions, while the situation continued to deteriorate, threatened the legitimacy of the ecclesiastical authorities as spokesmen for the nation. He understood that tying the fate of the church to the unpopular and apathetic Tsolakoglou government guaranteed serious and, possibly, irreversible consequence for an institution that fought the encroachment of anti-clericalism in Greek society for over a century. Thus, appearing as a handmaiden of a powerless, unpopular, and corrupt government assured dire consequences for the church. He also understood that the role of the church remained to bolster the flagging confidence of the population by attempting to assuage the immense burdens it faced. By offering welfare and other services and preaching

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, 93-44.

continued devotion to the faith, Damaskinos understood that he was fulfilling the role expected of him and his church.

The exchange between the two men sheds light on the attitude both had for their respective institutions in the newly established circumstances of the occupation. For the most part, Damaskinos and Tsolakoglou maintained a cordial relationship. Tsolakoglou trusted Damaskinos, whom he entrusted with the responsibility of procuring much needed foodstuffs from abroad and partial control over the national welfare service, with the establishment of EOHA. The issue will receive further treatment in the following chapter, but it is important to mention this development at this juncture, because it illustrates that the two came to a basic understanding about the relationship between church and state in the first half of the occupation.⁴⁴²

Tsolakoglou took advantage of another opportunity to win the support of Damaskinos. According to Christos Christidis, a close friend of Chrysanthos and member of the leadership of EOHA, a group of men led by General Protosyngelos hoped to form an advisory council made up of prominent Greeks and headed by the archbishop.⁴⁴³ This group would work closely with the government and the Axis authorities to solve the major problems facing the nation, such as the food crisis. A group of thirty to forty men working under the archbishop would advise the Greek

⁴⁴² Georgios Karagiannis argues that Damaskinos' letter attempted to give some words of comfort to the general, but wanted to articulate the fact that he could not openly support his regime. While there is some merit to this interpretation, the author fails to explain the complexity of the hierarch's position. He saw no value in such measures because doing so not only tarnished the reputation of the church, but also would indicate that the regime approved of the government's attempt to resolve the crises facing the nation. Something that Damaskinos openly criticized throughout the letter. While he was the consummate politician, his greatest concern remained actively pursuing a solution to this crisis. Therefore, he viewed such proclamation of no value. Karagiannis, *Ekklesia Kai Kratos, 1833-1997 (Church and State, 1833-1997)*, 67-8.

⁴⁴³ Christoforos Christidis, *Chronia Katohis, 1941-1944 : Martyries Imerologiou, Prologos, Sympliomata Simeioseis (Occupation Years, 1941-1944: Diary, Prologue, Supplementary Material)* (Athens: Christoforos Christidis, 1971), 231.

government.⁴⁴⁴ Protosyngelos received the approval of Tsolakoglou and the majority of the political parties (though they stated that they did not want to be officially tied to any such group). However, after weeks of negotiating with prominent Athenian leaders, the plan came to nothing. Christidis was convinced that Tsolakoglou never took the formation of such an advisory council seriously, but more likely hoped that such a group might give his government instant legitimacy.⁴⁴⁵ The plan, despite its failure, indicates that Damaskinos, by the spring of 1942, emerged as the most popular and respected figure in the capital. And, Tsolakoglou maintained a cordial relationship with the church, and with the men who worked hard to find a solution to the overwhelming food crisis facing the nation.

The prelate in fact maintained relations with Tsolakoglou's successors as well: Konstantinos Logothetopoulos and Ioannis Rallis. As could be expected from the general state of affairs, relations remained strained throughout the occupation. The most important examples included the drafting of Greeks as forced laborers both in Greece and in Germany, the execution of innocent Greeks in reprisal for acts of sabotage committed against the Axis, and the Bulgarian occupied territories. Conflict between the church and the government over these issues had three important consequences: 1) German occupation authorities sought the advice of Damaskinos over important political appointments; 2) The conflicts solidified his position as a leading figure in Athens in the eyes of many Greeks; 3) He began to be seen as a possible political force in the post-war Greece. Concern and frustration over the last two issues in particular led Damaskinos to negotiate with the occupation authorities on a regular basis. No doubt, the forceful

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

personality of the archbishop and his growing popularity caught the attention of the Germans, especially their diplomatic representatives, Gunther Altenburg and Herman Neubacher.

Konstantinos Logothetopoulos was a German-trained gynecologist, who served as professor of medicine at the University of Athens and ran a women's clinic in the capital. His educational background, marriage to Field Marshall Wilhelm List's sister, contributed to his appointment in the Tsolakoglou government.⁴⁴⁶ Under Tsolakoglou, Logothetopoulos held a number of ministerial portfolios, including those of Education and Religion and Vice Premier.⁴⁴⁷ He replaced Tsolakoglou in November 1942, after the general could no longer contend with the growing number of problems within the government and from the occupation authorities.⁴⁴⁸ While the Germans refused to accept Tsolakoglou's resignation on earlier occasions, by late 1942 they lost confidence in his ability to serve as even a caretaker prime minister. They chose Logothetopoulos as the lesser of two evils.⁴⁴⁹

As a compromise candidate, Logothetopoulos did not enjoy the respect of the occupation authorities, and it was only a matter of time before he would be removed. One issue, in particular, proved a catalyst to his demise, the debacle over labor conscription. Throughout much of occupied Europe, Germany used local collaborators to conscript the working-age male population to work for the Germans. In Greece, the Bulgarians already implemented similar policies to benefit from cheap Greek labor and to assist in changing the ethnographic makeup of the occupied territories. Such policies

⁴⁴⁶ Report of Rodney Young, April 2, 1942, 15-6 in Dispatch from Dewitt Poole to James Dunn RDSRIAG 868.00/11431/2.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Hondros, 80-81,

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, 80.

encouraged Greeks to flee to the German-occupied zone.⁴⁵⁰ German officials also implemented a similar policy in northern Greece and Crete. There was a call for some of these men to be transported for labor in Germany. Unlike their efforts to conscript local workers for military projects in other parts of Greece, however, they faced considerable opposition from their Italian partners, the local population, and, most notably, Athenian elites and the Church led by Damaskinos. German officials were stunned by this strong local opposition, in light of assurances from the Logothetopoulos government that few Greeks would oppose the measure, a testament to the level of ineptitude or naïveté on the part of the regime.⁴⁵¹ On January 12, 1943, Logothetopoulos published a brief announcement in the daily papers stating that Greeks may be forced to work in Germany in the future. While few paid attention to this announcement, it caused public outrage when it appeared in the official German organ, *German News from Greece*. Logothetopoulos argued, in his memoir, that he opposed the measure. Little evidence, however, exists to support this claim.⁴⁵² The following day OTE (National Phone Company) workers went on strike in protest. On March 5, further opposition led to a

⁴⁵⁰ According to Marshall Miller, a historian of Bulgaria's involvement in World War II, the Greeks worked twelve hours a day as part of work gangs building roads in Bulgaria. Marshall Miller, *Bulgaria During the Second World War*, 103-104. For more information on Greek laborers in Bulgaria see: Xanthippi and Georgios Kazamias Kotzageorgi, *I Voulgariki Katohi stin Anatoliki Makedonia kai ti Thraki, 1941-1944: Kathestos, Parametroi, Synepieis (the Bulgarian Occupation of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, 1941-1944, Government, Parameters, and Consequences)* (Thessaloniki, Greece: Paratiritis, 2002), 63-66.

⁴⁵¹ 868/1232 American Consulate General to Secretary of State: Istanbul, Turkey May 14, 1943, 15-16.

⁴⁵² According to Damaskinos' most recent biographer, Dimosthenis Koukounas, the government opposed the measure, and sent a representative to speak to the Assistant to the German Plenipotentiary, Vogel on February 24. According to an account by an informer who left the country soon in May 1943, however, the government informed the Germans that "the population was ready to accept this step and that the publishing of the decree would not meet with any serious opposition." He also stated that "It is believed that he also told the Germans that he had consulted the metropolitan and the Chief Justice and others before taking this step and had obtained their agreement that the decree might be published." When the Germans consulted him about the issue, Damaskinos denied making such a claim. This led the Germans to the conclusion that "Logothetopoulos was either incompetent or badly informed." Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Greece, 1940-1944 868.00/1232 May 14, 1943 Report from Consulate General Burton Berry to Secretary of State.

general strike.⁴⁵³ Moreover, Damaskinos threatened to have the city's church bells ring in protest and to join the strikers in the streets.⁴⁵⁴ After intense negotiations, the Germans backed down.⁴⁵⁵ In response to the fiasco, Logothetopoulos fell from power, soon to be replaced by the last occupation prime minister, Ioannis Rallis.⁴⁵⁶ In short, Damaskinos response to the German decree reflects the view he had about his relationship with the Axis and their Greek allies. He willingly cooperated with the occupation authorities and their Greek allies, but never hesitated to oppose policies he viewed as detrimental to the population.⁴⁵⁷ This stance by Damaskinos further convinced the occupation authorities that the archbishop remained a force that both understood the state of affairs and whose voice helped sway the mood of the population.

Despite conflicts such as the fiasco mentioned above, occupation governments attempted to placate the Church, and even resorted to bribery late in the war. In 1944, for propaganda purposes, the Rallis government attempted to appear as a champion of the Church when it passed a law which stated "bishops who are unable to occupy their sees because of unsettled conditions should be paid their salaries plus emoluments of 200,000 drachmas monthly."⁴⁵⁸ This policy targeted the hierarchs expelled from Bulgarian-occupied territory in the summer of 1941. Still, the relationship between the Rallis government and Damaskinos deteriorated rather quickly. Initially they appeared to get along well. For instance, Rallis accepted Damaskinos' recommendation to appoint

⁴⁵³ Koukounas, *Archbishop Damaskinos.*, 162-164, Costas Stassinopoulos, *Modern Greeks, Greece in World War II, the German Occupation and the National Resistance, the Civil War* (Washington DC: American Hellenic Institute Foundation, 1997), 174-175.

⁴⁵⁴ Koukounas, 164, Stassinopoulos, 175.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, Ioanna Tsatsou described the scene in Athens and the state of Damaskinos after the ordeal finally ended. Ioanna Tsatsou, *Fylla Katohis (Pages from the Occupation)*, 8th ed. (Athens : Estia, 2002), 78-80.

⁴⁵⁶ Koukounas, 165-167.

⁴⁵⁷ Christidis, 367.

⁴⁵⁸ Record Group 59 Numbered Intelligence Report 1941-61 R+A 1131.

Nikolaos Louvaris minister of education and religion.⁴⁵⁹ Relations, however, began to cool soon after the government came to power over the Bulgarian issue. Damaskinos demanded the government resign in protest against the harsh Bulgarian policies toward the local Greek population and the recent decision by the Germans to expand the Bulgarian occupation zone in Greece in July 1943. Rallis, after initially agreeing, decided to remain in office, stating that he could not betray the trust the Germans had in him.⁴⁶⁰ A cordial, though distant relationship continued between church and state until the following January, when the Rallis government published an article in the press, in response to a plea by Damaskinos, as president of EOHA, for financial assistance to help alleviate suffering from the bombing of Piraeus by the Allies in January 1944, stating that the government, not the Church, controlled EOHA. This selfish act led Damaskinos to sever relations with the government for the remainder of the war.⁴⁶¹

The labor conscription debacle, frequent discussions with the archbishop and reports from their informants convinced Axis authorities that the governments they appointed and their other Greek allies had little popular support in the country. This made the maintenance of a cordial relationship with the Church an important step toward maintaining the passivity of the population. While several leaders attempted to win the support of the Church for its war against communism both internationally and domestically, they remained content with the organization's silence regarding this issue and cooperation in other areas. Evidence of Axis goals toward the Church can be seen from the opening days of the occupation. Field Marshal von Stume's conversation with

⁴⁵⁹ The issue will receive further attention later in the chapter.

⁴⁶⁰ Vasos Mathiopoulos. *I Elliniki Antistasi kai I Symmahoi* (The Greek Resistance and the Allies) (Athens: Papazisi, 1977), 144-145. The matter of the response of the Greek government and the Church regarding the expanded Bulgarian zone will receive further attention in a later chapter.

⁴⁶¹ Koukounas, 147.

archbishop Chrysanthos, for instance, established German expectations of the church. Therefore, it is no surprise that German officials replaced the fiery prelate with Damaskinos in hopes of establishing a working relationship with the institution. German officials, however, soon discovered that Damaskinos refused to become their tool, though he and other prominent hierarchs such as the bishop of Kydonia and Apokoronis, Agathangelos Ksirouhakis in Crete, remained willing to cooperate with them. This relationship the Germans learned to appreciate.

Gaining insight into the attitude of the occupation authorities toward the church sheds light on the type of concession Axis officials made to the church in return for the latter's cooperation on mutually agreed-upon issues such as famine relief and the maintenance of social order. From the postwar accounts of the two most important German diplomatic representatives in Greece, Herman Neubacher and Gunther Altenburg we get a sense of the type of relationship the diplomatic corps had with the head of the church and the type of concession they and military officials made to the church in return for agreeing to some of their own requests. Although few military officials left memoirs referencing the relationship between the occupation authorities and religious leaders, the surviving correspondence sheds some light on the nature of this tense relationship. As already pointed out, the military's main concern remained the passivity of the population, and it expected the church to assist the occupation authorities toward this goal. Numerous meetings and communications between members of the German army of occupation and the church amply document this point.

The most important relationship between the Axis and the church remained that of Damaskinos and Gunther Altenburg, the German plenipotentiary of the Reich to Greece.

The two had frequent meetings beginning in July 1941 and continued until Altenburg left the country in late 1943 with the rest of the German diplomatic corps. In a prologue to Hagen Fleischer's *Crown and Swastika* Altenburg maintains that the diplomatic corps and Damaskinos forged a good working relationship during the occupation. From this brief summary of their working relationship and his recollections of Damaskinos, one can piece together the type of relationship and how it benefitted the church during the occupation. Commenting on Damaskinos' influence in society, Altenburg made the following observation: "It must be stated that during the period of the occupation Damaskinos was the individual with the most political clout in the whole country."⁴⁶² He also mentioned that he and Damaskinos held discussions over a plethora of issues related to the wellbeing of the nation from political affairs to the food crisis. "Our cooperation dealt with, primarily, outside of political discussions, the replenishment of the population with food, the prevention of work stoppages, such as the capture or execution of hostages." Altenburg apparently thought much of Damaskinos and his influence in Greek society. The topics they discussed included strictly political affairs, such as the hierarch's impression of individual political leaders, and other sensitive matters.

Herman Neubacher, Hitler's Special Envoy to the Balkans, spent some time in Greece and also formed a relationship with the archbishop. He, like his colleague Altenburg, acknowledged Damaskinos "as the strongest political figure I met in Greece." He concurs that he and Altenburg had ongoing dealing with the archbishop during the occupation. "Damaskinos intervened in matters of special relief operations, mobilized against our hostage policy, and mediated in social conflicts." Damaskinos even

⁴⁶² Hagen Fleischer, *Stemma kai Svastika : I Ellada tis Katohis kai tis Antistasis, 1941-1944 (Crown and Swastika: Occupied Greece and the Resistance, 1941-1944 uniform title: Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte* (Athens: Papazisis, 1988-1995), 31.

confessed to Neubacher, according to the memoir, that had he been privy to information about Germany's decision to grant Bulgaria control over Thrace, he would have joined the resistance in the mountains.”

The observations by these two German officials indicate that Damaskinos established a close working relationship with them and had won their respect and acknowledgement as a powerful force in Greek politics during the war. No doubt, these men understood that the individuals they appointed to run the government had little to no support and hoped to recruit more influential members of society to ensure the passive cooperation of the population, if not the church's support against the war on communism.

German officials also hoped to win the support of the church in its war against the Soviet Union and the internal communist-led resistance movement. The strong anticommunist sentiment felt among most ecclesiastical leaders in Europe, including Pope Pius XII, likely convinced German officials that they could win the support of the Greek Church for the war on the eastern front. Toward this goal, Gunther Altenburg sent a translation of a letter a group of Ukrainian bishops had sent to Hitler on September 10, 1941 thanking him for liberating their country from Godless communism. He attached a brief note to the letter that stated, “Your Beatitude, I have the pleasure of sending a copy of a letter sent by Ukrainian bishops to Hitler, and the attached, no doubt [will] interest the ecclesiastical circles of Greece.”⁴⁶³ Here Altenburg clearly hopes that such notes will encourage Damaskinos and his subordinates to support the German cause in the Soviet Union, or at least discourage activity in Greece that may jeopardize their war effort.⁴⁶⁴ I

⁴⁶³ ELIA, Personal Archive of Vasos Tsibidaros, Letter from Plenipotentiary of Germany to Greece, Gunther Altenburg to Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Damaskinos Papandreou. September 10, 1941. I was unable to find any evidence of a response from Damaskinos to this letter.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

was unable to find any response to this note. An interesting report by the of the German police of Southeastern Europe, Hoss, dated March 23, 1943, however, contends that Damaskinos planned to hold a meeting of the church leadership to discuss the anticommunist struggle. According to the report, the meeting was scheduled in order to “make a number of decisions regarding the popularization of them and in order to instruct the population, through the clergy, about the dangers of communism.”⁴⁶⁵

There is some evidence that German propaganda against communism influenced some sectors of the clergy, especially the middle ranks. The majority of the upper clergy, despite their reservations, refused to become tools of the Germans by openly condemning communism, especially EAM. Reasons for the susceptibility of members of the clergy appear obvious. News of the treatment of the Church in Russia following the communist seizure power in 1917 and the harsh persecution that followed under Lenin’s successors in the interwar period hardened the suspicions of members of the clergy. Although the growth of EAM-ELAS and word of their activity spread quickly and helped reduce the anxiety many clergy, especially lower clergy, felt toward the organization, suspicion of communism remained. According to an American intelligence report dated 12/1/1944 but containing a collection of data from the last year and a half of the occupation, “German propaganda, which equated resistance with communism and pointed to the consequent danger to the interests of the Church, affected many priests, particularly in the middle ranks.”⁴⁶⁶ More obvious, however, was the influence this propaganda had on Mount Athos. The religious community there is known for its conservative values. Thus, it did not come as a great surprise when, “in June 1943 the Holy Synod of Mt.

⁴⁶⁵ Mathiopoulos, 145.

⁴⁶⁶ RG 59/Numbered Intelligence Reports, R&A 2500.4, 12/1/1944.

Athos issued a statement praising the German campaign against atheistic communism.”⁴⁶⁷ There are other individual clerics that were accused of either making openly anti-communist speeches or working too closely with the occupation authorities.

Despite the existence of this small faction within the church, the majority of the clergy, especially the upper clergy, were far too aware of the potential influence on the group to openly condemn communism. In many cases, Axis policy against the Greek population soured much of the early enthusiasm members of the clergy may have had toward the German war effort on the eastern front. Even for many who likely sympathized with the German fear of communism, they understood they preferred to either bide their time or cooperate with the British to ensure the prevention of a communism seizure of power upon the withdrawal of German troops from the country.

Popular expectations of the church, especially of Damaskinos, remained high throughout the occupation. When reading memoirs of the hierarch’s contemporaries, one quickly concludes that he lacked the power necessary to meet these unrealistic expectations. However, even in his failure, which was monumental in some cases, he instilled hope in the population, as reflected by the fact that people continued to turn to him as the only individual who wielded influence with the occupation authorities. For instance, people outside the Archbishopric begged for his assistance in saving incarcerated family members or procuring food. In the early months of the occupation, no doubt influenced by their knowledge that he worked diligently with the occupation authorities to procure foodstuffs, people expected him to save them from starvation. His popularity, ultimately, led the Germans, the Tsouderos government, and the British to

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

view him as the most powerful personality in Greece at the end of the occupation. How and why did this develop? His meteoric rise occurred because tradition placed him in a position to wield considerable influence as a hierarch in a period of crisis. However, his determination to actively pursue the needs of the nation, as he saw them, led the powerful groups mentioned above to view him as the most powerful individual in Greece at the end of the occupation.

In the early months of the occupation, hopes placed upon Damaskinos reached meteoric heights. For instance, a powerful and moving essay written by the Greek poet Angelos Sikelianos at the beginning of the occupation symbolized the high hopes some segments of society had of the archbishop. Sikelianos met Damaskinos during his confinement at the Phaneromeni monastery in 1939. The poet and his wife became friends with the archbishop, but it was Sikelianos who became enamored with the man after their numerous encounters before the occupation. Sikelianos' confidence in someone he deemed an extraordinary and properly placed leader of the church led him to write a short essay in the era's most popular literary journal, *Nea Estia* in June 1941. In this essay, the poet expresses his belief that Damaskinos was both aware of the imposing tasks facing him and capable of dealing with them. The essay is worth citing because it gives one a sense of the unrealistic expectations facing the cleric at the outset of his prelacy.

To begin, the author describes the exceptional characteristics of the man whom he deemed imbued with the Doric spirit. Speaking to his exceptional nature he states, "exactly as the genuine poet so the true hierarch is born, not made, and that before all others he is summoned by his own nature to his harsh destiny, inspired both by God and

the world.”⁴⁶⁸ In reference to his time in the monastery, Sikelianos describes, influenced by their conversations, the impact the internal exile had on the cleric. Specifically, the experience only strengthened the man because of his fortitude and will. “The internal and simultaneously external man combined and found a balance so miraculously deep within him, so that the same reasons which usually become cause for internal dichotomy, would work for him like living strands of the fabric of his faith, thoughts, feelings, and deeply active willpower.” From these passages, one understands that, according to the author, Damaskinos is uniquely qualified to play an exceptional role in society as head of the church.

In addition to his exceptional personality, his previous work in Corinth had provided him with exceptional experience to deal with a crisis of considerable magnitude. “We all recognize this Christian personality from the famous brilliance of his shining and truly heroic social activity after the earthquakes of Corinth.” He goes on to discuss how this exceptional energy placed him a position to face even greater crises. “However, few imagined at that time the roots of the genuinely internal dynamism from which originated this activity, as one shining manifestation of the organic nucleus of life and faith which make up the depth and weight of the large persona.”⁴⁶⁹ His gravitas and energy referred to here caught the attention of his contemporaries, friends, and even opponents. His strength of will even made an impression on the occupation authorities, who preferred not to cross him in their dealings; if nothing else, they had a grudging respect for his courage and willingness to sacrifice himself for the nation.

⁴⁶⁸ Angelos Sikelianos, “O Dorieas Prothierarchis (the Doric Prelate),” *Nea Estia* (July 1, 1941): 520-522. Cited in Kollias, 81.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 81-2.

Despite the enormity of his task, Damaskinos' abilities convinced Sikelianos that he possessed the vision and strength to overcome the crisis. He also pointed to cosmic and national tradition as precedent. "Surrounded not only by the authority of centuries of tradition, but especially by his very own Doric creative ethic, in which along with historical circumstances, we are sure that he will proceed firmly toward the current difficult destiny."⁴⁷⁰ Moreover, he believes that Damaskinos' special gifts will allow him to construct this social cause against the problems facing the nation. "We are certain that by marshalling all the gifts of his personality, his courage, faith, and determination will be able to prioritize in the organization of the ethical and, at the same time, material solidarity of our current social demands."⁴⁷¹ He also believes that his own efforts, which may include sacrificing himself, will instill confidence and provide a model for other members of the national community, even convinced that he embodies the hierarch's apostolic tradition as a disciple of Christ. "He is consumed with the sentiment of renewal which, today, he is called upon to produce all around him, to be able to move in the people's conscience the living Jesus, in a way that has never happened in Greece until today." His example led the author to invoke the words of Jesus to describe the type of self-sacrifice the new archbishop demanded of himself and the nation. "[He wants] to inspire in all of us, like a social and national sign, the very words of Christ to his disciples: Learn from me, that is, learn from me myself, learn from my own example that my yoke is good and the burden light."⁴⁷² He concludes by referencing the hierarch's enthronement speech of July 5, 1941, which gives Sikelianos so much confidence as well as a clear picture of Damaskinos' vision for the church's role in the nation during this

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

period of crisis. “The weight of the organization of the Church falls completely in the midst of the difficult social problems that encircle us today.”⁴⁷³

From these few passages, we see that Sikelianos and those who hold out hope for Damaskinos expect the impossible. Though he possessed many of the traits described in the essay, he lacked the resources necessary to make the type of impact described above. One thing, though, that encapsulated Damaskinos’ expectations both of the church and the population was the type of self-sacrifice that circumstances demanded.

Unfortunately, people continued to hold Damaskinos to these unrealistic expectations throughout the occupation and later during his regency in the period that followed. While Sikelianos gave artistic expression to these expectations in this powerful essay, other contemporaries evaluating his efforts, mostly with the advantage of hindsight, provide a less flattering image of his efforts, and to a lesser extent, those of the church during the period.

George Theotokas, in his diary, also captured the enthusiasm some members of Athenian society regarded the newly appointed hierarch. On July 22, 1942, only days after his enthronement, Theotokas noted a meeting he had with Konstantinos Tsatsos, a close friend and collaborator of Damaskinos. According to Theotokas, Tsatsos made the following prediction. “The only solution is the Damaskinos solution. The metropolitan Damaskinos should take control of the situation, working with young, active, and moral individuals (basically, Kostakis).”⁴⁷⁴ The author wryly penned his response to Tsatsos’ enthusiasm. “All these things intertwined with Neo-Kantian philosophy, Palamic

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ George Theotokas, *Tetradia Imerologiou*, 269.

literature, and legal flair.”⁴⁷⁵ Tsatsos’ musings led Theotokas to conclude the following: “He is not saying anything, but he says it so well.”⁴⁷⁶ Despite his pessimism, the efforts of Damaskinos to procure a steady food supply and his denunciations of Bulgarian policies gave his young friend Tsatsos confidence. This confidence led many Greeks to share his enthusiasm.

Christos Christidis, a harsh critic of Damaskinos and the church during the war, also noted the enthusiasm segments of Greek society had of the archbishop, especially those close to him. For instance, he recorded a conversation he has with the Sikelianos family on July 26, 1941. He asks the family about the efforts of the archbishop to procure food for the population. Anna responded by saying: “He has his hands tied because he does not have money.”⁴⁷⁷ She articulates the confidence that his efforts instilled in many in high Athenian society and, likely, others in the capital. Her response, however, led him to make the follow comment in his diary. “What are his promises, then, based on?”⁴⁷⁸ His response articulates the fact that Damaskinos failed to provide food, but he never promised to solve the crisis, only that he would work to find a solution.

His successful efforts to save the lives of Greeks slated for execution won him considerable acclaim, and won him the support of the Greek people, even by his critics. His reputation as an active defender of the innocent led many to praise his efforts both in Greece and abroad. On May 14, 1943, the Consular General of the US in Istanbul, citing a number of Greeks fleeing to Turkey, stated the following about the archbishop’s efforts.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Christidis, 107.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

“Damaskinos is recognized as the chief of the church and when Altenburg said that he was, he replied that then he would continue to act in that capacity.”⁴⁷⁹ The statement indicates that popular opinion cared little for the fact that Damaskinos owed his throne to Tsolakoglou and his German patrons. The consular continues: “This probably meant what most people now are saying, that the Metropolitan is particularly active in intervening on behalf of Greeks arrested for sabotage or as hostages to save them from being shot. He is a strong man...”⁴⁸⁰ His determined effort to save the lives of Greeks slated for execution won him the respect and admiration of the population. People knew that they could go to him for help, despite the ultimate result of his efforts.

In a later report, the consulate general cited the account of yet another Greek refugee: “Archbishop Damaskinos is said to have won widespread approval and support because of the courage and wisdom he has shown in dealing with the enemy.”⁴⁸¹ This report indicates that people, in some circles, admire his cautious and, to some extent, successful dealings with the occupation authorities. The author concludes the following about the impact his efforts had on his future: “He has proved to be a man of great strength and is considered by some as a political leader whose services may be of great value in some emergency.”⁴⁸² People acknowledged that his role was greater than that of a traditional cleric. It was, rather, that of a major political leader.

As was the case of the railway car in Corinth in 1928, the office of the archbishop became a symbol of hope that people--especially those fearing the execution of their loved ones—continued to turn to. For instance, Ioanna Tsatsou notes in her diary on May

⁴⁷⁹ RDSRIAG 868.00/ 1232 Berry Report May 14, 1943.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ RDSRIAG 868.00/1260 Berry to Secretary of State.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

10, 1943: “The office filled with the desperate. Women were lamenting, women were crying quietly, and men were standing silently, as if they were statues. They had executed people in the morning.”⁴⁸³ She described the scene in the archbishop’s office. They wanted to see the archbishop, likely for comfort and support. Damaskinos agreed to see them, and, according to Tsatsou, the cleric’s words appeared to comfort the people that day. “I do not remember what he told them; something about the bedrock of the freedom of the homeland. I remember, even more [than his words], the image: the woman at his feet, unguardedly and slowly standing up, her eyes drying, and saying: ‘What values does death have..let Greece live.’”⁴⁸⁴ Even if her diary entry exaggerates the impact his words had on these family members, no doubt they viewed his office as a symbol of hope.

Later in her diary, Ioanna Tsatsou described the scene in the archbishop’s office in the late summer of 1943, after a successful act of sabotage destroyed a number of railway cars in Kalithea that captured popular expectations of Damaskinos. On August 28, 1943 she reports: “Tragic Hours. Whoever has family members in prison congregated in the archbishop’s office. Their despair, like a buzz, seeps from the walls, the windows, the doors. It is also choking us.”⁴⁸⁵ The following day she reports: “Crowds flooded the environs of the archbishop’s office all the way to the front steps.”⁴⁸⁶ Two days later she reported the efforts of the archbishop and the scene in his office. “The Despoti made all the efforts, all the steps, in order to avoid the reprisals. He saw Neubacher, who he tried to explain to, asked him to intervene. He also sent a lively plea

⁴⁸³ Tsatsou, 96.

⁴⁸⁴ Tsatsou, 97.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, 111.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

to general Speidel. Both yesterday and today, the archbishop saw people from morning until night.”⁴⁸⁷ When his efforts contributed to general Speidel’s decision to delay the executions, Tsatsou noted the change in mood and the appreciation of the population. On September 6 she reports: “The gratitude of the population spilled over. The archbishop’s office, from the beginning, was full of people. When the Despoti entered, everyone kneeled.”⁴⁸⁸ The author captures the hope and appreciation the population had for the archbishop, whom they considered the most important moral leader in the capital. Knowing that the legitimate government remained abroad, this event, more than any other single event, proved the benefits of the close relationship he had with the occupation authorities.

Another close friend and collaborator of the archbishop, Konstantinos Tsatsos, wrote a positive, insightful analysis of the archbishop and his relationship with both the population and the occupation authorities. He highlights the courage and resolve Damaskinos demonstrated during his tenure as archbishop during the occupation. In his comparison with his chief rival, Chrysanthos, Tsatsos concludes that Chrysanthos refused to make concessions to the Germans and their Greek allies, while Damaskinos decided to cooperate with Tsolakoglou and his patrons in order to fulfill his role as ethnarch.⁴⁸⁹ For instance, he made the following comment about the difference in attitude toward the new first occupation prime minister: “Chrysanthos, implacable, refused to swear in Tsolakoglou, refused to communicate with the occupier. Damaskinos worked with Tsolakoglou and agreed to take his position with his assistance.”⁴⁹⁰ For Tsatsos,

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, 112.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Konstantinos Tsatsos, *Logodosia mias Zois* (Athens: Ekdoseis Fylon, 2000), 314.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

Damaskinos took advantage of his position as hierarch, while his predecessor did not want others to view him as a collaborator. “The first one left in order to avoid being tarnished for having a relationship with the occupation authorities. The second one decided to turn the office of the archbishop into the central organ of survival and resistance of the people.”⁴⁹¹ For Tsatsos, Damaskinos could both maintain relations with the occupation authorities and resist their policies in a way that did not threaten them directly. This indirect form of resistance will receive further attention later.

He established a reputation as a powerful and active defender of the nation, and possessed a commanding presence that even the Germans respected. Damaskinos’ reputation led Tsatsos to make the following analogy: “He resembled the ethnarchs of the Ottoman period.”⁴⁹² He goes on to discuss his commanding presence. “His gravitas was such among the population that the occupation authorities took notice of him and sought good relations with him.”⁴⁹³ Evidence of their respect included their unwillingness to act on their correct suspicions that he communicated with the Greek government in exile and British SOE and other agents until very late in the war. “The Germans, of course, suspected him [of having contact with their enemies], and that is why, when things became more difficult for them, [they] placed him under house arrest.”⁴⁹⁴

Popular response at his funeral, according to Tsatsos, spoke volumes about perceptions of Damaskinos’ work during the occupation. In comparing the funeral of Chrysanthos and Damaskinos, which took place within a matter of months of each other,

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

one quickly realized that the path Damaskinos chose, despite its consequences, won him the respect and love of many of his spiritual flock. In contrast, Chrysanthos' noble yet less pragmatic stance did not engender the same type of reaction, at least in the way the population expressed their grief at his funeral. "The population followed both funerals. However, it was apparent at the funeral of Damaskinos that the population wept for the person who shielded them from the famine and the persecutions during the black days of the occupation."⁴⁹⁵ Here we see that the population mourned the death of an individual they knew worked toward ensuring their safety, despite the many cases when he failed. This event described the most important role Damaskinos played during the occupation, a symbol of hope and salvation. He lacked the resources to provide for everyone, but all knew that he continued to struggle despite the numerous setbacks he faced during the occupation.

Despite showering Damaskinos with considerable praise, the author pointed out that the hierarch could have done more during the trial of Ioannis Rallis at the end of the war. "I confess that I wish he had been stronger during the trial of Rallis, who, in my opinion, served the land patriotically and contributed to preventing the victory of communism before the British arrived in Athens."⁴⁹⁶ Damaskinos could not, under the circumstances, take a firmer stance because of the explosive political situation at the time. He understood that as Regent, he needed to remain above the proceeding in and avoid taking a particular side. This neutral stance taken during the trials won him the

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 311.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 315.

disdain of many on the right.⁴⁹⁷ Tsatsos' critique pales in comparison to others on the right during the immediate post occupation period.

Despite his best efforts, the hierarch did not remain beyond reproach. His questionable restoration, failure to procure food for the population, and inability to prevent the civil war that followed led some to attack his efforts. In addition, his deep involvement in political affairs led some to question his motivations, though that particular issue will receive further attention later. Much of the criticism he received came from Greek conservatives. For instance, Nikos Antonakeas criticized Damaskinos and the hierarchy, especially those that remained in the capital, for failing to fulfill their apostolic mission. Others, such as Christos Christidis, believed that Damaskinos did not have the personality or mindset to fulfill the ethnarchic role expected of him.

As mentioned in chapter three, many disliked the decision made by the Tsolakoglou government to dethrone Chrysanthos and replace him with Damaskinos, a person the government in exile considered an imposter and tool of the Germans early in the occupation. His growing popularity and strength on the one hand, and growing concerns over the growth and power of EAM-ELAS eventually forced King George II and his government accept Damaskinos' rise as a *fait accompli*. In addition, Nikos Antonakeas expressed the unpopularity of Damaskinos among many on the right after his enthronement in July 1941. He accused the hierarchy of plotting with the Germans to dethrone the legitimate archbishop, Chrysanthos. This criticism, in his eyes, reflects a larger dereliction of duty by the clerics during this period of crisis. "Unfortunately, the majority of the hierarchs were not worthy of their holy tradition. Excluding two or three enlightened exceptions, the majority of the hierarchs from the provinces preferred to

remain far from the pain and misfortune of their brothers in Christ and far from their religious and national mission.”⁴⁹⁸ There is evidence that a number of hierarchs remained in the capital for the duration of the war, but the Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia and Thrace forced some of them to relocate in the capital or in Thessaloniki.

A more interesting and detailed criticism came from a close friend of Archbishop Chrysanthos and a collaborator of Damaskinos, Christos Christidis. Christidis, during the war, worked in the office of the archbishop, first under Chrysanthos and later under Damaskinos. During much of the occupation, he served as a member of the central committee of EOHA. From the outset, he was opposed to Damaskinos, who he felt usurped the throne from Chrysanthos. However, his greatest criticism of Damaskinos was his failure to fulfill his ethnarchic duty when he failed to prevent a civil war from breaking out at the end of the war. Among the factors that contributed to his failure, according to the author, were his lack of political skill, overestimation of his importance, and empty promises that left many bitter.

Christidis possessed a keen understanding of the role the church played in periods of crisis, and viewed the war as just such a period. In the introduction to his memoir, he provides a succinct description of this role. “From the fifteenth century, when the Ottomans enslaved the Romans, a centuries-old tradition emerged, a centuries-old tradition: when the Greek nation ceases to have its own political leadership or when it exists but cannot wield its leadership role, the church takes its place.”⁴⁹⁹ Later he explains why the occupation resembled such a period in the nation’s history. “When, in 1941, the political leadership was forced to flee Greece and the enemy occupation began,

⁴⁹⁸ Nikos Antonakeas. *Fos eis ton Skotos tis Katohis (Illuminating the Darkness of the Occupation)* (Athens, 1947), 33-34.

⁴⁹⁹ Christidis, xlv.

the population gave little regard to the well-intentioned generals and other gentlemen, who ruled with the blessing of the occupiers, and instead asked, without hesitation, refuge and support from its church.”⁵⁰⁰ He goes on to explain, from his viewpoint, the main goal of the ethnarch during the occupation, i.e. maintaining the unity of the state.

After laying out this thoughtful definition of the role of the church and, specifically, its leader, he explains why Damaskinos failed to meet his expectations. He refuses to accept the hagiographic image of the hierarch portrayed by Venezis and others. Damaskinos, according to Christidis, failed to keep the nation united. Using the same nautical metaphor the hierarch frequently used to describe his role during the period, the author explains the reasons for his failure: “The main obligation [of the captain] was to protect the ship, to prevent it from crashing against the rocks. He is also obligated to work toward protecting the passengers and the crew. And, when necessary, he should maintain order.”⁵⁰¹ According to these criteria, the hierarch failed. The author, however, fails to acknowledge that neither Damaskinos nor any other individual in Greece possessed the power to prevent the civil war that erupted after the occupation. Damaskinos attempted to ameliorate the conditions in the country by working to procure food, shelter, and other necessities to the beleaguered population by working with the occupation authorities and through his organization EOHA, for two reasons: because it was his task as national leader to protect the population and because he knew, as he articulated to the Germans throughout the occupation, that starving and persecuting a population usually leads it to drastic measures.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid, xlv-xlvi.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, xlviii.

Damaskinos' shortcoming, Christidis explains, played an important role in his failure to prevent the disastrous civil war that followed the occupation. "Damaskinos, who only had second-rate political ability, lacked the great moral attributes which circumstances required of the head of the Greek church during a period of foreign rule. [For these reasons] a genuine Ethnarch and Pilot could not emerge."⁵⁰² For Christidis, this head of the church also lacked the insight expected of a church leader during such a critical period in the nation's history. "Damaskinos could not lead, because his moral stature was not above that of a leader of a small political party."⁵⁰³ He cites a plan developed by Damaskinos and his political collaborators to make him regent at the end of the war as an example of his shortsightedness. In addition to the hierarch's narrow-minded perspective, Christidis believed that Damaskinos made promises he could not keep. For instance, when the hierarch purportedly boasted that he could feed the population. No evidence exists that he made such open claims in public. He may have privately made such claims, but nowhere in the press or in a public forum did he make such claims. One, therefore, questions the type of evidence the author used to make such criticisms. Also, one wonders who in Greece's political history had the type of moral courage and insight needed to fulfill such a role.

Despite all his criticism, Christidis admired his tireless effort and success in saving the lives of Greeks slated for execution. For instance, he made the following comment about his effort: "It is justified to acknowledge that Archbishop Damaskinos showed untiring activity, trying to save young brave men or the misfortunate from the

⁵⁰² Ibid, 537.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

firing squad, who were endangered by the brutality of the occupation authorities.”⁵⁰⁴ Later, he gives a number of examples of successful efforts made by the archbishop including the aforementioned Kalithea incident of August 1943. Damaskinos’ commanding presence and courage also made an impression on the author and others at the time. “Damaskinos, unequivocally, had a commanding presence, which even made an impression on the Italians and the Germans. He also had courage, knowing deep down that the [Axis] would not dare bother him.”⁵⁰⁵ He concludes, however, that while his efforts deserve attention, he failed the ultimate test, to prevent the country from descending into civil war. “More than anything else, the main obligation of the ethnarch, who was the archbishop of Greece during the occupation, was to lead and to prevent a civil war.”⁵⁰⁶

Christidis makes a number of important observations about the role of the exarch and the unrealistically high expectations of Damaskinos. A number of Christidis’ conclusions about popular expectations shed light on the growing popularity and hagiographic image of Damaskinos at the end of the war. His early death, no doubt, contributed to his legend. The fact, however, that the church lacked the funds and military might necessary to prevent the civil war that erupted after the occupation does not seem to play a role in the eyes of the author. In short, his shortcomings may have prevented him from accomplishing certain tasks, but the church’s lack of resources, the longstanding social and political problems plaguing the country (which were exacerbated by the brutality and devastation of the occupation), and the goals for the country of

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid, xlvi.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, 164.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 537.

Greece's powerful patron, Great Britain, played a far more important role in determining the outcome.

Expectations of the Church, best articulated by Sikelianos and Christidis, were not based in reality. The Church, despite its influence, lacked the resources to force the Axis to halt their destructive reprisal policy. As for Tsolakoglou and his successors, the church leadership led by Damaskinos was far too wise to tie the institution's fate to that of the quisling governments. However, both sides understood that they needed to work together to ameliorate the horrible conditions the population faced during the period. As for the Axis authorities, they never had the full support of the church in their war against communism neither in Greece nor abroad, but they utilized their position of power to gain the church's cooperation in their effort to reduce the number of attacks on their forces in the country. A more detailed analysis of the negotiations between the Axis authorities and the Church will occur in the following chapter.

Chapter VI

The Fruits of Their Labor: Shielding the Population from Axis Excesses

Led by Damaskinos, Metropolitan of Kydonia and Apokoronis Agathangelos Ksirouhakis, and Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Gennadios Alexiadis, the church hierarchy hoped to utilize the influence they gained with the Axis authorities to gain concessions, primarily to protect the population from the brutalities of foreign rule. In particular, there was emphasis placed on assisting those incarcerated by the Germans and Italians. From the beginning of the occupation, in particular in Crete, the Axis began using the policy of taking hostages and executing them for acts of sabotage committed against their forces. Thus, from as early as June 1941, the hierarchy became deeply involved in rescuing these innocent citizens from being victimized. The Axis, especially as it became clear that victory in the east became less and less likely, began freeing prisoners and permitting the Church to provide basic goods and spiritual guidance to the prisoners. In return, the Germans demanded that the church use its influence to discourage the population from committing acts of sabotage through the publication of encyclicals and pleas in the press to desist from such activity. Although these clerics disliked their use as tools by the Germans, many felt that had little choice. Another consequence of the frequent contact between the Church leadership and the Axis was the growing political influence of hierarchs, especially Archbishop Damaskinos. However, to label the institution collaborationist for acquiescing to German demands and its involvement in political affairs fails to appreciate the reality of the situation and the limits of their willingness to cooperate with the occupation authorities.

While Damaskinos received the most attention by his contemporaries and later scholars because of his position in Athens, Metropolitan of Apokoronis and Kydonia Agathangelos Ksirouhakis established a cordial relationship with German military leaders in Crete. As the president of several popular committees, initially in the region of Hania, and then elsewhere, he expanded his influence to the rest of German-occupied Crete in the later years of the occupation, and caused local authorities to look to him as an important leader on the island. Due to its strategic importance, German diplomatic personnel had little power on the island, forcing anyone hoping to influence German policy to deal directly with the commander of German forces and his subordinates. Realizing the uniqueness of the situation, Agathangelos spent much of the occupation convincing the occupation authorities to refrain from the brutal excesses that defined the Wehrmacht's occupation of the island. Unlike the situation in Athens, circumstances in Crete allowed German military personnel to force Cretan leaders, led by Agathangelos, to make more difficult concessions. For instance, the prelate agreed to publish a series of encyclicals preaching obedience to the occupation authorities, in hopes of ending German excesses from the beginning of the occupation. On the surface, one could view these as acts of collaboration, but in the context of the situation and the relationship established between Agathangelos and the resistance movements, one can see that necessity rather than personal gain motivated his actions. In return, the Germans finally agreed to spare the lives of a few citizens or on occasion to cease a reprisal operation. As with Damaskinos, his actions saved fewer than he wanted, but these small victories attest to his determination to fulfill his role of custodian of the faithful. In short, faced with the dire circumstances of the island in the wake of the battle of Crete, Agathangelos

established a working relationship with the Germans, like Damaskinos on the mainland, to minimize the ugly aspects of the occupation as much as possible under such onerous circumstances.

Understanding the development of the relationship between Agathangelos and the German authorities, however, requires some background information about the events that influenced Germany's exceptionally harsh treatment of the population at the beginning of the occupation. A brief summary of the battle of Crete and its consequences for the local population deserves attention because of the impact it had on the Metropolitan's role during the period. After facing overwhelming odds in April 1941, Greek and British forces retreated to Crete in hopes of continuing the struggle against the Axis for the duration of the war. Hitler and his generals decided that they needed to capture the island to protect their southern flank for the upcoming Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union planned for June. Hoping to take advantage of their air superiority and optimistic about the success of a large airborne invasion, they hoped to quickly gain control of the island. Hitler and the Wehrmacht decided to launch Operation Mercury, a large-scale airborne invasion of the island on May 20, 1941. For numerous reasons including poor intelligence and reconnaissance, and bad luck, many of the German troops participating in the battle in the initial stage lost their lives. By the end of the ten-day battle, the Germans had lost between 5,000-7,000 men.⁵⁰⁷ The unexpected number of casualties led the German military to abandon the use of large scale airborne operations for the rest of the war.⁵⁰⁸ More importantly for the Cretan population, German

⁵⁰⁷ Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 229-30.

⁵⁰⁸ According to General Kurt Student's biographer, Hitler stated that the airborne invasion of Crete would be the last such invasion undertaken.

leaders wanted to place the blame for the high casualty rate on the least significant factor, the participation of a small number of local civilians in the conflict.⁵⁰⁹ According to a recent study of the battle, German authorities concluded that the local population accounted for a minimal number of German casualties, less than one hundred men.⁵¹⁰ Despite the actual impact of their participation, military leaders viewed this development as a breach of the rules of war. In response, the German authorities launched an aggressive reprisal campaign against the local population that lasted until September 1941.⁵¹¹ According to numerous accounts, casualties from this brutal campaign cost the lives of between 1,200-2,000 Cretan civilians.⁵¹² Of these, about two hundred of the victims went on trial.⁵¹³ Agathangelos headed a series of popular committees committed to ending the German reprisal campaign.

Born Angelos Ksirouhakis in Souri, Crete, near Hania in May 1872, our hero for this part of the occupation attended primary and secondary school near his hometown before his ordination as a deacon in 1894.⁵¹⁴ From the completion of his studies until 1900, he held a number of teaching and administrative positions at several nearby schools.⁵¹⁵ According to a biographer, he also fought in the Cretan rebellion of 1896 (1896-1898), where he earned the moniker ‘the Little Blond Deacon.’⁵¹⁶ After the war he received a scholarship from the then Cretan government to study at the Theological

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., G. C. Kiriakopoulos, *The Nazi Occupation of Crete, 1941-1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 17-50.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Stephanos Mylonakis, *O Mitropolitis Kydonias kai Apokoronou, Agathangelos Ksirouhakis 1872-1948; Ekklesia Kritis : Germaniki Katohi 1941-1945 (Metropolitan of Kydonia and Apokoronis Agathangelos Ksirouhakis 1872-1948; the Church of Crete 1941-1945)* (Hania, Crete: K. Maridakis, 1948), 5.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

School of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem. Upon completing his studies, his career included posts in Italy and Austria, where he continued his education and received a number of degrees. His time in Vienna, where he became proficient in German, proved critical during his tenure as bishop of Kydonia and Apokoronis during the war.⁵¹⁷ No doubt, his ability to communicate with the occupation authorities in their native tongue, coupled with his influential status in his ecclesiastical see, contributed to his becoming the central intermediary between the occupation authorities and the population on the island. This position allowed him to travel throughout the German-controlled regions of the island to resolve problems between the occupation authorities and the local population.

When the Germans began pursuing their reprisal policy in June 1941 against the population, expectedly, he became a leading figure in discussions with the occupation authorities. Faced with an enraged and powerful enemy occupier, Agathangelos and a group of prominent Haniotes formed a committee to negotiate the end of this wonton destruction wrought by the Germans in the form of mass executions and the destruction of villages throughout the island in retaliation for this perceived ‘injustice.’⁵¹⁸ These negotiations established him in the eyes of the local population and the German occupation authorities as the spokesman for the island.⁵¹⁹ Like Damaskinos in Athens, he understood that the Church remained the only traditional institution that wielded any influence over the local population. Despite his attempt to tread the fine line between cooperation and collaboration, the desperate circumstances thrust upon Agathangelos forced him to make unpopular concessions to the military authorities during these negotiations to terminate the reprisal policy. These concessions, however, were made in

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 7-8.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 120, Sanoudakis, 97-98, Kavvos, 61.

⁵¹⁹ Mylonakis, 140-141.

order to save the lives of his flock rather than for any political or ideological reasons. Among the most difficult remained the publication of a series of encyclicals calling for the obedience of the population to the occupation authorities, the surrendering of any weapons, or Allied soldiers they were harboring. With this context in mind, one can evaluate the efforts of the metropolitan and his allies to procure peace with the Germans.

Ending the reprisal expeditions of the Germans, therefore, became the critical issue weighing on the mind of Agathangelos and the other Cretan elites at the outset of the occupation. Fearful both of the long-term consequences of this devastating policy and wanting to establish a *modus vivendi* with the occupation authorities, the committee began negotiating possible terms for a general amnesty. Toward that goal these individuals formed a popular committee on June 11, 1941, ten days after the cessation of hostilities.⁵²⁰ Two weeks later they met with Lieutenant Vele to discuss the possible terms for a general amnesty. The committee argued that the population had the right to fight to defend their land. Vele responded by stating that he planned to investigate the matter, but nothing came of this initial effort.⁵²¹ Determined to accomplish their goal, the committee decided to see Vele's superior, Lt. Col. Glucke about the matter. This time, however, the committee attempted a new tack when it attempted to appeal to the German officer's sense of history. Agathangelos told him that the Germans should follow the examples of Alexander the Great and Mehmet II. Referencing the example of the Ottoman sultan who conquered Constantinople in 1453 is of particular interest. The metropolitan stated that after allowing them to pillage the city, Mehmet told them to put an end to such acts and treat the population with respect. Agathangelos also referenced

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 120, Sanoudakis, 97-98, Kavvos, 63-72.

⁵²¹ Mylonakis, 121.

the Conqueror's policy of appointing Gennadios Scholarios as ethnarch.⁵²² Despite this change in tact, the German seemed unmoved. He informed the committee that "the executions would continue because the account has not been settled."⁵²³ In addition, a decision regarding a general amnesty required the approval of the new commander of German forces in Crete, General Andrae, who would arrive in July.

Frustrated by their inability to negotiate an armistice, the committee looked forward to their meeting with the general. Nine days after his arrival in Hania on July 18, General Andrae met with the committee to discuss the matter of the amnesty.⁵²⁴ Andrae, whose superiors gave him a series of tasks to strengthen the defenses of the island, wanted to end the continued passive resistance of the local population. For this reason, he agreed to meet with the committee. At the start of the meeting he engaged in a long dialogue praising the fighting spirit of the Cretans, but critical of the decision of the civilian population to fight against the Germans. He also informed the committee that he expected them to ensure that the population obeys the occupation authorities, and in return, the Germans would ensure the wellbeing of the population. However, if the population refused to obey, the Germans intended to respond accordingly.⁵²⁵ He made it clear that the committee needed to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring the passivity of the population. Only then would he consider a general amnesty seriously. In response, the committee sent a letter that included a draft letter to the population calling for its obedience to the occupation authorities. German authorities asked the committee to revise the statement with a few passages that requested overt subservience to the

⁵²² Ibid., 122.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Mylonakis, 122-124, Kiriakopoulos, 32, Kavvos, 97-98.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

occupation authorities. Andrae, however, decided the document, in its whole, lacked value.⁵²⁶ Agathangelos and his comrades made no further progress toward a general amnesty for over a month. On August 31, the committee sent the Germans yet another letter outlining the legal justification for the participation of Cretans in the battle of Crete, which included reference to a series of decrees passed by the Greek government since the previous October that allowed Greek civilians to fight as members of the equivalent of a national guard. The month ended, however, without any further progress toward a general amnesty.⁵²⁷

September saw a plethora of activity by Greek officials including Agathangelos, Logothetopoulos, and Governor General of Crete Louloukakis. These efforts finally led to a temporary halt of the mass executions committed by the German military. Negotiations were tense. First, the committee sent a telegraph to Tsolakoglou asking for his intervention on behalf of the Cretan population.⁵²⁸ Agathangelos then met with Logothetopoulos during his visit to the island on September 10. Agathangelos explained the seriousness of the situation and requested that he intervene on behalf of the population.⁵²⁹ Success finally came when pressure from the Governor General of Crete, Louloukakis, Vice Premier Logothetopoulos, and the committee convinced the Germans to make two important concessions in the second week of September: the cessation of the

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 125, Sanoudakis, 100.

⁵²⁷ Mylonakis, 126

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ There is some debate about the importance of Agathangelos' contribution to general Andrae's decision. According to Kiriakopoulos and Beevor, Andrae wanted to declare an amnesty in order to discourage the growth of resistance bands and, hopefully, lead to their dissolution. However, he did not want to approach the committee because the population may see it as a sign of weakness. Thus, when Logothetopoulos arrived in Crete, he used the meeting between Logothetopoulos and the committee as an excuse to call for the armistice. 1,800 guns, of which, 70% were old and the rest defective. Kavvos, 71-2, Mylonakis, 122-124, Sanoudakis, 100-1, Kiriakopoulos, 47-8.

execution of civilians without trial, and the declaration of a general amnesty.⁵³⁰ It must be noted, however, that Andrae himself was under pressure to improve the island's defenses using the resources available to him, which meant that he needed to ensure the relative passivity of the population. Therefore, each side wanted an armistice. Andrae's concerns led him to ask the committee led by Agathangelos to publish an encyclical requesting the Cretan population surrender their arms and any British soldiers they are harboring.⁵³¹ Considering their experience at the beginning of the war, the Cretan population failed to cooperate with the Axis authorities. Despite the initial failures of Agathangelos and his committee to procure an agreement from the Germans in the summer of 1941, his leadership reflects the new reality of life in Greece and the role expected of the hierarchy. As with his colleague in Athens, Cretan political leaders allowed Agathangelos to take the initiative in these critical and sensitive discussions with the German occupation authorities.

The desperate state of affairs, the terroristic policies of the Nazis, and the weaknesses of the population in light of the overwhelming military might of the occupation authorities forced Agathangelos to rethink his options. He and his allies knew that their main priorities remained the cessation of this brutal reprisal policy.

Agathangelos articulated the state of affairs in a conversation he held with Logothetopoulos during the latter's visit to the island at the beginning of September 1941. The hierarch understood that his task remained to preserve the peace between the Axis and the population, because few alternatives presented themselves. For instance, referring to the reason for the population to bend to the will of the conqueror, he argued:

⁵³⁰ Mylonakis, 131-134.

⁵³¹ Sanoudakis, 102-104, Mylonakis, 133-135.

If the current events took place fifty years ago, you would be required, if you wanted to communicate with us, to come to the White Mountains, which you see across from us, because, then, the population could use them as a military weapon, as an effective means of war against the military foe. Unfortunately today, airplanes, machine guns and the other fearful weapons of the occupier do not permit us to use the White Mountains. This leaves us only one path, today at least, the salvation of the unjustly treated population discovered, which has been demonstrated, after the occupation, obedience and neutrality, which the conqueror demands.⁵³²

His keen understanding of the island's history indicates that open opposition that included armed resistance, while heroic, cannot be justified based on the recent exposure to German policies on the island. His pragmatism won the support of much of the population throughout the war, as evidenced by EAM in Cretan branch's willingness to cooperate with the hierarchy late in the war to avert the type of reprisals the population came to expect from the Germans.⁵³³

Axis authorities willingly made other concessions to these clerics in an effort to establish an amicable working relationship and, most importantly, their cooperation in pacifying the population. The Germans wanted to keep the population passive and needed workers to improve military installations. These tasks required the cooperation of local elites, especially the clergy. In return for the general amnesty and making other concessions the Germans hoped that the influence of pleas by the island's leadership, led by the church could, at least, reduce the number of acts of sabotage against their forces. They understood that the prelates possessed two important attributes that they viewed necessary in their effort to maintain relative order in a country that had a government in name only: legitimacy and flexibility. The fact that Agathangelos and his colleagues willingly made these concessions indicated that both parties had something to gain.

⁵³² Ibid. 130.

⁵³³ Mylonakis, 193-194.

While working with few resources, the military authorities did not want the open opposition of the church in light of the problems mentioned above.

One of the most pressing issues that concerned Damaskinos and his colleagues was the imprisonment and execution of innocent Greek citizens for acts of sabotage committed against the occupation authorities. Typically, hierarchs met with the occupation authorities frequently throughout the occupation to plead with them to rescind the execution order for a particular individual or group. Damaskinos and his colleagues met with more success with the Italian occupation authorities, whom the population considered as being more humane than the Germans. While German officials made fewer concessions, they permitted the ecclesiastical authorities the right to provide basic spiritual and material needs to the prisoners and, on occasion, agreed to stay an order of execution. These concessions may seem small, but were significant both because they gave a glimmer of hope to the relatives of the prisoners and because they symbolized to the population that the hierarchy intended to work incessantly to ameliorate conditions for their loved ones. Examining the response of Agathangelos in Crete, Damaskinos in Athens, and Gennadios in Thessaloniki will help paint a general picture of the nature of these Axis concessions and the nature of the relationship between the Axis and the Greek church during the period under consideration.

A striking example of the type of negotiations between the Germans and the hierarch took place in the summer of 1942, less than a year since general Andrae declared the general amnesty. The setting, however, was Iraklion and its environs. Frustrated by the decision of a few fellow Cretans to collaborate with the Germans, a group of

guerillas assassinated them.⁵³⁴ Hoping to use the opportunity to turn the country against individuals committing such acts, thus assuring the safety of other collaborators, as well as terrorizing the population into submission, the Germans threatened to execute twelve hostages if future collaborators suffered the same fate as their deceased brethren.⁵³⁵ Fearing that this could spark a renewal of the previous year's reprisal policies, a group of prominent Greeks led by Agathangelos published an encyclical condemning disobedience to the occupation authorities.⁵³⁶ General Andrae demanded that Agathangelos personally publish another encyclical four days later condemning assassinations and calling for obedience to the occupation authorities, and he complied.⁵³⁷ However, the real crisis came after a group of Greeks and Allied soldiers successfully damaged German aircraft and the Iraklion airfield on the night of June 13-14, 1942.⁵³⁸ This act of sabotage led the local German commander to execute fifty hostages in retaliation.⁵³⁹ Fearing the worst, Agathangelos sent a letter in German to the local commander begging him to refrain from killing any other Cretans from the area.⁵⁴⁰ Apparently this worked.⁵⁴¹ This concession appears small, but it was of huge psychological significance for a population that had witnessed firsthand the Nazi policy of summary execution the previous summer. Also, at this time the outcome of the war appeared bleak. Such a respite, therefore, must have been a sign of relief for the population.

The text of these encyclicals reinforced the message in Agathangelos' conversation with Logothetopoulos the previous summer, though in more subtle terms:

⁵³⁴ Mylonakis, 161.

⁵³⁵ Kavvos, 208.

⁵³⁶ For a copy of the encyclical see Mylonakis, 163-164.

⁵³⁷ For a copy of the encyclical see 165-166.

⁵³⁸ Mylonakis, 167-68, Kavvos 212-228.

⁵³⁹ Kavvos, 215.

⁵⁴⁰ Mylonakis, 167-169.

⁵⁴¹ Mylonakis, 169-170.

refusal to obey the occupation authorities caused unnecessary suffering to the population, many of which played no role in the acts of sabotage against the occupation authorities. The encyclical passed on June 10 reflects the attitude of the leadership toward open opposition to the occupation authorities. It begins by reminding the population of the past summer, and its consequences. “It was last September that the goodwill of the military administrator of Crete, general Andrae, who, at the time, announced to Cretans, a general amnesty, under the condition that they surrender their arms, ended our agony and internal storm.”⁵⁴² No doubt, the committee made this statement with some irony. However, they expressed their desire to maintain the peace established the previous fall. In addition, they explained what they deemed the only acceptable path available to the population. “We find ourselves in agreement, that in order to heal the deep wounds Crete suffered because of the war, only one path presents itself, our absolute obedience and continuous peaceful cooperation.”⁵⁴³ The committee then ostracized men committing acts of sabotage that jeopardized the fragile peace agreed upon the previous September. “Although these events have a completely local character and were committed by a few mad criminals, who forgot their obligations to the community, these decisive examples that completely deviate from the path of amnesty undermine the just effort of our district.”⁵⁴⁴ The committee condemned these acts in their concluding remarks because they understood that the innocent population, and not the saboteurs, suffer the German wrath for their irresponsible acts. They may not trust the Germans, but do not want the population to provoke the military authorities into unleashing another round of immense suffering on the population. “The harsh consequences of these acts, though they were

⁵⁴² Mylonakis, 165.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

committed by people who are safe from harm, are borne by this unarmed community.”⁵⁴⁵

Thus, the committee viewed its role as protector of the population, and hoped that such pleas accomplished two important goals: dissuade the Germans from using mass reprisals against the population and discourage frustrated islanders from committing such acts in the future. In short, Agathangelos and his committee believed that despite their personal feelings about these acts, the cost to the population for such acts of sabotage far outweighed the benefits. His task, like that of his colleagues remained the same: to preserve the integrity of the state and the lives of the flock.

The policy of executing innocent members of the population for acts of sabotage committed against the Axis became a major problem for Damaskinos throughout the occupation, especially after 1942. He strove, like his colleague in Crete, to discourage acts of sabotage and, simultaneously to convince the Germans to refrain from executing innocent members of the community. As with Agathangelos, his efforts met with limited success. Two important examples of his efforts to save the lives of hostages slated for execution in retaliation for acts of sabotage deserve attention; the acts occurred in June 1942 and August 1943. Damaskinos attempted to save the lives of imprisoned Greeks slated for execution in June 1942 in reprisal for an act of sabotage committed on the island of Salamis. The effort failed, but symbolized his determination to act on behalf of the innocent population. The following summer, however, he succeeded in convincing the Germans to initially delay, and later rescind the order of execution of Greek prisoners in retaliation for an act of sabotage committed in the district of Kalithea. Other examples of his efforts, even when he failed to prevent such acts of reprisal, as was the case of the secret execution of Greeks in January 1943, deserve attention. In this case, he fought for

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

the release of the bodies of the victims in order to end the anxiety of their families, and to allow them to bury their family members according to religious tradition. Thus, either in success or failure, his determination to fight for the lives of these individuals led many to see his office, like the railway car in Corinth in the spring and summer of 1928, as a symbol of hope and salvation.

In June 1942, Damaskinos discovered--in the way of a note tucked into his Bible--that General Andrae, temporary commander of German forces in Athens, had ordered the execution of a group of Greek officers imprisoned for attempting to escape to the Middle East rather than face execution for an act of sabotage committed on the island of Salamis.⁵⁴⁶ After reading the note he scheduled a meeting with the German commander to persuade him to rescind the order. During the meeting, Damaskinos argued that executing innocents went against Christian ethics and international justice.⁵⁴⁷ Andrae disapproved, stating that war necessitated such acts. He added that if the prelate desired peace, he should openly condemn acts of sabotage and efforts made by individuals to flee to the Middle East and excommunicate these individuals from the Church. Damaskinos replied that the church could not judge members of the flock for political acts.⁵⁴⁸ Although the discussion continued, the hierarch understood that he could not change the general's mind. The following day the men faced the firing squad.

Athenian elites, including Damaskinos, reacted swiftly after their first exposure to Germany's reprisal policy. The execution of these men shook these men to their very foundations. Hoping to prevent similar executions in the future, Athenian elites published an open plea to the population asking them to refrain from such acts in light of

⁵⁴⁶ Venezis, 184.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 185.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 186-187.

the German reprisals the following day. For them, preserving the lives of innocent members of the community outweighed the military benefits of attacks against Axis forces.⁵⁴⁹ In addition, Damaskinos wrote a series of letters to German military and diplomatic personnel condemning these acts. His hope remained that discouraging these acts of sabotage and warning the occupation authorities of the potential consequences of this method of reprisal, which he stated did not auger well for their forces in the country, would prevent future executions. Moreover, the cleric believed, after watching other Athenian elites publish a statement, that the church needed to express its views on sabotage and, most importantly, its impact on the general population. Although it was dated for June 6, efforts by the Italian occupation authorities to pressure Damaskinos to exclude references to the executions and to include passages that encourage close cooperation with the occupation authorities, delayed its publication for a week.⁵⁵⁰ The document reflects his attitude toward acts of resistance. His acute awareness of the situation, and, specifically, the power relationship between the occupation authorities and the population, came through in this plea to the population. He began by categorically condemning the saboteurs, whose acts led to the execution of these men. “In the past few days acts of terrorism were committed repeatedly against the occupation authorities. Because the culprits decided to evade capture and punishment, other individuals, who played no role in these acts, were executed.”⁵⁵¹ He continued by emphasizing the impact these acts had on the population. “There is no doubt that the people performing such acts were few. The consequences, however, they caused were not, and those in the future

⁵⁴⁹ This message is reflected in all of the open letter and encyclicals published by the clerics and other notables in Athens and Crete.

⁵⁵⁰ Venezis, 192-195.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

could be even worse for the nation and many Greek families.”⁵⁵² For him, committing any acts against the occupation authorities had no positive benefits to the population. “We do not have anything to gain from attempts or provocations against the occupation authorities. The opposite is true in fact.”⁵⁵³ This powerful plea articulated both his frustration with the saboteurs and, more importantly, his concern about the devastating impact, epitomized by the executions, it had on the population.

Damaskinos also complained bitterly to Andrae’s superior, Commander of Southern Greece General Helmuth Felmy and to Plenipotentiary Altenburg.⁵⁵⁴ On June 24, Damaskinos wrote a long detailed letter criticizing the executions and other Axis policies that concerned the archbishop.⁵⁵⁵ Altenburg expressed his regret and condolences, and promised to work toward preventing such measures in the future.⁵⁵⁶ Altenburg and his colleague Herman Neubacher bitterly opposed these reprisal policies because they undermined their efforts to build a strong anti-communist base in the country.⁵⁵⁷ They viewed, correctly, that these policies only drove people to the mountains and increased the popularity of EAM not to mention, its ranks. Although Damaskinos failed in his effort to prevent the executions, he made it clear both to the population and to the Axis authorities that he intended to oppose such measures, and undermined their efforts by providing financial and material aid to the families of executed members of his flock. This issue will receive further attention later.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 195-197.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 197-202.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 195-196.

⁵⁵⁷ Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece*, 179.

Numerous parallels can be found between the pleas of Damaskinos and the Agathangelos-led committee in Crete. Both emphasized the futility and danger of committing acts of sabotage against the occupation authorities. Also, they both openly condemned those individuals who refused to take responsibility for their actions. These individuals, for the two hierarchs, were cowards not patriots. Finally, the consequences of these acts, most importantly for Agathangelos, who had to fight hard twice to end the brutal reprisal policies of the Wehrmacht, had devastating effects on the population. It was a policy Damaskinos became all too familiar with as the Wehrmacht began using this strategy with some regularity after the Italian withdrawal in September 1943. Although clerics could not prevent the German army from committing these acts, they did their best to discourage activities that prompted these types of actions, with little success. But, no doubt, the Germans appreciated these efforts and, at least, willingly listened to their concerns and, on a few occasions, made some concessions.

German military authorities temporarily halted this policy in Athens until the following January, when they executed seventeen individuals secretly on January 7, 1943.⁵⁵⁸ Hoping to avoid the type of protests employed by Damaskinos and other Athenian elites, the German authorities did not publish any indication of their intentions in the capital's newspapers.⁵⁵⁹ Relatives of a number of the imprisoned Greek officers, however, visited Damaskinos later, on the date of the execution, to report that a small German contingent had escorted a number of men from the Vouliagmeni prison, executed them, and buried them; no one, however, knew the names of the victims.⁵⁶⁰ After some intense negotiations, Damaskinos received the names of these individuals and permission

⁵⁵⁸ Venezis, 206-207.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

to exhume the bodies to allow their relatives to rebury them according to religious tradition.⁵⁶¹ Ioanna Tsatsos, a close friend and collaborator of Damaskinos, described the tense scene on the day the bodies were exhumed:

Tragic moments at the Third Cemetery. After thousands of efforts, the *Despotis* finally received permission to open the unmarked grave of those executed on January 7. Standing, like the only responsible individual among the desperate [family members], he ordered the exhumation of the bodies. Under the icy light rain, overcome with tears, the relatives of the dead identified their own, held a mass all night prayer, and buried their dead in a single grave.⁵⁶²

This powerful description paints admirably the tragic scene at the cemetery, but also captures the archbishop's determination to work for the members of the flock, even if he could not save the lives of their loved ones. He, like Agathangelos and others, understood that people demanded that they act as intermediary between the occupation authorities and the population. Though distraught over the wrongful death of their loved ones, they appreciated the efforts of their spiritual father to ensure the proper burial of their relatives. In short, in spite of his inability to stop the executions, his response to the crisis crystallized his image as a symbol of action, religious piety, and stability to a population that saw their world fall apart around them.⁵⁶³

On some occasions, his efforts met with mixed results. For instance, by the summer of 1943, German policy was becoming increasingly brutal. The execution of innocent hostages became an all too common occurrence. Damaskinos, however, continued to work with the occupation authorities to save the lives of those slated for execution. One important example of his growing influence took place in July 1943. Axis authorities planned to execute a group of thirty-six prisoners after the Greek resistance detonated a roadside bomb that blew up an Italian truck carrying German

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ioanna Tsatsou, 67.

⁵⁶³ Ilias Venezis and Christos Christidis also comment on the efforts of the archbishop. Christidis, 346-347.

soldiers in Piraeus. According to Christos Christidis, Damaskinos saved seventeen of them after speaking to Altenburg. His description illustrates the type of influence Damaskinos began to wield with Altenburg. “Damaskinos saved seventeen of them after a meeting with Altenburg.”⁵⁶⁴ No doubt, this success resulted from a lengthy and fruitful relationship with the occupation authorities.

The highlight of his efforts, however, came in August 1943. On August 25, a group of saboteurs destroyed ninety railway cars at the Kalithea railway station.⁵⁶⁵ German authorities responded swiftly, publishing an announcement three days later stating that they planned to execute fifty hostages on September 1 if those responsible failed to turn themselves in to the appropriate authorities.⁵⁶⁶ Damaskinos, deeply distraught over the potential executions, took immediate action. He began meeting Greek political officials and the appropriate German diplomatic personnel, including Herman Neubacher, and published an appeal to the population on August 30.⁵⁶⁷ September 1 came and went without incident. However, the hierarchy continued to meet with German officials to prevent the executions. On September 3 he met with General Speidel to ensure that there was no immediate plan for the executions.⁵⁶⁸ On the same day, Speidel published a brief statement rescinding the previous decree because the culprits were found.⁵⁶⁹ Speidel’s decision to rescind the order represented a major victory for the beleaguered Damaskinos. No doubt, his willingness to publish the plea to the population

⁵⁶⁴ Christidis, 382.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 420-422, Venezis, 231-233.

⁵⁶⁶ Venezis, 232, Tsatsou, 111.

⁵⁶⁷ Venezis, 232., Tsatsou, 112.

⁵⁶⁸ Venezis, 233.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

and his close cooperation with the occupation authorities throughout contributed to Speidel's decision to delay and finally rescind the order of execution.

This victory may appear insignificant in light of the tragedy of Kalavryta⁵⁷⁰ and other reprisals, but for the fifty individuals scheduled for execution and their families, it meant everything. As with his efforts after the failures of June 1942 and January 1943, he proved to his flock that he would continue to fight for the safety of innocent members of society. However, his actions also demonstrated that he had little patience or sympathy for individuals that committed acts of sabotage and refused to face the consequences.

A story told by a Greek woman with Turkish citizenship who had spent a lengthy period during two separate trips in Athens from November 1939 to August 1943, tells us much about his growing frustration with the German policy of executing hostages and the growing popularity of the hierarch. Sometime later in the occupation, German military authorities' decision to execute 150 Greek hostages in reprisal for the destruction of an Italian naval vessel led him to make a stunning request to the occupation authorities.⁵⁷¹ "He proposed that he should be consulted whenever a list was to be made up of people upon whom reprisals were to be carried out, saying that he would submit a list of men who would not leave behind them families to be taken care of."⁵⁷² It must be noted that Damaskinos began aiding the families of German victims in October 1941. Thus, he understood the extensive needs of these families. In response, he took the following

⁵⁷⁰ Mission Kalavryta, the destruction of the Peloponnesian city of Kalavryta, its environs and, the execution of 696 Greek men remains the most tragic example of this policy. General Karl Le Seur ordered the reprisal action in retaliation for the execution of 78 German soldiers of the 117 Jaeger Division in the area at the end of October 1943. Mazower, 179-181.

⁵⁷¹ The story is referenced in a report from the United States Consulate General to the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull sent August 13, 1943. Conditions in Greece as Reported by a Young Woman Who Left Athens August 3, 1943. (1135/ R-1039), p.3.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 4.

action. “He drew up a list with his own name and those of the other bishops and unmarried priests.”⁵⁷³ The Germans arrested him temporarily, which led a group of priests to protest in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral.⁵⁷⁴ While one can question the authenticity of the story, as no corroborating accounts exist, the story’s existence testifies both to the growing popularity and influence of the archbishop and his determination to remain active in his efforts to work for the population.

In addition to fighting for the prevention of the execution of innocent members of their flock, hierarchs attempted to provide some spiritual and material assistance to the incarcerated members of their flock and others forced to work for the occupation authorities. In some cases, they even succeeded in procuring the release of prisoners. More influential clerics, on occasion, intervened with the occupation authorities on behalf of fellow clerics. Considering conditions in both prisons and work sites, even token efforts could be critical to the lives of individuals residing in these places. These spiritual leaders, no doubt, viewed their efforts as part of their mission to preserve the physical and spiritual health of their flock. In some cases, their efforts likely had major physical and psychological benefits for these members of society. For instance, Protosyngelos Evgenios Psallidakis of the bishopric of Crete sent a letter to Agathangelos on July 1, 1942 asking him to intervene on the behalf of several citizens of Iraklion imprisoned by the Germans.⁵⁷⁵ Agathangelos went to the occupation authorities, and after several weeks of negotiations, reported to Evgenios that the Germans agreed to free several of the prisoners mentioned in his letter.⁵⁷⁶ This success is important for two reason: Coming off

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Mylonakis, 170-172.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

his extensive negotiations with the Germans to prevent the renewed policy of mass executions, the successful release of the prisoners helped establish him as a major political force on the island; but, it also gave hope to the relatives of prisoners that their local leaders could successfully negotiate with the occupation authorities.

Metropolitan Gennadios of Thessaloniki, the experienced spiritual leader of Greece's second city during the war, negotiated, with partial success, the release of thirty hostages held in Thessaloniki from the village Magnisia Kanalia, whom German officials took prisoner on November 17, 1943.⁵⁷⁷ The local metropolitan, Ioakeim of Dimitria and Almyros (near Volos) sent a letter to metropolitan Gennadios requesting his intervention with the German authorities in Thessaloniki. The metropolitan convinced the Germans to release half of those incarcerated in March 1944.⁵⁷⁸ Although he made another effort to negotiate the release of the remaining prisoners, he failed. On another occasion, however, in the summer of 1944, he succeeded in convincing the Germans to rescind their order of execution of a young son of a doctor from Volos, whom the Germans had taken hostage earlier in the year.⁵⁷⁹ No doubt, these concessions by the Germans are, resulted, at least partially, because of the amicable relationship that had been established between the Germans and the metropolitan from the onset of the occupation.

In addition to the release of prisoners, hierarchs attempted to improve the lives of prisoners and Greeks working for the occupation authorities. For instance, although the mass executions ended temporarily with general Andrae's amnesty in September, the

⁵⁷⁷ Dimitrios Tsilividis, "O Thessalonikis Gennadios gia tous Fylakismenous tou Germanikou Stratopedou Thessalonikis (Metropolitan of Thessaloniki Gennadios and the Prisoners Held in the German Prison in Thessaloniki) " in *Epistimoniki Imerida, O Mitropolitis Gennadios Alexiadis 1912-1951*, ed. Athanasios E Karathanasis (Thessaloniki: Kentro Istorias Dimou, 1992), 275-281.

⁵⁷⁸ Gennadios letter to Ioakeim and the response of the German high command in Thessaloniki survived. For a copy of the documents see Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

Cretan population faced other serious problems. General Andrae's superiors demanded that he improve the defenses of the island in case of a future Allied invasion; this led him to conscript Cretans to work on military sites. Berry articulates their position in a letter to the State Department. "Heavy pressure continued to be exerted on the inhabitants of the island with both men and women being forced to labor on military constructions."⁵⁸⁰ Conditions on these work sites remained horrible. For instance, German military authorities forced the workers to sleep in open areas cordoned with barbed wire at night and gave them little food and water. Deeply concerned, Agathangelos intervened on behalf of Cretan men forced to work on German military projects.⁵⁸¹ In this instance, Agathangelos convinced the Germans to make two concessions: to drive the workers to and from the work sites, allowing them to sleep in their own houses; and to provide a little bread and olives for their daily provisions. This concession may appear small, but it was crucial to a group of starving men who had previously been asked to sleep outdoors near the work sites.⁵⁸²

Axis authorities also granted Damaskinos and other members of the clergy permission to visit prisoners, even those scheduled for execution. Typically, during these visits, an Italian or German officer escorted Damaskinos during his visits. Clerics blessed the incarcerated political prisoners and gave them small gifts on religious holidays, such as Christmas and Easter.⁵⁸³ On one occasion, he even had the opportunity to visit those incarcerated in the Haidari prison.⁵⁸⁴ According to Venezis, however, the

⁵⁸⁰ US Department of State, Greece, 868.00/1132 November 17 1941 Report from Burton Berry to Secretary of State.

⁵⁸¹ Mylonakis, 157-158, Kavvos, 65-6.

⁵⁸² Letter from Wadsworth to the US Secretary of State; for more information about the activities of Agathangelos to persuade the Germans to make these concessions see Mylonakis, 157-158.

⁵⁸³ Venezis, 181.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

Axis became less cooperative later in the occupation.⁵⁸⁵ For instance, Damaskinos negotiated extensively with general Speidel, commander of Southern Greece in late 1943 for the right to visit the Haidari prison on Christmas. After entering the prison, the commandant forced him to leave. The hierarch, believing that the commandant had not received the appropriate orders from Speidel, went to see the general again. Even after receiving permission from Speidel to visit the prisoners, neither Damaskinos nor the metropolitan of Ziknia and Neurokopios, who Damaskinos sent to the prison to perform the liturgy and to speak to the men, gained access to the prisoners.⁵⁸⁶ In short, the efforts of clerics to visit prisoners met with mixed success, but they remained determined to visit them when possible to meet their spiritual needs and to give them courage.

In addition to negotiations to save the lives or improving the condition of the incarcerated members of their community, some church leaders became involved in more politically motivated matters. Most specifically, Archbishop Damaskinos, became a major political factor. German officials even consulted him, on occasion, before making political appointments. It is difficult to determine how influential he was from the correspondence between German officials and their superiors in Berlin, but based on numerous sources the head of the church became involved. According to some accounts, Damaskinos' name emerged as a possible minister or even prime minister in an occupation government. Three sources of information appear to support this conclusion: reports from a number of Greeks fleeing to the Middle East, which state that the Germans consulted Damaskinos before choosing prime minister Logothetopoulos' replacement in

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ FO 371/43679/R2943 Intelligence Report to Dennis Lasky Document 17. Germany and the Greek Church: Report regarding attempts by Archbishop Damaskinos to see prisoners held in the Haidari Prison in December 1943.

March 1943; a report received by a Greek foreign ministry official stating that Damaskinos, Spyridon of Ioannina, and Ioannis Rallis were asked to form a government in late 1942, and, Damaskinos' insistence that Nikolaos Louvaris serve in the Ioannis Rallis regime as minister of Education and Religion, something that both Rallis and his German supporters conceded to the archbishop.

Sources, primarily people fleeing Greece to the Middle East, reported to United States and British officials that Damaskinos' influence with occupation authorities began to grow. His influence appeared to grow in late 1942, but a number of reports in the spring of 1943 reported that Altenburg may have consulted him over political appointments. While it is difficult to authenticate some of these reports, based on the relationship between the diplomatic representatives and Damaskinos mentioned in the accounts of Altenburg and Neubacher, one can speculate that they consulted him before making political decisions. According to a report by American Consular General in Istanbul Burton in May 1943, two separate individuals fleeing to the Middle East reported that Damaskinos wielded political influence in Athenian circles and with the occupation authorities. The fall of the Logothetopoulos regime in March proved to be the central incident that reflected this influence. One source stated "He brings news of the increasing influence in political affairs in the political circles in Athens of the Metropolitan of the Greek Church, Damaskinos."⁵⁸⁷ The general mobilization of male labor in Athens planned by the Germans and other issues leading to the fall of the Logothetopoulos government appeared among the central themes in this report. In reference to Damaskinos' response, the same source reported that when, "the Germans

⁵⁸⁷ 868.00/1232 May 11, 1943 Report from General Consul Burton Berry to Secretary of State. Political Conditions and Other Information from Athens.

questioned the Metropolitan, he denied having approved the publishing of the decree.”⁵⁸⁸ This led the German to question the prime minister’s competence and demanded his resignation. Another source cited in the same report commented also discussed the growing influence of Damaskinos. “The Metropolitan Damaskinos is now taking an important part in politics in Athens.”⁵⁸⁹ The same source commented on a meeting between Logothetopoulos and members of the Athenian elite, including Damaskinos. Logothetopoulos stated that they encouraged him to stay the course. Damaskinos, according to this source, passed around a written note denying this claim. Altenburg’s response to the debacle indicated that he valued the archbishop’s judgment. “The affair came to the attention of Altenburg, who not only requested the resignation of Logothetopoulos but also consulted the Metropolitan as to his successor.”⁵⁹⁰ Based on other source material, it appears that the central issue that brought down the regime was its ineptitude and weakness. The factors mentioned likely contributed to the German assessment of the regime.

This same report even indicated that Damaskinos’ candidacy for prime minister received some attention. The same source made the following comment about Damaskinos’ political prowess. “He is a strong man, and there have been rumors recently that he desires to become prime minister. When asked by Altenburg if he approved of Rallis as the choice for prime minister to succeed Logothetopoulos Damaskinos, according to my source, refused to commit himself.”⁵⁹¹ According to Basos Mathiopoulos, a scholar of the period, Gunther Altenburg, in a recollection regarding

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

his time in Greece, mentioned that Damaskinos had approached him about the possibility of serving as prime minister after Logothetopoulos was forced to resign.⁵⁹² Greece's ambassador to Turkey, Rafail, sent a telegraph to his government regarding German interests in installing a Rallis government that included Damaskinos and Spyridon of Ioannina. The three, however, declined.⁵⁹³

The Louvaris affair, more than any other, provided ample evidence of Damaskinos' influence, and, in the eyes of some officials, taints the archbishop with the brush of collaboration. An article in the rightwing *Elliniko Aima* (Greek Blood) on February 4, 1945, in the midst of the collaborationist trials taking place in Athens that discussed the issue, provides a colorful account of the story. Based on numerous sources including Nikolaos Louvaris, a close friend of Damaskinos, the hierarch asked him to join the Rallis government in order to look after the interests of the Church. A number of contemporaries, including both Greek politicians, collaborators of Damaskinos, and others confirm this act by the archbishop. From the beginning of the war, the two men worked closely together. Nikolaos Louvaris, a German-educated professor of religion at the University of Athens, maintained close relations with German authorities in Greece from the beginning of the occupation. According to one source, Tsolakoglou had initially chosen him to serve as minister of education and religion, but the latter ultimately declined.⁵⁹⁴ He was also instrumental, according to his memoirs and those of Logothetopoulos, in restoring Damaskinos to his office.⁵⁹⁵ In 1943, likely to ensure that

⁵⁹² Mathiopoulos, 318.

⁵⁹³ AYE Cairo Government 1942 (19) A/1/IV 5940 /16139/A Report from ambassador Rafail to Tsouderos, December 7, 1942.

⁵⁹⁴ Records of the German Foreign Ministry: Buro des Staatsekretars: Griechenland. R.157, n. 127502. Letter from Benzler to German Foreign Minister. April 29, 1941.

⁵⁹⁵ Logothetopoulos, 203-4, Rallis, 24, 79.

the Church's interests were maintained, the hierarch pressured Louvaris to serve in the Rallis government.⁵⁹⁶ After reluctantly agreeing to serve in the government, he changed his mind and attempted to inform Rallis of his change of heart before Damaskinos and others could convince him to stay the course.⁵⁹⁷ His term was uneventful, and he seemed to maintain good relations with Damaskinos throughout his tenure. At the end of the war, to most peoples' surprise, Damaskinos, while serving as Regent, allowed Louvaris to be tried and convicted of collaboration by the Greek government, despite the pressure from the Regent to serve in the government.⁵⁹⁸

Louvaris' appointment epitomized the type of influence Damaskinos wielded over political affairs and his preference to play a part behind the scenes rather than serve in an official capacity. Damaskinos' insistence that Louvaris serve in the Rallis government begs the question: can a person in this position avoid the corrupting influence of power when engaging in high politics? This question plagued most of the hierarchs who ascended to the position of patriarch during the Ottoman period. Also, does this type of involvement in political affairs qualify as an act of collaboration? When one considers Damaskinos' complete body of work, labeling him a collaborator proves quite difficult. Damaskinos seemed to devote more attention to the church than he had earlier in the occupation. The Constitutional Charter of September 27, 1943 gave the church more autonomy over its own affairs. In particular, the hierarchy gained the right, after the crisis of 1938 and the restoration of the appointment of the archbishop to the state, to

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ The article published in *Elliniko Aima*, a rightwing newspaper, described the matter in some detail. Cited in Koukounas, .

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

elect its own leader.⁵⁹⁹ No doubt, Damaskinos played an important role in this decision. It is interesting to note that the document continued to govern the church until the Colonels' Coup in 1967.⁶⁰⁰ No doubt, the selection of Louvaris made the passing of new church legislation easier and ensured that the interests of the Church would remain protected under the Rallis government. Despite his intentions, Damaskinos' involvement in the formation of the Rallis government indicated that both the Germans and their Greek allies viewed his input as evidence of his willingness to cooperate with them. Also, his support, until he withdrew it shortly after Rallis' refusal to resign in response to the nationalization policies pursued by the Bulgarian authorities in their occupation zone in May 1943, seemed to offer some legitimacy to the regime. Of course, his decision to swear in the government added additional weight to the legitimacy of the regime. For Damaskinos, he made the decision to involve himself in political affairs because he considered his involvement beneficial both to the Church and the nation. Unlike his decision to intervene on behalf of the starving population or to prevent the persecution of Greek Jews and other victims persecuted by the Axis, this decision appears less altruistic. His intentions seem far more ambiguous in these circumstances.

Based on the resources available to him during the period, one can conclude that he did the best under the circumstances. His ability to save a few Greeks from execution, or assuage the horrific conditions in the numerous Greek prisons by providing small gifts and encouragement to the incarcerated deserve praise, even though they fell far short of the expectations placed upon him and the church. No doubt, he and his colleagues had personal weaknesses that prevented them from accomplishing more, but these

⁵⁹⁹ Constitution Charter of the Church of Greece, National Gazette of Greece, 324 A/27-9-1943. Article 15 deals specifically with the election of the archbishop.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

weaknesses did not account for their inability to prevent the civil war that tore the country asunder at the conclusion of the occupation. Christidis, who through his work articulates the frustration many felt, unfairly criticized the archbishop for failing to stop the crisis. The reality, however, remained that neither he nor any other group in Greece possessed the resources to prevent the type of crisis that years of political animosity, the psychological scars of occupation and collaboration, and external involvement from the British played in creating an atmosphere ripe for disunion and war. Damaskinos and his colleagues provided leadership, despite its limitation, when no other group possessed the courage or vision to chart a course that had as its goals the preservation of social values and the geographical integrity of the state. This course, however, forced him and his colleagues to make compromising choices that included making open pleas against acts of resistance against the Axis forces in Greece. Though they could have refused, the situation in Crete and later in Athens demanded that they make this difficult choice, for it saved the lives of hundreds of citizens. In addition, the Germans made their own concession to the Church leadership in return for this cooperation. Despite the efforts of the majority to refrain from expressing their anxiety toward the growing communist-led resistance movement EAM-ELAS, some members of clergy viewed it as their duty to openly condemn communism and the Soviet Union based on their personal beliefs and their previous exposure to communism.

While the brutalities of Axis policy concerned the hierarchy, the famine that ravaged the population and cost the lives of 500,000 Greeks remained its primary focus. The following chapter examines the efforts made by the Church, beginning in the

summer days of 1941 to combat the famine and, at the least, provide enough food to permit the population to survive the crisis.

Chapter VII

Combating Famine and Destitution (1941–1944)

No issue concerned Damaskinos and his colleagues in the church more than the food crisis that developed within months of the occupation. The archbishop articulated the importance of the church's role in combating the crisis in his enthronement speech and in his frequent correspondence with the occupation authorities and others. Out of their moral obligation to their flock and their concern for their spiritual wellbeing, hierarchs, led by Damaskinos, played a fundamental role in providing welfare relief to the population. This role required these men to interact with a range of individuals from Axis military and diplomatic authorities to resistance leaders. Soon, everyone from political leaders to the general population expected them to remain at the forefront of Damaskinos' social crusade. These efforts can be divided into two categories: procuring foodstuffs and financial assistance for the population, and distributing these resources to their flock. Although the archbishop led this 'social crusade' and played a fundamental role in this effort by negotiating for the procurement of a steady source of food and by creating EOHA, circumstances demanded that church leaders take the initiative at the local level by forming their own welfare organizations or by expanding those prewar funds or organizations already in place. EOHA's limited resources demanded that local leaders take this initiative. Starvation and other famine-related illnesses claimed the lives of 300,000 Greeks during the occupation. The important role played by the church leadership in its attempt to solve the crisis and with the blessing of the occupation government of Georgios Tsolakoglou constitute one of the bright moments in the history

of the Church of Greece. The efforts of the church symbolized to the population that the institution remained determined to play an active role, even if this role failed to meet all the needs of the majority of the population.

This chapter explores the efforts of archbishop Damaskinos and his colleagues to provide whatever they could. The enormity of the famine and other problems created by enemy occupation coupled with extremely limited resources, a relatively uncooperative occupation force, and other problems insured that such efforts met with only partial success. Despite these setbacks, the official church understood that both from their moral obligation to their flock and their deep concern for the rise of radical movements which challenged the nation's social values and institutions, failure to act jeopardized the very influence of the institution. Damaskinos began this social struggle against starvation soon after ascending to the throne by negotiating with the government and the Axis authorities for the procurement of a consistent food supply, especially wheat. Simultaneous with these negotiations, he began formulating a vision for a nationwide relief organization, The National Organization of Christian Solidarity (EOHA) that could provide a modicum of support to the nation's poor, especially its children. This organization, however, did not come into being until late 1941 and never possessed the resources to form a strong nationwide organization. These issues forced local hierarchs to take a leading role in forming their own relief organizations, which EOHA could only supplement with the meager resources it could muster for the regions outside of the Athens-Piraeus area. In short, the chapter hopes to provide a general picture of the Church's struggle to combat the famine and its impact on the local population by

examining the strengths and weaknesses of the various organizations and funds created to combat the crisis.

In the early days of the occupation, German requisitions, hoarding in the countryside, the loss of the crop yields from the Bulgarian-occupied territories, a poor harvest, and the ineptitude and weakness of the Tsolakoglou government creating a major food shortage.⁶⁰¹ Most foresaw, however, something far worse: famine knocking loudly on Greece's door. Keenly aware of the impending crisis, Damaskinos and Prime Minister Georgios Tsolakoglou discussed the matter days after the new archbishop ascended the throne on July 5, 1941.⁶⁰² During this meeting, general Tsolakoglou informed Damaskinos that the state lacked the resources to feed the population, but other possible sources of sustenance may be available.⁶⁰³ Likely realizing that he possessed neither the time nor the gravitas to negotiate a positive outcome to this crisis, he gave Damaskinos the task of resolving the crisis. Damaskinos' first step was to gain access to two sources of food negotiated by the Greek government before the termination of hostilities in April 1941: 370,000 tons of Australian wheat and 600,000 Turkish Liras of credit to purchase foodstuffs from their eastern neighbor.⁶⁰⁴ From July to November 1941, Damaskinos negotiated with the Axis to procure these two vital sources of relief for the population. Unfortunately, these efforts did not meet with success, as external

⁶⁰¹ The issue received some attention in the previous chapter. For a more information see Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece : The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 23-30. Regarding the impact of the Bulgarian occupation on the food supply, Harry Ritter states that "Macedonia and Thrace, which accounted for 25 to 30 percent of Greece's prewar agricultural production, were reorganized as separate economic zones by German and Bulgarian authorities and sealed off from the Italian-controlled south and the country's largest urban complex, Athens-Piraeus." Harry Ritter, "German Policy in Occupied Greece and Its Economic Impact, 1941-1944 " in *Germany and Europe in the Era of the Two World Wars; Essays in Honor of Oron James Hale* ed. F.X. Homer and Larry Wilcox (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1986), 159.

⁶⁰² Venezis, Damaskinos, 74-75.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

factors, primarily the British blockade, prevented the procurement of the Australian wheat. The German occupation authorities refused to send a delegation of Greeks to negotiate with the governor of the Bank of Greece, Kyriakos Varvaressos. In addition, the prime minister gave the archbishop the task of establishing a welfare organization to combat the crisis, something that met with far more success, in the form of EOHA.⁶⁰⁵

Successful procurement of these sources of food required the archbishop to negotiate with the occupation authorities.⁶⁰⁶ The cleric lost no time at all, meeting with Germany's Plenipotentiary Gunther Altenburg's assistant, Graevenitz, on July 11 to discuss the matter. After informing the German diplomat that the prime minister had verbally assigned him the task of pursuing the issue, Damaskinos explained that he hoped to negotiate the procurement of the Australian wheat by agreeing upon a foreign church to act as intermediary between the Church of Greece and the British government.⁶⁰⁷ The following day he met with Italian Plenipotentiary Pellegrino Ghigi.⁶⁰⁸ In the last two weeks of July he met numerous times with both Altenburg and Ghigi, when he was finally told that he needed to provide a letter outlining the necessary details for the procurement of these sources of food, which would be forwarded to Berlin and Rome. Damaskinos agreed and provided the necessary documentation on July 30.⁶⁰⁹

While his frequent meetings throughout the month of July tell us much about his determination, his written request reflects both his diplomatic tact and his comprehension

⁶⁰⁵ This issue will receive further attention later in the chapter.

⁶⁰⁶ Tsolakoglou sent an undated letter to Damaskinos explaining the nature of his task. For a copy of the letter see Ilias Venezis. *Damaskinos*, 75-6. Tsolakoglou, though well-meaning, never won the support of the population. Realizing early on that he lacked any legitimacy, he looked to win the support of the church in a letter he sent to Damaskinos in August 1941. Damaskinos refused to openly praise the regime, but stated that he planned to work closely with the general and his government to guide the population through this period of crisis.

⁶⁰⁷ Venezis, 76-77.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

of the severity of the situation. Concealing his personal frustration with the policies of the Axis to requisition foodstuffs or pay for items with worthless currency, Damaskinos attempted to accomplish four important objectives in this letter: 1) outline the severity of the situation; 2) articulate the role of the church; 3) lay out the necessary steps toward procuring and distributing the aforementioned sources of food; and 4) explain the potential consequences both for the Greek population and the Axis authorities. In this letter, he expressed his own deep concerns about the status of the church, as well as that of the population in general.

He began by stating that wheat remained the main staple of the Greek diet, and that the current shortage had reached a critical level. It must be noted that part of Greece's breadbasket in Macedonia remained separated administratively from the rest of Greece, as the Bulgarians occupied much of the territory as part of an agreement with the Germans before the Nazi invasion of Greece. Even when one includes these territories, Greece remained a major importer of foodstuffs, especially wheat. He then moved on to discuss the state of affairs and the real consequences of this food shortage, a nationwide famine.⁶¹⁰ Speaking of the oncoming famine he wrote:

What's more, the claims of famine must not be viewed as an exaggeration, because they correspond with reality; famine is knocking on the door of Greece's home, and the threat of death, therefore, is not a distant possibility, but a fact that all Greeks, most especially the poor masses, are already feeling.⁶¹¹

In this passage, Damaskinos addressed claims that Greek and British propaganda were exaggerating the seriousness of the situation. More importantly, however, he wanted to

⁶¹⁰ It must be noted that as of the beginning of May, the government is beginning to notice the problem, and is beginning to control the food supply in the country by distributing ration cards, though the government did not have access to foodstuffs.

⁶¹¹ Venezis, 79

emphasize how rapidly conditions were deteriorating, and the impact this fact was having on the population.

He followed these observations by explaining what the perceived role of the church would be both in these negotiations and after the food is procured. “The Church did not have the right to stand by and watch.”⁶¹² This fact prompted him to go to Tsolakoglou about the oncoming famine, which led to the general placing the task in his hands. “Hereupon, the government has empowered the Church to proceed with any action to bring about the importation of wheat from Australia and also from Turkey using the credit of 6000,000 TL.”⁶¹³ This statement attests to the transformation of the role of the church during the period, and specifically that of its leader, with the consent of both appointed and established political leaders. Established political leaders such as Themistoklis Sophoulis preferred to wait in the wings until the developments of the war play out before reacting.⁶¹⁴

German officials likely viewed these goals as reasonable, but Damaskinos’ plan for the procurement of this food and how he intended to distribute it underlines the impressive amount of forethought that went into the letter. He did not request the impossible, but outlined a concrete plan to resolve the crises in an organized and timely manner. To accomplish this task he laid out five important criteria that must be met: 1) permission from the occupation authorities to pursue the matter; 2) authorization of the Church to establish an organization to distribute the food to the Greek population; 3) assurances of safe passage for ships transporting goods to and from Greece; 4)

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Ibid., 80.

⁶¹⁴ John Iatrides, ed. *Greece in the 1940s; a Nation in Crisis* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1981), 27-36.

permission for Greek representatives to travel to Turkey to negotiate the terms for the purchase and transportation of foodstuffs; and 5) permission from the British government for the importation of the Australian wheat, which was to be negotiated through another ecclesiastical institution.⁶¹⁵ With this well-conceived plan, Damaskinos placed the burden on the Axis authorities to act.

Damaskinos ended his letter with an ominous warning to the occupation authorities about the consequences for them in Greece. “Given the fact that famine is the worst enemy of social stability and peace, only through a quick and satisfactory resolution of the bread question for the Greek people, specifically the poor, is it possible to dissuade the affected population from resorting to desperate acts.”⁶¹⁶ German indifference toward the starving population increased resentment and encouraged many to join the resistance.

Both Altenburg and Ghigi informed Damaskinos that they planned to send on his request to their respective capitals.⁶¹⁷ Preoccupied with the invasion of the Soviet Union, Berlin took a long time to reply. Frustrated, Damaskinos sent another letter to both men on August 12. He informed the occupation authorities that the situation remained critical, and only a rapid resolution of the crisis, a constant theme in all his letters, could prevent the disastrous consequences of the food crisis. “I consider it beneficial to underscore the current, deteriorating situation of the country from the standpoint of the food situation; this situation will progress, no doubt into a general travesty shortly, at which time, the current woeful reserves will be extinguished.”⁶¹⁸ He also emphasized that the church’s

⁶¹⁵ Venezis, 80-81.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 81.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

responsibility demanded that he send this note to the occupation authorities. Finally, on August 26-27, he received a positive reply from both Axis representatives. Both men informed Damaskinos that their respective governments agreed to the request that all imported wheat would go exclusively to Greeks, and that ships transporting the wheat would have safe passage if they notified the Axis authorities at least two weeks before departure.⁶¹⁹

Permission from the Axis governments to pursue the matter gave Damaskinos hope. Realizing that the Papacy could be the best intermediary between the British and the Greek church, the hierarch and his colleagues contacted its local representative, Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (later Pope John XXII). Roncalli, who had already begun working toward a resolution of the problem, visited Athens to pressure the occupation authorities to find a solution to the crisis.⁶²⁰ A number of Greek leaders including Nikolaos Louvaris met with the cardinal at the beginning of August to request the intervention of the Papacy in order to pressure Britain to lift the blockade of Greece for the transportation of the Australian wheat and to pressure Italy to send foodstuffs to help the starving population.⁶²¹ Roncalli requested that the local leaders express their concerns in a letter that he could pass on to his superiors.⁶²² After these negotiations, Louvaris went to Damaskinos and other prominent political leaders such as Themistoklis Sophoulis, Georgios Kafantaris, and Dimitris Maximos. These men, for various reasons, including the fact that Greece did not have formal relations with the Vatican and fearing

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 83-85.

⁶²⁰ Cardinal Roncalli became deeply concerned about the Greek food shortage, and believed that the Vatican may be able to pressure Britain to lift its blockade of Greece to allow for the importation of supplies and foodstuffs.

⁶²¹ Venezis, 95.

⁶²² Ibid.

the consequences of a possible stigma of collaboration, hesitated.⁶²³ In the end Damaskinos' urgings prevailed. The prelate, however, felt that a private meeting with Roncalli may also help expedite matters.

For obvious reasons, no official meeting could take place between the two hierarchs. However, as both men understood the gravity of the situation, they arranged a meeting at the house of Damaskinos' legal advisor, Ioannis Georgakis.⁶²⁴ During this meeting, Damaskinos informed the papal representative that he hoped the Papacy would intervene with the British for the lifting of the blockade to allow the transportation of food to Greece's ports. Roncalli agreed to send this request to Pope Pius XII when he left for Rome on October 7. The day before he left, however, Roncalli sent one of his aides to see if Damaskinos had any other requests.⁶²⁵ The hierarch handed him a letter to pass on to his friend, Greece's ambassador to Great Britain Haralambos Simopoulos, requesting his assistance in the matter.⁶²⁶ Louvaris, in his postwar memoirs, writes that Damaskinos wanted to visit Berlin and Rome to take up the matter directly with Hitler and Mussolini, but that such a trip never materialized.⁶²⁷

⁶²³ Ibid., 95-96.

⁶²⁴ Unfortunately, no contemporary source exists that confirm that the two men met. Damaskinos' biographer, Ilias Venezis, however, mentions the conversation. The active involvement of both Damaskinos and Roncalli, though, make a meeting of this sort probable, if not likely. Venezis, 98-99.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 100

⁶²⁶ Stanley Hoffman's study of Roncalli's activities during the war places the papal nuncio in Athens in August 1941, though he fails to mention any meetings with Greek officials. However, the determination of both men makes a possible meeting possible, if not likely. Also, the fact that this letter reached Simopoulos indicates that the two men communicating, even if it was through intermediaries. Peter Hoffmann, "Roncalli in the Second World War: Peace Initiatives, the Greek Famine and the Persecution of the Jews," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40, no. 1 (1989), 74-99, Venezis, 100-101.

⁶²⁷ According to Nikolaos Louvaris, who published a portion of a letter from Antonios Negrepontis to Vasilios Sagias, Damaskinos wanted to broach the topic with Hitler and Mussolini in persons. Cited in Venezis, 95-6.

Unfortunately, Greek officials received discouraging news from the Vatican on October 26, 1941.⁶²⁸ In response to his letter, Cardinal Maglione, the Vatican's Secretary of State, wrote that his efforts to pressure Britain and the United States to lift the blockade failed. British officials argued that the blockade was an important weapon in their war against the Axis, and that it remained the responsibility of the Axis powers to feed the population of their occupied territories.⁶²⁹ No further official correspondence took place between Greek politicians in Athens and the Vatican.

Simultaneous with his efforts to procure the Australian wheat, Damaskinos began working on the other matter, procuring the foodstuffs from Turkey. Damaskinos and Tsolakoglou began to discuss the matter of the representatives to send to Ankara to negotiate terms for the purchase and transportation of the goods. Altenburg informed Damaskinos that he could grant permission for the two individuals once the candidates were chosen.⁶³⁰ On September 9, Tsolakoglou sent a letter to Damaskinos that recommended a former Trade specialist for the ministry of Foreign Affairs, Alexandros Argyropoulos and general Konstantinos Platis for the mission. He also informed

⁶²⁸ According to Owen Chadwick, a scholar of Vatican-British relations during World War II, Roncalli pursued the matter vigorously. According to Chadwick, Roncalli brought the attention to the pope through his Secretary of State, Maglione. Maglione met with Britain's minister to the Vatican, Osborne. Maglione met with Osborne several times in September and October of 1941 to discuss the matter. The fact that 350,000 tons (slightly less than the 370,000 mentioned in Damaskinos' correspondence) remained sitting in the Suez Canal made the situation that much more frustrating. Maglione's frustration with the British refusal to lift their blockade manifested itself in an outburst at Osborne on October 17. "Here are the Greeks starving. Italy has done all it can. I believe that it cannot do any more. The British ought to remember that the Greeks were their allies. Their refusal is bringing horror to Greece." Owen Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican During World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶²⁹ Emanuel Tsouderos had made efforts starting in June to convince Britain to help Greece's beleaguered population. In December 1941, Tsouderos also sent a letter both to Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill requesting that the Allies lift the blockade, but he received the same response he did earlier in the summer. For more information on British policy toward the blockade see George Kazamias, "The Politics of Famine Relief for Occupied Greece," in *Bearing Gifts for Greeks, Humanitarian Aid to Greece in the 1940s*, ed. Richard Clogg (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 39-57. For a copy of the letters from Tsouderos to Churchill and Roosevelt see: Venezis, 111-116.

⁶³⁰ Venezis, 101.

Damaskinos that Dr. Karl Clodius, economic expert of the Reich for the Balkans, planned to negotiate the matter of the credit with the Turkish government.⁶³¹ Damaskinos recommended that their efforts be supplemented with the dispatched representatives to negotiate with the governor of the Bank of Greece, Varvaessos, through Greece's ambassador to Turkey, Rafail Rafail. This was a time-consuming project, and by the fall of 1941 it was deadlocked. Damaskinos resolved to approach the Axis powers directly for assistance.

In a letter dated November 25, 1941, Damaskinos updated the Axis authorities about the desperate situation in Greece. He then proceeds to use his position as head of the church to plea with the authorities, something he could not do as a politician or private citizen. Obviously, Damaskinos had become deeply concerned about what the Vatican's failure meant, i.e., that this much-needed supply of wheat would remain outside Greece. As with the information about the efforts of the Vatican, he wanted to present a clear picture of the situation and its potential consequences. He was particularly concerned about the absence of even modest bread rations for the poor.

A characteristic symptom of the whole food situation in Greece, one which portends with certainty the worsening of the situation to a point of total collapse, is the repeated prolonged disruption, even of the already reduced bread ration—a sad harbinger of a permanent disruption of food distribution and the certain death of the Greek people of famine.⁶³²

By the time the food situation had become unbearable. People were waiting for hours in lines to procure, with their ration card, what little food remained available. The black market, however, remained the only reliable source for food, even by this early date in

⁶³¹ Ibid., 101-102.

⁶³² Ibid.

the occupation. Many times, people were left without bread rations for weeks. Meat had become a luxury by the summer of 1941.⁶³³ By this time, he realized that, even if his efforts to procure the two sources of food succeeded, the logistics necessary to procure the food required more time than the country had to avert imminent disaster. His tone and demeanor also began to change. “There is no doubt that the oncoming tragedy of starvation will soon have an impact on the youth and adult male population. So, if a solution is not found, Greece will transform into a country of necropolises and of walking dead.”⁶³⁴ He continued: “It is neither possible nor permissible for the Church of Greece to remain indifferent, since, more than any other institution, it has always stood by the nation during all its experiences.”⁶³⁵ He insisted that the current situation, more than ever, demanded the intervention by the church. Despite the gravity of the situation he expressed unwavering hope that a solution was possible, and that history would judge them harshly if they failed to intervene.

A few days later, he asks the plenipotentiary if he could make a plea to Greeks everywhere to help resolve the crisis. Altenburg responded by saying that he would if provided a written copy of the intended plea. Damaskinos attempted to procure external assistance by sending a plea both to Greek Americans and to other communities of the Greek diaspora for help. In the message, he wanted to inform the Greek diaspora that the Church was working tirelessly to find a solution to the crisis and continued hold out hope that a solution could be found. “During this tragic hour...of the blessed Greek people I thought it was necessary for the church’s voice to be heard...I hope that all the faithful are certain that the church will stand by the side of its suffering spiritual children like a

⁶³³ Mazower, 34-35.

⁶³⁴ Venezis, 117-118.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 118.

loving mother.”⁶³⁶ He wanted to confirm that the church remained in the forefront of the struggle to find a solution to the crisis facing the Greek nation.

In this document, the hierarch was already looking ahead toward the church’s new role in the struggle against famine: the formation of an expansive relief organization to cater to the needs of the population. The prime minister and Damaskinos had discussed the creation of such an organization earlier in the fall, at which time the hierarch received the task of formulating a plan to create this organization. He had this in mind, no doubt, when he prepared this statement for the German diplomat and his potential Greek American audience. A month later, the government approved his plan by passing a decree that formed EOHA.

Given the outlook, of protracted wartime upheaval, we ought to organize, beginning now, methodically, to defend the lives of the people on a long term basis. By organizing ourselves, the difficulties of the war will not be wiped out, of course. They can, however, be tempered to a degree. And, we will work, primarily, to mitigate the fearful dangers which lurk at every step and threaten to exterminate the Greek nation, or, at the least, make it unable to continue on its historical course.⁶³⁷

Always the pragmatist, Damaskinos knew that he needed to outline a plan to demonstrate to potential donors that he had a long-term plan for utilizing their funds. He also knew that one of the greatest problems facing the current government, besides its lack of legitimacy, was its inability to distribute what little food it had at its disposal, effectively. By creating an organization such as EOHA, which local priests, teachers, and other notables would run, he believed this would provide the bureaucratic network necessary to resolve this problem. Ultimately, however, Altenburg did not grant him permission to make a radio address, despite receiving a copy of the plea ahead of time. Still, the

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 121.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 122.

hierarch refused to accept defeat. Realizing that a plea remained his best option, he continued throughout much of 1942 to pressure the occupation authorities to allow him to make such a plea. His efforts, though mostly meeting with failure, met twice with success: a response to a radio message from the BBC stating that a ship transporting supplies from Port Said, Egypt planned to depart for Athens in February 1942; and a note to the Patriarch of Alexandria in April 1942 asking him to plead with members of the Greek diaspora to assist their brethren in Greece.

During the winter of 1941-1942, news of the devastating impact of the famine began reaching the United States and Great Britain. Public opinion in those countries began to turn against the British blockade.⁶³⁸ In addition, already aware of the tragic situation in Greece, the Greek community in the United States began raising funds for their Greek brethren, and eventually developed the Greek War Relief Organization to deal with the famine in Greece.⁶³⁹ In Greece, the archbishop continued to hope for the opportunity to plead with the Greek diaspora for assistance. His first opportunity to speak to a Greek community abroad came in the late winter of 1941-1942. On the night of February 19, a BBC radio message announced that a ship carrying 8,000 tons of wheat waited for departure to Greece in the Egyptian city of Port Said. Wanting to thank those responsible for this source of food, Damaskinos requested permission from the

⁶³⁸ For information about the decision to lift the blockade in light of the mounting pressure from British and American public opinion see: George Kazamias, "The Politics of Famine Relief of Occupied Greece," 47-9, , William Norton Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: Longmans, 1952-6), 254-281, David L. Gordon and Royden Dangerfield, *The Hidden Weapon, the Story of Economic Warfare* (New York: Harper, 1947).

⁶³⁹ For more information about the establishment and efforts of this organization to resolve the Greek food crisis see, Alexander Kyrou, "The Greek-American Community and the Famine in Axis-Occupied Greece," in *Bearing Gifts to Greeks, Humanitarian Aid to Greece in the 1940s*, ed. Richard Clogg (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 58-84.

occupation authorities to compose a response that could be read over Athens radio.⁶⁴⁰ In this response, the hierarch informed his audience about the efforts he and the occupation authorities had made to procure foodstuffs over the past seven months. He assured the British that the ship would have safe passage to and from Athens. Damaskinos used this opportunity to show the Allies that he had made every effort to procure foodstuffs for the population.

Later in the year, the hierarch made several other attempts to convince the occupation authorities to allow him to make a plea to the Greek diaspora. The first request was made in April 1942, when he approached the occupation authorities about making a plea to the patriarch of Alexandria, Christoforos, for assistance. Ghigi granted his request. Damaskinos sent a telegraph to Christoforos over Athens radio on April 9, asking him to encourage members of the Greek community of Alexandria and other members of the diaspora to assist their co-nationals. Christoforos responded with a short positive reply through the Italian embassy.⁶⁴¹ In this message, which was read over the radio, Damaskinos made similar statements to those mentioned in the statement he prepared the previous November. His goal remained the same, to inform the diaspora that the church was working diligently to find a solution to the food crisis, and that it needed outside assistance to accomplish this goal. While this effort met with success, a second request to Ghigi in June met with a negative response. According to Venezis, the Italian diplomat informed the head of the church that Axis and Allied governments and

⁶⁴⁰ Venezis, 126-127.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 127-128.

the representatives of the Swedish and Swiss Red Cross were negotiating for a solution to the food crisis in Greece.⁶⁴²

Damaskinos made another request in August 1942 to make a plea over the radio to the Greek American community.⁶⁴³ By this time, the Allied and Axis government had negotiated an agreement for the Red Cross to ship and distribute foodstuffs to the Greek population. The hierarch hoped to make this announcement in Switzerland through another Christian church. The content resembled that of the message he wanted to make over the radio the previous November, primarily asking for the Greek American community to provide financial assistance to the hierarch to use to feed the population. Altenburg knew about his previous trips to the United States as metropolitan of Corinth and informed his superiors that this trip could be beneficial both to his government and the Greek population. “With the influence that the Archbishop had among Greek [Americans] because of his earlier experience, this effort should be successful.”⁶⁴⁴ It must be remembered that Altenburg had made a number of complaints to his superiors about the food crisis in Greece during his first few weeks in the country. He understood both the propaganda value and, more importantly the consequences of allowing the population to starve. Seeing the dead bodies on his path to his office provided, no doubt, sufficient evidence to Altenburg that the situation remained dire.

For these reasons, he wanted to convince his superiors both of the propaganda value of Damaskinos’ mission and of the scheme’s potential value for the local occupation authorities. The negative press Germany received became, no doubt, a

⁶⁴² Ibid., 132.

⁶⁴³ Records of the German Foreign Ministry: Buro des Staatsekretars: Griechenland R.166, N.81360-1. Report from Altenburg to German Foreign Office August 21, 1942.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

motivation for Berlin to negotiate with the Allies for a solution to the crisis. The diplomat understood that the Allies controlled, ultimately, the distribution “The advantage of pursuing this plan is that it is a relief effort by Greeks for Greeks, which would negate the enemy’s propaganda that nothing is being done, which the Red Cross adheres to.”⁶⁴⁵ Altenburg viewed this plan as having more pragmatic value for the local occupation authorities.

The occupation authorities worked closely with the archbishop throughout the period to resolve this crisis. Both Gunther Altenburg and his colleague, Hitler’s special envoy for the Balkans Herman Neubacher, discussed the fact that the diaspora had worked closely with the archbishop to resolve this crisis. This series of negotiations from the outset helped establish a cordial and relatively close working relationship between Damaskinos and the diplomatic representatives of the Axis. This relationship yielded more benefits to the church than their dealings with the military authorities, which prioritized military concerns over any local ones. No doubt, the hierarch’s efforts helped dispel much of the suspicion the population may have had after his appointment by the Tsolakoglou government, at least in much of the postwar accounts written about Damaskinos after the war.

While Damaskinos continued to meet with the Germans over the food issue for the rest of the period, he and his colleagues had to contend with the problem as best as they could. EOHA emerged from the vision Damaskinos referred to in his enthronement speech and letters to the occupation authorities. Although he did reference the creation of an organization until the draft of the planned radio address he sent to Altenburg in November 1941, he understood that the church needed to create an organization to meet

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

the needs of the population, particularly to distribute any foodstuffs that came into the possession of the church. However, even before the state passed a law creating EOHA in December 1941, hierarchs worked tirelessly to help combat the consequences of the food shortage as early as the first month of the occupation. For instance, some hierarchs needed to provide temporary assistance to soldiers returning from the Albanian front after they were released by Axis forces. Although the church had its own welfare organization, it began forming others and asking for the assistance of the local population. Even after EOHA had become a nationwide organization, it could not satisfy all of the needs of the population, forcing hierarchs to look elsewhere to supplement the assistance provided by the organization. As Damaskinos and his colleagues realized, failing to assist the population threatened the very fabric of Greek society. Therefore they worked throughout the period to help as many people as possible. ZOE, the popular religious brotherhood loosely affiliated with the official church also became involved in the relief effort and, according to one scholar raised the ire of EAM-ELAS due to its effectiveness. In short, although Damaskinos formed EOHA in December 1941, he and other clerics began combating the crisis almost immediately after the beginning of the occupation, realizing that failure to act jeopardized the fabric of Greek society in general, and the future influence of the church in particular.

The roots of EOHA did not begin with Damaskinos' correspondence or speeches, but in the early days of the Albanian war. Chrysanthos and a number of prominent Athenians established Assistance for the Families of Soldiers to provide aid to soldiers and their families after war broke out in 1940.⁶⁴⁶ This organization proved relatively

⁶⁴⁶ For more information about the organization see Konstantinos Vastakis, *H Prosfora tis Ekklisias sti Dekatia tou 40' (the Response of the Church During the Decade of the 40's)* (Athens: 1996), 33-

effective in assisting the families of soldiers, especially in the Athens-Piraeus area during the conflict. Active support for the organization led it to raise nearly 30,000,000 drachmas during its short-lived existence.⁶⁴⁷ In addition to financial support, numerous groups volunteered their assistance to help the families of soldiers, including 600 doctors, 60 pharmacists, and a number of women who regularly visited the families of soldiers to provide moral support.⁶⁴⁸ And, the organization found homes for children orphaned by the war. Returning soldiers, hoping to find safe passage to their homes, sought the assistance of the organization. By the end of the war, roughly 60,000 families had benefited from the work of the organization in the Athens-Piraeus area alone.⁶⁴⁹

There is some debate over the relationship between POC and EOHA. Despite the nature of the relationship, however, both depended on the kindness of volunteers, who made up majority of the workforce. According to EOHA officials, two sources provided the inspiration for its creation: Damaskinos' enthronement speech and an official request by Prime Minister Tsolakoglou that the prelate create an organization to combat the problem. In his enthronement speech on July 6, 1941 Damaskinos "launched the dogma of National Solidarity as a primary duty of Greeks and called for a Pan Hellenic crusade toward the amelioration of popular misfortune."⁶⁵⁰ Here, fully aware of the food shortage, he wanted to inspire hope that the church planned to work on the nation's behalf, but that circumstances demanded a nationwide effort that included all sectors of society if the country wanted to combat the problem effectively. Some argued that his

35, Vasilios Stathakis, *I Chrisianiki Prosfora sta Chronia tis Katohis* (Christian Assistance During the Occupation) (Athens: Chrisianiki Foititiki Enosis), 10, G.D. Kouvela, "I Ekklesia stin Ethniki Antistasi (the Church and the National Resistance)," *Koinonia* 3 (KH).

⁶⁴⁷ Vastakis, 34.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁵⁰ EOXA, *Ekthesis Tis Genikis Diefithynsios epi ton Pepragmenon tou Protou Etous* (Report of the General Executive, from the Proceedings of the First Year) (Athens: EOHA, 1943), 5.

actions could not match his rhetoric. His ability to inspire hope remained his greatest weapon to combat the problem in an atmosphere of despair and enemy occupation.

Impetus also came from the Tsolakoglou government, which assigned the Church the task of establishing a welfare organization to combat the crisis. “At the behest...of the government, [Damaskinos] sent a long message on August 19 which defined the system of the organization, based upon the assistance and organization of public perception and social assistance, under the jurisdiction, cover and guidance of the Church of Greece.”⁶⁵¹

The statement appears to reiterate many of the statements he had made in his letters to the occupation authorities. Officially, the law creating the organization passed on December 4, 1941, with Law 776 creating EOHA.⁶⁵² The organization, which began in Athens, spread to the rest of country, numbering 3,000 branches by the end of the occupation.⁶⁵³

Hierarchs ran regional branches, and parish priests or other notables ran local branches.⁶⁵⁴

The organization worked closely with the Red Cross and other philanthropic organizations in the country to ensure that the maximum number of people could receive the assistance they required.⁶⁵⁵ In addition to distributing food, the organization catered to other physical and psychological needs of the population. For instance, the organization established a number of women’s clinics, orphanages, and work

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 6.

⁶⁵³ *Mnimes Kai Martyries (Memories and Eyewitness Accounts)*. (Athens: Klados Ekdoseon Epikoinoniakis kai Morphotikis Yperesias tis Ekklisias tis Ellados, 2000), 256.

⁶⁵⁴ EOHA Report, 47-48.

⁶⁵⁵ A Red Cross report about its work in Greece during the occupation referenced the extensive work of EOHA, especially its efforts to help impoverished children. In addition, the report referenced the close relationship between the organization a number of metropolitans outside of the capital. *Ravillement de la Grece Pendant L’occuation 1941-1944 Et Pendant les Premiers Cinq Mois Après la Liberation* (Athens: 1949), 6, 42-3, 86-87.

programs.⁶⁵⁶ As with its predecessor, numerous professionals and kindhearted individuals, mainly women, volunteered their assistance to the needy.⁶⁵⁷

The organization's first annual report published in July 1943 provides important details about the leadership of the organization, its progress in its first year, and other important details about the organization. Although Damaskinos served as president of the organization, he left the running of it to others while he pursued other important matters.⁶⁵⁸ A Central Committee consisting of thirty members met to discuss general matters, while the Special Committee of four made most of the everyday decisions. Much of its manpower, however, was voluntary. For instance, according to the organization's first annual report, 2,033 of its employees volunteered their services.⁶⁵⁹ This generosity allowed the organization to spend much of the meager funds they received to purchase and distribute as much food and other necessary goods to the country's destitute. Because it was a state organization, EOHA received a majority of its funds from the government. Initially, it had received a sum of 500,000,000 drachmas in December of 1941. However, rapid inflation meant this amount had less purchasing power. Therefore, the organization received an additional 2,020,000,000 drachmas from the government. In addition to state funds, EOHA received 60, 276, 304 drachmas in donations from the population.⁶⁶⁰ The medical community also donated goods and

⁶⁵⁶ Venezis, 172-173.

⁶⁵⁷ Venezis noted that 2,500 women volunteered their services to the organization. For instance, the Sisterly Visitors went to the homes of the destitute to provide moral support, distribute bread, arranged marriages and baptisms, and brought hope to these households. *Ibid.*, 165-167.

⁶⁵⁸ The hierarch's frequent absence from organization meetings upset some members of the leadership; an issue that will receive further attention later.

⁶⁵⁹ EOHA Report, 16-17.

⁶⁶⁰ EOHA Report, 43.

services to the organization. For instance, the organization reported 947, 258 cases of free medical assistance provided and 180, 028 individuals who received free medicine.⁶⁶¹

In the Athens area, where much of the funds and manpower went, the organization made major strides toward ameliorating the suffering of the city's destitute. To shelter the needy children, the organization established 90 soup kitchens, which provided daily meals to 50, 793 impoverished Athenians and 31, 959 citizens of Piraeus. For working mothers, the organization established six daycare centers that provided care and two meals for 317 children.⁶⁶² In order to combat the growing problem of orphaned and abandoned children, eight orphanages were established throughout the Athens area, providing shelter and food for 204 children.⁶⁶³ Organization officials also provided funds to foster parents to care for children until they found permanent homes.⁶⁶⁴ One hundred and fifty nine children remained off the streets because of this program. To ease the psychological burden placed on women concerned about their inability to provide for their families, the organization allocated 2,859,447, 376 drachmas to pay 28, 900 women to work for the organization.⁶⁶⁵

In addition to providing for the poorer citizens of the Athens-Piraeus area, the organization established fifty regional branches by the end of 1942, making it a nationwide organization.⁶⁶⁶ Usually, the initial step became providing funds to a local metropolitan until a leadership committee similar in makeup to the Central Committee could establish a local branch. The amount provided to a region depended on the size of

⁶⁶¹ *Athens News* August 5, 1943.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ EOHA Report, 6-7.

the population and extenuating circumstances. For instance, Thessaloniki received the most assistance, roughly 125, 200,000 drachmas in 1942, because it was the nation's second largest city, and to help provide for the many refugees who settled in the city after conditions in the Bulgarian occupation zone forced them to flee their homes.⁶⁶⁷

Meanwhile, Zihnos, a relatively small and sparsely populated area received only 177,000 drachmas for the region's destitute.⁶⁶⁸ While the benefits of EOHA policy could not be provided for all those in need, they allowed for a portion of the most needy to receive enough food to stay alive. For instance, in Corinth 4,700,000 drachmas of the EOHA fund, coupled with the 3,000,000 donated by generous citizens, helped provide daily meals to 2, 884 children. In Sparta, EOHA formed a local branch in September 1942, and established two local shelters that fed 1,200 children daily.⁶⁶⁹

By the end of the occupation, the organization had made major strides. For instance, the number of children afflicted with Trachoma receiving shelter and medical attention by the organization nearly doubled from 1, 012 in 1943 to 1, 840 a year later.⁶⁷⁰ Another group that needed assistance was students of the University of Athens whose parents either lived abroad or could not return to their homes. EOHA, with the assistance of the Committee of Administrative Assistance in Greece, provided food, clothing, and other necessities to 1,432 students who had nowhere else to turn from 1942 until the end of the occupation.⁶⁷¹ EOHA also provided free medical attention to the destitute in increasing numbers by the end of the occupation: 82, 049 in 1942; 86, 262 in 1943; and

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid, 49.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., 59-61.

⁶⁷⁰ Venezis, 168.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 170-171.

27, 319 in the first six months of 1944.⁶⁷² While EOHA focused much of its resources on feeding the children and the physically challenged, the organization also established women's clinics to cater to the needs of needy women. By the end of the occupation, nearly 36,000 women had received medical attention in EOHA women's clinics.⁶⁷³ In addition to these groups, some raw numbers provide an indication of the increasing ability of the organization to procure vital goods for the neediest members of society. For instance, the number of milk portions distributed to children increased nearly eight-fold from 1942-1944, from 480, 834 to 3,403,964.⁶⁷⁴

In short, the organization accomplished a considerable amount when one considers the circumstances and limited resources at its disposal. Evidence of its accomplishments, which can be measured partially by the type of statistical data provided above, but also by the fact that the church-led organization demonstrated its competence to the population. It accomplished this despite Damaskinos. According to Christidis, while presiding over the organization and intervening on its behalf with the occupation authorities, he could have played a more constructive role in its administration.

Even with EOHA, Damaskinos played a small role in the everyday decision-making process. Specific problems which arose, however, demanded that he intervene with the occupation authorities on behalf of the organization. As mentioned earlier, German pillaging, government ineptitude, and hoarding in the countryside. This ensured that the state received little from the countryside to feed the urban population, meaning that Damaskinos depended on the occupation authorities to receive domestic goods. On numerous occasions, Damaskinos needed to intervene with the Greek government or the

⁶⁷² Ibid., 171-172.

⁶⁷³ Ibid., 172-173.

⁶⁷⁴ *Mnimes kai Martyries (Memories and Eyewitness Accounts)*, 258.

occupation authorities to ensure that the organization receive its allotted share of the domestic olive oil supply collected by the occupation authorities. Although he did not always succeed in his efforts, he proved, yet again, that circumstances demanded his intervention regardless of the results.

A striking example of Damaskinos' need to intervene with the occupation authorities took place soon after the creation of EOHA in December 1941. While the hierarch continued to hold out hope that outside assistance could save the population, he understood that the occupation needed to make domestic products available to the church's organization. In the first month of that fateful winter of 1941-1942, he met with representatives of both occupying powers to negotiate for the acquisition of 3,000 tons of domestic olive oil from the island for EOHA.⁶⁷⁵ Specifically, he wanted the oil to feed the neediest members of Greek society: preschool children, and the disabled...⁶⁷⁶ After some discussion, the German diplomat informed the head of the church that he could provide 300 tons, a tenth of the amount requested. EOHA would receive a portion of the incoming shipments, as they arrived.⁶⁷⁷ However, further problems emerged, as the Germans did not keep their word.⁶⁷⁸ For instance, during the second shipment, the church was meant to receive half of the 100 ton shipment from Mytilini. But when the shipment arrived in Piraeus, Axis officials informed EOHA representatives that they could only spare six tons. Minister of Welfare Kostas Gotzamanis, however, prevented the organization from receiving even that small portion.⁶⁷⁹ Infuriated, Damaskinos sent a letter to Tsolakoglou complaining about the actions of his minister. After a number of

⁶⁷⁵ Venezis, 152-155.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 153-154.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 154.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., 156.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

letters were exchanged, the church did not receive even a drop of oil from the shipment. Damaskinos, however, succeeded in procuring the third shipment of thirteen tons of oil.⁶⁸⁰ His success symbolized a minor victory after a series of letters and meetings with members of the Greek government and their Axis patrons. Without his persistence, however, it appears unlikely the Germans planned to provide EOHA with anything. In short, only his personal intervention on behalf of an organization, with its limited resources and few other influential leaders, ensured that the organization receive any portion of the crop.

Though the organization received much praise, external and internal problems limited its effectiveness in combating the crisis facing the nation during the occupation. Internal factors including inconsistent leadership, unrealistic solutions to problems stemming from an overly academic approach to the functioning of the organization, over bureaucratization, and lack of personnel posed serious problem for the organization. Externally, Axis obstacles and The Red Cross created resource issues for the organization. Disagreement and lack of coordination between the ministry of welfare and the Church also created unnecessary setbacks. Most unfortunate, however, was the bad press the organization received from the Communist press. While some of the accusations were likely unfounded, at least one charge of fiscal mismanagement concerned some within the leadership.

Lack of appropriate oversight from the archbishop allowed for a number of these internal problems to grow. As an auxiliary inspector and member of the leadership committee, Christos Christidis thought that the lack of Damaskinos' oversight of the organization and apparent absence from some of the committee's meetings allowed for

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., 157-165.

the development and growth of problems related to the over-bureaucratization of EOHA, which disillusioned much of its volunteer staff. For instance, he noted in his diary on March 8, 1942 that the leadership lacked a pragmatic approach to the problems facing the organization. “We had a meeting at the office of the archbishop of auxiliary inspectors of EOHA, under the archbishop. We struggled from five until seven with little result. I asserted again how much the intellectuals approach the questions from the narrowest point of view, and how they are bogged down by the details and press.”⁶⁸¹ He concluded that this type of disagreement created internal tension and negatively affected the running of the organization. “The apparent tension had led me to conclude that neither were we doing a job nor were the Athens public works performing well.”⁶⁸²

On another occasion, when the committee met to debate the prudence of creating a consultative body to examine the interworking of the organization’s administration, it illustrated the type of over bureaucratization of EOHA Christidis mentioned.⁶⁸³ The meeting, according to Christidis also exemplified the overall problems facing the organization, something even Damaskinos acknowledged. The author, according to his account, began by providing an alternative to this, and in his eyes worthless, consultative body. “I had recommended that Damaskinos preside over the next meeting in order to listen to our suggestions.”⁶⁸⁴ Here, Christidis reiterated the need for Damaskinos’ frequent presence at these meetings. As, it appears, he believed that only the archbishop had both the pragmatism and gravitas to reign in the intellectuals. The hierarch’s rejection of the formation of such a committee and the immediate shift in topic indicated

⁶⁸¹ Christidis, 223.

⁶⁸² Ibid., 272.

⁶⁸³ Christidis, 294.

⁶⁸⁴ Christidis, 295.

that his presence meant a lot at these meetings. Moreover, Christidis approved of the president's plan indicating that he appreciated his input. Damaskinos understood that the organization needed outside consulting, but over other issues not administration. More importantly, however, considered the recommendation of such a consultative body part of larger problems plaguing the organization, and how the rejection of such plan by a faction within the leadership reflected these problems. "I tried to explain to the archbishop that the opposition of the inspectors was not out of sensitivity, or a question of priorities."⁶⁸⁵ He proceeded to elaborate his point. "Rather that it was an opportunity to express the disenchantment that had developed from the schism that emerged since EOHA started to become an organization bogged down by laws, press, bureaucracy, similar to a government department."⁶⁸⁶ Christidis explained why the current state of the leadership and its decision making had a negative impact on many of the organization's volunteers; the backbone of the organization and the majority of its workforce. "Those who make up the volunteer component are worried about the character that the organization is developing, and that some of the enthusiasm and emotion is being lost, and something is being drained by the press and the bureaucracy."⁶⁸⁷

In addition to these problems plaguing the leadership, the organization faced other critical issues. Coordination between the organization and the ministry of public welfare, for example, created considerable problems for large families because of unequal distribution. "Today antagonisms exist between the children's public soup kitchens and those of EOHA. In addition, we also have the schoolchildren soup kitchens

⁶⁸⁵ Christidis, 295.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid.

(which provide for children from ages seven to fourteen).”⁶⁸⁸ The plethora of food kitchens proved to be a serious problem for large families, in particular. “Thus, one family must, in order to receive less than one portion for every member, if it has many members, go to three or four food centers. Others can receive double portions. Basically, chaos.”⁶⁸⁹

Later on November 22, 1942, he made an even harsher criticism of EOHA and other public relief organizations in response to criticisms by the government and EOHA officials regarding the Red Cross’s decision to distribute its foodstuffs both to these organizations and to local grocers, giving people a choice of where to buy their goods. These complaints were due to the decision by these grocers to hoard the products and sell them on the black market. The author contends that the solution was fair, because it gave people a choice. His most venomous criticism, however, was for EOHA and the public soup kitchens. “Organized philanthropy had turned into organized disgrace of the destitute and their tactless manipulation. [One observed the following:] insults, mistreatment, total indifference toward the misfortunate people, embezzlement, and selfishness.”⁶⁹⁰ He stated that this drove people away, looking elsewhere for relief, at least until winter set in and need for fuel forced them to return. “Of course, the absence of heating fuel—coal costs 1000 drachmas an oka, and wood above 300—will force people slowly to return to the shelters—but they will do it due to higher pressure.” It must be noted that this did not refer exclusively to EOHA. Most importantly, he noted that the Communists sent agents to these places to take advantage of this situation. This

⁶⁸⁸ Christidis, 219.

⁶⁸⁹ Christidis, 220.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 317.

was a great concern for Christidis, for he feared and disliked EAM-ELAS and its growing power.

This concern about poor press, especially by the left, caught the attention of Christidis on another occasion in July 1943. On the twenty-fifth of that month, he noted in his diary that only 25,000,000 of the 300,000,000 drachmas monthly budget of the organization went to feed the Athenian poor.⁶⁹¹ He speculates that much of the budget went for wages, but was unsure where the rest went. “I do not know what happened to the rest, however, a very large portion goes to employee wages. I know, however, that the activity of EOHA—meaning its shortcomings--constitutes popular “assistance” for communist propaganda.”⁶⁹² If the organization faced an internal and external image problem, it undermined the effort of the organization.

Despite all the problems mentioned above by Christidis, the organization accomplished a considerable amount. When compared to the number of those who perished as a result of the famine in Greece during the occupation, EOHA, with the assistance of the Red Cross, Greek volunteers, and the inconsistent assistance of the occupation authorities in Athens, helped reduce the number of deaths after the tragic winter of 1941-1942. Leading this effort, Damaskinos strove to insure that the organization received the necessary resources to fulfill its mission. While not always successful, he remained a symbol of action and hope to a desperate population struggling to survive the occupation. Despite these limitations, some statistical data may give a general picture of the work of the organization during the period. According to the most

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 402-403.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

recent study of the organization, EOHA soup-kitchens saved the lives of 400,000 children, 4,000 pregnant women, and 23,000 disabled persons.

In addition to the official church's response, the Zoe brotherhood played an important role in caring for the destitute during the occupation. The Zoe brotherhood, which was founded by Archimandrite Evsevios Matthopoulos in 1907, emerged due to the dissatisfaction some segments of the clergy and lay members of Greek society had with the Church's ability to cater to the religious needs of the nation. The organization won considerable support and grew in popularity in its first few decades of existence. As with the official church, the organization provided assistance and moral support to the men at the front. For example, they provided material and spiritual support to the wounded soldiers returning from the front; assisted their families; and collected food, money and other resources for the war effort. Some statistical data included 12,000 free medical visits by 325 doctors at no charge, and thousands of socks, gloves and scarves for the soldiers at the front.⁶⁹³

During the war many of the organizations affiliated with Zoe's welfare effort during the conflict continued under the umbrella institution Apostolos Pavlos. This organization utilized numerous methods to provide for the needy including resources from their land, public pleas and printed requests through the journals *Aktines* and *Zoe*, and by cooperating with the Red Cross and other philanthropic organizations. The organization, for instance, used much of the crop yield and the livestock raised to provide for the destitute, utilizing transportation services purchased by the organization. Another

⁶⁹³ Vasilios Makrides, "The Greek Orthodox Church and Social Welfare During World War II," in *Bearing Gifts to Greeks, Humanitarian Aid to Greece in the 1940s*, ed. Richard Clogg (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 158.

important source of income came through the payment in kind for subscriptions to their publications.⁶⁹⁴

Like with EOHA, the organization founded soup kitchens beginning in March 1942, which were largely run by organization volunteers. In addition to the food kitchens, the organization provided poor university students with clothing and assistance to victims of bombings. Like Damaskinos, the organization intervened with the occupation authorities on behalf of prisoners, even attempting to negotiate their release.⁶⁹⁵ The brotherhood also spread its welfare mission to the countryside, and had considerable influence in Thessaloniki in particular. Under the leadership of Archimandrite Leonidas Paraskevopoulos and the lay theological Athanasios Phrangopoulos, the organization founded several soup kitchens. Their efforts saved the lives of thousands.⁶⁹⁶

Despite the valiant efforts of EOHA and ZOE, local hierarchs needed to supplement the funds they received from EOHA to confront the food crisis in their ecclesiastical see. Two important examples of the efforts made by local hierarchs, include those of the metropolis of Crete and the metropolitan of Dimitiria, Ioakeim. In these two cases, local church leaders had to begin confronting the food crisis in their regions well before the creating of EOHA, and even afterwards, as the money and organization could only partially fulfill their flocks' needs. In some cases, as was the case in Dimitiria, the metropolitans needed to negotiate with local Axis officials and members of the Red Cross, when possible. Their efforts testify both to the limitations of

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 158-159.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 159-160.

⁶⁹⁶ For more information about the organization's efforts in Thessaloniki see Makrides, "The Greek Orthodox Church and Social Welfare During World War II.",

EOHA to fight the crisis, especially in the countryside and the sheer magnitude and impact of the famine. The fact remained that the sheer number of those incapable of providing for their families numbered in the millions, and the organization lacked the necessary funds, organization, and labor force to provide for all those needing its assistance.

In Crete, local ecclesiastical authorities including the bishop of Crete, who was in exile in Athens for much of the occupation, raised much of the funding for the church's welfare work on the island. Obviously, the local ecclesiastical authorities could not wait for assistance from Athens, and even after EOHA began sending funds and established local branches, ecclesiastical leaders needed to supplement the meager funds provided by the organization with funds they raised themselves. At the beginning of the occupation, for instance, the bishop of Petras Dionysios helped establish and lead the National Organization of Solidarity (EOHA), which was created by the bishop and members of the local resistance in the region of Lasithi.⁶⁹⁷ Meanwhile in 1942 a series of island-wide Annexes were created to combat the crisis. The most important of these was the Holy Metropolis of Crete, led by Eugenios Psallidakis.⁶⁹⁸ It was only in August 1943 that Damaskinos' organization began helping the island's needy. In Crete, the EOHA operated similarly to the way it did on the mainland, having both regional and local branches, headed by the church. It appears, however, the Central Committee provided meager funds.⁶⁹⁹ However, the island's various branches also benefitted from the efforts of its exiled metropolitan of Crete, Vasilios [exiled from March 1942], who established

⁶⁹⁷ Antonios Sanoudakis, *Ekklesia Kai Antistasi, O Rolos tis Ekklesias tis Kritis stis, Metaksy ton Antistasiakon Organoseon Scheseis (Church and Resistance, the Role of the Church of Crete, Relations among Resistance Organizations)* (Athens: Knosos, 1993), 114.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., 117-118.

the “Pan-Hellenic Fund for Needy Cretans” that sent money to the organization.⁷⁰⁰ In addition, the organization received money from a local British representative. Local bishops, however, also relied on the funds they raised from wealthy philanthropic Cretans. Antonios Sanoudakis summarized the path required of the Cretan hierarchs to combat the crisis, “This struggle of solidarity is united, with the church working with all the powers of the nation, as apparent from the highest text in the diary of [bishop of] Petras, Dionysios from February 1, 1942, who works closely with Rousos Koundouros, the esteemed EAM official”⁷⁰¹ In short, although EOHA funds helped feed some members of Cretan society, Cretan hierarchs needed to raise funds both on the island and the mainland, work with local notables (including members of the resistance), and members of the local Red Cross to provide for the population.

The famine in the region of Dimitria made a considerable impression on its Metropolitan, Ioakeim. From the beginning of the occupation, the local church leadership needed to contend with a series of welfare issues resulting from the large number of Greek soldiers returning from the front. Most importantly, Metropolitan Ioakeim used church funds to feed the soldiers and help them return to their homes.⁷⁰² As with the rest of the country, signs of an imminent famine concerned the religious leader. “Sugar, milk, bread, olive and other important products began to disappear from November 1941.”⁷⁰³ This lack of foodstuffs and fuel led to the death of 1,000 members of his flock, five times the average number of deaths from the previous two years. He and other local notables formed a committee and traveled to Athens to express their

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., 118.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., 119.

⁷⁰² Metropolitan of Dimitria Ioakeim, *Metaksy Katahtiton Kai Antarton (between Occupiers and Resisters)* (Athens: X Synodinos, 1950, 21-22.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 33.

concerns to the government. At home, Ioakeim and the church, through the General Charity Fund (established in 1936) attempted to provide at least a single meal to the region's poorest children, but failed.⁷⁰⁴ Although other efforts were made, only a fraction of the children received a meal intermittently. Despite these shortcomings, the organization received praise from the local press.

During another trip to Athens in September 1942, he succeeded in procuring 100,000,000 drachmas and 400,000 okas of olive oil for the soup kitchens. Food shortages proved so difficult, however, that Ioakeim had to ensure that the cemetery workers had enough food to prepare the grave for the many Greek who perished because from famine.⁷⁰⁵ In 1943, after the International Red Cross became involved in relieving the situation in Greece, he traveled to Athens again to plead for more flour for his flock, but was informed that everything possible was being done for Volos.⁷⁰⁶

Soon, the Central Charity Fund became the central welfare organization in the diocese, as other public welfare organizations lacked the funds to continue. Unlike in Athens, however, the organization did not fall under the jurisdiction of EOHA, but rather created similar clinics and other facilities to cater to the needs of the destitute.⁷⁰⁷ Funds and resources became a major problem for the Fund, but thanks to the kindness of the local notables and shop owners, the money raised from Sunday donations, and the sale of candles and other church valuables, and goods grown on the land of local monasteries, the church succeeded in providing a modest welfare organization in the diocese.⁷⁰⁸ While a local EOHA branch did not exist, the metropolitan notes that the Fund received some

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 37-38.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 51-69.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., 46-51.

financial assistance from the organization for a little less than a year. Like with the rest of the welfare operations in Greece, the majority of the foodstuffs came from the Red Cross for the needy children. Interestingly, the local German commander Helmut Seffel left 10,000 okas of wheat in two German silos when the Germans departed in 1944.⁷⁰⁹

One can see in the case of the Volos region, that Ioakeim needed to use all the church's resource and depend on the kindness of wealthy members of society, the Red Cross and, interestingly, the Germans to help fund the umbrella relief organization established in his diocese. It is of particular interest that the metropolitan commented on the insignificant support provided by EOHA to assist the impoverished of the local diocese. Like in Crete, the local church leadership needed to rely on its own resourcefulness coupled with outside assistance from the Red Cross and other charitable individuals and organizations. As with Damaskinos in Athens, the local hierarch needed found himself in negotiations with Greek politicians and Red Cross officials in order to find resources for his beleaguered flock.

From the frequent negotiations of Damaskinos in the second half of 1941 to the numerous trips made by Metropolitan of Dimitria Ioakeim, the leadership of the Church of Greece needed to take a prominent role in finding a solution to the food crisis. The obvious benefits to ameliorating the horrific conditions of the famine led German officials to work with Damaskinos toward finding a solution. Although they refused to grant all his requests, Gunther Altenburg and his colleague Neubacher both realized that German occupation costs and their Army's general policy of forced requisitioning of food and, in many cases, blatant looting exponentially increased the resentment the local

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., 56.

population felt for the Germans. However, local hierarchs depended on the kindness of the local notables and shop owners to help resolve the food crises.

Chapter VIII

The Path of Passive Resistance and Protest:

The Response of the Church of Greece to Bulgarian Occupation Policies and the Holocaust

The Church of Greece remained divided throughout the occupation on the issue of how to express their opposition to the occupation, especially excessive Axis brutality. A majority of the hierarchy preferred expressing their opposition through official protests to the foreign occupier and their Greek clients and/or through passive forms of subversion, such as providing refuge or false documentation to groups persecuted by the authorities, or, in a few instances, categorically refusing to cooperate with the occupation authorities in their effort to implement policies deemed amoral and detrimental to the wellbeing of the nation. Led by Damaskinos, this faction of the church preferred this option because they deemed it the most practical way to assist those in need while continuing to maintain a healthy relationship with the occupation authorities in order to gain further concessions regarding other critical issues. In contrast, a small group within the hierarchy and much of the lower clergy either joined or sympathized with the resistance, especially EAM-ELAS, in an effort to liberate the nation and to provide for the needy through the organization's philanthropic wing, Ethniki Allilengyi (National Solidarity). This faction will receive further attention in the following chapter.

This chapter examines the way members of the church, especially the hierarchy, resisted Axis policy in their country through passive and accepted means. Damaskinos and other clerics viewed two Axis policies as being so detrimental to the nation's future

that they deemed open though non-violent forms of resistance the only acceptable path: Bulgarian occupation policy in Greek Macedonia and Thrace and the Holocaust. Regarding the former issue, the nation's clergy overwhelmingly opposed Bulgarian policy in Macedonia and Thrace because they concluded that their northern neighbor planned to Bulgarianize, or change the ethnographic makeup of the territories by expelling the Greek leadership and terrorizing the population to such an extent that it would flee from the territories. This would allow the Bulgarians the ability to permanently incorporate this territory into the Bulgarian state at the end of the war. Due to the expulsion of the Greek clergy from the territory, however, opposition took place in the form of formal complaints to the occupation authorities in Athens and Thessaloniki. Ultimately, however, these protests fell on deaf ears, as Berlin refused to force the Bulgarians to scale back their efforts, for the most part, due to increasing German dependence on Bulgarian manpower to occupy parts of Greece and Yugoslavia in the later stages of the war. Regarding the Holocaust, the church, led by Damaskinos, opposed the persecution of the Jewish community, especially its deportation, which began in March 1943. And, in the cases where the Greek Church, joined by local civilian leaders, aggressively subverted German efforts by offering direct assistance to the community, the local Greek Jews survived at a much higher rate. However, as a result of the tardiness with which the church realized the extent of the danger to the Jewish community, coupled with the refusal of some members of the hierarchy to actively subvert German policy, Germans were able to deport and, ultimately, murder 90% of Greek Jewry by the end of the war. According to at least one historian, the church's response to these two issues (Bulgarian occupation policy and the Holocaust) are linked

in the sense that the overwhelming concern of Metropolitan Gennadios of Thessaloniki for the future fate of the Bulgarian occupied territories led him to limit the extent to which he was willing to oppose the deportation of the community in the city (by far the largest community in Greece), especially after it became clear that the Germans would not change their mind regarding the matter.⁷¹⁰ This chapter suggests that, despite the failure of the church to cause a significant change in Bulgarian occupation policy or save the majority of the Greek Jewish community from deportation and death, the efforts of the Archbishop and a number of his colleagues played a fundamental role in confirming the new expanded 'ethnarchic' role played by this faction of the clergy during the Axis occupation. Although they were unwilling to actively oppose the Axis, they understood that, as national and moral leaders, their national and religious obligations forced them to oppose these policies.

Weeks into the occupation, the Church and the government began receiving disturbing news from the Bulgarian occupied territories. Letters from exiled prelates, former mayors and other notables who were expelled from the occupation zone by Germany's Axis partner painted a very grim picture of the situation in those territories. Based on the existing scholarship, a few important facts can be gleaned about Bulgarian policy in these territories: the systematic attempt by the occupation authorities to change the ethnographic makeup of these territories; to undermine the two pillars of Greek culture, the church and the education system, by forcing prelates, notables and scholars to flee to the German zone in Macedonia; and, to replace the expellees and the refugees with

⁷¹⁰ Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf., 2004), 410.

Bulgarian civil, ecclesiastical and intellectual leaders as well as colonists.⁷¹¹ In addition, an uprising in the city of Drama, staged by Bulgarian dissidents and frustrated Greeks in September 1941, gave the Bulgarian authorities the opportunity to punish the local population, a punishment which included the massacre of the whole male population of surrounding villages and other acts of brutality.⁷¹² In the aftermath of the Drama incident, thousands more fled the Bulgarian zone.

The Church received special attention by the Bulgarian authorities because the government and the ecclesiastical authorities understood that the Greek hierarchs could serve as a lightning rod for resistance to their plans.⁷¹³ A group of Greek professors from the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki astutely articulated the goals of the occupation authorities toward the church in their report to the United Nations after the war. "The aims pursued: to Bulgarise the Greek Church and the education system... [and] to deprive the Greek population of their spiritual leaders and of all those who

⁷¹¹ Accounts of Bulgarian policy began to filter into Athens and Thessaloniki within weeks of the beginning of the Bulgarian occupation of those territories in May-June 1941. For more information on Bulgarian policy in Greek Macedonia and Thrace during the occupation see Athanasios Chrysohoou, *I Katohi en Makedonia (the Occupation in Macedonia)* 4 vols. (Thessaloniki: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1949), Xanthippi Kotzageorgi and Georgios Kazamias, *I Voulgariki Katohi stin Anatoliki Makedonia kai ti Thraki, 1941-1944: Kathestos, Parametroi, Synepeies (the Bulgarian Occupation of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, 1941-1944, Government, Parameters, and Consequences)* (Thessaloniki, Greece: Paratiritis, 2002), Xanthippi Kotzageorgi, "Population Changes in Eastern Macedonia and in Thrace: The Legislative "Initiatives" of the Bulgarian Authorities (1941-1944)," *Balkan Studies* 37, no. 1 (1996): 133-164, Xanthippi Kotzageorgi, and Georgios A. Kazamias, "The Bulgarian Occupation of the Prefecture of Drama (1941-1944) and Its Consequences on the Greek Population " *Balkan Studies* 35, no. 1: 81-112 (1994), Marshall Miller, *Bulgaria During the Second World War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), 122-134, Hans-Joachim Hoppe, "Germany, Bulgaria, Greece: Their Relations and Bulgarian Policy in Occupied Greece," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 11, no. 3 (1984): 41-54, ———, "Bulgarian Nationalities Policy in Occupied Thrace and Aegean Macedonia," *National Papers* 14, no. 1-2 (1986): 89-100.

⁷¹² Kotzageorgi, *I Voulgariki Katohi stin Anatoliki Makedonia kai ti Thraki*, 201-204, K Snok, *I Tragodia tis Dramas (the Tragedy of Drama)* (Drama: 1945).

⁷¹³ For a Bulgarian perspective on church policy in Greek Macedonia and Thrace see Vania Stoianova, "Bulgarian Orthodox Church and Bulgarian National Question (1941-1944)," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 25, no. 2 (1997): 96-107.

through their influence and authority might have added to their courage in adversity.”⁷¹⁴

The Bulgarian church leadership also expressed this view to the political authorities, as the church served as a spearhead of the effort to incorporate the territories into the Bulgarian ecclesiastical administration. For instance, the metropolitan of Nevrokop made the following statement during a conversation with Bulgarian Prime Minister Filov: “Our Orthodox Church is a national church, and with this in mind, no hierarch or hierarchical committee can remain here.”⁷¹⁵ Bulgarian ecclesiastical authorities officially approved this policy during various Synod meetings in the first few months of the occupation. For instance, on April 29, 1941 the Synod passed a resolution that called for “the subjugation of the Greek Churches to the Bulgarian Metropolis of Nevrokop and Philippopolis.”⁷¹⁶ And, two months later, on June 20, 1941 they ruled on the use of the Greek language during liturgical services: “[The] allowance of only occasional co-existence of the Greek and the Bulgarian language in the Divine Liturgy.”⁷¹⁷

Evidence of the execution of this policy came in a letter from the Mayor of Florina to the Governor General of Macedonia: “The priests in the various areas are receiving an unbelievable amount of pressure from the authorities to give their sermons in Bulgarian, in some places this is taking place.”⁷¹⁸ Bulgarian military and ecclesiastical leaders in the occupied territories used the spirit of this proclamation when pursuing this

⁷¹⁴ *Bulgarian Atrocities in Greek Macedonia and Thrace, 1941-1944 [I.E. 1945] a Report of Professors of the Universities of Athens and Salonica* (1945), 21.

⁷¹⁵ Vania Stoianova, “Bulgarskata Pravoslavna Tsurkva V Belomorskata Oblast 1941-1944 Godina (the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the Aegean Region, 1941-44),” *Istoricheski Pregled* 49, no. 4 (1993): 145. Cited in Kotzageorgi, *I Voulgariki Katohi stin Anatoliki Makedonia kai ti Thraki*, 72.

⁷¹⁶ Decision of the Synod of the Bulgarian Church, April 29, 1941: The Subjugation of the Greek Churches to the Bulgarian Metropolis of Nevrokopion and Philippopolis. Cited in Kotzageorgi, “Population Changes in Eastern Macedonia and in Thrace”: 159.

⁷¹⁷ Decision of the Bulgarian Synod June 20, 1941: Allowance of only occasional co-existence of the Greek and the Bulgarian language in the Divine Liturgy. Cited in *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁸ Letter from the Office of the Mayor of Florina to the Governor General of Macedonia. July 3, 1941. AYE, 1941 (4) 2nd Subfolder A Political Affairs (1941-1944) Bulgarian Atrocities, Bulgarian Propaganda, Eye-witness Accounts, and Reports.

policy, which resulted in the expulsion of the metropolitans of Serres, Konstantinos, Sidirokastros Vasilios, Zihnos Alexandros, temporary metropolitan of Drama Archimandrite Ieronymos Giamalakis, Maroneia and Thasos Vasileios, the temporary metropolitan of Kavalla Archimandrite Konstantinos Chronis, and the temporary metropolitan of Alexandroupoulos, Bishop Pataro Meletios.⁷¹⁹ Abbots of local monasteries, such as Ignatius, of the Timios Prodromos Monastery in Serres, and many members of the lower clergy also needed to leave their homes as part of Bulgarian church policy in the occupied territories.⁷²⁰ In addition to expelling and abusing much of the Greek clergy, they robbed many of the metropolitan churches and monasteries, taking anything of value.⁷²¹ These types of excesses led many in Greece to prefer life, as deplorable as it was, in the German zone of occupation.

However, when reading the reports from these Greek officials, one quickly realizes that it was not the policy alone, but the brutality with which it was executed that deeply concerned the Greek leadership. For example, Governor General of Thessaloniki, Nikos Rangavis, sent a letter to Tsolakoglou on June 17, 1941 describing the Bulgarian policies on the occupied territories. “The Bulgarians demanded that the ecclesiastical leaders of the Orthodox Church leave within 24-48 hours...They were not permitted to take anything with them except their clothes and whatever they could take in the short

⁷¹⁹Kotzageorgi, *I Voulgariki Katohi Stin Anatoliki Makedonia Kai Ti Thraki, 1941-1944: Kathestos, Parametroi, Synepeties (the Bulgarian Occupation of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, 1941-1944, Government, Parameters, and Consequences)*, 72-3, A. Papaevgeniou, *Martyres Klirikoi Makedonias-Thrakias (1941-1945) (Clerical Martyrs of Macedonia and Thrace (1941-1945))* (Athens: 1945),61-66.

⁷²⁰ Kotzageorgi, *I Voulgariki Katohi* , 73.

⁷²¹ The numerous reports flooding into the officer of the Governor General of Macedonia and the Prime Minister describe these methods in some detail.

time they had.”⁷²² Not only that, but the Bulgarian border officials usually confiscated anything of value before expelling them to the German zone.⁷²³

According to the reports submitted by individuals who endured Bulgarian policy during World War I (1916-1918), the Bulgarians executed their policy more brutally than they did during the previous occupation. The Mayor of Drama, Athanasios Triandafylidis, in a letter to Tsolakoglou dated July 26, 1941, stated that this occupation “is far more barbaric and harsh than that of 1916-1918.”⁷²⁴ In addition, Triandafylidis compared the short German occupation to that of the Bulgarians: “The Germans basically respected the Greek leadership, but the situation changed on May 17, the day in which the Bulgarians took over occupation duties.”⁷²⁵ Specifically, he commented on the cultural and social policy of the occupation authorities. “Immediately, the Bulgarians seemed to have attacked the cultural and social pillars of the city, the schools and the churches.”⁷²⁶ Father Zaharios Papadopoulos from Xanthi, who was expelled by the Bulgarian occupation authorities, provides a detailed account of the methods in a letter he sent to the Governor General of Macedonia, which was forwarded to the prime minister’s office in August 1941. According to his account, the Bulgarian secret police entered his home at 4:30, forced him to hand over all his money and anything of value, and took him to their local office, where he was abused and received little food or water. Then, he and

⁷²² AYE, 1941 (4) 2nd Subfolder A Political Affairs (1941-1944) Bulgarian Atrocities, Bulgarian Propaganda, Eye-witness Accounts, and Reports, Letter from the Governor General of Macedonia Nikos Rangavis. To the Office of the Prime Minister June 9, 1941, Number 862B, Regarding Bulgarian Policies in Their Occupied Territories.

⁷²³ Ibid., AYE, 1941 (4) 2nd Subfolder A Political Affairs (1941-1944) Bulgarian Atrocities, Bulgarian Propaganda, Eye-witness Accounts, and Reports. Letter from the Governor General of Macedonia Nikos Rangavis, June 9, 1941.

⁷²⁴ AYE, 1941 (4) 2nd Subfolder A Political Affairs (1941-1944) Bulgarian Atrocities, Bulgarian Propaganda, Eye-witness Accounts, and Reports. Letter from the Mayor of Drama Athanasios Triandafylidis to Prime Minister Tsolakoglou, July 26, 1941.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

a group of notables were forced to leave the city. These are the type of reports that the church and political leadership received in Athens and Thessaloniki.⁷²⁷

Armed with this information, both metropolitans of Athens and Thessaloniki began protesting to the occupation authorities. As the situation worsened, as with the encroachment of the Bulgarian occupation authorities on the environs of Thessaloniki when the Germans handed the Bulgarians much of the territory around Thessaloniki and permitted a small group of Bulgarian officers residing in the city access to one of the largest churches in the city for their religious needs, the authorities continued to pressure the Germans for action, but to little avail. The Germans, for their part, were more concerned with their need for their ally to take on further responsibilities in Greece due to a critical shortage in manpower.

Metropolitan of Thessaloniki Gennadios Alexiadis took a special interest in the matter because he saw many of his brethren in the hierarchy who had fled from Bulgarian territory. He also viewed the Bulgarian occupation as a direct threat to his ecclesiastical see. He and other notables, therefore, formed an unofficial committee, Ethniko Makedoniko Symvoulío (The National Macedonian Committee) to intervene with the German occupation authorities.⁷²⁸ Other important individuals in this group were the local prefect Pellis and Athanasios Chrysohoou, a cavalry officer and Chief of Staff of General Tsolakoglou during the Albanian campaign. Chrysohoou played an important role in the local government, serving as General Advisor to the Prefecture (May 1941)

⁷²⁷ AYE, 1941 (4) 2nd Subfolder A Political Affairs (1941-1944) Bulgarian Atrocities, Bulgarian Propaganda, Eye-witness Accounts, and Reports, Letter by Governor General of Macedonia to Prime Minister's Office. August 28, 1941.

⁷²⁸ Mazower argues that the local authorities, including Gennadios, who were determined to prevent the Bulgarians from occupying all of Greek Macedonia, ceased to protest about the Jewish deportations once it became clear that the Germans would not give ground on the matter. This will receive further attention later in the chapter.

and Head of the Information and Public Enlightenment (March 1942) among other posts.⁷²⁹ Chrysohoou discusses the working of the organization and the role of Gennadios in his postwar memoir, *I Katohi en Makedonia* (The Occupation in Macedonia): “Due to the general anxiety of the population caused by [Bulgarian policies], these threats were discussed in the meetings of the National Macedonian Committee presided over by the metropolitan of Thessaloniki.”⁷³⁰ While led by the metropolitan, “this committee included important representatives from all of Macedonia...[including] all of the local hierarchs of Macedonia...and, in general, the highest members of government and the nation.”⁷³¹ While this group made formal complaints to the occupation authorities regarding Bulgarian policies, it also remained staunchly anti-Communist.⁷³²

In Athens, Damaskinos took special interest in the matter, as he regarded his intervention as obligatory as leader of the Church in Greece. His first step toward resolving the crisis came on August 19, 1941, when he sent a letter to Plenipotentiary Altenburg about the matter.⁷³³ In this letter, he emphasized the important difference between the short German occupation of late April and early May and the far more brutal and invasive period of Bulgarian occupation.⁷³⁴ As with his discussion of the food situation, he provided a detailed analysis of Bulgarian occupation policy and its assault on the Greek Church. For instance, he mentioned the prohibition on performing church

⁷²⁹Chrysohoou, *i Katohi en Makedonia (the Occupation in Macedonia)*, v.1, 44-45, Kotzageorgi, *I Voulgariki Katohi*, 30.

⁷³⁰ Chrysohoou, 44.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² For more information on the group’s position toward EAM-ELAS see: Ibid. 46-48, Cited in Karagiannis, 30.

⁷³³ A letter can be found in Ilias Venezis, *O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos : I Chronoi tis Douleias (Archbishop Damaskinos: The Years of Slavery)* (Estia, 1952), 27-31.

⁷³⁴ Ibid., 27-8

services in Greek, the replacement of Greek letters on Greek churches with Bulgarian, the robbing of the Greek churches, and the expulsion and poor treatment of a majority of the clergy.⁷³⁵

He also emphasized the brutality used by the Bulgarian authorities in their effort to change the ethnographic makeup of the occupied territory. “Also of interest is ...the systemic harsh violence [used to implement] the policy of Bulgarianization.”⁷³⁶ In addition, Damaskinos drew attention to the way the Bulgarian authorities robbed the metropolitan churches and treated the Greek clergy.⁷³⁷ He, no doubt, realized that the Bulgarians would pursue such a policy based on the recent history between the two nations, and, possibly, his own experience as a soldier in the Greek army during the Balkan wars.

Damaskinos concluded his letter by emphasizing the obligation of the church leadership to protest these inhumane and anti-Christian acts by the Bulgarian authorities: “The Greek Church, failing to possess any other means to protect its rights... has a responsibility...to express its concerns to his Excellency and request, through him, the intervention of the powerful Christian state, which he represents, for the restoration of the ecclesiastical situation.”⁷³⁸ Specifically, he insisted on the restoration of the clerics to their previous positions and restitution of their rights to perform their duties as Greek clerics. He demanded,

the return of the clergy of all ranks to their positions, through the restoration of the holy churches and metropolitanates, and through the recognition of...their right to free execution of their

⁷³⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., 29-30.

⁷³⁸ Ibid., 30.

Christian responsibility, including the unhampered ability to perform the rituals in the Greek language, the only... comprehensible language in those territories.⁷³⁹

In this passage, Damaskinos explained the consequences of Bulgarian policy in these territories. He understood that an assault on the Greek Church played a vital role in the Bulgarianization policy. In particular, his insistence on the use of the Greek language, the only intelligible language to the majority of the population, was vital to ensure the continued bond of the population to their faith. The Bulgarians understood this as well and hoped that this policy would force the Greek population to flee in order to change the ethnographic makeup in their favor. Damaskinos hoped that the Germans would take responsibility for the actions of their ally and intervene on behalf of the population placed under their protection. Although he did not state this point explicitly, his letter suggests that he considered the German occupation authorities responsible for the continued peaceful coexistence between the conquered and the conqueror, in ways similar to the relationship established between the Ottoman authorities and their Christian and Jewish subjects, basically obedience in return tolerance and protection. More importantly, he understood the dire consequences of Bulgarian policy if no one acted on behalf of the local Greek population. Thus, he deemed it his responsibility to express the concerns of his institution and nation to the appropriate authorities.

Damaskinos sent another letter to the plenipotentiary on January 22, 1942 after the situation deteriorated in the fall and winter of 1941-1942. It became so unbearable that it forced thousands more to flee east to the German occupation zone.⁷⁴⁰ The Bulgarian reprisals against the Greek population in response to the Drama uprising of

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 33-35.

September 1941 highlighted the increasingly brutal efforts of the Bulgarians to change the ethnographic makeup of their zone of occupation. The letter Damaskinos sent on January 22, 1942 expressed concern over these new measures, and, in particular, the increase in their intensity: "...As President of the Holy Synod, I am reporting the difficult and absolutely anti-Christian and inhumane measures executed by the Bulgarians in the Greek territories of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, which are under their military administration."⁷⁴¹ Here as Damaskinos emphasizes his concern about the brutality of these measures, he reminds the German authorities that, through their indifference, they are also responsible for the events unfolding in these territories. However, he holds out hope that the Germans will, "protect the unalienable national and ecclesiastical rights of the Greek people."⁷⁴²

Events in Thessaloniki, however, forced the archbishop to send yet another letter to Altenburg six days later. In Thessaloniki, the Bulgarian Officers Club began lobbying the Germans for permission to use a church of Sundays to fulfill their religious needs and those of Slavophone community.⁷⁴³ Toward this goal, the Bulgarian club asked the Germans for permission to occupy the Church of John Chrysostomos, a request that was finally granted on January 5, 1942.⁷⁴⁴ As evidence that the church was meant to be a step

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., 33.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ The Bulgarian Officers' Club began its work in Thessaloniki a few days after the Germans occupied the city on April 9, 1941, and served as a propaganda organ for the Bulgarian authorities. Its purpose was to appeal to the local Slavophone population, which numbered 94,500 based on the census of 1940. It hoped to expand the number of its supporters with an eye toward annexing Greek Macedonian territory to Bulgaria at the appropriate time. Basically, it pursued a similar policy to that of the military, civil, and religious authorities in the Greek territory occupied by the Bulgarian military in Thrace and Macedonia. The German authorities forced the Greek government to recognize the club in September 1941. For more information on the organization see: Christos Kardaras., *H Voulgariki Propaganda sti Germanokratoumeni Makedonia: Voulgariki Leshi Thessalonikis (1941-1944) (Bulgarian Propaganda in German-Controlled Macedonia: The Bulgarian Club of Thessaloniki (1941-1944)* (Athens: 1997), for Damaskinos' January 28 letter to Altenburg see Venezis, 35-37.

⁷⁴⁴ Venezis, 36, Kardaras, 63-7.

toward larger goals for the city, the Bulgarian authorities renamed the church Saint George's.⁷⁴⁵ Damaskinos and Gennadios viewed this move by the club as part of larger Bulgarian designs for the city, which was by no means unfounded.

Two other developments occurred that led to further protests by Damaskinos and his colleagues: the Bulgarian Citizenship Law of June 5, 1942 and the German decision to cede more territory to the Bulgarians in the summer of 1942 and later in February 1944. Regarding the Bulgarian Citizenship Law, the government passed the law in both Greek and Yugoslav occupied territory because the previous Bulgarianization policies were not efficient enough.⁷⁴⁶ Damaskinos, for obvious reasons, sent another letter to Altenburg regarding the matter on February 20, 1943.⁷⁴⁷ In this case, even the Germans thought the Bulgarians went too far. German officials in Greece, including Gunther Altenburg, complained to Berlin about the decision to hand over more territory to the Bulgarians. Altenburg succeeded in having the law suspended indefinitely, leading Venezis to note: "It is a victory."⁷⁴⁸

More disconcerting, however, for the church hierarchy and other Greek leaders was the ceding of further territory to the Bulgarians. Germany, however, had little choice. Setbacks in late 1942 and the first half of 1943 forced them to rely more heavily

⁷⁴⁵ The reason the Bulgarians chose the church was because the church began as a Bulgarian church. The Ottoman authorities granted the community permission to build a church at that site, however, it was not complete until after the Greeks annexed the city in 1912. Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶ According to this law, all Greeks and Yugoslavs who refuse to accept Bulgarian citizenship by April 1, 1943 would be expelled from 'Bulgarian' territory. For more detailed information on the law see Kotzageorgi, "Population Changes in Eastern Macedonia and in Thrace: The Legislative "Initiatives" of the Bulgarian Authorities (1941-1944)," 139-141, Hoppe, "Bulgarian Nationalities Policy in Occupied Thrace and Aegean Macedonia," 48-49, Miller, *Bulgaria During the Second World War*, 125. There is some debate over the date of the law. According to Miller and Hoppe (who cites Miller) the law was passed on June 10 while Kotzageorgi, citing Bulgarian newspapers, states the law was passed on June 5.

⁷⁴⁷ Venezis, 51-53.

⁷⁴⁸ Venezis, 54.

on Bulgarian occupation forces in the Balkans.⁷⁴⁹ At the beginning of July, news came that the Germans gave the Bulgarians further Greek territory to occupy in Macedonia, leading to protests in Athens on July 13 and 22; the latter led to the death of twenty-two Greeks when the Italians broke it up.⁷⁵⁰ Damaskinos discussed the matter with Prime Minister Rallis. In addition, Rallis sent a letter to Damaskinos stating that he planned to tender his resignation in light of these new developments. Ultimately, he did not follow through on this promise, something that severely damaged what had been close relations between Damaskinos and the final occupation prime minister. In addition, Prime Minister Rallis sent a letter of protest to Altenburg, and received a response confirming the aforementioned details.⁷⁵¹ After this recent development, having little faith in the efforts of Rallis, Damaskinos sent yet another letter to the occupation authorities about the mistreatment of the Greeks and the popular displeasure with the decision of the German government to cede further territory to the Bulgarians.⁷⁵²

Ultimately, these efforts by Damaskinos and his colleagues did not lead to a change in policy in Bulgarian occupied Greece. It does appear, however, that Altenburg spoke to his superior on a number of occasions regarding Bulgarian abuses. His impetus to do so was at least slightly motivated by the constant bombardment of letters from church and government officials. This policy also represented a conflict of interest between German military and diplomatic officials in Greece, who were concerned about

⁷⁴⁹ Miller, 131.

⁷⁵⁰ Venezis, 55.

⁷⁵¹ In a confidential letter sent to Damaskinos by Rallis, the prime minister informed the prelate that he had tendered his resignation to Altenburg after hearing this new development in Macedonia. After failing to follow through, Rallis sent a letter of protest to Altenburg regarding the increasing territorial control of the Bulgarians. Altenburg again reassured him that Greek territory in Macedonia remained part of Greece. For more on these exchanges between Altenburg and Rallis see: Demosthenes Koukounas, *O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos (Archbishop Damaskinos)* (Athens: Metron, 1991), 122-125, Venezis, 56-59.

⁷⁵² Venezis, 60-63.

the reaction of the Greek population, and those in Berlin who were far more concerned with the overall state of the war, especially the issue of manpower. Ultimately, while Berlin complained to Bulgarian officials in Sophia, their needs in the various military theaters prevented them from forcing any recognizable change in Bulgarian occupation policy. However, these efforts demonstrated to the population, which remained deeply disturbed about Bulgarian atrocities in their zone of occupation throughout the war, that the church refused to accept this policy passively.

Church opposition to the German persecution of Greek Jewry, however, yielded better results for numerous reasons: the physical presence of the hierarchy throughout German-occupied territory, the ability to use its influence to encourage the Christian population to assist their Jewish brethren, and the close cooperation between the Greek civilian authorities and the local church hierarchy (especially in Athens, Zakynthos, and Volos). One of the greatest problems facing the hierarchy in Bulgarian occupied territory remained the lack of a physical presence. In contrast, the Archbishop of Athens and others were present and used their influence with government officials and the local population (either directly or through subordinate clerics such as parish priests and monks) to assist the Jewish population residing in German-occupied Greece.

Damaskinos, in particular, took an active stance against this German policy, initially in the form of written and verbal protests to the occupation authorities and their Greek clients. Later this opposition took a more subversive character, which included the issuing of false baptismal papers, encouraging local Jewish leaders to refuse to cooperate with the Germans, providing refuge to Greek Jews in monasteries and orphanages, and the general unwillingness to cooperate with the occupation authorities in the

implementation of this policy. Although these passive and subversive forms of resistance were effective in some cases, the inability or unwillingness of some hierarchs to take an active stance against the Germans failed to impede, to a large extent, the near complete decimation of the Greek Jewish community (nearly 90%) during the occupation. In the cases where clerics, especially hierarchs, took an active role in assisting Greek Jews, the results were notable. However, the tardiness with which the church perceived the danger of this policy to the Jewish community as well as the unwillingness of some clerics to pressure the Germans or take action into their own hands, especially after the tragic deportation of the Jewish community of Thessaloniki, prevented a better overall effort in this matter.

In more conventional accounts of the period, the Greek Church is depicted as a major opponent of the Holocaust in Greece. For example, in his earlier work, Mark Mazower argues, "The Italians and the Greeks were disgusted by Nazi racial policy against the Jews, and even tried to oppose it."⁷⁵³ This statement summarizes the early and still popular perception of the Greek and Italian response to the Holocaust in Greece. The Church of Greece, in particular, received much praise in this generally accepted interpretation. Revisionist historians, however, led by Andrew Apostolou, Michael Matsas, Katherine Fleming, and even Mark Mazower in his more recent study, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*, have challenged this generally accepted position.⁷⁵⁴ These scholars identified the assistance of Greek leaders such as the Governor General of Thessaloniki,

⁷⁵³ Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 235.

⁷⁵⁴ Katherine Fleming, *Greece: A Jewish History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 110-144, Andrew Apostolou, "'The Exception of Salonika': Bystanders and Collaborators in Northern Greece" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14, no. 2 (2000): 165-96, Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430-1950*, 392-411.

Vasilios Simonidis, the weak response of other community institutions (such as the Thessaloniki business and professional community, and religious leaders, including the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki Gennadios and others), and the inability or unwillingness of the Christian population to assist their Jewish co-nationals as integral to the tragic success of the German effort to deport the Jews.⁷⁵⁵

The position of the Church with regards to the Holocaust in Greece and even the motivation behind the nature of the opposition posed by clerics such as Damaskinos have come to be questioned by recent scholars. These criticisms highlight the silence or indifference of clerics in some cities, point to the weak nature of the opposition, and question whether or not these men acted as representatives of the church or as individuals.⁷⁵⁶ Though receiving less attention by many of these critics, the timing of the Church's response to German policy toward the Jews, especially that of Damaskinos deserves attention.⁷⁵⁷ The church leadership in Athens was aware of the German persecution of the Jewish community as early as May 1941; however, they did not protest against the community's poor treatment until the deportations began in March 1943.⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁵ Mazower, *Salonica*, 409-411.

⁷⁵⁶ Michael Matsas, in particular, criticized the effort of scholars to make generalizations about the response of the church by looking to the example of Damaskinos: "In the literature, the Greek clergy is given the greatest credit for the survival of most of the Jews who were not captured. But if Archbishop Damaskinos helped save so many Jews, where were his counterparts—bishops of Ioannina, Arta, Preveza, Veria, Corfu, Rhodes and Hania—whose Jewish population were totally destroyed?" He also states that, "The difference between the archbishop and the bishops was that Damaskinos acted as a resistance leader in a city where the population was practically in revolt against the Germans." See Michael Matsas, *Illusion of Safety: The Story of the Greek Jews during World War II* (New York: Pella, 1997), 97. The problem with this assessment is that, if one looks at the language Damaskinos used throughout his letters to Altenburg regarding matters that concerned him, religion remained a constant theme; in other words, he was acting more as a cleric than as a member of the resistance.

⁷⁵⁷ Giorgos Margaritis made the following insightful comment about the church's timing: "Only when the 'Final Solution' appeared imminent did the Greek Orthodox Church decide to take action on the Jews of Salonika." George Margaritis, "The Greek Orthodox Church and the Holocaust," 10.

⁷⁵⁸ Christidis claims that he passed on a report to Chrysanthos on May 17 from a Jewish delegation from Thessaloniki: "Yesterday, Freddie Koen informed me that the Germans detained the head rabbi, Koretz, and that he had requested that his Grace (Chrysanthos) and professor Balanos be made aware of the situation. I agreed to help. The Jewish community (of Athens) is in such a state of terror that no one dared

This decision proved critical, as it meant that the Church lacked the time to marshal its limited resources and regional branches to respond effectively to the crisis.

The recent revisionist work on the Church and its response to the Holocaust in Greece, in spite of its weaknesses, has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the institution's record during this period. One of the most puzzling weaknesses in this scholarship lies in the argument, formulated by scholars such as Michael Matsas, that clerics such as Damaskinos and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos acted as patriots rather than as representatives of the Church of Greece. Damaskinos understood quite well what his obligations were as head of the Church. Throughout the occupation, clerics such as Damaskinos knew that as 'men of the cloth' during this critical period in the nation's history, their moral obligation to their flock demanded that their role expand rather than simply change. For instance, as a devout Christian leader, he knew that he had an obligation to oppose the inhumane actions taken by the occupation authorities against the Jewish population. He, like many others, understood that as hierarchs and popular public figures, the Axis needed to deal with them gingerly in order to avert negative public opinion both domestically and, especially, internationally. This explains why the German authorities did not take action against Damaskinos until May 1944, although they were probably aware of his effort to subvert their plans to deport the Athenian Jewish population among other issues, and even this decision to put Damaskinos under house arrest caused conflict between the SS and the

pass on the information. Manoli Triantafyllidis informed professor Balanos and I informed his grace." Unfortunately, this source remains to be the only one indicating that the Church had knowledge of German abuses against the Jewish community in Thessaloniki. However, Chrysanthos and his successor had contact with Gennadios in Thessaloniki, making such a statement very plausible. Christoforos Christidis, *Chronia Katohis, 1941-1944: Martyries Imerologiou, Prologos, Sympliomata Simeioseis (Occupation Years, 1941-1944: Diary, Prologue, Supplementary Material)* (Athens: Christoforos Christidis, 1971), 34.

German diplomatic representative responsible for Greece in 1944, Herman Neubacher.⁷⁵⁹ Even then the justification for his house arrest was given as suspicion of communicating with the Allies in the Middle East. Hence, the argument that Damaskinos acted as a Greek patriot or an individual underestimates the importance of his position within the church hierarchy.

Because of the danger posed by resisting or impeding Nazi Jewish policy in Greece, few written records exist that indicate that the Church leadership, and Damaskinos in particular, requested that local metropolitans oppose Nazi anti-Semitic policy. It must be noted, however, that the Germans, through their clients in the Greek government, would never allow such a message to be sent. Having said that, however, based on the letters of opposition sent by Damaskinos, the British and American archival source material and the existing survivor accounts, one can deduce that the head of the Church opposed this policy and encouraged clerics in the Athens area and the rest of the country to assist Greek Jews and encourage their flocks to do the same. One could even go one step further and state that Damaskinos hoped that other clerics elsewhere in Greece viewed his stand against this injustice as a symbol to follow suit in their respective diocese. Despite the difficulty posed in determining the rationale behind Damaskinos' opposition to German policy, one can determine, from the two letters he sent to Prime Minister Logothetopoulos and Plenipotentiary Altenburg, that he viewed the attack on the Jews as a threat to the nation. He described the Jewish community as a law-abiding community, which had made important contributions to the development of the nation and hence deserved the same treatment as Greek Christians. In particular, he emphasized the fact that the terms of the armistice stipulated that the occupation

⁷⁵⁹ For more on his house arrest see Koukounas, *Damaskinos*, 211-216.

authorities did not possess the right to deport any Greek citizen, regardless of their religious affiliation. In short, while one should view any generalizations about the Church's response to the Holocaust in Greece with skepticism, it is possible to argue that the example established by Damaskinos, especially given the numerous contemporary and postwar survivor accounts that claim that the hierarch instructed his clergy to assist the Jewish community in any way they could and to encourage the flocks to follow suit, served as an example of the moral stand an ecclesiastical and national leader needed to take against an enemy policy that threatened the fabric of Greek society. However, many clerics either failed to maintain the moral standard set by Damaskinos or chose to remain silent or lodge quiet protests without speaking openly against the policy. In short, while several individuals served as examples of moral courage, the institution's response came late and in far less strength than many expected.

Before examining the various responses of clerics to the German deportation of Greek Jewry, it is necessary to provide an analysis of how the tragic events unfolded to understand the important background for the story of the Church and the Holocaust. Most importantly, it is necessary to examine the role three factors played in the development of events in Greece: the makeup of the Greek Jewish population, the local circumstances during the occupation, and the timing of the deportations. The differences, for instance, between the Sephardic community of Thessaloniki (by far the majority of Greek Jewry) and elsewhere and the numerically fewer Romaniot communities in the rest of Greece, played an important role in the response of the Christian communities to the persecution and eventual deportations of Greek Jewry.⁷⁶⁰ The Sephardic community

⁷⁶⁰ Most scholars divide Greek Jewry into two categories, Sephardic and Romaniotes, though some Ashkenazi's settled in the country, predominantly outside of Macedonia. For more information on the

spoke a different language, lived separately from their Christian neighbors, and as a result of its strong economic and cultural presence in the city, came into conflict with some segments of Greek Orthodox society. In contrast, the Romaniot communities spoke Greek, lived among their Christian neighbors, and their small size made it easier for the local Christian communities to hide them. Local circumstances also played a fundamental role in the outcome of German anti-Semitic policy in Greece. For instance, in Italian occupied Greece the Jewish community lived in relative peace as the occupation authorities refused to enforce anti-Semitic laws or assist the Germans in deporting Greek Jews residing in their zone of occupation. Moreover, Italian representatives issued false passports and offered the Jewish community of Thessaloniki other forms of assistance in the period leading up to and including the deportations of 1943.⁷⁶¹ In the Bulgarian zone, in contrast, the authorities expelled much of the Greek leadership in 1941 and willingly sacrificed the Jewish community to the Germans, leaving the Christian community leaderless, making it difficult for them to assist the local Jewish community, except on an individual basis.⁷⁶² Coinciding with local circumstances

regional differences between the two communities see Eli Plaut, *Greek Jewry in the Twentieth Century, 1913-1983* (London: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 21-25, Fleming, *Greece: A Jewish History*, 1-2. The Sephardic community, according to contemporary sources, numbered 56,000 of the 79,000 that resided in Greece, which settled predominantly in the city of Thessaloniki. Ioseph Nechama and Mikael Molchos, *In Memoriam: Aphieroma eis tin Mnimin ton Israeliton Thymaton tou Nazismou en Elladi (In Memory of the Jewish Victims of Nazism in Greece). Translated and Revised from the French*, 3 vols. (Thessaloniki, Greece: Typo-Ellenismou, 1974). Cited in Plaut, 68-9.

⁷⁶¹ For information on the Italian effort to assist Jews escape deportation in Thessaloniki see Fleming, 121, Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 244-245, Joseph Rochlitz (with introduction by Menachem Shelach), "Excerpts from the Salonika Diary of Lucillo Merci (February-August 1943)," *Yad Vashem Studies* 18 (1987): 293-323, Daniel Carpi, "Nuovi Documenti Per La Storia Dell'olocausto in Grecia: L'atteggiamento Degli Italiani (1941-1943)," *Michael: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora* 7 (1981): 118-200, Hagen Fleischer, *Stemma Kai Svastika: I Ellada tis Katohis kai tis Antistasis 1941-1944 (Crown and Swastika: Occupied Greece and the Resistance, 1941-1944)* (Athens: Papazisis, 1988-1995), 296-297.

⁷⁶² The Bulgarian policy to expel the Greek Church hierarchy and a majority of the lower clergy in their zone of occupation was discussed in the previous section. It must be noted, however, that the head of the Bulgarian Church, Exarch Stefan, lodged a protest with the political authorities when he discovered that these clerics were handed over to the Germans for deportation. He was, however, in the minority, at least in regard to the Greek Jewish population.

was timing. For instance, in the German and Bulgarian zones, the Christian and Jewish community had little time to anticipate the plans of the Germans. Although the Jews were treated like second-class citizens by the Germans, the rapid succession of Nazi anti-Semitic policies, beginning with the humiliating Eleftheria Square incident of July 1942 and leading to the deportation the following spring and summer, came as a shock both to the Christian and Jewish community. In contrast, the Jews in the former Italian zone did not begin feeling the impact of German policy until September 1943, and efforts to deport the communities in the former Italian zone did not begin until the following year. These communities and their Greek Christian counterparts had the knowledge of the deportations in northern Greece, which meant that the Greek Christian leadership and population knew well what lay in store for the Jewish community. The same held true for the Jewish leadership in these regions.

As mentioned above, Greece's prewar Jewish population numbered roughly 79,000, which could be loosely divided into two categories: Sephardic and Romaniotes. Sephardic Jews represented the overwhelming majority of Greek Jewry. The community was established in Thessaloniki and other parts of the then Ottoman empire after the Spanish defeat of the Moorish empire in 1492, when the Spanish monarchy expelled the Jewish and Muslim communities from Spain. Many of the expelled Jews and Muslims began to immigrate to the Ottoman empire after Sultan Bayezid II invited the communities to settle in the empire.⁷⁶³ The Jewish refugees settled predominately in the cities of Thessaloniki and Istanbul. The community in Thessaloniki numbered roughly

⁷⁶³ For more information on the arrival of the Sephardic communities to Thessaloniki see Mazower, *Salonica*, 46-63, Mark Alan Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Freiburg: K. Schwarz 1980), H. Kamen, "The Mediterranean and the Expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492," *Past and Present* 119, no. May (1988): 30-55.

56,000 at the beginning of the occupation.⁷⁶⁴ Under Ottoman rule the city's Jewish community thrived and lived, for the most part, peacefully with its neighbors, which included Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians and Muslim Turks.⁷⁶⁵ Important characteristics of this group included its use of Ladino, a medieval form of Spanish, the decision to live apart from their non-Jewish neighbors, and their strong cultural and economic presence in their communities, especially Thessaloniki. After the outbreak of the first Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, Greece annexed much of Macedonia, including the city of Thessaloniki. Many within the city's Jewish community feared that its incorporation into a nation-state threatened their cultural independence.⁷⁶⁶ Despite numerous assurances from the Greek government and the monarchy, relations between the Jewish community and its Christian neighbors remained tense.

World War I and its aftermath led to a series of developments that increased the tension between the communities. A few incidents of note include the Great Fire of 1917, the refugee crisis following the Greco-Turkish war of 1920-1922, and the Campbell Riots of 1931. In response to these events there were a series of small waves of emigration from the country, first to the United States and Latin America and later to Palestine. On August 5-6, 1917, a fire swept through the city of Thessaloniki, consuming three quarters of city's buildings and leaving 60,000 people homeless. The Jewish community suffered disproportionately, as it left between 40,000-50,000 Greek Jews

⁷⁶⁴Molchos, *In Memoriam: Aphieroma eis tin Mnimin ton Israeliton Thymaton tou Nazismou en Elladi (in Memory of the Jewish Victims of Nazism in Greece)*. Translated and Revised from the French. Cited in Plaut, *Greek Jewry in the Twentieth Century, 1913-1983*.

⁷⁶⁵ Mazower, *Salonica*, 46-274. A. Levy, *The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁷⁶⁶ Mazower, *Salonica*, 275-285, Fleming, 65-71, Rena Molho, "Popular Antisemitism and State Policy in Salonika During the City's Annexation to Greece," *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1988): 253-264, Rena Molho, "The Jewish Community of Salonika and Its Incorporation into the Greek State, 1912-1919," *Middle Eastern Studies* 24, no. 4 (1988): 391-403, Plaut, 30-3.

negatively affected and led to the loss of one of the largest Jewish libraries in the world and a number of other invaluable cultural and religious items.⁷⁶⁷ Despite losing the most in the fire, the community did not wield much influence over the reconstruction of the city.⁷⁶⁸ Hoping to use this opportunity to remodel the city to appear more “Hellenic and decidedly European,” the government moved to control the rebuilding of the city.⁷⁶⁹ Toward this goal, the Venizelos government passed a law that insured that the government would control the rebuilding of the city. This law and a series of others related to the matter caused a series of protests by the Jewish community, which deemed the series of legislation an effort to limit the community’s influence over the rebuilding of the city.⁷⁷⁰ The fire and the treatment of the Jewish community by the Greek government in the aftermath led some members of the community to emigrate and strengthened the support for the Zionist movement in Greece.⁷⁷¹

While few Greek Jews emigrated due to their poor treatment after the fire of 1917, the tension between the Jewish and Christian communities increased after the Greek defeat in the Greek-Turkish war of 1920-1922. Greece, exhausted by nearly a decade of war and bankrupt, faced its greatest domestic challenge, how to meet the basic needs of a 1.5 million Greek refugees from Asia Minor.⁷⁷² Many of these refugees settled in the city of Thessaloniki, which established the Greek Christian population as the absolute majority in the city. Struggling with the xenophobia hurled at them by their neighbors, this new wave of settlers became the spearhead of a new wave of anti-

⁷⁶⁷ Plaut, 33, Fleming, 76-80, Mazower, *Salonica*, 298-310.

⁷⁶⁸ Fleming, 77-79, Plaut, 33, Mazower, *Salonica*, 301-310.

⁷⁶⁹ Fleming, 77.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷⁷² For more information on the Greek-Turkish War of 1920-1922 see Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision; Greece in Asia Minor 1919-1922* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

Semitism in the city with their organization the Ethniki Enosis Ellados (National Union of Greece or EEE) and media outlet, the newspaper *Makedonia*.⁷⁷³ While the EEE and its newspaper had little popular support, the paper published a series of anti-Semitic articles which made claims and accusations that had little merit.⁷⁷⁴ In June 1931, the paper used the story of Yitzhak Koen, who participated as a member in the regional meeting of the Jewish sporting club Maccabi in Sofia (Bulgaria), as a spark to ignite the most serious outbreak of anti-Semitic violence in the history of the modern Greek state up to that point. One article accused Koen of attending a Bulgarian national conference meeting in the Bulgarian capital at the same time. Although accounts conflict over his attendance, the newspaper appeared to have evidence of his treasonous activity.⁷⁷⁵ Between June 20-24, *Makedonia* and other ultranationalists called for the disbanding of the organization and labeled Coen a traitor. On June 24, a group of 100 ultranationalists ransacked the organization's Karaiskaki headquarters, injuring some members in the building, but the culprits evaded capture because the authorities did not arrive until an hour after the incident.⁷⁷⁶ Events quickly deteriorated, as nationalist groups incited riots against the Jews and called for their expulsion. On June 29, *Makedonia* encouraged Christians to attack their Jewish neighbors. A group of several thousand nationalists descended on the heavily Jewish "Campbell" district setting fires and causing general mayhem, but, even more troubling, the chaotic activity spread to other districts.⁷⁷⁷ The following day, Venizelos, then prime minister, sent the army to the city to quash the riots. More

⁷⁷³ Ibid., 83-88, 94, Plaut, 35, Mazower, 385-6, George Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 255.

⁷⁷⁴ Fleming, 94-5,

⁷⁷⁵ Fleming, 97, Mazower, 385-386.

⁷⁷⁶ Fleming, 98.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid. 98-9.

damning for the Greek authorities and disturbing for the Jewish community was the fact that the individuals arrested for their involvement in the riots were acquitted by the Greek legal system.⁷⁷⁸ Legislation passed over the next few years worsened conditions for the Jewish community, leading one scholar to state, “Salonika’s Jews were a community under siege and in transition.”⁷⁷⁹ While no further incidents on the scale of the Campbell Riots occurred before World War II, tensions between the two communities remained high, and played an important role in the response of the Christian community during the German persecution of the city’s Jewish community during the occupation.⁷⁸⁰

The Romaniot Jews had lived in Greece for nearly two millennia, were much smaller in number, had Greek as their first language, and, thus, were more integrated into Greek society and had closer relations with their Greek Orthodox neighbors. In addition, their relatively small size did not pose the same ‘threat’ to the Christian community either in the cultural or economic sphere, which did not create an atmosphere that would allow for the creation of organizations such as EEE. Moreover, because of their assimilation within Greek society, they could maneuver within the city without drawing attention to themselves, as they were able to speak the language without an accent, and maintained good relations with local political and religious authorities.

Differences between the two Jewish communities played a role in the response of their Christian neighbors. In Thessaloniki, recent scholarship indicates that while Greek Christians felt saddened by the deportation of their Jewish neighbors, many did not feel compelled to risk their lives to save them in the period prior to and during the deportation in the spring and early summer of 1943. In contrast, in places such as Athens, Volos, and

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., 98-9,

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., 99

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

Zakinthos, the Greek Christian community, led by the local political, civilian, and religious leadership, actively undermined the German policy of deportation to help their Jewish neighbors evade the Nazi authorities. Archbishop Damaskinos and the intellectual and cultural elite openly condemned this policy and provided illegal assistance to the Athenian Jewish community, thus, serving as a symbol of opposition to Athenian society and the rest of the nation. Despite this crucial contrast in response, the tragic destruction of the Jewish communities in Ioannina and Crete serves as a powerful qualification to this observation. While Romaniot communities fared better than their Sephardic brethren, efforts to thwart the German policy demanded local initiative. And in the case of Ioannina, this initiative, especially from the leadership, never came.

Timing and local circumstances provide two other fundamental factors that determined the response of local Christian communities to the plight of their Jewish co-nationals. Because the Jewish community of Thessaloniki was considerably larger and it fell under German jurisdiction, it was the first to feel the impact of German anti-Semitic policy at the outset of the occupation in April 1941. During the first year of the occupation of Thessaloniki, for instance, the Germans took a series of steps to isolate the community and encourage anti-Semitism on the part of the Christian population (especially by closing Jewish newspapers and religious organizations, and resurrecting the EEE), but did not enact the Nuremberg Laws or pursue a systematic policy of physical violence or other forms of persecution against the community.⁷⁸¹ Although the community remained anxious during the first year of the occupation, a false calm set in, relatively speaking, until the summer of 1942. From the summer of 1942 to the early summer of 1943, however, events rapidly unfolded and led to the near destruction of the

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., 114, Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 238, Mazower, *Salonica*, 392-395.

city's Jewish community. Unlike in Italian-occupied Greece, the local political and business leadership used the opportunity of the Jewish persecutions for their own benefit.⁷⁸² For instance, in line with the long standing desire of the city of Thessaloniki to gain control of the land where the Jewish cemetery stood for city projects, especially the Aristotle University, Governor General Vasilios Simonidis provided assistance in the form of local manpower to the Germans during their implementation of the Holocaust in the city.⁷⁸³ Local economic leaders, viewing these developments as an opportunity to benefit at the expense of their Jewish neighbors, offered little opposition to German policy.⁷⁸⁴ City leaders, however, also may have offered less resistance to the deportation of the Jews because of their deep concern for a more 'serious' matter: policies implemented by Bulgaria in their zone of occupation in Macedonia and Thrace and their encroachment on the city of Thessaloniki itself.⁷⁸⁵

Conditions in the Bulgarian zone shared some similarities and differences with those in the German zone. In the summer of 1942, as in the German zone, the Bulgarians began using the male Jewish population in labor battalions.⁷⁸⁶ In addition, the Bulgarians abused and robbed Greek Jews because they thought that they were wealthy. Jews, at least in some places, also were forced to register with the Bulgarian authorities, had their valuables taken and deposited into Bulgarian banks, and their houses and businesses marked.⁷⁸⁷ The largest difference, however, between the German and Bulgarian zone was the timing of the deportations. Unlike the case in the German zone, the relatively

⁷⁸² Apostolou, 175-181, Mazower, *Salonica*, 408-411.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*, Apostolou, 179-180.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁶ Fleming, 126.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

small size of the Jewish population (4,706) in the Bulgarian zone meant that rounding up and deporting the communities proved less time consuming and logistically challenging. During the first week of March 1943, the Jewish communities under Bulgarian jurisdiction were rounded up and deported to Treblinka. The rapidity of this development gave little time for the Christian community and its leadership to respond to the crisis. In addition, since the Greek Orthodox population was left leaderless due to Bulgarian expulsions two years prior to these deportations, any organized effort to assist these communities was nearly impossible.

In the Italian zone, the Jewish population grew, as Greek Jews fled from the German and Bulgarian zones to relative safety. From the beginning of the occupation until September 1943, Jews in the Italian zone lived in peace, as Germany's Axis partner refused to enforce anti-Semitic laws or deport Jews in their zone.⁷⁸⁸ When the Germans occupied the formerly Italian zone in September 1943, the Jewish community, aware of the plight of their northern neighbors, knew well what fate awaited them. Christian leaders, led by Damaskinos, played an active role in undermining Germany's anti-Semitic policy in Athens. These efforts included hiding Jewish children in Orthodox orphanages, providing false baptismal papers, assisting Chief Rabbi of Athens, Zvi Barzilai, flee the city, and making the German effort to register and deport the Jewish population in Athens far more difficult. However, in the cases of Rhodes and Ioannina, local metropolitans either remained silent or their efforts were insignificant or delayed, as the little attention they receive in survivor accounts or Holocaust scholarship indicates.

In short, differences within the Greek Jewish communities, local circumstances and timing played a fundamental role in the response of the clergy to the Holocaust in

⁷⁸⁸ Plaut, 62, Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 248-250, Fleischer, 318-319.

Greece. Events in the Bulgarian zone unfolded in such a way that the Orthodox Church of Greece lacked the personnel, resources, and time necessary to offer much resistance to the deportations, especially because of the Bulgarian policy of expelling local Greek elites and the suddenness and rapidity in which the Jewish communities were deported from Macedonia and Thrace. In contrast, in the other two zones, despite the difficulties posed by circumstances, there was at least the possibility for hierarchs to respond earlier and with greater urgency to the obvious crisis that began to unfold in the summer of 1942 in Thessaloniki.

Because of the tripartite occupation of Greece and the decentralized tradition of Orthodoxy, Damaskinos could not order his fellow metropolitans to either condemn these policies outside of Athens or to undermine this policy in a formal encyclical. However, by sending the letters of protest to both the Logothetopoulos government and Plenipotentiary Gunther Altenburg, the archbishop expressed to both his colleagues in the hierarchy and the rest of the population that this policy was morally wrong and should be resisted. Consequently, his verbal orders to local priests to assist Jews pursued by the authorities and other actions further solidified his position on the matter. However, not all hierarchs followed his lead. Numerous factors influenced the response of other hierarchs such as Gennadios of Thessaloniki and Ioakeim of Volos. While a detailed examination of the response in each ecclesiastical see would be fruitful, the lack of adequate data for many of the archdiocese prevents such an analysis. However, a close examination of the response of clergymen in four communities – Thessaloniki, Athens, Zakynthos, and Ioannina – may provide sufficient data to paint a general picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the church's response to the crisis.

In Thessaloniki, the first signs of the tragic events that would unfold in the spring and summer of 1943 began on July 11, when the German authorities ordered all Jewish men to meet in Constitution Square. German soldiers proceeded to make the men perform humiliating exercises before letting them leave.⁷⁸⁹ A few days later the men were again asked to report, but this time they were forced to work on various German work projects throughout Macedonia.⁷⁹⁰ Conditions were horrific, and a number of Jewish men perished during the summer and fall.⁷⁹¹ Between September and October 1943, Rabbi Koretz and other community elders paid several billion drachmas to the occupation authorities and surrendered the city's Jewish cemetery in return for the release of the men.⁷⁹² Up to this point, the Greek authorities and Metropolitan Gennadios remained silent. On December 6, Greek workers began to dismantle the Jewish cemetery, an event that, according to Katherine Fleming, a scholar of Greek Jewry, "marked the final diminution of Jewish physical presence in the city."⁷⁹³

In February 1943 things moved quickly toward their unfortunate climax the following month. In order to ensure the efficient deportation of the Jewish community, Adolf Eichmann sent Dieter Wisliceny, an SS officer sent to Bratislava a year earlier, to arrange for the deportation of Slovakia's Jewish population. Among Wisliceny's first acts was to inform Chief Rabbi Koretz that the German authorities planned to enact the Nuremburg Laws and to force the community to resettle in the Baron Hirsch Ghetto by February 25. Only after the Germans started to enact the Nuremburg Laws in Thessaloniki did the church protest. Gennadios, for instance, reacted strongly after

⁷⁸⁹ Fleming, 116-7, Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 238-239, Fleischer, 303-305.

⁷⁹⁰ Fleming, 118, Mazower, *Inside Hitler Greece*, 239-240, Fleischer, 304-5.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Fleischer, 305.

⁷⁹² Fleischer, 305, Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 240.

⁷⁹³ Fleming, 119.

learning German plans for the community. In addition, the metropolitan “gave the city’s clerics verbal instructions not to show any sign of scorn or discrimination against the Jews when they were obliged to wear the yellow star.” German authorities, angered by the refusal of the church’s cooperation, “arrested [priests] for refusing to preach racism.”⁷⁹⁴ In addition, Yomtov Yakoel, a Greek Jew from Thessaloniki who perished in Auschwitz, made the following observation about the efforts of the Jewish community to appeal to the church and the response it received: “The Jewish Council appealed to the Church, hoping to arouse their Christian conscience. In many churches of the city, priests took the step of protesting directly or indirectly against what was happening to their neighbors.”⁷⁹⁵

In early March, the Chief Rabbi Koretz learned of Nazi plans to deport the city’s population. Between March and August 1943, the Germans deported the Jewish community to Auschwitz at a rate of 10,000 per week.⁷⁹⁶ Gennadios protested with more intensity when he learned about the deportations. According to an OSS confidential report, the metropolitan pleaded with the Germans “to refrain from cruelties in deportations.”⁷⁹⁷ He also stated: “The result of implementing the deportation measure will inevitably bring about the destruction and death of most of them by virtue of their extreme poverty.”⁷⁹⁸ He also requested from Dr. Max Merten to end the policy.⁷⁹⁹

Gennadios made a final effort to assist the Jews during Prime Minister Ioannis Rallis’ visit to Thessaloniki in April 1943, roughly a month after the beginning of the

⁷⁹⁴ Steven Bowman, “Jews in Wartime Greece,” *Jewish Social Studies* 48, no. 1 (1986): 57.

⁷⁹⁵ Giomtov Giakoel, Ampatzopoulou, Phrankiski Editor, *Apomnimoneumata, 1941-1943 (Memoirs, 1941-1943)* (Thessaloniki: Idryma ETS ACHAIM 1993), 111, 115. Cited in Margaritis, 10-11.

⁷⁹⁶ Fleming, 122.

⁷⁹⁷ OSS Confidential, National Archives, No.1823 R-2285. Cited in Matsas, 22.

⁷⁹⁸ NARA, RG 226, Entry 16, Box 1320, Report 115705, November 21, 1944. Cited in Apostolou, 175.

⁷⁹⁹ Alexis Menexiadis ed., *To Olokautoma ton Ellinon Evraion: Mnimeia kai Mnimes (The Holocaust of Greek Jewry: Monuments and Memories)* (Athens: Kentriko Israelitiko Symvoulío Ellados, 2006), 48-9.

deportations.⁸⁰⁰ On April 11, the prime minister flew to the nation's second largest city, partly motivated by Athens' Jewish elite, to see about the deportations.⁸⁰¹ Four days before the visit, Chief Rabbi Koretz asked the metropolitan to arrange a meeting with the new prime minister, which he did at his own residence.⁸⁰² At the meeting, Koretz begged for the prime minister's assistance.⁸⁰³ The Germans, infuriated by the meeting, promptly placed Koretz and his family under house arrest.⁸⁰⁴ According to a report sent by Fritz Shoenberg to Altenburg in Athens, the metropolitan made the following comment to Koretz after the meeting: "You see, then, that the Premier can do nothing in this matter."⁸⁰⁵

The metropolitan's efforts received recognition by Yad Vashem in Israel as a righteous gentile, but recent scholars have challenged this earlier interpretation, arguing that his efforts did not go far enough, and, according to Mazower, they were largely due to his concern over the Bulgarian issue.⁸⁰⁶ Mazower and others look at Damaskinos (whose role will be discussed shortly) as the model churchman. The head of the church remained openly opposed to the deportations, and when the Germans planned to deport the capital's Jewish population, he actively worked to undermine their effort. However, while Damaskinos expressed his opposition to the deportation in Thessaloniki in March 1943, his efforts to save the capital's Jewish population came after he learned of the fate

⁸⁰⁰ Matsas, 65-66.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid., 66.

⁸⁰⁶ Michael Matsas argues that while his protests are commendable they did not save any lives. Such statements are problematic, because if the clergy spoke out against this policy, how can one determine the effectiveness of these words. Mazower is in the minority among recent revisionist scholars, and provides little evidence to support his argument. However, if nothing else, the metropolitan's involvement in the Macedonian Committee and his known fears of Bulgarian policy in their occupied territories and their future plans for Thessaloniki make his case plausible. Others, such as Apostolou argue that while his efforts were exemplary, he had little power to influence the Germans.

of Thessaloniki's community. Gennadios, however, faced a far different situation in his city because of local attitudes toward the Jewish population, the lack of knowledge of the fate of the victims, and the size and makeup of the community, all of which made the situation far more challenging. To his credit, he began lodging formal complaints with the occupation authorities once it became apparent that the Germans planned to deport the community.

Despite these important differences, however, the willingness of EAM-ELAS to assist Jews evade German persecution meant that the metropolitan could have worked with them to assist more Jews to escape deportation.⁸⁰⁷ Yet, there is no evidence showing that such efforts were made by the metropolitan. Nonetheless, if he was aware that deportation certainly meant death for the Jews, as the OSS report claimed, why did he not act more resolutely? He, like Damaskinos, must have been aware that even if he acted in a way that warranted execution, the Germans would deal with him cautiously if they discovered that he helped Jews escape. German officials in the city needed to deal with the well-established and elderly hierarch with caution. For instance, if they discovered that he had assisted Jews escape, they would not have executed him or removed him because of the serious popular protest it would surely cause, let alone the negative international press. In short, though Gennadios was at a serious disadvantage to act resolutely because of the sudden developments, he could have provided more assistance to the Jewish community due to his status as the moral and religious leader of the city. While remaining on good terms with the Germans may have been important in light of the Bulgarian concerns, there was little evidence that he had any influence over

⁸⁰⁷ A number of scholars identify EAM-ELAS as the organization that offered the most assistance to Greek Jews. Matsas, *Illusion of Safety: The Story of the Greek Jews During World War II*, 48-9, Mazower, *Salonica, 1430-1950*, 421, Fleming, *Greece: A Jewish History*, 113.

Germany's attitude toward Bulgarian occupation policies. That is not so to say that he should not have remained vigilant about the Bulgarian policies, and yet the fact that he mainly restricted himself to formal pleas against an obvious act of brutality and inhumanity targeting an unarmed and integral part of the city's population shows the limits of his leadership.

News of the deportations and the horrific treatment of the Jews became common knowledge in Athens especially as Thessalonikan Jews fortunate enough to escape the city recounted the unspeakable events taking place there.⁸⁰⁸ Even before the Germans took responsibility for the Italian zone of occupation, Damaskinos and other Athenian elites became deeply concerned after learning about the deportations in Thessaloniki in March 1943.

Requests from a committee of Thessaloniki Jews motivated Damaskinos to speak to the occupation authorities. He decided to visit Gunther Altenburg to discuss the matter. During the meeting, Altenburg explained that Jews of foreign nationality would be deported to their country of origin, while Greek Jews would be sent to Poland to work. The logic struck Damaskinos as strange, but Altenburg did not have an answer.⁸⁰⁹ The archbishop also asked why women, children, and the elderly were also selected for work in Poland. Altenburg responded that it would make life easier for the men if they remained together with their family.⁸¹⁰ Damaskinos requested that the plenipotentiary intervene with his superiors, which the latter stated he would. Nothing came of this 'intervention' by the plenipotentiary.

⁸⁰⁸ Mazower, *Salonica*, 407-8.

⁸⁰⁹ Ilias Venezis, "Archiepiskopos Damaskinos (Archbishop Damaskinos)," *Chronika* April no. 34 (1982). Cited in Matsas, 53.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Damaskinos, with a group of the city's economic and cultural elite, sent letters to Prime Minister Logothetopoulos and Plenipotentiary Gunther Altenburg on March 23 and 24, 1943 respectively to express opposition to the deportations. These letters represent two of the most powerful and succinct public outcries against the Holocaust in occupied Europe. Theodoros Moridis, a well-known actor of the Greek National Theater and a member of a clandestine group headed by the archbishop that met to discuss the problems of the occupation, provides important insights into the decision made by the Archbishop and his colleagues to draft and send these letters.⁸¹¹ "George Politis' wife, a Jewish woman well known to us...came and pleaded with the archbishop and the representatives of the various organizations for assistance for her coreligionists, whom the Germans had begun to arrest."⁸¹² The group, touched by her presentation, decided to act. "We all decided to protest in writing...Angelos Sikelianos, offered to compose it, and a committee of three men, Angelos Sikelianos, George Karanzas, and I undertook the dangerous mission of delivering the protest to the prime minister."⁸¹³ Moridis concludes by emphasizing the point that the document came from the whole committee, not just from the archbishop, who usually receives credit for the document. "Our document was not just a written protest by Archbishop Damaskinos, it was a written protest under the chairmanship of Archbishop Damaskinos. It was a protest by the totality of citizens of Athens."⁸¹⁴ Although Moridis' account helps us understand the role of other citizens in this protest, it is still crucial to note the leadership role that Damaskinos took by heading the list of signatories and serving as chairman of this committee in the preparation of this

⁸¹¹ Theodoros Moridis, "The Inside Story of the Damaskinos Letter of Protest." Reprinted In *Kathemerini* 1988. Cited in Matsas, 56.

⁸¹² Ibid.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

document. According to Fleming, Damaskinos' protest represented "the only head of a European Church to officially condemn the German occupation's treatment of the Jews."⁸¹⁵

Despite the fact that the documents are addressed to the prime minister and Altenburg respectively, the committee's letter to Logothetopoulos gave the prime minister advice regarding the way he should make his case to the Germans. They understood that any letters sent to Logothetopoulos would reach the Germans. For this reason, the letters must be discussed in tandem rather than as separate documents. Damaskinos and his colleagues presented four major arguments: Greek Jews were Greek citizens and should be treated the same as their Christian co-nationals; Christianity preaches tolerance of others; their protest was not a general commentary on German policy toward European Jewry, but solely against that country's policy toward the Greek population; and if the community posed a threat to the German war effort, the matter should receive further investigation, and, if necessary, this segment of the population should be held under guard in Greek territory as Greek citizens. Scholars debate the value of these letters, but, when coupled with the later actions of the archbishop and his colleagues, they served as a symbol to the Greek nation to oppose this policy.

In no uncertain terms, Damaskinos and his colleagues in Athens explain why the deportation of the Jews concerned the nation and represented a breach of the terms of the armistice signed between Greece and Germany. These social leaders wanted to ensure that the German occupation authorities and Logothetopoulos understood that the Jewish population ranked among the loyalist citizens of the nation. "The Greek Jews have not only proved themselves valuable factors in the country's economic performance, but have

⁸¹⁵ Fleming, 132.

generally shown themselves law-abiding and fully cognizant of their duties as Greeks.”⁸¹⁶

The authors take it one step further by stating that the nation does not discriminate based on race or religion. “In the national consciousness, the children of our common Mother Greece are seen as indissolubly united and equal members of the body of the nation, regardless of any religious or denominational difference.”⁸¹⁷

Damaskinos’ position makes the comments about the Church’s view of this policy more significant. “Our Sacred religion recognizes no discrimination, superiority or inferiority based upon race or religion, teaching that ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek’ (Gal. 3:28).” For the church, therefore, “any inclination towards the creation of...discrimination deriving from racial or religious difference thus [would be] condemned.”⁸¹⁸ This powerful statement eliminates any doubt of the position taken by the head of the church as upholder of the faith and moral leader of the nation.

In both documents, the committee wanted to assure both the Germans and the Greek prime minister that their protest is isolated to the Greek Jews, and that it was not targeting Germany’s ‘struggle’ against the Jews. Toward this goal, they tried to emphasize the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of the Greek Jewish community: “It should be also noted that the Jews in Greece have a mentality which differs from that of the Jews in Germany, and that they do not even know the language of their co-religionists in Poland, where they are being sent to live.”⁸¹⁹ They also underscored that they had no intention to comment on the relationship between Germany

⁸¹⁶ Letter from Damaskinos and Athenian Business and Cultural Leaders to Prime Minister Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, March 23, 1943. Foteini Konstantopoulou and Thanos Veremis eds., *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews: Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* Kastaniotis Edition ed. (Athens: Istoriko Archeio tou Yypourgeiou Exoterikon, 1998), 250.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., 251.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 251.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 254.

and the ‘Jewish element’: “We are not ignorant of the profound opposition which exists between New Germany and the Jewish element, nor is it our intention to...judge of world Jewry and on this or that activity on its part in...major political and economic problems of the world.”⁸²⁰ They were particularly insistent on clarifying the intentions of their intervention: “What is of interest to us today and disturbs us deeply is the fate of our 60,000 Jewish fellow citizens.”⁸²¹

One can criticize this strategy for its dubious moral stance, especially when the letter contains the signature of the head of a national church. As pragmatic men, however, Damaskinos and his colleagues hoped that refraining from making this effort larger than a national concern might lead to a change in German policy towards Greek Jewry. As these letters demonstrate, Damaskinos and his colleagues, interestingly enough, take a practical approach toward finding a solution to the crisis. Although they hope to convince the Germans of the pointlessness of their policy, they understand that such logic alone would have little influence. Toward this pragmatic goal, they make the following suggestion to Logothetopoulos:

If considerations of security are put forward to justify it, it is our view that it would be possible for solutions to be proposed and preventive measures taken, such as the confinement of the active male population only (excluding old men and children) in a certain area of Greek territory under the surveillance of the Occupation Authorities in such a way that their security would be safeguarded—even though against a hypothetical danger—and the class of Greek Jews would escape the dire consequences of the displacement with which it is threatened.⁸²²

These protest letters strike a delicate balance in their language: On the one hand, they force the Germans to answer uncomfortable questions about this policy. For instance,

⁸²⁰ Ibid.

⁸²¹ Ibid., 251.

⁸²² Ibid.

they demand an explanation of how the young, elderly, women, and infirm pose a threat to the German authorities. On the other hand, they are cautiously crafted in proposing a pragmatic solution that would ensure that the Greek Jewish community remains in Greece. The signatories of the letters thought that this solution was the only possible way in which the Greek Jews had a chance to survive the ordeal. No doubt, as Metropolitan Gennadios also understood, Damaskinos knew that under the conditions of the initial deportations, most would perish either on the trains or upon arrival to their destination. The message to Logothetopoulos is also clear: failing to act on behalf of innocent Greek citizens would ensure the increased enmity of the population and condemnation by history. For the Archbishop, the prime minister's public opposition to the policy or resignation could possibly pressure the Germans to consider an alternative solution: "If, they...persist in their policy, we consider that the Government, as the holder of...political power...should take up a clear position against the acts... leaving to the foreigners the entire responsibility of the manifest injustice being committed."⁸²³ If, however, no such action were taken, the government, along with the Germans, would be held responsible for these actions. "No one, we believe, is entitled to forget that all the acts of this difficult period, even those which lie beyond our wishes and our power, will one day be investigated by the Nation for the due apportioning of the judgment of history."⁸²⁴ For this reason, the letter asks the prime minister to take an open stand against this policy to demonstrate to the Greek people that the government, despite its failing, refused to remain silent when innocent citizens were persecuted by a foreign power occupying the country:

⁸²³ Ibid., 252.

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

And in the moment of judgment, the side of the moral responsibilities which the rulers have shouldered even for the acts of the powers that be will weigh heavily in the conscience of the Nation if they omitted to express, by a noble-minded and courageous gesture, the entirely reasonable indignation and unanimous protest of the Nation at actions which vitally affect its unity and honor, such as the displacement of Greek Jews now beginning.⁸²⁵

Logothetopoulos, according to this secret committee, had a chance to redeem himself with this single act. The committee insisted that the foreign rule did not excuse silence even though it made it very difficult to prevent deportations. Although his treasonous activity would receive due attention by future historians, the committee wanted to assure the prime minister that acts of heroism on behalf of the nation would also be noted in the annals of history, in an effort to appeal to his vanity.

At the time, Damaskinos' actions won the admiration of many of his contemporaries. Ilias Venezis and others chronicled these efforts, while at least one Jewish contemporary who escaped the Germans and fled to Izmir, Turkey, wrote the following about the actions of Damaskinos in a report he prepared for American Consul General Burton Berry on April 27, 1944:

The Archbishop of Athens and all Greece, Damaskinos, whose name should be written in letters of gold in the annals of recent years, showed a spirit of sublime sacrifice and practical understanding truly worthy of a great pastor. It is to him that we owe the famous protest against the crimes committed against the Jews of Salonica, a protest that the Logothetopoulos government refused to make. This protest was drawn up by the Archbishop himself at the memorable reunion of the presidents of 31 organizations of Athens. The Archbishop was the first to sign the protest; the others followed.⁸²⁶

Scholars remain divided over the importance of these letters. Some early scholars and chroniclers argue that these letters proved that Athenian elites, including the Archbishop,

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ Samuel Ovanin-Burton Berry to State Department. April 27, 1944. 3037, 27/5/1944, War Relief Board Files.

risked their lives in order to save the Jewish community. No doubt, the publication of these documents was a courageous act, but in the end they failed to save the lives of members of the Jewish community, as Damaskinos learned that Altenburg could not rescind the order because it came from Berlin. In addition, some question the timing of the letters.⁸²⁷ Why did the church and other institutions wait until the beginning of the deportations to protest German treatment of the community? Also, what role did Mrs. Politis' plea play in motivating the committee to act? Although these questions need to be raised, however, the critics do not take into consideration the overall record of the Archbishop and other local elites toward the plight of the Jews.

In addition to sending the letters of protest, Damaskinos had another meeting with Altenburg, but it had little effect. Knowing that he could do nothing to stop the

⁸²⁷ Steven Bowman, however, argues that the letters of protest were critical, despite their ineffectiveness with the Germans. "What is important here is not that these meetings and public statements were ineffective with the Germans, but that they were heard ultimately by the Greek people. The statements were as effective in retrospect, if not more so from the Archbishop to his clergy, as the statements broadcast over the BBC to occupied Greece." Steven B Bowman, *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 78. In contrast, Professor P.K. Enepekidis, while acknowledging the efforts of the archbishop, considered them, along with those of the Greek government, useless. Here a number of his observations regarding the written protests by the archbishop and other Greek elites: "The German records frequently mention the efforts by the archbishop to intervene on behalf of Greek Jews after the barbaric measures against them began. (...) There is no doubt that this effort [to have a Jewish woman married to Christian man released], as with all his previous letters, would not lead to anything. (...) Both Greek Jews and prominent Greeks acknowledged that neither the efforts of the Greek government or, even, Archbishop Damaskinos, had any chance of success, regardless of all the instances of intervention, to accomplish something substantial and permanent for the Jews of Greece. Quite the opposite, it appears that their efforts, in the name of humanitarianism and Greek tradition bothered SS leaders..." P.K. Enepekidis, *I Diogmoi ton Evraion en Elladi, 1941-1944 (the Persecution of the Jews in Greece, 1941-1944)* (Athens: Papazisi, 1969), 56-8. Another historian who doubts the significance of these efforts was George Margaritis, who points out two things: that it was intense Jewish pressure that led Damaskinos and the others to send the protest; and that "these declarations while very convincing on the theoretical level with their references to equality of all Greek citizens regardless of religious belief, were ineffectual in concrete terms since the Church and the notables were unwilling to take actual steps to oppose the deportations... The resignation of the Archbishop or any other Church or civil figure was not considered; neither was the severing of ties with the German authorities." Margaritis, 11-12. The first point is invalid for a number of reasons, including the active stand Damaskinos continued to take against this policy, especially after the Germans planned to deport the Jewish population in the capital in September 1943. Thus, if he had simply caved into pressure, he would have stopped with the formal protests.

deportations, he contacted the Red Cross for assistance.⁸²⁸ Initially, he asked them to intervene with other European nations on behalf of the Greek Jewish community, and later, when it became clear that nothing could be done for them, he requested that the Red Cross establish soup kitchens for the Thessaloniki Jews that awaited deportation. The government and the Red Cross agreed to set up the soup kitchens.⁸²⁹ Damaskinos also sent funds from Athenian Jews and the relatives of those slated for deportation to the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki to assist the Jews in any way he could.⁸³⁰ However, his activities against Nazi anti-Semitic policy expanded after the fall of Italy and Germany's renewed efforts to deport the Jewish communities formerly under Italian jurisdiction.

While Bulgarian and German efficiency sealed the fate of most Greek Jews living in their occupation zones, the Jewish communities living in the Italian zone lived in peace until September 8, 1943, when the government of Marshal Pietro Badoglio capitulated to the Allies. Germany, deeply suspicious of their Axis ally, especially after the fall of Mussolini in June 1943, planned for the disarming of Italian forces and the occupation of the peninsula and all territory formerly occupied by the Italians. SS officials led by Wisliceny returned to Greece to prepare the deportation of the Athenian Jewish community and those of the rest of the former Italian zone in late September 1943.⁸³¹

As in Thessaloniki, Wisliceny hoped to work through the chief rabbi of the city to implement the deportations, who, for Athens, was Elias Barzilai. On September 21, the rabbi received a phone call from Wisliceny asking for an audience. Immediately,

⁸²⁸ Venezis, *Archbishop Damaskinos*, 268.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, 268-9.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁸³¹ Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 250.

Barzilai informed the Jewish community, the Archbishop, and the Greek authorities of the SS officer's request.⁸³² During the visit, he was asked to hand over a list of all the Jews living in the city and to form a 'group of elders'.⁸³³ After informing Wisliceny that he could not meet his demand to provide these lists in two hours, he was given two days.⁸³⁴ Over the weekend of September 23-25, however, EAM-ELAS convinced Barzilai to flee with his family from the city. According to a number of accounts, Archbishop Damaskinos had knowledge of the plan and assisted in its execution. Barzilai, in his postwar account, states that the Archbishop personally assisted his escape.⁸³⁵ Modiano and Shibi, two members of the community confirmed the role of the archbishop.⁸³⁶ Barzilai's sudden departure disrupted Wisliceny's plans. The departure of the chief rabbi convinced many within the Jewish community to flee to the hills, which many did with the assistance of EAM-ELAS.⁸³⁷ Frustrated by this turn of events, local SS chief, Jurgen Stroop ordered the Jewish community to register by October 3, threatening to execute any who refused.⁸³⁸ Although Stroop extended the deadline to October 17, only 1,200 of 8,000 registered.⁸³⁹ Stroop and his colleagues faced other problems. The community of predominately Romaniotes blended in well with the Christian population, because they spoke Greek and lived among their

⁸³² Matsas, 89.

⁸³³ Ibid., 89-90.

⁸³⁴ Ibid., 91

⁸³⁵ Eliyahu Barzilai, *Greek Jewry in the Holocaust (in Hebrew)* (Tel Aviv: 1988). Cited in Fleming, 135.

⁸³⁶ According to Baruch Schibi, a journalist and a local EAM leader, there were a few plans for the removal of Barzilai, including one to dress him up like a monk and take him to a monastery. "The rabbi asked for time to decide. At the same time, being afraid that any delay would make us lose the opportunity to abduct the rabbi, we asked Nikolaos Louvaris, a government official, to ask Archbishop Damaskinos to allow Rabbi Barzilai to go as a monk to a monastery. Damaskinos indeed sent a message to Barzilai and asked to get ready to go to a monastery." However, the decision was made to escort him and his family to the mountains where he would remain for the rest of the war. Letter from Baruch Schibi to Michael Matsas, published in Matsas, 91-2. See also Bowman, *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece*. 79.

⁸³⁷ Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 250-1, Matsas, 93, Fleming, 113.

⁸³⁸ Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 250

⁸³⁹ Ibid., 250-251.

neighbors. In addition, the Rallis government sent a memorandum to express his disapproval of the new round of deportations. Moreover, local police officials were far less helpful to the Germans than their colleagues in Thessaloniki. Finally, after months of waiting, roughly 1,000 Greek Jews came to the synagogue on Melidoni Street to register, as usual, when suddenly they were seized and held in the synagogue. A few hours later they were loaded in waiting trucks and taken to the Haidari concentration camp before being shipped to Auschwitz. The deportation of the Athenian Jews was coordinated with that of other parts of the formerly Italian-occupied parts of the mainland.⁸⁴⁰

Damaskinos, this time, did not limit his involvement to formal letters and meetings. The tragic situation required him to perform illegal acts in order to subvert the efforts of the occupation authorities. His knowledge and involvement in the removal of rabbi Barzilai evidenced his commitment to prevent the events of the spring and summer of 1943 from reoccurring in Athens. He also wanted churchmen in Greece, especially Athens, to assist Greek Jews evade capture. Toward this goal, he asked clergy nationwide to assist Jews and to encourage their flock to do likewise, though not in the form of an encyclical due to the circumstances of the occupation. In at least one case, this cost a cleric his life.⁸⁴¹ Specifically, among other authorized activities by the archbishop was the issuance of false baptismal papers. Moreover, he invited the Director of Administrative Services of Athens P. Haldezo and told him: “I crossed myself, I spoke to God, and decided to save as many Jewish souls as I can. Even if I endanger my

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁴¹ “Ben Yaish, a soldier in the Greek army during the Albanian campaign received the assistance of a priest in the town of Philadelphia, outside of Athens on orders from Archbishop Damaskinos. The Germans later executed him for assisting a Jew.” Bowman, *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece*, 111-12.

life.”⁸⁴² He proposed the following plan: “I will baptize the Jews, and you will give them municipality papers so they can receive Greek Christian identity cards.”⁸⁴³ Toward this goal, the director arranged with the department head of the municipality to open a municipality account, which recorded 560 Jews as Christians. All of them survived the war.⁸⁴⁴

In addition, Damaskinos tried to save Jews in mixed marriages and the young and elderly unfit for work. On March 31, 1944, Damaskinos sent a letter requesting that exception made for “the very young, the elderly, the disabled, and the war victims.”⁸⁴⁵ This effort met with little success. An explanation for the refusal to comply was written on the letter: “SS officer Honscheit informed me over the telephone that under no condition would there be exceptions, as orders from Berlin prevent them, even if there were a small number of toddlers and elderly.”⁸⁴⁶ Damaskinos also sent a letter on April 5, 1944 to von Graevnitz, a person who he worked with on a number of occasions, regarding the case of Edith Dimaki, a Jewish woman married to a Greek Naval officer fighting with the British in Egypt. According to discussions Damaskinos had with the Germans, Greeks Jews in mixed marriages were exempt from deportation. The letter noted that Mrs. Dimaki married her husband on January 15, 1942, and that the office of the Archbishop issued a marriage certificate. This effort also met with failure, though, it appeared, because of the activities of her husband. “Archbishop’s secretary (Georgakis)

⁸⁴² Venezis, 269.

⁸⁴³ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁵ Enepekidis, 56.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., 57.

was informed...that this is the family of Admiral Dimaki, who is active in Egypt as an exile,” concluding, therefore, “special treatment is unavoidable.”⁸⁴⁷

Two clerics who took on the responsibility bestowed on the hierarchy by Damaskinos were the Metropolitan of Zakynthos, Chrysostomos and the Metropolitan of Dimitria, Ioakeim, both of which undermined the effort of the Nazis to deport the Jewish communities in their ecclesiastical sees. In Volos, seventy-four percent of the Jewish population survived the war.⁸⁴⁸ Community officials anticipated the deportations after hearing of those in Thessaloniki. Therefore, the chief rabbi of the city, Pessah, gave the community archives to a Christian friend. Two days before the Germans published decrees regarding the deportation of the community, the Germans demanded an audience with Pessah.⁸⁴⁹ Likely concerned about their demand, he went to the mayor’s office, which was closed for the afternoon siesta. David Levi, a community member alerted by a friend of the rabbi’s presence in the mayor’s office, discouraged the rabbi from meeting the German official. Instead, he suggested that he see the Metropolitan Ioakeim and ask for his help.⁸⁵⁰ These events led many within the community to flee to the ELAS-controlled countryside. Some of these individuals received assistance from Metropolitan Ioakeim. “Other [Jews] were given false identity documents with Christian names and their religion registered as ‘Greek Orthodox’. This was done under Archrabbi Pessah’s guidance, with the full support of Bishop Ioakeim, the mayor...and the prefect.”⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁷ Matsas, 225, Enepekidis, 60.

⁸⁴⁸ This is a testament to the close cooperation between the local metropolitan, civilian leaders, and the local branch of EAM, which provided false documentation to the Jews to help them evade capture by the Germans. Matsas, 221-2.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid., 221.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid., Menexiadis, 196.

⁸⁵¹ Menexiades, 196.

Metropolitan of Zakynthos, Chrysostomos, along with Damaskinos, remains one of the most recognized clerics who opposed Germany's effort to deport the Jews. The community on Zakynthos, as a whole, survived the war. There is some debate over the sequence of events, but according to most accounts the Metropolitan played an important role in saving the community.⁸⁵² The German governor of Zakynthos, Berentz, demanded a list of the island's Jews from the mayor, Loukas Karrieras. Deeply shaken, the mayor saw Metropolitan Chrysostomos to seek his advice. The two men, hoping to buy time for the community, provided a list with two names, Chrysostomos and Karrieras. In addition, according to the official account by the Greek Jewish community, a letter from Chrysostomos to Hitler, stating that he would take responsibility for the Jews, was also sent.⁸⁵³ The community, regardless of the importance of the gentile leadership of the island, survived the war intact. One can conclude, however, that the Metropolitan and mayor's tactics delayed the deportations long enough to ensure the safety of the population. To speculate what could have happened if the Germans had more time is of little value.

In addition to these examples of moral courage, other metropolitans assisted the Jews in less dramatic ways. For instance, the Metropolitan of Veroia (a town southwest of Thessaloniki), Polykarpos, hid the synagogue's valuables in his home until the end of

⁸⁵² According to an article published in the Greek daily, *To Vima*, on 12/2/1989, The Germans treated the metropolitan with respect because he had studied in Germany and had met Hitler in Munich. Even before the planned deportation in 1944, the Germans had raised the issue of the Jews. Chrysostomos and the island's mayor sent a telegram to Hitler informing him that he and the mayor would take responsibility for the island's Jews. They received a positive response from Berlin. "Let the Jews remain in Zakynthos under the personal responsibility of the Metropolitan and the mayor." No record, of course, of the telegram exists. Matsas, 122.

⁸⁵³ Menexiadis, 272. Matsas discounts the value of Chrysostomos' intervention, arguing that lack of resources and the impending withdrawal from the island rather than the metropolitan's intervention saved the community. While there may be merit to this position, the intervention of the mayor and the metropolitan bought the community invaluable time, which many used to hide among Greek families and in the mountains. Matsas, 123.

the occupation.⁸⁵⁴ Bishop Gregory of Halkis also provided a similar service to the city's Jewish community.⁸⁵⁵ In Kastoria, Bishop Nikiforos requested permission from the German Garrison commander, Hildebrandt, to give the Jewish community awaiting deportation a daily meal, which was granted.⁸⁵⁶ These acts of kindness, though paling in comparison to those of Damaskinos and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos, indicated that the church disapproved of German policy, though some within the leadership decided to take greater risks than others.

While Damaskinos, Ioakeim of Dimitria, and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos stand out as exemplary religious leaders in terms of their efforts to save members of the Jewish community, and others such as Polykarpos of Veroia indicate the possibility of helping the Jewish community by preserving valuable artifacts or by other forms of kindness, the brutal efficiency of the Germans in other parts of the mainland and on many Greek islands evidenced the silence or, at least, inactivity of local hierarchs. It must be noted that in many of these places, German orders for deportation came suddenly, giving little time for the Christian or Jewish community to act. However, unlike the case of the Jews in Bulgarian-occupied territory or even the Thessaloniki Jews, the church leadership knew, based on the extensive accounts of the deportations in Greece's second largest city, that a tragic fate awaited the Jewish community that had, until then, avoided deportation. For this reason, these men, as moral leaders of their community, could have taken further actions on behalf of the members of the Jewish community in the ecclesiastical see. The most notable examples of this failure to act include the Metropolitans of Ioannina, Corfu, and Rhodes – cases in which the Germans deported roughly 90% of the respective

⁸⁵⁴ Fleming, 122.

⁸⁵⁵ Menexiadis, *The Holocaust of Greek Jewry*, 251.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

communities to Auschwitz.⁸⁵⁷ Overall, outside of possibly Poland, Greece lost the highest percentage of Jewish population in all of occupied Europe, a troubling statistic for a country where anti-Semitism did not take root as it had in other parts eastern and central Europe.

Based on the information regarding the response of the Church, a few conclusion can be gleaned: First, one cannot evaluate the response of the Church in the Bulgarian zone because of the policies enacted by the occupation authorities to remove the religious, political, and economic leadership. Second, the official church led by Damaskinos did not act promptly to the persecution of the Jews in the German zone, but both Damaskinos and Gennadios (though the latter to a far lesser extent) expressed their opposition to Nazi anti-Semitic policy as it pertained to Greek Jewry. Third, in the Italian zone, because the Jewish and Christian communities had learned of the experience of the Jews of the German and Bulgarian zones, Damaskinos and a few of his colleagues took a stand against this Nazi policy and actively assisted Jewish communities, and their actions set an example for the rest of the country to take a stand against these measures, even though there is no formal documentation showing that they explicitly asked the community to follow suit. In short, wherever the Church, as an integral part of the political and moral fabric of Greek society, took an active role in assisting Jews, the local community had far more success in evading deportation. The tragic silence or inactivity of the leadership in places such as Ioannina, Rhodes, and Corfu evidenced that the Church's inactivity made it easier for German officials to execute the deportations.

⁸⁵⁷ No account indicates that local church leaders did anything to subvert German efforts in these areas. The deportations had devastating effect as it led to very high percentages of deaths in the aforementioned areas: Rhodes 89%; Ioannina 91%; Corfu 91%. See Plaut, 68-9.

In conclusion, Damaskinos and a number of his colleagues deemed the Axis policy in the Bulgarian zone and the Holocaust amoral and treated it as a national crisis that needed their attention. Despite making little impact in shaping Axis policy, the Church, through open opposition and passive resistance to these policies, led the population to appreciate their effort, and in the case of the Holocaust, no doubt contributed to others assisting the Jewish victims of Nazi measures. However, these clerics, in some cases, could have worked closer with EAM to assist Jews in Thessaloniki and other places such as Ioannina. While the efforts of these clerics were admirable and have received much attention by the postwar scholarship, the glaring fact that 90% of the Jewish population perished is disconcerting, especially since the cases where the clergy did become actively involved had a resounding impact on the survival of the Jewish community; those of Athens, Zakynthos and Volos are especially important. Other clerics, led by Ioakeim of Kozani and Antonios of Ileia, did not agree with the decision of the majority of the hierarchy to limit its involvement to passive resistance, opting instead to join the active resistance; this was the case particularly for the lower clergy. EAM-ELAS, the largest most influential resistance movement, benefited the most from this feeling of patriotism demonstrated by the ecclesiastical sector of Greek society. The response of these clerics and their relationship with EAM will be the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter IX

In the Spirit of Papaflessas and Germanos of Old Patras:

The Relationship between EAM and the Clergy during the Axis Occupation

Archbishop Damaskinos and Metropolitan Gennadios of Thessaloniki opposed Axis policies detrimental to the nation. In doing so, they utilized legitimate forms of resistance such as formal complaints to the occupation authorities. They also undermined policies through secretive forms of subversion, such as providing temporary shelter and false documents to those targeted by the occupation authorities. In contrast, Metropolitans Ioakeim of Kozani and Antonios of Ileia, and many members of the middle and lower ranks joined EAM-ELAS or other movements both out of patriotism and necessity. For instance, both metropolitans of Ileia and Kozani fled to the mountains after the Axis pursued them for ‘subversive’ activities. The same held true for the abbot of the Agathanos monastery, Archimandrite Germanos Dimakos, one of the most recognized members of the lower clergy to join EAM-ELAS. Despite joining the movement, both Germanos and Antonios negotiated with the Axis authorities for the release of members of their flock before joining the resistance.⁸⁵⁸ In addition, much of the clergy, for canonical reasons, joined the relief wing of the movement, Ethniki Allilengyi (National Solidarity), rather than ELAS, the military wing.⁸⁵⁹ As devout Christians and

⁸⁵⁸ The efforts of archimandrite Germanos will receive more attention later in the chapter. For information about metropolitan Antonios’ negotiations with the occupation authorities see: Dimitrios Kailas, *O Kliros stin Antistasi* (Athens: Synchroni Epochi, 1981), 35.

⁸⁵⁹ Despite the fact that most clerics did not join ELAS, especially as active combatants they established special ranks for clerics who joined the organization. For more information about this system and members of the movement who joined ELAS see: *Keimena Tis Ethnikis Antistasis: (EAM, EEAM, ELAASs, EA, EPON, Kinima Mesis Anatonlis) (Documents of the National Resistance (EAM, EEAM, ELAS, EA, EPON, the Middle East Movement)*, 2 vols. (Athens: Synchroni Epochi 1981), 104, 192. Cited in Georgios

ecclesiastical leaders they remained staunch in their faith and unmoved by communist rhetoric incorporated in the patriotic songs and other propaganda of the movement. Myths of 1821 and the role of clerics such as Germanos of Old Patras and Papaflessas also inspired some of these men. In addition to the small faction of hierarchs who actually joined the movement, a small faction sympathized with the movement, offered it assistance, but declined to join for political and ideological reasons. Metropolitan Eirinaios of Samos counted among the most recognized sympathizers of the movement. He received much praise by a number of chroniclers of the resistance in general and of the branch in Samos in particular.⁸⁶⁰ The relationship between the metropolitan and the resistance was so amicable that it allowed them to work together on a governing committee when the Italians capitulated to the British in September 1943.⁸⁶¹ In addition to providing relief to the population, a number of active clerics used the opportunity to improve the lot of the impoverished parish clergy; this effort resulted in the creation of the Panclerical Union.

Resistance movements, especially EAM, hoping to benefit from the acknowledged influence of the clergy, used the popular accounts of the Revolution of 1821, both to identify their movement as a second Philiki Etaireia (Friendly Society) and to recruit the clergy by referencing the myths of Papaflessas and Germanos in their

Karagiannis, *I Ekklesia Apo Tin Katohi Ston Emfylio, Ekklesia Kai Politiki* (Athens: Proskinio, 2001), 38-40, Kaïlas, *O Kliros stin Antistasi (The Clergy in the Resistance)*, 53-70.

⁸⁶⁰ For information about his treatment by the postwar resistance literature see Grigoriadis, *To Antartiko*, v.3, 244-245, Ioannis Zapheiris, *I Katohi kai i Ethniki Antistasi sti Samo: 1941-1944 - Chroniko (The Occupation and the Resistance on Samos: 1941-1944, A Chronicle)* (1962).

⁸⁶¹ For more on his involvement in the temporary government in Samos in the fall of 1943 see Philip John Carabott, "A British Military Occupation, under a British Military Governor, but without a British Military Administration. The Case of Samos: 8 September to 18 November 1943," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 7, no. 2 (1989): 287-320, Eirinaios Papamihail Metropolitan of Samos, *I Dynamis tou Ellinochristianikou Pnevmatos (the Strength of the Helleno-Christian Spirit)*, 5 vols., vol. 3, Meletimata Diafora (Various Studies) (Athens: Kypraios, 1960), 77-117.

propaganda literature and speeches. The leadership also understood that these men could help win the support of local parish priests and, through them, their flocks. In addition to using the myths of the revolution, EAM-ELAS attempted to blunt the anti-communist German propaganda by identifying acts of sacrilege against the church and the persecution of members of the clergy by the Axis and their Greek allies in the resistance press. Despite EAM's unwillingness to attack the Orthodox faith during the war using traditional communist anti-clerical rhetoric, the movement did not refrain from speaking out against clerics that openly collaborated with the Axis or spoke out against their movement. This union between EAM and the church seemed to offer considerable hope for the improvement of the status of the parish priests while also strengthening the legitimacy of the movement in the eyes of the population. However, there were anticlerical elements within EAM that led to the tempering of the initial enthusiastic support offered to the church, in the eyes of many clerics. Also, communist propaganda and certain policies made many parish priests question the intentions of the organization toward the church after the war.

In short, inspired by the myths of the revolution, the atrocities of the Axis, and patriotism, a small faction in the hierarchy and many in the ecclesiastical leadership's lower ranks joined the armed struggle against the Axis. EAM, for its part, understood the value of the support of the church and utilized a number of propaganda techniques to win over the clergy and encouraged its more enthusiastic members to organize their brethren in an effort to gain the support of the majority of the population. While the establishment of the Panclerical Union and the general respect and enthusiasm demonstrated by the leadership of EAM toward the church in public reflected the political pragmatism of

EAM's leadership, the polarization of the population after the outbreak of the civil war, the strong anticlerical sentiments within the movement, and the continued concern and growing disillusionment among many within the clergy toward the movement's growing anti-clericalism limited its appeal after the war.

Axis brutality, pillaging and general indifference on the one hand, and careful organizing, clever use of propaganda, and a burgeoning patriotism on the other hand, led to the growth of resistance to the Axis in Greece. In the first year and a half of the occupation (May 1941-September 1942) much of the opposition took the form of individual acts of sabotage and other minor acts against the armies of occupation.⁸⁶² Among the most recognized acts of this type included the removal of the swastika from the top of the Acropolis in late May 1941, support in the form of applause when British and Dominion troops passed in lorries on their way to Axis prisoner of war camps, and the refusal of Archbishop Chrysanthos to swear in the first occupation government of Georgios Tsolakoglou. In addition to these symbolic acts, sporadic acts of sabotage against Axis forces represented the type of opposition the Germans and their allies faced in Greece during the first year and a half of the occupation. The case of Crete represents the sole exception to this rule. German brutality, after all, was seen firsthand by the population during the summer of 1941 when the German army pursued its reprisal campaign against the Cretan population because of the large number of deaths it suffered during the battle of Crete. As a result, a number of resistance movements developed in the final days of the battle in late May 1941. Crete also is an exceptional case because

⁸⁶² For information on early acts of resistance see: Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece : The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 85-96, John Louis Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance : The Greek Agony, 1941-44* (New York: Pella 1983), 95-100.

unlike much of the rest of Greece, the communist-led EAM did not dominate the resistance against the Axis on the island.⁸⁶³

Despite the lack of an organized movement in the first months of the occupation in much of Greece, the Greek Communist Party, along with a number of smaller ‘fellow travelers’ joined to establish the National Solidarity relief organization (EA), which was eventually incorporated in the general movement, the National Liberation Front (EAM) in September 1941. In the following year a military wing emerged, the National People’s Liberation Army (ELAS).⁸⁶⁴ By 1943, EAM-ELAS became the most significant resistance movement in Greece. Its activities, initially a mere annoyance to the occupation authorities, became more troubling by the end of the year, largely due to the growth of the movement and the inability of the German army, especially after Italy’s surrender in September and reverses on all fronts, to field enough troops to maintain a presence in the Greek countryside.

EAM hoped to gain the support, either tacitly or openly of the upper clergy, which the organization knew could play an important role in the growth of the movement. As mentioned in the previous chapters, both elites and common people began turning to the hierarchy for assistance during this period of crisis. However, outside a small minority, the upper clergy remained either opposed or neutral toward EAM-ELAS.

Damaskinos’ attitude toward armed resistance to the Axis remained unclear, at least publicly, during the occupation. He admired the patriotic act of fighting with the

⁸⁶³ For more on the resistance in Crete see: Antonios Sanoudakis, *Ekklesia kai Antistasi, O Rolos Tis Ekklesias Tis Kritis Stis, Metaksy Ton Antistasiakon Organoseon Scheseis (Church and Resistance, the Role of the Church of Crete, Relations among Resistance Organizations)* (Athens: Knosos, 1993), 29-65, G. C. Kiriakopoulos, *The Nazi Occupation of Crete, 1941-1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance : The Greek Agony, 1941-44*, 143.

⁸⁶⁴ For more on the founding of EAM-ELAS see: Mazower, 102-122, Hondros, 110-120.

resistance, but the negative impact resistance activity had on the population, and the political motivations of EAM, in particular, concerned him. The Archbishop learned about the movement in August 1942. A member of EAM approached Ioanna Tsatsos, Damaskinos' personal secretary and close friend, in 1942 requesting that she join the movement. She informed the archbishop about the organization, but the latter, unclear about the organization's leadership and motives, remained suspicious. "But what is this EAM? Can't they give us a name? ...I hear about it, but I don't know it." He continued by explaining his reservations about this secretive organization. "I don't believe in abstract ideas—at least for our country. I must know who are the men who are fighting for them. Only when the men are honorable do the ideas have substance..."⁸⁶⁵ As mentioned earlier, he remained deeply concerned about socialist ideas, and, more importantly, understood that he could not join any resistance movement regardless of its political affiliation.⁸⁶⁶ German officials kept a close eye on him, and any concrete information tying him to such an organization would seriously jeopardize his close working relationship with the occupation authorities. A relationship, despite its limited success, that bore fruit. Unlike his other acts of resistance, such as his formal complaints against Bulgarian policies and the Holocaust, joining a resistance movement would be untenable. As with many clerics, he remained skeptical of the political intentions of

⁸⁶⁵ Ioanna Tsatsos, *Fylla Katohis (Pages from the Occupation)*, 8th ed. (Athens Estia, 2002), 36-7.

⁸⁶⁶ However, Damaskinos met with Dimitrios Psarros' organization Ethniki kai Koinoniki Apeleftherosi (National and Social Liberation) and provided him funds. Ibid., 106. Once, Iraklis Petimezas, approached the archbishop with a letter from Napoleon Zervas, the leader of the National Republican Greek League (EDES). Based on Petimezas' account, the archbishop appeared terrified, likely for fear of the Germans becoming aware of the meeting. For more general information about EDES see: Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance : The Greek Agony, 1941-44*, 105-107, Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 106-7, 133-143. For the meeting between Damaskinos and Petimezas see Dimosthenis Koukounas, *O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos (Archbishop Damaskinos)* (Athens: Metron, 1991), 197-199, Iraklis Petimezas, *Ethniki Antistasi kai Koinoniki Epanastasi, Zervas kai EAM (National Resistance and Social Revolution, Zervas and EAM)* (Athens: Metron, 1991), 207, 415.

EAM-ELAS at the end of the war. Still, despite his unwillingness to join the movement and deep concerns about the movement's postwar political motives, he declined requests by the occupation governments and the German and Italian occupation authorities to denounce the organization. According to Ioannis Georgakis, his legal adviser during the war, Damaskinos explained his attitude toward the resistance as follows: "I do not distinguish those who desire the liberation of the nation into bad and good. I pray for them all."⁸⁶⁷

A few hierarchs, however, took a clear position toward EAM-ELAS. Those fearful of their postwar intentions, led by Spyridon of Ioannina, spoke in opposition to the movement, while a few openly joined or sympathized with the movement and its wartime objectives. Other hierarchs, out of fear of communism, also opposed the movement. According to at least one scholar, they became part of small faction of the clergy that feared Communism to such an extent that they viewed the Germans as the 'lesser evil'.

In contrast, Metropolitan Ioakeim Apostolidis of Kozani and Metropolitan Antonios of Ileia became important leaders in the resistance. EAM, knowing the powerful influence these men wielded used their position to expand both the membership and popularity of the movement. Interestingly, though, both men joined the movement after escaping Axis pursuers in their respective regions for 'subversive' behavior. In addition to these popular figures, four other hierarchs maintained a working relationship and sympathized with EAM: Metropolitan Eirinaios Papamihail of Samos, Metropolitan

⁸⁶⁷ Ioannis Georgakis, "O Archiepiskopos Damaskinos Kai I Ekklesia Kata Tin Katohi (Archbishop Damaskinos and the Church During the Occupation)," in *Omiliai, 1987* (Speeches, 1987)(Athens: 1989), 71.

Iakovos of Attika, Metropolitan Gregory of Halkis, and Metropolitan Ioakeim of Chios.⁸⁶⁸

Metropolitan of Kozani Ioakeim, earned a reputation as strong-willed and patriotic church leader, who successively clashed with the Ottoman authorities, the Pangalos and Metaxas regimes, and the Axis occupation authorities. The last conflict forced him to flee to the EAM-ELAS controlled mountains near the city of Kozani. Ioakeim was born in Outraki, Vithynia in 1883. He attended the Theological School at Halkis from 1889-1906. In either 1910-1911 Patriarch Ioakeim V, who also appointed him deacon of the patriarchate, ordained him a deacon. In 1923 he was elected metropolitan of Kozani. In the same year as his election to head the church of Kozani, the Nationalist government of Mustafa Kemal sentenced him to death for his activities. With the assistance of the Allies, he fled to Greece on February 6, 1923.⁸⁶⁹ He remained metropolitan of Kozani until his dethronement in February 1945. Conflicts with the Pangalos and Metaxas regimes, however, led to his temporary dethronement by both dictators (1926, 1936).⁸⁷⁰ Axis authorities became concerned about his activity as early 1942, which ultimately led him to flee to the mountains of Western Macedonia in March 1943, before travelling with the 500th Regiment of ELAS to Western Thessaly, where he

⁸⁶⁸ For more information about these hierarchs and their affiliation with EAM see: Grigoriadis, *To Antartiko*, v.3, 244-5., Kaïlas, *O Kliros Stin Antistasi*, 37-39, Karagiannis, *I Ekklesia Apo Tin Katohi Ston Emfylio, Ekklesia Kai Politiki*, 36-37.

⁸⁶⁹ N.P. Deliani, *Episkopika Kozanis* (Episcopal Matters of Kozani (1992), 25. Cited in *Mnimes kai Martyries (Memories and Eyewitness Accounts)*. (Athens: Klados Ekdoseon Epikoinoniakis kai Morphotikis Yperesias tis Ekklesias tis Ellados, 2000), 117.

⁸⁷⁰ No details exist in the secondary literature regarding his dethronement under Pangalos. However, according the church, the Metaxas government dethroned him and banished him to the Karakalli Monastery on Mount Athos in 1936 after he sent a letter to the government complaining about the military installations of the 'Metaxas Line' (a line of defense established on Greek Bulgarian border by the dictator). Ekklesia, ID, 286. Cited in *Memories and Eyewitness Accounts*, For more on his early life see: Kaïlas, *O Kliros Stin Antistasi*, 33-34, Karagiannis, *Ekklesia kai Politeia*, 33-34, *Memories and Eyewitness Accounts*, 117-118.

finally settled.⁸⁷¹ Unfortunately, the Germans seized, tortured, and, finally, executed his assistant, Archimandrite Ioakeim Lioulis, on June 6, 1943 both for his affiliation with the metropolitan and his own patriotic sermons.⁸⁷²

The metropolitan's arrival provided a public relations coup for EAM. He became deeply involved in the movement, travelling throughout EAM-controlled Thessaly giving impassioned speeches and recruiting many to the cause. According to eyewitnesses: "He toured the villages and spoke, enlightening and raising the spirit of the people, but never ministered or wore a stole (required to perform the liturgy)." The metropolitan respected the rights of the local parish priest and communicated with him before making any speeches. "Wherever he went, before anything else, he sought to speak with the village priest. He did this in order to avoid being reported to the Holy Synod for canonical infractions."⁸⁷³ Upon returning from his tour with the metropolitan, Aris thanked Germanos for accompanying the elderly hierarch and discussed the benefits of the trip:

⁸⁷¹ Three stories have emerged about his forced exile from Kozani. One story is that he and forty others EAM officers signed the "Protocol of Honor." Karagiannis, *From Occupation to Civil War*, 34. A second, according to an article in the Greek War Relief Association stated the Ioakeim gave an impassioned sermon promoting the resistance; uttering the following statement: "Every tree on the mountains is a guerilla fighter. With God's help, Greece will be liberated.", *Greek War Relief Association* 3, no. 5 (1943). Reports of this account led the Germans to seek him out for questioning. Germanos, 83-86, Kaila, 34-35. A third, told by his nephew and then vicar of the metropolis, Mitsos Grimbas. He states that the metropolitan had left his ecclesiastical see for 15-20 days in February 1943 to meet with EAM leaders to inform them that they had good relations with the Germans and to not act against them. On March 6, soon after his return, two German officials came to ask why he left for so long. He informed them of his trip, at which point, the Germans told him to refrain from such activities as his life would be in danger. He took that as a sign and escaped to the mountains. The plausibility of this meeting appears unlikely as other sources corroborate his earlier resistance sermons. For this reason, they German likely had intention of imprisoning him well before this trip. Also, it appears very unlikely that he would inform the Germans that he visited the EAM leadership. Finally, this does not corroborate with the other sources, which indicate that the metropolitan fled for the mountains in late February early March, and that he had plans to do so from at least late February. Mihalis Papakonstantinos, *To Chroniko tis Megalis Nyhtas (the Chronicle of the Long Night)* (Athens: Estia, 1999), 252-263, *Memories and Eye-Witness Accounts*, 118-119.

⁸⁷² According to Papakonstantinos, the archimandrite gave sermons that had little spiritual content, but sounded more like a call to arms. "The Nation does not die, it lies in slumber for a while, but now awake." Papakonstantinos, *the Chronicle of the Long Night*, 254. For more details on his death see: *ibid.*, 263-4, Kailas, *O Kliros Stin Antistasi*, 38-40.

⁸⁷³ Archimandrite Germanos K. Dimakos (Pater Anyponomos), *Sto Vouno Me Ton Stavro, Konta Ston Ari (in the Mountains with the Cross, near Aris)* (Trikala: Lavrentios Detziortzio, 2004), 186.

“Do you see, little father, the work that was done? Do you see how beneficial the tour was? You and the Despoti may be more exhausted, but none of us could have done the work that you did. They hear us differently from the way they hear you (clergy).”⁸⁷⁴

EAM understood this and utilized his position and enthusiasm well throughout the occupation.

Later, EAM used him to communicate their concerns to the Allies in the Middle East in April 1944. In this message, the metropolitan had four objectives: 1) to paint a positive picture of the movement and its contribution to the Allied cause; 2) to request arms against an impending civil war against the Rallis government and its forces; 3) to condemn Axis policies against the population; and 4) to encourage the creation of a ‘national’ government and national military force in Greece. His reference to Axis atrocities is of particular significance for its propagandistic value:

Using our signature please [communicate] to the leaders of all...churches [that] the Germans and Bulgarians [are] burning churches, monasteries and art monuments; of wholesale murder against the clergy, unarmed population and women and children...are literally suffering martyrdom.⁸⁷⁵

No doubt, EAM understood that his position as metropolitan placed him a position of respect and authority that had, in the minds of the movement’s leadership, greater weight than their own. Moreover, the movement was trying to refute Axis propaganda claims that EAM disrespected religion and mistreated clergymen and destroyed church property. EAM’s leadership struggled against these accusations throughout the occupation, but found numerous ways to counter them such as the telegram mentioned above. In May

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid., 193

⁸⁷⁵ FO 371/R6178. A telegram sent from Ioakeim of Kozani, through General Sarafis, to Prime Minister Tsouderos, March 31, 1944. The telegram was translated and sent to Hammond from London on April, 4, 1944.

1944, Ioakeim was elected as an advisor to the National Committee, which congregated in May 1944 to write a National Charter.⁸⁷⁶

Metropolitan Antonios of Ilea, the president of Ethniki Allilengyi, after Ioakeim of Kozani, became the most recognizable hierarch to join EAM. Born on the island of Syros in 1891, he was ordained in 1917 and served as a military chaplain on the Macedonian Front during World War I, and, later, during the Greek-Turkish War of 1920-22. In December of 1922, he was elected Metropolitan of Ilea, a position he held until his dethronement by an ecclesiastical court in 1945. During the first years of the occupation, he intervened with the occupation authorities on behalf of members of his ecclesiastical see. He joined EAM in 1943, but did not flee to the mountains until March of 1944 due to German attempts to arrest him for his resistance activity. Like his fellow hierarch, Antonios served the movement by taking tours of the Peloponnesus to enlighten the population. In addition, to these activities, EAM elected him as representative to the National Committee in May 1944.⁸⁷⁷ This organization, better known as the Political Committee of National Liberation (PEEA) or the ‘Government in the Mountains,’ was dominated by EAM.⁸⁷⁸ The organization will receive further attention during the discussion on EAM’s propaganda campaign and the church.

Of those hierarchs sympathetic to the movement, the Metropolitan Eirinaios of Samos deserves attention. He represented a group within the hierarchy that supported the

⁸⁷⁶ Kaïlas, *O Kliros stin Antistasi*, 35

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid., 35-6

⁸⁷⁸ Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44*, 291. Mazower argued that the organization, hoping to follow the example of Tito in Yugoslavia wanted to take advantage of the unpopularity of the King and the Government-in-Exile by holding election for a national government in “Free Greece,” the territory controlled by EAM-ELAS forces. The KKE played an important role in this movement, as the Party Secretary, Siantos, also served as Secretary of Internal Affairs. The movement even convinced a number of intellectual and political leaders of small stature to join the movement, such as the ‘government’s president, law professor Alexandros Svolos. EAM, however agreed to disband the government after the Lebanon Agreement in May 1944.

intentions of the movement during the war, but like many hierarchs, harbored a number of concerns about the movement. His relationship with EAM included a short period in the fall of 1943, when he served as president of a governing committee with representatives of the Samos branch of EAM and other island notables. His memoirs provide interesting insight into the rationale both behind his support for the movement and the movement's limitations. "On my behalf, the struggle of the antartes is an expression of the virility of the race, a condemnation against foreign rule and an effort toward liberation. The antartes are armatoloi and klefts of the struggle of 1821."⁸⁷⁹ He added that the church supported their effort as it had all of the nation's struggles. "This spirit of love toward the nation and sacrifice on its behalf is blessed by the church, in accordance with its historical tradition; and, it supports the movement against the enemy."⁸⁸⁰ He also mentioned the fact that the movement genuinely represented the entire nation. "They had gathered strength from all the political parties and the communists, and were a genuine National Liberation Front, and in this regard they embodied a Pan-Hellenic character."⁸⁸¹ This attitude explained why he supported the movement and worked closely with them. He fled the island during the German invasion of October 1943.

Despite his ardent support for the movement's desire to liberate the country from foreign rule, he harbored reservations about EAM's plans for social reform in postwar Greece, especially regarding the church. Based on his conflicts with the Metaxas regime,

⁸⁷⁹ Metropolitan of Samos, *I Dynamis Tou Ellinochristianikou Pnevmatos (the Strength of the Helleno-Christian Spirit)*, 49.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid.

he favored a democratic form of government, and a state apparatus that was more in tune with the needs of the population.

He appreciated the movement's goal of social reform. But he warned that the reform should be grounded in the current social values as reflected in the context of the nation, the church, the family, and the dignity and freedom of the individual.⁸⁸² He specifically rejected the internationalism of Communist ideology.

“Our nation, which has a bright and shining creativity, continues to influence the entire world, is of colossal significance, and we should be honored to be its children.”⁸⁸³ He ranked Orthodox Christianity among Greece's greatest contributions. “The orthodox church is a synthesis of the ancient Greek spirit and Christ...The Orthodox Greek Church is the creative strength of the history of the nation, which strove to brighten it, to raise it, in the support of love and justice in its breast.”⁸⁸⁴

For Eirinaios, the church played and will continue to play a critical role in the development of the nation. He even found common ground for collaboration in the values of Communism and Christianity. However, in his view, the international nature of Communism threatened the very uniqueness of the Greek people. No doubt, his attempt to discuss the place of the Church in the development of Greek history took into consideration the Soviet government's persecution of organized religion in general, and the Orthodox Church in particular. In short, he understood the value of social justice promoted by the movement, but wanted to ensure that overzealous reformers did not threaten the basic values of Greek society after the war. Eirinaios' position toward the church was not unique. Many clerics, including Damaskinos, sympathized with the

⁸⁸² Ibid., 49-50.

⁸⁸³ Ibid., 150.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid.

movement's goal of liberating the nation. The official church, in theory, did not oppose such a path. However, longstanding fears of communism's attitude toward religion and the movement's plans for postwar Greece caused many to look wearily toward EAM's postwar agenda. This issue concerned the parish priests as well as the hierarchs.⁸⁸⁵

EAM, however, found far more support among the parish priests and monks in the countryside. As Germanos explains: "Tradition calls upon Greek Orthodox priests and monks, both as leaders and comrades, to be involved in all of the nation's struggles—never uninvolved!" Archimandrite Germanos Dimakos (who went by the pseudonym Father Anyponomos in resistance circles) used these words to define the role of the church during period of struggle in his poignant memoir of his experience as a close confidant of Aris Velouchiotis, the most popular and powerful ELAS chieftain during World War II. Germanos also points to the role conditions played in the decision to join. "Someone would have to have a heart of iron or steel to close his eyes and ears...to the tragic situation in which our country and people found themselves, even if one was not moved...by this patriotic call, to this call to arms for our liberation from the barbaric occupiers."⁸⁸⁶ As one can imagine, the nationwide famine, the ineptitude and unpopularity of the national government, and the brutality of the occupation authorities led many to join the ranks of the resistance to liberate their country. Thus, when a village came out in support of EAM, the parish priest usually followed the example of his parishioners.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁵ For instance, the bishop of Aigion told the ELAS officer 'Kassandra' "to keep in mind the needs of the Church." The story is referenced in Mazower, 314.

⁸⁸⁶ Dimakos, 86.

⁸⁸⁷ William McNeill, in his account of Greek affairs accurately described the position of the parish priest and his attitude toward EAM-ELAS: "In Greece the parish priests are chosen from among the peasants of the village and share the attitudes and ideas of their parishioners to the full...They are distinguished from their fellow chiefly by a peculiar dress, and by the semi-magical power, conferred by the bishop's

From the beginning of the movement, a number of patriotic priests joined EAM, primarily serving in EA and in administrative capacities. Later, after the establishment of ELAS, a small group served as military chaplains and on occasion, as soldiers. Based on the few surviving accounts, patriotism remained the major motivating factor leading these men to join the armed resistance. In Roumeli, where Aris' band began to gain notoriety by May 1943, a number of later prominent clerics in the movement joined the newly formed group. Among the most well-known include, K. Tzebelekas of Kolokythia, Papparisteidis of Stromi and Papa Kostas Papaleventis. Most of these men served in comparable roles in the resistance to that of peacetime: caring for the social and religious needs of the population, primarily through their work in EA.

Papakostis Papaleventis is an interesting case both for his involvement in the movement, but also because of his fate at the hands of his superior, Metropolitan Amvrosios of Fthiotis. His comrades knew him by his pseudonym, Papaflessas. Born in Amfikleia, Thessaly in 1893, Papaleventis was the son of a priest and had four siblings, three brothers and a sister. He served as a soldier (1912-1924), before returning home a wounded veteran.⁸⁸⁸ Once home, he decided to get married and become a priest, serving initially in his father's church. Although anti-Communist before the war, the events of the occupation changed him. Frustrated by the abuses of the occupation authorities, he sought a way to resist.⁸⁸⁹ His first resistance activity was with National Solidarity, which he joined in 1942. Among other missions for the organization, he travelled to

ordination, to conduct services, baptisms, marriages and funerals. The priests are little educated, and some of them are only partially literate. In such circumstances there was no rift between clergy and peasants; and the priests divided as did their parishioners, some favouring, some opposing EAM." William Hardy McNeill, *The Greek Dilemma: War and Aftermath* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Co., 1947), 84.

⁸⁸⁸Kostas Pentedekas, *I Amfikleia (to Dadi) Stin Ethniki Antistasi, 1940-1944 (Amfikleia (Dadi) in the National Resistance* (Kaisarani, Greece: Entos, 2001), 212-3.

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

Athens on behalf of Aris to raise money for the movement among well-known Greeks from the region residing in Athens.⁸⁹⁰

Despite his involvement in EAM, however, he continued to serve as a mediating force, along with Dimakos, with the occupation authorities, such as his intervention after the occupation authorities began executing innocent community members after the ‘battle of Dadi,’ or the act of sabotage that destroyed part of the railway near the local train station that left seventeen German soldiers dead. Fifteen Axis soldiers were taken hostage (9 Germans, 6 Italians), and 200 railway cars were destroyed on April 13, 1943.⁸⁹¹ Infuriated, the Italians handed ten random citizens to the Germans, who promptly executed them the following day.⁸⁹² This led many in the town to flee to the nearby mountains. The Italians, discovering that much of the dynamite used in the destruction of the railway station had been hidden in the nearby town of Velitsa, decided to travel there and punish the population. They set fire to the town burning half of its houses and killing a number of the residents. In addition, the Germans took many of the remaining young and middle age men as hostages.⁸⁹³ Hoping to end this wave of terror by the occupation authorities, Papaleventis, Dimakos and others began negotiating with the occupation authorities.⁸⁹⁴ These efforts led to a temporary end to Axis violence in the town.

In May, after an incident that cost the life of an Italian soldier, Giovanni, Papaleventis fled to the mountains. He served in ELAS, even taking part in a skirmish

⁸⁹⁰ For more about Ethniki Allilengyi in Amfikleia, including his involvement see *ibid.*, 113. For details about his trip to Athens to raise funds for the resistance among prominent members of the community who lived in Athens see: *ibid.*, 213.

⁸⁹¹ For a detailed account of the ‘battle of Dadi’ see *Ibid.*, 160-183.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, 179-183, Dimakos, 111-122

⁸⁹³ Pentedekas, *I Amfikleia (to Dadi) Stin Ethniki Antistasi, 1940-1944 (Amfikleia (Dadi) in the National Resistance*, 181-183.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

(in resistance literature this is known as the battle of Pavlianis) with the Axis authorities that same month. The following year, on June 20-21, he took part in the Congress of the Panclerical Union to discuss the role of the clergy in EAM and ways to improve the economic status of the lower clergy.⁸⁹⁵ In short, his role appeared representative of that of many lower clergy in Greece. At the end of the war, Amvrosios suspended him for his wartime activities, though accounts differ about his ultimate fate after the war.⁸⁹⁶ His punishment reflected a general position taken by the church after the war against clerics who served in EAM-ELAS.

Archimandrite Germanos Dimakos (Father Anyponomos), a close confidant of Aris Velouchiotis, played a similar role to that of Papaleventis. He was born in the Peloponnesus, in the small village of Agridaki, Gortynia in 1912. He attended the local grammar school and gymnasium before leaving in 1929 to become a monk in the Panagias Ksenia Almyrou Monastery. On July 29, 1934, while at the monastery, he was ordained a deacon and took the ecclesiastical name Germanos. Metropolitan Amvrosios of Fthiotis ordained him a Presbyter on October 4, and sent him to the Agathanos monastery, where he served as temporary abbot until receiving the position permanently on July 17, 1945. He remained at the monastery, outside of a two-year period in the mountains, until his death in June 8, 2004.⁸⁹⁷ During the occupation he played an important role, both in the nearby town of Amfikleia and later as a close confidant of

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., 214-215.

⁸⁹⁶ There are two accounts that emerged about his fate after the war; that of archimandrite Dimakos and that of Kostas Pentedekas (the chronicler of Amfikleia during the war). Dimakos states that he was permanently suspended, because he had to work as a cobbler to feed himself and his wife. Pentedekas, in contrast, stated that, in front of a big crowd in the Ai-Vlassi church, Amvrosios restored him during a ceremony, which, out of its love and support for their priest, a large crowd emerged both within the church and in the churchyard. For the two accounts see: Dimakos, 90, Pentedekas, *I Amfikleia*, 219.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid., 204.

Aris. Despite his participation in the resistance, his goals remained similar: to provide for the population, to save lives when possible, and to perform his spiritual duties as a cleric.

Before discussing his resistance activity, a brief summary of his relationship with the occupation authorities deserves attention. Keenly aware of the fact that the occupation authorities treated, in most cases, clergy with deference, he utilized his position to gain concessions from the occupation authorities. “I, due to my position as a priest and monk, approached them (the local Italian military leaders) and they responded and were friendly... Maybe they thought it better that they had a relationship with the abbot of the local monastery.”⁸⁹⁸ This relationship he utilized to his advantage. “They showed me respect, which I used for good.”... Whatever I wanted, they granted me. They may have harbored reservations initially, but due to my pleading and diplomacy they came around in the end.”⁸⁹⁹ The Italians developed such good relationship with the abbot that they insisted on his becoming community president in March 1943.⁹⁰⁰

On three separate occasions he used his position as a cleric and his good standing with the occupation authorities to assist fellow Greeks in their dealings with them. The first instance came several months before his ascension to the position of community president on October 1, 1942. Frustrated by the growing resistance to their rule, the Italian occupation authorities imprisoned seventy innocent members of the community to

⁸⁹⁸ Dimakos, 65.

⁸⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁰ Previous presidents fled because of resistance activity in the area from the previous year. Thus, the position of president remained vacant for quite some time. Thus, in late March, the local Italian military commander Catelano approached him about serving as town president. He initially refused, but would consider it if he had a statement from the local nomarch, G. Florinis approving this measure.⁹⁰⁰ He received the letter on March 22, but still refused. However, due to his concern about the state of the town and the continued insistence of the occupation authorities and the local population, he finally relented. For more information about his role as president see: Dimakos, 109-122, Pentedekas, 183. For a copy of the Nomarch’s letter see Dimakos, 109.

discourage further acts against the occupation authorities. Germanos and Papaleventis accompanied the families of most of those imprisoned and, together, negotiated the release of most of the prisoners. One young man, however, who had come to the city for work had no one to intervene on his behalf. Germanos took it upon himself to act on his behalf. He vouched that the man was a good hardworking citizen and that he had no intention of joining the resistance. Ultimately, months later, he, in fact, did flee to the mountains.⁹⁰¹

Briefly touched upon earlier in the discussion of the activities of Papaleventis, Germanos made a concerted effort to improve relations between the occupation authorities and the resistance after the destruction of the Amfikleia railway station on April 13, 1943. In addition to handing men to the Germans for execution, they took a number of individuals as prisoners in the town as insurance against similar attacks. In this atmosphere of hatred and animosity, which led many townspeople to flee the Parnassos mountains, Germanos wanted to utilize his good standing with the occupation authorities to improve the situation of the population and the occupation authorities. He attempted to convince the local Italian commander that the majority involved were not locals, both others working or visiting the city. “We exhorted them, we approached them obsequiously and pleaded with them, I as president and a cleric, near me was Papaleventis and the relatives and friends of the prisoners... We pleaded for them to release them, giving them personal assurances and support of their innocence and, finally, we succeeded in securing their release.”⁹⁰² Here, no doubt, his position as president, priest, and close collaborator with the Italian commander played an important role in the

⁹⁰¹ Dimakos, 66-7.

⁹⁰² Ibid., 120-1.

release of these men. This action, according to the most recent chronicler of the resistance in Amfikleia, occurred with the blessing of the local resistance leadership.⁹⁰³ Meeting with the occupation authorities, in the eyes of many resistance leaders, did not constitute collaboration, but rather the intentions of said meetings determined the response of the resistance.

The German occupation authorities took many of the young and middle age men as hostages from the neighboring town of Velitsa hostage and transported them to the German prison in Livadeia for assisting in the attack against the Amfikleia railway.⁹⁰⁴ In response, the relatives of many of these prisoners approached archimandrite Dimakos to intervene with the local German commander on behalf of their relatives. He agreed and traveled to the town to intervene on the community's behalf.⁹⁰⁵ Dimakos chose to include two older men from the group, likely to invoke the sympathy of the German commander, to accompany him to the meeting. He instructed the men to stand and behave in a deferential way to appeal to the vanity of the local officer. "You will also participate in the meeting, but without speaking. You will show humility, lowering your heads, without raising them at all; you will bend down, toward the ground."⁹⁰⁶ During the meeting, he was obsequious and kept his eye on the general to see if his demeanor changed. He stated: "Unfortunately, my compatriots, who acted against the [occupation] authorities, are fools. That is because they did not understand that that their actions had

⁹⁰³ Pentedekas, 183.

⁹⁰⁴ Dimakos, 123-124., Pentedekas, 205, Giorgis Moraitis, *Anamniseis enos Antarti (Memoirs of an Antarti)* (Giorgis Moraitis, *Memoirs of an Antarti*), 2 vols. (Athens: Kastanioti, 1989), 122-124.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid., 124-125.

⁹⁰⁶ Dimakos, 125.

tragic consequences for so many people...”⁹⁰⁷ According to Dimakos, the general slowly began to come around, and, in the end, released the hostages.⁹⁰⁸

Germanos, ultimately, understood the power and influence of his position. He refused to accept praise for his successful negotiation with the Germans. For him, his faith in God and his position as cleric allowed him to accomplish this task. “This [successful intervention] took place because I wore my priestly robes and my priestly hat, my cross and my miter.”⁹⁰⁹ Intervening on behalf of prisoners remained a central goal for Germanos after joining the resistance, who viewed his role to be the same, for the most part, as it was when he served as abbot and temporary president of Amfikleia.

Germanos first became involved in resistance activity in the early part of the occupation, as an active member of EA.⁹¹⁰ Under the aegis of preaching about the faith to the local communities, the local Metropolitan Amvrosios appointed him a traveling preacher. He travelled in the countryside around Amfikleia to spread the word about the resistance movement and to encourage the population to assist the national resistance by donating goods or funds. By and large these missions met with success.⁹¹¹

On May 9, Lieutenant Mario, an Italian military intelligence officer who spoke Greek fluently removed a typed resistance flyer posted in town. After questioning the local official working in the city’s town hall, including the residing typist, he learned that the abbot-president granted permission to a child to have his flyer typed in the office. Germanos, in his memoir, stated that he did not read the flyer and, thus, was unaware of its content. Infuriated, the Italian officer began looking for the abbot. Germanos

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid., 127.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., 132.

⁹¹⁰ Pentedekas, 113, Dimakos, 91.

⁹¹¹ Ibid., 93-4.

managed to evade authorities and flee to the Parnassos mountains. Interestingly, Mario appeared both stunned and angered by the news of Germanos' involvement, stating: "Ah, papa (Oh, the priest)!" His reaction indicated he never expected that Germanos could commit such an act against the occupation authorities.⁹¹²

After joining the resistance in the mountains in May, his role changed slightly, but much of his time was spent promoting the movement in the countryside, saving individuals from execution, performing other tasks such as gathering supplies for ELAS.⁹¹³ The main difference, however, was his involvement in the Panclerical Union, which will receive further attention later. He met Aris on May 14, whose confidant and traveling companion he became. In fact, he served in the Mavroskoufides (Black Hats), the ceremonial bodyguards of Aris Velouchiotis.⁹¹⁴ Germanos served primarily as the group's priest and advisor to the ELAS captain. While with Aris, he served as a mediating force, as he had with Italian occupation authorities. Although life in the mountains made him commit acts inappropriate for a man of God, he typically attempted to avoid such behavior and continued to serve the movement in a way he found morally acceptable. He remained a companion of Aris until the two parted ways in the spring of 1945.

On two separate occasions, he intervened on behalf of individuals he deemed innocent and whom Aris had slated for imprisonment or execution. The first occasion

⁹¹² For a detailed account of the incident see Dimakos, 133-140. Ultimately, when the Germans learned that the president of the town and abbot of the Agathanos monastery was involved in resistance activity, and that he had fled to the mountains, they contacted the local metropolitan, Amvrosios. In order to avoid the destruction of the monastery he assigned a residing monk, Efraim Poulis abbot. When asked about Germanos, the metropolitan stated that the abbot was in the countryside preaching and performing other ecclesiastical duties. Obviously, the metropolitan wanted to avoid further bloodshed. Dimakos, 140.

⁹¹³ Germanos remained convinced that the task of the church, despite the circumstances, remained a vehicle of peace. He tells an interesting story that reflects his views on the position of the church.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid., 156-7.

came while travelling in Epirus on his way to meet Aris. On his way, he passed through the village of Miliana. While there, he met with the wife of colonel Matsoukis, who was held prisoner by ELAS in Pramanta. She pleaded with him to intervene with local ELAS officials on behalf of her husband. He agreed to inquire about the fate of her husband.⁹¹⁵ Once he arrived in Pramanta, he found an opportunity to approach Aris on her behalf. With a little swaying, Aris relented. Before allowing Matsoukis to leave, the ELAS captain made the following statement to the colonel: “The little father is pleased. I would not have released you, because I know that you are a snake waiting to eat me. You are free to leave now, but be careful: don’t let them bring you here again, because no one will save you, neither the priest nor the Despoti.”⁹¹⁶

During the winter of 1943-44, Aris and his band found themselves in Epirus on orders from Siantos, the general secretary of the KKE and leader of EAM. Because EDES controlled the region, the group wanted to maintain telephone communication with the leadership in Thessaly. The bad winter weather, however, severed communication between the two sides. Aris ordered the mayor of the town of Voulgareli, closest to the severed line, to fix the problem. The town leader assigned the task to three young men, who, despite their efforts, failed to repair the line. Infuriated, Aris planned to execute them and the town leader for failing. Deeply troubled, Germanos again intervened. He informed Ari that such a harsh punishment, in light of the fact that no harm came to the group, was unnecessary and would only damage his reputation. As with the previous case, Aris relented.⁹¹⁷ The incidents are significant because they provide insight into the role of the majority of clergy who served in the resistance, as most served in EA and

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., 219-220.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., 223-4.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., 227-230.

worked in some welfare capacity for the resistance. They also demonstrated that Germanos and other clerics had the respect and some influence over the more pragmatic members of the EAM leadership.

Germanos realized that the antartes were in a constant propaganda struggle, and, for this reason complained to EAM leaders about the misbehavior of members of the movement, especially because he began hearing complaints from potential supporters in the countryside. For instance, in late 1943, during the fighting between EAM and EDES, he discussed the state of affairs with EAM leader Georgios Siantos. In response to a question by Siantos on the general situation, Germanos responded: “Comrade Elder, the population, for the most part, has awakened to the struggle and in that regard we must be happy. There exist, however, situations where the population resents us, based on the misguided actions of many antartes.” He explained the consequences it had among many of the villagers: “I am a priest and the people speak to me freely; and they tell me things that they do not tell the ‘leaders’.”⁹¹⁸ On another occasion, he complained, bitterly, about how much of the goodwill created by the resistance among the population quickly dissipated in light of some of these misdeeds: “How many times did we gather the milk drop by drop, only to spill it with our own hands.”⁹¹⁹ In addition to these random acts by individual resistance fighters, the movement had to contend with a considerable amount of bad press from the beginning due to the central role played by the Communist Party in the movement, an issue that will receive further attention shortly.

National Solidarity and the role of the church deserve special attention due to the active role that the clergy played in the organization. According to a recent study on the

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., 215-216.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid., 215

movement by Rolandos Katsiaounis⁹²⁰, the roots of the organization can be found in the early efforts of the Greek Communist Party to provide to members persecuted by the government. The first such organization, Laiki Voitheia (People's Aid) was founded in 1925 during the Pangalos dictatorship. The organization expanded with the growing government opposition to the KKE under Venizelos and Metaxas. Under the former, the LV expanded and became Ergatiki Voitheia (Worker's Aid). When the war came, the existence of the previous organizations gave the Communist Party invaluable experience when it formed Ethniki Allilengyi (EA).⁹²¹

Five Communist Party members who escaped from the island prison of Folegandros (one of the small islands the Metaxas regime used as prisons for KKE members) in late May 1941 during the early days of the occupation, founded the organization on May 28. The leading member of the group, Pantelis Simos-Karagitsis, and a former leader of EV, wanted to provide aid to party members in need. The aims of the organization were to assist prisoner and war victims within the larger framework of a popular liberation movement.⁹²² The movement soon became part of the larger EAM organization after September 1941. The activities in the cities included the establishment of Soup-Kitchens, which became more successful than those of Damaskinos' EOHA.⁹²³ They also sent food to political prisoners such as those in Akronafplia, to combat the Axis policy of tormenting the prisoners through starvation. Because of the growing number of imprisoned Greeks (up to 500,000), according to the organization's records,

⁹²⁰Rolandos Katsiaounis, "Ethniki Allilengyi (National Solidarity): Resistance and Welfare," in *Bearing Gifts to Greeks, Humanitarian Aid to Greece in the 1940s.*, ed. Richard Clogg, *St. Anthony's Series* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), 125-147.

⁹²¹ Ibid., 125-126, Vasilis Barzotas, *Stis Fylakes kai tis Exories (In Prisons and Exile)* (Athens: 1978).

⁹²² Ibid., 126-7.

⁹²³ According to an SOE agent in 1944, EAM eventually controlled 91 of 94 EOHA soup-kitchens. Ibid., 127-130

the movement grew and became more effective.⁹²⁴ One reason for its effectiveness was the growing sympathy among all professional classes and even members of EOHA.⁹²⁵ According to organization records, the movement distributed 540,000 parcels in the prisons of the Athens area during the occupation. The organization also attempted to aid the families of imprisoned Greeks. In Athens the organization assisted 2,500 families by the end of the occupation, while also assisting 500 families in Piraeus and 1,100 in Thessaloniki.⁹²⁶ After EAM ‘liberated’ parts of the Greek countryside, EA became the supplier for the organization, by organizing the local population to assist in the supply and upkeep of the ELAS units.⁹²⁷

As touched upon earlier, the clergy was naturally drawn to the organization because of its basic humanitarian motives. In the countryside, likely because of the influential position in society, EA sometimes used local clergy to assist in the collection and distribution of food. Germanos explains that the resistance movement chose them because they were priests. “We did fundraising and food gathering as National Solidarity, which to a considerable degree was entrusted by the Organization to priests of every parish, and as it was also their duty.”⁹²⁸ Priests, in his eyes, had an obligation to play a role in any legitimate welfare organization, especially under the circumstances of the occupation. In discussing the general role of the clergy in the resistance, he explained why they were drawn to this particular organization: “Many clerics decided, in some way, to participate in the national resistance and joined in its organizations, specifically

⁹²⁴ Ibid., 132-133.

⁹²⁵ Ibid., 133. For more information on sympathetic members of EOHA see: Tessera Chronia Agones kai Drasi tis EA Thessalonikis (Thessaloniki, 1945) cited in *ibid.*, 39n.

⁹²⁶ Ibid., 132-133.

⁹²⁷ Ibid., 134-135.

⁹²⁸ Dimakos, 93.

in Ethniki Allilengyi, due to their priestly character.”⁹²⁹ The majority of the hierarchy and a majority of the lower clergy supported the work of the organization. Even Metropolitan Amvrosios of Fthiotis, by no means a supporter of EAM, knew about the movement and did not seem troubled by the subordinates in his ecclesiastical see supporting or participating in the movement. In addition, Metropolitan Antonios of Ileia served as the organization’s ceremonial president. Based on organization records, much of the lower clergy throughout the country supported the movement: Central Greece 60%; 70% in Macedonia and Epirus; and as high as 80% in Thessaly, the seat of EAM power during the last year of the occupation.⁹³⁰ A British SOE agent corroborates the active participation of the church. He reports that 120 priests and 23 monks from Evia worked with the organization, while the bishop of Halkis and several priests were arrested by the Germans for their outspoken support of the movement.⁹³¹ “The church not only lends its prestige to the organization but actively participates in the collection and distribution of relief supplies, in educating children and in giving medical assistance.”⁹³² A local monastery also housed a children’s camp and EAM hospital.⁹³³

Germanos’ account of his activity for the organization provides a picture of its operations in Thessaly. He traveled in the area around the town of Amfikleia both spreading the word about the movement and gathering food and supplies for ELAS and for the local population. He described the basic goal of the tour as follows: “I went and made a preliminary trip, to inform about the goal of the collections. I spoke about the

⁹²⁹ Ibid.

⁹³⁰ Ibid., 338.

⁹³¹ HS5/235, ‘Greece: Political-Religious Position of the Church in Evia’, September 13, 1944. Cited in Katsiaounis, “Ethniki Allilengyi,” 140-1.

⁹³² Ibid.

⁹³³ Ibid.

liberation struggle and the need of the resistance. I stated: Organization officials will come to collect whatever you have to offer, wheat, etc.”⁹³⁴ He usually received a positive response from the population. “Ok, they said. They can come whenever they want.”⁹³⁵ In return, he gave the population coupons with the organization’s symbol, a handshake, as a receipt that identified the individual’s contribution.⁹³⁶ On another occasion, General Headquarters of ELAS decided to form a cavalry, but needed to gather horses for the effort. Aris assigned Germanos the task of gathering horses from the countryside for the movement.⁹³⁷ The ELAS captain explained the mission to the abbot: “I assign you...this mission and appoint you president of the committee with the certainty that you will execute your mission dutifully...I am giving you, therefore, the essential documents, a receipt book. You will provide legitimate receipts.”⁹³⁸ As with his fundraising mission, Aris hoped the mission would be executed properly because a man of the cloth headed it.

There were instances when clergymen took advantage of their position and the good relationship between the abbot and the surrounding community. Ignatius, a monk of questionable character residing in the Agathanos monastery, informed his abbot that he planned to gather supplies for EA. Germanos gave him his blessing. However, instead of providing the population with little coupons, he received a receipt from them stating that they provided him with the goods. He then sold the items on the black market and enriched himself. One day Germanos and Ignatius were in the monastery’s courtyard when the latter dropped a number of these receipts. Germanos picked one up and demanded an explanation. The monk explained that the local metropolitan gave orders to

⁹³⁴ Dimakos, 93-94.

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

⁹³⁶ Ibid., 93

⁹³⁷ For more information on the nature and goals of the mission see: Dimakos, 167-170.

⁹³⁸ Ibid., 167.

gather the receipts. Deeply concerned about this situation, he went to see the metropolitan and requested an explanation.⁹³⁹ He feared that if the organization discovered these underhanded dealings, either the Germans or the organization would execute him. He preferred the metropolitan remove him as abbot than die unnecessarily. “Remove me as abbot...Do not let the Germans execute me for nothing for these activities...Even worse, don’t leave me to the antartes to kill me dishonorably and unnecessarily.”⁹⁴⁰ The metropolitan, of course, gave no such orders. He appeared genuinely shocked according to Germanos. “Abbot, what are these things you are saying? I do not know anything and never gave such an order. Ignatius, however, told me that you gave him these missions.”⁹⁴¹ Ignatius deceived the clerics, but he could not escape ELAS. While the organization valued the work of its clerics, it did not tolerate such abuses. The local community complained to the organization’s leadership and they responded by capturing and executing the monk. “One night, the antartes captured Ignatius and took him to the Parnassos Mountains and punished him for his deeds. The birds ate him there...However, much earlier, he had been consumed by his cleverness.”⁹⁴² In short, while the clergy played a vital role that EAM appreciated, especially in EA, there were always those willing to abuse their position to enrich themselves. Such abuses the organization refused to tolerate.

Ethniki Allilengyi, for obvious reasons, appealed to the nation’s clergy because their activities did not require them to engage in combat, something against canon law. In addition, many had experience in welfare activity as the local spiritual and social

⁹³⁹ Ibid., 106-108.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid.

⁹⁴² Ibid.

leaders of the community. Moreover, EAM understood that as clerics they could yield better results than lay members of the movement because tradition dictated that people respected churchmen. Germanos' involvement demonstrated both the confidence EAM had in the clergy and their important involvement in the organization. Ignatius, however, demonstrated both the faith the population had in clerics and the opportunity for a dishonest person to take advantage of his position during a period of crisis. His activity, however, also showed the lengths at which the organization was willing to go to maintain its respected position among the population. Any dishonorable acts could have deadly consequences for those responsible.

In addition to serving in EA and other organization of the National Liberation Front, a number of active clergymen, with the blessing of EAM's leadership used this opportunity to organize themselves both for work in the movement and to improve their financial position, especially the lower clergy; this effort to organize led to the formation of the Panclerical Union (different from that formed by Damaskinos in 1918). In addition to organizing, the EAM-controlled PEEA and National Assembly discussed the future of the church in postwar Greece. These efforts were important steps taken by the resistance both to assuage fears many clerics had of the future intentions of the organization and in its propaganda war against the Germans and their Greek allies. The movement took every opportunity to improve its image with the clergy by promoting the activities of the clerics within its ranks and condemning abuses committed by the Germans and their allies against the church and its property in Greece.

The tragic state of the clergy, especially the lower clergy concerned many within Greece. The state of the urban lower clergy received special attention by a close friend of

Damaskinos. This was followed by a report of Damaskinos to Prime Minister, Tsouderos in January 1944: “The ordinary clergy is starving. Beneath their well-darned and well patched cassocks, priests wear rags...”⁹⁴³ The author places part of the blame on Damaskinos’ other obligations for the desperate state of affairs. “This is because he is quite absorbed in other things and has left everything to his advisors.”⁹⁴⁴ Many, including the author, point to the financial crisis facing the population in general as a major reason that the parish priests are suffering. Their impoverished state and lack of education left them at the mercy of their parishioners: “Priests could not sink to the black market as many professors have [who] manage to live by...converting their chemistry shops into sweet shops and their dispensaries into clothes shops. In all [this] activity the parish priests remained a spectator.”⁹⁴⁵ Even compared to the state of manual laborers their status is deeply troubling. “Conspicuous in his misery, he has earned 10 drachmas while others have earned 10,000. When the lowest porters in Athens get astronomical sums for “trivial” moves, the priest still only gets his 100 drachmas...”

In short, the clerics were among the most vulnerable members of Greek society, but their position and limited education restricted their ability to cope with the difficult circumstances of the occupation. The Greek government, which had never provided sufficient support to the lower clergy in times of peace, could do little to relieve their plight in time of war.

The state of parish priest in the countryside was little better. Their deplorable condition provided one of the major impetuses for the creation of the Union. Germanos commented on the issue of the “Parish Obligation.” “The clergy found themselves in a

⁹⁴³ Damaskinos Report.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid.

difficult situation from every side. They lived on a little wheat and corn which they received from their parishioners, as the “parish obligation,” because the state did not pay them as they do today.”⁹⁴⁶ As times became more difficult, the parishioners were less willing to fulfill this obligation. This abbot captured the general state of affairs for the parish clergy in the following hypothetical exchange between a parishioner and a parish priest. “When a priest complains to a parishioner about not receiving his parish obligation, the response is: ‘And you, my priest, don’t bury me when I die.’”⁹⁴⁷

A number of clergymen became deeply concerned about this matter. Under the leadership of Father D. Holevas, a group of clerics meet on June 23, 1943 in Sperheiada, Fthiotis to discuss ways to organize the church for the struggle and ways to improve the life of the parish priests.⁹⁴⁸ They made three decisions: a) that the clergy should be paid in kind; b) that the clergy should participate in the national liberation struggle through EA; c) To organize a Panclerical Union.⁹⁴⁹ The first meeting of the Panclerical Union would take place several months later in August 1943.

Germanos, well aware of the situation, wanted Aris to allow him to recruit representatives from the surrounding area to attend the August meeting. In July 1943 Germanos used a conversation with Aris about the clergy’s attitude toward the resistance to discuss the idea of organizing the clergy in the surrounding area in preparation for the meeting. “The priests, all of the parish priests love you and support the struggle, but they have many problems, and are unenlightened. The bishops, moreover, left their

⁹⁴⁶ Dimakos, 337.

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁸ Kaila, 122.

⁹⁴⁹ Open Letter of the Panclerical Union to All Associations and Christians, June 27, 1944. Cited in Ibid., 145-149.

metropolises and the priests have been left completely leaderless.”⁹⁵⁰ Due to this state of affairs, Germanos informed Aris that the clergy needed to be enlightened and organized. The ELAS captain responded by saying that Ioakeim of Kozani would help resolve the problem when he arrived. Germanos then, when Aris asked how he could assist, received permission and the appropriate documentation to travel in the countryside of Fthiotis and Domokos to preach about the liberation struggle and to organize a clerical conference.⁹⁵¹ After the arrival of Ioakeim, the men left for the mission. In the initial stages they promoted the movement and spoke to the parish priests about the possibility of organizing.

The culmination of this effort came in August 1943 in Karpenisi, Evrytania in Central Greece. During the meeting the group of congregated clergy decided to discuss two goals: 1) the role of the clergy in the national resistance and its various organizations; 2) to alleviate bad conditions of the clergy and their families, most of which had many children.⁹⁵² In addition, they wrote a Charter for the organization. The group of clergymen, who represented the Evrytania and Fthiotis, decided that similar conferences should take place in other parts of liberated Greece. In the first half of 1944, meetings took place in Western Macedonia, Trikala, Thessaly, among other places. On June 20-21, 1944, the Panclerical Union of Greece congregated its second (and first genuine) national meeting in Karpenisi, Evrytania. Clergy from Thessaly, Sterea Greece, Epirus, Macedonia, Peloponnesus, and the island of Lefkas attended the meeting. At this meeting the group decided that regional ecclesiastical groups should be formed in all parts of ‘Free Greece’. For this reason, they approved the Charter for a second time. A

⁹⁵⁰ Dimakos, 338-9.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid., 339-345.

⁹⁵² Ibid., 344-5, Kaila, 122-123.

few days after this national conference they elected a Legislative Committee, headed by its general secretary, Father Dimitrios Holevas, and published an encyclical to be distributed to the regional committee of 'Free Greece' about the decisions made by the Union at the second national meeting.⁹⁵³ Despite the ambitions of the organization, liberation and the civil conflict that erupted soon after brought an end to the work of the organization. Its final act, for instance, was the publication of an encyclical in October 1944.⁹⁵⁴

The organization of the Panclerical Union also served an important purpose for EAM. It demonstrated to the rest of the country that the organization welcomed the church as an integral institution in its struggle against the Axis and the democratization of Greek society. EAM, through its sponsored PEEA, during its National Council in May-June 1944, wanted to demonstrate to the population, through the election of the two prominent clerics to the council that there was a place for the church in the organization's future plans for the nation. The disbanding of this government in June 1944 with the Lebanon Agreement ended the Church's involvement in the political affairs of the movement.⁹⁵⁵

The organization also confirmed the legal status of the institution in the body of laws, known as the Code of Self-Rule and Population Justice, used to govern "Free Greece," the territory under EAM control. Under this code of laws, the Ecclesiastical Charter continued to govern the administration and organization of the law, with few

⁹⁵³ Kaila, 124-129.

⁹⁵⁴ For a text of the document see: Ibid., 128-9.

⁹⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that during the negotiations between EAM, the Tsouderos government, and the British, Ioakeim asked that either he or Antonios serve as minister of religion in the new government of national unity. His request was turned down for legal and political reasons. The minister of the former PEEA informed the metropolitan that the constitution of 1911, which the government-in-exile abides does not permit clerics to serve in the government. Karagiannis, *I Ekklesia apo tin Katohi ston Emfylio*, 37.

exceptions.⁹⁵⁶ Among the most important roles of the church in the local communities was as members of the Ecclesiastical Committee. These committees consisted of four members, two permanent and two alternate or non-voting members. The first two are elected by the community. The second two, which consist of a Public Advisor and a Priest, are elected by the Public Committee (Dimotiko Symvoulio) and the clergy of the community.⁹⁵⁷ This committee, “deals with all questions related to the churches, the clergy, the ieropsaltes, and the other matters that involve Church authority.”⁹⁵⁸ Thus, EAM-ELAS realized that the church needed a legal standing within the new governing system because of significance in Greek society. This, no doubt, would have also provided a framework for the status of the church within an EAM-controlled Greece if the organization took power at the end of the war. It is also important to note that the individuals drafting the laws respected the canon law and the existing administrative and legal standing of the church in Greek society before the occupation.

In addition to encouraging the church to organize and participate in the popularly elected government, EAM took other steps to win the support of the clergy. They used their numerous newspapers to publish speeches and articles by prominent clerics such as Ioakeim. References in these publications to clerics who fought in the revolution of 1821 abounded. Finally, they condemned acts of destruction or violence committed against members of the clergy or church property. In addition to the press, some resistance leaders took upon themselves the tack of performing symbolic acts of reference and

⁹⁵⁶ Dimitrios Zepos, *Laiki Dikaiosyni Eis Tas Eleftheras Periohas Tis Ypo Katohin Ellados (Popular Justice in the Free Regions of Occupied Greece)* (Athens: Morfotiko Idryma Ethnikis Trapezis, 1986), 18,27

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., 124.

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid., 126.

deference toward the church in order to combat the growing propaganda by the Axis and their Greek allies.

Rizospastis, the Greek Communist Party's official newspaper, published a series of articles in later 1942 and the first half of 1943 that condemned a series of Axis actions, which included the destruction of a number of churches. For instance, in December 1942 the paper published a long article titled "Mommioi," on the atrocities committed by the Italian occupation authorities. In the article they discuss a number of barbaric acts committed by the Axis forces, with an emphasis on the destruction of the twelfth Century Byzantine Zoodoxos Pigis Church in Parnassos.⁹⁵⁹ Similar articles condemning actions against churches and church property appeared in the April 1 and July 10, 1943 editions of the paper.⁹⁶⁰

A similar approach was taken by *Allilengyi tou Laou* (Solidarity of the People). On September 4 they published an article titled "They Continue Their Sacrilege, They Don't Even Respect Our Church or Monasteries."⁹⁶¹ In the article they criticized the pillaging of churches and monasteries by German-controlled military units. They also pointed out their hypocrisy. "Those sacrilegious ones dare to speak about their support of religion. They, who have nothing holy inside of them, showed their piety in their recent raid."⁹⁶² This reference appears to attack the notion that the rightwing opponents of EAM-ELAS are defenders of religion in the country. The following month, they reported

⁹⁵⁹, *Rizospastis*, December 1942.

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid., April 1 1943, July 10, 1943.

⁹⁶¹, *Allilengyi tou Laou* (*Solidarity of the People*), August 8 1943.

⁹⁶² Ibid.

on the execution of the Metropolitan Gregory of Halkis by German-supported anti-Communist *Tsoliades* for refusing to be used as their tool.⁹⁶³

Eleftheri Ellada, the central organ of EAM made a point, on several occasions, of publishing articles about the leadership of the church. For instance, on March 30, they published a report from another newspaper communicating that Metropolitan Ioakeim had joined EAM and become a leader of the movement. From the same newspaper we have information that Metropolitan Ioakeim of Kozani had gone to the mountains and united with the antartes of Thessaly. A true hero, the metropolitan was appointed a member of the ELAS of Olympus Command. On April 15, the paper published a follow-up article with the title “The Example of the Metropolitan of Kozani.” They wanted his decision to flee to the mountains to join the guerillas to serve as an example to other clerics. But, also, to dispel the notion and fears that the organization had plans to attack the Greek church during or after the war. The heroic metropolitan was put forth as an example after clergymen to join the ranks of EAM.”⁹⁶⁴ Specifically, they viewed his example to follow that of heroic clerics of the past. “This effort reflects an exceptional title of honor for him who takes that path, which represents a holy follower of the heroic model of Papaflessas and the other honored clerics in Greek history.”⁹⁶⁵ Clearly, they wanted the population to view their organization as the second Philiki Etaireia.

A similar plea to the clergy to join EAM was published in the February edition of *Ellinika Niata* (Greek Youth). “We are addressing you, apostles of love, equality and

⁹⁶³ Ibid., October, 1944. This article proved to be false. The Germans and their allies did not execute him, but forced him to flee to Athens. The propagandistic value of such an event to EAM was too great for EAM’s opponents to risk. He did return to his ecclesiastical see soon after liberation. (Karagiannis, 36, Sotiris Papastratis, *Meres Tou 1943-1944 Stin Evvoia; Katohi, Antistasi, Apeleftherosi (Days of 1943-1944 in Evia; Occupation, Resistance, Liberation)* (Athens: Hatzinikoli, 1995), 153-156.

⁹⁶⁴ *Eleftheri Ellada (Free Greece)*, April 15 1943.

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid.

justice; you who believe in Greece, her steadfast soul, and her ability to overcome major calamities.”⁹⁶⁶ As with *Eleftheri Ellada* the paper was calling upon the clergy to follow the examples of their predecessor: “You should be in the front lines. The Greek Church stands behind you. The past, with its Gregory Vs, Samuels, Papaflessases, and Chrysostomos’ calls you.”⁹⁶⁷ The article encouraged the clergy to help both the people in the mountains and others who hoped to flee to their safety: “The free people are living in the mountains; help them in their struggle...Hide them when they are being hunted; send others into the mountains; show the slaves the path to the free mountain peaks.” The article concludes with a forceful demand. “Prepare the people for the big moment. You will then be Greek clergymen worthy of your past.”⁹⁶⁸

Another issue that arose was the movement’s tie to the Soviet Union. In much of the Axis propaganda in Greece, emphasis was placed on the positive Soviet policy toward religion, which, these reports claimed would follow in Greece. For instance, *Rizospastis* published an article titled “The Soviet Union and the Christian Church,” in an attempt to dispel the myth that the Orthodox Church is mistreated in that country. It points out the praise Stalin received from the metropolitan of Kiev and the patriarch of Moscow for his recent victories against the Nazis.⁹⁶⁹

While EAM refrained from launching any open assaults against the clergy, they did criticize individual clerics for their deeds, especially if they were openly hostile to the resistance movement. The most famous propaganda assault against a cleric took place in

⁹⁶⁶ , *Ellinika Niata (Greek Youth)*, February 1943.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁹ Of course, the paper does not mention that the new Modus Vivendi between the church and state in the Soviet Union was a political move by Stalin in his struggle against the Nazis. "I Sovietiki Enosi kai i Christianiki Ekklisia (the Soviet Union and the Christian Church)," *Rizospastis*, February 23 1943.

Ioannina, where local resistance newspaper, *Agonistis*, published a series of scathing articles against the powerful Spyridon of Ioannina. A memorandum by the metropolitan of Ioannina to the Allies gives an idea of his views toward the movement and a possible explanation for the open opposition to him. Scooter House sent the memorandum with a preface to Dennis Lasky of the British Foreign Office's Southern Division. "Part of the troubles of the forceful cleric, who undoubtedly did good work during the Albanian war and had long been something of a miniature dictator in his diocese, was no doubt due to the fact that he played no inconspicuous part in the armistice."⁹⁷⁰ Another account of the attitude of the metropolitan, which seemed plausibly realistic considering his scathing view of EAM-ELAS was the memorandum by the secretary of the metropolitan of Dryinoupolis, Dimitrios Tasos. He argued that the metropolitan ruled the city like a dictator, comparing him directly to Ali Pasha, the Ottoman governor of the region of Epirus during the revolution of 1821. "Here, father, Ali Pasha once ruled. In order to survive here you worshipped him...Ali Pasha was been succeeded by the metropolitan of Ioannina Spyridon. We, here, have not been liberated; we have simply changed our leader!"⁹⁷¹ He was so powerful that even bishops and metropolitans who visited him needed to show him deference. "The metropolitans who come here...even mine, Dimitrios...are his vassals! Even deacons! Compared to him they resemble candle lighters."⁹⁷² No doubt, the author exaggerated, but it confirmed the report by the British officer that he wielded considerable influence in the region. But, more importantly, the author provided a colorful story of the metropolitan's attitude toward the resistance, though the quote should be seen more as a reflection of his views toward them than

⁹⁷⁰ Bishop of Ioannina Memorandum.

⁹⁷¹ Dimakos, 314.

⁹⁷² Ibid.

something he actually stated. “Perhaps I should have built a trough rather than a seminary, so to raise pigs in order to provide the villagers with piglets. Instead I went and built a school in order to produce enemies of the nation!”⁹⁷³ As with the previous statement, the author’s story is difficult to verify, but the open opposition of Spyridon to the Communists became apparent rather early in the occupation.

In a memorandum he sent to British officials he expressed his view of the movement. Although he expresses his attitude in evasive terms, his obvious opposition to the movement was apparent: “Obviously it is inconceivable that a man should consciously abandon the tradition of his entire life-time...”⁹⁷⁴ He made the previous statement in regards to EAM’s requests to join the movement, which he viewed as incompatible with his personal views and position as a hierarch. In response to death threats, he considered capitulation more shameful than death itself: “It would be shameful if he was to go against his conscience and serve ends and systems of which he disapproves.”⁹⁷⁵ His biggest criticisms include the movement’s future plans for the country and the secretive nature of the organization. He argues that he could not work with organizations without knowing the men leading them. Of course, it must be noted that Greek political life is dominated by personality politics at this time. Thus, usually people support a movement because of its leadership as much as because of its goals. Regarding the future plans of the organization, he made the following statement: “If the Organization is aiming at purely communistic ends, and indeed, under the violent form of revolutionary communism as in Russia in 1918, then it is obvious that the Metropolitan of Ioannina cannot rally to it.” Support for such a movement meant to “give his blessing

⁹⁷³ Ibid., 314-15.

⁹⁷⁴ Spyridon, Memorandum.

⁹⁷⁵ Spyridon Memorandum.

to crimes, civil war, social upheaval, abandonment and degradation of national and religious ideals.”⁹⁷⁶

According to Spyridon the communists tried to attack him by attacking institutions and individuals affiliated with him: “They...systematically looted and dissolved entirely popular institutions, such as the Dourouta Agricultural College, the Lampriades School of Domestic Science and the Bellas Seminary.”⁹⁷⁷ According to Spyridon, the countryside, which had been abandoned by Axis forces, was in the thralls of a reign of terror ensued: “Murders were committed, people were beaten up, often with the only justification that they were the Bishop’s men...”⁹⁷⁸

EAM’s local press organ, *O Agonistis* (The Warrior) made it clear that they viewed the Metropolitan with antipathy and expressed their displeasure through attacks on his person and his associates. They considered him as a tool of the Axis, even claiming that he headed the pro-Axis organization, Sphinx.⁹⁷⁹ On December 7, 1943 an article criticized a recent anti-EAM-ELAS speech by the metropolitan, at a fundraiser for recent fire victims. The event, hosted by the Ioannina Women’s Committee, reflected the longstanding feud between the two sides. The article, interestingly, began by criticizing the metropolitan for straying from his ecclesiastical roots: “His Eminence forgot that he was a representative of God it appears...forgot the words of Christ, even much more frequently, he forgot the enslavement of our people, its danger of dying of hunger and

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁹ In his memorandum to the Allies in the Middle East, he criticized the organization for making false claims about his involvement with this fictitious organization. “These agitators, who claimed to be enlighteners of the people, publicly accused the Metropolitan of being the director of a pro-Axis organization called Sphinx, which is really nonexistent, in Epirus at any rate.” Spyridon Memorandum.

from exposure.”⁹⁸⁰ Spyridon was portrayed as an old crank who could think of nothing else but criticizing the movement. Moreover, the paper stated Spyridon found every opportunity to criticize the movement in public: “He did not, therefore, lose the opportunity...to spew, yet again, his poison with his acidic tongue against our popular movements and our organization, just as he did during the Zosimades Celebration and at other times.”⁹⁸¹

The paper also claimed that his collaboration with the enemy and determination to maintain control of his flock prevented him from coping with the problems facing the population. For instance, on December 9 the paper stated that the relief work in the city was hindered by the involvement of the metropolitan. For this reason, “the people of Ioannina will ask the committee to sever relations with the metropolitan and his circles...”⁹⁸² He and his supporters, in the eyes of EAM, represented the reactionary elites who were not effectively utilizing and distributing food to the population. Later on, another article referred to his palace as a center of treason. And, it stated that the traitors concealed their collaboration with the Germans by claiming to the population that they desired an end to the civil strife. The culmination of the criticism of Spyridon in this series of articles came on December 11. On that day, the paper reported on the metropolitan’s recent trip to Athens. Rather than secure funds for the beleaguered population, the reporter stated that he was working with the Rallis government, EDES officials in Athens, and the Germans in an attempt to restore his influence over his flock by claiming that a struggle against EAM was a struggle for the preservation of civilization against Godless communism.

⁹⁸⁰ *O Agonistis (The Warrior)*, December 7 1943..

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸² *O Agonistis (The Warrior)*, December 9 1943..

In short, the EAM-ELAS press only attacked clerics they speak out openly against the movement. In this case, Spyridon spoke out against the movement on a number of occasions. This war of words represented a power struggle for control of the city. Spyridon, a staunch anti-Communist and the most powerful individual in the city saw the growing power and influence of EAM-ELAS as a threat both to himself and to Greece. EAM, for its part, launched a steadily harsher propaganda assault against the metropolitan and his supporters after their initial unwillingness to offer either their open or tacit support for EAM, and later, based on the articles, for their open opposition to the movement. By December 1943, both sides were engaged deeply in a war to win the hearts and minds of the local population. In these attacks, however, the newspaper never criticized the metropolitan's position as a cleric, but rather took the opposite approach claiming that he had failed to rise to the occasion of the crisis of the occupation because of his obsessive hatred of the movement and the latter's growing popularity.

EAM used its numerous newspapers to combat the Greek government and their propaganda campaign. However, when assaulted by a member of the church, as was the case of Spyridon, the movement used its media outlets to attack the person of the hierarchy by attacking his character and his negligence as a cleric. EAM's leadership understood that it needed to dispel previous myths about communist atheism to increase its ranks. Toward this goal, it championed members of the hierarchy such as Ioakeim by publishing numerous articles about their activities and identified them as model members of the church, while it attacked its ecclesiastical opponents by identifying them as traitors and inadequate or inept members of their hierarchy. They refrained from attacking the institution of the church as such. As Archimandrite Germanos explains the rationale

behind this position toward the church, “Aris—and those who had a little bit of intelligence and a connection with Greek reality—understood and respected the value of the ‘little father of the village’.”⁹⁸³

Prominent leaders such as Aris Velouchiotis attempted to combat this notion that EAM leaders were atheists by attending an occasional church service or treating a local priest or hierarch with deference. The consummate politician, Aris understood the value of showing respect to the local clergy and village officials. Upon arriving to a small village, Aris followed the following pattern: “He dismounted, kissed the hand of the priest, greeted the notables and then proceeded to the place where he was to give his speech.”⁹⁸⁴ EAM officials also made a point of including clerics in national celebrations and other events. Mark Mazower describes the political astuteness of the EAM leadership, especially the military captains as follows: “The communists were much too concerned about alienating the peasantry to go along with their dangerously atheistic ideas. Aris, for example, always emphasized the importance of the church. At resistance parades, large numbers of priests would take part.”⁹⁸⁵ However, they took part in major political events, such as the swearing in of the PEEA, which was done by Ioakeim of Kozani.

Aris made a point of using symbolic gesture to combat the anti-EAM propaganda of the rightwing antartes and the German-controlled government. For instance, Germanos relates a story of Aris (Thanasis) and his retinue attending a church service on the ELAS captain’s name day, January 18, 1944 in Epirus. He shocked the village population when he and his band of andartes attended the morning service. He gave the

⁹⁸³ Dimakos, 348.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid., 291.

⁹⁸⁵ Mazower, 314.

following orders to his men before attending the service: “Comrades, you will all go to the church quietly, light a candle, and worship the icons. You will stand still, as I do not want to detect any mischief because I will punish it severely. You will watch me and Father Anyponomos and do the same.”⁹⁸⁶ He concluded by informing them that they would stay to the end of the service and show the priest proper respect: “[At the end of the service] we will take the antidoro and kiss the hand of the priest.”⁹⁸⁷ The villagers and the priest, Papa-Lambros Tsetsos, appeared dumbfounded by the scene at their church: “It made a deep impression on them when they saw the antartes, especially Aris, lighting candles and worshipping the icons. For them, Aris was the butcher, the atheist who burned icons, destroyed crosses, and committed a thousand and two other acts of sacrileges.”⁹⁸⁸ Government and German propaganda about the anticlerical EAM had bombarded them: “The antartes of ELAS desecrated churches, burned and destroyed icons...”⁹⁸⁹ One is unsure of his personal beliefs, but Aris was an astute politician who understood the propaganda value of such an act, especially by him the leader. As Germanos mentioned, the population had received countless reports of the sacrilegious activities of ELAS guerillas, an issue that the EAM continued to battle against throughout the occupation.⁹⁹⁰

The impact of the multipronged approach toward winning the church paid handsome dividends. By the end of the war, the number of priests who served in or were sympathetic to EAM-ELAS numbered 3,000 by some accounts, which does not seem out of the realm of possibility considering that many parish priests usually follow the lead of

⁹⁸⁶ Dimakos, 243.

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid.

their parishioners.⁹⁹¹ A report by an OSS agent in Greece seemed to confirm this in Evvia: “Almost all clergy of Evvoia usually espoused the EAM course.”⁹⁹² In April 1944, another report outlined the reasons for the growing support of EAM among villagers including parish priests: “The fact that the communists have changed a great deal themselves has helped to alleviate that fear.”⁹⁹³ EAM understood that any attack on traditional values or institutions constituted political suicide. Thus, once these myths about communist opposition to private property or organized religion were weakened, the previous mistrust dissipated and support for the movement grew: “The question of community of private property and abolition of church that bolstered the Greek village had made him (the villager) look with suspicion towards communism does not exist today.”⁹⁹⁴ The same report discussed the growing support of the church for EAM. “Many members of the Greek Church favored the EAM. As mentioned earlier, the lower clergy, who usually shared the same values as their fellow parishioners (many of whom supported the movement for patriotic reasons) supported the movement: “The lower clergy is to a large extent pro-EAM. Many priests are fighting side by side with the antartes.”⁹⁹⁵ The report did, however, mention a generational divide within the lower clergy regarding the movement: “It is generally considered that the younger clergy are in favor of the EAM and the older are against it openly because of their fear of communist influence, or at best remained neutral.”⁹⁹⁶ Regarding the upper clergy, the report

⁹⁹¹ Karagiannis, 37.

⁹⁹² Record Group 59, Numbered Intelligence Reports 1941-1961, National Archives and Records Administration Publication M 12212500.4.

⁹⁹³ Record Group 226 Entry 190, Box 73, Folder 27.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁶ Ibid.

indicated that many refused to openly support the movement, but many favored its goals.⁹⁹⁷

Despite all of the positive efforts made by EAM to win the support, a number of lower clergy remained skeptical. For some, the patriotic overtures were overshadowed by the poor behavior of the antartes in some places. Also, the growing indoctrination became a serious problem for active supporters such as Germanos. Most clerics never associated themselves or the movement with communism. They understood that much of the leadership was communist because it was the only organization that actively fought the Axis in Greece. However, these men scoffed at the accusation made by the official church and the post-civil war governments that members of the clergy that supported and participated in the movement were communists. As liberation neared, acts of aggression against certain members of the clergy became more frequent and anti-clericalism became stronger.⁹⁹⁸

In reference to indoctrination, Germanos mentioned the events in the town of Agia Triada. He became especially critical of the 'lessons' they received from the leadership on how to treat the population. These 'lessons' became more communist propaganda session than anything else: "Soon they consisted of communist songs, enlightenment about the proletariat and socialism, propaganda about the Soviet Union and the Red Army and the like."⁹⁹⁹ He lamented that traditional myths and culture were ignored: "About Greek history, Roman civilization, Orthodox tradition, faith in God, when the commissars did not criticize them, in the best case scenario, they remained

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁸ Dimakos, 147.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid., 158.

silent about them.”¹⁰⁰⁰ The abbot wondered why they were not singing songs about the klefts, discussing the heroes of 1821, and other patriotic stories. He saw a dramatic turn toward more indoctrination as ELAS began to grow, and blame the communist leadership in EAM. For him, this policy ran parallel to their effort to gain control of the rapidly growing and spontaneous ELAS bands springing up throughout Greece.

The impact, in his eyes, had a number of consequences for the movement. Many chose to ignore the propaganda or leave: “Many antartes were scandalized by this communist atmosphere which developed ELAS groups and units, and many resisted in different ways.”¹⁰⁰¹ The most popular form of resistance to this indoctrination was to ignore it. “Some left, but most remained, closing their eyes, feeling that the independence struggle was more important than their political ideas.” However, Germanos also began to sense a change in a number of rank and file members of the movement. “Many were influenced by the systematic teaching and propaganda of the communists.”¹⁰⁰² He goes so far as to say that these ‘lessons’ contributed to the division of the population which eventually brought on the civil war.

Paralleling the increase in the use of communist propaganda was the movement’s waning support for the church. He blamed the communist leadership for this change: “The occasions were many, but there was one reason: ‘The hostile attitude toward the church of Christ by many communists...which was not only tolerated but encouraged by their leaders.’”¹⁰⁰³ Apparently, there was a disconnect between the leadership and the rank and file of the movement who did not harbor communist ideas. This was true

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid., 159.

¹⁰⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid., 346-7.

especially among the clergy. He also commented on the troubling questions parish priests began to ask about the movement: “Is it worth it for me to be a comrade and supporter of people who ridicule, humiliate, and abuse with vulgarity and baseness the Lord whom I worship, and slander the things that are holy and which I respect and honor?”¹⁰⁰⁴ Germanos held out hope that the movement could enact social change and improve the lives of the parish priest. However, as the occupation was coming to an end, and civil war appeared imminent, the EAM leadership became increasingly less sympathetic toward the plight of the clergy. By 1944, most of the concerns that Germanos had about the movement were similar to those held by Eirinaios. Particularly alarming was the potential threat that the Communist reforms might unleash against the church.

The issue, however, that really soured the abbot on the leadership occurred at the end of the occupation, and this centered on the execution of parish priests, some of whom even served in the resistance: “They did not execution him [the priest] quickly, they literally slaughtered him.”¹⁰⁰⁵ The division between the anticlerical element and the rest of the movement grew as the polarization of society grew with the end of the occupation and the civil war.

One development can be deduced from the reaction of the few accounts of clergymen of the church’s stance toward the resistance. Without the support of the upper clergy, the resistance would have difficulty maintaining the church’s relative neutrality during the period of the occupation, let alone win its support. With the December events, many within Greek society, led by Damaskinos, became outspoken critics of EAM-ELAS

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., 347.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid., 349.

policies. The removal of Ioakeim and Antonios from the hierarchy, and later Gregory of Chios a year later, reflected the change within the church leadership toward EAM. Damaskinos and the church fell into line with the larger anti-EAM policy pursued by the Greek governments in postwar Greece. The trials and the consequences will receive further attention later.

In conclusion, as long as EAM fought against the Axis, it enjoyed the open support of much of the lower clergy and the neutrality of the hierarchy. Although fear of a communist revolution in post-occupation Greece influenced some within the hierarchy to ally themselves with the Axis and, on occasion, to make anti-Communist speeches in the German-controlled press, the majority, for political reasons, avoided making negative statements about the movement. For many, such as Germanos, the movement was created to fight the Axis not to seize power at the end of the war. However, after the December events, the civil strife that existed during the occupation grew in intensity. The church leadership, with British prompting, took an open stance against the resistance by dethroning hierarchs that joined the movement and by punishing many sympathizers and activists within the lower ranks of the clergy. This issue will receive further attention in the epilogue.

Epilogue

From the waning days of the Albanian campaign until the immediate post-occupation period, the role and influence of the clergy grew in scope and significance, as evidenced by the intervention of hierarchs throughout the country, from Spyridon's involvement in armistice discussions in April 1941 to the emergence of Damaskinos as regent at the beginning of 1945. The resurgent clergy from Spyridon to Ioakeim of Kozani fought for the preservation of Greek sovereignty and culture as they understood these concepts. Even for those who supported Communist-driven EAM-ELAS, their faith continued to play a central role in their everyday life. This fact also explained why no member of the clergy who sided with EAM-ELAS ever considered himself a communist.¹⁰⁰⁶ Although many, including Ioakeim, sought social change, they did so within traditional Greek values. This explains why Eirinaios supported the movement, but remained concerned about the ideological views of the communist members and their goals after the war. Also, efforts to indoctrinate the rank and file members of EAM-ELAS and frustration with the persecution of members of the clergy, after the occupation, became another concern among some members. Moreover, the goal of preserving peace within Greek society underscored the reason Ioakeim, despite his dethronement, acted as intermediary between government and communist forces during the civil strife that enveloped the nation during the period of 1944-1949.

If preservation remained the goal of the majority of the clergy, division unfortunately defined the status of the church at the end of the occupation. This was

¹⁰⁰⁶ A number of clerics such as Dimakos never understood why enemies of EAM, including the official church leadership, referred to them as communists. They joined the movement to assist in the national struggle, never to involve themselves in any social revolution.

especially the case between the upper and lower clergy. The former remained a small minority, either opposed or neutral toward EAM-ELAS, while the lower clergy to a large extent, supported EAM-ELAS. However, there was division within the upper clergy, too, especially between the majority, who cooperated with the occupation authorities and remained neutral toward EAM-ELAS, and the minority, who either actively joined or sympathized with EAM on the one hand or spoke out against the movement out of fear of its postwar goals and aspirations. Never as centralized to the extent of the Catholic Church in Rome, Damaskinos' restoration in July 1941 and the tripartite occupation of the country expanded the traditional autonomy local hierarchs had enjoyed throughout modern Greek history. Obvious examples such as the actions of Spyridon in 1941 or the local initiative taken by Agathangelos to negotiate a general amnesty never came from Athens. Damaskinos' election further weakened the position of the archbishop. This was reversed after he established himself as a national force by overcoming the opposition. Postwar events demonstrated that this rise in power and prestige resulted from the absence of a legitimate Greek government. The official church became an essential tool for the government during the civil war that erupted in the immediate post-occupation period. Thus, once the Greek government returned to Athens, though it had little actual power outside the capital (even that power was dependent on the small British force sent in with the government) the role of the church began to change. For those who supported EAM-ELAS, such as Ioakeim and Antonios, the end of the occupation brought dethronement and disgrace, while for those who had either remained neutral or had openly opposed the communist resistance movement, the new situation witnessed the obvious turn in major political and ecclesiastical circles against EAM-ELAS.

Division and the concern for self-preservation helped define the immediate postwar period. Two developments that demonstrate these themes were the Damaskinos regency and the persecution of the 'leftist' clergy. The two are connected, as the archbishop offered the best hope to avert civil war in the eyes of many British and Greek leaders because of his ability to remain sufficiently above politics. But his persecution of 'leftist' clergy, British pressures, and his own fears of communism led him to pursue a policy that excluded the communists for the rebuilding of Greece at the end of the war. As early as 1923, Damaskinos expressed his concern about 'foreign' ideas and their influence on Greek society during his enthronement speech as metropolitan of Corinth. He continued, though in private, to express his reservations about the communists, which he conveyed to the contacts sent by the British and the Greek government-in-exile during the occupation. However, his growing popularity and influence, in addition to his political astuteness to evade requests to denounce the movement publicly, prevented him from becoming labeled by either side of the ideological struggle developing in the country during the occupation. With liberation, however, the archbishop's neutrality remained untenable. For this reason, he decided to play a central role on the side of the government and their British patrons 'assault on the left, especially within the church. His position regarding the communists, among other factors, contributed to Churchill's decision to force King George II of Greece to accept Damaskinos' candidacy as regent in the final days of 1944. This transparent attempt to attack members of the clergy that sympathized with EAM sent an obvious message to EAM, that the state and the church planned to rebuild Greece based on the traditional values that dominated the country in the prewar period, thus excluding the Communist Party from the political process. This

development, no doubt, contributed to the persecution of the clergy by the left during the civil war that erupted in 1946. Ultimately, however, clerics such as Ioakeim and Antonios did not pose a serious threat either to the church or the state but had the effect of polarizing Greek society and consuming the leadership of the church. Whether Damaskinos, or any other single individual, possessed the ability to prevent the civil war appears unlikely, but his increasingly open anti-Communist policy and the tight control of the British embassy in Athens over political matters made any genuine possibility of peace unlikely. No doubt, both sides contributed to the increased polarization, but the inability of the government to curb the white terror against the left in 1945-6 ensured further civil strife and doomed what little chance the Damaskinos Regency had to succeed. Despite its failure, however, Damaskinos' selection as regent provides invaluable insight into the growing influence of the church as a symbol of hope during the occupation. However, while his regency reflects the growing influence of the clergy during the occupation, the persecution of the left demonstrated that the church and its leadership pursued a policy deemed necessary to preserve the traditional values of the Greek world. In short, the immediate post-occupation period gave the church an unprecedented opportunity for a pivotal role in society, far exceeding the bounds placed on it by modern Greek legal tradition.

Damaskinos' Regency had its origins in 1916. In that year, the 'National Schism' saw the creation of a rivalry between the monarchy and the government of Eleftherios Venizelos. The interwar period witnessed a deepening of the crisis, giving the presidential democracy formed in the aftermath of the 'Execution of the Six' and the failed coup attempt that forced King George II to flee to England little chance of success.

However, the restoration of the monarchy after a (rigged) plebiscite in 1935 gave Greek political elites on both sides of the constitutional issue hope that King George's return would bring stability. As noted in previous chapters, the king had promised to remain above politics, yet he approved the establishment of the 4th of August dictatorship of general Ioannis Metaxas. The little goodwill that the king enjoyed after his restoration evaporated. His decision to flee the country during World War II in light of his nation's suffering added to the populations' anger toward the monarch.

Thus, with the exception of a small minority, the population did not want George II to return until after a plebiscite was held to determine the fate of the monarchy and resolve the constitutional crises that began in 1916. For the first two years of the occupation, the British government and Foreign Office remained steadfast in their support of the king's return to Greece at the end of the occupation.¹⁰⁰⁷ However, local SOE (Special Operations Executive) agents in Greece maintained that this could only be done by force. The growth of EAM-ELAS in 1942-3 and reports from prominent politicians in Athens made some members of the British military and political administration consider the establishment of a regency, either under a committee of notables or a single individual. Some scholars view Frank Macaskie's stay with the archbishop over a ten day period in September 1943, and the numerous discussions they had regarding the creation of anti-Communist resistance movement, as the beginning of the discussion of the hierarch's candidacy for regent.¹⁰⁰⁸ Ultimately, Winston Churchill's visit to Athens on Christmas 1944 convinced the British prime minister that King George

¹⁰⁰⁷ For more on the position of the British government toward the King of Greece see: John Louis Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance : The Greek Agony, 1941-44* (New York: Pella 1983), 52-3, 125, Reginald Leeper, *When Greek Meets Greek* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950), 3-12.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Hondros, 173-176.

It could not return before a plebiscite had taken place, and that Damaskinos remained the best option as a stopgap until the king's fate was decided by the population, especially while Athens was turning into a battleground between the British and ELAS forces.¹⁰⁰⁹

Contact between the Middle East High Command and Damaskinos reinforced this trend. This began in August 1942, when major Ioannis Tsigantis arrived in Athens as an emissary of the British. Tsigantes had hopes of establishing a pro-monarchy resistance movement in Athens.¹⁰¹⁰ Some scholars maintain that the major wanted to establish a national council in Greece to serve as an official government in the country under the presidency of Damaskinos.¹⁰¹¹ His death at the hands of the Italians in January 1943 ended his mission, but negotiations with Damaskinos cemented the latter's influential position in Athens.¹⁰¹²

Italy's capitulation in the fall of 1943 led, unintentionally, to a major landmark in Damaskinos' postwar political career. Captain Frank Macaskie spent time with the archbishop in the first half of September 1943 and brought a message from the archbishop to the Middle East High Command in late September 1943.¹⁰¹³ Captain Frank Macaskie served in the British expeditionary force sent to Greece during the battle of Crete as a member of the Leicestershire Regiment and was wounded during the

¹⁰⁰⁹ Churchill in his *History of the Second World War* stated that the unstable situation in Athens led him and Anthony Eden to fly to Athens to evaluate the matter firsthand. It must be remembered that two months early, he and Stalin agreed to divide the Balkans and Central Europe into 'spheres of influence.' Stalin agreed to give the British control of Greek affairs, an agreement he adhered during the civil war. Winston Churchill, *History of the Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, 6 vols., vol. 6 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), 226-228. For more on the 'Percentages Agreement' see Albert Resis, "The Churchill-Stalin Secret 'Percentages Agreement' on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944," *American Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (1978) 368-87, Joseph M. Siracusa, "The Night Stalin and Churchill Divided Europe: The View from Washington," *Review of Politics* 43, no. 3 (1981), 381-409, Stephen G. Xydis, "The Secret Anglo-Soviet Agreement on the Balkans of October 9, 1944," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 15, no. 3 (1955): 248-271.

¹⁰¹⁰ Hondros, 103-104, Ioanna Tsatsou, *Pages from the Occupation*, Koukounas, 200-201.

¹⁰¹¹ Koukounas, 200-201.

¹⁰¹² Hondros, 104, Koukounas, 201.

¹⁰¹³ Hondros, 172-3, FO 371/R10450. Letter to Dennis Lasky.

battle.¹⁰¹⁴ The Germans captured and sent him to a prisoner-of-war hospital on the mainland, and then to a prisoner-of-war camp after his recovery. He escaped from the POW camp and made his way back to Cairo. During a second trip to Greece to arrange for the escape of British soldiers, the Italians captured him in January 1942.¹⁰¹⁵ Sentenced to death, his execution for his activities was postponed due to the Pope's intervention. During the Italian capitulation, he successfully bribed an Italian prison official before the Germans took over the prison. For the next ten days, he stayed with the archbishop until fleeing again for the Middle East. During his time with Damaskinos he had detailed discussions with the archbishop and his close friend, chief of Police in Athens, Angelos Evert.¹⁰¹⁶ His assessment of the archbishop and his confidence in his ability to serve as a leading figure in Greece after the German withdrawal speaks to the strong personality and growing influence of the prelate among Greece's political elites.

There is only one man in Greece-by reason of his very high personal prestige which has been greatly enhanced by his magnificent work and example during the period of enemy occupation, and also because he, as head of the Church in Greece, is more or less above politics and admired by all political parties- who can induce these various political groups and patriotic organizations to work together against the Germans, and after the liberation prevent grave internal dissension and, Government and Government system are established. This man is the Archbishop of Athens and Primate of Athens Damaskinos.¹⁰¹⁷

Damaskinos' personality and courageous work during the first two years of the occupation are duly noted in the report. Equally important was his ability to avoid becoming involved in the growing struggle between the various resistance movements throughout Greece. While the author may overestimate the archbishop's 'apolitical' stance, his ability to conceal his fears of the left in public, in spite of the consistent

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid.

pressure to denounce the communist-led EAM-ELAS, led all sides to accept him as the only individual that possessed both the prestige and influence to prevent civil war.

Macaskie, of course, excludes the communists from

“the political groups and patriotic organizations” referenced in his statement.

In addition to his report about his conversations with Damaskinos and his allies, Macaskie passed on a memorandum from the archbishop regarding the situation in Greece and plans for the immediate post-occupation period. His message to British officials betrayed both his concerns about the Communists and his growing power in Athens. His first request is that he should establish contact with the British government in Cairo to ensure the prevention of internal disintegration following a German withdrawal from the country, which appeared to many a foregone conclusion. “Now that the liberation of Greece appears to be imminent he would like to have close liaison with GHQ Middle East and authority from the British Government to act in certain ways which he is confident will ensure the unity of the Greek people at a time when internal dissension would be disastrous.”¹⁰¹⁸ Here we see that Damaskinos in a little more than two short years had emerged as a powerful personality and the hope of many old politicians who feared the potential power and designs of the Communists in the postwar period in Greece.

His position regarding the communist threat also came into focus in this report. Regarding the communists, he stated, “that the strength of the Communist Party in Greece not be underrated. It is, in fact, numerous, widespread though chiefly in Athens, Piraeus and Salonika and well organized.”¹⁰¹⁹ Damaskinos viewed the power of the

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid.

Communists as ephemeral and a consequence of the occupation. “But he believes that it is chiefly a product of the enemy occupation and hunger...and that with the presence...of Allied troops and enough food the number of communists will slowly but steadily diminish. But at the moment this danger is great.”¹⁰²⁰ He realized that a German withdrawal would leave the capital vulnerable to a communist takeover. “If, as seems possible and even probable, the Germans withdraw to the North of Greece before there is an Allied landing, there is nothing whatever to prevent the communists from taking control of Athens and Piraeus.”¹⁰²¹ Because there are no other sources capable of challenging such a move, he hoped the Allies could send weapons and supplies to arm a local force under Athens police chief Angelos Evert. “Evert suggested that weapons should be sent in to arm the Athens police forces. Col. Evert has at his disposal a force of 3,000 and he can guarantee the support of these men in the event of trouble.”¹⁰²² In addition to this, he suggested that upon a German withdrawal the British draft a statement regarding the position of the archbishop. Upon a German withdrawal, “the Commander in Chief Middle East should announce...the Archbishop of Greece, Damaskinos, with the Chief of Police will be responsible for the order and Government...until the arrival of The Greek Government or an Allied Military Governor.”¹⁰²³ Macaskie, Damaskinos, and others hoped that, “with this authority, the combination of the Head of the Greek Church, the chief of police, and a British officer, backed by an armed police force, will probably be sufficient to prevent even the beginning of trouble.”¹⁰²⁴ This optimistic report of circumstances on the ground and the viability of this plan were shortsighted. Denis

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰²¹ Ibid.

¹⁰²² Ibid.

¹⁰²³ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid.

Lasky, a British Foreign Office official working in the Southern Department recognized that this policy could ignite civil war in the immediate postwar period.¹⁰²⁵ For this reason, he dismissed the plan of creating an anti-Communist resistance bloc in preparation for the liberation of Greece.

However, one can obviously see that Damaskinos was planting the seeds for his regency. Indeed, by 1943 Damaskinos had become more of a politician than a cleric, although the two roles were rarely mutually exclusive in the political experience in modern Greece. Still, the circumstances of the occupation and his own personality surpassed even the accepted norms of the ‘political hierarch’. “During the interim between the liberation of Greece and the end of the war or such time as the promised plebiscite...can be held, His eminence will do all in his power to preserve unity in Greece and prevent political dissensions.”¹⁰²⁶ The archbishop’s requests regarding the establishment of a regency were based on the firmly established belief among most Athenian politicians that the King would not be welcomed in Greece until the issue of his fate could be decided in a plebiscite. “He urges...that the King should not return to Greece until after such plebiscite; that he should remain King of Greece, work for Greece and represent Greece at Allied Conferences, but not return to the country.”¹⁰²⁷ He and his advisors, with extensive knowledge of the previous plebiscite held in 1935 that returned King George II initially from exile, did not want a similar farce to take place again. They did not want him to return, “until and unless [the] Greek people in an honest plebiscite under Allied supervision ask him to return.”¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²⁵ Hondros, 173.

¹⁰²⁶ Lasky Letter.

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid.

The civil war in Greece between EAM-ELAS and the resistance band of Napoleon Zervas' EDES in late 1943 forced the British government to reconsider the possibility of a regency. British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden broached the topic with King George. The latter agreed to reconsider the timing of his return to Greece, but refused to consider a regency.¹⁰²⁹ He articulated his new stance in a letter to Tsouderos on November 8, 1943, though the language he used regarding his return appeared vague enough to allow politicians in Athens to view the letter as evidence of the King's acceptance of a plebiscite to resolve the constitutional crisis.¹⁰³⁰

This prompted the politicians to send a letter to Tsouderos approving the letter from the King in January 1944.¹⁰³¹ In response, the Greek prime minister sent a letter to Damaskinos requesting that he "make an appeal for reconciliation and to open negotiations with Athenian politicians on behalf of the Cairo government, which, Tsouderos emphasized was and should remain the only Greek government."¹⁰³² In the meantime, Colonel Christopher Woodhouse, a British officer serving in the Allied Military Mission in Greece, negotiated with the three major resistance bands, ELAS, EDES, and EKKA a temporary halt to the civil war, better known as the Plaka Agreement, on February 29, 1944.¹⁰³³ Things, however, became far more complex with the establishment of PEEA in March.

These events coupled with developments in the Middle East complicated matters. The establishment of this rival government in Greece forced the Tsouderos government and its British clients to negotiate with EAM. On March 6, Colonel Emmanuel Fradellos,

¹⁰²⁹ Hondros, 205.

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰³¹ Ibid.

¹⁰³² Ibid.

¹⁰³³ Ibid., 207.

an agent sent to Athens to negotiate with the Athens politicians and Damaskinos, returned after three months and informed Tsouderos that the Athenian political elites no longer offered their full support to the government and demanded that the king make a clear statement about a plebiscite.¹⁰³⁴ They also insisted on a Damaskinos regency.¹⁰³⁵ Churchill informed Tsouderos and the king that the constitutional question would wait until after liberation.¹⁰³⁶ The formation of the PEEA on March 10, however, unleashed a series of events that brought the fall of the Tsouderos government, the broadening of the Greek government to include EAM-ELAS officials, and the possibility of the return of the king before a plebiscite untenable. In April 1944, a mutiny broke out among the Greek armed forces in the Middle East, which lasted until May 7. The mutineers demanded recognition of PEEA and a broadening of the Greek government.¹⁰³⁷ These events led to the Lebanon Conference (May 17-20), which included members of the various resistance movements and political parties whose task was to establish a government of national unity. The final agreement on such a move did not occur until August. Conditions in Greece, however, were by no means resolved. The king persisted in his refusal to the appointment of a regent. In September 1944, the government moved from Cairo to Italy. During their short stay in Italy, the Greek government, the two major resistance movements, and the British agreed on the terms of the country's liberation at Caserta. The constitutional question remained unresolved when the country was liberated

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid., 211.

¹⁰³⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁷ For more on the Mutiny see Ibid., 212-215, Evangelos Spyropoulos, *The Greek Military (1909-1941) and the Greek Mutinies in the Middle East (1941-1944)*, Eastern European Monographs (Boulder, CO-New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 328-374.

in October. The Papandreou government arrived in Athens on October 18, six days after the German withdrawal.

Between the day of liberation and the December events (December 3-February 13) the situation in Greece remained tense. A breakdown between EAM and the Greek government over the disbanding of the military units on both sides led to the events of December 3. The day before, EAM ministers in the Papandreou government resigned from their posts, prompting a governmental crisis. The following day the Communists staged a protest in Constitution Square. Although the protestors were unarmed, Greek police panicked and fired on the crowd, sparking roughly six weeks of fighting between ELAS and British and Government forces. Negotiations between EAM and the government began in Varkiza, a suburb of Athens after the ceasefire on January 11 and concluded on February 13.

In the midst of this fighting, Churchill and Eden flew to Athens to evaluate the situation, arriving the day after Christmas. Throughout the fighting, British officials in Athens led by Ambassador Reginald Leeper, a strong supporter of Damaskinos, began pressing Churchill to reconsider a Damaskinos regency as early as December 10. Finally, during the two weeks between Leeper's efforts and his trip to Athens, the prime minister convinced the king to reconsider and appoint Damaskinos as regent.

One major stumbling block was Churchill's personal reservations about Damaskinos. Well aware that the hierarch owed his position to the Tsolakoglou government and its German patrons, he considered him a tool of the Germans. However, he also stated that he was a tool of the far left. Obviously, his support of the king and his dismissal or skepticism of the reports of Macaskie and others allowed him to come to

such conclusions. Churchill recounts his doubts about the intentions of the archbishop prior to his visit to Athens in his account of the war. For instance in a letter to Roosevelt dated December 17, he communicates that “There is suspicion that the Archbishop is ambitious of obtaining chief political power, and that, supported by EAM, he will use it ruthlessly against existing Ministers. Whether this be true or not I cannot say. The facts are changing from hour to hour.”¹⁰³⁸ In a letter to Field Marshall Harold Alexander two days later he appeared convinced that Damaskinos was a tool of EAM. “It is a hard thing to ask me to throw over a constitutional King acting on the true advice of his Ministers, apart from British pressure, in order to install a dictator who may very likely become the champion of the extreme Left.”¹⁰³⁹ He reiterated these concerns about the Damaskinos-EAM connection in another letter to Alexander on December 22. “I have personally great doubts about the Archbishop, who might quite conceivably make himself into a dictator supported by the Left Wing. However, these doubts may be removed in the next few days.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Finally, he decided that he and Eden should visit Athens on Christmas day.

The visit to Athens on December 26-28 was pivotal in convincing Churchill of the wisdom of Damaskinos’ appointment as Regent. Among the reasons for this complete volte-face included his personal meetings with the archbishop, the results of a conference between Greek political officials and EAM-ELAS chaired by Damaskinos, and the continued pressure from his (WHOSE? advisors. Among the most important factors was the hierarch’s ‘anti-Communist’ credentials. “When he came to see us he spoke with great bitterness against the atrocities of ELAS and the dark, sinister, hand behind

¹⁰³⁸ Churchill, 303.

¹⁰³⁹ Ibid., 309.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid., 310.

EAM.”¹⁰⁴¹ In another statement about the archbishop’s ‘credentials,’ he seems to contradict his previous statements about fears of Damaskinos’ ‘leftist’ sympathies. “I was impressed, especially from what the Archbishop said, by the intensity of hatred for Communists in the country. We had no doubt of this before we came here. Present position confirmed by all we had heard so far.”¹⁰⁴² Churchill and Eden left Athens on the morning of December 28 convinced that Damaskinos remained the only solution to the crisis. He and the archbishop agreed that Churchill would broach the topic with the king.¹⁰⁴³

After returning to England, Churchill continued to receive reports from his advisors in Greece and elsewhere that he needed to impress the king of the seriousness of the situation and the lack of alternative solutions.¹⁰⁴⁴ On the night of December 29-30, Churchill had a long conversation with the Greek monarch that ended at 4:00 AM. The prime minister ran out of patience with the obstinate king. In no uncertain terms, he threatened to withdraw his government’s support for the king if he refused. “This has been a very painful task to me. I had to tell the King that if he did not agree the matter would be settled without him and that we should recognize the new Government instead of him.”¹⁰⁴⁵ He also requested that the king send a telegram informing British and Greek officials of his appointment of Damaskinos as regent.¹⁰⁴⁶

Unfortunately, despite all of Damaskinos good intentions and the hopes of his British patrons, his regency could not prevent the country from, yet again, descending

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid., 314.

¹⁰⁴² Ibid.

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid., 318-9.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid., 321-2.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid., 322.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid.

into civil war. Damaskinos, however, influenced by circumstances and his own fears of the communist movement could not maintain a neutral position. Although he successfully gave the appearance of remaining above politics during the occupation, the shift from ‘unofficial’ to official Ethnarch forced him to descend into the abyss of post-occupation politics in Greece. In addition to working closely with the British government to exclude the KKE from playing a role in Greek political affairs, he purged the church of ‘EAMites’ to eradicate any lasting cultural/religious influence. This persecution of the church, though under the vice president of the Holy Synod, Spyridon, reflected the growing anti-Communist mood of ruling Greek political circles.

Despite the unofficial criticism of the clergy for joining EAM-ELAS, the hierarchy needed to provide an official reason for the persecution of these clergymen. For the hierarchs targeted in this drive to ‘cleanse’ the upper echelons of the church, the synod utilized the obscure law that penalized clerics that were absent from their ecclesiastical see for an extended period of time without permission from the synod. The fact that the Axis actively pursued these men for their resistance activity made such a charge dubious. However, the Rallis government, in one of its last official acts, removed these men from office. Officially, these men were removed during the summer of 1944. The June 1, 1944 edition of *Ekklesia*, the official organ of the Church of Greece, reported of their dethronement.¹⁰⁴⁷ Their ecclesiastical sees, however, remained vacant until the spring of 1945.¹⁰⁴⁸ In addition to these most recognized members of the movement, three others were targeted for their sympathies toward or participation in EAM/ELAS. These were: the metropolitan of Halkis, Grigorios Pleiathos, the metropolitan of Chios, Ioakeim

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Ekklesia*, June 1, 1945.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Their replacements were elected and enthroned in the first week of April 1945. Strangas, 2466-7.

Stroumbis, and the metropolitan of Mithymni, Dionysios Minas.¹⁰⁴⁹ Of these, the Church dethroned the metropolitan of Chios and the metropolitan of Halkis had to contend with a deeply hostile population, and, at one point, needed his residence guarded by the gendarmerie.¹⁰⁵⁰ Ioakeim and Antonios, however, remained the most complicated ‘problems’ for the Church, as they symbolized the its involvement with EAM-ELAS.

During the December events, the newspaper, *Ethnos* (The Nation), published a series of articles that the Holy Synod planned to try these individuals in an ecclesiastical court. For instance, on January 31, the newspaper reported the following: “We received information that the Holy Synod decided during its last session to consider Metropolitan Ioakeim of Kozani and Metropolitan Antonios of Ileia because of their involvement in EAM.”¹⁰⁵¹ On February 8 the newspaper reported that “The Holy Synod during the last session, decided to take measures against the EAMite metropolitans and prepared, based on canon law, a law which allows for the opportunity to remove and dethrone the misbehaved metropolitans.”¹⁰⁵² Among those tried were the metropolitans of Kozani, Ileia, Chios, and Halkis.¹⁰⁵³ Two weeks after the initial notice, the newspaper reported that the Synod convicted and dethroned the metropolitans of Ileia and Kozani.¹⁰⁵⁴ As for the justification, the article cited the following statement by the head secretary of the Holy Synod, “The dethronement is an administrative measure, in accordance with canon law, because the EAM metropolitans had left their ecclesiastical sees during a period of

¹⁰⁴⁹ Karagiannis, 77.

¹⁰⁵⁰ According to the reporter, K. Demertzis described some of the troubles he had upon returning to ecclesiastical see in December 1945 in two articles in the newspaper, *Vradyni* (The Evening Times). Karagiannis, 80-81.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ethnos*. January 31, 1945. Cited in Karagiannis, 77.

¹⁰⁵² *Ethnos*. February 8, 1945. Cited in Karagiannis, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ethnos*. February 15, 1945. Cited in *ibid*.

more than six months during the occupation.”¹⁰⁵⁵ The article also reported that the metropolitans of Halkis and Chios would receive the attention of the ecclesiastical court for their involvement at a later date.¹⁰⁵⁶ As mentioned earlier, the metropolitan of Chios suffered the same fate as those of Kozani and Ileia the following year.¹⁰⁵⁷

In a synod meeting on April 4, 1946, which investigated the activity of six hierarchs during the occupation, among whom were the metropolitans of Chios Ioakeim and of Mithymni Dionysios, an interesting exchange occurred between the minister of religion Papadimos and the members of the synod, regarding the war and the role of the Church. More than anything else, it articulated that the role of ‘liberating the nation’ had drastically different connotations. During his opening remarks, Minister Papadimos stated the following about the role of the church during periods of crisis: “The position of the church *vis-à-vis* the state is well known. It is a position of complete harmony. The struggles of the church for the freedom of the nation deserve the respect of the government.”¹⁰⁵⁸ In response, the metropolitan of Arta, Spyridon stated that he knew the government would work for the improvement of the church. As for the role of the church during times of crisis Spyridon made the following statement: “The Church also remained a steward of the nation and a guardian of its freedom and ideals.”¹⁰⁵⁹

Unfortunately, for clerics such as Ioakeim of Kozani, their interpretation differed from

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Although the Royal Advisor Dimitrios Petrakakos informed the Synod that the government’s only concern in this matter was the church, his observation is far from truthful. The state was in the process of preventing EAM from playing in government, something the British and traditional political insisted upon. Thus, to attack those within a pillar of Greek society, namely the church, was seen as essential. And in this regard, Damaskinos cooperated with the state fully, as no evidence exists that indicates that posed any opposition. This point, though implicitly is made by Karagiannis in his study of the church during the civil war when the author concludes a paragraph with this disingenuous statement by Mr. Petrakakos. Strangas, 2466, Karagiannis, 78.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Strangas, 2515.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid.

that of the majority of his colleagues in the synod and the Greek government at the end of the war. For much of the hierarchy, the communist-led resistance movement threatened the ‘ideals’ mentioned in the above statement. This was a concern that Eirinaios discussed in his postwar memoir.

The lower clergy, however, fared far worse. Unlike the methods used to dethrone and isolate the hierarchs who joined the movement, the lower clergy faced abuses from much of the population, and even death at the hands of extreme right-wing bands roaming the country throughout the second half of the 1940s or as a result of military courts during the civil war.¹⁰⁶⁰ It must be noted that the opponents of EAM and the postwar National Democratic Army in territory they controlled, lost their lives.¹⁰⁶¹ Archimandrite Germanos describes the way that the hierarchy and the postwar governments treated him and other who joined the movement. Two passages from his memoir articulate the cleric’s criticism. “The postwar governments and the tactless church hierarchy called all those who fought in the mountains communists, Bulgarians, enemies of the nation, sell-outs, antichrists, and traitors.”¹⁰⁶² In a similar vein “[Clerics] were persecuted because they fought the occupier and for the liberation of our country with whatever parapet available to them. They were not only pursued by the bigoted, vengeful post-civil war government, but also by the bishops...”¹⁰⁶³

The reaction of the clergy, from metropolitan Antonios to Germanos refuted these criticisms, arguing that they simply contributed to the movement as part of the ecclesiastical tradition in Greek history during periods of crisis. During his trial,

¹⁰⁶⁰ For more on the members of the lower clergy persecuted by the state after liberation see: Kailas, 136-142.

¹⁰⁶¹ Germanos mentions a few of these priests in his memoir. Germanos, 348-350.

¹⁰⁶² Germanos, 147.

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid., 87

Antonios testified that he had informed Damaskinos of his decision to join the movement.¹⁰⁶⁴ He argued that he had fled to the mountains because German officials pursued him in Pyrgos, the seat of his ecclesiastical see.¹⁰⁶⁵

A group of clerics tried by the metropolitan of Aitolis and Karnania for “scandalizing the faithful” viewed their role as members of EA perfectly acceptable. “It is true that since 1942 we were members of EA, whose goals were the welfare of the suffering, persecuted patriots....”¹⁰⁶⁶ They also argued that their involvement was in line with their ecclesiastical duties. “We found our duties in complete agreement and harmony with Christian virtues and our missions as pastors.”¹⁰⁶⁷ Germanos made the following remark about these accusations against those clergymen who served in the resistance: “The stance [of those who identified us as communists, traitors, etc.] repels us and this injustice consumes us. We asked neither for recognition nor material rewards, only to be left in peace and not to be viewed us as enemies of the nation.”¹⁰⁶⁸ The fact remained that the persecution of the left, including the clergy, did not end with the civil war in 1949. In reality, as late as 1969, the Colonels’ government prosecuted clerics for their resistance activity during the war.¹⁰⁶⁹

Damaskinos as regent shares much of the responsibility during this period. Once the government established a policy, the hierarchy, with few exceptions, fell in line. The December Events, the experience of the occupation, and the longstanding fear of communism, no doubt, made the hierarchs fearful of EAM, which made them remove

¹⁰⁶⁴ Karagiannis, 78.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ethnos*. April 9, 1945. Cited in *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 82

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁸ Germanos, 147-8.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Karagiannis identifies a number of examples of clerics punished for their activity during the war by the Colonels’ Regime. Karagiannis, 84.

any possible influential hierarchs sympathetic with the movement from within their ranks. However, because they could not charge them with treason for serving in or sympathizing with the movement, they used the more mundane charge of leaving their ecclesiastical see for longer than six months without permission from the Synod. Many who tried Antonios and Ioakeim fled to Athens, during the occupation, and failed to make an impression on the court.¹⁰⁷⁰

In conclusion, clerics from Damaskinos to the lower clergy who served in EA believed they fulfilled their role as leaders of the Church according to the immediate needs of the population and their perception of the traditional role of the church during periods of crisis. Damaskinos' experience during the Corinthian earthquakes of 1928 and his mission as Exarch in 1930-31 foreshadowed, to some extent, the type of role he would play during the occupation and during his regency. Specifically, one can draw direct parallels between his role as president of AOSK (1928-1929) and president of EOHA (1941-1944). The biggest difference, however, was that his role during the occupation dwarfed the one he played during the earthquakes, as he had to deal with matters of state, such as the execution of prisoners, the Holocaust, and other manmade problems created by the Axis occupation authorities and their compromised Greek allies.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Germanos cites a conversation he had with metropolitan of Veroia Alexandros at the end of the war. The hierarch made the following comment about the trial: I also participated in the trial which convicted these two (Ioakeim and Antonios) hierarchs, for which the only thing they could be accused of was that they left their ecclesiastical see for more than six months without the Synod's permission. I stood up and said, 'Holy Brethren, if another charge exists against the accused let them be tried, if, however, there is nothing other than the charge of being absent from their ecclesiastical see, then most us presiding should sit in the box. How many of us hierarchs remained in ecclesiastical see during the occupation.' Germanos, 200-202.

His mission as Exarch, in addition, helped prepare him for the unenviable task of remaining both above politics and suspicion by all sides throughout the occupation. This position he maintained relatively well considering that he nurtured a working relationship with the occupation authorities, an understanding with the resistance, and open communication with the Greek government, Greek politicians, and the British military and political authorities through their emissaries. While Damaskinos receives much of the attention for his 'ethnarchic' role during the occupation, numerous other hierarchs and, in some cases, members of the middle and lower clergy played a similar role on a smaller scale. This expanding role, which the population and the Greek authorities recognized, could be seen in the active response of hierarchs from Ioannina to Crete.

A division, however, occurred between a majority of the upper clergy, who maintained a position of neutrality toward the resistance, primarily the communist-led EAM (though they harbored deep reservations about the postwar intentions of the movement), and the minority who embraced either pro-EAM or anti-EAM stance. The leadership of EAM-ELAS, led by astute and pragmatic men such as Aris Velouchiotis understood that not only did the movement want the participation of the clergy, but needed it (or at least its neutrality). For this reason, the movement used numerous methods to recruit the church into its ranks: there were newspaper reports and articles; ecclesiastical representatives (especially hierarchs when possible); were sent to villages; and clerics were encouraged to organize and improve their status in society; even legislation for the church was incorporated in the law codes used to govern the territory under the control of EAM-ELAS. Most importantly, EAM leaders knew that by sending clerics to preach about the movements and its goals, it was far more likely to succeed in

winning over villagers, especially local priests. This remained especially true of hierarchs, such as Ioakeim, who were revered and, in some cases, feared because of their immense status in Greek society. For the clerics who joined the movement, most of them participated in the philanthropic National Solidarity, fulfilling a role that church law permitted them and one that suited their prior experience as men of the cloth. Even some who served in ELAS did so as the unit's priest or spiritual advisor. Germanos provides the best example of such an individual. They could also serve as a mediating presence in the unit leading to the preservation rather than the destruction of life. Although members of EAM's leadership did not always agree with these 'humanitarian' tendencies, many appreciated their contribution to the movement. Despite the fact that many members of the lower clergy supported the movement, a number had reservations about efforts to indoctrinate the rank and file of the movement and the growing anti-clericalism that began to influence the stance of the movements, especially toward the end of the war and the civil war that followed. Moreover, even sympathetic clerics, such as Eirinaios, viewed the movement's postwar ambitions with great concern, fearing that a communist-controlled Greece may exclude the church or, even worse, lead to persecution that resembled that of the interwar Soviet Union.

Once the war began to turn against the Axis, especially after the capitulation of the Italians in September 1943, the German occupation authorities and diplomatic officials began to court the church, utilizing metropolitans when possible to espouse their anti-Communist message. German officials successfully recruited a number of metropolitans to make anti-EAM speeches in the press. The appeal, however, of this message had less influence on the clergy than the Germans would have liked. Two

reasons explain the limited influence of this message: the brutal record of the Germans during the occupation and the effective use of propaganda by EAM-ELAS. Therefore, only a small fraction of the hierarchy supported this German effort.

The occupation, however, ended with a nation divided, a division that spilled over to the church. On the eve of liberation, EAM-ELAS enjoyed considerable support for its resistance activity during the war. Damaskinos and prewar politicians in Athens understood that the peace that emerged with liberation remained tenuous, and that the government of Georgios Papandreou depended on the bayonets of the British. The outbreak of hostilities of the chaotic December Events provided the immediate catalyst for the Damaskinos Regency. Personal dislike of communism, embitterment over the atrocities committed by members of ELAS during most of December, and pressure from the Athenian political elites and the British placed Damaskinos in an untenable situation. He sided with the Athenian political elites who did not want to allow former members of EAM-ELAS to join the government and did little to ensure the safety of former members of EAM-ELAS during the 'White Terror' or the energetic prosecution of former collaborators. But the British offered him little choice. Church policy toward former collaborators and members of the resistance within their ranks represented a microcosm of their policy to ensure a Greece free of Communist influence. Prominent members of EAM-ELAS such as Ioakeim of Kozani, Antonios of Ileia, and Ioakeim of Chios suffered the humiliation of dethronement on the charge of unauthorized absence from their ecclesiastical sees for periods longer than six months, while no hierarch accused of collaborations lost his post. During the occupation, the absence of a legitimate government and the manmade crises created by Axis policy led the population to turn to

the church to guide them through this period of crisis. Despite having similar goals, in many cases, the circumstances of the occupation divided the clergy over the issue of how to respond. Bolstered by traditional interpretations of the church during periods of crisis in the nation's history, both those who cooperated with the occupation authorities and those who fought with the resistance believed they were participating in a struggle to preserve the integrity and values of the nation. However, upon liberation the church reverted to its prewar role of close cooperation with the Greek political leadership and, through Damaskinos, resumed its close and unequal relationship with the nation's traditional patron, Great Britain. The Church became a strong supporter of the Greek government forces and purged itself of any traces of the institution's involvement in the resistance, a role that the leadership did not recognize until after the fall of the Colonels' Government in 1974. Although division defined the church at war's end, the institution, with the urging of the population, played an expansive role in social and political affairs ranging from the intervention of Damaskinos and his colleagues with the Axis authorities to the participation of Ioakeim of Kozani in EAM. In short, traditional perceptions of the church during times of crisis shaped, on a fundamental level, the expectations both of the population and the clergy itself during the period of the occupation. The rise of Damaskinos from pariah to Regent in three and half short years demonstrated that the role the clergy, especially the hierarchy, could play when the country is left leaderless by a national government that fled the country and political elites refusing to either collaborate with the Axis or participate in the resistance to the armies of occupation. The Greek case, despite the fundamental differences from other territories under German

occupation, will help provides an illuminating example of the response of organized religion to the experience of occupation during World War II.

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