

Nigel Clive

AS AN intelligence officer, diplomat, Hellenist, and author Nigel Clive had a distinguished post-war career, but he will always be remembered as one of the heroic small band who were parachuted into the Greek mountains to assist the Greek resistance against the Axis occupiers in 1943-44, and he soon became deeply involved in the tragic conflicts between the Greek guerrillas that developed into the Greek Civil War. His memoir *A Greek Experience 1943-1948* is one of the seminal books in English on this period. Published in 1985, it was one of the first memoirs by an ex-M16 officer to discuss past operations.

Clive was born in 1917, and educated at Stowe and Oxford, where he read History at Christ Church and was a contemporary of Edward Heath and Julian Amery. His conventional political outlook had been somewhat radicalised by the Spanish Civil War, but it was a motor tour in Europe in the summer vacation of 1938 that finally convinced him of the errors of the Chamberlain policy of appeasement of Hitler.

In a gesture of rebellion, when he returned to Oxford he marched into the Carlton Club, and turned Chamberlain's picture round to face the wall. He began a campaign of support for A.D. Lindsay, the Master of Balliol, who was standing against Quintin Hogg on an anti-appeasement platform in the dramatic Oxford by-election of that year. Convinced that war against Fascism was inevitable, he also joined the Territorial Army, with the Middlesex Yeomanry.

A frustrating period during 1940 ended with action in North Africa in early 1941, and recruitment into SIS, the Secret Intelligence Service, also known as MI6. His first posting under diplomatic cover was to Iraq, where over Christmas 1941 he met the Arabist and distinguished travel writer Freya Stark, who was also involved in secret work for the British government, and Clive shared her house for the next 18 months. He was not happy, however, in what seemed to be a Middle East backwater of the war, and with what he later recorded as the "bickering and jealousy" between SIS, SOE, the Special Operations Executive, and MIS, all of whom were jostling for influence in Iraq at the time.

In the summer of 1943 he returned to Cairo, where with help from the British ambassador to Egypt, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, he was transferred to the Yugoslav office of SIS, but never succeeded in being parachuted into the Yugoslavian mountains to join Bill (later Sir William) Deakin at Tito's headquarters. A move to the Greek section of SIS was more fruitful, and in December 1943 he replaced Costa Lawrence as British liaison officer in Epirus, in a nerve-racking and difficult post as Lawrence had just been shot dead.

Clive spent the next nine months in the remote mountains of Souli, near the north-west town of Ioannina, and he set up extensive networks of agents. He played a prominent role in the labyrinthine intrigues of the Greek resistance there, particularly with Napoleon Zervas's relations with the British, and the equally intractable problems with the pro-Royalist Foreign Office who Clive and other field agents in Greece felt often did not understand the realities of the

mountain war, or the political situation in Greece itself. He won the Military Cross for his work.

As a result of the Souli period, Clive developed what became a lifelong fascination with Greek popular life and culture, and mastered the demotic Greek language. His immediate empathy with the Greek people, especially the traditional mountain villagers, was remarkable, and was the foundation for his lifelong Hellenism, something that transcended the politics of the moment and the often bitter quarrels for many years afterwards about British policy towards Greece. Whether you agreed with Clive about something or not, there was never the slightest doubt that what he said was based on a passionate concern for the Greek people, rather than external political considerations of any kind.

He left Greece after the victory over the Axis in December 1944 and spent some time in London, engaged in controversies about the British role in the early stages of the civil war, and he campaigned for the return of a Labour government in the 1945 election.

Clive returned to Athens in March 1945, and worked for SIS under diplomatic cover for three years. In his book he described these as "exceptionally happy years when I submerged myself in the Greek way of life". Among his English friends in Athens were Steven Runciman, Rex Warner and Paddy Leigh Fermor, with whom he revived the British Council. But the Greek years were drawing to a close, and a posting in Jerusalem in 1948 followed, then, in November 1949, marriage to Maria Tambakopoulou, from a prominent Athens family with Spetsai bandit roots, a marriage that was a wonderfully happy partnership for over 50 years.

His Foreign Office jobs thereafter included postings in Tunis, Algiers, and Baghdad. He became head of the Information Research Department in 1966. From 1970 to 1980 he was an adviser to the Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Work connected with Anglo-Greek relations began to dominate his life, and he was an active member of the Anglo-Hellenic League and the Royal Institute of International Affairs and wrote reviews and articles for several journals. *A Greek Experience* was recognised on its publication as a landmark in the British literature of the civil war. In 1994 he published an English translation of Marianna Koromila's *In the Trail of Odysseus*, based on Yiankos Danielopoulos's memoir of Greek life on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria.

In recent years Clive took a close interest in the emerging Balkan crisis, and travelled widely in the region until he was a very advanced age. In Albania, in 1992, he was a wonderful travelling companion, in very difficult practical circumstances, with all the energy and commitment of someone half his age and an endless curiosity and affirmation of Albanian popular life, and well-informed interest in the Greek-speaking minority in the south of the country.

Nigel Clive was an inspiration to the younger generation of Hellenists, with a razor-sharp mind that could cut through any kind of political obfuscation, and a sweetness of temper that never failed



Clive, right, with his Greek companion in arms Mario Maniakis, in 1944

even in the often acrimonious atmosphere accompanying disputes in London about the Balkans. With Maria's wisdom, humour and common sense, there was always a fund of personal generosity, advice, understanding and endless kindness in his London flat or in their Greek house on Spetsai where they spent the summer and autumn months.

He was always of the Establishment, in one sense, and defended the British role in the Greek civil war, although he felt Ernest Bevin, as Foreign Secretary, had continued Churchill's wartime policy in too mechanical a way. In a wider sense he had a keen radical spirit, and was a strong admirer and supporter of the Roy Jenkins pro-Europe wing of the Labour Party for many years. He was committed to the contemporary Greek cause, and concerned with the lack of understanding of the Macedonian issue he felt was current in many British academic and journalistic circles.

Clive played an important role in the early 1990s in galvanising the Hellenic community in Britain to try to reverse the pro-Skopje conventional wisdom that he felt then dominated the British foreign policy establishment.

JAMES PETTIFER

Nigel Clive made his career in the Secret Intelligence Service but he was an unorthodox member of the firm, writes **Noel Annan**.

When in Moscow the Jewish doctors at the Kremlin were accused of murdering Andre Zhdanov, an event followed shortly by Stalin's death, the Foreign Office asked SIS for help in interpreting the news from the Soviet Union. Clive did something unknown in SIS. He set up a group of Kremlinologists bringing together experts in academic life as well as Foreign Office officials. At that time E.H. Carr, the apologist of Stalin, and the Trotskyist Isaac Deutscher were the accepted interpreters of Soviet Russia: scarcely any others reviewed books on the subject for the *Times Literary Supplement*. Clive got Leonard Shapiro at LSE and Hugh Seton-Watson to analyse, and in so doing expose, the enormities and diseconomies in the Soviet political system.

But there were mutterings from the old guard. It was not the work of MI6, they said, to prognosticate about affairs in other countries: their job was simply to provide information. At a meeting the only support he obtained was from George Blake. As Clive used later to say, Blake knew how to provide

convincing cover for his activities as a spy.

Clive had a passionate nature and in discussion spoke with great emphasis. He did not disguise his opinion of those who differed from him. He got across Nicholas Elliott, typical of the pro-war intake, who had had the bright idea of employing the luckless Commander Crabbe to investigate in a wet suit the underwater armaments of Soviet warships when on a friendly visit to Portsmouth. (Crabbe's body was later washed ashore.) Elliott had been an undergraduate friend of Kim Philby at Cambridge and believed Philby had been unjustly forced to resign after Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean decamped. He got him re-employed by MI6, unknown to the *Observer*, who had agreed to appoint him their correspondent in Beirut.

Clive knew that Sir Dick White, when he was head of MIS, was convinced that Philby was guilty, and he could not understand why White allowed this arrangement to continue when he became head of SIS after the Crabbe debacle. He protested even more loudly when the Soviet defector Anatoly Golitsyn proved conclusively Philby was a spy and Elliott, full of indignation, confronted him in Beirut, like a prefect who had caught a boy smoking, giving Philby the chance to escape.

Nigel Clive's mother was a direct descendant of Clive of India. She fell in love with a good-looking merchant banker, Horace Oppenheimer. Both of them were music lovers and they enjoyed playing piano duets. The price her family exacted for the marriage was that he should take her name.

Nigel was the second of three sons and put down at birth for membership of the MCC, which he joined before the war as a playing member (he was an elegant batsman with a delightful late cut). His parents and mine were close friends and I grew up with him. We went to the same prep school and the same house at Stowe. There he was taught English in the sixth form by T.H. White, to such effect that he won a scholarship to Christ Church.

At Oxford his personality changed. Slim, good-looking, he became a boisterous pursuer of debutantes and a staunch Conservative.

Unlike some Cold War warriors Clive retained a sense of proportion about Communists and fellow travellers. His common sense stood him in good stead when that egregious sleuth Jim Angleton of the CIA maintained that the report of a split

between the Chinese and Soviet Communist parties was a ruse, a masterpiece of disinformation; and that those who challenged this view should be regarded as suspect, even perhaps as moles. Angleton's theory found many takers in MI6, among them the deputy head, Maurice Oldfield. Clive had a hot dispute with Angleton; and, when at last Oldfield admitted that he was beginning to waver but intended still to keep an open mind, Clive snapped that it was not a subject on which it was possible to keep an open mind.

In 1966 Clive was transferred to the Foreign Office to be head of a department that disseminated unattributable analyses of political events and forecasts. But three years later the Commonwealth Office was amalgamated with the Foreign Office. Posts had to be found for former Colonial Service officers and Clive was asked to return to MI6. He was informed that he was too old now for a post abroad and that no suitable post was vacant in London. Oldfield had his revenge.

Clive decided to start afresh and in 1970 he was appointed special adviser to Jonkheer van Lennep, the Secretary-General of OECD, a brilliant though difficult man to work for; and all Clive's diplomatic talents were needed to sweeten relations between him and his staff. He held this post until 1980, when he returned to London, and until 1982 he became editorial consultant to the Institute for the Study of Conflict in order to change its reputation as a centre for fanatical Cold War propagandists. But when Michael Goodwin, its Director, rejected his advice he resigned.

In Clive's last years he continued to contribute articles to the *Times Literary Supplement* and other periodicals. He took particular pleasure in writing for the *DNB* a notably fair-minded appraisal of Sir Maurice Oldfield.

Nigel David Clive, intelligence officer and writer; born London 13 July 1917; MC 1944; OBE 1959; Head of Information Research, Foreign Office 1966-69; CMG 1967; Adviser to Secretary-General, OECD 1970-80; married 1949 Maria Tambakopoulou; died Athens 6 May 2001.

• Lord Annan died 21 February 2000