WANTED: A MIRACLE IN GREECE

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Today an almost forgotten American mission has got to perform a miracle—or fail in its job. The miracle is to save Greece from economic disintegration and the intruders of Communism.

The fight to save Greece is just beginning. The announcement of plans is not enough. Greece this month and next is infinitely more important than are the debates which commanded the headlines last March and April.

Last January, I went to Greece as head of a mission charged with reporting on the economic situation and with determining what outside assistance would be necessary for the survival of the Greek nation. I know at firsthand the complicated and discouraging conditions which today are confronting the Greek government. The present economic conditions are indeed more different from the past. During 1946, Greece got about $330,000,000 from UNRRA and the British; our aid of $350,000,000 barely exceeds this. And, at the same time, we are banking on the ability of the Greeks to more than double their exports. So, far from having too liberal a program of aid, we are only a gesture of mute despair. There's a chance they'll do it again.

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Dutiful trip through the lovely Greek countryside, a peasant I talked with typified the Greek national psychosis. He was a weary and discouraged man, prematurely old, his face lined and wrinkled, his hands upturned in a gesture of mute despair. "Four times in my lifetime my home has been destroyed," he said, "by the Turks, the Bulgars, the Nazis, and the guerrillas. Why don't I build it up again?"

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Businessmen will not invest. Storekeepers will not lay in supplies. Peasants will not repair their ruined homes. A few months ago, 1,500,000 homes had been totally destroyed in Greece and that only 1,300 had been rebuilt.

My most depressing experience in Greece was a visit to Kalavryta, the Liotsia of Greece. This was the village high up a narrow gorge near the Gulf of Corinth where, in December, 1943, a small band of Greek resistance forces ambushed a squadron of Nazi occupation troops. The German re-

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In the shadow of the Acropolis the British flag flies over a public square in Athens. A U.S. mission is now working to restore the political and economic health of Greece.

A Greek mother and family. The boy standing at left suffers from rickets. Fatness of baby in mother's arms is caused by swelling of hunger edema, a starvation disease.

Regular Greek troops, in their age-old uniforms, who have been engaged in a grueling civil war with guerrilla bands. This strife has slowed the recovery of the ancient nation.
They had spent the night on a bench in the station, running a dangerous blood pressure.

AFTER Charlie Squires quit the hotel business in Chicago to take up turkey raising, the Okie Keepers Journal sent me to Wisconsin to see how he was getting along. As we might have suspected, he was getting along fine. "Oh, hell, yes," he said, showing me around his model farm. "I've finally licked the turkey business—figured out a serum to keep 'em from catching cold."

SUSIE, his wife, was thinner, but as pretty as ever. She seemed happy in a bright, nervous way. "This is so much better than living in a busy hotel in some noisy old city," she said. "And I love my house. I love it!"

It was a house. It had been put together with imported flagstone, granite and mahogany; the drapes were hand-woven and the furniture was all custom-made. "Charlie insisted on ordering things that were hard to get—but he battled until he got 'em," Susie said, proudly. "We're all settled now. The last chair came yesterday."

We sat in the sun porch where wide screened windows overlooked Charlie's manicured acres, with the Kickapoo River glittering below us in the summer sun. It was serene and quiet there, and the countryside was gentle, inviting the eye like green New England hills. It was no wonder Susie loved it.

She brought us coffee in a silver pot, with fresh hot rolls and home-churned butter. Charlie perched on an arm of the oversized davenport and stretched out his long legs. "I suppose you heard about my last night at the Grand Embassy with Bert Buell and the seven Italian acrobats?" he suggested.

"Several versions," I admitted. "Nobody seems to have it straight."

"Charlie lit his pipe. "Never knew a story to get so garbled," he said, as they went through that poison-pen correspondence together. "I'll push until they give, that's all."

He wrote letters, made long-distance phone calls and flew from city to city in anything that would leave the ground. When he found customers who'd promised never again to darken the Grand Embassy's revolving doors he mesmerized them with his charm, sent them small bottles of Irish whisky and large baskets of flowers. He'd never been happier. Whenever he was thrown out of an office he'd come back to Susie with his long face aglow.

One night he came into his suite after a trip to Toledo, picked Susie up and danced her around the room. "I've met the champion!" he shouted joyously. "Wait 'till you hear what happened to H. Bertrand Buell!"

Bert Buell was executive secretary of the International Roadmasters, an annual convention of three thousand wild-eyed, spendthrift highway engineers. Before the war, nothing had been too good for Bert; the staff had wooed him as if he were a shy young maid—with pretty compliments and rare tropical fruits and five-pound boxes of candy for his wife. But in the heyday he'd been told to take his convention to Muskegon; and when he had stopped over-night with his wife, a new house detective had waked him up and thrown him out, along with Mrs. Buell. They had spent the night on a bench in the Union Station running a dangerous blood pressure.

"But why doesn't he sue us?" Susie asked.

"Because," said Charlie triumphantly, "the poor egomaniac forgot to register his wife, a hot-eyed blonde. Isn't that a honey of a situation? There's nothing in the complaint file to touch it. He's so sore he wouldn't even write us a letter!"

"But, Charlie," she said, in her pretty, bewilderer way, "you pleasured yourself too much about these things that makes you so happy?"

He tried to explain it to her. In Toledo there had been a bustle and shouting in H. Bertrand Buell's private office, then a door opened and a heavy brass ash tray had missed Charlie's head by inches.

"But what's funny about that? He looked down into her lovely, puzzled face, and kissed her.

"You just keep house, sweetheart," he said. "Let me run the business."

It was along about then that he dreamed up the Cock 'n' Feather, a secret bar back of his office down the bowels of the house. You pressed a button, a panel slid open and there it was, a replica of an English taproom, stocked with every liquor a man could handle. Into this little nest he would entice recalcitrant prospects and ply them with hospitality until they thawed out, usually managing to get them on the dotted line just before their fingers became too limp to hold a pen.

"I don't see how you're going to get Bert Buell into the hotel, let alone down here," Mr. Ashcraft said, the day the carpenter shop sent in the cost sheets for Charlie's hideaway. "A rather expensive shot in the dark, it seems to me."

"Bert is merely the pièce de résistance," said Charlie, cheerfully. "Come in here a minute."

He pressed the button, the panel slid open, and there was the President of the National Association of Canners of Artichoke Hearts, asleep on a red-leather wall bench.

"I just booked him for December," Charlie said, with satisfaction. "Next to the National Association of Glove and Parka (Continued on page 60)"