

**BOB
POTTER**

**G
R
E
E
K**



The head of a partisan is paraded through a village by a Greek mounted policeman in British battledress (Daily Mirror 10. 11. 47)

TRAGEDY

[THE FAILURE OF THE LEFT]

SOLIDARITY PAMPHLET No. 29

1/-

introduction

For anyone interested in politics (i.e. in understanding the world around them) one fact stands out about the coup which brought the Greek colonels to power. It is the absence of any organized popular resistance to the establishment of the new regime.

We don't doubt for a minute that the mass of the Greek people are hostile to the dictatorship, that heroic individual acts of opposition have been committed or that those who challenged the regime in this way often paid a heavy price for their courage. We know that several thousand of the regime's opponents are rotting away in concentration camps. The censorship in Greece certainly limits information concerning the extent of disaffection. But individual opposition and organized mass resistance are two very different things. There is something seriously the matter with an opposition that cannot find expression in collective action. When one compares what happened in Athens (in April 1967) with what happened in Barcelona (in July 1936) certain blinding differences emerge.

At dawn on July 17, 1936, General Franco issued a manifesto 'To the Army and to the Nation'. He urged them to join him in establishing what was obviously to be an authoritarian, anti-working class regime in Spain. While the government dithered, the ruling class as a whole - and in particular the army officers - responded enthusiastically to the appeal. But within 48 hours, almost barehanded, without any calls from their traditional organizations, the workers of Barcelona had stormed the barracks and were masters of the town. They had raided sporting goods stores for rifles, construction jobs for sticks of dynamite, fascist homes for concealed weapons. They appealed on class lines to their brothers in the Army and succeeded in getting them either to disarm or shoot their officers. The political weapons they were able to use more than made up for the superior equipment of the fascists. The next day the example of the Barcelona workers was followed in Madrid and, during the following week, in many other towns. 'In a word, without so much as by-your-leave to the Government, the proletariat had begun a war to the death against the fascists.'*

Nothing remotely similar happened in Greece. The working class, as a class, has not taken up the challenge. Looking at the situation 12 months after the coup it is clear that by and large the Colonels have had a fairly smooth ride. A conservative woman newspaper editor

* F. Morrow. 'Revolution and Counter Revolution in Spain', p.19. New Park Publications Edition (1963).

(Mrs Vlachou) and a moronic monarch have probably caused as much damage to the image of the Colonels as the combined endeavours of the entire Greek 'left'.

How could the Colonels get away with it so easily? Why has the whole Greek 'left' collapsed like a pack of cards? Why no outbreak of popular indignation, no significant strikes or demonstrations against the regime? Why did the masses not turn to the Communist Party? Or if they did, how could the arrest of the Party's leaders decapitate and paralyse a whole movement? At a deeper level still, why have the Greek masses not thrown up alternative organs of struggle? Why are they remaining politically passive? What does their silence imply, both in terms of the Greek revolutionary tradition and in terms of the evolution of modern capitalism?

These are important questions, which politically conscious people should be beginning to ask themselves. We will not even attempt to answer them here. Our aim is a more limited one. In this particular pamphlet we only seek to deal with one subject: the specific role of the KKE (Communist Party of Greece) in the general defeat of the Greek left. To understand this role we will have to examine the development and past history of the Party in some detail. We will only touch on the more general questions insofar as they help one understand the background against which the events we describe took place.

The revolutionary tradition in Greece has been very different from the one which prevailed in Spain. There has never been a radical, libertarian, 'do-it-yourself' tradition in Greek politics, with an emphasis on mass consciousness, mass participation, self-activity and working class domination over the productive process. On the contrary. The only revolutionary tradition in Greece was the one which from the onset had proclaimed the need to build a disciplined, tightly knit 'vanguard Party', organized on 'democratic-centralist' lines and whose objective was the capture of state power. In a sense the failure of the Greek left is yet another failure of that particular tradition.

Historically speaking, the Communist movement in Greece stopped voicing, long ago, the real demands of the Greek workers and peasants. Within a few years of its foundation it began to base its politics on the requirements, real or imagined, of the Russian bureaucracy (as expressed in the foreign policy requirements of the Russian State). This evolution is documented here in considerable detail.

In parallel with this development the Party gradually ceased to be revolutionary. Despite this it continued to enjoy widespread support. But this support was less and less on the basis of revolutionary commitment. The KKE is today paying the price for years of 'peaceful coexistence' propaganda. One cannot switch overnight from such a line to a line urging revolutionary struggle. To hope for such a change is like hoping that Labour Party GMC's might suddenly become hotbeds of illegal, revolutionary activity, following a right-wing coup in this

country. Here the difference with Spain is partly explained by the calendar. The Spanish events took place 30 years earlier than those in Greece. During these 3 decades erstwhile revolutionary movements have gradually come to terms with the capitalist environment around them. There is no better illustration of this than the sad history of the Spanish CNT itself!

Not only were the objectives of Greek Stalinism at variance with those of the Greek workers and peasants but its organizational methods and the political climate it engendered were to prove profoundly harmful to the task of building a real relationship with the Greek working class. For over 4 decades one of the main activities of the KKE was to purge itself repeatedly. With every twist and turn of the Party line, layer after layer of 'trained leaders' would be expelled as 'agents of the class enemy'. The KKE soon became one of the most discredited of all Stalinist organizations, utterly subservient to the Russian bureaucracy and thoroughly corrupted by its unprincipled manoeuvres. Its political gangsterism made it the object of deep suspicion among the more advanced sections of the Greek working class. It was centralized (in the defence of ideological and organizational discipline) to a ridiculous degree. Such a movement proved eminently vulnerable when the authorities decided to persecute its leading cadre. A movement based on a politically conscious, militant and self-reliant rank and file, with strong local roots, (i.e. a movement where initiative and self confidence had been fostered rather than actively opposed) would have proved a much tougher nut to crack.

Other factors have also played a role. Not only had the KKE itself become non-revolutionary but it had played an important role in preventing the growth of genuinely revolutionary organizations. Part of the deafening silence now emanating from Greece is due to the physical annihilation (by the combined forces of Nazism, the Greek Establishment and Greek Stalinism) of thousands of working class militants. As described in this pamphlet the Greek revolutionary movement was decimated during the years of World War II. Part of this blood is on the hands of the KKE.

The collapse of Greek Stalinism is now total and irreversible. It is a collapse as complete as that which, in Germany, followed Hitler's accession to power in the thirties. Revolutionaries at that time sought to understand what had happened, to draw the lessons however painful, the better to prepare themselves for what lay ahead. Today we must do the same. A total demystification is needed. Stalinism, in all its variants, has now proved to be a false solution. It cannot lead to the self-emancipation of the working class. A completely new type of political thinking and completely new patterns of organization are required. The Greek movement cannot go forward until it has assimilated this basic fact. In the words of Spinoza the task today is 'neither to laugh nor to weep but to understand

In this light the Greek tragedy takes on a new dimension. It is not only the failure of an established movement effectively to challenge advancing reaction. It is also the failure - at least up to the present - of the Greek working class to create autonomous organs (organs which it would itself control and dominate) to express its immediate interests and its long-term aspirations. This pamphlet will have served its purpose if it contributes, even marginally and indirectly, to an awareness that this is both necessary and urgent.

THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM. by Paul Cardan. What is a socialist programme? The real contradiction in capitalist production. Socialist values. A restatement of socialist objectives. The case for workers' management of production. 11d.

TRUTH ABOUT VAUXHALL. by Ken Weller (AEU). An analysis of some new managerial techniques. Higher pay - but at what cost? Recently reprinted with a new introduction. 11d.

KRONSTADT 1921. by Victor Serge. An erstwhile supporter of the Bolsheviks re-examines the facts and draws disturbing conclusions. 9d.

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT VERSUS THE DOCKERS, 1945-1951. Governmental strike-breaking under a Labour Government (how it was done last time) with an introduction on the Devlin Report. 9d.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL VERSUS THE HOMELESS. The story of King Hill Hostel, West Malling. How a local authority was successfully challenged. Do-it-yourself politics in practice. (Jointly with Socialist Action). Includes an up-to-date postscript on how victory was achieved. 2/-

MOUNT ISA (The Great Queensland Strike). by Bretta Carthey and Bob Potter. The greatest labour dispute in postwar Australian history. 2000 miners against the employers, the State authorities and the bureaucrats of the Australian Workers Union. 1/5d.

MODERN CAPITALISM AND REVOLUTION. by Paul Cardan. A fundamental critique of the traditional left. The problems of our society (bureaucratization, political apathy, alienation in production, consumption and leisure). What are revolutionary politics today? 4/3d.

THE CRISIS OF MODERN SOCIETY. by Paul Cardan. The interlocking crises in work, politics, values, education, the family and relations between the sexes. 9d.

FROM BOLSHEVISM TO THE BUREAUCRACY. by Paul Cardan. Bolshevik theory and practice in relation to the management of production. An introduction to Alexandra Kollontai's 'The Workers Opposition'. 9d.

THE RAPE OF VIETNAM. by Bob Potter. The background to the present struggle. The revolutionary socialist case. 1/3d.

WHAT HAPPENED AT FORDS. by Ernie Stanton (NUVB) and Ken Weller (AEU). The story of the 1962 strike by one of the victimized stewards. How management and unions together destroyed job organization. 1/5d.

THE KRONSTADT COMMUNE. by Ida Mett. The full story, at last, of the 1921 events. The first proletarian uprising against the bureaucracy. Contains hitherto unavailable documents and a full bibliography. pp.68. 3 shillings.

All these, post free, from H. Russell, 53A Westmoreland Rd, Bromley, Kent.

GREEK TRAGEDY

Greece today consists of the southern part of the Balkan peninsular, a narrow strip of land stretching along the northern reaches of the Aegean Sea as far as Turkey, and about 250 islands scattered around her coast, the largest of which is Crete. More than half of the mainland is covered with craggy mountains and barren rocky patches. There are no fewer than 25 mountain ranges. The chief mountainous backbone runs from north to south, down the centre of the country. 15% of the mainland is forest. Another 15% is arable land.

UNDER THE OTTOMAN

During the past 500 years the frontiers of Greece have never remained constant for more than a generation. The territory now known as Greece was occupied by the Turks in the 15th century who brought with them their own particular brand of feudalism. Turkish "knights" were given land for services rendered to the Sultan (receiving revenues from those who worked in agriculture). In return the knights provided mercenaries for the Sultan's armies.

When the Ottoman Empire was on the decline, due largely to the challenge of Venice, the elite among the captive Greeks infiltrated and took over the Turkish "civil service". Although closely attached to the Sultan, they nevertheless remained Hellene in language and religion and increasingly expanded their control of trade and commerce, in which they eventually came to play a dominant role.

THE AGE OF REVOLUTION

The bourgeois revolutions that swept Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries brought with them the opportunities for the Greek merchants to consolidate as a class, to reap enormous profits, to

found the Greek carrying trade as an industry*, and to establish commercial connections with Odessa, Moscow, Trieste, Venice, and London. In all these towns Hellenic communities took root.

In the clash between Russia and Turkey for control of the Dardanelles, the Greek merchants looked on Russia as a potential ally in their struggle for freedom - indeed in 1770 Catherine the Great took advantage of the aspirations of the Greek people to independence to send a Russian fleet to the coast of Laconia. The whole Peloponnese responded, rising in revolt against their Turkish masters, only to be ruthlessly suppressed by puppet Albanian troops, who established a reign of terror unsurpassed in Greek history.

The vast majority of the old freedom ballads date from this period. They describe the struggles of the many patriots who took to the mountains. These ballads kept alive the tradition of struggle against oppression, and were to become popular again during the War of Independence, 50 years later.

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Following the defeat of Bonaparte at Waterloo in 1815, Britain took advantage of the redivision of Europe to establish a protectorate in the Ionian Islands. The British ruling class developed an increasing sympathy for the Greek cause, and the "Grand Tour" became an integral part of every rich young man's education. When, in 1821, Greeks rose en masse against the Turk, hordes of volunteers arrived from France and Britain to fight for the cause of freedom in Greece - like the English Lord Byron, who significantly felt no compulsion to fight social injustice in his native land!

The outcome of the War was determined by the formation of the Triple Alliance (Russia, England, and France) whose combined naval forces destroyed the Turkish fleet in 1827. A year later the Peace of Adrianople recognised Greek independence, although the new state was so delineated that it included neither Thessaly nor Macedonia. Indeed, the majority of Greeks were outside "Greece"! The only thing that remained to be decided was who should be king. After a little scratching about, the Allies decided on seventeen year old Prince Otho of Bavaria, who duly arrived with his German entourage, refused a constitution and promptly muzzled the press.

* To this day the Greek merchant marine is one of the largest in the world, accounting for some 10% of the world's registered tonnage. (Lloyds Register, April 1966).

SORTING OUT THE SPOILS

Otho's was a reign of frequent tensions. His unpopularity increased when he refused to support the Cretan rebellion (against the Turks) in 1841. His bungling attempt to occupy Thessaly and Epirus during the Crimean War resulted in an Anglo-French occupation of the Piræus (1854-57), national bankruptcy, and civil chaos culminating, in 1862, in a general uprising against the monarchy.

The British Government, always helpful in such matters, undertook the responsibility of finding a new and better king! They decided on Prince William of Denmark. The Greek National Assembly approved (especially as they were to get the Ionian Islands as part of the deal). In 1864 Prince William became George I of Greece.

Sweeping Russian victories over the Turks in the War of 1877 led to popular risings in Thessaly, Epirus and Crete. British forces intervened to maintain the status quo. The following year the Congress of Berlin, under the Presidency of Otho von Bismarck, set itself the task of settling the affairs of the Balkans once and for all. The people, whose destiny was to be decided, were not, of course, consulted.

The Berlin Congress of 1878 set the stage for the First World War. From the Congress emerged the nation-states of Serbia, Roumania, Montenegro, and Bulgaria. Thessaly was to go to Greece; Thrace, Macedonia, Epirus, and Albania were to remain under Turkish rule. Cyprus was surrendered to Britain.

CONSOLIDATION OF CAPITALISM

The next thirty years were years of consolidation and construction; roads and railways were modernised as foreign capital showed an increasing interest in Greece's natural resources. Parallel with the "allied" interest in Greece, a German-Turkish alliance was forged. The Turkish army was modernized and trained by a host of German staff officers. In 1903 the Kaiser visited Turkey, and the proposed Berlin-Baghdad railway scheme was hatched.

Europe was preparing for war, and the more intelligent sections of the Greek ruling class saw the urgent need to follow the Turkish example and modernize their own military forces.

In 1909 a "military league" of army officers staged a successful coup d'etat, and appointed Venizelos, the leader of a recently victorious Cretan revolt, as virtual dictator. In 1911 a new National Assembly issued a constitution allowing for sweeping reforms, compulsory free primary education, and the following year a general election gave Venizelos over 80% of the seats.

THE BALKAN WARS

Satisfied with the new stability, British and French military missions arrived to train and reorganize a new Greek army - just in time, for only a few months later Serbian and Bulgarian forces moved into action to wrest Macedonia from Turkey. Greece promptly joined in, the Turks were thrashed, and it all ended with the big powers getting together again to re-allocate the spoils. By the Treaty of London, Crete and much of Macedonia were ceded to Greece, and Albania was created an independent state. (It was in Italy's interest to keep Serbia from the Adriatic.)

Now the Greek and Serbian rulers entered into a secret alliance against Bulgaria. Another brief war ended in the Treaty of Bucharest, which handed Serbia a slab of Macedonia, and Roumania a slab of Bulgaria. The size of Greek territory almost doubled!

This led to the Bulgarian alliance with Turkey and the Central Powers who were opposed to British and French interests in the area and to their continued and determined domination of the eastern Mediterranean.

THE WORLD WAR

August 1914 found the Greek rulers divided. The bourgeoisie, personified by Venizelos, held a position of "benevolent neutrality" towards Serbia. But King Constantine (George I had been assassinated the previous year) was the Kaiser's brother-in-law. Together with the army chiefs, he was very pro-German.

An attempt was made to secure Greek involvement in the War, on the side of the "Allies", by the offer of Asian territories and Cyprus. This having failed, five British and eight French divisions landed at Salonika using, as justification, a treaty signed in 1864, the terms of which made Greek concurrence unnecessary. Meanwhile, frequent clashes between the King and Venizelos led to the latter being removed and replaced by a pro-German government. Simultaneously Serbia was invaded by the Central Powers.

With Allied help and encouragement Venizelos toured the Greek islands and set up a rival government in Salonika. The Allies found themselves in a dilemma. Fearing the collapse of "law and order" they were determined to prevent the overthrow of the Monarchy. This policy led, for a while, to rather unsuccessful attempts to curtail Venizelos' influence, while nevertheless supporting him against Athens.

In June, 1917, "popular" pressure, helped along by Allied intrigue, led to the abdication of the unpopular Constantine in favour of his son Alexander, who agreed to re-install Venizelos as Premier. Side by side with the Allied forces, for the first time, the Greek army went into action in Macedonia. A fortnight later the enemy had surrendered. It was the first outright military defeat inflicted on the Central Powers. Turkey was now isolated; an armistice was on the horizon.

The share-out gave Greece the mandate of Thrace and a large slice of north-west Asia Minor. The latter was to prove more trouble than worth, requiring considerable forces of occupation at a time when many Greek troops were still in action and suffering very heavy casualties in the anti-Soviet war in Russia. These circumstances led to massive discontent on the home front and to a crushing electoral defeat for Venizelos and his Liberal Party in 1920.

The Asian possessions were destined to be short lived. Mustapha Kamel had begun turning Turkey into a modern bourgeois state. In March, 1921, he began military operations which within six months were to sweep the Greeks from Asia.

THE VANGUARD ARRIVES

It was during the Asian Campaign that the young Greek Communist Party (KKE) first made its mark. The Party had been founded in November, 1918,* with great idealism. Manifestos were issued calling for the "World Soviet Republic", the abolition of secret treaties, and so on. In 1920 the KKE joined the Comintern.

During the Asian War they formed the "Central Council of Communist Soldiers of the Front Line" and helped to spread the doctrine of "revolutionary defeatism" by systematically getting their members placed in field communication posts. In November, 1921, the State Police moved into action for the first time against the Central Committee of the Party and the editors of the Party organ Rizospastis for spreading defeatist propaganda.

* It was at first called the "Socialist Labour Party".

However, Party tactics were not simply dictated by "Marxist-Leninist thought". The Soviet Government was allied to Kemal under the terms of the Turko-Soviet Treaty of 1921. Defence of the Soviet Union and its allies was already replacing the defence of the world proletarian revolution - or being made to appear synonymous with it.

The defeat of the Greek forces in Asia ushered in a period of general instability. In 1924 a Republic was proclaimed, and the following year, claiming the urgency of national defence, General Pangalos assumed dictatorial powers. Governments came and governments fell throughout the next five years - alliances were desperately signed with Yugoslavia, the USA, the USSR, and even Turkey. The ruling class, struggling for existence at home, dared not risk international antagonisms.

In January, 1926, the KKE was outlawed for the first time. The previous two or three years had been devoted to the "bolshevising" process; strict disciplinary rules had clearly defined the role each member was to play in his cell.

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

The ban was a direct result of the campaign launched by the KKE for Macedonian and Thracian independence. In the years that followed, no other single issue was destined to dominate KKE policy discussions* to a greater extent.

* In 1945 Zachariades (the leader of KKE) was to assert: "Since 1931, when I became its leader, the KKE has rejected the slogan of Macedonian and Thracian independence, and now once again declares that Macedonia is and shall remain Greek". (Laiki Phoni, 25 October, 1945)

This statement was hardly in agreement with the Plenum resolution approved by the KKE (Neos Rizospastis, 5 March, 1932) a decade earlier. This had stated:

"Greece is an imperialist state which has conquered by force whole areas inhabited by other nationalities (Macedonia and Thrace). In the name of the basic principles of Bolshevism, the KKE proclaims for Macedonia and Thrace the slogan of self-determination, including separation from the Greek state, and actively supports the revolutionary struggle of the population of these areas for their national liberation.

The support given by the Communist International to the demand for separate Macedonian and Thracian states must be seen against the social composition of the Balkans at that time. In the middle twenties Communist agitation couldn't expect significant returns if directed exclusively at the limited proletariats developing in often semi-feudal surroundings. The peasantry and the ethnic minorities were better potential targets.

The policy was completely opportunist, and anarchistic. There have been numerous other examples in even more recent times where the Communist parties have mounted massive campaigns for "national independence".

From the beginning of the century when the world had been fully divided among the various imperialisms, the call for national autonomy for the smaller weaker powers has had little real meaning. In the era of imperialism small states cannot be economically independent. Their existence depends upon their belonging to one power block or another.

Since the controversies between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg on the question of Poland, Communist theoreticians have seldom examined this particular field in any detail. Perhaps it is because the obvious conclusions wouldn't suit the pseudo-Marxist requirements of their official ideology. The "national question" has always been used in an opportunist manner; the "significance" of ethnic minorities being played up or played down as the requirements of the international power struggle demanded.

The first trial of Party members, accused of treason, began on 1st August, 1925. The Party press successfully turned the whole proceedings into a "persecution" of Macedonian "patriots" (although of the twelve defendants only two were Macedonian . . . one of these had fought for union with Greece in 1912!)

(footnote continued)

In April, 1935, the Central Committee formally dropped the slogan for an independent Macedonia and adopted instead the call for "complete equality for the minorities". The Party had suddenly discovered that "in the portion of Macedonia under Greek control, Greek refugees have been settled, and the majority of the population today is Greek. The change in the ethnic composition of Greek Macedonia, in close connection with the anti-Fascist and anti-war struggle, requires the replacement of the old slogan". (Dheka Khronia Agones: 1935-1945, published by KKE, 1946, p. 66.)

The KKE was again to return to the "independence" slogans, in desperation, in 1949.

Although the trial was eventually postponed indefinitely, it had far-reaching consequences. While most of the leading Party officials were in custody, the vacuum was filled by the arrival of the "KOUTVIES", the first graduates of the Communist University of the Eastern Peoples - Russian-speaking comrades loyal to Stalin's particular concept of proletarian revolution.

THE ENTRENCHMENT OF STALINISM

At the Third Congress of the KKE held in Athens in March, 1927, the future policy of the party was debated for the last time. Three groupings emerged:

- (a) that of KHAITAS, which identified itself with the Comintern. Eight years later Khaitas was to be executed in Russia as a Trotskyist.
- (b) that of POLIOPOULOS, who believed that the Party should first seriously attempt to develop a cadre force. Poliopoulos led the fight against the mass admission of "raw" proletarians into the Party (a Greek analogy to Stalin's "Lenin enrolment"). He was expelled as a Trotskyist in September, 1927.
- (c) a centre group led by MAXIMOS. This group was to be expelled en bloc as Trotskyists at the Fourth Party Congress, in 1928.

Thus, quite literally, were Comintern demands fulfilled - namely "to finish the job by eliminating, once and for all, the trends which exist or existed within the Party"!

While the various factions were fighting for control of the Party machine, royalists and republicans battled for state power. In 1928 Venizelos returned to the premiership and promptly set to work crushing the labour unions, throttling the free press, arresting 180,000 farmers for not paying taxes, and deporting 30,000 workers accused of being Communists to concentration camps on the islands. The man who had formerly been known as the "Tiger of Crete" now represented the Greek ruling class at its most reactionary.

In October, 1931, there was a national uprising in Cyprus against British rule. The Cypriots demanded union with Greece. The British despatched two cruisers and seven RAF troop carriers from Egypt to crush the rising. The Cypriots looked to Greece, and to the man who had led the Cretan uprising for arms and sympathy. As the British deported the Cypriot leaders, and imposed a £20,000 collective fine on Nicosia, Venizelos declared there was "no Cypriot question between Britain and Greece".

The world economic crisis of the early 1930s hit Greece hard. Her internal problems were reflected in a continual shuttlecock of governments.* The anti-working class rule of Venizelos was soon to be replaced by an even more right-wing government, closer politically to the various forms of fascism dominating the surrounding European states.

THE THIRD PERIOD

In line with Stalin's doctrine for the "Third Period"** the Comintern launched its ill-fated campaigns in the summer of 1929. These were to culminate everywhere in mass demonstrations, in August, 1930.

The campaign in Greece was a gigantic flop. The Greek workers were singularly unimpressed by the call to defend "our Soviet Fatherland", and a general strike planned for August materialized with but 12,000 participants.

In February, 1930, a "Congress" of pro-communist labour leaders set up an independent "Confederation of Greek Workers", and affiliated with the Red International of Labour Unions, (the Profintern). The split in the Trade Union movement, always rather ineffective, was to last until 1936 when, with the switch to the "Popular Front", the Confederation dissolved itself.

In the early thirties the KKE was an insignificant force, at times claiming a total membership of only 1,500. In Piraeus, the country's largest industrial centre, there were but 70 members! Regardless of the grim reality, the Comintern ordered full-scale preparations for the "general political strike", with May Day, 1930, to be the first demonstration in the campaign. When the day came, only 1,300 people took part.

* For instance, Venizelos was Prime Minister of Greece on no less than eight separate occasions.

** The 'Third Period' was proclaimed by a Plenum of the Communist International in 1929. It was based on the idea that with the introduction of the first 5-year plan, Russia would march towards unprecedented prosperity, while in the rest of the world there would be an end to the period of 'temporary stabilisation of capitalism'. It was held that capitalism was on the verge of imminent collapse. An international campaign against an alleged 'threat of war against the Soviet Union' was launched, and various Communist Parties were asked to draw up plans for immediate insurrection. This period (never officially proclaimed closed) was the basis of the theory of 'social fascism', which held that social-democratic organizations were now the 'main obstacles' on the path to revolution and had to be physically destroyed

A year later it was even worse. A "mass" demonstration called in Athens in August, 1931, consisted of 150 demonstrators! So much for Stalin's theory of the "mass turn to the left"! But the Politbureau couldn't be wrong. Scapegoats had to be found within the KKE leadership.

Late in 1931, Zachariades, graduate of the KUTV, was installed as Party leader, responsible direct to Moscow.* The "decision" of the Politbureau was briefly announced on 10th November. There was to be a "radical change" in the Party leadership and "unquestioning support" was called for. Within a month declarations came from all district Party organizations pledging "unswerving" and "unqualified" allegiance to a "new leadership" (mostly anonymous)! Almost without exception, each resolution condemned the "old", "factionalist", leadership.

It is an interesting historical fact that it was in the period of the "radical change" that the retiring cadres, for the first time, sent slavish letters confessing their "errors" and vigorously demanding their own removal.

POPULAR FRONT AND FASCISM

Zachariades set to work tightening up the centralized Party organization. In April, 1933, a system of "instructors" was introduced. The following year a new "line" was promulgated. Greece was declared a country of "medium capitalist development". The Party's role was therefore to unite wide masses of people around demands of a bourgeois-democratic character. In 1934, following Hitler's consolidation in power in Germany, the Party's activities centered around the creation of a popular anti-Fascist front. In January of that year, the 6th Plenum had bluntly disavowed proletarian revolution, and called for a bourgeois-democratic republic in Greece.

Meanwhile the Greek bourgeoisie was also having problems. In October, 1935, the Cabinet declared Greece a Monarchy. The Army stage-managed a plebiscite a month later, and so "proved" that 97% of the population favoured recalling King George from the pleasures of London society life.

The year 1936 was to be the harbinger of Fascism. In January a General Election gave the Liberals and their allies 142 seats. The Populists and their allies won 143 seats. The Communists (or "Popular Front") deputies were left holding the balance of Parliamentary power - with a mere 15 seats.

* The 4th Plenum of the KKE made him Secretary-General on a "life" basis. He was to remain in power until March 1956 . . . when he was removed as a "Stalinist".

On the industrial front the tensions mounted. In the first half of 1936 there were 344 major strikes involving some 195,000 workers. Things came to a head in May, when 6,000 tobacco workers, on strike for higher pay, marched through Salonika. They were attacked and dispersed by the police. The same afternoon groups of textile workers joined in the strike. A factory was stoned. By midnight several other unions had come out on a 24-hour protest strike.

The Government declared a State of Emergency, but this only triggered off further demonstrations. The following day saw 25,000 on strike in Salonika. There were further clashes. At one point the police opened fire, killing twelve people and seriously wounding another 32. The funeral of those killed was held the following day, and attended by 150,000 people.

Control of the worker's activities was regrettably firmly in the hands of the trade union leaders. The government planned legislation for compulsory arbitration and for authority to seize union funds. August 5th was fixed as the date for a general strike against those proposals. It was a rather passive and delayed reply to an increasingly aggressive ruling class.

THE METAXAS DICTATORSHIP

In April, 1936, General Metaxas, leader of a small political grouping, became Premier, and immediately demanded legislation to rule by decree. He was determined to have a show-down with the trade unions. On 4th August, the day before the planned General Strike, Metaxas declared martial law, suspended much of the constitution and dissolved the Chamber. Not satisfied with the Premiership, he took over Foreign Affairs, War, Marine and Air, so establishing a dictatorship that was to last until his death.

The policies of the Metaxas regime were to a large extent modelled on those of the nearby Fascist states. There was a complete suppression of any opposition, political or industrial (all industrial disputes were dealt with by compulsory arbitration). A youth organisation openly modelled on the "Hitler Jugend" ensured that the coming generation held the right ideas: there was even a "Strength Through Joy" movement. Censorship was carried to extreme limits by a severe editing of the classical writings of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Aristophanes, etc. The Chair of Constitutional Law at Athens University was abolished.

On the other, and again in emulation of Mussolini and Hitler, there were sweeping reforms aimed at turning Greece into an up-to-date capitalist state. More than a third of peasants' debts were remitted. This was a blow at the old landlords, and an encouragement for peasants -

now no longer tied to the land by debt - to move into the factories. Industry was given state encouragement. An eight-hour day was introduced with a guaranteed minimum wage; systems of health insurance, holidays with pay, and housing programmes were started up.

The disintegration of the KKE under the Metaxas regime proceeded very rapidly. The next few years were to demonstrate the Party's absolute failure to "grow roots" in Greece, to relate its activities to the fundamental aspirations of the workers and peasants. It no longer even spoke of workers' power - and had long ago abandoned the vision of a totally different kind of society. The "reforms" instituted by the Metaxas regime were to cut the ground from under its feet.

The decline of the KKE was helped along by extremely capable tactics employed by MANIADAKIS*, Minister of Public Security, who developed a system of "declarations of repentance". Any Communist, regardless of his position in the Party, could secure his liberty provided he signed a detailed statement of his "history" in the organization, and a list of all his contacts in the various front and trade union organizations**. 45,000 such declarations were signed (a number far exceeding party membership!) leaving the Party demoralized and mistrusting***.

This policy of Maniadakis proved more effective than the usual Fascist beatings and bullyings. He carefully gave those arrested a chance to "repent", and only those who refused to do so were imprisoned or exiled to the Aegean Islands. Not only did he succeed in breaking up the internal structure of the KKE, but he successfully created his own rival Communist Party, with its own Central Committee, and its own paper Rizospastis****. To create an impression of authenticity this paper was subjected to the same persecution as other Communist papers.

* Repeatedly an MP, during the 1950s.

** The present regime has revived this technique.

*** During the period of the Second World War "declarationists" were frequently allowed to hold Party positions (e.g. "Aris"). This policy was to be repudiated in June 1945 when the 12th Plenum called for a full investigation of these particular comrades.

**** The twists and turns of Russian policy sometimes led to an interesting state of affairs, where the fake Party fought for the Moscow line, in opposition to the genuine KKE! (For instance, at the time of the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact of August, 1939). "Marxists" can learn an important lesson from these events. Obviously a truly democratic body where decisions emanated from below could never be impersonated in this way. But a bureaucratic organisation (and there are few better examples than the CP) leaves itself wide open for infiltration and even take-over - perhaps the extreme example of the so-called "revolutionary" organisation reflecting the society it allegedly opposes!

The only uprising against the Metaxas dictatorship during this period was organized by Cretan republicans in July 1938. It was a flop. Counting on support from the mainland, the rebels collapsed when none was forthcoming. Government planes dropped leaflets over the island calling on the people to remain calm, and requesting the rebels to "go home". This they did, and the same afternoon the "uprising" was over. No lives were lost!

Metaxas' policies were paying off. His modernization, coupled with a substantial loan from Nazi Germany, brought rapid developments on the industrial and agricultural fronts*. Unemployment fell dramatically. This was accompanied by an all-round rise in the standard of living.

These were years of retreat for the "left". The KKE advocated a "Popular Front" against fascism, only to find itself in a hopeless situation, first when Mussolini invaded Albania in April, 1939, and even more so four months later with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

The Party line at the time came from the Executive Committee of the Communist International in the following words:

"Your country is threatened by the Fascist Axis and particularly by Italian Fascism, which is very active in the Balkans. The first duty of the KKE is to defend the independence of the country. Since the Metaxas Government is fighting against the same danger, there is no reason for you to pursue its overthrow".

To many old Communists, unable to realize the extent to which the CI merely acted as an instrument of Russian foreign policy, this attitude was incomprehensible. But the leadership, as represented by Zachariades and Siantos, found no such difficulty. They even accepted the Nazi-Soviet Pact, which implied collaboration with both Mussolini and Metaxas, quite a feat for "Communists".

With the Italian attack on Albania the KKE officially suspended all activity directed against Metaxas. This disreputable policy was supported and publicized by a broad front of "left" Greek exiles living in Paris.

For their part, the oligarchy ruling Greece hoped to be able to walk the tight-rope between Axis and Allied Powers. On the one hand, in April 1940, the Italian Empire (i.e. Italian imperialist conquests) were "recognized", on the other hand a new extensive trade agreement was signed with Britain.

* In comparison to the major powers industry was still, on the whole, small and technically backward. 40% of the population was still illiterate. 55% were still engaged in agriculture, although only 25% of the land could be tilled.

Tensions mounted. In October, 1940, anti-fascist demonstrators appeared in the streets of several cities. Expecting an Axis invasion, and ever mindful of her interests in the area, the British Government ordered her navy into Greek waters. On the 28th October Mussolini's troops invaded Greece from Albania.

The Party's call came in the form of an open letter by Zachariades:

"The people of Greece are today conducting a war of national liberation against Mussolini's fascism . . . every agent of Fascism must be exterminated without mercy* . . . In this war, directed by the Metaxas Government (my emphasis, B.P.) we shall all give every ounce of our strength without reserve"**.

THE AXIS INVASION

As the Italians launched their invasion Metaxas ordered the arrest of all known "communists". Republican officers who had been removed from the army clamoured to rejoin and "fight for Greece". All offers emanating from officers senior to the rank of Captain were declined. It is one of history's ironies that those who lick the arse of the class enemy get shat on for their efforts.

By early 1941 the Italian attack had been smashed. Italian casualties numbered more than 100,000 men. The counter-attacking Greeks had occupied about one-third of Albania. British land forces began arriving in March, 1941, and the following month a reluctant Führer was forced to commit German troops to save the situation. Three weeks later, Greece surrendered. Nazi troops entered Athens, amid general silent hatred (apart from the welcome offered by a few Nazi supporters and by the more Stalinist Party members who really believed Hitler to be Stalin's best friend.)

* As in every other country the Communist Party directed its major efforts against the Trotskyists. The "Archeo-Marxists"- a specifically Greek tendency to which we shall refer later - were also the target of the Party's policies of "extermination".

** Kathimerini (2 November, 1940). Metaxas had this appeal published in all Greek papers while the Stalinist press the whole world over claimed it was a forgery and that the Communist Party of Greece was not supporting the imperialist war!

The occupation armies found a political vacuum. Metaxas had died in January 1941, and his regime was falling to pieces. As a political force the KKE was practically non-existent.

The German forces occupied only strategic parts of Greece: Athens, Piraeus, Salonika and some islands. The rest of the country fell to the Italians and Bulgarians. That the rank-and-file soldiers in the armies of occupation were frequently sympathetic to the people they were helping to oppress was evident on many occasions, the most notable of which was the execution by the Italians, in June 1943, of Pouliopoulos.

Pouliopoulos had been a founder member of the Greek "left opposition" in 1927. During the occupation he sought to build revolutionary anti-fascist cells - in the armies of occupation themselves. He was eventually denounced and condemned to death. He harangued his execution squad so successfully that they refused to fire, and the execution had to be carried out by officers*.

During the occupation hundreds of communists were arrested, and many of them deported to Germany. Zachariades, for example, spent the war years in Dachau, and Siantos was appointed acting-secretary-general in his place.

THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

As was the case in other occupied countries (Yugoslavia, Poland, etc.) the resistance movement was split roughly into two. The largest partisan force, set up in April 1942, was ELAS (National Popular Army of Liberation). Open communists were in a minority. The partisan army was directed by EAM (National Liberation Front), which had been set up in September 1941. In ideology it was the natural successor of the "Popular Front" of pre-war days, inviting "all good anti-fascist men" to join its ranks. It was in fact controlled by the KKE, and by the logic for which Stalinists are famous, "anyone not joining EAM would be regarded as a traitor to Greece"**.

* See "Quatrieme Internationale" (November 1958 issue).

** See "Greek Entanglement", E.C.W. Myers, page 152, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955.

The system of Command in all ELAS units, at every level, was the three-man-committee, consisting of a military officer, an administration officer, and a political commissar. Should there be disagreement, the latter could override his colleagues.

By September, 1943, ELAS forces were firmly established in three main areas, Roumeli, Thessaly, and Macedonia. There were five fighting divisions in the field, a division numbering anything between 2,000 and 8,000 men. Additional "bodies" were set up; EPON, a youth organization, and ELAN, a naval force.

The "opposition" partisan force, formed in north-west Greece in late 1941, was EDES (Greek Republican Liberation League). It was led by a Colonel Zervas, who had at one time been offered command of ELAS but had declined because of the three-man-committee system which ensured that the KKE invariably had the final say in all decisions. As the guerilla war against the Axis developed, EDES increasingly became the partisan force favoured by the Allies, for it proclaimed loyalty to the "Greek King and Government"*..

Resistance against the occupation and its stooge government developed vigorously during the Spring of 1942. In March some 3,000 students defied a ban and celebrated Independence Day. In April civil servants struck for better pay and conditions. June saw a series of sabotage incidents, trains were derailed, buildings dynamited. In August the Nazis attempted a mass deportation of workers to Germany, but a general strike forced the suspension of the decree. In September the H.Q. of the Greek Fascist Party (EEE) was blown up.

CLEARING THE PITCH

Increasingly guerilla activity was NOT directed at the Axis forces. Prior to the battle of El Alamein a small British force had been parachuted into Greece to organize the destruction of vital railway viaducts. The operation had been successful due to the cooperation of both ELAS and EDES forces. But prior to the Sicily landing a similar Allied venture was refused help from ELAS, and EDES forces dared not do otherwise, since they would need to encroach on ELAS territory.

The KKE was moulding and preserving its army for the days that would follow the Axis withdrawal!

* See Greek Entanglement, E.C.W. Myers, pp. 128-129.

The first all-out attacks on the EDES forces were launched in the Thessaly Mountains in October, 1943. (EDES now had 3,500 men in Epirus and Thessaly, and another 5,000 held in reserve.) The ELAS offensive lasted for a week, but in spite of their superiority in men and equipment EDES everywhere remained firmly entrenched. The ELAS command had acted on the false assumption that the Germans were indifferent to the inter-partisan squabbling. On the contrary, just at this point of time the Nazis mounted a three-month offensive which inflicted enormous casualties on both groupings, but especially on ELAS.

The winter of 1943-1944 saw the occupation at its most rapacious. Virtually everything that could be moved was sent to Germany, 50,000 Greeks were transported to Bulgaria as forced labour, while in Greece itself many people died of starvation. The guerilla forces held some 15,000 prisoners of war, and many of these were "lent" to the labour-starved peasant holdings.

ELAS used these months for nursing its wounds, retraining, and "purging itself" of the inefficiencies revealed during the disastrous attack on EDES. At all times ELAS had an overwhelming superiority in men and arms (of never less than 4 to 1)*.

Under newly appointed General Saraphis, ELAS was being institutionalized, in anticipation of the taking of state power. Ranks were defined, promotion regulations codified, saluting and decorations introduced. Prisoners of war were used on a large scale as instructors to help turn the guerilla army into a regular army.

On the other hand activities began at getting "legal" representation in the "Government in exile". On 26th March, 1944, yet another "local alliance" was set up, the PNEA (Political Committee of National Liberation) and was immediately recognized by the Soviet Union**.

* ELAS attacks were directed at all opposition partisan forces. EDES was the largest of these. A smaller grouping, EKKA (a "centre" movement) of some 400 men was annihilated by an ELAS attack on 17th April, 1944.

Aris told E.C. Myers that he had specific orders from the EAM Central Committee that "none other than ELAS bands were to exist in Roumeli". (Greek Entanglement, pp. 172-173.)

** From 1941 to July, 1943, the KKE had had no contact with Moscow. Then, in July 1943, eight Soviet officers suddenly appeared at ELAS GHQ. Their report described ELAS as "just a rabble of armed men, not worth supporting. (The Greek Civil War 1944-49, by Edgar O'Ballance, p. 78.) Needless to say, ELAS received no Soviet aid.

REVOLT IN EGYPT

Meanwhile, a wave of discontent swept the Greek forces stationed in Egypt. A major reason for the dissatisfaction was the refusal of the Government in exile actively to engage the Axis forces. The soldiers and sailors wanted to fight but their commanders were determined to preserve these troops for use in Greece as a repressive force after "liberation".

On the 31st March a group of anti-royalist officers representing a "Committee of National Unity of the Greek Armed Forces" handed their Cabinet a petition demanding a government based on PEEA. Simultaneously, mutinies broke out in several military units based in Egypt, and soldiers' committees, declaring allegiance to PEEA, took over the commands.

The revolt spread to naval units in the port of Alexandria. On each ship there existed a popular committee comprised of sailors and sympathetic officers. (On one ship the officers resisted as a bloc, and were promptly thrown overboard). It is not known whether these committees were elected, or how, but they certainly had the confidence of the crews, and exercised real power.

Although the demonstrators were well organized on the ships, they were nothing like "workers' committees", but rather ad hoc bodies controlled by the Stalinists*. Their real weakness lay in ~~their~~ dependence for provisions on the British Navy, whose authority in the area was beyond challenge.

The Government in exile reacted to these events with a hastily convened Cabinet meeting, which carried out a re-shuffle and appointed Sophocles Venizelos (son of the Venizelos who had dominated the Greek political scene between the wars) Premier, in the hope that he could handle the situation.

In the Greek Navy, the Air Force, and the 1st and 2nd Brigades scheduled to leave for Italy on the 12th April, the soldiers' committees were now in complete control. The prestige of PEEA had been further enhanced by recognition from Tito's Committee of National Liberation.

* The Stalinist leader in Egypt at the time was Basile Nefeloudis. He had been one of the 16 CP deputies when Metaxas came to power, having made his name as a militant bus worker in the 30s, when he led several major battles against the British-owned public transport company in Athens. Interned by the Italian occupation forces, he was rescued by royalist emissaries and brought to Egypt to explain to the soldiers and sailors the need for a policy of "national unity". He wrote an account of the 1944 revolt, which was subsequently withdrawn by the KKE.

The British Command could tolerate this situation no longer, and the pretence that the Greek Cabinet controlled its own forces was dropped. British troops went into action, the Greeks were disarmed, their units fragmented, and by 23rd April there were no Greek armed forces in the Middle East*.

The mutineers were deported into the desert, and placed in POW camps. A number of these soldiers who found the camps intolerable agreed to be enrolled in the Rimini Division, which, led by royalist elements, was to later become a major force for the repression of the Greek people.

Regular pressure for PEEA representation in the Greek Government in Exile could no longer be ignored. Consultations began in the Lebanon, with influential British participation. On the 26th April, George Papandreou, leader of the Social Democratic Party, and recently escaped from occupied Greece, agreed to form a government of National Unity. It received Churchill's immediate support**. After much hard bargaining it was agreed that five seats would go to PEEA. In an attempt to cut away one of the main EAM propaganda points, the British ensured that the newly formed government pledged itself to the holding of a plebiscite on the monarchy as soon as the war ended.***

* A year later Zachariades was to denounce the mutiny as having several "objectively speaking anti-democratic aims" claiming that it had all been instigated by the British in order to break up the Greek forces. (Rizospastis, 3rd October, 1945.)

** The British rulers were now aware of the dangers of a Communist Greece. On the 30th May Lord Halifax, Ambassador in Washington, asked Cordell Hull whether the USA objected to Britain doing a deal with the USSR whereby Roumanian affairs would be dealt with the Russians, and Greek affairs by the British.

Roosevelt personally approved the proposed agreement "on a three-month trial basis" -- an agreement which had no immediate effect on the Greek Communists who were not, of course, informed of it!

*** In September, 1943, B.C. Myers had met the British Prime Minister in between trips to Greece, and pointed out that his (Churchill's) recent speech in Quebec "looking forward to the return of the Greek King" had made Myers' task more difficult with the guerillas. Churchill's parting words to his visitor were "Don't let the Greeks prejudge the issue about their King. I want to see him have a fair deal". (Greek Entanglement, p. 262.)

PREPARATION FOR COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The Papandreou Government was transferred to Naples in September, 1944. Its immediate concern was the considerable ELAS support among the Greek population, and the alleged "anarchy" that might follow the Axis withdrawal.

On the capitulation of Italy the 7,000 strong Italian Pinerio Division (stationed in Greece) contacted the British who delightedly agreed to the division "changing sides". It was hoped it would be a useful reinforcement to the British forces eventually to be dispatched to ensure that the partisans didn't take over their own country.

For their part the ELAS leaders had agreed to accept British control on liberation. But for how long? This was to be the question to which British policy was to force the answer.

Greece was "liberated" because the German troops left. At times the guerilla and the tiny allied forces acting with them had difficulty in keeping contact with the German rearguards. In fact on 1st September 1944 an agreement was reached whereby ELAS forces guaranteed that they would not harrass the retreating Germans on condition that Salonika was surrendered to ELAS*.

As the Germans left, the British came in. By the end of October, 1944, General Scobie had landed 26,500 men and five squadrons of aircraft. Many British officers expressed astonishment that as they advanced north after the retreating Axis troops, they passed ELAS detachments moving south. It was at this point in time that ELAS could have taken power. They held back because of orders from Moscow which stemmed from the agreement Stalin had reached with Churchill as to the future of Greece**.

ELAS forces now totalled 50,000 armed men. The FA (National Cooperative) and the TP (National Guard) were established, while the UPLA (Units for the Protection of Peoples' Struggle) set to work to eliminate

* See Revolution and Defeat - Story of Greek Communist Party, D. George Kousoulas, p. 158.

** The Report of the 1950 KKE Conference claimed:
"On 12th October 1944 we could easily have seized power with the forces of the First Army Corps of ELAS alone (that is the 20,000 ELAS supporters of Athens and Piraeus). We did not seize power because we did not have the correct line" (Ibid., p. 196.)

opposition "fascists". The 10th Plenum of the KKE (in January 1944) had resolved that "the ruthless suppression of all enemy agents and of the puppet government, and the isolation of all those who undermine national unity (were the indispensable pre-requisites for the realization of our Party's political objectives"*.

The KKE now had the opportunity to settle with the "underminers of national unity". Without a doubt there were scores of fascist collaborators whose punishment was justified. But there were also the hundreds whose activities - according to the Stalinists - "objectively" supported fascism, i.e. whose only crime was to disagree with the political line imposed by Stalin. Hundreds of ex-communists, archeo-marxists, and trotskyists were to be liquidated in these "purges".

ARCHEOMARXISTS AND TROTSKYISTS

The physical annihilation of all serious opposition on the "left" was one of the historical hallmarks of Stalinism. It had, of course, been practised in Russia for many years. The first application, on a mass scale, outside of Russia was during the Spanish Civil War. This policy was to be repeated by the Greek Stalinists, in 1944 and 1945, on an increasing scale. It is worth briefly describing some of its victims.

The "archeo-marxist" tendency in Greece went back to 1921, when a small number of intellectuals, worried by the unprincipled empiricism of the official communist movement took the initiative of translating into Greek a number of classical marxist texts in a review called The Archives of Marxism - hence their designation as "archivo-marxists" or "archeo-marxists".

The early "archeo-marxists" were characterised by their apostolic zeal and their asceticism. They didn't smoke or drink and devoted all their time and energy to their immediate task in hand. They were organised on a basis of absolute secrecy, members of a cell in a given town not even knowing those of other cells in the same town.

By 1924 they had begun to influence certain layers of workers, particularly those working in bakeries and certain shoe factories. They grew during the period of the Pangalos dictatorship (1925-26) which had "dissolved" the official Communist Party, and reached the peak of their influence during the years 1929-1933, when Stalinist "third period" tactics had resulted in a serious isolation of the Communist Party from its working class base, in the trade unions. During this period the

* Dheka Khronia Agones, p. 209.

"archeo-marxists" were the dominant influence in many unions, in most of the big towns. They held political meetings attended by 1,500-2,000 people. In the Salonika municipal elections one of their candidates secured 3,000 votes.

Their political line at the time came very close to that of the trotskyists. One of their leaders, Totopoulos, in fact became secretary to the International Bureau of the Trotskyist Opposition, in Paris.

The period between 1934 and the Second World War witnessed the development of splits in the "archeo-marxist" movement. Many of the rank and file activists evolved towards Trotskyism, whereas the leadership, already rather ossified and bureaucratised, slowly veered towards social-democracy. They lost influence rapidly during the period of the Metaxas dictatorship, although they continued to publish their clandestine paper Class Struggle until the outbreak of the war.

Part of their loss of influence was due to the ferocious attacks upon them by the Metaxas dictatorship. Vite, their general secretary, was executed by the Nazis during the war. Many of their members who survived the war were later assassinated by the Stalinists. In 1946 the "archeo-marxists" participated in the elections but their sole candidate only secured 250 votes. Today they exist no longer.

As for the Greek Trotskyists they were divided, during the war, into three tendencies:

The Defencists accepted Trotsky's analysis that Russia was a "degenerated workers' state". They held the Greek resistance to be a "progressive" movement, badly led, which had to be "reorganised" and "given a correct political line". They nevertheless didn't participate themselves in the resistance, which anyway would have been physically impossible for them; anyone voicing dissent usually ending up before an execution squad.

The Defeatists believed that Russia was no longer a workers' state. They believed that support for the resistance was tantamount to support for the war, on the side of the Allies. The occupation, they believed, didn't fundamentally change the tasks confronting workers which remained to struggle for basic working class demands, at the point of production. They held the "resistance movement" to be an army, a political organ of bourgeois type, and the embryo of a future totalitarian state. They sought to organise fraternisation with German and Italian soldiers on an anti-capitalist basis.

A Centrist tendency adopted an intermediate position.

The three tendencies at times formed one organisation, at times two, and at others three.

In 1944 and 1945 the Stalinists executed hundreds of their own ex-members who had become critical of the conciliatory line of their own Party towards imperialism. Famous figures of the Resistance such as Glankos and Arcs Belouchiotis were notable victims of these "purges". Over 100 archeo-marxists were also executed, particularly in the provinces. They had not opposed the Resistance. Their only "crime" was to have been known as "archeo-marxists" from the years before the war. Several dozen trotskyists were also executed, particularly after the departure of the Nazi troops.

BRITISH CONTROL SECURED

With the collapse of the Nazi Armies, Greece was poised on the threshold of social revolution. The country was ripe for profound social change. Despite the rationalisations of the capitalist structure brought about by the Metaxas regime there were still important feudal remnants to be cleared away.

When the Nazis had entered Greece they had found still primitive forms of land tenure. For instance in the years immediately preceding World War II 6% of those who owned land in Greece owned, between them, 20% of the land. 758,000 people were employed in agriculture of whom 200,000 were landless peasants. As against this there were 802,000 workers (33% of the employed population); 148,000 (5.4% of the population) were described as employers.

The national debt was one-and-a-half times higher than the annual net revenue. Its repayment accounted for one-third of the annual budget. Most of the major industries (electricity, telephones, irrigation, and mines) were foreign owned, most by British shareholders.

British concern at "re-activating" the various forms of local authority evolved by the Nazis can readily be understood. They started by resurrecting the "security battalions" in order to maintain "law and order". (These battalions had been set up by Nazis with local fascist support.) Simultaneously Papandreu forbade ELAS units to enter Athens. On October 30, 1944, EAM was "decreed" disbanded. The Government ordered the surrender of all arms by December 10.

Five days later Athens witnessed its first mass demonstration against the new Government's restitution of the old order. The workers' activities reached a high political level and were reminiscent of soviet power. The London Evening News reported on the 3rd November that 2,000 textile workers had taken possession of their factory and had appointed a "management committee". The extent of this movement is difficult to assess now, both "sides" playing it down for obvious reasons. It was

undoubtedly this aspect of the Greek revolution that was to frighten Churchill and lead him, in his political semi-literacy, to resort to such terms as "trotskyism" to describe what was happening in Greece. He cabled Scobie to act as if he were "in a conquered city, confronted by local rebellion".*

Scobie prepared for hostilities. More troops were hurriedly flown in from Italy (please note that the war against Germany was still in full swing!). On 3rd December, 1944, EAM held a mass demonstration which, although unarmed, was fired on by the police while British troops stood by. 23 demonstrators were killed and more than 150 seriously wounded.

The following day General Katsulas declared that any ELAS members attempting to enter Athens would be "treated as enemies". Scobie proclaimed martial law, decreed a curfew, and expressed his determination to stand by the Papandreu government. On that day British formations disarmed three ELAS units.

EAM called for a general strike. All shops, factories, ministries and public and private installations were paralyzed. ELAS seized two police barracks in Piraeus, and 21 of the 28 police stations in Athens. In the Thessum district a Royalist battalion was saved from ELAS troops by the intervention of British armour.

On December 5th, hundreds of thousands turned out for the funeral of the 23. They packed Athens Cathedral and knelt in the streets, massed a quarter of a mile outside. Their banners read "Down with Papandreu" and "British Soldiers! Let us Choose Our Own Government". It was the largest demonstration in the history of Athens.

Yet even in this situation the Party leadership was not prepared to make a clear call for revolutionary action but merely asked the Allied Governments to deplore what had happened**. On the day of the funeral, Partialides, secretary-general of EAM declared "if necessary, we will fight for liberty against Papandreu and his gendarmes". He tentatively made allusions as to whether - at some future date - it might be "necessary" to fight! He added that "after yesterday's clash, the ELAS could not surrender its arms by December 10th as ordered".

* Greece: American Dilemma and Opportunity, by L.S.Stavrianos, Chicago 1952, p. 134.

** "We hope that the Allied Governments and with them the responsible British Government will condemn the sorry actions of Messrs Leeper and Scobie". Rizopastis, 4th December 1944.

General Scobie had no such hesitation. He ordered RAF rocket attacks on ELAS positions.

On 11th December General Alexander arrived in Athens. Recognizing the serious situation (his troops were penned up in the city) he asked for immediate reinforcements. The Fourth Division was diverted from Italy to Greece.

ELAS actions were masterpieces of improvisation. Tram cars were filled with explosives and propelled at British tanks. On the 18th ELAS launched a major attack on an RAF base, capturing it with 250 prisoners. Scobie announced an all-out offensive, and after four or five days of heavy fighting and savage rocket attacks, ELAS forces were driven back. On the 21st December Papandreou expressed the gratitude of the Greek people to the British forces. On the 24th Churchill himself arrived in Athens*.

THE CARVE-UP

Churchill pointed out that the British troops had come with the agreement of Roosevelt and Stalin. He was referring, of course, to the general agreement on spheres of influence he had reached with Stalin in October, 1944, which suggested that the Soviet Union would have 75-25

* A few weeks later Churchill was to summarize these events to the House of Commons:

"For three or four days or more it was a struggle to prevent a hideous massacre in the centre of Athens in which all forms of Government would have been swept away and naked triumphant Trotskyism installed.

I think Trotskyism is a better definition of Greek Communist and certain other sects than the normal word. It has the advantage of being equally hated in Russia".

An editorial in the New York Daily Worker (11th January, 1946) answered Churchill's comments in the following words:

"Communists everywhere have a long experience with Trotskyists. If Churchill means to fight their influence, the Communists will always assist him, just as we have been fighting them without his assistance."

or 80-20 predominance in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Roumania, that Britain and Russia would share influence in Yugoslavia 50-50, and that the British would have full responsibility in Greece*.

On 11th January, Scobie met delegates of ELAS and a cease-fire was agreed. A defeated ELAS accepted the British terms. They would withdraw to 100 miles from Athens. They would evacuate Salonika and specified islands. A general exchange of POWs was arranged**.

The following month negotiations were opened between the Government (now under a General Plastiras) and EAM. Three delegates represented each side, with Harold Macmillan speaking for Britain. Agreement was reached on February 13th, 1945. The terms included the disbanding of ELAS within 14 days and the surrender of arms***, a "probe"

* Roosevelt and the Russians: The Yalta Conference, by E.R. Stettinius, p. 21.

Stettinius, who was present at the Yalta Conference, describes the 8th February, 1945, discussion on Greece as follows (p. 195): "The P.M. (Churchill) then turned to Greece and said he was hopeful that peace would come. It was doubtful, however, that a government of all parties could be established, since they hated each other so much. Stalin observed that, since the Greeks had not yet become accustomed to discussion, they were following the practice of cutting each other's throats.

The P.M. concluded his remarks on Greece by saying that five British trade union leaders had recently visited Greece and had had a difficult time. They were very much obliged to Marshal Stalin, the P.M. stated, for not having taken too great an interest in Greek affairs. Stalin repeated that he had no intention of criticising British actions in Greece, nor, he added, did he have any intention of interfering in that country.

With this remark . . . the plenary session adjourned . . . to a formal dinner which included twenty courses, 45 toasts, and lasted until after midnight."

** Years later, in one of his typical speeches, Zachariades was to claim that the whole revolt had only occurred because British agents in the Party (i.e. Siantos!) had acted as "agents provocateurs" to ensure the destruction of ELAS! Neos Kosmos, November/December, 1950.

*** Instead of blunt speaking, the Stalinists tried to sugar the bitter pill. "ELAS must surrender its weapons. Now is coming a period of peaceful political struggles which will culminate in brilliant successes for all democrats in the plebiscite and in the elections" declared Rizospastis (16/2/45). Indeed ELAS surrendered more weapons than had been stipulated in the "agreement". The rank and file were suspicious enough of the new line however to hang on to a substantial number of the best and most modern weapons.

into the civil service, the removal of all Metaxas and Nazi collaborators, a plebiscite on the monarchy, and new General Election. Throughout the negotiations British forces were occupying more and more of Greece*.

From this point in time ELAS began to fragment. Two prominent left-wing socialists, Stratis and Tsirimokos, publicly withdrew support in protest at the "execution" by EPON of 114 trade union officials. Other former leaders of the PEEA (such as Svolos and Askoutsis) also withdrew their support, announcing on 18th April, 1945, that they were forming a new political party, known as ELD/SKE (Popular Democratic Union/Socialist Party of Greece).

Many of the ELAS activists surrendered. Others refused to do so and, like Aris, took to the mountains. Yet others drifted into Albania and Yugoslavia. Those who remained frequently had cause for regret, for the government seized the opportunity for settling old scores. Many were arrested and charged with common law crimes, i.e. murder (of German soldiers!). By July 1945 more than 20,000 had been arrested and 500 of them executed**. (These figures are from EAM sources. In reply the government claimed (on 2nd September 1945) to have recovered the bodies of 8,752 murdered hostages, many of them mutilated.

ELAS policies were not always guaranteed to make friends and influence people. They had at times more than 20,000 hostages whose frequent ill-treatment had alienated large sections of the population. (In the battles on the outskirts of Athens commanders had kept their men at their posts by the simple process of shooting deserters).

In June Zachariades returned to Greece from German captivity and took up his post as secretary-general of the KKE. In the same month Aris was killed in a clash with the National Guard***and in keeping with the savagery in the developing civil war, his head was publicly exhibited.

The Seventh Congress of the KKE, the first to be held openly, took place in Athens in October, 1945. Needless to say, great "revolutionary" speeches were made, and the main attack fell on "British

* These negotiations formed the basis of the "Varkiza Agreement". "This Agreement will ensure internal peace" declared Rizospastis (14th February, 1945).

** The New York Herald Tribune reported (on 19th May, 1949) that 2,313 anti-fascists had been executed by the Government. Meanwhile only 20 people had been executed for war-time collaboration with the Nazis.

*** The National Guard had been tipped off by the "X" organization, a rough-neck right-wing royalist body led by Colonel Grivas, later to become famous in Cyprus.

Imperialism" and the "monarcho-fascist lackeys of imperialist reaction". The slogan was for the setting up of a "People's Democracy" in the fashion of other Balkan states under Russian military occupation. Ironically, glowing tributes to the United States came from many speakers, with a special call for emulation of American agricultural techniques*.

THE FIRST POST - WAR "ELECTION"

December, 1945, brought the KKE its first embarrassments arising from Russian foreign policy. Together with Britain and America, Moscow recognised the Hoxha regime in Albania. Feeling in Greece ran very high, for Albania occupied territory, many Greeks felt, should be theirs. The KKE remained silent. But the worst blow of all was the unqualified recognition the Kremlin gave to the Greek government**. The EAM had demanded, instead, one with EAM participation. (A truly revolutionary demand!)

31st March, 1946, was chosen for a General Election. The election was a farce from the word go. Reconstituted fascist bands terrorized the countryside to such an extent that even the Premier (now Sofoulis) asked Britain's Labour Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, to call

* At this time US policy was very pro EAM. For example Admiral King ordered Admiral Hewitt, US Commander in the Mediterranean, not to allow American transports to carry supplies to British forces in Greece. Lincoln MacVeagh, US Ambassador in Athens, declared "American Policy is to stay clear and take no part in Greek politics". (I Was There, by W.D. Leahy, p. 285.)

As early as 17th December, 1944 Rizospastis had shown how friendly the Stalinists could be to the main bulwark of world imperialism. In the aftermath of the Athens massacres they declared: "An astounding, incredible thing has happened! A real but undeclared war exists between the great British Empire and the small country of Greece. But on our side we find the greatest Anglo-Saxon country: America".

**. History has recently repeated itself - this time with even more cynical overtones. In February, 1968, Russia "normalised" her relations with the Colonels' regime in Greece, accepting a new Greek ambassador to Moscow. Meanwhile thousands of Greek communists rot away on islands in the Aegean Sea, for opposition to the present illegal regime.

things off until the conditions for a free election existed. The appeal fell on deaf ears.. In protest the Greek "left" boycotted the polling stations. A heavy majority for the right was thus ensured.

Six months later a plebiscite was held. The authorities managed to secure a 68.9% vote in favour of the Monarchy. George II arrived in Greece on 28th September.

The abstraction from "parliamentary politics", forced on the people by the forces of reaction, was partly due to a realization that the struggle must now be carried on with guns.

A "Republican Army" had been founded in December, 1945. A year later it was renamed the "Democratic Army" (DSE). It existed largely due to Yugoslav help, especially in relation to food supplies, and bases on Yugoslav territory*.

Stalin was playing the "two-faces" game. On the one hand he was sticking to the Yalta agreements, not because of the "agreements" as such, but because he didn't want the blame for Greek communist activities. On the other hand, as the spokesman of the so-called world communist movement, he couldn't be seen completely to ignore the difficulties of the Greek "comrades". He, therefore, ensured that Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria provided assistance and vaguely promised Russian aid. In actual fact, no supplies or arms ever came from the U.S.S.R.

THE CIVIL WAR

In August, 1946, Markos Vafiades, an old tobacco worker, assumed command of the DSE which by the Autumn was well established in north-west Greece and the Peloponnese. The Government declared martial law, and in a display of outraged dignity called for a UN investigation concerning aid reaching the DSE from neighbouring communist countries**. (The **presence** of 16,000 British troops was beside the point!)

-
- * As the civil war developed these foreign training bases became increasingly important. The H.Q. was in Bulkes, north-west of Belgrade. There were four others in Yugoslavia, two in Albania, and one in Bulgaria.
- ** This aid had largely resulted from Markos' visits to the capitals of his three neighbours. It had been granted conditional to frontier adjustments favouring Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria should the DSE be victorious in its struggle. These agreements were later formally endorsed by the KKE.

By January, 1947, when yet another government, this time a coalition under Maximos, was installed in Athens, the DSE held more than 100 villages, and had a permanent GHQ in northern Greece.

Maximos appointed General Zervas, late of EDES, Minister of Public Order. Within two days the General had more than 3,000 people arrested, including the leadership of EAM and the staff of all "communist" newspapers. Zervas was eventually to deport more than 15,000 to the Aegean Islands.

These developments in Greece were but a microcosm of what was happening on a world scale: the opening phases of the cold war. American policy had undergone a considerable change, and the menace of communism was increasingly dominating her policy decisions.

In March, 1945, the U.S. Congress allocated 300 million dollars for "aid" to Greece*, 50% of which was to be military aid. (By June, 1953, Greece was to receive 2,572 million dollars.)

As 1947 progressed so did DSE strength: 13,000 in March, 18,000 in May, and 23,000 in July. Many of those who fled to the mountains did so, not so much from political idealism, but to escape the terror in the towns. In many cases their physical preservation depended upon flight. Herein lay the strength and the weakness of the DSE. By 1947 it dominated the major part of the country, but in spite of widespread sympathy there was significantly no agrarian uprising, while working-class struggles in the towns were ignored.

The DSE became increasingly isolated from the class struggle. The war became a war of ambush, and of hit-and-run destruction. Occupied areas were seen primarily as areas for enforced recruitment, not as areas in which new forms of social organisation might be established. There was no serious attempt to organize the town proletariat. The war was seen in bourgeois terms: the main objective the capture of a "capital" in which to set up an opposition "state". A provisional "Democratic Government" was announced, and desperate attempts were made to capture a major town. It was believed that if the "government" could have a "capital" it would receive immediate "recognition" by the USSR and her satellites. But in spite of the better military equipment they were now receiving, the DSE was still no match for regular forces well supported by air power.

* Greece had suffered considerably from the German Occupation. Official estimates were that 25% of all buildings, 67% of all motor vehicles, and 75% of the merchant fleet had been destroyed.

By the second half of 1947 when the U.S. had shipped in 74,000 tons of military equipment, the Greek National Army was entirely supported by American "aid". American "advisors" assumed greater responsibilities and the functions of government were increasingly dictated by Washington. Opposition newspapers were closed on American insistence. The right to strike was abolished. The Americans demanded their battle plans be accepted, and in November, 1947, a joint U.S.-Greek Army Staff was formed. The Greek National Army was increased to 180,000 men, and its air force equipped with modern dive bombers. It was left to Britain to supply the napalm!*

The American build-up didn't produce the required results. As the New York Star was to point out on 10th January, 1949:

"When the U.S. Army Group arrived in 1947 there were 17,000 guerillas. Today, despite the blood-letting at Grammas, the figure is put at 25,000 with another 150,000 active sympathisers".

Undoubtedly many of those recruited into the Greek National Army were sympathetic to the liberation movement. There were frequent instances of fraternization. In 1948 the 567th Company refused to fire on the partisan forces. But overall the National Army was being constantly expanded and strengthened. By the time of its last great offensive in 1949 its forces numbered a peak 197,000 men.

The DSE had reached military agreements with neighbouring communist countries at Bled, in Yugoslavia, and more material assistance was promised. Motors, anti-tank projectiles and machine guns in ever increasing numbers began to flow across Greece's northern frontiers. Yugoslavia increasingly dominated the military strategy planned by the "Balkan Joint Staff".

* Keith Butler writing in the Sunday Chronicle (4th September, 1948) witnessed an attack on DSE positions:
"The British 'napalm' fire bombs were dropped by British-donated Spitfires - 50 of them. British experts watched to gain ideas for improving the design and employment of the new bomb. U.S. military experts also saw one of their new weapons being tried out".

Between 1944 and 1948 Britain spent £400 million on intervention in Greek affairs.

An increasing proportion of the British troops were horrified by the war they were forced to witness and assist. In November, 1947, the Daily Mirror had published pictures of human heads displayed by the Government forces, and in Britain meetings, marches, and demonstrations against British policy were gaining increasing support, especially when a month later the Athens government announced the death penalty for strikers.

STALIN STABS PARTISANS IN THE BACK

Stalin very carefully continued his policy of doing nothing to help his Greek "comrades".

He was to reveal his attitude to the Greek fighters to Djilas in February, 1948:

"The uprising in Greece will have to fold up. . . . What, do you think that Great Britain and the United States - the United States the most powerful state in the world - will permit you to break their line of communication in the Mediterranean? . . . Nonsense. And we have no navy. The uprising in Greece must be stopped, and as quickly as possible"*.

On Christmas Eve, 1947, the "Free Democratic Greek Government" was proclaimed, with Markos as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. Simultaneously an attack was launched on Konitza in a final desperate attempt to gain a capital. By the 7th January the DSE had to admit a crushing defeat at the hands of American armoury. No foreign government had recognized the "Democratic Government", neither the Balkan "allies" nor the USSR. Markos and a large proportion of his followers retired to Yugoslavia to lick their wounds.

In February, 1948, the first big consignment of U.S. aircraft arrived, and General Van Fleet was appointed Chief of the Joint Military Forces. The Athens authorities stepped up their terror activities against all political opponents to such an extent that even their allies in London and Washington had to protest at the number of executions**.

For the Americans it was a familiar dilemma. On the one hand they wanted a strong anti-communist government, which given the existing state of Greek public opinion could only be achieved by dictatorial rule. On the other hand they needed to create the appearance of "democracy". It was a dilemma to be repeated in Korea, Vietnam, and indeed in every country living under American domination in today's world.

* Conversations with Stalin, Penguin ed. (1963) pp. 140-141.

** The Greek civil police were trained and supervised by a British Police Mission under Sir Charles Wickham, of Black and Tan fame.

WHEN "COMRADES" FALL OUT

On 28th June, 1948, came the event that was to doom the Greek resistance movement. Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform. The KKE was emphatically pro-Stalin and resorted to the crude and ungrateful accusation that Tito was harbouring Greek Government troops! The KKE insisted on publicly associating itself with Moscow at a time when its very existence depended on aid from Tito. Had the Greek Communists remained neutral (as North Vietnam in the Peking-Moscow dispute) there is no reason to suppose aid would have ceased. But with the Greek Party leadership in the forefront of the denunciations of the "Tito Clique of Fascists" it is hardly surprising that the aid, which continued for a while steadily dwindled to a trickle.

It was in the desperate situation created by their own duplicity that the Cominform tried to reappraise its Greek policies. The old call for an independent Macedonia was resurrected. Many left the KKE over this issue. Rank and file fighters refused to believe the Kremlin line on Tito. Markos himself was purged as a "Titoite" (his "serious illness" was announced in the Stalinist press in February, 1949). In his only published utterances he denied there was a split, and claimed he did not believe the Yugoslavs guilty of "deviations". He obviously saw the stupidity of deliberately alienating the DSE's major ally.

Zachariades, the super-Stalinist, took over the Supreme Command, and set to work to reorganize his army on a purely conventional basis, as opposed to the guerilla formations Markos had maintained. His actions were motivated essentially by anti-Titoism and its "ideological errors" reflected in Markos' partisan organization*. The final routing of the DSE was now only a matter of time - its regular formations made excellent targets for the newly-equipped Greek air force.

By late summer, 1949, the National Army had swept the rebel forces out of central Greece. The remnants staggered across the Albanian border as American aircraft pounded hell out of them. Fearing an invasion of his territory, Hoxha ordered that all Greeks in Albania be disarmed and interned. For a few days Zachariades dreamed of reorganizing in Bulgaria, until the great Stalin himself intervened and ordered a cease-fire. On 16th October, 1949, the civil war officially ended.

* Interesting articles were published in the Yugoslav Borba, 9th and 12th September 1949, written by Yugoslav Partisan Generals Vouchkovitch and Tempo, analysing the causes of Zachariades' military defeats, and blaming them squarely on his sacrificing all else to the hysterical anti-Tito campaign.

YEARS OF CONFUSION

The years following the civil war witnessed a series of unstable governments*, and no relaxation of the suppression of "opposition". General Papagos, who had led the National Army in the last months of war, increasingly dominated the government until his death in 1955.

The King then appointed Constantine Karamanlis as Prime Minister. Karamanlis had an even blacker political past than most Greek politicians. During the German occupation he had obligingly provided lists of Jews for deportation. His appointment caused an outcry, even from the right. But the King argued he could appoint anyone he liked Premier - "even my gardener".

Social Democrats and "leftists" began to register electoral successes in the middle 1950s. The death of Stalin led, at the Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee (in February 1957) to the expulsion of Zachariades from the leadership of the KKE. But the new political bureau included all his old hatchetmen, people such as Crozos, Parsialides, Koligianni, Strigos, Theos, and Roussos, all of whom had been in the leadership in the years 1941 to 1949. At the same Plenum, Markos was re-instated!

The actors were basically the same, but the script was drastically rewritten. A "government of popular unity" was the newly-declared aim. This was to include "the intelligensia, patriotic officers, the patriotic church, the progressive bourgeoisie, etc.". The path had been cleared for the EDA (United Democratic Left), based on the new broad KKE policy, but free of the stigma of the Communist Party.

In the February, 1956, elections, the EDA entered the coalition "Democratic Union" and scored more votes than Karamanlis, but the rigged system gave Karamanlis 165 deputies against the DU's 132 (of which 18 went to the EDA).

The next elections were to take place on 11th May, 1958. Just prior to this date, Karamanlis pushed through a new electoral law to ensure that the two largest parties would win the overwhelming majority of seats. It was expected that the Liberals would follow Karamanlis in second place. It was a great miscalculation, for the EDA polarized the anti-capitalist forces, increased its votes by 50%, won 24% of the votes and 79 of the 300 seats.

* Between 1945 and 1949 there were no fewer than twenty governments in Greece.

Fear gripped the right politicians who decided drastic steps would need to be taken before the next elections. A reign of terror steadily built up. 'Electoral propaganda by candidates of the Opposition, mainly of the Left but also of the Centre, became increasingly impossible. T.E.A. and the police, working in close collaboration with thugs and terrorists, attacked and arrested Opposition candidates and their supporters; they broke up meetings and set fire to speakers' platforms; they mounted road-blocks and, in general, made it impossible for candidates to work freely in the constituencies.

'The most horrifying incident in this campaign of terror organized by the Right with the connivance of the Dovas caretaker government was the murder, in cold blood, by a gendarme in Salonica, of a 25 year old left-winger, Stefanos Veldemiris, who was distributing E.D.A. leaflets. (His father is now in the prison island of Yura.)'.*

In the 1961 election the E.D.A. share of seats diminished by two-thirds.

THE SHOWDOWN

In May 1963 Gregory Lambrakis, a popular Liberal deputy, was murdered by members of a fascist youth organization. It was just one incident in the campaign of terror being waged against anyone who vaguely supported the 'left'. But the murder caught the imagination of democrats the world over. Senior police officers had witnessed the crime but had taken no action against the killers. It had obviously been carried out with their knowledge and encouragement. Later it was established that influential friends of the palace and Karamanlis were implicated. A wave of demonstrations at home and abroad brought the Karamanlis regime crashing down.

In the comparatively 'free' election of 1964 George Papandreou and his Centre Union won 53% of the votes. It was just a liberal government. While a scheme for free education was legislated, and agricultural 'reforms' carried out, the key ministries of 'Defence' and 'Public Security' remained in royalist hands. Real executive power still belonged to King and Army. The Prime Minister slavishly pledged himself to his monarch not to rescind civil war emergency legislation.

But even this was not good enough for the King and his reactionary friends. A scheme was hatched to prove that Papandreou was in reality a dangerous communist agent. General Grivas, of Cyprus fame, was undoubtedly the inspirer of the 'Aspida (shield) Plot' which allegedly aimed to over-

*

'Fascism in Greece - and why it happened'. G. Catephores and G.Zis, p. 10. (League for Democracy in Greece).

throw the King. Andrea Papandreou, son of the Prime Minister, was claimed to be one of the ringleaders. A trial was held, the proceedings lasting from November 1966 until March 1967. In the main the trial only proved the extent of C.I.A. activities in Greece.

The King nevertheless seized the opportunity to dismiss his Premier. The problem was that nobody else was able to form an alternative government, and that May 28, 1967 had been set as the date for a General Election. Increasing demonstrations and public dissatisfaction, the now open and insistent demand for a new plebiscite on the monarchy, made it clear that should the election be allowed to take place, the right would take a thrashing.

THE COLONELS SEIZE POWER

And so on April 21st a group of ten Army colonels put NATO plan 'Prometheus' into effect. Claiming a threat to the internal security of the country due to an alleged impending communist uprising, they seized power and established a military dictatorship.

All political parties and trade unions were dissolved. The majority of the leaders of Opposition parties (45 ex-members of Parliament), of E.D.A. and of the trade unions were placed under arrest. Many thousands were banished to Yura and other island prisons in the Aegean. The government officially admitted (7/6/67) to the arrest of 10,000 persons, but the true figure must have been at least double that.

All state councillors, judges, civil servants and university professors were given a month to submit a statement of loyalty to the State. (Those whose statements were regarded as unsatisfactory were liable to immediate dismissal.) Several hundred Army and naval officers, to say nothing of university lecturers, were sacked as 'politically undesirable'. On August 8 three men were sentenced to up to eight years' imprisonment for 'insulting the King'.

The telephones of anyone regarded as vaguely 'liberal' or 'left' have been disconnected. Some 20,000 phones have been so dealt with. Should a subscriber try to phone one of these numbers, the exchange cuts in and explains 'why there is no reply'.

All meetings of more than five persons must have police permission. In August 1967 a military court sentenced former Foreign Minister Averoff to five years' imprisonment for holding an unauthorized social gathering in his home. He was in fact pardoned by the King due to world-wide protest. Even out and out reactionaries like the exiled Karamanlis were moved to intervene on Averoff's behalf.

A strict censorship has been imposed on all printed matter. The plays of Aristophanes, Sophocles and Aeschylus, for example, may not be publicly performed without severe editing. Minister of the Interior

Patakos declared (9/5/67) that 'those distributing tracts or voicing communist slogans will be shot on sight'. Amateur radio transmitters have been declared illegal, and it is an offence to listen to foreign radio stations. Particular concern has been shown for the 'spiritual welfare' of the young. Attendance at Sunday School has been declared compulsory, all history books are to be 'revised' in the immediate future. Beatle music has been banned and mini-skirts are forbidden.

BEYOND THE DEFEAT

Undoubtedly the greatest tragedy of all is the virtual lack of opposition to the dictatorship within Greece. This cannot be explained away by arguing that all opponents are under arrest. Given years of rule, a dictatorship can systematically eliminate opposition, as Hitler did in Germany, but the Colonels have found their rule unchallenged. We look in vain for the mass demonstrations, the general strikes, the calls for action or the self-mobilisation of the people in defence of their liberties.

One of the important reasons for this apparent acceptance of defeat by the Greek workers must be clear to readers of the foregoing pages.* Can we really expect our Greek brothers to identify Mikis Theodorakis and the 'Patriotic Front' with their own struggle completely to change their conditions of life? Opposed to the persecution of Theodorakis and his associates as we may be, can we forget his enthusiastic support for the imprisonment of the Soviet writers Sinyavsky and Daniel for daring to satirize their rulers? Does not the 'freedom' for which Theodorakis and his Communist Party friends stand sound a little hollow against the history of the K.K.E., its misuse of the confidence vested in it, its manipulation of the masses for ends that were not theirs, its systematic destruction of its own dissidents?

Some argue that these things are irrelevant, that we must forget our 'differences' and unite together against the regime of the Colonels. But the Greek people who have lived through one of the bloodiest civil wars in history find that these 'differences' do matter. This is hardly surprising. This is why they don't turn out in their millions to support the 'Patriotic Front'. Their abstention implies deep criticism. It also implies, for the moment, difficulties in seeing an alternative.

'Peace News' (25/8/67) tells the story of the 17 year old girl who was shot dead by a tank patrol for shouting 'Viva Papandreou'. This tragic and heroic tale is supposed to bring tears to our eyes and bind us together in opposition to the fascist murderers. But readers should remember who

*

A struggle against the dictatorship is a serious business, involving great risks and demanding a high level of commitment. People will undertake such struggles but only for really fundamental objectives.

Papandreou was: - the puppet Premier who congratulated British General Scobie on 'capturing' Athens; - the Premier who grovelled before his monarch and resisted attempts to lift the civil war emergency measures. The Greek workers certainly remember it. They sense that a movement built around such a character could only lead to disaster. They are unwilling, at the moment, to make further sacrifices, only to bring to power their potential enemies. Unlike the writers of Peace News, they are not unduly stirred by the call 'Viva Papandreou'.

The tragedy of the Greek working class is the tragedy of the British, French, American and all other working classes. They have suffered the demoralization of disillusion in their traditional political parties and unions which, starting off as instruments of their emancipation, have now become obstacles to that very objective. And they have so far been unsuccessful in creating new organizations and new methods of struggle.

These new organizations have appeared fleetingly in recent Greek history. (The Soldiers and Sailors Committees in Egypt in 1944, the Workers' Management Committees that appeared in the early months of the British Occupation.) Little is known of these bodies, for it has been the common interest of both Communist Party and imperialist governments to suppress not only the workers' committees themselves, but also all information about them, their functioning, programme and so on.

Effective and meaningful resistance can only come with the creation of these fundamentally democratic rank and file bodies, bodies with deep roots in the social life of their localities and whose preoccupations are the real problems of the working people in the area. This is as true for Britain as it is for Greece. It is this fact which makes our struggle one.

SOLIDARITY

(a paper for rank and file militants)

Why not take out a sub.? Send 10/- to Heather Russell, 53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent, and we will send you the next 12 issues (or pamphlets).