

Dialectics of the Future:
Historical Narrative and Political Imagination in Greece from the
Axis Occupation to the Civil War

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*For my parents,
Tinamarie and Brian,
and my brother,
Trey.*

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Transliteration Table

A α	A a	Φ φ	Ph ph
B β	V v	X χ	Ch ch
Γ γ	G g	Ψ ψ	Ps ps
Δ δ	D d	Ω ω	O o
E ε	E e	Diphthongs	
Z ζ	Z z	AI αι	AI ai
H η	I i	AY αυ	AU au
Θ θ	Th th	ΓΓ γγ	NG ng
I ι	I i	ΓΚ γκ	GK gk
K κ	K k	TZ τζ	J j
Λ λ	L l	ΓX γχ	NCH nch
M μ	M m	EI ει	EI ei
N ν	N n	EY ευ	EU eu
Ξ ξ	X x	HY ηυ	EU eu
O ο	O o	ΜΠ μπ	B b
Π π	P p	NT ντ	D d
P ρ	R r	OI οι	OI oi
Σ σ/ς	S s	OY ου	OU ou
T τ	T t	YI υι	UI ui
Υ υ	Y y	ΩY ωυ	OU ouj

Method adapted from the ALA-LC

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Introduction

“[T]he subject of historical knowledge is the struggling, oppressed class itself.”

—Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations*.¹

Some Thoughts on History

As all histories ought to, this project seeks to reflect on both a particular history and the totality of history itself; and, in the current of the dialectical tradition, this reflection oscillates between viewing the particularity from the totality and the totality from the particularity.² Although many of us may wish it to be this simple or this precise, history cannot be, as Leopold Von Ranke described it, a recording of “the way it really was.”³ Rather, History and histories are always subject to their resurrection, are always liable to be displaced and replanted in new contexts, thus generating new conceptions of the past, present, and future.⁴ This is only to say that the writing, publication, and distribution of history is not a neutral endeavor; history as a field and epistemological practice is always subject to co-optation, most often by those in power who seek to maintain the status quo.

¹ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (Boston: First Mariner Books, 2019), 204.

² Mao Tse-Tung, “On Contradiction,” (August 1937), accessed through https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm; When using the concept of dialectical movement or dialectics in general, I refer to the pithiest definition for the term I have encountered thus far in my forays into philosophy: “Dynamic movement through conflictive opposition.” George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, (Durham: Duke University Press), 2017, 2.

³ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 198; see also Michael Lowy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History,”* (London: Verso), 2016, 42.

⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press), 1995, 29. See also pages 6 and 24. I am specifically referencing Trouillot’s distinction between History (what happened or the “socio-historical process”) and histories (our various understandings of what happened).

It is no different for the history of the 1940s in Greece, from the Axis occupation to the Civil War. Immediately after the Civil War ended in August of 1949, a reprisal against the Left took place not only in the political sphere but in the history books. For 25 years, from 1949-1974, modern Greek history was the terrain of the Right, and the legacy of the Resistance, and the leftists who fought in its ranks, were flattened, erased, and remolded to create a narrative which propped up the Right's central tenets of anti-communism and nationalism.⁵

This reactionary revisionism was concomitant with a political practice based on "repression and widespread discrimination against leftists," which saw the continuation of the jailing of leftists into the postwar years.⁶ Building on these punitive practices, the Dictatorship of the Junta (1967-1974) brought the repression of the postwar Greek Left to new levels.⁷ Utilizing a constructed historical precedent of anti-communist paranoia and nationalist fervor, the army in concert with the monarchy organized a coup d'état and seized power on April 21, 1967.⁸ Quickly thereafter parliament was disbanded, martial law declared, and 3,000 leftists were jailed while another 8,000 were sent to concentration camps.⁹

The fact that this coup was framed as a "nation-saving revolution" reveals a key component of the struggle between Left and Right which is a main point of analysis of this

⁵ Polymeris Voglis and Ioannis Nioutsikos, "Greek Historiography of the 1940s: A Reassessment," *Sudost-Europa* 65, no. 2, (June 2017), 316-333, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1515/soeu-2017-0020>, 318.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 319.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁸ Kostis Kornetis, *Children of Dictatorship: Student Resistance, Cultural Politics, and the "Long 1960s" in Greece*, (New York: Berghahn Books), 2013, 38.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

thesis.¹⁰ That is, the nation, like capital-h “History,” is a crucial plane on which battles over how we ought to conceive of the scope and potential of political action take place. In other words, the interweaving public discourses of nation and history shape the way in which we think about how the world can be changed and our own roles in changing it. Thus, the defeated Left of the Resistance and Civil War, and its historical legacies, was not erased simply because it was the putative opposition to the Right, but because the Left offered a political-economic vision which demanded a fundamental restructuring of Greek society. The partisans who were a part of the Greek Resistance during WWII, many of whom later fought in the Civil War, engaged in a collective project to transform a bourgeois state organized around the exigencies of the rich and powerful into one organized around the “*Laos*,” the “People,” writ large. As such, their stories—that of struggle and ultimately defeat in reconceptualizing the political status quo—are not something that often makes it into the mainstream, dominant history books.

Walter Benjamin noted that, “empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers...Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate.”¹¹ Thusly, a history which seeks to reclaim the potential of the 1940s Greek Left must come to terms with narratives that the victors’ histories prevented from fully developing. The official position and conventional wisdom must be “brushed against the grain” by the stories of the oppressed.¹² As such, in this thesis I utilize sources that work to amplify and give voice to the stories of the “People.” I rely largely on interviews and testimonies from former

¹⁰ Ibid., 38

¹¹ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 200.

¹² Ibid.

Resistance members and imprisoned leftists to help illuminate the often-forgotten futures and potentialities of the 1940s in Greece.

Regarding potential futures, throughout this thesis I deploy the conceptual arguments of Reinhart Koselleck regarding “temporality” and the perception of historical time. I will explain in detail what these terms mean in chapter 1, but for now let me say that I utilize Koselleck to trace throughout modern Greek history how appropriations of the past—specific understandings of history—were used in order to construct, and delimit, certain political futures. Particularly, I note how from the inception of the modern Greek state in 1830, to the Resistance in the 1940s, to the post-occupation repression and Civil War, elements of Greek past, most often the legacies of ancient Greece, were consistently drawn upon to legitimize political actions, ideals, and coalitions as well as to delegitimize others. Therefore, the narrative I construct in this thesis is both a picture of the material-political struggle between the oppressed and those in power, as well as the struggle between these same groups over the various events of Greek history and their collective understandings.

Thesis Outline

The 1940s in Greece do not easily fit into the linear, upward-arcng narratives that so commonly dominate the historical imagination of modernity.¹³ Rather, it was a time of tumult and contradiction. Highs were immediately followed by lows, successes by failures, and bottom-up political initiatives by top-down repressions. The elation of the stunning defeat of the Italian invasion in 1940-41 was quickly ended upon the Nazi invasion and the

¹³ Zimmerman, Andrew, “Guinea Sam Nightingale and Magic Marx in Civil War Missouri: Provincializing Global History and Decolonizing Theory,” *History of the Present* 8, no.2, (January 2018): 140-176, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.5406/historypresent.8.2.0140>, 142.

ensuing brutal occupation; the might of British and Greek governments muted the political power and potential of the leftist resistance organizations; and the new forms of political organization and action taking place in the resistance-controlled villages were subordinated to Party doctrines and official Communist dogmas. Yet, these points of contradiction ought not be viewed as points of closure but as places ripe for new inquiries and investigations, as places that once held the potential for the construction for something new.

I begin the thesis with a prelude to the 1940s. Chapter 1 locates the seeds of the material and political situation of 1940s Greece in the formation of the modern Greek state in 1830 and its subsequent political culture up to 1941. The founding of modern Greece after the war of independence from the Ottoman Empire was rife with tensions. The political elites and nobility of modern Greece cloaked themselves, and the state, in the glories of ancient and Byzantine Greece while the subalterns of the country languished in economic destitution. Throughout the 19th century and the early 20th, peasants and workers in Greece struggled to feed their families and to gain any sort of economic security.

Likewise, the politics of modern Greece prior to the 1940s was devoid of any sort of developmental or economic policies. The obsession with reproducing and preserving the legacy of ancient Greece consumed Greek politics for much of this period. The “Great Idea,” (*Megali Idea*), which cast an irredentist vision of the reincorporation of the lands of ancient and Byzantine Greece into the modern Greek state, dominated Greek politics and pushed to the side all concerns for material issues. At the behest of politicians championing the “Great Idea,” Greece entered a series of disastrous wars, further indebting the country and driving many subaltern Greeks to emigrate in order to survive.

Even as a more materially focused politics developed in Greece with the foundation of the Greek Communist Party (*Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*), KKE, the traditional holders of political power in Greece reacted toward the emergent Left with an ethos of exclusion. The Greek state passed laws that effectively banished radical ideas from the public sphere. Moreover, along with the passage of laws, the Greek state also created a system of incarceration and punishment that was designed to not only remove leftist ideas and bodies from the political realm, but also to eliminate their radicalness and transform them into passive subjects who would not jeopardize the status quo. This system relied on a broad network of prisons and concentration camps spread across the Greek mainland and the vast array of islands across the Aegean Sea.

The rise of the proto-fascist dictator Ioannis Metaxas further solidified the anti-communism of the Greek state. Metaxas not only expanded the state's repression of the Left in terms of laws and incarceration, he also grounded this repression in a reading of Greek history. Metaxas's government declared that leftist ideas were antithetical to Greekness and to the legacy of the Greek past. In so doing, Metaxas's government set the precedent and further developed much of the punitive structures that would be used by the Greek state after the Axis occupation to repress tens of thousands of leftists.

Chapter 2 examines the political potentiality of the Greek Resistance against the Axis occupation. Specifically, how the leftist resistance organization EAM (*Ethniko Apeleutherotiko Metopo*), "National Liberation Front," created a political administration that was theretofore singular in Greek history and in the minds of subaltern Greeks.

Greece entered World War II with the Italian invasion of 1940. Surprisingly, the Greek Army, under the leadership of Metaxas, quickly repelled the Italian forces, pushing

them out of Greece and into the south of Albania by the end of the year. Hitler swiftly released his fury at the incompetence of Mussolini's leadership with devastating results as the Germans began their invasion of Greece in April, 1941, with Nazi forces reaching Athens on April 27, 1941. After the defeat in the Battle of Crete (May 20-June 1, 1941) the Greek government and monarchy along with some British troops fled the island and set up a government-in-exile in Cairo.

Along with persecution of the Left, which saw thousands of Greeks sent to political concentration camps, the Axis slaughtered entire Greek villages and executed the genocidal "Final Solution" with horrifying efficiency. Come the end of 1944, when the German troops were forced to evacuate Greece, nearly 70,000 of Greece's 80,000 strong Jewish community had been liquidated.¹⁴ This devastated the Romaniot and Sephardic Jewish communities in Greece, which had been some of the oldest and most culturally entrenched communities of European Jewry.¹⁵

This crucible of violence and suffering birthed a massive resistance movement. The largest and most significant organization of the Greek Resistance was EAM, which operated with significant support from the KKE. EAM administered a military wing called ELAS (*Ellinikos Laikos Apeleutherotikos Stratos*), the "People's Liberation Army", which engaged in a protracted guerilla war mainly in the northern and central areas of the country against fascist forces within Greece, both Axis troops and the "Security Battalions" of the collaborationist government. By 1944 much of the north and central areas of Greece were

¹⁴ Dominique Eudes, *The Kapetanos: Partisans and Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949*, trans. John Howe, (New York: Monthly Review Press), 2009, 49; Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-1944*, (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1993, 256.

¹⁵ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 235.

under EAM/ELAS control, and this collective space—which comprised nearly two-thirds of the entire country—was named “Free Greece.”

Within Free Greece the EAM vision of “*Laokratia*,” “People’s Rule,” became hegemonic. With this ideal of a government for the people, EAM built key infrastructure such as telecommunications, roads, utilities, schools, and hospitals; it established people’s courts for the carrying out of collective justice at the village level; dancing and singing theater troupes travelled from village-to-village spreading culture and providing entertainment; and, perhaps most significant of all, it formed a national political body, PEEA (*Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Apeleutherosis*) the “Political Committee of National Liberation”, colloquially known as the “Government of the Mountains.”

I argue that through its ideals and practices EAM opened a space of radical political possibility in Free Greece. Whereas previous governments had largely excluded subaltern Greeks, EAM prioritized the education and development of the masses. And, moreover, through localized political structures, EAM encouraged the political participation of all members of Greek society. This is particularly noteworthy in the case of women, who previously were considered second-class citizens in Greece. Women not only became crucial members of, and often took on leadership positions within, EAM, they also voted—for the first time in Greek history—in the PEEA elections of 1944. Through its singular political advances EAM impelled subaltern Greeks to imagine new political futures where the work of politics would be oriented most fundamentally to the plight of the struggling and oppressed.

It is important to note, however, that these visions and possibilities did not arise out of thin air. Rather, they developed within a very specific political-economic context. The

mass suffering and social immiseration that was widespread across Greece due to the Axis occupation paved the way for the building of new political structures and ideals. Radical forms of change became acceptable because the status quo appeared impossible to accommodate. This is not to say, however, that a dire situation caused ordinary Greeks to submit to a program that they would not otherwise have supported. It is in fact the opposite. The occupation's violent intervention into normal, everyday life allowed people to see the faults in the quotidian and engage in a struggle which could possibly improve life for the common Greek. As anthropologist Janet Hart describes, "the...National Liberation Front [EAM] conceived of the Nazi occupation as a broader mandate for social transformation."¹⁶ A context of destruction opened a potentiality for radical construction.

Of course, it is also very important not to idealize the Resistance or to overstate its democratic aims. The decentralized aspects of EAM/ELAS constantly clashed with the rigid and dogmatic understandings of radical struggle which emanated from the KKE. The back-and-forth exchange between the KKE Central Committee and the body of the EAM administration continued throughout the occupation period and it constrained the political potential of Free Greece.

The inspirational and insurgent developments of "Free Greece" were not long lived, however. Chapter 3 details the Greek state's mass repression of the Left post-occupation. Once the Axis forces began to retreat in October 1944, tensions between the Greek Left and Right exploded into political violence. After twenty-eight Greek demonstrators were shot and killed by the police in the streets of Athens in December, a thirty-three-day battle took

¹⁶ Janet Hart, *New Voices in the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance, 1941-1964*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1996, 1-2.

place in the city with EAM/ELAS forces on one side and a coalition of British, monarchist, and reactionary groups on the other. In Greece these are known as the “December events” (*Dekemvriana*) and they ended with the defeat and disarmament of ELAS.

These events were followed by the “White Terror,” which saw monarchist and rightist forces in the Greek police, army, and the fascist “Organization X,” systematically hunt down Greeks sympathetic to the leftist cause or its organizations and send them to concentration camps or even execute them. Clashes between leftist and rightist groups continued until 1946, developing into an all-out Civil War in the spring of that year. The Civil War was waged for three continuous years, ending with the surrender of the communists at Mt. Grammos and the subsequent retreat of many of them into the bordering areas of Albania and Yugoslavia.

Political persecution was not a new practice in modern Greece, but the Civil War and the staunch anti-communism of the new Greek state brought it to unprecedented levels. Continuing previous practices, leftists who were arrested faced sentences in prisons or concentration camps, if not outright death. I argue that the experience of leftist political prisoners in Greece after Axis occupation and during the Civil War was one of a violent confrontation with the anti-communist Greek state. The point of political imprisonment in Greece was not simply to remove persons—and the ideas they embodied—from public society, it was also to enact a form of subjective transformation, to forcibly mold previously subversive persons into compliant subjects who would go along with the status quo rather than strike out against it. While the battle between reaction and radicalism within Greek prisons and prison camps can be framed a number of ways, I employ a Fanonian approach to analyze the conflictive struggle between the Greek state and leftist groups.

I use Fanon's competing and conflicting notions of anti-dialectical change and dialectical change to describe the policies of repression of the Greek state and the resistance to this repression by imprisoned leftists.¹⁷ Fanon's anti-dialectical change is constituted by a refusal of recognition between the conflicting parties; rather than interacting together to produce something new, anti-dialectical change results from absolute elimination of the "other." I argue that the Greek state fundamentally premised its repression on a policy of absolute elimination: in order to transform leftists into compliant subjects, their former leftist subjectivity, and the future that it projected, had to be completely destroyed.

Particularly, I focus in on the concentration camps on the island of Makronisos, located a few miles off the coast of the city of Lavrio. On Makronisos, prisoners were subjected daily to a series of horrifying punishments and psychological torments. Hard labor in conjunction with daily and nightly beatings broke the bodies of the imprisoned, while incessant propaganda—whether in the form of lectures, entertainment, or "redeemed" prisoners' testimonies—tormented their minds. Again, following Fanon, I argue that the indoctrination, and thus transformation of political prisoners' subjectivities, relied on an "otherization" of the leftist subject. Continuing the precedent set during Metaxas, the Greek state used particular readings of Greek history to frame leftists and their ideals as "anti-Greek," or antithetical to Greekness. As such, and in conjunction the violent brutality of daily torture, I argue that the Greek state treated leftists as Fanonian "non-beings": entities totally devoid, and undeserving, of access to any degree of human agency, dignity, and recognition.

¹⁷ Gavin Arnall, *Subterranean Fanon*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 2020, 6.

Notwithstanding the totalizing repression of the Greek state, political prisoners within camps and prisons actively resisted, and this resistance engendered a dynamic movement which produced new political identities and new conceptions of history. In this way, political prisoners embodied Fanon's claim that even within "the zone of non-being," the area of complete dehumanization, there is a potentiality for progressive development; there is a space where "an authentic upheaval can be born."¹⁸ As historian Polymeris Voglis writes, "Prison as an institution is contested directly—and more often indirectly—by the prisoners, and it is a field that *shapes and is shaped* by the politics of the subjects."¹⁹ Former EAM members utilized the new forms of political actions to collectively organize the prisons the Greek state confined them to. Drawing on the work of Hart, I particularly highlight how the female prisoners in the Averoff Prison designed a system of education and communalistic values that effectively continued the legacy of EAM despite the Greek state's society wide efforts to purge this legacy from Greece.

A Note on Sources

A thesis of this length and scope naturally relies on a great deal of work done by other authors. Briefly, I would like to recognize the various scholars whose previous historical, political, and anthropological work has formed the backbone of the evidence presented in this thesis.

¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press), 2008, xii

¹⁹ Polymeris Voglis, "Becoming Communist: Political Prisoners as a Subject during the Greek Civil War," in *The Greek Civil War: Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences*, 141-149, eds. Phillip Carabott and Thanasis D. T-Sfikas, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited), 2004, 142, (emphasis added).

Across the entirety of the thesis, historian and archeologist Yannis Hamilakis's *The Nation and Its Ruins* is a crucial element in my framing of the deployments of antiquity and the Greek past across Greek history, from the creation of the modern Greek state after independence, to the dictatorship of Metaxas, through the indoctrinating practices of the post-occupation Greek state. The work of historians L. S. Stavrianos and Richard Clogg provides a large portion of the historical background of modern Greece that I sketch in chapter 1. Historian Mark Mazower's *Inside Hitler's Greece* provides similar background for the events of the 1940s, particularly the Axis occupation and the EAM resistance. My analysis of the singular experience of "Free Greece," and the political possibilities it engendered is greatly in debt to the many interviews conducted by anthropologist Janet Hart in her work *New Voices in the Nation*. And, finally, my investigations into the repression of the Greek state and the experience of political prisoners post-occupation are built from the scholarly foundations laid by historian Polymeris Voglis and anthropologist Neni Panourgia.

I

“In another time’s forgotten space...”¹:

Subaltern Resistance and Greece’s Futures Past

“In reality, every mutable thing has within itself the measure of its time; this persists even in the absence of any other; no two worldly things have the same measure of time... There are therefore (to be precise and audacious) at any one time in the Universe infinitely many times.”

—J. G. Herder, *Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.²

Introduction

The historical conjuncture of 1940s Greece, with the political possibilities thereof, did not arise out of thin air. Although the 1940s presented forms of popular collective action and attempts at state building that were, and remain, unique in their breadth and scope, the tensions that birthed them cast a long historical shadow. The Greek state’s crushing of the 1940s Left was carried out with persecution on an unprecedented level, but its execution drew on tactics, laws, and systems of punishment which had been created and developed over the course of decades prior. This chapter will focus on the material conditions of common Greeks and the anti-Left political culture of Greece prior to the 1940s, and on the ways in which those conditions set the stage for an explosion of political potentiality from below and its subsequent liquidation by the forces of the Greek state. My wager is that two political “cultures” were present prior to the 1940s: a culture of widespread resistance to

¹ “Franklin’s Tower,” lyrics by Robert Hunter, music by Jerry Garcia and Bill Kreutzmann, track 2 on Grateful Dead, *Blues for Allah*, 1975.

² J. G. Herder, *Metakritik Zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, (Berlin), 1955, 68, quoted in Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe, (New York: Columbia University Press), 2004, 2.

oppression, which saw subaltern Greeks broadly fighting for political change, and a culture of anti-communism that ingrained the preservation of the status quo into the structure of the Greek state, with devastating results for those who sought to alter it.

In a broader, historical sense, the events of the 1940s must also be linked to the construction of, and contestation over, Greek modernity, which began with the creation of the modern Greek state in 1830. By this I mean that part and parcel with the formation of the Greek state post-independence from the Ottomans was the introduction and elevation of a new historical “time.” Greece’s first king, the German import Otto, came to imbue his rule with the time of the bourgeois nation-state, viewed as the harbinger of progress. But this was more than just an implantation of Western European notions of “progress” or “development” onto the body of the fledgling Greek state. It was a situating of the Greek state, and the “liberated” body of Greece, between the legacies of ancient and medieval pasts and the potentialities of eagerly awaited futures. Thus, explicit within the modernity of the Greek state is a national historical narrative. But this narrative was not merely a descriptive account of how the modern Greek nation came to be; its particular reading of history—how it joined understandings of the past to expectations of the future—implied a certain normativity that legitimized one current of historical time while excluding others. To clarify these points further, it will be helpful to briefly sketch out some more concrete definitions of “historical time,” “modernity,” and “temporality.”

Drawing on the work of the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck, particularly his 2004 work *Futures Past*, “historical time” can be understood in contrast to “natural time.” Natural time represents the temporal finitude that the laws of physics subject all humans and everything in the universe to; it is thus uniform and all encompassing, natural time plods

forth unrelentingly, regardless to whether you are a human subject or a planetary object.³ The study of natural time therefore requires little attention to the varieties of human action and understanding. Rather, natural time necessitates a single “chronology” which “reduces” all possible conceptions of time to “a common temporal scale.”⁴

The reduction of times to a single, unilinear strand cannot, and must not, constitute the study of historical time. Historical time is necessarily “bound up with social and political actions, with concretely acting and suffering human beings and their institutions and organizations” each of which with its own “internalized forms of conduct” and “peculiar temporal rhythm.”⁵ Implied within this is that historical time is multivariate and plural. Historical time is constituted by the unique human understanding of time—how we perceive the passage of time, and, more importantly, how we emplot events to form a coherent narrative that allows us to understand, and derive meaning from, the world around us—within every tangible thing. Thus, there are necessarily “infinitely many [historical] times.” I will return to this conclusion later in this discussion and at multiple points within the later chapters of this thesis.

With an understanding of historical time as relating to human action and perception rather than the successive ticks on a clock face or the marking of days on a calendar, modernity must be implicated within a particular conception of history, rather than a specific date, or range of dates.⁶ Koselleck argues that we can grasp the ways modernity is distinct

³ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe, (New York: Columbia University Press), 2004, 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁶ Massimiliano Tomba, *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2019, 3.

from other epochs by considering a basic question: “How, in a given present, are temporal dimensions of the past and future related?”⁷ In other words, how does our modern understanding of history construct a causal and semantic bridge between what came before and what we look forward to? Koselleck answers these questions by developing two spatial concepts—space of experience and horizon of expectation—that are simultaneously metaphors with epistemological power and concrete anthropological experiences. That is, for humans the past is an experience—an experience understood spatially as a series of events layered together to form the sediment of “past”—and the future is an expectation—with the horizon of expectation representing the space of possibility yet to be realized.⁸ From this tension between “experience” and “expectation” emerges the condition of “temporality,” the understanding of ones’ position in historical time.⁹ Within this framework, the essence of modernity is a continual increase of demands made upon the future; we are thoroughly modern when our knowledge of the past, and thus its meaning, is ever more subordinated to anticipation of the potentialities of the future.¹⁰

If we situate these concepts in the Greek context, it becomes apparent that the fascination with antiquity, especially its archaeological ruins, that has been a hallmark of Greek governments since the modern state’s inception in 1830, was not simply a benign interest in the events and people which previously existed and transpired. Rather, those in power recognized that the territory of the past had to be monopolized in order to define the boundaries of what is legitimate and what is illegitimate, and therefore to define a national

⁷ Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

project. This is simply to say that the construction of a Greek modernity by selectively appropriating and assimilating layers of the past into a historical narrative always contained, whether implicit or explicit, a political valence. How the past and future, experience and expectation, are drawn together and made sense of has direct repercussions on how power is wielded and legitimized.

To be sure, as I will discuss later in this chapter and in chapters 2 and 3, both the Right and Left constructed specific temporalities with ties to the past and the future to justify their political ideologies and prescriptions for action. The details of these utilizations will be described in depth later, but for the moment this conclusion presents two things worth noting. First, to recognize both the Right and the Left in Greece as appropriating the past in order to project an anticipated future is to recognize both as thoroughly modern. In more specific terms, this realization leads us to view both the proto-fascist Metaxas dictatorship and the following leftist insurgency as modernist movements; they both were forward looking, sketching out narratives that tied a vision of the future to seeds of a past which demanded specific actions in the present. Second, this again reminds us of the importance of historical knowledge and practices to both the reinforcement and the contestation of the status quo.

Indeed, the Greek political sphere can largely be understood as a battlefield over historical time. I conceptualize this as a battle between the “bourgeois time” of the Greek state, which demanded preservation of the status quo—maintenance of the same socio-economic relations that left the majority of Greeks poor and outside the purview of putative political action—and subaltern time, which demanded a fundamental transformation of society. Although the Greek state utilized the ancient past to concretize and legitimize its

exclusion of structural, material change from the Greek political sphere, there was always resistance, both in the ideological realm, where other, more emancipatory, readings of the Greek past were proffered and in actual subaltern political practice, as Greek peasants and workers organized and fought back against their oppressors.

I trace these dual times from the Greek War of Independence in 1821 to the Italian invasion of 1940. In the case of subaltern time, foreshadowing the arguments of chapter 2, this chapter works to describe the material and political realities of modern Greece prior to the 1940s and the development of the EAM administration. It explores the conditions of the peasantry and working classes—“subaltern” Greeks, put generally—as well as their lively spirit of resistance even in the absence of institutional structures that could turn such resistance into organized political action on a national level. Despite the parochial character of most organized opposition to oppression in pre-1940s Greece, the fact of constant and widespread peasant resistance in Greece reveals how the majority of Greeks were not content with their economic and political conditions. The mass discontent with the status quo, however, was long unable to congeal into a movement with transformative power. There was simply no national political organization which offered a vision of substantive material change. As such, peasants engaged in radical and violent actions ranging from assaulting, or even murdering, tax collectors to all out revolt and rebellion, but then had to show up on election day with the hope that a bourgeois party would work in their favor.¹¹

¹¹ Serpahim Seferiades, “Small Rural Ownership, Subsistence Agriculture, and Peasant Protest in Interwar Greece: The Agrarian Question Recast,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 17, no. 2, (1999): 277-323, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1353/mgs.1999.0034>, 282-283.

The electoral political hopes of oppressed Greeks were rendered futile by the fact that mainstream Greek political discourse, and thus the positions of mainstream Greek political parties, did not take on a class or material character until the 1930s.¹² Post-independence, Greek politics was wholly dominated by political “personalities,” who focused solely on irredentism and the question of the monarchy. The republican (Venizelist) parties and the royalist (anti-Venizelist) parties were the only viable options. Both groups rallied voting blocs that crossed class lines rather splitting them, creating governing coalitions with no desire to touch material issues. There simply was no space for a class politics which demanded policies that would work toward restructuring the economic bases of Greek society.

Once the Greek political sphere did begin to take on a more materialist character—with greater industrialization in the 1920s and the subsequent creation of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) in 1918—the reaction of the political establishment was one of prohibition rather than incorporation. Building on 19th century laws which outlawed banditry, in 1929 the Greek state codified the *Idionymo* Law, which was designed specifically to banish the Left from the political and public sphere.¹³ The *Idionymo* Law of 1929 outlawed any speech or even thought by anyone, whether politician or common citizen, which could be seen as attempting to “overthrow the established social order.”¹⁴

The superstructural legal scaffolding of the *Idionymo* Law was accompanied by the development of structures and systems of punishment. The tactics of organized physical

¹² Nicos Mouzelis, *Modern Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishes Inc.), 1978, 22.

¹³ Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners During the Greek Civil War*, (Oxford: Berghahn Books), 2002, 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

torture and psychological disintegration which would culminate in the Makronisos prison camp of the 1940s were first cultivated in exile camps established in the 1920s.¹⁵ An environment of violence which included daily beatings, hard labor, and nationalist indoctrination constituted the experience of the imprisoned.

Anti-communist fervor in interwar Greece reached its denouement with the seizure of power by the proto-fascist dictator Ioannis Metaxas on August 4, 1936. By this point in time the old political consensus was over but could not die, and the future was alive but could not be born. Described by political scientist George Mavrogordatos as a “frozen” period in Greek political history, the Metaxas dictatorship functioned to alleviate the gridlock between the bourgeois parties without ceding the Greek political sphere to the Left.¹⁶ Metaxas’s regime drew an explicit connection between anti-communism and a constructed “Hellenism” which acted as a far-right nationalist ideology derived from a reading of Greece’s ancient past.¹⁷ Although Metaxas was successful in fighting off the Italian invasion of 1940, his regime, and its repression of the Left, only served to prime the political atmosphere for insurgency. The Axis occupation which followed the Italian invasion was accompanied by an eruption of the material and political pressures which had been existent, but ignored, since the Greek state’s very foundation.

1820-1880: The Creation of a Greek Modernity

¹⁵ Voglis, *Becoming A Subject*, 36.

¹⁶ George Mavrogordatos, “The 1940s Between Past and Future,” in *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and its Legacy*, 31-48, ed. John O. Iatrides and Linda Wrigley, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press), 1995, 31-34; quoted in Voglis, *Becoming A Subject*, 38.

¹⁷ Yannis Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2009, 169-205.

The genesis of modern Greece was the War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire. What came out of the war was a modern Greek state beset by problems of time and space. Time nested in the tension between “modern” Greece and the legacy of its ancient and Byzantine pasts, and spatial dilemmas which originated with the fact that the Greek state contained only roughly a third of the total Greek population living in the Ottoman Empire. Combined with a constructed historical memory of the Byzantine Empire, the claims on Greek lands and populations outside of the new state became the centripetal force in Greek politics until 1922, its gravity subsuming all other issues. The dominance of reviving antiquity and expanding modern Greece all the way to Constantinople left little room for the times and spaces of the subaltern populations in Greece. Peasants and small artisans languished in utter destitution, often left with the choice of starvation or emigration.

Similar to the 20th century, late-Ottoman imperial rule saw mass inequality across Greece. A small set of Turks and wealthy Greeks owned most of the land with the majority of Greek peasants forced into sharecropping or wage labor.¹⁸ Although peasant antipathy had an anti-Turkish valence, it was projected against both Turkish and Greek landlords, with Greek owners being pejoratively labeled “uncircumcised Turks.”¹⁹ Resistance against Turkish rule mostly came from the *klephts*, brigands that terrorized wealthy Turks and Greeks alike across the countryside, often preying on state figures like tax collectors, to the great esteem of the peasantry.²⁰ The subversion of all aspects of the social order foisted the *klephts* to a legendary place in the Greek national memory, with their likeness and spirit

¹⁸ L. S. Stavrianos, *History of the Balkans Since 1453*, (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc.), 1958, 280.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1992, 15.

being recast and drawn upon in later moments of subaltern resistance. These guerilla militant bands inaugurated what would become “a long, if erratic, tradition of irregular warfare” in Greece, a tradition that became a centerpiece of the fighting in the War of Independence and the Resistance and Civil War of the 1940s.²¹

Peasant guerillas and bandits led by westernized Greeks may have fought most of the war, but the intervention of the Great Powers won it. In what began a continuous pattern of foreign intervention throughout Greek history, Britain, France, and Russia intervened on the side of the Greeks, crushing the Ottoman navy in the Battle of Navarino and ultimately ending the war. The Great Powers played more than just a military role, however. With the culmination of the war, they decided the political fate of the new Greek state. Despite the revolutionaries electing a president in 1827, the Powers declared Greece a monarchy and appointed the 17-year-old Otto of Bavaria as the country’s first king in 1832. The influence of the Western powers, however, did not end with the imposition of the new monarch.

Indeed, the Great powers made Greek politics post-Independence totally subordinate to their interests. Although Otto ruled absolutely for the first ten years of his reign, his government was staffed by political parties named after the titular powers. The “French,” “Russian,” and “British” parties not only payed nominal fealty to the Powers, but they also effectively represented their national interests in Greek government. Thus, the imposition of the West onto Greece became not only ideational and symbolic but also reified and consequential. King Otto’s arrival marked the inauguration of Greece as a “semi-colonial” state, constantly under the thumb of larger European powers. But this also signaled the

²¹ Ibid.

active rebuilding and resurrection of the myth of ancient Greece as a source of expectations for the future.

The Bavarian monarchy drew on the classical past to construct a new future from the contradictory potentialities of present. In a ceremony for the movement of the Greek capital from Nafplion to Athens in 1834, an official greeted the arrival of the King in the city with a speech at the reconstructed ruins of the Acropolis, a section of which stated the intentions of the new state all too clearly:

Your Majesty stepped today for a first time on this glorious Acropolis after so many centuries of barbarism, walking on the road of civilization and glory, on which passed the Themistocleses, the Aristideses, the Kimons, and the Pericleses, and this is and it should be in the eyes of the people the symbol of your glorious reign... All the remnants of barbarism will disappear, not only here but in the whole of Greece, and the remnants of the glorious past will be surrounded with new shine, as a solid basis for the present and future.²²

King Otto and his chief architect, Leo Von Klenze, thus commenced the construction of a Greek modernity. In this vein, the restoration and protection of ancient monuments formed the landscape of the modern Greek nation, to be brought into the fold of Western modernity.²³ But the ironies of the new King remained blatantly apparent. The fact that the above speech was given in German, his practice of Catholicism, and the initial staffing of the King's government by Bavarians rather than Greeks, greatly reduced the believability of the new state's attempts to tie itself to the legacy of Greek antiquity. From the dawn of modern Greece, claims on the ancient Greek past were always open to contestation, marred as they were by suspicions of political instrumentality by historical figures lacking legitimacy.

²² Antonios Miliarakis, "A Ceremony on the Acropolis of Athens," *Estia* 18, no. 447, (1884): 461-467, quoted in Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 60-61.

²³ Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 62.

Geographical imaginings dominated Greece's fledgling political sphere and stood in tension with the temporal claims that linked the ancient past to an expected modern future. The new state contained only a fraction of the total Greek population housed within the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, its geographical boundaries did not at all match the extent of the ancient and Byzantine legacy which so enamored the minds of its officials.

The irredentist "Great Idea" (*Megali Idea*) became the central focus of Greek politics for roughly the first 100 years of the state's existence, until the tragic finale of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922). The Great Idea conjured a nationalist dream of a Greece that stretched from western Greece, through Macedonia, Thrace, and up to Constantinople and eastern Anatolia. As noted by historian Harry Harootunian, fixation on space is often a central component of national histories, as fledgling nations (re)envision themselves and their forward looking national projects with respect to the legacies of past experiences.²⁴ The "Great Idea" thus provided a connecting arc between the constructed modernity of the new Greek state and the purported territorial inadequacies that the Greek state faced. Moreover, following Harootunian, the obsession with recapturing the putative territories of ancient and Byzantine Greece, created a "sense of timelessness" which prioritized "tradition and continuity."²⁵ Greek historians and politicians assigned utmost importance to reproducing and preserving the Greek past in their political vision, thus defining any effort for radical

²⁴ Harry Harootunian, "Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem," *Boundary 2* 32, no.2, (2005): 23-52, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1215/01903659-32-2-23>, 25; for further reading see Harry Harootunian, "Shadowing the Past: National History and the Persistence of the Everyday," *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2/3, (March/May 2004): 181-200.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

societal change as “anti-national” or “anti-Greek,” a legacy that would take on even greater significance in the post-Occupation period.

But even as expansionist dreams captured the minds of Greek political figures, the peasantry continued to languish in utter destitution after the war. Although independence liberated the peasantry from the large Turkish-owned estates, Greek land reform did not ameliorate their situation. In fact, peasant taxation increased under Otto, often leading to ever-increasing cycles of debt.²⁶ Moreover, loans to peasants were not regulated by the state and in conjunction with mass debt this created an environment of peasant extortion where interest rates often reached levels of 20-24% for mortgages and 36-50% for personal loans.²⁷ The state also did little to try to help peasants improve their agricultural practices, investing very little money in infrastructure, agricultural capital and education, and transportation. This lack of structural changes led to mass emigration from Greece. Nearly 60,000 people, mostly young men, emigrated *back* to the Ottoman provinces between 1834 and 1836.²⁸

Growing unrest due to Otto’s failure to rule on essentially all fronts led to two revolutions during his reign. The first, in 1843, established Greece as a constitutional state with a popularly elected Chamber and an appointed Senate. But this did not save the King. A second rebellion in 1862 forced Otto to abdicate the throne, prompting the Great Powers to replace him with Prince William George Glucksburg of Denmark. Although the Greek people in an unofficial plebiscite voted for a different potential monarch—the second son of Queen Victoria, Prince Alfred—the Great Powers instead crowned King George because he

²⁶ Stavrianos, *Balkans*, 297.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 296.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 296.

promised absolute fealty to their interests.²⁹ King George ceded even more of his monarchic powers to the Greek national assembly but, despite his accession being contemporaneous with the granting of universal male suffrage in 1864, his weakening of the monarchy did not produce a flowering of unfettered democracy in Greece.

Sociologist Nicos Mouzelis has defined the revolutions of 1844 and 1862 as oligarchic ones.³⁰ The fracturing of the absolute, centralized monarchy resulted in more political power for wealthy, land-holding Greeks. As such, a clientelistic political climate based on top-down patronage became the dominant mode of political organization in Greece. Mouzelis notes that “the linkage between State and ‘civil’ society was not in terms of classes or rather of secondary organizations representing class interests, but in terms of purely personal clientelistic networks.”³¹ With this transformation class-based organizations, and mobilization around economic issues more generally, was again precluded from the Greek political sphere. The distribution of political “spoils” became the lifeblood of Greek politics. Instead of developing the economy, the Greek state became the principal sector of new employment. Evidencing this, by roughly 1880 the size of the Greek civil service had ballooned, with “the number of civil servants per 10,000...approximately seven times higher in Greece than in the United Kingdom.”³²

1880-1922: The obsession with Space and the politics thereof

The 1880s initially promised some concessions to the subalterns of Greece, but the spatial fixation of territorial expansion under the auspices of the “Great Idea” crowded this

²⁹ Clogg, *Concise History of Greece*, 59.

³⁰ Mouzelis, *Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment*, 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 17.

out. The economic developments and reform that did occur for the most part benefited the wealthy in Greece and the colonial powers. Meanwhile, Balkan conflicts connected to the gradual weakening, and eventual collapse, of the Ottoman Empire only fanned the flames of Greek irredentism. The irredentist torch was seized and carried furthest by the emergence of Eleutherios Venizelos as Greek premier in 1910. The Cretan rose to legendary heights in the Greek political sphere, again prompting a redrawing of the political map, this time with the major schism lying between the “Venizelist” and the “anti-Venizelist” parties. While Venizelos was unmatched in his success at securing new lands for the Greek state, his policies of land reform did little to ameliorate the conditions of the peasantry. In conjunction with a rising industrial sector and working class, the discontent of the subaltern masses in Greece was too loud to be ignored. The creation of the Greek Communist Party, KKE, in 1918 opened the door for the political battle which would ingrain itself into the heart of Greek politics: communism vs anti-communism.

From 1880 to 1910, the battles between the two political personalities, Khirilaos Trikoupis and Theodoros Deliyannis, dominated Greek politics. Whereas Trikoupis’s government prioritized infrastructural development, Deliyannis’s coalition furiously advocated for the grand vision of the “Great Idea.” Deliyannis continued to set the Greek political eye on Constantinople, frenetically rallying his fellow party members to “take the City.”³³ The fervor and nationalistic glory which Deliyannis ascribed to the “Great Idea,” largely crowded out the more materially oriented policies of Trikoupis.

³³ Stavrianos, *History of the Balkans*, 468.

Even so, as much as it was an idealistic dream that crowded out burning economic issues in Greece, irredentism had still managed to accrue a few victories throughout the 19th century. King George's accession to the throne saw the Ionian Islands ceded to Greece from Britain in 1864, and after Ottoman defeat in the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78, the region of Thessaly joined the Greek state in 1881. Though these were sizable additions in both population and territory, the hunger for recapturing the territories of the Byzantine Empire remained rampant in Greek politics while the economic situation became even more perilous. The battle between Trikoupis and Deliyannis, continued to reflect this, as escapades abroad and military overspending in the fever dream of reconquest forced Trikoupis to declare the Greek state bankrupt in 1893. Again, the ultimate control of the small state by the Great Powers reared its ugly head and an international financial commission was established to make sure Greece paid its debts—an antecedent of sorts to the tragedy and farce that followed the financial crisis of 2008.

Yet, bankruptcy and the intervention of the Powers did not stop the irredentist fervor from arousing further injudiciousness. Greek and Turkish battles for the island of Crete came to a head in 1897. Exaggerated reports of Turks massacring Greek Christians on Crete raised the situation to a fever pitch, prompting the Greek government to attack Turkish military outposts in Thessaly, which amounted to a declaration of war. It was a short and disastrous campaign for the Greeks. The Ottoman forces utilized their better training and equipment to crush the Greek army in only thirty days. Only the Great Power's intervention prevented the burning of Athens, who feared that a Turkish rout of the city may lead to the end of the Glucksburg Dynasty's rule of Greece.³⁴ Despite the ignominious defeat in the

³⁴ Ibid., 471.

war, the post-war negotiations still delivered for Greece the demands that had started the fighting in the first place: Crete was liberated from the Ottoman Empire bringing the “Great Island” securely into the Greek sphere of influence.

Despite the addition of Crete, defeat by the Turks left irredentism dead in the water in Greece. The *Megali Idea* seemed to be all but over. Moreover, Trikoupis’s death in 1897 and Deliyannis’s assassination in 1905 untethered Greek politics from the two personalities which had been its main driver for the past twenty years. This unmooring prompted disillusionment and deadlock in the political arena, the country lay in “one of the most depressing periods since the war of independence.”³⁵ New political factions struggled to accrue popularity and form governments, and out of the deadlock, in what would become a common pattern in Greek politics for the next thirty years, a military coup took power in 1909.

Out of the coup surged not a dictatorship but the torchbearer of the new era of Greek politics. Eleutherios Venizelos, a Cretan who had cut his teeth in the political realm of the autonomous island, was foisted to power. Venizelos’s “Liberal Party” surged to power in the 1910 election, winning 300 out of the 364 seats in parliament.³⁶ Venizelos triumphed on promises of social reform and reclamation of the “Great Idea.” His new government quickly passed laws which delivered change across Greek society, consolidating a political coalition that was not class oriented, with significant support from both workers and businesses alike. The first Venizelist government codified the minimum wage for women and children, set up institutions for agricultural development and land reform, created a compulsory education

³⁵ Ibid., 473.

³⁶ Ibid., 476.

system, re-organized the military, and rolled back the systems of patronage which had enabled the vast, clientelist spoils system.³⁷ Despite Venizelos's seeming attention to material issues, his political dominance in the 1910s was for the most part singularly focused on expansion of Greek territory and revitalization of the dreams of the *Megali Idea*.

Tactful negotiations after the Balkan Wars (1911-1913) brought the northern region of Macedonia into the Greek state and a better funded and equipped navy liberated the islands of Chios, Mytilini, and Samos from Ottoman rule.³⁸ This added nearly two million new subjects and increased the land area of the state by 70%.³⁹ Nevertheless, the ambitions did not stop there, and the momentum of one success after another cast the Greek irredentist eye towards Constantinople once again. The onset of the First World War opened the door for further carving and annexation of the ailing Ottoman state. But, diving into the war on the side of the *Entente* was not unanimously supported in the Greek government. What emerged from this was a fracturing of Greek politics, inaugurating the "National Schism" where Venizelist parties supported engaging in World War I, pushing for the *Megali Idea*, and jettisoning the monarchy while anti-Venizelists formed the pro-monarchy, anti-expansion bloc. Becoming more than just a notional divide in the political apparatus, the schism literally broke Greek politics and the country in two, with rival Venizelist and anti-Venizelist governments each claiming power.

In what nearly resulted in a civil war, which saw violent reprisals against opposing Venizelist and anti-Venizelist factions, culminated with the exodus of the King in 1917 and his replacement by his second son, Alexander. Supporters of the King were subsequently

³⁷ Clogg, *Concise History of Greece*, 77; Stavrianos, *History of the Balkans*, 477.

³⁸ Clogg, *Concise History of Greece*, 81.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

purged, and Greece entered World War I on the side of the allies. Greek troops were deployed to the Macedonian front to fight the Bulgarians and, in what presaged the anti-communist bent which would characterize much of the upcoming Greek politics of the 1920s and 1930s, two Greek divisions were sent to Russia in an attempt by the *Entente* coalition to cripple the Bolshevik revolution.⁴⁰

The end of the Great War came with the question of how the defeated Ottoman Empire was to be split up. Greece initially enjoyed extreme success, with Venizelos's appeals to the Allies resulting in the allocation of both eastern Thrace and Smyrna and its hinterland to the Greeks. Buoyed by this success, and under threat of a crashing of the irredentist party with the landing of Italian troops in southwest Turkey, Venizelos's government deployed the Greek army to the shores of Smyrna in 1919, ambitiously, and in the end foolishly, aiming for the conquest of Turkey and thus the fulfillment of the *Megali Idea*. The result was tumultuous on both the war front and in domestic politics.

The Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922 was disastrous for the Greek army. After roughly two years, the Greek offensive into the center of Turkey began in March 1921. To the shock of the Greek government, the Turks routed the Greek army all the way back to Smyrna, forcing them to turn tail back to Greece. The bloodshed sadly did not end there, though. With the exit of the Greek army the Turks massacred nearly 30,000 Greeks and Armenians Christians and burned much of the city of Smyrna to the ground.⁴¹ The city's historically cosmopolitan character vanishing in the flames as Greeks fled to the sea to try and escape.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 93.

⁴¹ Ibid., 97.

Coinciding with the devastating events of the Greco-Turkish War was a series of dramatic events in Greek politics. War fatigue from nearly a decade of continued deployment for the Greek army prompted an overwhelming rejection of Venizelos and his Liberal Party and a return of King Constantine in the elections of 1921. Notwithstanding previous pledges against territorial expansion and war, the King and his royalist bloc pushed ahead with the war in Turkey and took the brunt of the blame in the ignominious defeat. After returning to Greece only a year prior, a military coup ousted the King from power and a national plebiscite declared an end to the monarchy in Greece, for the time being at least. Venizelos's Liberals returned to power, but despite pleas to the Great Powers, the achievements borne from the end of the First World War were reversed.⁴²

East Thrace and Smyrna were returned to the Turkish state, but, more significantly, an exchange of populations was agreed between Greece and Turkey. This saw nearly 1.2 million Greek Christians forcibly moved from Turkey to Greece and roughly 400,000 Muslims go the other way. The rich cosmopolitan character of cities like Smyrna and provinces like Macedonia were largely erased by ethnic homogenization. Although the transfer solidified a Greek majority in areas like Macedonia, where large minority populations were problematic in the eyes of the Greek state, the forced transfer also fostered many tensions. Many of the Anatolian Greeks were primarily Turkish speaking and were looked down upon by the "Old" Greeks of the Peloponnese and Attica. Most importantly, the *Megali Idea* died in the ashes of Smyrna. Territorial settlement with Turkey and the population exchange ended what had been the cornerstone of Greek politics for the past 100

⁴² Ibid., 101.

years, the result being even more infighting and a decade of political turmoil and deadlock which produced proto-fascist dictatorship.

For all the expansionary achievements of the Greek state from 1880 to 1922, the plight of subaltern Greeks was barely improved and in many cases it deteriorated further. Infrastructural initiatives and land reform, although made under the guise of improving the Greek economy for all, worked to the benefit of the Western powers and wealthy Greeks. State bankruptcy and Western-oriented trade policy rendered peasants and workers vulnerable to the fluctuations of the market. Economic degradation was not experienced passively by Greek subalterns, however. Uncoordinated revolts and riots were a constant presence, building up to the even more charged atmosphere of the inter-war period.

Spearheaded first by Trikoupis and then later Venizelos, construction of new roads, railroads, dams, and canals was a major characteristic of the period from 1880 and 1920. Yet, the infrastructural system itself was not built for the development of Greece and the accrual of greater prosperity to its citizens. Rather, they functioned as a node of extraction in the greater network of Western imperialism.⁴³ Moreover, the machinations of Western imperial powers in Greek internal affairs kept the Greek economy open, in the international sense, with little trade protections for its citizens. Anti-protectionism forced subsistence farmers to engage in the competitive, international market. Competition meant reduced prices, and subsequent lower revenues that forced peasants to take out loans and go into debt.⁴⁴

⁴³ Mouzelis, *Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment*, 20.

⁴⁴ Seferiades, "Small Rural Ownership," 284.

Land reform, which was supposed to be a direct benefit to the peasantry from the state, also induced greater precarity in the economic position of the Greek masses. Although land reform distributed parcels of land to peasant farmers, for the most part it continued the dominance of large estates throughout the Greek countryside, with roughly 35 percent of arable land holdings consisting of large properties owned by local elites.⁴⁵ Consolidation of the land into a few wealthy hands kept the majority of the peasantry locked into positions as either sharecroppers or smallholders. Furthermore, peasant rights to the land were *reduced* following land reform in the 1880s. The hereditary right to the land was removed and landowners were granted discretionary powers over terminating peasants' contracts and expelling them from the land.⁴⁶ Debt and economic insecurity created a situation where peasants basically lived hand-to-mouth, with almost no opportunity to improve their situations. As such, immigration numbers again soared, with nearly 350,000 Greeks leaving the country for areas of diaspora settlement or the United States between 1890 and 1914.⁴⁷

For the Greeks who were unable to emigrate, or who simply chose not to, resistance was the only other option. Peasants "constantly engaged in defiant action," like the breaching of contracts; clashes with foremen and managers of the land; attacks, and sometimes even killings of tax collectors; and, when things reached fever pitch, battles with the Greek military.⁴⁸ Although this resistance did not congeal into a force for national political change, it nonetheless signaled the utter destitution of the peasantry, and the fact that its continuation would not be passively tolerated. This pattern persisted into the 1920s

⁴⁵ Ibid., 281.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 282.

⁴⁷ Clogg, *Concise History of Greece*, 71.

⁴⁸ Seferiades, "Small Rural Ownership," 282-283.

and 1930s, foreshadowing the “cry for vengeance” that rose into a call for transformation in the 1940s.

1923-1936: Greek politics in Crisis

The inter-war period in Greece multiplied and deepened the tensions which had been building since the very inception of the country in the war of independence. The political system completely capitulated, dominated by internecine strife and constant military uprisings which prevented any sort of structural change. Instead of irredentism, the issue of the monarchy became the central focus, as alternating periods of power between the Venizelists and the anti-Venizelists exacerbated political divisions and deadlock.

Against the grain of an ossified bourgeois politics, the emergence of the KKE in the early 1920s began a significant shift in the Greek political scene. Though their support remained relatively small up until the mid-1930s, the presence of the KKE gave voice to the material issues which had plagued Greece for over a century. The reaction to the KKE, however, was wholly exclusionary. Both in ideology and in practice anti-communism became a central tenet of the Greek political establishment, ingraining the preservation of the status quo deep into the Greek political structure. Yet, fealty to the status quo was not in the cards for the majority of Greeks. Material conditions remained appalling, and resistance on the part of subalterns continued. As tensions rose to a breaking point in 1935, rather than allowing the Communists a modicum of power in the government, a proto-fascist dictator seized power with the backing of the reinstated Greek King.

The end of the *Megali Idea* brought with it not only over a million refugees but also fundamental shifts in the Greek political scene. Territorial expansion could no longer be the

hegemonic issue for Greek politicians; the borders of the country were, for the most part, set in stone. This loss of the nationalist dream of a “Greater Greece” cloaked the country in widespread apathy and depression. What was clear in the fog of dreams deferred was the country’s dire need for “internal development and modernization.”⁴⁹ But policies, and politics, from the mainstream parties never rose to adequately meet this vast material need. Rather, the dominant political blocs shifted their political battles to a different, non-material question, that of the monarchy.

It is not necessary to get deep into the details of the back-and-forth struggles between the Venizelists and anti-Venizelists over the Greek monarchy, but suffice it to say that this conflict generated irreparable fractures in the Greek political establishment. From 1922-1936 there were seven military coups which attempted to seize power—the one true success being Metaxas’s coup in 1936—and elections were held six separate times.⁵⁰ The first act of a newly minted government would be to purge all members of the opposition party from its ranks and replace them with friendly party members or distribute the positions through patronage. The clientelist system thus survived into the interwar period, but it developed a much more explicit and retributive character. Political scientist George Mavrogordatos likewise locates what can almost be labeled a blood feud between Venizelists and anti-Venizelists in the period of the 1910s, particularly the National Schism of 1915-16. For our purposes, Mavrogordatos identifies the key shift in Greek politics of the 1920s. Until then, both Venizelist and anti-Venizelist parties relied on cross-class coalitions that were held

⁴⁹ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 34.

⁵⁰ Stavrianos, *History of the Balkans*, 662.

together by mutual investment and belief in Greek irredentism.⁵¹ When Greek irredentism was ignominiously defeated in the Greek-Turkish war, the coalitions of the two parties—and also the only thing that gave the respective parties common ground with each other—began to splinter, the product of this splintering being mass political polarization.⁵² Thus, the question of the king, the definitional difference between the “republican” Venizelists and the “monarchist” anti-Venizelists, became the combative center of the Greek political establishment.

The divisions and weakening of the Venizelist and anti-Venizelist parties presented an opportunity for a new contingent in Greek politics: the Left. The Greek Communist Party (KKE), originally founded in 1918, gave the material concerns of subaltern Greeks a political voice which had hitherto been absent in Greece. Although the party found some support with the Greek refugee population, its mass appeal throughout the 1920s was greatly precluded by its strict adherence to international communist doctrine (at this time stemming from the Comintern), a problem which would continue to hurt the party’s popularity and legitimacy throughout the 1940s.

The main doctrinal problems for the KKE throughout the 1920s were its position on the “Macedonian Question” and its refusal to incorporate elements of Greek nationalism into its platform. On the issue of Macedonia, the party held fast to the unpopular position, proffered by the Comintern, that the province of Macedonia should be allowed to detach from Greece and become its own state.⁵³ Not only was this unappealing to indigenous

⁵¹ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 34; George Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Conditions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1983, 323-337.

⁵² Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 25.

⁵³ Clogg, *Concise History of Greece*, 106-107.

Greeks, but it even further alienated a refugee population which had so recently experienced the social upheaval and struggle of population exchange and national realignment.⁵⁴

Moreover, the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the KKE viewed nationalism as a bourgeois perversion which obscured class consciousness, and thus the party refused to invoke it. The problem with this was that regardless of ideology, nationalism was an incredibly potent force in the modern Greek political context and without it the accrual of political consensus was quite difficult.

The KKE's limited popularity and doctrinal barriers did nothing to deter the other Greek political parties from launching an anti-communist crusade. Budding out of the culture of political purges, the Greek political establishment responded to the Left by codifying laws and systems of punishment that excluded any possibility, or even thought, of structural, society-wide change from the Greek political sphere. What would develop into an entire state apparatus of punishment in the 1930s and 40s began with the *Idionymo* Law of 1929.

Passed by the Venizelists in 1929, the *Idionymo* Law ("special crime" law) declared that "whoever aim[ed] at the implementation of ideas whose manifest purpose is the overthrow of the established social order by violent means or the detachment of part from the whole of the country, or proselytiz[ed] in favor of these ideas" would be jailed for six months or exiled for one to two years.⁵⁵ Moreover, any actions which could be framed as inciting the "overthrow of the established order," such as worker strikes or lockouts, were also made illegal.⁵⁶ The "special" element of the *Idionymo* Law was that unlike other laws

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Law 4229", *Government Gazette* 245, 25 July 1929, quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 35.

⁵⁶ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 35.

which punished an action, its purpose was to persecute ideas and convictions.⁵⁷ Ownership of books, or even the casual utterance could land an individual in jail or in exile; it was not enough to proscribe radical action, radical thought itself had to be banished from the Greek political sphere.

The *Idionymo* would lay the groundwork for further persecutory laws enacted under the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas, but even the initial iteration had brutal consequences for many Greeks. Between 1929 and 1937 nearly 3,000 individuals were convicted and then jailed or exiled under its auspices.⁵⁸ The convicted were then sent to island detention camps or prisons. Historian Polymeris Voglis describes the “flavor of life” of these early prison camps as being constituted by

Beatings when the new soldiers arrived in the camp and while they worked, hard labor in road construction, woodcutting, and the transport of coal, surprise attacks at night by the guards, censorship of correspondence, wretched living conditions, nationalist songs, [and] suicide attempts by detained soldiers.⁵⁹

Moreover, conditions within 1920s Greek exile camps and prisons were horrid. Voglis, utilizing the testimony of a contemporary judge, reports that in the prison of the town Kyparissia, “windows were broken or missing, tiles were missing from the roof of the building and rain leaked through, the wooden floor was broken or rotten, and there was hardly any physical light in the dormitories.”⁶⁰ Importantly, this was not at all exceptional in

⁵⁷ Neni Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens: The Greek Left and the Terror of the State*, (New York: Fordham University Press), 2009, 41.

⁵⁸ Roussos Koundouros, *I asfaleia tou kathestotos*, (Athens), 1978, 93-103; quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 35.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶⁰ I. P. Petrounakos, *Ai Fylakai kai i dikaiosyni mas*, (Athens), 1936, 7-9, quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 36-37.

the Greek prison system. As one lawyer of the time commented on the topic of Greek prisons, “their characterization as graves for living people is not an exaggeration.”⁶¹

Alongside the violence of beatings and brutal living conditions, the mass persecution of leftists by the *Idionymo* Law also prompted the addition of an ideological dimension to Greek punitive practices. Processes of indoctrination and transformation of political subjectivity that would be developed further under Metaxas, and reach their ultimate culmination in the Makronisos prison camp, began in the late 20s and early 30s. The Greek state quickly recognized prisons as not only sites of ideological removal—that is, where ideas that threatened the status quo could be contained outside of society—but also as spaces for ideological transformation. Voglis highlights one Stylianos Glykofrydis, a prison director, ardent anti-communist, and, uncoincidentally, an open admirer of Hitler and the Nazi party. Glykofrydis advocated that communist prisoners should be subject to a “special strict regime” and kept away from other non-political prisoners who they could potentially “corrupt” with their “Bolshevik propaganda.”⁶² Although this approach was more restrained than the later indoctrinatory practices of Makronisos, which saw prisoners being subjected to a strict regime of mind- and back-breaking violence and nationalist propaganda, it inaugurated that trajectory. The idea that communists were mentally corrupted or contaminated and as such needed to be “cleansed” or “purified” was a central premise of the Greek state’s understanding, and it undergirded the persecution of the Left throughout the 1940s. Moreover, one of the main devices used to “cleanse” prisoners of their political beliefs, the declaration of repentance (*dilosia*), also originated as an outgrowth of the 1920s

⁶¹ Aristeidis Prokos, *Symvoli eis tin organosin tou sofronistikou systimatos en Elladi*, (Athens), 1936, 89, quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 36.

⁶² Stylianos Glykofrydis, *Fylakai*, (Athens), 1936, 79-86; quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 37.

punitive system. Prisoners who were jailed under the *Idionymo* Law could be released after serving only one-fourth of their sentence if they signed a document which affirmed they had “repented” from their previous political beliefs and pledged they would not engage in any actions which threatened the established social order.⁶³

Yet, while the crackdown on the Left began to take full bloom in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the material conditions which made left politics appealing to a mass base of Greeks continued to worsen. Although the Venizelists and their titular leader, Eleutherios Venizelos, enacted a putatively “radical” series of country-wide land reforms in both the late 1910s and throughout the 1920s, the result was in fact deepening economic inequality and worsening economic security across Greece.

Venizelist land reform may have been significant in scope, breaking up over 3,000 estates (nearly 40% of Greece’s arable land at that time), but land redistribution was a highly inequitable process. Utilizing data from 1929 Agricultural Census, political scientist Seraphim Seferiades estimated that by the end of land reform roughly 72% of land holdings (the total of small plots, owned largely by smallholding peasants) only accounted for 24% of total land under cultivation while the largest parcels of land (owned by elite families) only represented 4% of total holdings but 42.3% of total land under cultivation.⁶⁴ The elite families (*tsorbadjides*) which dominated Greek agriculture were barely affected by Liberal land reform. Summarized as such by anthropologist Anastasia Karakisidou,

Despite some land expropriations, much of the property base of the powerful *tsorbadjidhes* families, Liberals and...[anti-Venizelists] alike, had been left intact...Land reform had created a new class of agricultural small landholders, but many continued to struggle to meet their subsistence needs. [Moreover], through taxes, threshing fees, milling charges, and the

⁶³ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 36.

⁶⁴ Seferiades, “Small Rural Ownership,” 287.

like, the *tsorbadjides* contributed to the impoverishment of the new class of agricultural smallholders, compromising the subsistence needs of many families as they furthered their own economic development and aggrandizement.⁶⁵

On top of unequal land distribution and labor exploitation by wealthy land holders, Greek smallholders were further disadvantaged by lack of technology and access to more efficient farming practices. However, rather than providing low-interest loans to buy agricultural capital or offering community training programs, the Greek state shirked the problem altogether by simply giving the peasants greater access to land; but without more efficient farming more land just perpetuated the same problems.⁶⁶ Karakasidou concludes that poverty in the Greek countryside was “so endemic that some families could not find anyone worthy enough to help carry the coffin to the village cemetery when a family member died.”⁶⁷

Throughout the interwar period the impoverished existence of many peasant smallholders in Greece was primarily characterized by constant existential dilemmas and mounting debts. Peasant smallholders were unable to grow enough to either feed themselves directly, or to sell to the market for money to then use to purchase subsistence goods. According to historian L. S. Stavrianos, utilizing data from the 1929 census, roughly 38% of Greek farmers in 1929 “had insufficient land to support their families at a locally accepted standard of living.”⁶⁸ Outside of, and in conjunction with, nutritional subsistence, the lack of institutions like schools and hospitals in villages meant that many common Greeks were also

⁶⁵ Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 1995, 296, quoted in Seferiades, “Small Rural Ownership,” 290.

⁶⁶ Seferiades, “Small Rural Ownership,” 292.

⁶⁷ Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, 184, quoted in Seferiades, “Small Rural Ownership,” 299.

⁶⁸ Stavrianos, *History of the Balkans*, 678.

plagued by the threat of disease—most significantly malaria and tuberculosis—and saddled with the economic and social disadvantage of being illiterate.⁶⁹

Deficiencies in standard of living also prompted and perpetuated the accrual of smallholder debt, as lack of monies or food forced peasants to borrow in order to feed themselves.⁷⁰ Seferiades provides a further quantitative angle to the debt issue. His calculations show peasant debt was nearly 8.5 billion drachmas by the end of the interwar period with roughly “60-80% of the debtors...unable to service their debts.”⁷¹ Add to this an extremely heavy tax burden on the lower classes, constituted mostly by indirect taxes that peasants had to pay in order to produce their goods (milling and threshing fees, for instance), and you have a situation where peasants were comprehensively trapped in pauperism; for many the only exit remained death by starvation or emigration.

Forms of public humiliation exacerbated the peasants’ misery. Peasant families engaged in temporary or seasonal labor to accrue additional income. Naturally, this labor often entailed working on the land of the elite families (*tsorbadjides*), often to the great disrespect and dehumanization of the peasants. Karakasidou writes, “Relations between employers [*tsorbadjides*] and employees [smallholding peasants] were far from ideal, and hired laborers were often addressed as ‘servants’ (*douloi*).”⁷² Furthermore, Karakasidou utilizes the testimony of villagers in the Assiros village who had been subject to such temporary work arrangements, they recall,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 683-685.

⁷⁰ Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, 183.

⁷¹ Seferiades, “Small Rural Ownership,” 294.

⁷² Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, 183. *Douloi* (δούλοι), also translates as “serfs” or “slaves,” in general “owned person.”

We were not allowed to enter the house of the *tsorbadjides*. We could hear them inside the house saying, ‘The servants have come to get paid.’ We had to stay outside and wait...In order to receive our pay, we either had to have a gun or to kneel in front of them and kiss their hands, as in the old Turkish system.⁷³

Even though Greek peasants had been putatively liberated from the Turkish lords one-hundred years prior, the policies of the modern Greek state effectively maintained the same power relations and oppressive practices, albeit now perpetrated by fellow nationals.

Summarized by Karakasidou, “[m]any older villagers maintained that living conditions in Assiros during the interwar period had been worse than those under Ottoman rule.”⁷⁴

However, this continued oppression was not experienced passively or accepted as an immutable fact of life. Peasants actively resisted exploitation and collectively assembled to demand material and social justice.

The resistance and radicalization of peasants in the interwar period was directly connected to greater exposure to industrial workers’ movements.⁷⁵ As economic exigencies forced peasants to seek out additional work to supplement their agricultural income, many were pushed toward budding industries, the tobacco industry in particular. This cast the early seeds of a peasant-worker alliance which would provide the lifeline of the Greek Left from the 1920s through the 1940s. By Seferiades’s calculations, from 1921-1936 there were over one-hundred distinct incidents of peasant and/or worker protest.⁷⁶ This ranged from rallies, marches, and riots to all out rebellion, with the turnout of such events often numbering into the thousands and drawing on support from multiple distinct localities.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ibid., 184.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 165.

⁷⁶ Seferiades, “Small Rural Ownership,” 310-320.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Moreover, these protests were not merely the vague “cry for vengeance” in the name of ill-defined political objectives by a “primitive” subaltern coalition.⁷⁸ Rather, peasants and workers clearly articulated the aims of their resistance. Interwar protest demands varied from strictly material issues and issues of economic justice—cancellation of debts, technical development of the peasantry, land expropriation, tax-reform, and increased taxation on the rich—to more general political claims that most prominently included changes to the repressive apparatus of the Greek state (anti-war and anti-police sentiment was incredibly common, as well as the demand for the dissolution of fascist bands which attacked workers and peasants under the purview of the state).⁷⁹ The radical character and rejection of the status quo of these protests is further evidenced by a December 22, 1929 protest in Karditsa, which included as one of its demands the abolition of the *Idionymo* Law.⁸⁰ What these protests lacked, however, was greater national coordination which could channel this radical sentiment into direct change either through the mechanisms provided by the Greek state or by outright organized rebellion to state power.

The parties that did putatively represent this worker and peasant radicalism, the KKE and the Agrarian Party of Greece (AKE), were wholly unable to transform this radical energy into actual political power on a national scale. This was due both to deficiencies within the parties themselves and to the Greek state’s utter refusal to acquiesce to any demands which reached beyond the status quo. While the AKE was able to seize upon the revolts and anguish of the lowest stratum of peasants, its internal debates on the question of

⁷⁸ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc.), 1965, 5.

⁷⁹ Seferiades, “Small Rural Ownership,” 310-320.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 314.

the Greek monarchy ultimately led to its split in 1932, ending any hope for the party to wield significant political power.⁸¹ As for the KKE, its electoral shortcomings continued to hinge upon its adherence to international communist doctrines, which were blatantly contradictory to the Greek political climate. Its strict opposition to private property combined with its antinationalism and continued calls for the autonomy of Macedonia put it directly at odds with the beliefs of many peasants and workers.⁸²

Despite the weakness of the Left, the growing tensions in the countryside and factories convinced the establishment parties within the Greek state that communist revolution was imminent. At face value, this perception was not necessarily unfounded. As Seferiades shows, peasant and worker militancy steadily increased from 1932-1936, especially as the effects of the Great Depression began to hit Greece.⁸³ That is, outright violence, in the form of rebellions and riots, began to outstrip the more peaceful marches and rallies as the main tactic of resistance as the years went by and no change was visited upon the oppressed masses. Add to this the KKE's "Popular Front" strategy of 1936, which ditched the Macedonian policy and formed a coalition between the KKE and AKE, and the sense that a peasant-worker alliance was primed to overthrow the Greek political status quo appears far from outlandish.⁸⁴ The culmination of this rising radical energy was a strike and series of demonstrations that began in Thessaloniki on May 8, 1936.

Although the strike was immediately attacked by the gendarmerie and police, resulting in the death of twelve protestors and the serious injuring of thirty-two others, the

⁸¹ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 173-174.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 175-176.

⁸³ Seferiades, "Small Rural Ownership," 320-323.

⁸⁴ Mavrogordatos, "The 1940s Between Past and Future," 35-36.

strikers soldiered on for three more days, until their demands for an eight-hour work day, pensions, and medical coverage were met.⁸⁵ The result of this, according to anthropologist Neni Panourgia, was an “absolutely revolutionary moment” which “galvanized the labor movement in prewar Greece.”⁸⁶ The increased impetus of this movement led to a nationwide general strike being called for August 5, precipitating a truly national reckoning between the Greek state and the subaltern masses, whose voices had been excluded from its halls of power for its entire existence. Yet, rather than face the calls for economic justice and restructuring, the recently returned King George suspended the Greek constitution on August 4, inaugurating a period of proto-fascism which “froze” the flow of Greek subaltern revolution—the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas.

1936-1941: The Frozen Temporality of The Metaxas Dictatorship

The Metaxas dictatorship may have halted the growing radical demands of the Greek subaltern classes, but this should not be interpreted as implying that nothing happened during Metaxas’s regime. Indeed, the period of Metaxas’s leadership from 1936-1941 contains many important elements needed to tell the story of the Greek 1940s. The reaction to the Left, which was a central element of Metaxas’s rise to power, solidified anti-communism as a central presupposition of governance by the Greek state. Metaxas and his cadres, moreover, recognized that the Left could not simply be jettisoned from the Greek national body; the fundamental subjectivity of the Left—what drew individuals to its ranks—demanded transformation. That is, individual leftists had to be targeted, rounded up, and ideologically “purified,” developing the sort of theory and praxis against the Left which

⁸⁵ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 39.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

was utilized against thousands of leftists in the prison camps of the 1940s. Likewise, Metaxas's regime adapted and refined the Hellenist ideology of 19th century Greece to create a historical narrative—and thus a vision of modernity—which fit the necessities of the contemporary political context. Metaxas's authoritarian government, often referred to as the “Fourth of August Regime,” again deployed the ancient and medieval Greek pasts to both justify its anti-communism and cast the national imagination toward an imminent and glorious future. But, before this future could be realized the national body had to be “cleared of Communism and the social order made unshakable,” a task which Metaxas attended to as soon as his power was secured.⁸⁷

The beginning of Metaxas's regime was characterized by a swift crackdown on subaltern resistance. Metaxas immediately declared martial law; expanded the police force and military; arrested roughly four-hundred opposition leaders; dissolved trade unions and made strikes illegal; and crushed any street demonstrations against him with the newly augmented repressive state apparatus.⁸⁸ While all of this was in the name of preserving “social order” of Greece, Metaxas's regime actually changed the legal and political structure of the state in order to entrench into the state a rejection of any body or idea which presented a threat to the status quo.

The way this was achieved was largely through a series of laws which expanded upon the *Idionymo* Law. The first of these was “Emergency Law 117,” which was codified on September 8, 1936, only a month after Metaxas had been made dictator.⁸⁹ This measure echoed the same sentiments of the *Idionymo* Law of 1929—illegalization of any “theories,

⁸⁷ Stavrianos, *History of the Balkans*, 672.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 671-672; Clogg, *Concise History of Greece*, 120.

⁸⁹ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 39.

ideas, or social, economic, or religious systems that threatened to overthrow the existing social system”—but it added an additional measure that found instances “aggravating” if they were “committed by the press or in workplaces, or if the offender was a civil servant.”⁹⁰

These proscriptions were further expanded in the follow up to Emergency Law 117:

Emergency Law 1075.

Emergency Law 1075 provided three additions to Emergency Law 117 that proved crucial to persecuting the Left in both the Metaxas period and in the post-war and civil war periods.⁹¹ Firstly, the law officially codified the use of “declarations of repentance” (*diloseis*).⁹² This not only officialized the process by which declarations of repentance were to be extracted, but it also added to the signing of the *dilosi* a stipulation that “the daily newspapers of Athens...the press in the signer’s place of origin and residence, and...the priest at the signer’s parish” would all announce the declaration of repentance.⁹³ As argued by Panourgia, the purpose of publication was to produce a new social context that would work to guarantee a repudiation of the signer’s previous political proclivities.⁹⁴ Secondly, the use of “concentration camps” (*Stratopeda Sygkentrosios*) specifically for exiled political prisoners was made official under the law. These camps enforced a “disciplined life” for the prisoners through daily hard labor.⁹⁵ Finally, the law added that anyone who desired to be a civil servant or work at a corporation valued at over 20,000,000 drachmas must produce “a

⁹⁰ Ibid., 39-40.

⁹¹ Ibid., 40.

⁹² Ibid., Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 42.

⁹³ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 42.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁹⁵ “Emergency Law 1075,” *Government Gazette* 45, 11 February 1938, quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 40.

certificate from the Secretary of Public Security concerning his social convictions.”⁹⁶ This “loyalty certificate” not only aimed at preventing the state and influential businesses from being infiltrated by communists, but it also effectively worked to completely untether the operation and duties of the state from any and all politics it found threatening. As stated by Metaxas’s director of public security, Konstantinos Maniadakis, the law targeted “on account of their social beliefs” individuals who “not only should not occupy positions at specific points in the state mechanism but are not even worthy of any special protection by the state.”⁹⁷

The result of these legal additions, however, was more than just a crackdown on communism and the Greek Communist Party. In fact, denial of certificates of loyalty and persecution under the emergency laws affected “anyone who might be considered a potential [communist] sympathizer” as well as anyone who objected to Metaxas’s regime, even if they were sincere anti-communists.⁹⁸ And, as Panourgia notes, this “in effect barred from the sectors of education, security, the military, offices in municipalities and prefectures, social services, and medicine,” anyone who expressed any degree of liberal or leftist sympathies and anyone who was simply discontented with Metaxas’s dictatorial regime.⁹⁹ In total, Metaxas’s expansion of the *Idionymo* generated approximately 45,000 signed declarations of repentance and the exile of 3,000 individuals. The total population of political prisoners in Greece on the eve of the Italian Invasion in 1940—which roughly

⁹⁶ Ibid., Theodoros Lymberiou, *To Kommounistiko Kinema stin Ellada*, Vol. A, (Athens: Papazeses), 2005, Appendix, quoted in Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 45

⁹⁷ Lymberiou, *To Kommounistiko*, quoted in Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 45.

⁹⁸ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 45.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 45-46.

correlates with the end of Metaxas's regime—was around 2,000.¹⁰⁰ But the mass persecution Metaxas executed was not solely a product of administrative state repression; it required a justifying ideology, a further iteration of “Hellenism.”

The persecution and elimination of the Left was part and parcel of Metaxas's broader goal: “the creation of a new civilization.”¹⁰¹ Metaxas thus aimed to usher in a “Third Hellenic Civilization,” in a not-so-subtle allusion to Hitler's Third Reich.¹⁰² Metaxas constructed a national historical narrative that purported to “synthesize the pagan values of ancient Greece...particularly those of Sparta, with the Christian values of the medieval empire of Byzantium.”¹⁰³ In so doing, Metaxas drew on previous 19th century ideologies of Hellenism, but importantly he revised them to fit the necessities of his current political moment. Specifically, the Metaxas regime abandoned the previous obsession with territorial expansion for a far more metaphysical understanding of Hellenism. Stated in an anonymous 1941 text on the ideology of the regime,

The mistake [of the believers in the original Great Idea] is that they thought they could, by analogy to other nations, include Hellenism within territorial boundaries, while it is exactly the ingenuity of our nation that it has no boundaries.¹⁰⁴

In other words, as argued by archaeologist Yannis Hamilakis, for Metaxas's regime Hellenism was about the production of a particular national “spirit” rather than the

¹⁰⁰ D. George Kousoulas, *Revolution and Defeat: The Story of the Greek Communist Party*, (London), 1965, 140; Angelos Elefantis, *I epaggelia tis adynatis epanastasis*, (Athens), 1979, 257, both sources quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 40-41

¹⁰¹ Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 176.

¹⁰² Although Metaxas clothed himself in the language and appearance of his German and Italian contemporaries, his regime cannot be seen as truly fascist because it lacked the mass organizational fascist movement that both Hitler and Mussolini had. For further discussion of this see Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 39.

¹⁰³ Clogg, *Concise History of Greece*, 119.

¹⁰⁴ *The Ideas of I. Metaxas on Greece and Hellenism*, (Athens: Psyros), 1941, 18, quoted in Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 174

acquisition of a specifically delineated territory.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the cultivation of said spirit required the national body to be “purified” of all elements which were seen as antithetical to the national ethos, namely, communism and other forms of thought which threatened the status quo.¹⁰⁶ In the positive sense, the cultivation of this spirit involved a state-sponsored revival of, and obsession with, antiquity.

Both *Neon Kratos* (“New State”) and *Neolaia* (“Youth”), the two main print sources which spread the regime’s Hellenism, published a slew of articles, features, and lectures that focused on the relevancy of ancient and classical culture and life in the present day.¹⁰⁷ As Hamilakis notes, these articles largely focused on “militarism, discipline, and sacrifice,” promoting a strict subservience to the will of the state.¹⁰⁸ More importantly, the resuscitation of ancient culture and Greek history served to imbue Metaxas’s state with a sense of millennial continuity—temporal frozenness. Issues of *Neon Kratos* and *Neolaia* often contained photographs of youths garbed in reproductions of ancient dress and pictured in front of ancient monuments.¹⁰⁹ By amalgamating a revival of the past with the ideology of the present these photos in effect “freeze and monumentalize temporality and social space.”¹¹⁰ They reproduce a national narrative where the sole aim is *preservation*; all purified subjects of the state are imbued with the experience of the ancients, so that desires or demands for change must be subordinated to that legacy. “[T]he frozen, static classical land” that was thus created “deprive[d]...modern human figures of their temporal and social

¹⁰⁵ Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 174.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

milieu, [it] recast them as modern monuments.”¹¹¹ As is the case with many forms of modernity, and as is needed in any justifying political ideology, these readings and depictions of history also made claims upon the future. The photographs used the ancient past to construct a frozen present which gestured toward a utopian future; a future characterized by order, cleanliness, and the absolute sanitization of social space.¹¹²

The Metaxas regime’s ideological reading and utilization of the past, however, was not simply accepted by all who were forced to experience it. Particularly, it was most openly contested by members of the Greek Left. The leader of the KKE, Nikos Zachariadis, while imprisoned by Metaxas’s forces, thoroughly rejected use of the Greek past by noting that ancient Greek society “was based on slave ownership and exploitation” and the Byzantine Empire was a civilization of “asiatic despotism.”¹¹³ However, this rejection of the classical and medieval past was paradoxically accompanied by its embrace as providing potential inspiration for emancipation. The secretary of the Agrarian Party of Greece (AKE), K. Gavrilidis, while in an exile camp in 1937 expressed pride in “[t]he glory of Ancient Greece which for centuries nurtured the souls especially of the enslaved Greeks.”¹¹⁴ This seeming contradiction shows that both Left and Right needed to lay claim to the past in order to make sense of, and legitimate the goals of, the present moment. This conflict over the past and, more officially, over history, would continue to gain significance, and become more violent,

¹¹¹ Ibid., 201; 189.

¹¹² Ibid., 186.

¹¹³ Nikos Zachariades, *Theses on the History of the KKE*, (Athens: Central Committee of the KKE), 1945, 15, found in Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 191.

¹¹⁴ K. Gavrilidis, *The Diary of Anaphi, during the Metaxas Dictatorship*, (Athens, Entos), 1997, 197, found in Hamilakis, 193-194.

as the frozen era of Metaxas gave way to the chaotic and momentous political atmosphere of the 1940s.

The regime's projection of frozen time did not affect the elimination of possibilities for change. Rather, it was only an act of delaying the conflictive development of societal tensions that had been building for over one-hundred years. Although Metaxas was buoyed by the Greek army's successful resistance against the Italian invaders in 1940, the general sense of pride that ensued such victory did not last. The 1941 German intervention, along with Metaxas's death, eviscerated both the legitimacy and the actual body of the Greek state in the minds of its subjects. The death of this largely reactionary structure and its anti-communist mechanisms left a vacuum in the Greek political sphere, a vacuum seized upon by a majoritarian Resistance. The Resistance unfroze the radicalism of the 1930s and its potential for successful change.¹¹⁵ The *Jetztzeit* of the subaltern in Greece was imminent.

¹¹⁵ Mavrogordatos, "1940s Between Past and Future," 31-32.

II

“All the years combine...”¹:

Free Greece and the People’s Imaginary

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.”

—Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*²

Introduction

There is an interminable interaction between past, present, and future. We operate in a world “given and transmitted from the past;” yet, our course of political action always aims itself toward the future. And, when we finally move—back and forth, of course—from thinking and theorizing to action in the present, we must negotiate the contradictions of our situation (given from the past) with our visions and expectations which project the space of the future. Thus, there is a way in which a dialectical movement between past and future produces the present. It is with this sort of analysis in mind that I approach the monumental events of the 1940s in Greece. What I have tried my best to illuminate in this chapter, and in the thesis more broadly, is the way in which past experience and future expectation congeal and conflict in an interaction that results in an understanding of the present. In a limited sense, this is the dialectic that Marx describes in this particularly famous passage from his

¹ “Stella Blue,” lyrics by Robert Hunter, music by Jerry Garcia, track 4 on Grateful Dead, *Wake of the Flood*, 1973.

² Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (New York: *Die Revolution*), 1852, accessed through <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/>

Eighteenth Brumaire. I say limited here because I draw inspiration from Marx's claims here as much as I diverge from them; this conversation with Marx being key to the theoretical view and argumentative position that I take vis-à-vis the 1940s in Greece.

I agree with Marx's emphasis on the conflict between human action and the given situation in which it takes place; the constant butting of heads between those who want to alter the world and the entrenched powers which desire to keep it the same. It is this conflict which drives history. But, importantly, this same dynamic can be given a deeper, temporal and ideational dimension. People making "their own history" necessarily implies within it a conception of the future. In order to have your own history you must be in a position to look back on it, to reflect on it, to recognize it as the past implicated within the present you are now living, the past which generated your very own future. In a way, I am putting Marx on his head. That is, within my analysis I privilege and emphasize how within the events of Axis occupation and left-wing resistance in Greece during the 1940s there was a significant shift in the way common Greeks *thought* about politics. Put differently, I argue that the contrast between the existential destruction wrought by the Axis occupation and the achievements and ideology of the EAM administration produced within the minds of Greeks a new conception of what government could do for its constituents and thus how it ought to function.

Namely, I center the concept of *Laokratia*, "People's Rule," which was the main rallying cry of EAM. *Laokratia*, in contrast to *Dimokratia* ("Democracy"), gestured toward a form of politics organized around the concerns of the many, of "the People," (*o laos*), as a whole. In this way, the theory and practice of EAM opened a space of legitimate political possibility where subaltern Greeks could plausibly imagine a new future, one bereft of the

exclusionary politics of old. In contrast to the politics of the previous 120 years of modern Greek history, the politics of this possible EAM future rested on tenets of mass participation and inclusiveness, where all Greeks, regardless of age, gender, or class would have an equal say in the operations of governance.

I do not wish to jettison material analysis here, however. Rather, I intend to highlight the ways in which the EAM/ELAS resistance specifically sought to ground its political action in a rigorous understanding of the contemporary material situation in Greece; how EAM acted with respect to the “circumstances...transmitted from the past.” Following the work of anthropologist Janet Hart, I argue that EAM’s political ideology was firmly rooted in a Leninist understanding of politics. That is, its practical functioning was based on identifying, and then remedying, the various ills of its contemporary context. As such, EAM’s work was to a great extent colored by both the particularity of occupation and of the “underdevelopment” of the Greek countryside and mountains as EAM’s leadership understood it. The occupational context demanded mass support from all potential parties, thus EAM sought a political model that was fundamentally based on inclusion of all social groups. A strict adherence to Marxist-Leninist class analysis was abandoned in favor of a sort of political universalism.

Moreover, as EAM’s military wing, ELAS, liberated larger and larger sections of the Greek countryside, efforts at “modernization” became a central aspect of EAM operations. The EAM organization deployed vast resources to develop both the physical and mental resources of the Greek masses. EAM’s operations built key infrastructure like roads and telecommunications networks. Likewise, education was of primary importance to EAM. Creation of village schools went hand-in-hand with improvement of literacy rates and

dissemination of more efficient farming techniques. It is through these works that EAM attempted to bring what they considered as “backwards” populations of Greece into the political fold. These practical achievements of EAM spurred an opening of political imagination and expectation in EAM’s constituents. As common Greeks were exposed to the possibilities of a government organized for the masses rather than the few, they began to truly believe in EAM’s cause and become eager for the future that it presented. It is in this sense that EAM embodied a thoroughly modernist political ethos, and, as with all modernisms, the experience of the past was also significantly involved in the moment of EAM.

It is mostly here—in the significance of the past for present action and future imagination—where I differ from Marx. Marx claimed that, for the oppressed classes, there is a way in which the ideals of the past need to be cast off; its memories turned away from in order to fully confront the revolutionary potential of the present. Writing about his own moment Marx charged that “the social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot take its poetry from the past but only from the future.”³ The suggestion here is that truly transcendent political action cannot merely be a reproduction of something that already occurred in the past. Those who imitate the past do not seek the emancipatory change that the subalterns of society require. And it is in this way that the legacy of the past corrupts attempts at radical action in the present: it becomes a “nightmare,” a haunting object which must be discarded.

³ Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, accessed through <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/>.

What this point misses is that in order for a new future to be apparent, for it to be understandable to those it wishes to liberate, it must have the past implicated within it. The future is necessarily bound up in a temporality, an arc that stretches from the past through the present to the future.⁴ Thus, imaginations or ideas of a new future are themselves always connected to some form of understanding of the past. Furthermore, drawing on Walter Benjamin, I argue, against Marx, that the revolutionary moment is presented not when the past is finally cast off, but when it is resurrected and utilized to fuel the radical potential of the current moment.⁵ It is this notion of a present charged with the past toward the possibility of a new future that Benjamin dubs the *Jetztzeit* or “now-time.” And it is in the 1940s that this moment of radical potential presented itself to the Greek masses.

In the context of EAM and the 1940s in Greece I find this resurrection or redemption of the past in a number of places. The liberation from the Axis was constantly cloaked in the language of revival. Namely, a revival of the legacy of emancipation and liberation from the Ottomans in the 1821 War of Independence. Patriotic EAM songs and propaganda often dubbed the 1940s moment as “a new ’21.” Moreover, the guerillas who made up the majority of ELAS’s fighting forces fashioned themselves as the rebirth of the “klephts,” the guerilla bandits who were the main Greek military force in 1821. Finally, the experience of the previous 120 years of the “bourgeois” Greek state greatly influenced the way in which subaltern Greeks perceived EAM and its potential for change. Peasant Greeks fully

⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe, (New York: Columbia University Press), 2004, 262.

⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (Boston: First Mariner Books), 2019, 198; Frederic Jameson *The Benjamin Files*, (London: Verso), 2020, 14; for the claim that this appreciation of the “demand [for change] coming from the past” is absent in Marx see Michael Lowy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History,”* (London: Verso), 2016, 33.

understood the magnitude of EAM's political ethos and achievements in the mountains and countryside because they displayed what the previous Greek state had never been: a political body organized around the needs and demands of the masses. The experience of the Greek past therefore projected onto EAM the possibility of a new political future. But, for EAM to rise the former Greek state first had to fall, and that came with the Axis occupation.

Occupation and Crisis:

Though the Greek victory over the Italians in 1940 filled the air with nationalistic pride and fervor, the exuberance and glory were short lived. Forced to make-up for the Italians' failure, the Wehrmacht furiously swept through Greece, taking complete control of the country by April 1941. Politically, the Axis occupation caused two main developments: the exodus of the Greek Government and King to Cairo after the Greek defeat at the Battle of Crete, and the creation of the collaborationist government which governed Greece with the backing of the Axis throughout the entirety of the occupation. Both the fleeing of the Greek government, the subsequent creation of a "Government-in-Exile," and the wholesale failure of the collaborationist government alienated Greeks from the old order of bourgeois governance and thus created a vacuum of political space. This vacuum, which would be seized upon by the Communist-organized Resistance, grew out of an environment of widespread existential crisis, primarily driven by economic collapse and famine.

The Axis occupation was chiefly characterized by the pure disregard the occupiers had for any degree of preservation of the Greek social apparatus. Axis military leaders had only one concern: making sure their troops were fed. As such, military requisitioning plundered grain storages across the country, stole raw materials for military equipment, and

had industrial inputs shipped out of the country to Germany.⁶ One American oil executive in Greece at the time aptly remarked, “the Germans are looting [the Greeks] for all they are worth.”⁷ The looting not only deprived the inhabitants of crucial foodstuffs and businesses of needed materials, it also sparked an economic panic throughout Greece. Farmers, fearful of more crop seizures, refused to bring their crops to market or to disclose the size of their harvests, so that, overall, the various vicissitudes of occupation made crop harvest 15-30% lower in 1941 than in 1940.⁸ The result of Axis disregard was mass famine and unemployment, both of which further aggravated each other as lack of work disabled people from buying food and lack of food prevented Greeks from being able to work. Although estimates and accounts differ, the Red Cross approximated the total death toll of the Greek famine to be roughly 250,000 people between 1941 and 1943.⁹ More than just statistics, the pure experience of mass nutritional deprivation was unimaginably horrifying. Corpses often lined the streets of towns, and everyday a cart would come round to pick up the bodies of the dead and bring them to the local cemetery. The near ubiquitous presence of the violence of state negligence fundamentally altered the perception with which many Greeks viewed their government.

Likewise, the complete ineptitude of the collaborationist government and the often-conflicting interests of the Axis forces fractured the Greek political administration. The

⁶ Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-1944*, (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1993, 26.

⁷ Interview with Mr. James Schafer August, 4, 1941, Foreign Office Files, General Correspondence, Kew, London, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 24.

⁸ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 27; “Note sur la production Agricole et d'élevage en 1941 et previsions sur celle de 1942” Foreign Office Files, General Correspondence, Kew, London, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 26.

⁹ K. Sosnowski, *The Tragedy of Children Under Nazi Rule*, (Warsaw), 1962, 119-125, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 41.

national government receded to the background, which created pockets of local municipalities operating almost completely independently. As such, some areas, primarily small villages and more mountainous regions, were far less harshly affected by the famine and economic collapse while others, most particularly the towns, were absolutely devastated. Whereas the previous manifestations of the Greek state had been openly violent towards leftists and those who wished to change the status quo, the violence of economic collapse and gross negligence on the part of the state universalized the notion that the Greek state was solely a force for violent coercion. Historian Mark Mazower describes the view of the typical peasant as seeing the state as “allowing some regions to starve...[while] roaming through others, levying taxes at the point of a gun.”¹⁰

As the horror of famine and occupation reached a fever pitch, it coincided with an irrevocable break from the temporality of the former Greek state. In a stunning resonance with Benjamin’s Thesis XV, when the occupation eviscerated all that had previously constituted the norms of Greek society, time itself seemed to be frozen. The writer George Theotokas observed that during the occupation all the clocks which dotted the various streets, spaces, and public buildings of Athens had stopped, those who had previously maintained the inexorable plodding forth that characterized “bourgeois time” had been relieved of their duty. Theotokas states, “it’s like a universal epidemic of clocks. A melancholy and enigmatic symptom of the disintegration of the life of the community.”¹¹ Similarly, in Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” he notes how in the 1830 July revolution in Paris all the clocks around the city were destroyed; for a new time to be

¹⁰ Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 111.

¹¹ George Theotokas, *Tetradia imerogoliou (1939-1953)*, (Athens), undated, 277, 332, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 89.

apparent, the previous time first had to be done away with.¹² Concomitant with this stoppage of the preceding measure of time came a jettisoning of all legitimacy the former Greek state held, and with that a radical opening toward novel political possibilities.

This breakdown of political and economic structures in Greece thus entailed a highly consequential movement toward the political left across Greek society. Sectors of people who had previously benefited from, or at least were indifferent to, the policies of the Greek state now became alienated from it, and therefore were now open to new forms of organization and political praxis. Nazi officer and Special Plenipotentiary for Economic and Financial Questions in Greece, Hermann Neubacher, remarked that hyperinflation was driving a mass “proletarianization” of the Greek population, leading 95 percent of Greeks to be opposed to the Axis and its collaborationist government.¹³ And, in what would be a key aspect of the resistance which emerged against the occupation, this political movement was constituted largely by previously apolitical or even typically anti-leftist segments of the Greek population. As one contemporary Greek source found by Mazower noted, “the public servant, the private employee, the small professional man, the lawyer, the state pensioner and the small businessman...are practically starving,” creating a “veering towards the Left of elements of the public who, before the war, were among the most conservative.”¹⁴

With this political shift also came widespread incidents of mass resistance, as the collapse of legitimacy of the Greek state caused more Greeks to take matters into their own hands. Walls across the cities were painted with anti-Axis graffiti and slogans, and there were constant confrontations between Greeks and Axis soldiers. Importantly, as the

¹² Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 206; Lowy, *Fire Alarm*, 90.

¹³ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 71.

¹⁴ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 108.

occupation continued and the famine worsened into 1942, individual acts of resistance began to take on a more collective and national character. Journalist Dominique Eudes particularly notes the funeral of the poet Kostis Palamas on February 27, which thousands of Greeks attended to sing songs and listen to speeches which “contained undisguised exhortations to national resistance.”¹⁵ In Athens, protests and strikes occurred almost daily. In an interview with anthropologist Janet Hart, Anthoula, a former member of EPON, EAM’s youth organization, recalled the strikes against occupation as something wholly seminal in the history of Greece,

...The strikes during the occupation! They were really something [*itan kati to megaliodes*]. Today’s strikes don’t even come close to the strikes during the occupation. They were spontaneous, huge, and general. They weren’t the trade union type [*den itan sintechniakes*], that is, with such-and-such branch striking for the sake of its own demands. They were national strikes [*ethnikes apergies*]. Employees, greengrocers, shopkeepers, merchants, workers, students—everyone struck all on the same day. Public transportation came to a screeching halt. Everyone, all the working people, the public utilities, everything. And the public, without any means of public transportation, all set out on foot at the same time to go to the gathering place [*sto meros tis sygendrosis*]... That kind of universal [*katholiki*] discipline has never been seen again.”¹⁶

Although certainly somewhat romanticized, as many memories are, Anthoula’s account nonetheless displays how the events of resistance, in light of the complete collapse of legitimacy of the Greek government, presented themselves as embodying the potential of a radically open political moment. The strikes took on a political character that previously was unseen in Greece: they were “national,” constituted by people from all walks of life, and contained a certain universality that bonded the strikers together. Moreover, Anthoula’s lamentation regarding “today’s strikes” presents a subtle recognition that the future that that

¹⁵ Dominique Eudes, *The Kapetanios: Partisans and Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949*, trans. John Howe, (New York: Monthly Review Press), 2009, 36.

¹⁶ Janet Hart, *New Voices in the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance, 1941-1964*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1996, 170-171.

moment of resistance held was not realized. Even so, in that particular moment a future based on mass power and action seemed abundantly possible.

These moments of collective action and exhortations of the possibility for something new even went as far as declaring the need for a Greek revolution. Utilizing the memories of the 1821 War of Independence, poet Angelos Sikelianos constructed a vision of a new Greece rising out of the destitution and destruction wrought by the Axis occupation,

The swallows of death threaten to bring you
Oh Greece, a new spring, and from the grave a gigantic birth.
Vainly is the guard of the Romans on watch around you.
Soon you will rise up in a new Twenty-One.¹⁷

Although Sikelianos did not profess support for leftist political views, this poem nonetheless displays the radical political opening of Greece caused by the occupation. And, more so, it evidences how in a moment of radical potential the past itself becomes a signifier of the prospective of a different future, a different temporal arc. Greeks thus resurrected images and conceptualizations of the past in order to construct a new future charged with expectations of liberation; a “gigantic birth,” “from the grave” of utter material desperation. And the organizational architect of this future was EAM.

The Emergence and Ideology of EAM

The organization that best seized upon this great desire for change was the Communist backed “National Liberation Front” (*Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*) or EAM. While supported by the KKE and largely administratively staffed by KKE figures, the strength of EAM stemmed in large part from its rejection of the traditional Communist

¹⁷ Angelos Sikelianos, “25 March 1942,” n.d., quoted in Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 93-94.

dogmas and doctrines. Rather than toeing the Stalinist line, I argue following Hart, EAM presented a Leninist political framework. Namely, I see this political ethos as characterized best by Lenin's notion of a "concrete analysis of a concrete situation."¹⁸ Since that concrete situation was the fascist occupation of the country, EAM advocated for a political coalition based on inclusiveness and mass participation in order to eliminate the fascist other. The crowning achievement of EAM, as I will discuss in the following section, was that through both its theory and practice it made the conception of fundamental political change seem attainable, and thus worth fighting for, to the majority of the Greek population. For our purposes here, it will be best to outline the context in which EAM emerged, how it structured itself around the occupation, and what its ideology was.

To begin, EAM built itself out of, and eventually expanded upon, resistance that was already occurring in Greece. Most important were the "People's Committees" which formed in many areas to ameliorate the ills of famine and economic collapse in the absence of a strong state structure. Although most committees initially emerged simply out of public necessity and without any specific political aims, Mazower argues that as the war and famine engendered greater political radicalization local committees became more open to joining a national organization.¹⁹ Thus, when EAM was officially formed on October 10, 1941, it quickly reached out and established connections with the various People's Committees which existed across Greece. Moreover, the "People's Army," ELAS was created by EAM in April 1942, which brought together already existing networks of guerilla fighters in the Greek countryside and mountains. ELAS was primarily constituted by the

¹⁸V. I. Lenin, "Kommunismus," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1965, 165-167, accessed through <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jun/12.htm>

¹⁹ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 108-109.

andartes, peasant fighters who utilized guerilla tactics to steadily undermine the Axis occupation.

The *andartes* cloaked themselves in the imagery and meaning of the past. As Eudes argues in his book, *The Kapetanos*, the *andartes* drew on the tradition of the klephts—the guerilla fighters who were the main prosecutors of the Greek War of Independence—to imbue their fight against the Nazis with a similar liberatory gravitas.²⁰ Led by KKE member Aris Velouchiotis, the *andartes* would liberate villages and then disarm the village gendarme, march into the village square, and through patriotic songs and proclamations to liberate Greece like in 1821, they would call villagers to join their ranks.²¹ One song the *andartes* may have sung is “To Arms, To Arms” by Nikos Karvounis. It goes as follows,

Mount Olympus thunders,
And lightning on Kiona,
Agrafa rumbles, and Steria shakes.
To arms! To arms! Forward into battle!
For the most valuable thing of all, Freedom!

The *armatoliki* has been revived,
The arms iron, the spirit enflamed
The foreign wolves crouch trembling
At our avenging male (*andriki*) force!

The Gorgopotamos sends proud salutations to Alamana
It's a new resurrection, beat the drums
Word of our uprising reaches Litromo.
We break the ignoble chains

²⁰ Eudes, *The Kapetanos*, 3-4.

²¹ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 125-127.

That have been our deadly burden,
We want our country free
And universal human freedom.
...
EPON, EPON, you are the enemy of fascism
Valuable generation of hard workers
The pride of the people EPON, EPON, EPON,
EPON, EPON, a new day is dawning,
The Generation of '21 lives again among the people²²

Notice particularly the emphasis on “revival,” “resurrection,” and “the Generation of ‘21” living again. The conception of these fighters as the rebirth of the War of Independence’s klephts is explicit in this song. Furthermore, just as the independence struggle offered the potential for a break from the status quo, its revival in the resistance is likewise rhetorically flavored by odes to political ideals theretofore unrealized in Greece. Directly next to homages to 1821 are shouts for “universal human freedom, “break the ignoble chains, and the recognition that “a new day is dawning.” EAM/ELAS’s imputing of past experience into the current struggle gave the moment, and the people within it, a sense of purpose and explicitly colored the situation of occupation as revolutionary, drawing more and more members into its ranks. As one former gendarmerie officer recalled, “a revolutionary spirit began to spread...and many nationally minded men rushed to join the *andartes*.”²³ With this

²² Nikos Karvounis, “To Arms, To Arms,” trans. Janet Hart, n.d., quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 215.

²³ Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 125-127

revolutionary spirit by May 1943 ELAS had nearly 17,000 partisans in its ranks, which rapidly grew to upwards of 30,000 members by July.²⁴

ELAS operated primarily with the classic techniques of a guerilla army. *Andartes* utilized their better knowledge of terrain and tactical maneuverability to their advantage, engaging Axis forces in small-scale, quick battles that strained the occupying forces. More so, ELAS targeted key resources for the occupiers. They cut off supply lines by destroying bridges—most notably the Gorgopotamos Bridge, which was destroyed with the help of the British and EDES—and occupying key roads and railways.²⁵ All said and done, by 1943 EAM/ELAS had control of nearly two-thirds of the country, and by the end of 1944 the Axis forces were on the retreat. ELAS was not the sole organization of military resistance, however. There were multiple other resistance organizations, all much smaller in scope and personnel than EAM/ELAS. Of particular note is the “National Republican League” (*Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Syndesmos*) or EDES. Initially professing a republican, and thus anti-monarchist, political character, the allure of British support and supply quickly altered EDES’s position. Although EDES began as a partner to EAM, it soon became the main Greek-backer of the King and the British, acting as a foil, and eventually a direct enemy, to EAM.

What distinguished EAM from other resistance organizations in Greece was its recognition of the occupation “as a broader mandate for social transformation.”²⁶ In order to achieve this lofty goal of political action, EAM utilized a theoretical framework based on

²⁴ “The Guerilla Movement in Greece,” Myers Papers, Foreign Office Files, Public Correspondence, Kew, London, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 137.

²⁵ Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 133.

²⁶ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 1.

“indigenous requirements” that avoided a vision of reproducing any other form of “communism” or “socialism” but sought something that was in its essence Greek, which is to say grounded in the social and material conditions of contemporary Greek society.²⁷ The main theoretical mind behind EAM, Dimitrios Glinos, provides a clear illustration of this emphasis on the particularity of the Greek situation. In his pamphlet “What is EAM and what does it want?” (*Ti einai kai ti thelei to EAM;*) Glinos maintains that the Greek struggle must be rooted in the current “objective reality” of Greek society. Glinos writes,

This struggle emerges out of the contemporary objective reality and from the current mood of the entire people. In order to succeed, it must correspond both with the practical needs and with the true disposition of the people. This struggle must be deeply rooted in the concrete, rooted in our earth, to embrace the unconquerable need of the people for their freedom. This is why it is necessary that its features and its goals and creeds come from the actual needs and passions of the people. Only then can we proceed down the right road toward its organization. What, then, does the struggle consist of?

The people’s struggle of today can only be liberational. We must gain our freedom, expel the foreign invaders from our country, and safeguard our rights in life, politics, and society. We must clear the road for a free, civilized, and happy Greece...The struggle can only include all the people, embrace all levels of society, the worker, the aristocrat, the farmer, and the intellectual...Such a struggle, in order to get results, more than anything and above all, calls for *unity*...This duty falls upon all who, regardless of their station in life, their work, their mission, or their personality, consider themselves and are the moral guides of the people: their intellectuals, their journalists, artists, poets, teachers, priests, judges, doctors, lawyers, mechanics, etc. Today, more than ever, the people must feel their moral and intellectual guides are close to them, they must see them in the front lines of the struggle and in the front lines of sacrifice, even where the people may not yet perceive how much they need their intellectual leaders by their side, their moral guidance.²⁸

EAM was thus an organization with radical aims that nevertheless recognized the limitations and exigencies of the occupational situation. Occupation necessitated EAM constructing a coalition made up of “all the people,” and, as such, EAM’s struggle had to both aim for liberation while still appealing to all social groups in Greece. To explain how EAM achieved this seemingly contradictory political goal I first must further clarify the political strategy of

²⁷ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 12.

²⁸ Dimitrios Glinos, *Ti einai kai ti thelei to EAM*, (Athens: Ellinika Themata, O Rigas) 1944, 38-44, quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 118.

EAM, namely how it rejected a purely Stalinist framework which would have solely aimed at grafting the Soviet project onto Greece.

Although organizationally supported by the KKE and administratively staffed by many communists, EAM's immediate political goal was liberation from Nazi rule and political self-determination for all Greeks, not a seizure of the means of production through protracted people's struggle. As such, EAM's politics were based more on a loose notion of mass participation rather than a strict understanding of class and revolutionary action. Whereas Hart takes after sociologist Nicos Mouzelis in branding this "populism," I find this term to be less than useful, as our current political context has significantly muddled its meaning. Nonetheless, Mouzelis's definition of "political populism" is quite useful for our purposes. For Mouzelis,

Political populism involves drawing into the political arena people hitherto excluded from it or admitted to it only marginally. This type of political mobilization entails a radical restructuring of the prevailing relations of domination, without a concomitant radical transformation of the prevailing relations of production.²⁹

This definition relates to EAM's actions and ideology in two important ways. The first is the re-drawing of the political arena, what I will call "radical inclusiveness." I will discuss this further in a later section, but suffice it so say that against the Greek political precedent of clientelism and personalistic politics, EAM constructed a coalition where people of all backgrounds and occupations were included. EAM was thus not solely focused on the creation of a "revolutionary proletariat," but envisaged instead a radical integration of previously excluded social groups into a new political system based more on practices of

²⁹ Nicos Mouzelis, "On the Concept of Populism: Populist and Clientelist modes of Incorporation in Semiperipheral Polities," *Politics and Society* 14, no. 3, (1985): 329-48, 344, quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 83.

mass democracy and political agency than on the radical transformation of material-social structure. Second, against an ossified Marxist-Leninist framework, EAM did not fix its political goals on the vague notion of a “radical transformation of the prevailing relations of production.” In fact, as I will showcase later, the practical actions of EAM were far more focused on modernization and the expansion of political agency than on the prospect of a socialist revolution.

This is not to say that the communist members of EAM were not under the ideological influence of the Soviets, but simply to emphasize that the conditional priorities of occupation and the material situation of Greece required certain tactical adjustments. One of the military leaders of ELAS, Stefanos Sarafis, described the communist analysis as such,

The Communist leaders explained their view that, irrespective of the Party’s ideology and long-term objectives, they believed that in Greece the bourgeois revolution had not solved all the bourgeois-democratic problems, and the conditions had not been created in which a socialist programme could be implemented. Consequently, they were aiming at popular democracy which would solve the outstanding bourgeois-democratic problems and prepare the ground for socialism. To arrive at popular democracy with free expression of the popular will, in accordance with EAM’s programme, we needed to fight at the side of the allies to achieve liberation and secure our liberties.³⁰

It is with this expression, “popular democracy,” that I label the political movement and ethos of the resistance, especially as conveyed by the concept *Laokratia*, or “People’s Rule.”

Although this runs the risk of taking EAM at its word, I believe that it is irrelevant to wonder whether the achievement of People’s Rule was the *true* mission of EAM. While EAM framed itself as a state-building organization—especially with the creation of its own national government, PEEA, in 1944—the achievement of this goal was ultimately unsuccessful. Notwithstanding this failure, EAM did succeed in spreading *the idea* of

³⁰ M. Sarafis, *O Stratigos Sarafis opos ton gnorissa*, (Athens: Kastanioti Press), 1990, 97, quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 122.

popular democracy or People's Rule to the mass of Greeks. Through this dissemination, EAM fundamentally altered the political conceptualization that many Greeks held of the very notion of government.

One statement by a soldier of ELAS, Georgios, is particularly revealing of the imaginative power of "People's Rule." When asked by American Costas Couvaras, an agent of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), about what *Laokratia* meant to him Georgios answered, "it will be a type of government where the common people rule the country."³¹ Although this is certainly a response lacking the detail of a thought-out program of governance, it distills to its bare essence the new form of political imagination which the work of EAM had brought to the minds of the common people of Greece: the government ought to be *ours*, and it ought to operate how we please. The sheer rhetorical power of this notion of popular political agency is again demonstrated in the songs of EAM. Let's take the example of the song, "One Voice,"

One voice, one voice calls out to me,
Giving me the signal to move forward.
From the earth, it reaches to the sky,
Whatever the people want! Whatever the people want!

Down with thrones, down with violence,
Down with dark, insidious fascism!
Forward with democracy!
So that the people may have whatever they want!
Whatever the people want!³²

³¹ Constantios Couvaras, *OSS with the Central Committee of EAM* (San Francisco), 1982, 22-23, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 295.

³² "One Voice," trans. Janet Hart, n.d., quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 214-215.

While the idea of people creating/having “whatever they want” may certainly appear to us as dream-like or largely idyllic, it is important to recognize that the seeds of future change are always first sowed in dreams and imaginations. People first must be able to imagine something as different or new in order to believe that change is possible. Moreover, these dreams or imaginations are placed in the context of past wrongs which ought to be rectified. “Down with thrones, down with violence, down with dark, insidious fascism,” grounded EAM’s lofty political vision in actual things to be achieved, especially the seemingly ubiquitous existential enemy of fascism and the historical enemy of the King.

Of course, the fact that “People’s Rule” was itself quite vague only aided in the popularity of its messaging. Summed up by Theotokas, although not lacking a significant bit of disdain,

No one can explain what People’s Democracy means, nor even cares. People don’t feel the need for an explanation. They like the sound of this word and the indefinite trend towards a ‘state of the People.’ The People rise up, the People will be the Boss, the evil-doers will stop treating the People unjustly—that is what the people want.³³

Theotokas is nonetheless right to be critical of EAM insofar as its practice did not live up to the vision that its organizational concepts like “People’s Rule” projected. But this is not to say that EAM’s actions did not achieve anything in terms of collective work in Greek society. In fact, as I will discuss in the following section, EAM’s organization built political structures that gave common Greeks a substantive say in their everyday life. Things like the “People’s Courts,” the hierarchical EAM organization, and PEEA, EAM’s short-lived

³³ Theotokas, *Tetradia imerologiou*, 511, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 295.

national government, not only pushed past previous barriers in Greek political life, but also made ordinary Greeks believe that a different form of political practice was possible.

Aiding in the recognition that the political work of resistance was a seminal occurrence, EAM's emergence also arose in direct contrast to the forces which had previously characterized the last 100-odd years of Greek politics. Particularly, the experience of fascism under Metaxas had generated a popular anti-fascist sentiment across Greece. And with EAM being quickly recognized as the most significant anti-fascist organization in Greece, individuals joined *en masse* to support its cause. As one former member of EPON interviewed by Hart describes, the arrest and torture of his father under Metaxas for political crimes taught him "what fascism meant."

So when the Germans came into Greece...I knew very well what fascism was, from that previous experience of my father. There weren't any organizations right in the beginning. But as soon as EPON started, I joined.³⁴

Moreover, the old political guard of Greece was largely skeptical of the EAM project. For them, politics was about maintaining a certain entrenched political economic order, not constructing something new from the contradictions inherited from the past.³⁵ In fact, the Greek political establishment feared EAM, as it represented a shift in national opinion which had the potential to render them redundant. Commenting on the establishment politicians, Glinos stated,

They fear the People. They fear their awakening, their active participation in the struggle for redemption; they fear that when people take their freedoms into their own hands, it will no longer be they who guide them in their future political life. Because till now they've been used to governing from above.³⁶

³⁴ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 90.

³⁵ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 99-100.

³⁶ From Th. Chadzis, *I nikifora epanastasi pou chathike*, (Athens), 1982, 107, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 100-101.

This break from the previous political structure of Greek politics by EAM is further evidenced by the exodus of politicians to the Government-in-Exile. Leading politicians like Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, Themistoklis Sofoulis, and George Papandreou all chose to flee to Cairo rather than join in the organizing of EAM.³⁷ The old political order's rejection of EAM does not simply reflect the inflexibility of Greece's previous political guard, but, more importantly, showcases the idealistic goal of EAM: a transcendence of all that had characterized the traditional Greek political system.

In large part, EAM's greatest rejection of the previous "bourgeois" Greek politics was its embrace of a politics of inclusiveness rather than one based around "personalities." Specifically, to fight the occupation EAM needed to rally as many as people as it could to its cause. EAM thus eschewed focusing solely on "workers" or "farmers" but instead welcomed members of all stripes. This included not only people of all statuses, but also substantial involvement of groups which had previously been excluded from Greek political life: women and youth. In an interview with Hart one Peloponnesian woman recalled,

We had lawyers and doctors, and then had people like my father, who had a mule and used it to carry things from village to village for the people and get paid for it. And the one didn't necessarily look down on the other.³⁸

A field report from the Peloponnesian unit of the German Field Police further shows the degree to which EAM welcomed people of all occupations into its ranks. From the fifty-two people it lists there are thirty-four different employments, with the members of EAM's leadership in the region being composed of teachers, students, merchants, shopkeepers,

³⁷ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 100-102.

³⁸ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 230.

lawyers, skilled laborers, former army officers, doctors, civil servants, police officers, and a bookseller.³⁹

The key outcome of EAM's policy of radical inclusiveness was its incorporation of "hitherto excluded groups" into the political arena. This meant not only the subaltern masses, but also to a great extent women and children. Through its youth group EPON, programs of education for women, and concept of "popular democracy" EAM gave to the people the idea that political participation ought to be in the hands of the many, not the few. As one former member of EPON, Tasia, describes in an interview by Hart,

If the resistance hadn't come alone...It's hard to tell how the conditions of life would have been and how much *it woke us up* [*mas xipnouse*], but I'm fairly certain the war woke us up a lot more intensely, and if it hadn't happened, I doubt we would have been woken up so easily...the war was a lesson for all of us. And especially for us women. That was when the women began to understand that she also needed to participate in politics and to follow what was going on politically.⁴⁰

EAM's ideology can thus also be thought of as a kind of political awakening. Inclusiveness and mass participatory politics both necessarily required a widespread outreach to groups hitherto ostracized from Greek politics or even those simply unrecognized as political agents. To achieve this, EAM's ideology was paired with a practical program based on the extension of its influence across the country. In what follows I will detail this program and emphasize the ways in which its achievements further concretized in the minds of Greeks the notion that a different form of political action was possible in Greece.

Praxis of EAM

³⁹ J. L. Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance: The Greek Agony, 1941-44*, (New York: Pella Press), 1981, 119-120, quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 91.

⁴⁰ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 91-93, (emphasis added).

By mid-1944 the military success of ELAS and the EAM administration had carved out a territory of liberated Greece which stretched from the Gulf of Corinth in the south to the Yugoslav/Albanian border in the north, and from the Pindos mountains in the west to Greece's eastern shoreline. At approximately 2/3 of the land area of the Greek peninsula, this space was aptly named "Free Greece" by the partisans of EAM and within it they attempted to act on the "broad mandate for social transformation" which they saw as their mission. In terms of the political praxis of EAM, Mazower gives us a succinct summary: within Free Greece EAM "organized economic activity, reshaped the judicial and education system, and introduced social reforms for women. EAM officials handled relief for the victims of Axis raids and or guerillas' dependents...brought in a new system of local self-government, and even held national elections in March 1944."⁴¹ What EAM achieved was effectively a widespread attempt to modernize the northern and central regions of Greece. As I will discuss, this included infrastructure initiatives, the creation of new institutions, and "didactic efforts" which focused on educating people about hygiene, literacy, and political participation. Moreover, EAM worked to instantiate its vision of "People's Rule" through the development of "People's Courts" and ultimately the creation of its "People's Government," PEEA. It is important not to idealize these efforts and achievements, however. All were intertwined in vast contradictions: the context of occupation; the allegiances and objectives of the KKE; and the pressures of the British and the Government-in-Exile. Ultimately, the actions of EAM in Free Greece failed as much as they succeeded in transcending the previous coordinates of bourgeois Greek government. Nonetheless, the practical constructions of EAM, although ephemeral in their objective existence, generated a

⁴¹ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 265.

long-lasting, seminal understanding of “a new type of local and national administration,” based on substantive participation of *all* social groups, in the minds of subaltern Greeks.

Beginning with infrastructure, the control of the territory of “Free Greece” by EAM resulted in several significant developments. Communications networks—telephone and telegraph—were expanded to nearly the entire country.⁴² This was a drastic development for a country that had only previously devoted modernization initiatives to the cities and major towns. Likewise, with telecommunications expansion came the building of new, and repair of old, roads. Of course, it must be noted that this was not simply benevolence in itself on the part of EAM, as both telecommunications and transportation infrastructure were crucial components in the fight against the Axis occupation. Even so, the fact that EAM achieved these initiatives, which the Greek state had wholly failed to deliver upon for the past 120 years, sent a clear message to its constituents: EAM was acting with the will, and to the benefit, of the people as an entirety.

And with this potential of a government for all taking place in front of their very eyes, people’s conceptions of legitimate demands upon their government shifted. The interviews of American correspondent, Constantine Poulos, with individuals within Free Greece at the time are particularly illuminating of this imaginative shift. Poulos describes the “hopeful expression” of peasants now eager for a “bright future,”

The peasants talk of rural cooperatives and agricultural schools. “We must have enough schools where our children can be taught modern farming methods...For fifty years I thought olive trees produced only every other year...Now I learn with proper care they can produce every year.”

⁴² Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, 63.

Fisherman talk of cooperative canneries. Old people talk of public work programs to build roads, bridges, sewage and water systems and public utilities. The younger people talk of schools, libraries, and of exchange scholarships.

Mothers talk of free hospitals, visiting nurses, public clinics and public dispensaries. “It has to change” an old grandmother said. “Ever since I was a little girl whenever anyone was seriously sick, he either had to set out for Athens with its hospitals and doctors, or die.”⁴³

The developments around them, and the memories of the incompetence and failure of the old state, thus propelled people to believe that something different was possible. Moreover, this expectation, and excitement, for the future displays the modernism of EAM and of Free Greece.

As was mentioned previously, EAM was also greatly invested in the less abstract meaning of modernism or modernization—that is, in the idea of bringing people who were purportedly un(der)developed up to date with the present customs and social norms. Of course, with this came an implicit/explicit disrespect, the idea that certain people were backwards and culturally deficient. These stereotypes aside, it was with this modernizing vision that EAM executed many of its most beneficial programs. Recalled by a former EPON and ELAS member, Maria, in an interview with Hart,

....a very important factor was that [EAM] would participate at the “civilizing” level [*ekpolitistiko tomea*]. Because in the villages things were very backward; they were very underdeveloped [*ipovathismena*]. That is, the people didn’t know what “theater” meant; what “dance” was. They would dance, that is, when they had festivals [*panigyria*], but it wasn’t in any organized fashion. So the occupation came along...and the resistance played a very big role in the cultural area...All the girls were taught to read and write, because a lot of girls were illiterate. Lessons in the arts and culture. We learned dances, we learned recitation. We learned...we put on plays. And all this stuff, the girls who came in knowing nothing realized that we all had talent in some area.⁴⁴

⁴³ “Report from Constantine Poulos,” *Overseas News Agency*, October 10, 1944, quoted in L. S. Stavrianos, *Greece: American Dilemma and Opportunity*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company), 1952, 85-86.

⁴⁴ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 177.

Ignoring the on-its-face ridiculous claim that people who danced somehow did not know what “dance” was, this comment nevertheless gives a very clear picture of the didactic nature of EAM. It was broadly recognized, going back to Glinos, that a key aspect of elevating the subalterns of Greece was education. This is further displayed by the work of Rosa Imvriotis, a member of EAM who travelled throughout Free Greece before establishing her own teaching college in the mountains. Usually without books, Imvriotis along with university professors and high school teachers taught courses on education to students from Thessaly who then were sent to village teaching positions in the region.⁴⁵ “A school in every village,” was Imvriotis’s goal and vision, something that seemingly could not have been imagined prior to the control of EAM and the establishment of Free Greece.⁴⁶

In the name of “People’s Rule”—by which the “People” would be collectively deliberating, and deciding, issues for themselves—EAM created two projects, one for the local level and one for the national level. At the local level, the “People’s Courts” purported to put democracy back into the hands of the people. A central aspect of the system of localized self-government that EAM established across Free Greece, the People’s Courts functioned primarily to adjudicate disputes and administer justice at the village level. Officially codified by EAM in the “Poseidon Code,” many local courts were actually formed prior to the takeover of EAM as local areas needed a way to maintain authority upon the collapse of the traditional Greek state.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, EAM helped to formalize the

⁴⁵ Janet Hart, “Women in the Greek Resistance: National Crisis and Political Transformation,” *International Labor and Working Class History* 38, no. 38 (1990): 46-62, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 281.

⁴⁶ Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 281.

⁴⁷ L. S. Stavrianos, “The Greek National Liberation Front (EAM): A Study in Resistance Organization and Administration,” *Journal of Modern History* 24, no. 1, (March 1952): 42-55, 47, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 271.

operations of parochial justice and spread the extent of its use. By 1944 People's Courts could be found in almost every village in Free Greece.⁴⁸

The significance of the People's Court resided largely in the stark difference of their operation in comparison to how courts of law had worked in Greece prior to the war. As Mazower details, "before the war villagers had to travel to the district court to settle disputes, making litigation expensive and time-consuming. Lawyers conversed in high Greek, *katharevousa*, which was like a foreign language to the peasant."⁴⁹ Thus, it is not an exaggeration to state that in pre-war Greece official channels of justice were effectively useful, or able to be used, only by the wealthy and privileged. To the common Greek, especially in regard to language, seeking justice was akin to visiting a foreign country, which alienated most Greeks from this process. Against this precedent, the People's Courts operated within the village and in demotic—the common Greek spoken by the majority of the population.⁵⁰ Moreover, court meetings took place every week and were free to the public.

This appeal to the common people of the village was further emphasized by the operations of the court being fully executed and determined by the residents of the village. Most evidently, "lawyers were rarely engaged; plaintiff and defendant presented their own cases and introduced witnesses before a tribunal whose members were appointed by election in the community."⁵¹ Furthermore, local court cases were often not adjudicated based on appeal to law or legal precedent but rather leaned heavily on "local tradition" and the "views

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 272.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

and attitudes of the local population.”⁵² Although this certainly provided a sense of greater political agency and determination for villagers and peasants, it was far from an idealized picture of a pure “democracy” or “people’s choice” being delivered to the subalterns of Greece. In many instances, court cases were never heard and were decided arbitrarily by the local EAM representative. Nonetheless, the People’s Courts proved to be highly popular with the villages within Free Greece. For example, Mazower finds that “in areas like Mesolongi, where the old ‘bourgeois’ courts continued to operate, peasants abandoned them for the People’s Courts.”⁵³

Coming together on the national level, the People’s Courts and local self-governments formed the individual points of the collective EAM administration which governed over Free Greece. Utilizing established organizations at the local level, EAM created a highly complex national network which acted as the skeletal governing apparatus instantiating “People’s Rule” across the nation. Outside of the People’s Courts, each village in Free Greece had four EAM organizations within it: the EA which did relief work, EPON for youths, ETA for the guerillas, and a general EAM committee which ran the village.⁵⁴ Each EAM general committee was headed by an EAM representative [*ypeuthinos*]. These representatives were often not local residents, usually taking their positions after establishing EAM within a village. From each village committee a larger hierarchical structure of authority was formed. Village committees elected a district [*eparchia*] EAM committee; and then district committees in turn elected a regional [*periochi*] committee

⁵² Stavrianos, “The National Liberation Front,” 51, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 273.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Stavrianos, “The National Liberation Front,” 45-46, quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 196-197.

which represented larger areas like Thessaly or Macedonia.⁵⁵ The major cities—Athens, Thessaloniki, Piraeus, for instance—likewise had their own EAM committees, elected by neighborhood committees within the respective cities. Each regional and city committee would then elect a representative to the national EAM central committee. By Stavrianos’s count, the national committee had twenty-five members, each representing the various regions and districts but also the constituent organizations within EAM (EA, EPON, ELAS, etc.).⁵⁶

Although dressed in the language of mass democracy, the vast hierarchy of EAM did not function as a truly democratic organization. As stated previously, local committee members were often chosen by the village, but the representative or *Ypeuthinos* who controlled the committee meetings was an EAM member, which often times meant a KKE cadre.⁵⁷ Moreover, the hierarchical structure of the national EAM organization allowed further Communist influence as the *Ypeuthinoi* had final say in who would be elected from the local to regional to national committees.⁵⁸

These limitations do not detract from the concrete achievements of EAM’s administration, and the very presence and workings of such administration itself had a deep impact on the minds of the Greeks who experienced it. Hart aptly notes that, “for those previously uninitiated into the ways of organized politics and political culture, this mode of doing business created a lasting impression and engendered a set of expectations about participatory government.”⁵⁹ C. M. Woodhouse further describes the singularity of what the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 197.

EAM administration achieved in Free Greece: “EAM/ELAS set the pace in the creation of something that Governments of Greece had neglected: an organized state in the Greek mountains.”⁶⁰ Thus, EAM’s work fundamentally changed the way many Greeks thought about government and what they materially and ideologically expected from those in power.

Yet, the work of participatory governance did not stop at the administrative level. In March of 1944, with control over Free Greece solidified and the retreat of the fascists beginning, EAM decided to take its role as a proto-state body even further. That is, EAM created its own popularly elected government body, the “Political Committee of National Liberation,” (*Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Apeleutherosis*) or PEEA, known colloquially as the “Government of the Mountains.” Elections utilized the administrative structure of EAM and accorded the right to vote to all Greek citizens, both male and female. Women had hitherto been barred from voting in Greece and would not be officially enfranchised by the post-war Greek state until 1952. Along with the extension of the ballot to women, EAM extended political agency to populations formerly ostracized from the political process. Evidencing this, according to EAM, over 1.5 million individuals voted in the first PEEA elections, more than what had been recorded in the last Greek election prior to the dictatorship in 1936.⁶¹

The occupational situation and the presence of EAM within villages across Free Greece largely aided in this electoral effort. EAM members would bring ballots to the houses of voters and then return later to pick them up.⁶² In lock step with EAM’s political liberation of women, EAM grounded these efforts in its ethos of inclusiveness. To aid both

⁶⁰ C. M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord: A Survey of Recent Greek Politics in their International Setting*, (London: Hutchinson), 1948, 146-147, quoted in Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, 121.

⁶¹ Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece*, 293.

⁶² *Ibid.*

in the fight against occupation and the legitimation of EAM as a body for the “People” writ large, mass participation was a must. Mazower notes how even those who were illiterate were able to vote as they could request local EAM members to read ballots aloud for them and then write down their vote.⁶³ Nonetheless, commitment to inclusiveness should not be conflated with a stringent adherence to the people’s will.

While EAM extended the ballot to all, its electoral practices all but guaranteed the dominance of EAM and KKE supported candidates. Anyone over the age of twenty-one was technically allowed to nominate themselves for election but given the situation of occupation it was nearly impossible to mount any sort of electoral campaign. As such EAM’s candidates “swept the board” winning nearly all of the seats on the PEEA National Council.⁶⁴ But, despite EAM, and thus KKE, dominance of the elections, the PEEA program remained strongly moderate. For example, land expropriation and redistribution were largely tabled in order to keep PEEA viable in the eyes of wealthier Greeks.⁶⁵ This again showcases the commitment to inclusiveness that EAM maintained due to the nature of the occupational situation. Even more so, the composition of the National Council further displays the inclusiveness of EAM. Notwithstanding the influence of the KKE, the Council was made up of individuals from all walks of Greek life. With the creation of PEEA “the traditional stranglehold of lawyers and doctors” in Greek politics “had been broken.”⁶⁶ PEEA meetings “included women, farmers in their working breeches, workmen, artisans, priests, and journalists.”⁶⁷ Although not necessarily a truly democratic expression of the people’s will,

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 291-292.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 294.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

EAM's "Government of the Mountains" thus reflected in its composition the conception of a government by and for the people, something that had previously been given little credence in the former governments of Greece.

Importantly, this conception was received with widespread approval and support. In fact, the troops of the National Army—those who served the Greek Government-in-Exile—rebelled on March 31, 1944 in an effort to have PEEA recognized as the official Government of Greece.⁶⁸ Moreover, the ideal of PEEA as a government which worked for the masses is fondly remembered. As one female villager recalled,

I remember that the government [Government of the Mountains] made beautiful things happen and we were raised to a higher level. The other governments had neglected the peasants. Beautiful things happened, like voting. I voted. And we helped the local government in any way we could.⁶⁹

EAM, and its creation PEEA, thus achieved in practice "beautiful things" and delivered to common Greeks items of political action that previous governments had wholesale ignored. Tellingly, however, the villager did not comment on the actual praxis of EAM. Rather, she beautifully wove theory and ideology together to produce the ability to imagine something radically new. The "higher level" referenced here refers not to the material actions, those are the "beautiful things," but to the society-wide shift in expectations that EAM engendered. The imagined EAM future was thus greater, it had the potential to exist on a higher plane than previous iterations of Greek governance.

Yet, PEEA's existence was short lived. A series of negotiations between PEEA and the Government-in-Exile saw PEEA and the EAM administration jettisoned by EAM leaders

⁶⁸ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 32.

⁶⁹ *The Hidden War*, produced by Jane Gabriel, aired January 1986, on BBC Channel 4, quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 210.

in favor of joining George Papandreou's "Government of National Unity" which had the backing of the British and Americans.⁷⁰ Even with PEEA and EAM's dissolution, the imaginative opening that had been created in the Greek political space across the previous three years could not be closed without sustained effort on the part of the forces of the establishment. The belief of many former EAM/ELAS members that not only a radical future was possible, but that it was their right to have it, was not to be done away with without a fight. In fact, Papandreou's return to Greece was met with the unmistakable demand for recognition of EAM and the future of "People's Democracy" that it espoused. As Papandreou rose to the podium in Athens's Syntagma Square to deliver his first speech as prime minister he was unceasingly interrupted by shouts of "*Laokratia, Laokratia, Laokratia,*" from the crowded Greek masses.⁷¹ Eudes aptly notes, "for the moment...no one could or would believe in a blatant return to the past."⁷² The extent to which EAM had shifted the frame of political imagination in Greece was undeniable.

The conservative elites did not accept this shift in popular attitude, however. After the end of occupation, the forces of the reaction within the Greek establishment took it upon themselves to purge all support, ideals, and even memories of EAM from the Greek body politic. The chief political project of the Greek state for nearly the next thirty years was "neutralizing the ghost of EAM."⁷³ The result of this unnerving refusal to concede even an inch to the leftist politics of EAM and the KKE was widespread violence across Greece. A

⁷⁰ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 294-295.

⁷¹ Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, 175.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Tscoucalas, Constantine, "The Ideological Impact of the Civil War," in *Greece in the 1940s: A Nation in Crisis*, 319-41, ed. John O. Iatrides, (Hanover: University Press of New England), 1981, 327, quoted in Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 32-33.

prolongated military confrontation in Athens between former EAM/ELAS members and a coalition of British and Greek government forces in December 1944, which came to be known as the *Dekemvriana*, gave way to two years of “White Terror” where fascist and rightist forces hunted down, arrested, and executed Greek leftists.

Yet, the violence did not stop there. As the KKE refused to accept the defeat of EAM, an all-out Civil War broke out between the KKE’s forces and the new government of Greece. Concomitant with civil war came the theretofore full development of the Greek government’s system of incarceration, torture, and “purification” of leftists. But even in the violent crucible of civil war and existential destruction, which reached its climax in the concentration camps, Greek leftists continued to resist, and through their resistance the potential for a different future remained alive.

III

“All you’ve got to live for is what you left behind...”¹:

State Repression and the Conflicts of Subjectivity

“There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinary sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born.”

—Franz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*.²

Introduction

The period after the Axis occupation was marked not by reconciliation, rebuilding, and integration of new and old forces into the post-war Greek state, but instead by a project of totalizing elimination, specifically the elimination of the political imagination—of the possible future—which the state-building project of EAM had created. The denizens of the re-established Greek state displayed no recognition of EAM as a legitimate political force. Rather, the state framed EAM, and the Left broadly, as a national “other”; as made up of individuals whose existence *in itself* was antithetical to both Greek society and Greek politics. As such, both the ideas and bodies that made up EAM, and which produced the radical changes within “Free Greece,” were systematically removed from Greek society, purged of their values, and remade in such a way that they would be compliant with the Greek political status quo.

¹ “Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodleloo,” lyrics by Robert Hunter, music by Jerry Garcia, track 1 on Grateful Dead, *Wake of the Flood*, 1973.

² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press), 2008, xii.

Mass political repression thus characterized the post-occupation political and social space of Greece, but the repressive policies of the Greek state against leftists, in fact, amounted to far more than what is typically thought of as “political repression.” Historian Polymeris Voglis has argued that what occurred in Greece after the Axis occupation and during the Civil War is more accurately labeled as “political exclusion,” that is, the state not only discriminated against leftists, it also completely deprived them of their civil rights, as organizations associated with leftist causes and ideals were barred from any and all participation in the political and social arenas (parties illegalized, press banned, assembly outlawed, etc.).³ Thus, a primary aspect of this “exclusion” was an elimination of leftist ideas and bodies from the “national space,” from the legitimate spheres of thought and action in Greek society.

However, what I mean by “elimination” must be further clarified. Elimination in the sense of outright murder was not sufficient for the degree of societal reformation the Greek state demanded, although this is not to say that no one was killed: thousands were. Rather, in order to “neutralize the ghost of EAM,” the Greek state engaged in a society-wide program of political *transformation*.⁴ That is, leftists who held “anti-national” beliefs were sent to prisons and camps where strict regimes of torture, indoctrination, and renunciation of their former leftist ideals would make them into “new” individuals who would be compliant with the established political order in post-occupation Greece. Thus, in this chapter I closely

³ Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners During the Greek Civil War*, (Oxford: Berghahn Books), 2002, 63-64.

⁴ Tscoucalas, Constantine, “The Ideological Impact of the Civil War,” in *Greece in the 1940s: A Nation in Crisis*, 319-41, ed. John O. Iatrides, (Hanover: University Press of New England), 1981, 327, quoted in Janet Hart, *New Voices in the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance, 1941-1964*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1996, 32-33.

follow the arguments of both Voglis and anthropologist Neni Panourgia regarding the creation of political identities through repression and terror by the Greek state. I concur with these scholars that the repression of the post-occupation and Civil War period was premised on “the production of a new type of citizen.”⁵ But my own focus differs from these scholars in a few important ways.

Although this chapter outlines the major events of 1945-1950 in its investigation into the creation of political identities, I confine my analysis largely to the specific site of the Makronisos concentration camps. I do this in part because the sources I was able to collect refer to that location, but also because the degree of violent brutality and indoctrination on Makronisos is particularly indicative of both the contestation of historical narratives and the production (and destruction) of political imaginations that are the broad topics of this thesis as a whole.

Indeed, the practices and ideology that informed the Makronisos camps worked to resurrect another iteration of the national history that connected the Greek present to the ancient past. I follow the work of historian and archeologist Yannis Hamilakis in recognizing the “deployment of the discourse on antiquity at Makronisos.”⁶ My central argument is that the Greek state deployed this discourse in order to erase the temporality—the expectation of future grounded in a reading of the past—that EAM constructed, and subsequently replaced it with a historical narrative of Greece that privileged the preservation and perpetuation of the status quo. This temporal construction resonated with similar efforts that had occurred in previous periods, namely during the Metaxas dictatorship. The

⁵ Neni Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens: The Greek Left and the Terror of the State*, (New York: Fordham University Press), 2009, 81.

⁶ Yannis Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2009, 223.

conservative ethos of the Greek state had long been committed to a regression, to a return to be past. But after the occupation this reactionary temporality took on new and more radical features, as it came to be contested and resisted by many. Most clearly, I highlight how the temporal projects that the Greek state engaged in on Makronisos were, above all, part of an effort to transform the political subject position of individuals. Thus, in utilizing its own selective national history, the Greek state defined leftists as an “other,” a group outside the space of acceptable political action and discourse; an other which had to be totally destroyed in order to “cleanse” the national body of its thoroughgoing “spiritual pollution.”⁷

To analyze this “otherization” of leftist prisoners on Makronisos I utilize a Fanonian framework. Before I outline this framework, it is important to note that my use of Fanon’s ideas here relies not on a similarity of content but rather a symmetry of form. Whereas Fanon’s arguments are based on race, the colonial subject, and the processes of decolonization, my arguments center on political identity and the mutual conflict of political repression. Nonetheless, I find useful convergences between Fanon’s description of the experience and identity of the colonized and that of Greek political prisoners, as well as parallels between the progressive force of decolonizing violence and the regressive force of the violence of political repression of the Greek state.

Fanon’s framing of subjectivity and subject creation is explicitly concerned with violent confrontation. He recognized that for projects of large-scale social deconstruction and reconstruction—whether progressive decolonization or the regressive reassertion of a formerly dominant power—violence was an utmost necessity.⁸ But the same can also be said

⁷ Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 215.

⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove Press), 1963, 29.

about the (re)formation of individual identities.⁹ On Makronisos, violence, both physical and mental, was the crucial tactic employed by the Greek state to force political prisoners to renounce their identities as leftists. This is because only when the things which normally structure our world into (what seems to be) a simple and understandable package are abruptly torn asunder can new forms of understanding the world, and the self, replace those previously held. Or, in Fanon's words, only "absolute violence," the jarring, visceral shift of a violent event, can call into question, and thus reshape, an understanding of the "narrow world" around us.¹⁰

After examining this process of "objective" destruction, Fanon sets out to explain two forms of violent change that target subjectivities: an anti-dialectical one premised on absolute elimination of the other, and a dialectical movement based on development of change through mutual recognition and conflictive action.¹¹ I apply both these forms of change to the history and experience of repression in post-occupation Greece. The treatment of leftists by the Greek state clearly mirrored Fanon's description of anti-dialectical opposition: the Greek state acted towards leftists with "reciprocal exclusivity," whereby any "conciliation" between the two was impossible.¹² Fanon further projects this opposition as a Manichean one, a zero-sum standoff between "beings" and "non-beings."¹³ Rather than the mutual identification that results from a dialectical interaction—with each entity recognizing itself through the recognition of the other—this anti-dialectical opposition contains "an

⁹ George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, (Durham: Duke University Press), 2017, 48.

¹⁰ Fanon, *Wretched*, 31.

¹¹ Gavin Arnall, *Subterranean Fanon*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 2020, 6.

¹² Fanon, *Wretched*, 31-32.

¹³ Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 78; Arnall, *Subterranean Fanon*, 15.

absence of access to Being itself.”¹⁴ This is likewise displayed in the repression of the Greek state. In the discourse of post-occupation imprisonment, the state refused to recognize leftist political prisoners as such.¹⁵ This refusal led the Greek state to adamantly maintain for decades that it had never executed or imprisoned anyone for political crimes.¹⁶

On a more ontological level, I argue that the Greek state’s treatment of leftist prisoners within the prison and the camp was fundamentally premised on the ripping away of any and all aspects of human recognition and personal identity, in general of a person’s “being.” The prisons and camps contained no mutual preservation—a development through incorporation of both elements of the conflict—but instead the purpose was to leave one side “cleared away, completely destroyed, [and] irreversibly annihilated.”¹⁷ This emphasis on absolute elimination is particularly visible within the prison camp on the island of Makronisos.

As I argue, Makronisos both constructed, and was perceived as, a space of complete dehumanization. The harsh landscape and environment of the island along with constant beatings, propaganda, and psychological duress pushed leftist prisoners to their ontological breaking points. This treatment reached its most strictly eliminationist form in the “declaration of repentance,” (*dilosí metanoía*). Another carryover from the 1920s and 1930s, the signing of declarations of repentance was the putative goal of the Makronisos camps and the Greek system of mass imprisonment writ large. Declarations of repentance performed the function of the complete renouncement of the individual prisoner’s former beliefs, and,

¹⁴ Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 55.

¹⁵ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 65.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁷ Arnall, *Subterranean Fanon*, 15.

as Voglis has argued, they thus functioned as the ultimate act in the Greek state's "liquidation of the opposition... and the deconstruction of political prisoner's subjectivity."¹⁸ As I will show, those who had signed the declarations, the "repented," represented, in both their own self-perception and in how they were perceived by others, the Fanonian "non-being."

Yet, while anti-dialectical violence takes precedence in this story of repression, the unignorable force of contestation introduced a powerful dialectical element. Fanon argued that at the point of greatest elimination, of absolute violence and repression, exists a potential for progressive movement. The zone of non-being is also a space with the potential of "authentic upheaval," from which a genuinely dialectical movement can emerge. I follow this notion by describing the various forms of resistance that took place within prisons and camps. I attend to the strategies prisoners deployed to resist mistreatment—and particularly to the ways they resisted signing *diloseis*—but I also examine how they collectively organized themselves in a way that was mutually beneficial and productive for themselves even under the brutal conditions of the prisons and camps.

Thus, there was a way in which the legacy of EAM, the future that EAM had projected to Greek subalterns, survived within this mass repression. EAM's teachings and its singular ways of understanding political participation and education—particularly for women—were adapted by prisoners within the camps. Upon their release, prisoners made these understandings relevant to new potentialities and futures, even in the face of a political space that had been irreparably altered. These enduring forms of resistance illustrate Fanon's

¹⁸ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 75.

observation that repression can drive, rather than stall or eliminate, the further development of political consciousness.¹⁹ But before discussing the experience of Makronisos, I must first outline the various military clashes between the Left and the Greek government after the occupation and how these battles provided the context for mass political repression against the Left.

Civil War and Mass Imprisonment

The repression of the Left began with the “December Events” (*Dekemvriana*). On Sunday, December 3rd, 1944, a massive EAM demonstration took place in the streets of Athens. Nearly 250,000 people paraded through the streets to display to the Greek government the widespread support for the ideals and practices of EAM.²⁰ But, with the Axis removed from Greece, the forces of the Left no longer represented a necessary partner to the Greek government. Instead, the government viewed the Left as a rival faction, a power bloc that needed to be eliminated. Indeed, the Athens demonstration was met with brutal force. Policemen, soldiers, and members of “Organization X”—a far-right, fascist group composed largely of former Nazi collaborators—without provocation attacked the EAM demonstration. Chaos ensued as unarmed demonstrators tried to escape what was in many ways an attempt at mass execution. By the end of the day twenty-eight people were dead and more than 150 were seriously wounded, including many women and children.²¹

The fighting did not end on December 3rd, however. EAM/ELAS responded to the murderous attack as to a declaration of war. ELAS units moved into Athens and the city became an all-out war zone between ELASites and a coalition of British and Greek soldiers,

¹⁹ Fanon, *Wretched*, 56

²⁰ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 67.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

police, and members of Organization X. For the next thirty-three days fighting raged between the two coalitions until EAM/ELAS forces withdrew on January 6, 1945. The entirety of the fighting throughout Athens resulted in roughly 7,000 deaths.²² Importantly, EAM fought not to overthrow the Greek government, but rather to be recognized as a legitimate and equal participant in Greek elections and overall governance. Indeed, on December 12, despite ELAS having control of the majority of Athens, EAM leaders requested an audience with Churchill and the Greek government to negotiate a peaceful re-institution of the Greek government with EAM as one party among others. The audience was rejected, however, because the British and the Greek government viewed EAM's demand for "full participation as a political force in the government" to be "excessive."²³

Therefore, the *Dekemvriana* was far more than a violent clash. The established powers in Greece—the former leaders of the Government-in-Exile, the King, and the foreign influences—sent an all-too-clear message that there would be no conceding of post-occupation political space to the Left, even at the cost of fraternal bloodshed. The December Events thus marked the beginning of a concerted campaign to thoroughly eliminate the political imagination fostered by EAM. To do this, the Greek state revived, and put into greater use than ever before, the policies of leftist persecution that had been deployed in the late 1920s and during the Metaxas dictatorship.

I will describe in greater detail the policies deployed by the state in a moment, but first I must quickly note the magnitude of imprisonment carried out after the December Events. Following the *Dekemvriana*, the British and Greek governments arrested over

²² Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 53.

²³ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 70-71.

12,000 leftists, 8,000 of whom were sent to prison camps in the Middle East before being eventually transferred to the Greek camps at Makronisos or Yiaros.²⁴ To be sure, EAM/ELAS adopted some of the same tactics. Upon their retreat from Athens, EAM/ELAS arrested and brought with them nearly 15,000 people, imprisoning them as hostages in jails and camps outside Athens.²⁵ With this hostage taking came a series of mass executions by the KKE. Roughly 1,200 people were killed for crimes that varied from proven collaboration with the Axis occupiers to mere “suspicion.”²⁶ The KKE had, as described by Panourgia, “turned inward.”²⁷ It reacted to the backlash against the Left with fear and paranoia, purging from its ranks—often violently—many who supported its cause simply because the KKE suspected them to be enemies. This self-inflicting reaction not only reduced the Left’s ranks, but it allowed the Right and the monarchy to depict communists as “bloodthirsty villains” and proclaim that their bodies and ideas must be systematically hunted down and removed from Greek society.²⁸

The atmosphere of right-wing persecution against the Left was further enhanced by the policies of the Varkiza Agreement. Created from the negotiations between EAM and KKE leaders and the Greek Government and British, the ostensible purpose of this agreement was to draw down the fighting between leftist and rightist groups and establish a new political framework after the occupation. Yet, the outcome from Varkiza was explicitly biased against the Left. Whereas the agreement putatively demanded disarmament of *all* paramilitary groups, only those of the Left—largely former members of ELAS—had their

²⁴ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 53.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 76.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

weapons removed, while rightist groups—mostly former collaborators—were left alone. Moreover, Varkiza stated that amnesty would be given to all political offenders, something that would be blatantly ignored as thousands of leftists were jailed for “political crimes” committed during the occupation.

With the disarmament of former EAM and ELAS members, the period of “White Terror” began. Rightist bands roamed the Greek countryside arresting, more often murdering, anyone with even the smallest connection to EAM or the KKE. Violent persecution of the Left was primarily executed by the “National Guard,” a proto-fascist military group made up of men who either fought as conscripts against ELAS in the *Dekemvriana* or who were soldiers in the Greek government’s “National Army,” which the government had previously purged of men “suspected of leftist views.”²⁹ Moreover, the National Guard received nearly 12,000 men from the “Security Battalions” the Greek military forces who had collaborated with the Axis during the occupation. By May 1945, the National Guard had 60,000 men in its ranks, with members often rotating between the National Guard and local gendarmeries as provinces were purged of the suspected leftists within them. Thus, by staffing gendarmeries with former National Guard members, the Greek government maintained a security force that operated from the local to the national level with overwhelmingly anticommunist personnel. In addition to their primary activity—murdering and arresting leftists—National Guard members also destroyed the offices and newspapers of known leftist organizations. In total, Voglis estimates that 551 leftist offices

²⁹ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 55.

and newspapers were destroyed.³⁰ Sent across Greece to “restore law and order,” the National Guard became the central “force of vengeance and of the prosecution of leftists.”³¹

By August 1946, 3,250 leftists, including the leadership of EAM/ELAS, had been exiled to prison islands.³² Furthermore, nearly 50,000 people were prosecuted for their alleged “activities as EAM/ELAS members,” a blatant rejection of one of the main stipulations of the Varkiza agreement. Most brutally still, during the period of White Terror from 1945-1946, according to EAM sources found by Voglis, 1,192 people were murdered, 159 women raped, and 6,413 were seriously injured.³³ The Left was so gravely weakened from the ferocious persecution of the White Terror that the Right was able to completely fabricate the elections of March 1946 with little to no protest. Blatantly fixed by the Right, the referendum on the question of the King produced a massive “yes” victory, returning the monarchy to Greece for the first time in ten years. Furthermore, out of disgust for the persecution by the Right, the KKE boycotted the elections, leading to an overwhelming victory for Rightist parties in the re-established Greek parliament.

The Civil War (*O Emphylios*) emerged from both the political exclusion and the mass violent repression the Greek government executed against the Left. In the countryside armed leftist bands had already been formed as persecuted leftists grouped together to defend themselves from political terror. In conjunction with the political rigging that characterized the March 1946 elections, KKE members decided that armed struggle would be the only “viable solution” to defend themselves from the terror of the state.³⁴ The KKE

³⁰ Ibid., 56.

³¹ Ibid., 55.

³² Ibid., 92.

³³ Rizospastis, 12 February 1946, quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 56.

³⁴ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 59.

thus formed the Democratic Army of Greece (*Dimokratikos Stratos Ellados*), or DSE, led by Makos Vafiadis.³⁵

Although the beginning of the Civil War is generally said to have started with the attack on the Litchoro gendarmerie station by leftist guerillas on election day, March 31, 1946, the war did not become a full-scale military conflict until fall 1947.³⁶ The fighting took on a more serious character after the KKE announced its “Provisional Democratic Government” (*Prosorini Dimokratiki Kyvernisi*) in December 1947. Nonetheless, throughout 1946 and 1947 both the British and United States provided massive amounts of military aid to Greece in order to crush the Communist guerillas. Voglis estimates that from 1947-1949 the United States alone supplied nearly \$350 million to the Greek government in military aid, facilitating the increase of the National Army from 98,200 men in December 1946 to 147,000 in 1948, with an additional back-up force of 100,000 men in the National Defense Corps.³⁷ On the other hand, the DSE retained roughly 26,000 men and women in its ranks, while receiving military support from Yugoslavia and Albania, although certainly at a far lower level than that supplied to the National Army by the United States.³⁸

The fighting of the Civil War largely took place in the Greek countryside, as leftist guerillas executed quick skirmishes against the much larger and better equipped National Army. For two years these battles raged across central and northern Greece, often devastating villages caught in the crossfire.³⁹ By 1949, however, the Tito-Stalin split and the KKE’s proclamation of strict devotion to Stalin cut off the DSE’s main provider of material

³⁵ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 87.

³⁶ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 61.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 88.

support, Yugoslavia.⁴⁰ Without Yugoslavian support—and without Soviet support due to Stalin’s adherence to the “napkin agreement”—the DSE’s guerilla army quickly broke down, with the victory by the National Army at Mt. Grammos on the Greek-Albanian border on August 29, 1949 being widely agreed as the official end to the fighting of the Civil War.⁴¹ Yet, the Greek government did not end the state of emergency until 1963, allowing the prisons and concentration camps to continue the operation of terror, repression, and indoctrination well past the termination of armed conflict.

Before moving to an analysis of the experiences of leftist prisoners in the camps, it is important to establish both the scale of imprisonment carried out by the Greek government, as well as the “return to the past” embodied in ideological policy utilized to remove and “reclaim” thousands of leftist bodies. After the *Dekemvriana* and during the White Terror, a number of laws were passed that were framed as necessary for the “appeasement of the country.”⁴² But, as Voglis notes, these laws primarily functioned to facilitate the repression of the Left.⁴³ Importantly, these were not novel measures or new approaches to political repression, but rather the direct imitation of policies utilized by Metaxas in the 1930s to crush the Left and ingrain anti-communism into the Greek state structure.

Passed prior to the elections of March 1946, Law 453 outlawed “banditry” while Emergency Law 890 “effectively reintroduced the *Idionymo* Law.”⁴⁴ And in the same vein as the 1920s and 1930s, the Greek state used both laws to jail thousands of leftists throughout the December Events, the White Terror, and the Civil War. Concomitant with

⁴⁰ Ibid., 115.

⁴¹ Ibid., 116.

⁴² Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 58.

⁴³ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

mass imprisonment, the civil and private sector were both purged of potentially subversive subjects. Any civil servants or army officers who were found to have supported or joined the guerillas were subsequently banished from Greek society. The distribution of leftist newspapers and journals was similarly made illegal.⁴⁵ Finally, any form of strike or labor organization in both the public and private sectors were banned.⁴⁶

As had been the case during the Metaxas period, repression of the Left went further than the removal of subversive individuals: it also demanded the absolute rejection of leftist ideals. Following Axis occupation, this primarily took the form of “loyalty certificates.” As Voglis describes, “anyone who wished to apply for a job or already worked in the public sector was examined by a ‘loyalty board’ for his or her political beliefs and was required to sign a declaration of his or her loyalty.”⁴⁷ Those found to have “anti-national” opinions or have connections to anti-national people or organizations were labeled as “disloyal” and fired from their position or denied employment.⁴⁸ The mention of “connections” to “anti-national” groups or people is especially important, since a significant number of people prosecuted and removed from society were the families of EAM or KKE members. This persecution even went as far as removing the citizenship of Greeks living abroad who were found to have connections—even if this simply mean family relations—to people associated with the Left.⁴⁹ The series of laws that excluded the Left from Greek politics culminated with the illegalization of both EAM and the KKE on December 27, 1947, a reaction by the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Greek government against the KKE's declaration of the Democratic Provisional Government.

The human cost of these laws was staggering in magnitude. The December Events began the surge of imprisonment, but the imprisoned population ebbed and waned as new laws allowed for new waves of arrests and calls for release and overcrowding within prisons forced policies of decongestion. The population of political prisoners peaked around September 1947 with just under 20,000 people, according to Communist Party sources found by Voglis.⁵⁰ For the next three years (1948-1950) the leftist prison population wavered steadily between 18,000 and 20,000 individuals, at least 3,000 of whom were women.⁵¹ Although prison sentences could often be commuted due to overcrowding, they could as easily be lengthened at the whim of the presiding judge. This further reveals the strict anti-communist character of the Greek government. As one former Minister of Justice remarked, "Justice cannot work...Ninety percent of the judges belong to the extreme right."⁵²

On an even darker note, this bias against leftist prisoners was borne out in the disproportionate severity of sentencing for political prisoners. Analyzing data for the 7,771 individuals who were prosecuted under special courts-martial—special courts created for the extrajudicial prosecution of leftists during the White Terror—Voglis finds that 15% were imprisoned for one year, 25% for one to ten years, 17% from ten to twenty years, 17% to life imprisonment, and the remaining 26% were sentenced to death.⁵³ Voglis finds that during

⁵⁰ Ibid., 96.

⁵¹ Ibid., 97

⁵² Norman Dodds, Stanley Tiffany, and Leslie Solley, *Tyranny and Terror: The Betrayal of Greece*, (New York), 1946, 12, quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 57-58.

⁵³ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 61-62.

the course of the Civil War (1946-1949) at least 8,000 individuals were sentenced to death for political crimes.⁵⁴

The system of exile was even greater than the prison system. Initially, the Greek government spread exiles across forty-seven separate islands throughout the Aegean and Mediterranean, but over time the exiled population was consolidated into a series of prison camps primarily on the three islands of Trikeri, Giaros, and Makronisos.⁵⁵ Before delving into the administrative details of these three camps, I will provide a sense of the sheer scale of people who were forcibly interned within their gates. I will then focus on the data from Makronisos, by far the largest camp, and on the experience of being a prisoner there.

Voglis relies on KKE sources to state that in September 1947—after the December Events and the White Terror—there were just under 37,000 political exiles along with 20,000 political prisoners in jail.⁵⁶ This included 12,000 soldiers and officers at Makronisos.⁵⁷ These numbers represented the peak of the overall exile population as the following years would see many sentences reduced or commuted, but as the overall population fell the numbers of those interned on Makronisos continued to grow. By May 1948, in the midst of the Civil War, British sources located by Voglis indicate 10,365 persons in exile with an additional 15,242 on Makronisos.⁵⁸ These numbers then began to decline as individuals were released and others were transferred from smaller islands to Makronisos. In September 1949, towards the end of the Civil War, Greek government sources found by Voglis report that 15,000 persons were in exile including 12,000 on

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Makronisos.⁵⁹ Finally, as the Makronisos camps were closed down in August 1950, the remaining prisoners were transferred to the camps on Ai-Stratis (*Agios Eustratios*) and the women among them were sent back to the Trikeri camps. By 1951, roughly 2,800 men and 544 women remained in camps.⁶⁰ Voglis summarizes that between 1947 and 1949 the total camp and prison population in Greece wavered between 40,000 and 50,000 persons.⁶¹ This means that approximately one Greek in two hundred was imprisoned in the course of the late 1940s.

It is worth noting here the make-up of the populations of the various camps—that is, who was interned there and for what reason. At first, Makronisos was designated specifically for suspected leftists within the Greek armed forces, individuals who had been members of the Greek state’s National Army, but whose ties to EAM or the KKE had revealed them as “anti-national” subjects.⁶² Trikeri housed men and women deemed “suspicious” by the National Army as it roamed the country clearing out areas formerly under the domain of EAM/ELAS.⁶³ Finally, Giaros was for “those convicted under criminal law,” which specifically meant people who had committed acts against the nation during either the occupation or the December Events.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, these designations were far from rigid and were quickly subject to change as the state dealt with overcrowding and other exigencies. The case of Makronisos will further illuminate this. Although its official purpose was to “concentrate all battalions of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 92.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 63.

⁶² Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 89.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

sappers” (sappers being noncombatant conscripts, typically conscripted during the *Dekemvriana*), Makronisos quickly changed from a place of “exile” to one of indoctrination and “civil reformation.”⁶⁵ In 1948 the first non-military political prisoners arrived on Makronisos, and in the next three years of its operation the camp would house prisoners from the leadership of the KKE, leaders of the DSE, members of the KKE and EAM, as well as people who professed leftist political views, and even people merely *suspected* of leftist political views as well as any of their family members, including women and children from the ages of two to eighty.⁶⁶ Thus, with the inclusion of non-military individuals, Makronisos became not only a place for the removal of leftists from society, but also a site for the production of anti-communist subjects.

Before moving to the experience of prisoners within Makronisos, it is worth quickly noting how the camp was organized and how it functioned day-to-day. Makronisos was staffed by Army officers, but the military police (A.M.) carried out the majority of the tortures on the island. In a cruel twist of fate, “repentant” former leftists constituted the ranks of the A.M. Thus, in order to prove their rejection of leftist ideals and acceptance of the regime of the Greek state, repentant leftists had to beat and terrorize their erstwhile comrades. Moreover, the degree to which one had “repented” further determined where prisoners lived and their level of treatment. The island was divided into three “battalions,” the first for prisoners who refused to reject their leftist beliefs, the second made up of prisoners “who had renounced Communism and were well along the road to becoming ‘re-indoctrinated’ patriots,” and finally the third for prisoners “who had completed the course

⁶⁵ Ibid., 90.

⁶⁶ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 104; Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 90.

and were almost ready for release to the regular armed services.”⁶⁷ The Greek military claimed that in total 14,000 soldiers and 1,000 officers were rehabilitated on Makronisos and redeployed in fighting against the DSE.⁶⁸

Past and Present on Makronisos

The Greek state described the purpose of Makronisos as “rehabilitation through the enlightenment and education” of the political prisoners.⁶⁹ Both Greek and international media often metaphorically described Makronisos as an educational or medical facility. German and French scholars declared Makronisos, “a great educational institution that seeks to rest on pure reason.”⁷⁰ And the Greek novelist, Stratis Myrivilis deemed Makronisos as

the island of Divine Knowledge [*Theognosia*] of wayward minds, the infirmary of tortured consciences...the island of a new Circe, the island of an Anticirce, who took the transformed victims of the bad witch, pulled them out of the mud and the hay of her stables, and gave them back their human dignity and Christian heart.⁷¹

What cannot be ignored in this short quote is the explicit connection between the purported project of transformation on Makronisos and the allusions to the mythical ancient Greek past. As had been the case in the nineteenth century and in the 1930s, the Greek state deployed a version of national history on Makronisos. The narrative arc of this history likewise connected the ancient Greek past to the exigencies of contemporary Greek modernity. In other words, the Greek state created a specific temporality on Makronisos.

⁶⁷ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 101.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 103

⁶⁹ Resolution 73, *Government Gazette* 262, article 2, 14 October 1949, quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 100.

⁷⁰ Stratis Bournazos, “To ‘Mega Ethnikon Scholeion Makronisou’ 1947-1950,” in *Historiko Topio kai Historiki Mnimi: To Paradeigma tis Makronisou*, 141-157, ed. Stratis Bournazos and Tassos Sakellariopoulos, (Athens: Philistor), 2000, quoted in Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 93.

⁷¹ Louis de Villefosse, “Makronissos, laboratoire politique,” *Le Tempes Modernes*, 1950, 1287-99, quoted in Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 94.

Hamilakis states that “Makronisos and the whole Greek Civil War become part of the national history, of the national destiny, of the unbroken and inescapable continuity.”⁷²

As Hamilakis argues, this was a temporality “defined by the cyclical national time where antiquity occupies a central position.”⁷³ This fixation on antiquity formed what Hamilakis terms a “monumentalized temporality,” the world as frozen in the likeness of a monument.⁷⁴ This monumentalized temporality thus conveyed that politics in Greece ought to reflect preservation and perpetuation of the glory of the ancient Greek past over other political and historical understandings that demanded more radical change. Accordingly, this national history worked to legitimize the Greek state’s own commitment to the status quo and to delegitimize the radical political futures offered by the Left, primarily the vision created by EAM during the Axis occupation.

The creation of a frozen, monumentalized temporality of conservation and exaltation of the past also implied an irreconcilable opposition between the “repented” individuals and those who still paid deference to “antinational” ideals. That is, monumentalization implied a certain Manichean understanding of the world. Fanon writes that the Manichean world is one “divided into compartments...motionless...a world of statues.”⁷⁵ The statuesque ideological conception proffered by the authorities on Makronisos thus demanded that all those who threatened this static and unalterably immortalized picture of Greece be regarded as a national enemy, a national “other.” Following from this, the narrative formed on Makronisos not only constructed an idealized Greece, but it also formed a notion of what

⁷² Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 224.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Fanon, *Wretched*, 41.

was “not-Greek,” the framing of certain ideas as antithetical to the essence of Greekness as defined by the particular reading of Greek history by the Greek state. Within the rocky bounds of the island of Makronisos the transformation of leftist political prisoners into compliant national subjects was thus framed as a modern iteration of the “millennia-old” conflict between Greece and its antithetical other.⁷⁶ And, in Manichean fashion, the conflict with this other could only end with its absolute destruction.

Contemporaries and supporters of Makronisos did not just associate the island with antiquity and its glories, but rather took a further step in declaring that the island itself offered the potentiality of a rebirth of Greece. A poem printed on the Makronisos journal, *Skapaneus*, which was circulated to those imprisoned there, reads,

From the grey rocks of Makronisos
In the dusk the soldiers’ souls fly towards you,
Glorious Temple, carried by the sails of
the boats that cross the sea
Oh Temple, you project the shine of the ancestral spirit
to our poor souls, with your rosy marbles you fly
like butterflies in the night,
You resurrect Hellas, glorious, pure and complete.⁷⁷

The notion of the “Glorious Temple” signals one of the central ways that the authorities of the Greek state conveyed the connection between the project of Makronisos and the ancient Greek past. Namely, prisoners on Makronisos inhabited an island landscape covered in monumentalized representations of the Greek past. The landscape of antiquity was therefore “resurrected” in the camps of Makronisos. The camps of the three Battalions each housed a number of replicas and imitations of classical Greek architecture.⁷⁸ The “Glorious Temple” refers to what may be labeled, without much exaggeration, the synecdoche of modern

⁷⁶ Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 223-224.

⁷⁷ *Skapaneus*, 1, 1947, 20, quoted in Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 222.

⁷⁸ Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 217.

Greece: the Parthenon. Among the various torments and labors that prisoners experienced on Makronisos was the construction of replicas of antiquity, particularly 1:20 scale replicas of the Parthenon, which were erected in the camps of both the First and Second Battalions.⁷⁹ The handling and constant exposure to these mimicked evocations of classical Greece thus confronted the prisoners with the great national tradition that they purportedly rejected by aligning themselves with radical ideologies, and acted as an ever present reminder to renounce them in the name of the eternal glory of Greece.

Along with the adornment of the island in the achaeolatry of ancient Greece was the notion that the experience of Makronisos inculcated in the imprisoned the true essence of Greece. In a 1949 propaganda pamphlet titled, “A Great Work of Civic Readaptation in Greece,” the author, C.P. Rodonachi, an advisor to the Greek state, remarks, “at Makronisos, these forlorn young men again find Greece. Under the ashes of errors...they find still smoldering the divine spark of man.”⁸⁰ Makronisos was Greece, in the view of the Greek state: it embodied all the ideals, norms, and conceptions of accepted life that made a person worthy of being part of the continuity of Greek history. Within Rodonachi’s statement is also the implication that this discovery of Greece is concomitant with an individualized and personal transformation. It is the “forlorn young men” who “find Greece” because it is they who have allegedly given themselves to ideologies that reject the constructed greatness of *Hellas*.

⁷⁹ Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 217; 221.

⁸⁰ C.P. Rodonachi, “A Great Work of Civic Readaptation in Greece,” (Athens), 1949, 7.

Therefore, the historical discourse on Makronisos also worked to display that the Greek “spirit”—the metaphysical essence of Greekness—was diametrically opposed to radical political thought, primarily Communism.⁸¹ Rodonachi writes,

The idea behind the foundation of this seminary [Makronisos] is that there exists a radical antinomy between the Greek racial psychology, essentially individualistic, and communism, essentially gregarious. This idea has as its corollary that every Greek communist is in self-exile from the spirit of the Greek race.⁸²

Thus, the rejection of this officially accepted reading of Greek history equaled, in the eyes of the state, the rejection of Greek identity. On these merits, resistance fighters or KKE members who identified as communist were fundamentally not Greek. Rather, the Greek state defined any and all leftist politics as “Slavic,” or as related to “Slavo-Communism.”⁸³ The state then deployed this specter of the Slavic, communistic national other to re-interpret not only the project of Makronisos, but also the ongoing Civil War. K. Tsatsos, at the time the Minister of Education, declared in a speech he gave to the imprisoned on Makronisos that, “we [Greeks] have 3000 years of history and we will not become slaves to the Slavs.”⁸⁴

Alongside the daily environment of sculptural icons of the Greek past, daily lectures and speeches also worked to introject the Greek state’s temporality of antiquity into the minds of the political prisoners. And it was primarily through lectures that the Greek state explicated to the prisoners the notion of the national other. Every day prisoners had to attend lectures on “morality and nationalism” delivered by repentant soldiers, Greek citizens, priests, professors, and even members of parliament.⁸⁵ Example lectures include titles like

⁸¹ Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 223.

⁸² Rodocanachi, “A Great Work,” 6.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ *Skapaneus* 4, 1949, quoted in Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 215.

⁸⁵ Aphrodite Mavroede Pandeleskou, “The Makronisos Journal,” in *Greek Women in Resistance: Journals, Oral Histories/Selected, Translated, and Introduced by Eleni Fourtini*, 120-159, (New Haven: Thelphini Press), 1986, 164; Voglis *Becoming a Subject*, 102-103; G. Tzokas, “Makronisos:

“Our Race and the Slav Attack,” “Religion and Communism,” “The Marxist Error,” and “Greece, Outpost of Liberty.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Manichean character of this opposition between Greece and its “Slavic” others is even more clearly displayed in a speech given by a reformed soldier, Private Basil Maniati, to his fellow inmates. He states,

Two worlds are facing one another: The one is fighting for the democratic tradition, the other for communism which in its present form differs from Tsarism only by worse enslavement of the people and inflicting more misery on them. Our country has been compelled to fight certain of its children who, either by foolishness or greed of power, have accepted to serve the Slavs and their designs. A voice rises from the depth of our soul: “Enough, of your frauds! They have been exposed!”⁸⁷

Explicit in Maniati’s statement is the thoroughly violent character that the Greek state approached the “other” with. In the Greek state’s view, these “two worlds” represented a total antagonism; there is no space where either can engage with the other: only one can triumph while the other is irrefutably done away with. The Greek state approached those who refused to renounce their beliefs with this same absolute violence. It is in this vein that the authorities on Makronisos declared: “Only one law governs Makronisos: repent or die.”⁸⁸ It is on this note that I now turn to the dehumanizing violence that was fundamental to the Makronisos project.

The Creation of Non-Beings

To get a sense of the violent dehumanization of Makronisos, it is important that I first describe how the prisoners perceived its environment. More specifically, we need to note how the interaction with the landscape of the island embedded individuals in a space of

The Hell of Democratic Soldiers,” [in Greek], 1949, accessed through <https://www.makronissos.org/en/g-tzokas/12-13>.

⁸⁶ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 102-103; Rodonachi, “A Great Work,” 10-11.

⁸⁷ Rodonachi, “A Great Work,” 9.

⁸⁸ Mavroede-Pandeleuskou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 150.

complete dehumanization. This is not to minimize the sheer brutality of the camps, but rather to utilize the sense perception of the prisoners do get a deeper understanding of the immediate way they understood the island. That is to say, there was a certain phenomenology of Makronisos: how it felt to be on the island and how prisoners perceived its environment conveyed the purpose and the nature of the torturous and indoctrinatory project that took place within its borders.

The principal observation that recurs in many accounts of Makronisos is the uninhabitable nature of the island. G. Tzokas, a soldier imprisoned on Makronisos, described it as “an island without trees, without water, a dry rock in the sea. Life on this terrible dry rock did not exist until the time that the monarcho-fascists made it livable.”⁸⁹ Similarly another of the imprisoned, Aphrodite Mavroede-Pandelekou, stated that,

The island loomed around us—a grey rock pitilessly pounded by waves and whipped by harsh winds. There was not a single tree in sight, not a plant, not a bird in the sky. The entire island was a bare mountain with steep, deep ravines.⁹⁰

The lack of inhabitants was not perceived solely as a negative characteristic—i.e., an absence of life—rather it had a positive notion: Makronisos is an island where life itself is prohibited.

The extremely harsh weather also constituted a significant portion of the island’s landscape, and likewise the island’s perception. Particularly, prisoners note the merciless combination of the wind and the sun. Mavroede-Pandelekou further writes,

Those who have not been to Makronisos cannot imagine the satanic alliance of nature and man. The four winds pound that bare rock with relentless fury, blowing down the tents and creating storms of sand and gravel that whipped our faces and blinded us. On windy days we’d walk along the narrow passage to the outhouses by twos and threes, holding hands for

⁸⁹ Tzokas, “Makronisos,” 4.

⁹⁰ Mavroede-Pandelekou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 145.

fear the wind might fling us against the barbed wire...Day and night our mouths were filled with mud, our nostrils stuffed with sand, our eyes red and swollen...This unrelentingly harsh life, endlessly repeated day in and day out, broke down the health of many women, making us unable to cope with the hardships of daily existence.⁹¹

The weather of Makronisos thus made “daily existence” itself almost impossible. This “satanic alliance of nature and man” clearly displayed to the prisoners that only those considered unhuman or unworthy of the basic precepts of human existence would be made to stay on this “dry rock” (*xerovrachos*). Furthermore, the experience of the summer, specifically the rays of the sun, amplified the inhumaneness of the existence of a Makronisos prisoner. Tzokas writes as such: “Summer. The hot sun melting iron. The bone-dry land of Makronisos took out the breath as it burned endlessly.”⁹² In startling similarity Mavroede-Pandeskelou also describes how “summer is terrible in Makronisos. The cliffs give out a scorching heat, the tents are ablaze, the earth burns like red-hot iron, there is no shade anywhere. Not the smallest tree, not a shrub, no water, nothing to relieve the cruel white heat.”⁹³

What is immediately obvious in reading these accounts is the totalizing nature of Makronisos environment. The wind blows with “relentless fury,” the combination of the sun and the aridness of Makronisos “burned endlessly.” The perceptions of these prisoners display that the inhumanness of Makronisos, even at the most base, environmental level, was ubiquitously apparent and it confronted them every single day. Even just the environment made clear that the Greek state reserved the space of Makronisos only for those

⁹¹ Ibid., 162.

⁹² Tzokas, “Makronisos,” 5.

⁹³ Mavroede-Pandelekou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 181.

whom it deemed fundamentally lacking the qualities that define a fellow being, for persons unworthy of mutual human recognition, for Fanonian non-beings.

Dehumanization is even more clearly evidenced in the broad array of tortures that political prisoners suffered on Makronisos. Torture was part of the daily life on Makronisos, with the purpose of completely alienating prisoners from who they were and from the beliefs which formerly structured their lives. Succinctly put by another of the formerly imprisoned on Makronisos, the author Andreas Nenedakis in an interview with anthropologist Michael Herzfeld, “the state’s effort was to reduce us to nonexistence.”⁹⁴ The Greek state achieved this primarily through physical torture, but more generally by utilizing tactics which removed any and all forms of agency that prisoners possessed. It was in this sense of all pervading and encompassing torture that the Greek state deployed Fanonian “absolute violence” against political prisoners in order to deprive them of their humanity. The absoluteness of this violence likewise displays the anti-dialectical character with which the Greek state approached leftists on Makronisos: there was no conciliation or recognition, in the eyes of the Greek state the leftist subject required a crucible of pure punishment and inhumanity.

As Mavroede-Pandeleškou powerfully describes, “life in Makronisos could be summed up in a single statement: your self, your time, your life were not your own.”⁹⁵ Nenedakis in his novel *The Painter Tsingos in War and Prison*, which describes the experience of imprisonment in post-occupation Greece, further writes,

⁹⁴ Michael Herzfeld, *Portrait of A Greek Imagination: An Ethnographic Biography of Andreas Nenedakis*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1997, 128.

⁹⁵ Mavroede-Pandeleškou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 163.

And now they don't want you even to think. They arrange your footsteps, your sleep, your food. How many bedclothes are needed to cover your carcass, how long you are to breathe fresh air, just enough to be preserved, so that they can dehydrate your soul and dissolve every bit of resistance that may be in you, any vitality you may possess.⁹⁶

It was through this lack of control, this removal of any semblance of having a legitimate say in your life, that the Greek state treated the leftist non-being.

The tortures of Makronisos consisted of hard labor during the day and psychological and physical brutality at night. A common labor at Makronisos was the carrying of stone. Daily, the guards at Makronisos would command prisoners to walk up the cliffs and bring down from them large pieces of stone. After the prisoners retrieved said stone, the guards then told them to put it back where they got it, at the top of the cliff. In the heat of the sun, and against the bellows of the wind, prisoners would walk up and down the cliffs of Makronisos carrying these stones all day, with their only orders being “bring them up,” (*aneveite*) or “bring them down,” (*kateveite*). As Panourgia has argued, there was a particular existential reduction that occurred through “the constant repetition... of needlessly and mindlessly carrying stone.”⁹⁷ Namely, the endless up and down of carrying the stones worked to “obliterate the political consciousness of the prisoner,” so that there was nothing to the individual's life except the unthinking completion of the guards' orders.⁹⁸ This quotidian repetition therefore reduced prisoners from the status of a human subject to that of an object.

Along with the hard labor of carrying stone was also the ubiquitous presence of physical violence on Makronisos. Beatings occurred throughout the island every night.

⁹⁶ Andreas Nenedakis, *The Painter Tsingos in War and Prison*, [in Greek], Athens, 1965, 124-127, quoted in Herzfeld, *Greek Imagination*, 108.

⁹⁷ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 92.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Tzokas recalls that he was beat by a group of 3 or 4 guards for four continuous hours, and beaten so brutally that he fainted five times.⁹⁹ Guards subjected prisoners to a number of physical punishments. Accounts describe prisoners being burned alive, having excrement shoved into their mouths, and being hung by their hair.¹⁰⁰ Consistent across accounts of torture, at both Makronisos and on other islands, is the guards' screaming at the prisoners "Kill the Bulgarians," or "Bulgarians you will die tonight."¹⁰¹ The invocation of "Bulgarians" followed from the state's notion that leftist prisoners were, in essence, Slavs rather than Greeks. But this specific invocation in the context of a life-threatening beating displays that for the Greek state, the exclusion from its construction of Greekness was tantamount to the negation of humanity. To be a Slav was to be a non-being, and to be treated as such.

Additionally, of particular note is a torture technique whereby guards put inmates in a sack and hung them above the sea for days on end. Described by Tzokas as a torture that "makes the human mind stop," Mavroede-Pandelekou likewise recalls one prisoner who stated that,

They tied me by my feet and hung me, head first, from a cliff over the sea. The waves beat on me, drowning me. They pulled me up many times. I begged them to kill me. "Kill you and make a hero out of you?" they laughed. "Makronisos doesn't breed heroes, only worms." They kept it up for three days.¹⁰²

What this quote illuminates is that on Makronisos the authorities not only deprived the prisoners of every minute aspect of human agency, but even the most basic control over their lives. For instance, the camp authorities strictly forbade prisoners from attempting to

⁹⁹ Tzokas, "Makronisos," 7.

¹⁰⁰ Mavroede-Pandelekou, "The Makronisos Journal," 151; Tzokas "Makronisos," 7-8.

¹⁰¹ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 109; Tzokas, "Makronisos," 6.

¹⁰² Mavroede-Pandelekou, "the Makronisos Journal," 151.

kill themselves. After the Makronisos A.M. massacred a large number of prisoners on February 28 and March 1, 1948, a series of prisoner suicides followed.¹⁰³ The military director of Makronisos responded to the suicides by announcing,

Those attempting suicide are misled if they believe that they can dispose of their selves as they wish. From now on, it is decreed that a sworn interrogation will take place concerning any and all who attempt suicide, the results of which will be submitted to me immediately, along with the necessary suit for the indictment to special court martial.¹⁰⁴

Imprisonment on Makronisos thus deprived prisoners of even the autonomy over their own lives.

However, beatings and torture did not dehumanize the prisoners solely through direct physical suffering. Constant beatings, and thus constant potential for beatings, produced unending fear and paranoia within the political prisoners. Mavroede-Pandelekou writes that, “day and night were haunted by the specter of torture, the dread of an unknown tomorrow,” that made it difficult “to breath at Makronisos.”¹⁰⁵ This atmosphere of fear was further created by the perception of the torture of others. Namely, the nightly hearing of the screams and groans of other prisoners being beaten by the guards. A passage from Tzokas best illuminates this,

The nightmares followed the painful days of Makronisos, the torturous nights. Just as it was getting dark, the anxiety began. Whose turn is it tonight? There did not pass any night without hearing the wild moans, the gut-wrenching voices of pain from some colleague, your comrade who was inhumanely tortured...it was impossible to sleep in that moment as you heard the pain of the voices as they were beaten...And it was not only one evening, it was entire weeks and months.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 111.

¹⁰⁴ Dionysis Georgatos, “To Syrma tis Apomonosis,” in *Makronisos, Istorikos Topos 2*, 44-47, (Athens: Sygromi Epochi), 2003, 45, quoted in Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 111.

¹⁰⁵ Mavroede-Pandelekou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 168.

¹⁰⁶ Tzokas, “Makronisos,” 6.

And this constant anxiety extended beyond torture. As Mavroede-Pandeleškou claims, constant fear, paranoia, and uncertainty were the “atmosphere” of Makronisos,

Murder was only one side of Makronisos. The other, by far the worst, was the scientifically designed and expertly executed atmosphere of uncertainty and disorientation. The falanga and the whip, the alphamites [A.M.], the shrill metallic voice of the loudspeakers, the howling of drunken guards, the gentle-mannered propaganda, the nightly assaults by the archterrorists Ioannides and Kastrititsis, even the island priest—all were engaged in a total, pitiless assault on everything that keeps a person human.¹⁰⁷

By destroying “everything that keeps a person human” the operations of Makronisos thus thoroughly worked to eliminate all aspects of the leftist subjectivity.

In the eyes of the state, however, elimination could only be achieved upon the signature of a declaration of repentance. The sheer brutality of the experience of Makronisos proved to be highly effective in this sense. Voglis writes that “according to the director of the Makronisos camps,” in January 1950, “out of the 16,768 interned soldiers and civilians only 1,494 had not signed declarations of repentance.”¹⁰⁸ Declarations of repentance held significance in a number of ways. The first was that after being signed, declarations would be posted in the signee’s local newspaper or read by their local priest, thus signaling to the broader community the necessity of rejecting left-wing values. An example of a declaration printed in a local newspaper reads:

The undersigned Eftychia K...I state that during the December rebellion I was misguided into the EAM organization by deceptive words without knowing of its antinational activities and its treasonous and destructive actions against my Motherland. I renounce the organization as the enemy of my Motherland, by whose side I stand. Moreover I pledge the quick extermination of the bandits.¹⁰⁹

More importantly, the signing of a declaration of repentance represented a rejection of a prisoner’s past but also, simultaneously, the foreclosure of a possible future. As Voglis

¹⁰⁷ Mavroede-Pandeleškou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 168.

¹⁰⁸ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 79.

¹⁰⁹ *Acropolis*, December 24, 1947, quoted in Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 74.

notes, the public publication of declarations of repentance made the renunciation of prior beliefs an undeniable social fact.¹¹⁰ When a prisoner signed a declaration of repentance, in a significant sense they declared that they had given up on any possible realization of a future different than that projected by the temporality of the Greek state.

It is for this reason that Mavroede-Pandeleškou presents such a powerful depiction of the emptiness of the prisoners who signed on Makronisos. She writes,

After we passed the soldiers' encampment, we found ourselves in front of a field fenced with barbed wire, which caged the men who had succumbed and signed the Declaration of Repentance. Thousands of eyes were on us and we saw in them an unbearable expression of sorrow and pain. Even though most of the men were young, they seemed to have given up all resistance to the inhuman regime that surrounded them. Unshaven, unwashed, their clothes dirty and torn, they seemed to have lost all memory of what they once were.¹¹¹

The sentiment of the last sentence deserves deeper consideration. In describing the repentant as having “lost all memory of what they once were,” Mavroede-Pandeleškou situates the connection of non-being and the contestation of temporalities within the phenomenon of declarations of repentance. The signing of a declaration in one fell swoop both eviscerated the allegiances and solidarities which formerly constituted the prisoner's political identity while, through this evisceration, simultaneously eliminated the potential political future that the prisoner had fought for. The power of ontological destruction that came with declarations of repentance thus pushed prisoners to furiously resist signing, and through this resistance that particular future remained alive.

Resistance in the Prisons and Camps

¹¹⁰ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 84.

¹¹¹ Mavroede-Pandeleškou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 147.

Against the totalizing repression of the Greek state which held the objective of eliminating the political identity and future of the Greek Left, there emerged in Greek prisons and camps a concerted force of resistance. This resistance stemmed from both political and non-political motivations, but, nonetheless, the conflict between prison resistance and state repression produced a concretization of the ideals first inculcated and disseminated by the EAM resistance against the Axis; against the absolute repression of the Greek state a Fanonian “authentic upheaval” emerged. Namely, I highlight how resistance by political prisoners fostered collective action based on inclusiveness and a commitment to education. Although I utilize sources from Makronisos, I also draw from testimonies about the Averoff women’s prison assembled by Janet Hart. I focus on women because, as argued by Hart, they benefitted the most from the EAM project in the long term, and their prison resistance clearly demonstrated how unwilling they were to surrender the political and social gains accrued during the Axis occupation.

Despite the explicit focus on individualism and rejection of “communistic” values, the vicious nature of the prisons and camps forced prisoners to form collectivities. Mavroede-Pandeleškou describes how the sheer brutality of Makronisos demanded that in order to survive, she and her female comrades had to come together. Upon arriving on Makronisos in 1950 the female prisoners recognized that,

Weak as we were from the hardships of our exile, we were not going to last long, we would die with the first beating. We looked around us. We were a solid mass of stubbornness and determination. Pressed close together, holding hands, we forgot about our individual selves... All our strength, all our thoughts, focused on only one desire—to continue to resist.¹¹²

¹¹² Mavroede-Pandeleškou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 154.

The refusal to sign declarations of repentance further emboldened the collective spirit of resistance. Tzokas describes how his fellow soldiers “resisted proudly” the signing of *diloseis*, even under extreme duress.¹¹³ And likewise Mavroede-Pandeleou writes that,

Our spirits rose when we discovered that in spite of the torture very few had given in... Only the seriously wounded had stayed in the tents. Marching to the canteen—a long line of stubborn, determined women, each of us a tiny fragment of resistance, each of us a necessary and indestructible part of the whole—we were triumphant.¹¹⁴

Although the extreme environment of repression and torment on Makronisos largely precluded collective organization, in other prisons, particularly Averoff, collective organization defined prison life. In an interview with Janet Hart, Maria Sideri, who was imprisoned for fourteen years in Averoff prison, 1947-1961, with twelve years on death row, describes the “communistic” and “socialistic” way of life of Averoff. She recalls that “we owned everything in common,” and that if prisoners required a certain good, like an item of clothing, the collective prisoners’ organization would procure it for them.¹¹⁵ Thus, the communalistic, mass participatory character of EAM continued to thrive in prison, as prisoners utilized what they had learned in the Resistance to improve their lives behind bars.

Indeed, collective organization extended further than the simple procurement of goods. Prisoners in Averoff organized singing groups and theater groups, and delegated to individuals necessary chores for things like cleanliness or package distribution.¹¹⁶ Most of all, prisons and camps, through collective organization, became bona fide educational institutions.¹¹⁷ Sideri describes how,

¹¹³ Tzokas, “Makronisos,” 6.

¹¹⁴ Mavroede-Pandeleou, “The Makronisos Journal,” 157.

¹¹⁵ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 257.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 267.

Out in the sun, we would either do lessons, like foreign languages, which were allowed, and the literacy lessons, which were also allowed. We weren't allowed to study things like political economy and other theoretical subjects, but we did do those in secret. But all this without paper. We had to do it by memory, for the most part. And that's why we were in large groups. I would forget something, and you would chip in. Or vice versa. And we did those lessons outside.¹¹⁸

Also interviewed by Hart, Natalia, who was exiled on both Makronisos and Trikeri, recalls how on Trikeri,

we were able to do a lot of lessons. All the teachers, because a lot of the teachers were still there, like me. We had a lot of illiterate women, and we were able to give them lessons, and also to the girls. There were about fifty-four teachers there, and we taught about 350 illiterate women to read after a fashion.¹¹⁹

Hart notes that resultant from this prison educational system, not only did many women learn how to read, but many girls subsequently passed their high school equivalency exams upon release from prison.¹²⁰

Thus, through the brutality of prison and the concerted efforts of total elimination of the leftist subjectivity and potentiality of EAM, prisoners still resisted. And from this resistance a genuine development emerged. Although repression by the Greek state may have wiped away the material and organizational achievements of EAM, the ideas that it presented, namely, a future with the possibility of inclusive mass political participation through collective action, remained alive.

The return of the Greek state after the Axis occupation brought with it the entrenched anti-communism that had defined the Greek state throughout the 1930s. Military clashes and expanded legal and carceral constructions from the Metaxas period showcased that, for the Greek state, there would be no concession to the achievements of the Left during the occupation. As I have argued in this chapter, the Greek state worked to eviscerate

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 254.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 265.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 267.

the temporality generated by EAM during the occupation through a set of policies premised on totalizing elimination. It is in this way that the Greek state created a Manichean opposition between leftists and Greekness writ large; the one was fundamentally at odds with the other. The prisons and concentration camps, primarily on Makronisos, acted as the sites where the state executed the absolute violence of this anti-dialectical opposition. But, even as this brutal violence forced many leftists to renounce their former radical views, many others continued the tradition of collective resistance. The female prisoners of Averoff prison particularly display the way in which leftists refused to let the dreams of EAM perish. EAM's future thus survived in the minds and bodies of the subalterns who would no longer tolerate being excluded.

Conclusion

In concluding this thesis, I would like to return to some comments that I made in the introduction regarding the reception of the Resistance and Civil War. I noted how for decades after the end of the Civil War the Right made its historical reading of the 1940s in Greece hegemonic across the national history books. The Right thusly recognized one of the central points of this thesis, that interpretations of the past necessarily implicate particular imaginings of the future; and, as such, to prevent certain political visions or possibilities requires a monopolization of history. It is in this sense that Neni Panourgia writes that the historiography of the Civil War “does not deal with a fifty-year-old history; it deals with the story that is modern Greece.”¹

The rightist iron grip on the history of the Resistance holds true for roughly the first 25 years which followed the Civil War, but upon the overthrow of the Dictatorship of the Junta and the legalization of the KKE in 1974, leftists and resistance members across Greece began to advocate for recognition and commemoration of the Resistance. However, the official commemoration of the Resistance constructed a historical understanding that is filled with significant historical silences, silences that I hope the contents of this thesis worked to fill with voices and ideas that ought not be forgotten.

The Greek government answered the calls for commemoration of the Resistance in 1981. The state passed a law which officially recognized the role of EAM in overthrowing the Axis

¹ Neni Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens: The Greek Left and the Terror of the State*, (New York: Fordham University Press), 2009, 64.

occupation and liberating the country.² What is problematic about this national commemoration is that it erased the conflict and political potentiality that lay at the heart of the story of EAM and the Greek state's subsequent repression of it. The narrative of official commemoration described the Resistance as including "all Greeks," in a struggle that was solely anti-fascist and devoid of "revolutionary and political aspects."³ Rather than highlighting the ways in which the Resistance appealed to Greeks who formerly were all but excluded from the Greek political system, in this narrative the Resistance is reduced to yet another iteration of the glory and triumph of the all-encompassing legacy of *Hellas* defeating the "other." Accordingly, there is also no mention in the commemoration of the repression to which the Greek state approached the Resistance after the occupation was over. The wrongdoing on the part of the state is forgotten, while the progressive aspects of EAM are nationalized to the point of meaninglessness.

Along with official commemoration, the Greek state also monumentalized the Resistance in a series of statues and plaques at various sites where battles and other significant events occurred during the occupation and Civil War.⁴ Of particular interest, one of the roughly 350 commemorative monuments built, is a statue on Makronisos. The statue depicts a male prisoner engaging in the torturous "carrying of stone."⁵ The prisoner's legs are wrapped in barbed wire which appears to be breaking while he carries the stone on his left shoulder with his right fist raised in the air.⁶

² Polymeris Voglis and Ioannis Nioutsikos, "Greek Historiography of the 1940s: A Reassessment," *Sudost-Europa* 65, no. 2, (June 2017), 316-333, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1515/soeu-2017-0020>, 321.

³ Voglis and Nioutsikos, "Greek Historiography," 322.

⁴ Kostantinos Charamis, "'Nothing and no one has been forgotten': commemorating those who did not give in during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949)", *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 70, (2005): 173-193, 176.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 178

⁶ *Ibid.*

While these various aesthetic elements are meant to evoke the resistance of the prisoners on Makronisos, on closer inspection this evocation presents a highly sanitized depiction of the history of Makronisos. There is no mention of the political character of prisoners on Makronisos, nor the names of the many who perished within its rocky bounds. The monumentalized prisoner's resistance is thus emptied of any specific political or ideological content. And, furthermore, the monumentalization in itself freezes this empty resistance and preserves it for future generations. In so doing, Makronisos becomes a place where some people resisted against suffering at the hands of the state, but the reasons for this are left unsaid.

In its construction of monuments and official recognition of the Resistance, the Greek state thus reproduced the continuity of preservation and adherence to the status quo that was the hallmark of the Greek governments before and after the Axis occupation. Without any recognition of the Resistance as a radical response to the previous political and economic status quo—and likewise no recognition of the explicit political character of the state's crushing of its memory—the history of EAM and of the leftists who fought off the Axis becomes just another element in a national history that prioritizes continuity above all else.

As I have argued in this thesis, specifically against this aforementioned reading of history, the legacy of the Resistance must be framed from the position of the “struggling, oppressed class itself.”⁷ Rather than simply a protracted military campaign against a foreign insurgency, the resistance against the Axis was a thoroughly political movement, one which constructed forms of political practice and ideals that displayed to subaltern Greeks the possibility of a radically different future. EAM's centering of education, mass participation, and

⁷ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (Boston: First Mariner Books, 2019), 204.

inclusiveness broke open a Greek political climate that had previously only worked for the wealthy and the ennobled. And it was the majoritarian and radically inclusive character of EAM that made it a broadly popular political movement in Greece, with hundreds of thousands of common Greeks rallying to its cause and embracing its political vision.

It is these moments of history—the ruptures, the breaks with conventional wisdom, the explosions of potentiality from below—that the historian must elevate and make conscious to their reader, and to broader society in general. And it is with these moments that the dominant history must be brushed aside, the plight of the oppressed revealed in its wake.

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