

# JOURNAL OF THE HELLENIC DIASPORA

VOL. XII, No. 1

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## DEBATE

RENTIER CAPITAL, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT,  
AND THE GROWTH OF THE GREEK ECONOMY IN  
THE POSTWAR PERIOD:  
A RESPONSE TO JAMES PETRAS  
*by A. SKOURAS*

THE SECURITY BATTALIONS AND THE CIVIL WAR  
*by ANDRE GEROLYMATOS*

DOCUMENTS:  
DISPATCHES OF LINCOLN MACVEAGH  
*Edited and with an introduction*  
*by YIORGOS CHOULIARAS AND DAN GEORGAKAS*

ORESTES  
*by YANNIS RITSOS*

BOOK REVIEWS

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*A Quarterly Review*

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# Statement

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With this issue, the constitution of an advisory board to the *Journal* takes effect. The formation of this board is a public and collective expression of long-established relations, on an individual basis, between the *Journal* and the board's members. More significantly, from their own and varied vantage points, the members of the board share in the *Journal's* general orientation and intellectual agenda. Finally, as we are going through a period of various improvements—including, we hope, a normalization of production schedules—we actively encourage the suggestions and assistance of our readers on all matters, whatsoever.

*The Editors*

# Rentier Capital, Industrial Development, and the Growth of the Greek Economy in the Postwar Period: A Response to James Petras

by A. SKOURAS

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James Petras has offered recently an interesting interpretation of the growth of the Greek economy in the postwar period.<sup>1</sup> Its interest lies mainly in the attention it pays to the specificities of Greek economic growth and, particularly, to the central role it attributes to investment in real property. Petras argues that this investment, the exceptional magnitude of which is beyond dispute, constitutes the key to a proper understanding of the postwar growth of the Greek economy. Moreover, and this is the most contentious argument, investment in real property is the main cause of the industrial underdevelopment that characterizes the Greek economy.

Unfortunately, Petras's thesis suffers from a number of flaws and is ultimately not convincing. The considerable magnitude of the investment in real property is, undoubtedly, an important particularity of the postwar Greek economy, but this fact does not possess quite the significance that Petras attributes to it. Furthermore, this investment has not had an adverse influence on industrial development. It is far more likely that postwar industrial development (which is hardly negligible, as Petras seems to believe) was facilitated by investment in housing and construction.

Let us consider Petras's argument in some detail. His thesis can be encapsulated in the following two propositions:

- (1) Rentier capital reduces profit earned by productive activities, limits investment in industry, and is responsible for industrial underdevelopment.
- (2) Rentier capital creates a mentality that stands in opposition to productive activity and, by permeating the whole of Greek society, discourages productive work effort.

<sup>1</sup>James Petras, "Greek Rentier Capital: Dynamic Growth and Industrial Underdevelopment," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, Vol. XI, No. 2 (Summer 1984).

*The Definition of Rentier Capital*

Both these propositions are open to serious objections. But before we consider the objections to Petras's thesis, let us first examine his definition of rentier capital: "Rentier capital refers to direct and indirect activities in which capital is invested to realize forms of rent-income. This includes investment in all types of real estate: housing, hotels, stores, land, and so on."<sup>2</sup> This definition confuses investment, which results in the production of capital goods, with "placement" of capital, which does not result in production. There is a considerable difference between investment in the production of new housing, hotels, and stores from placement in land and in already existing housing, hotels, and stores. The former increases national output and contributes to growth while the latter does not. In addition, it is important to distinguish between land and reproducible capital assets because of the different effects to which their respective taxation gives rise. Following the literature on real property taxation,<sup>3</sup> it can be shown that taxation of reproducible forms of real property tends to discourage investment and economic growth while taxation of land tends to encourage development.

For these reasons, it is desirable that the definition of "rentier capital" be modified so as to exclude placements and relate to investment only. The need for such a modification is reinforced by the fact that the existing statistics refer exclusively to investment. If placements are not excluded from the definition of rentier capital, a quantitative estimate of rentier capital will not be available, and the relative importance of this phenomenon in the Greek and other economies becomes impossible to ascertain.

It would therefore seem sensible to limit the definition of rentier capital to *investment* activities involving land. Such investment activities are, in essence, construction activities, and these are estimated, reliably on the whole, by the National Statistical Service of Greece and reported under the statistical series heading, "Dwellings, Other Buildings and Constructions."<sup>4</sup>

*Industrial Underdevelopment and the Notion of Capital*

Let us now turn to the first proposition in Petras's thesis. Is rentier capital responsible for industrial underdevelopment? To start with, it is very doubtful whether "underdevelopment" is an appropriate descrip-

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, A. Skouras, *Land and Its Taxation in Recent Economic Theory*, Papazissis, 1977.

<sup>4</sup>Petras also refers to tourism as part of rentier capital. Although it is the case that possibly the greatest part of investment in tourism falls into the statistical category of "Other Buildings and Constructions," investment in tourism extends into the categories of transport and equipment for the provision of services.

tion of the evolution of Greek industry in the postwar period. It is an indisputable fact that the industrial sector grew at a faster rate than the rest of the economy and increased considerably its share in employment, national product, and, especially, exports. Even by international standards, the rate of growth of the Greek industrial sector is impressively high. "Underdevelopment" could possibly denote either the gap between a desirable target of industrialization and the existing level of industrial development or, alternatively, the shortfall of the actual past rate of industrial growth from an ideally and potentially faster rhythm of industrial development in the postwar period. As regards the desirable target of industrialization, there is little doubt that further industrialization of the Greek economy is a desirable objective. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that most economies at a more advanced level of industrialization have witnessed, during the last twenty years, a clear reduction in industrial employment and, often, a reduction also in the share of industrial output as regards total output. It is therefore not at all obvious that, in the Greek case, the desirable target of industrialization implies necessarily an increase in the proportion of the labor force employed in industry.

As regards the ideally faster past rhythm of industrial development, this hinges on the argument that rentier capital has, in fact, retarded the potentially faster rate of industrialization in the postwar period. For such an argument to hold, it is necessary to establish that investment in housing and construction is directly competitive to investment in industry, so that a higher rate of investment in the one implies a lower rate of investment in the other. Petras seems to consider this proposition to be evidently true. He seems to believe that capital and investment resources, at any time, are a fixed magnitude and, to the extent that they are used in housing and construction, cannot be available to industry. In holding this view, Petras is in agreement with most neoclassical economists who consider capital as a given magnitude of material resources. But this view is incorrect. Capital is neither a given material magnitude nor is it simply a physical quantity of capital goods. Capital is, in the widest sense, the social potentiality to use labor power for production which does not result in the satisfaction of the consumption and other needs of the labor force, but is in the interests of those who own and/or control the means of production. This potentiality is determined by socioeconomic conflict, including wrangling about changes in the system of relative prices, and its boundaries cannot be known without considering the configuration and dynamics of socioeconomic forces. But apart from this, and even if capital is taken as a given physical magnitude, there is absolutely no guarantee that it will be fully employed in production. There is no certainty, even if the quantity of investment resources in the form of capital goods is given, that it will be utilized in its entirety. It is therefore far from evident that more investment in housing and construction necessarily implies less investment in industry. On the contrary, as it will be argued below,

it is more probable that more investment in housing and construction promotes more investment in industry, too.

### *Excessive Housing Investment?*

Before we examine the mechanism which produces the contrary result from the one that Petras believes to be self-evident, let us first consider a closely related policy view. This is that investment in housing is excessive and should be reduced. This view is held by many, maybe even the majority of Greek economists. It was put forward thirty years ago by the then-Governor of the Bank of Greece, X. Zolotas. The argument supporting this view, as expressed more recently by Zolotas,<sup>5</sup> runs as follows: "In Greece, during the decade 1964-73, investments in housing absorbed 30.2% of total investment and 7.4% of gross domestic product." These figures are quite high when compared with those of other countries. This emphasis on housing investment tends to retard the rate of economic growth because the contribution of such investment to national product is limited. This is reflected in the high capital-output ratio in housing: "It is estimated that, for the period 1956-1975, the capital-output ratio in housing was four times higher than that in agriculture and seven times higher than the capital-output ratio in industry. This means that the investment of a given capital sum in industry and agriculture leads directly to an increase in national product that is a multiple of the increase brought about by a comparable sum invested in housing."

For this reason, Zolotas argues that it is desirable to reduce investment in housing and shift it to industry and agriculture. This will have the additional benefit that it will reduce inflationary pressures, since the increase in the supply of goods, following a given investment, is greater in industry and agriculture than in housing.

The above argument is quite correct if the level of investment can be considered as given. In a centrally planned economy, where investment can be programmed and carried out by a planning agency, the level of investment can be reasonably taken as fixed, and the argument is valid. But the logic of the capitalist economy is quite different. In an economic system in which investment is determined by the prospect of profit expected by private agents, the level of investment cannot be taken as given. The problem is that the overall level of investment is no longer independent of the sectoral composition of investment. A change in investment in one sector affects expectations and prospective profit in the other sectors, with the result that investment in the rest of the economy also changes in the same direction. More concretely, a reduction of investment in housing reduces profit in the other sectors of the

<sup>5</sup>X. Zolotas, *Consumption, Investments and Monetary Equilibrium*, Bank of Greece, 1977 (in Greek).

economy and adversely affects investment in these sectors. The result is a fall in the aggregate level of investment and a retardation in the rates of growth.

Conversely, the high level of housing investment in the postwar Greek economy had a positive effect on the levels of profit and investment realized by the other sectors in the economy. That is, contrary to what Petras and Zolotas believe, the high levels of investment in housing promoted rather than retarded industrial investment and development. Since this conclusion is not obvious, it may be appropriate to develop the argument at some length, noting briefly the theoretical principles which are relevant to it.

### *The Central Role of the Volume of Profits*

Let us begin considering the basic factors which determine the volume of profits. It is evident that developments in this economic magnitude are of crucial importance for the health of an economy based on private enterprise. The volume of profits is the magnitude which, in the short run, is probably the most important determinant of developments in the business climate, investment decisions, and aggregate economic activity. Unfortunately, the determination of this magnitude has been far from the central preoccupation of neoclassical economists, probably because the mainstream of neoclassical theory has consistently ignored the central role of profits in the operation of capitalist economies. The nearest substitute to the volume of profits in standard macroeconomic theory is aggregate demand. Of course, changes in aggregate demand are closely linked to changes in the volume of profits, but an approach focusing on aggregate demand tends, infelicitously, to direct attention away from the subject of profits, which is the all-important question for private business. Given this state of mainstream theory, the work of the Polish economist, Michal Kalecki, is still the most important theoretical contribution to the question of profits determination and remains the starting-point for any thinking on the subject.

According to Kalecki,<sup>6</sup> the determining factors of the volume of profits are, on the one hand, the values of recently realized investment, state expenditure, and exports, all of which have a positive effect on profits, and, on the other hand, the propensity to save out of wages and other incomes, state revenue, and imports, all of which have a negative effect on the volume of profits. If the time lags between realized investment and profits are ignored, then the relationship among the above variables can be expressed as an identity; this identity can be derived from the standard definitions of these variables in national income accounts. The volume of profits is thus similar to aggregate demand

<sup>6</sup>For a simple formulation, see the essay, "The Determinants of Profits," in M. Kalecki, *Selected Essays on the Dynamics of the Capitalist Economy*, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

in two aspects: first, they are both determined by the same variables, and, second, the relationship of both profits and aggregate demand with these variables can be expressed as a tautology. This is, in fact, the common basis between Kalecki's theory and the mainstream neoclassical/Keynesian synthesis in macroeconomics. Their difference, apart from the difference in the intellectual traditions from which they issue, lies mainly in the choice of variables which are put at the center of the stage and on which they throw light. But this difference has, as we will now see, important implications for the problem at hand.

It is a widely held view that investment in housing and construction constituted the main means of rekindling aggregate demand in the Greek economy and, in this way, tended to promote economic development. This Keynesian view has been criticized, as we have seen, by Zolotas and others who have argued that investment could have been directed instead to other sectors of the economy, and especially to the industrial sector, where the effect on both production and productivity would have been far more beneficial. Kalecki's theory can provide a different perspective on this matter and illuminates certain interesting and important aspects of this question.

Economic growth and development were promoted by the volume of profits brought about by investment in housing and construction. These profits were necessary, given the socioeconomic conditions of the time, to provide investment incentives to private business and thus to preserve the dynamism of the economy. In the absence of these profits, productive investments might not have taken place and the economy's dynamism might have been impaired. Here we should distinguish between productive and non-productive investments solely on the basis of the return or profit they earn. It is in the sense of earning a comparatively low return on the capital invested that housing investment is considered as non-productive and is opposed by Zolotas and other economists. But non-productive investments do not make a smaller contribution to the creation of profits than they themselves have brought about. Similarly, the existence of low-return investments in a sector like construction in postwar Greece means that this sector absorbs only a proportionally small part of total profits. As a result, a proportionally larger part is available for appropriation by other sectors of the economy. It can thus be seen that the lower an investment's rate of return, the higher is the rate of profit for the rest of the economy. The same applies, to an even greater extent, to exports and to the deficit in the government's budget, which do not absorb any of the profits they create.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above analysis is that, in an economy motivated by profit, non-productive investments are more effective in reflating the economy than productive investments and are, in fact, comparable to exports and public deficits. The reason that this conclusion may seem paradoxical is that, apart from exports, the other two potent means for increasing profits and reflating the economy cause counter-reactions which negate their effectiveness. Budget deficits (1) are

in direct opposition to the business and market mentality and are considered as evidence of economic mismanagement by the government; (2) cause concern among business interests because they enable the potential expansion of state economic activity to the detriment of the private sector; (3) absorb financial funds which, the private sector believes, causes the savings and finance at its own disposal to be correspondingly reduced; and (4) are seen by business circles as inevitably inflationary and generally harmful to the development of private enterprise. As a consequence, the business climate is adversely affected and this probably has a negative effect on private investment.

Non-productive investments face a different, but possibly more serious, problem with respect to their effectiveness as a reflationary policy tool. Non-productive investments, and possibly even investments with a positive but very low rate of return, lead the investing firms to a financial impasse and, sooner or later, to bankruptcy. Although a bankruptcy does not necessarily imply the cessation of a firm's operations, this is often the case. In that event, the repercussions on the rest of the economy are adverse, and both aggregate demand and profits fall. The adverse effects will be particularly pronounced if a firm's failure drags healthy firms, which happen to have close commercial ties with the failed firm, along to bankruptcy. It is evident therefore that only exports remain as a particularly potent and effective means of increasing profits and reflating the economy, without causing a series of counter-reactions.

### *The Postwar Role of Investment in Housing*

Nevertheless, in the case of postwar Greece, the socioeconomic conjuncture was such as to make the low-return investment in housing both possible and desirable. There were many reasons that contributed to this: poor housing conditions following a decade of foreign occupation and civil war; the huge internal migration from the countryside to the main urban centers; the lack of alternative ways of private accumulation in a period of rapid growth of incomes; and, possibly more crucial than all the rest, real property being widely distributed as a result of the historical absence of both a feudal caste and a landless peasantry. This fact is responsible for the robust demand for private housing, the roots of which reach far into the past and are nourished by the cultural fusion of social recognition and the ownership of one's home—a fusion which was supported by the dowry custom and which stamped the social importance and value of home-ownership.

Concurrently, this widely-distributed land ownership, at a time of rapid economic growth which raised land prices, and in conjunction with a legally and financially inventive regime of real-estate transactions known as *antiparochi*, which minimized the capital needed by building firms for housing construction, made investment in housing possible

despite its low return. This investment, which until not long ago consistently made up one-third of total investment, kept buoyant not only the construction sector but the whole economy. The rapid growth of national income which ensued, financially justified, despite its low return, the investment in housing by increasing its capital value. In this way, the demand for housing investment was kept high by being reinforced through this feed-back mechanism.

The buoyancy of the economy through investment in housing and construction, which can be witnessed in postwar Greece, was brought about by the operation of a fortuitous and involuntary Keynesian mechanism which secured high levels of aggregate demand and profits for the private sector. It must be emphasized that this was not an intentional Keynesian policy; the economic policy was orthodox and not at all influenced by Keynesian thinking. The operation of this mechanism was due to unplanned actions in the context of an extremely propitious socioeconomic conjuncture. It must therefore be concluded that "rentier capital" (to use Petras's terminology) did not cause the underdevelopment of industry but, on the contrary, created the preconditions for and made possible the far-from-insignificant industrial development of the postwar period. And this happened despite the governmental attitude toward rentier capital which, contrary to what Petras seems to believe, was from 1955 onwards, with the exception of the junta period, on the whole quite unfavorable to building and construction activity.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Appropriate Policy Today*

What should the policy with respect to construction be today? Petras proposes, as a transitional measure, a graduated property tax. The crisis characterizing building and construction activity today provides an ideal opportunity, according to Petras, for a decisive attack on rentier capital which will destroy once and for all its hold on the Greek economy.

Petras's position seems to be, in view of what has been argued above, the perfect recipe for economic disaster. Of course, a return to past practice is not the right solution either. Now that the circular, feedback process has been broken, it is doubtful whether an intentional—this time—repeat of such a practice would be at all possible. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether this would be desirable, given the dimensions of urban swelling and the concentration of economic activity in the Thessaloniki and, especially, in the Athens-Piraeus conurbations. This does not mean that investment in housing has no important role to play and should not be a considerable proportion of total investment. Nevertheless, the emphasis must be placed on the provinces on the one hand, and, on the other, on coordinated housing construction in the context of urban planning. It must be noticed, at this point, that the success of

<sup>7</sup>For this observation, I am indebted to Nicos Floros.

the government's decentralization efforts is premised on immediate, sizeable investments for the timely provision of housing in the provinces.

In today's conditions, the role played in the past by housing could be taken over by a different subsector of the construction industry: the subsector that the National Statistical Office includes under the classification, "Other Works and Constructions." This category consists exclusively of public works and investment in technical infrastructure. This type of investment has been considerably cut in the past decade and is presently at about half the level it had reached in the beginning of the 1970s. Moreover, there are serious indications that the technical infrastructure has become out of date and shows deficiencies that could block the growth of productivity in the rest of the economy.<sup>8</sup> More crucially, this investment is under government control and is the only means at its disposal that can give a boost to the economy, leading it to recovery and, at the same time, to improved productivity.<sup>9</sup>

Let us now examine briefly the second proposition in Petras's thesis, according to which rentier capital creates a mentality that is hostile to productive activity and discourages productive work effort. Petras's claims are far from being founded on reliable evidence and are not more than facile and, on the whole, exaggerated generalizations. For example, if Greek society is characterized by "mediocrity, cunning, and manipulation," it is not at all clear that this is to be attributed to the rentier class. Similarly, it is not easily credible, without at least some further evidence, that "the ascendancy of rentier capital in Greece destroys or undermines all the skills, creative potentialities, and positive learning acquired through participation in the world marketplace or in the industrialized countries."<sup>10</sup>

This kind of sociological generalization can be made to support practically any position. It might be instructive to present two such generalizations; not necessarily because they are more credible, but in order to demonstrate how easy it is to reach conclusions that are contrary to those of Petras. One such example is provided by a recent OECD report on the Greek economy.<sup>11</sup>

It is there argued that one of the main problems of the Greek economy, on the diagnosis of which the OECD and Petras are in agreement, is due to the rapid expansion of state expenditure since the late 1970s. The reason given is the sociological generalization, on a level comparable to those made by Petras, that the persons who benefit from the rapid expansion of state provisions tend to dissociate their standard of living from their own work effort. It follows that the dis-

<sup>8</sup>See the article by S. Cavounides and T. Skouras in *Oikonomikos Tachydromos*, November 7, 1983 (in Greek).

<sup>9</sup>For the full argument, see T. Skouras, "Recovery and Restructuring: An Investment Policy Proposal," *Economic Bulletin of the Commercial Bank of Greece*, No. 117-118, 1983 (in Greek).

<sup>10</sup>J. Petras, *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup>OECD Country Reports, *Greece*, 1983.

couragement of productive work effort, according to the OECD, originates from the expansion of state economic activity. Thus, where Petras proposes a tax attack on the rentier class, the OECD favors a reduction of budget deficits, as well as of state budgets.

A second example can be found in the work of the historian A. Vakalopoulos,<sup>12</sup> who argues that the typical traits of character exhibited by Greeks have been stable over the centuries and have their origins in antiquity. For example, it is argued that defects like cunning (another diagnosis on which there is agreement with Petras) may have been heightened under Ottoman rule, but that they certainly existed from the time of classical Greece and are by no means a creation of the postwar period. The mentality and the character of a people are shaped by long evolutionary processes of a duration of centuries, as Vakalopoulos clearly understands, and they cannot possibly be the outcome of the supposed rule of rentier capital in the last forty to fifty years. Needless to say, if the mentality of the Greek people has not changed substantially over the centuries, measures like the taxation of real property, or even the complete elimination of the "rule" of rentier capital, will obviously have an insignificant impact on the character and political and social customs of the Greek people.

The examples mentioned above show clearly that, even with an identical selection of characteristics and tendencies of contemporary Greek society, it is perfectly possible to propose different explanatory hypotheses and arrive at quite different conclusions. Of course, the establishment of credible and reliable conclusions requires a far more systematic and intensive study of Greek society. In the absence of such a study, the view that rentier capital decisively shaped the character and mentality of postwar Greek society remains at the level of an impressionistic and facile contemplation of modern Greek history and contemporary social reality.

### *Concluding Remarks*

In concluding this critique, it should be mentioned that the rentier capital thesis suffers from some additional weaknesses, which relate to its internal analytical consistency. To start with, the "rentier class" is never defined properly and, judging from the references made to it, seems to have an extremely elastic shape and to cover the greatest part of the Greek people. But, possibly more importantly, there is nowhere an explanation of how the rule of rentier capital can coexist with rapid rates of accumulation. How, in other words, can a non-productive use of capital lead to the creation of surplus value? Not only is it not explained how non-productive rentier capital creates, or at least is

<sup>12</sup>A. Vakalopoulos, *The Character of Greeks: Searching for our National Identity*, Thessaloniki, 1983 (in Greek).

consistent with, the substantial creation of surplus value, but there is also no explanation of how this capital manages to appropriate, to a large extent, the created surplus value.

It should be evident from the above critique that the "rentier capital" thesis does not properly explain either the nature of modern Greek society or the postwar development of Greek industry. Petras's contribution is that he noticed (and was probably overimpressed by) an important specificity of Greek postwar development: the exceptionally high level of investment in housing and construction. Nevertheless, he did not pay attention and even ignored other important particularities which played and still play a determining role. Specifically, as regards modern Greek society and the economy, he ignored certain important factors which, for example, appear clearly in the recent work of C. Tsoukalas.<sup>18</sup> These factors include the pronounced role of the state as an employer of labor, the unusually high degree of self-employment throughout the economy and even in industry and, finally, the intensely petty bourgeois or lower middle class character of modern Greek society. The lower middle class character of Greek society, which is closely related to the widely-distributed ownership of land and other real property, was a crucial factor, as was noted above, in the unusually large building activity and the path of postwar development generally.

As regards, finally, the development of industry, an understanding of this development certainly requires taking into account the above social specificities, which have determined in a decisive manner the course of industrial development. But it also requires a systematic study of the historical factors which have shaped the structure of Greek industry, with special reference to state interventions, interconnections with the banking system, and, finally, the integration of the Greek economy within the international division of labor.

<sup>18</sup>C. Tsoukalas, "The State as Employer in Postwar Greece," *Review of Social Research*, No. 50, 1983; "The Structure of Employment and the Small Business Miracle," *Anti*, No. 260, May 11, 1984 (both in Greek).

# The Security Battalions and the Civil War

by ANDRE GEROLYMATOS

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When, in the spring of 1943, Ioannis Rallis agreed to form a government, an important precondition was that his regime would be permitted the establishment of a security force. The Germans agreed to this principle, and on April 7, 1943, the Rallis government enacted legislation which decreed the mobilization of four Evzone Battalions. Two of these units were to be formed in Athens and the remainder in Thessaloniki.<sup>1</sup> The Germans, however, did have certain misgivings concerning the reliability of these forces, and they consequently vetoed the deployment of any battalion in Thessaloniki. At the same time, they only permitted the authorized battalions to be armed with rifles and machine guns.<sup>2</sup> In part, these restrictions were the result of German apprehensions over the dubious loyalty of indigenous security forces, as well as the effect on their Italian allies. Until this point, Greece had fallen mostly under the Italian sphere of influence. As such, the existence of a Greek military force could have spawned potential difficulties among the axis partners.<sup>3</sup> In view of these factors, Rallis had to contend with a token force, which, despite a persistent recruiting campaign, failed to attract a sufficient number of volunteers.<sup>4</sup> This, however, only reflected the realities of the moment since within a short span of time the pace of the war would create an entirely different situation.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>NARS 226:83476. According to S. Grigoriadis, Συνοπτική ιστορία της έθνικής αντίστασης, 1941-45, Athens, 1981, p. 238, the Rallis government informed the Greek public of the security battalions on June 29, 1945.

<sup>2</sup>NARS 226:83476. In addition to the security battalions, which were, at least in name, a military force of the Rallis government, the Germans were able to use the services of private anticomunist organizations such as E.E.E. and the Poulos battalion.

<sup>3</sup>For the place of Greece in the Italian sphere of influence, see: M.L. Van Creveld, *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941: The Balkan Clue*, Cambridge, 1973, p. 179; E. Wiskemann, *The Rome-Berlin Axis: A History of the Relations Between Hitler and Mussolini*, London, 1949, p. 278. According to F. W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship*, London, 1962, p. 253, the Germans feared that their Balkan satellites would defect to the allied camp in case of an allied offensive in the Balkans and that such an exodus might include the Italians. This made the German attitude toward Greece, in the spring of 1943, even more sensitive to Italian considerations.

<sup>4</sup>NARS RG 226:83476.

<sup>5</sup>Especially since the slogan used for the recruitment of the battalions in-

The purpose of "Operation Animals" was to create the illusion that the allies were planning an invasion of Greece.<sup>6</sup> Initially, this deterred many potential recruits from joining the battalions since few individuals would risk being labeled as collaborators by serving the security forces of a German-sponsored government. The allied landings in Sicily and Italy dispelled any notion that the occupation would end in the immediate future; meanwhile, the growing strength of ELAS was bringing the resistance under the control of the left. Thus, by October 1943, the first battalion came into service in Athens, which was followed by a second later in the same month and by a third in December.<sup>7</sup>

During the same period, ELAS had acquired the services of Stefanos Sarafis (as its commander-in-chief) and those of other well-known military personalities. These men had the effect of attracting a large number of professional officers into the ranks of ELAS. It soon became apparent that the left would have at its disposal a military force which could overshadow the combined strength of all the other resistance groups.<sup>8</sup> Outbreak of civil war in October 1943 compounded the threat posed by EAM-ELAS and encouraged many conservative officers to join the security battalions. Concurrently, during the course of this internal conflict, certain members of organizations disbanded by ELAS sought refuge and/or revenge by enlisting in the security battalions.<sup>9</sup> Since a large proportion

cluded, along with references to anticomunism, the use of these forces to prevent the return of the king, see NARS RG 226:83476. According to J. L. Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance: The Greek Agony 1941-44*, N.Y., 1983, p. 81, Rallis did not originate the security battalions, but the idea came from General Pangalos, who feared that an allied victory would permit the British to impose the monarchy on Greece. Rallis accordingly revised Pangalos's proposal by using fanatical royalist officers instead of republicans. Later on, the security battalions did attract royalist officers but initially many monarchist officers made their way to the Middle East or joined ELAS, the remainder preferring to keep out of the resistance and the puppet government. On this, see: A. Gerolymatos, "The Role of the Greek Officer Corps in the Resistance," Proceedings of the International Historical Congress, *Dictatorship and Occupation in Greece, 1936-1944* (forthcoming). On the republican nature of the security battalions, see: H. Fleischer, "Νέα Στοιχεία για τη σχέση γερμανικῶν ὀρχῶν καὶ ταγμάτων ἀσφαλείας," Μνήμων, Athens, 1980; G. Seferis, *Πολιτικό δημορολόγιο*, vol. 1, Athens, 1979, p. 141; L. Spaiš, *Πενήντα χρόνια στρατιώτης*, Athens, 1970, p. 263.

<sup>6</sup>See: C. M. Woodhouse, *The Struggle for Greece 1941-1949*, London, 1976, p. 91; *Something Ventured*, London, 1982, p. 65; C. Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, Oxford, 1981, pp. 52-53; F. W. Deakin, *op. cit.*, pp. 349-356.

<sup>7</sup>NARS RG 226:83476.

<sup>8</sup>See: C. M. Woodhouse, *The Apple of Discord*, London, 1948, p. 67; S. Sarafis, *ELAS: Greek Resistance Army*, London, 1980, pp. 168-170; D. M. Condit, *Case Study in Guerrilla War: Greece During World War II*, Washington, 1961, p. 153; A. Gerolymatos, *op. cit.*, Note 22.

<sup>9</sup>According to Hondros, *op. cit.*, p. 220, in the early fall of 1943, Psaros had to dismiss some EKKA officers who had maintained contacts with officers of

of these men were republicans, the battalions, which ostensibly reflected anti-monarchist organization, offered a natural alternative. Moreover, EDES, after Zervas's reconciliation with the monarchy, had ceased to represent the political will of hard-core republicans.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the political organization of the Athenian EDES fell apart in June 1943, and one faction led by Vouliotis and Tavoularis, played a prominent role in the development of the security battalions.<sup>11</sup> Pangalos, a close associate of Gonatas, engineered the appointment of Tavoularis to the Rallis government. He also nominated Col. Dertilis, another member of the republican faction, to be commander of the security battalions.<sup>12</sup> These men, in effect, used their influence to ensure that the battalions would be led by republican officers so as to employ these forces to prevent the return of the king.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of their association with the Rallis government, these individuals were in a position to maintain links with Zervas, the British military mission, and certain underground organizations in Athens.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the collapse of Italy encouraged the Germans to stimulate the growth of the security battalions since the occupation authorities required new forces to replace the Italian garrisons in Greece.<sup>15</sup> Early in 1944, the Rallis government seized the advantage in this new situation and began an intensive campaign to recruit volunteers successfully into the battalions. In order to maintain a steady flow of recruits, a considerable number of men were dismissed from local police forces without any ra-

the security battalions. Later on, in April 1944, two hundred members of EKKA joined the battalions after the dissolution of the 5/42 Regiment. See also: C. M. Woodhouse, *The Apple of Discord*, *op. cit.*, pp. 85 and 87; S. Grigoriadis, Συνοπτική Ιστορία της εθνικής αντίστασης 1941-1945, Athens, 1981, p. 322; F. N. Grigoriadis, Γερμανοί, κατοχή, αντίστασης, vol. 6, Athens, 1973, pp. 819-830; NARS RG 226:83476.

<sup>10</sup>See: C. M. Woodhouse, *The Apple of Discord*, *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>11</sup>NARS RG 226:83476; H. Fleischer, *op. cit.*, p. 191; NARS RG 226:83476; C. M. Woodhouse, *The Apple of Discord*, *ibid.*, p. 75; J. L. Hondros, *op. cit.*, p. 81; Heinz Richter, Δύο ἐπαναστάσεις κατ' αντεπαναστάσεις στὴν Ἑλλάδα 1936-1946, vol. 1, Athens, 1975, p. 266; J. L. Hondros, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup>J. L. Hondros, *ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>13</sup>Heinz Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 267; J. L. Hondros, *ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>14</sup>J. L. Hondros, *ibid.*, p. 172, states that the British considered Vouliotis a double agent; however, during this period the same Vouliotis was recruiting on behalf of the security battalions. This certainly provided the British with a direct channel to the battalions (and Hondros bases his statement on British archives [p. 173, Note 9]). Dertilis's relationship with Zervas went back to 1923 and he had also been involved with Zervas in the overthrow of the Pangalos dictatorship and the abortive attempt to remove Kondylis, NARS RG 226:83476.

<sup>15</sup>This was also demonstrated by the fact that the battalions in October 1943 were placed under the control of S.S. Major General Stroop, Chief of the S.S. in Athens. The commander of the battalions would receive his orders from Stroop and in turn pass these down to the unit commanders. Later on, an S.S. officer was attached to each battalion. NARS RG 226:83476; H. Fleischer *op. cit.*, p. 193. Shortly after, Stroop was replaced by Schimana.

tions; to survive, they sought employment within the battalions. This was made more palatable when rumors were spread that the British and American governments secretly supported Rallis.<sup>16</sup> On March 19, the puppet government enacted legislation which permitted all officers who were dismissed from the army since 1927 to reenlist (with their former rank intact), providing they joined the security battalions.<sup>17</sup> For many republican officers, who were expelled from the army before the war, this meant an opportunity of regaining their lost status; for others, it became an important source of income. More importantly, since the battalions were depicted as a means of combating communism, the possibility existed that they would not be treated as collaborators and might keep their rank in a postwar Greek army. As matters stood in the spring of 1944, the republican cause was lost. Zervas had made his peace with the king and royalists officers had begun to join EDES. The mutinees in the Middle East had caused the removal of many republican officers from the Greek armed forces, which further eroded the possibility of the reinstatement of republican officers after liberation. Since a postwar Greek army would have to accommodate officers who had fought in North Africa and those who had participated in the resistance (at least members of right-wing groups), this would leave little room for officers who did not belong either to a partisan force or the royalist faction.<sup>18</sup>

Ironically, royalist officers faced a similar dilemma. The failure of the "Military Hierarchy" in the spring of 1943 to take control of the resistance, or to create a large royalist organization, forced many royalist officers to join ELAS, EDES, or other right-wing splinter groups.<sup>19</sup> The outbreak of civil war in October and the subsequent disbanding of smaller resistance groups led some of their followers to the security battalions.<sup>20</sup> In this way, many royalist officers joined them in the service of Rallis. The predominance of EAM-ELAS in 1944 thus began to overshadow the royalist-republican schism by threatening the social order which represented both factions.<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, by the summer of 1944, the number of security battalions was increased to ten, which then included approximately one thousand professional officers. Under these circumstances, the policy of Rallis at-

<sup>16</sup>NARS RG 226:83476, 72935, 92920; H. Fleischer, *ibid.*, p. 195; S. Sarafis, *op. cit.*, p. 287; K. Kouvaras, O.S.S. Μὲ τὴν κεντρικὴν τοῦ ΕΑΜ, Athens, 1976, pp. 43, 97, 103.

<sup>17</sup>NARS RG 226:83476; L. Spaïs, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>18</sup>N. A. Stavrou, *Allied Politics and Military Interventions: The Political Role of the Greek Military*, Athens, 1970, p. 24; A. Gerolymatos, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup>A. Gerolymatos, *ibid.*, see Note 22. On the adherence of royalist officers to the battalions, also see Heinz Richter, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 80-81.

<sup>20</sup>NARS RG 226:83476; S. Sarafis, *op. cit.*, pp. 223, pp. 280-281; K. Piromaglou, 'Ο Γεώργιος Καρτάλης καὶ ἡ ἐποχὴ του, 1934-1957, Athens, 1965.

<sup>21</sup>L. Spaïs, *op. cit.*, p. 264; G. K. Douatzis, Οἱ ταγματασφαλίτες, Athens (no date), p. 19; K. Piromaglou, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-150; G. Karagiannis, Τὸ δρᾶμα τῆς Ἑλλάδος 1940-1952, Athens, 1964, p. 58; H. Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

tained a measure of success. To some degree, this was reflected by the ambiguous attitude of the British toward the security battalions. For example, according to one directive issued on June 2, it was stipulated that all those who joined the security battalions were assisting the Germans, but they should not be denounced as traitors. Twenty days later, a second directive ordered all direct attacks against the battalions suspended.<sup>22</sup> The ban was lifted in July, but it was only on September 6 that the Greek government-in-exile publicly denounced these units as had been agreed upon earlier at the Lebanon Conference. Even this was a belated attempt since, despite the agreement to condemn the battalions, the announcement of the Greek government only warned their members and encouraged them to come over to the side of the allies. This ambiguous policy is one indication that the Greek government and the British were at least considering the potential use of the battalions.<sup>23</sup> Another factor was the composition of the battalions, which by now included a large number of officers and men who represented the conservative element of Greek society opposed to EAM-ELAS. Originally, the battalions simply accepted anyone who was willing to serve, but, by July 1944, the Rallis government passed a decree to mobilize more recruits for the battalions and other security organizations. According to an OSS report of September, the call-up orders were primarily directed at individuals from the middle and upper classes to make it more difficult to punish members of these forces since

<sup>22</sup>F.O. 371/43706. According to an O.S.S. report (NARS RG 226:L47184), after September 1944, press releases and radio broadcasts from the Greek ministry of information were placed under British censorship, partly because of their continued condemnation of the security battalions. The report went on to state that repeated attacks against the security battalions by the Greek ministry had alarmed the Greek general staff as well as many other Greek officers in the Middle East. Another O.S.S. report (NARS RG 226:L47310) cites a British foreign office telegram of October 7, 1944, for guidance of Balkan publicity agencies, which stated that the security battalions and other quisling organizations should be condemned. The same O.S.S. report goes on to say that neither the British nor Greek governments had a clear policy toward the battalions. Also see: L. MacVeagh, *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece, 1933-1947*, ed. J. O. Iatrides, Princeton, 1980, p. 554; P. Papastratis, *British Policy Towards Greece During the Second World War 1941-1944*, London, 1984, pp. 209-210.

<sup>23</sup>According to P. Papastratis, *ibid.*, p. 210, Papandreu, with the support of Lord Moyne, was considering the possibility of incorporating the security battalions into a new national army. This, however, fell though but the battalions could be used as a lever of indirect pressure on EAM to join the Papandreu government. Despite the agreement at the Lebanon Conference to denounce the battalions, Papandreu kept delaying implementation of any public statement until September 6, 1944. Concerning the ambiguity of the Greek government's proclamation, see: L. Baerentzen, "Liberation of the Peloponnese, September 1944," *Greece in the 1940's: A Nation in Crisis*, Hanover and London, 1981, p. 134, note 13; also P. Papastratis, "The Papandreu Government and the Lebanon Conference," *Greece in the 1940's*, pp. 119-130.

they now included the sons of good families.<sup>24</sup> The notion that the security battalions could survive by attaining a measure of respectability was contemplated earlier in January by Archbishop Chrysanthos. At this time, the archbishop urged members of the battalions to join the resistance or the Greek forces in the Middle East, thus avoiding prosecution and participating in the struggle against the left after liberation.<sup>25</sup>

As the day of liberation approached, these considerations, and the fear that EAM-ELAS would have the opportunity to gain control of Greece, brought about, at the end of September, another ban on broadcasts which condemned the security battalions.<sup>26</sup> An important aspect of this decision was that the British could only employ a small force to secure Greece. As such, every possible anti-EAM organization could act as a deterrent against a move by ELAS to dominate the entire country.<sup>27</sup> This was particularly relevant with regard to Athens and Attica since these regions represented the strategic focal point for control of Greece.<sup>28</sup> Yet another factor was that Papandreu and the British could not be certain as to how ELAS would react after the German withdrawal since at this time EAM was not represented in the government.<sup>29</sup> Even after EAM agreed to participate in a government of national unity and accepted the Caserta Agreement, the situation remained uncertain until the British force landed in Greece and the Papandreu government was installed in Athens.<sup>30</sup> As it turned out, the British landed without incident and the security battalions were, for the time being, placed under custody, but no official action was taken against them. Despite appearances to the contrary, the political situation remained volatile and the battalions still represented a potential weapon against ELAS.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup>NARS RG 226:L45701. Also, see: RG 226:L47698; G. Karagiannis, Το δραμα της Ελλάδος 1940-1952, Athens, 1964, p. 59.

<sup>25</sup>K. Piromaglou, *op. cit.*, p. 562; NARS RG 226:L49585; L55167; Sarafis, *op. cit.*, pp. 286-287.

<sup>26</sup>See note 22.

<sup>27</sup>NARS RG 226:L48685; P. Papastratis, *British Policy Towards Greece During the Second World War 1941-1944*, *op. cit.*, p. 209. According to L. Baerentzen, *op. cit.*, p. 140, in the Peloponnese, British officers were first ordered not to intervene between the security battalions and ELAS, and later their orders were amended, instructing them to confine the battalions to barracks areas. This change in policy is attributed by Baerentzen to the ability of ELAS in the Peloponnese to attack and defeat the battalions.

<sup>28</sup>J. Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, vol. 5, London, 1956, pp. 386-387, and *Grand Strategy*, vol. 6, pp. 44-45; *Foreign Relations of the United States*, "The Conference at Quebec 1944," Washington, 1972, p. 439; W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 6, Boston, 1953, pp. 244-245; L. Baerentzen, *op. cit.*, p. 362, Note 8.

<sup>29</sup>NARS RG 226:L47184; L48685.

<sup>30</sup>H. Macmillan, *The Blast of War 1939-1945*, N.Y., 1967, p. 484; W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 6, Boston, 1953, pp. 244-245.

<sup>31</sup>It is extremely difficult, however, to provide an accurate estimate of the number of those enrolled in the security battalions. According to an O.S.S. docu-

Gradually, a general consensus began to evolve among the British, the Greek government, and the Greek military, which eventually led to the rehabilitation of those serving in the security battalions. At first, these men represented potentially expedient allies against ELAS but later they would actually become accepted as a reliable support against the left. The transition, however, had begun prior to the German withdrawal. Some members of the battalions found refuge and respectability by joining right-wing resistance organizations. Others were transferred to the Athens city police and the gendarmerie, where they remained, thus escaping internment after liberation.<sup>32</sup> The rest were confined to military camps in Athens, some Aegean islands, and the Middle East. The officers, about one thousand in number, had to face a review by a military board, which decided their eligibility for service according to individual circumstances.<sup>33</sup>

On November 23, 1944, the ministry of defense published a list of approximately 250 officers who were to command units of the new national guard; of these, eight had served with the security battalions.<sup>34</sup> In the ensuing uproar from the press and EAM, the government revised the list and replaced the undersecretary of defense with General Sariyannis, an officer of ELAS. Despite this, the attempt to include former members of security battalions in the national guard indicated the first official

ment, NARS RG 226:83476, in July 1944, there were ten security battalions with a complement of five hundred officers and six thousand men; of these, three battalions were stationed in Athens and the rest operated in central Greece and the Peloponnese. J. L. Hondros, *op. cit.*, p. 82, suggests that the Rallis government and the Germans raised thirteen battalions, with a total of 16,652 officers and men, but these units included all types of collaborationist formations. Only the best ones were referred to as Evzone Battalions and can be defined as the security battalions. According to Hondros, nine such units were created and included 532 officers, 656 non-commissioned officers, and 4,536 other ranks. This figure of 4,536 is close to the estimate provided by W. H. McNeill, *The Greek Dilemma: War and Aftermath*, N.Y., 1947, p. 59; L. Spais, *op. cit.*, p. 264 and p. 268, on the other hand, claims that approximately 25 battalions were raised, which included one thousand officers and thirty thousand men.

<sup>32</sup>NARS RG 226:L45740; L46724; L5100; L55167; J. O. Iatrides, *Revolt in Athens: The Greek Communist "Second Round," 1944-1945*, Princeton, 1972, p. 143; K. Piromaglou, *op. cit.*, p. 584.

<sup>33</sup>This depended on whether the officers could provide mitigating circumstances of compulsory conscription, voluntary desertion, or otherwise "substantial circumstances" demonstrated for their service in the security battalions. See: G. M. Alexander, *The Prelude to the Truman Doctrine: British Policy in Greece 1944-1947*, Oxford, 1982, p. 261, Note 78; Sarafis, *op. cit.*, pp. 492-493; P. Kanellopoulos ('Ημερολόγιο, Athens, 1977, p. 696, November 25, 1944), mentions the crisis but does not specifically mention the security battalions.

<sup>34</sup>H. Richter (vol. 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-209), whose sources are: Sarafis, *op. cit.*, p. 498, German edition, 1964; *EAM: White Book*, p. 17, concludes that the majority of the 250 officers served with the security battalions. G. M. Alexander (*op. cit.*, p. 37) suggests that according to *Kathimerini Nea*, November 25, 1944, the number was eight, while according to *Rizospastis*, November 24, 1944, over 90% of the 250 officers had belonged to the security battalions.

attempt toward the rehabilitation of at least the officers of the battalions. Considering the critical negotiations going on at the time between EAM and the government, the attempt was certainly provocative. A possible explanation, however, is that the Papandreu government was faced with a shortage of politically reliable officers for the national guard and army. At the beginning of the occupation, there were approximately 4,391 officers who had survived the campaigns of 1940 and 1941. During the course of the occupation, about 600 served with ELAS, including 2,000 reserve officers, while an additional 2,500 joined the Greek forces in the Middle East. The rest either served with EDES and other resistance groups, remained inactive, or served with the security battalions.<sup>35</sup> After the purge in the Middle East, the government merely had the services of the Mountain Brigade and the Sacred Battalion, which could only provide a minimal number of officers for the new armed forces. One possibility was to employ officers who had served with ELAS, but they were not considered politically reliable; the other alternative was to make use of the one thousand officers who had served with the security battalions. Indeed, the latter would provide the most dependable reserve since it was to their advantage to keep ELAS officers outside the armed forces and support a right-wing government.

In the middle of November 1944, the British began to release officers who were associated with the battalions from Averof Prison, and during the same period some of these men were seen in uniform in the streets of Athens.<sup>36</sup> Other members of the battalions were assisted by the British and officers from the Greek general staff to leave Greece and find refuge in Egypt.<sup>37</sup> According to one OSS report, former members of the battalions who were released in early November were afterwards slowly formed into regular army units.<sup>38</sup> At the beginning of December, all the officers of the security battalions held at the Goudi army camp were permitted to draw a salary comparable to the one received by officers in the Greek army.<sup>39</sup> The December uprising, however, created the final impetus for the release and employment of the majority of those in the battalions. According to Spais,<sup>40</sup> who was then undersecretary of defense, the decision to use the security battalions was taken on December 12. The suggestion came from the British, but Spais made the final decision, and ultimately

<sup>35</sup>For a complete breakdown of the Greek officer corps, see A. Gerolymatos, *op. cit., passim*.

<sup>36</sup>NARS RG 226:L49595; L49817.

<sup>37</sup>NARS RG226:L49839; XL2683; L49838.

<sup>38</sup>NARS RG 226:L49839.

<sup>39</sup>According to Spais (*op. cit.*, pp. 270-271), who issued the order, one of the reasons for this was that the officers did not have any charges against them and, until there were charges, they were entitled to their salaries. Another was, Spais writes, that he was moved to act in this manner after he discovered that the inmates of Goudi were living under pitiful conditions.

<sup>40</sup>L. Spais (article in the journal, Πολιτικά Θέματα, December 4, 1976) in P. Rousos, 'Η μεγάλη πενταετία, vol. 2, Athens, 1978, pp. 358-359.

12,000 of the least noticeable and least-known members of the battalions were employed in national guard units. The prime minister, on the other hand, during a press conference a couple of days earlier (December 7, 1944) denied any suggestion that the battalions were committed in the battle against ELAS.<sup>41</sup>

In the meantime, efforts were intensified to bring more former security battalion personnel into the national guard. Other than the political considerations behind these decisions, the military situation in December was a decisive factor. General Scobie had only thirteen thousand troops at his disposal, most of whom were stationed in or near Athens. The Greek government could only rely on the 4,500 soldiers from the Mountain Brigade and the Sacred Battalion, as well as three thousand city police and about one thousand members of the "X" organization.<sup>42</sup> A determined effort was made to recruit men into the national guard, but many could not report for duty since they lived in areas occupied by ELAS.

After the crisis was over, the government continued to employ former members of the security battalions and, by March 1945, the last officers and men were released from detention.<sup>43</sup> Shortly after the Varkiza Agreement was concluded, the military committees set up by the Plastiras government, who were to select officers for the national army, appointed 228 officers who had served with the battalions, along with 221 officers from ELAS.<sup>44</sup> Despite the apparent impartiality of this selection, succeeding governments between 1945-1946 tended to discriminate in favor of officers from the security battalions rather than appointing officers with a record of service in ELAS. In fact, the Greek general staff placed ELAS officers eligible for service on the inactive list, permitting them to draw their salary until they were officially retired.<sup>45</sup> Later in the same year, the courts, trying collaborators, ruled that the formation of the security battalions did not fall under the category of collaboration because their function had been to maintain law and order and to act against "criminal elements." This ruling and the work of the military committees in effect provided the judicial framework for the government to employ members of the battalions and to continue to use those already in state service.

In September 1945, however, the national guard was withdrawn from active service and its function was taken over by the reorganized gen-

<sup>41</sup>Considering the political implications of this decision, it is unlikely that it was made without the knowledge and approval of Papandreu, who, as well as holding the office of prime minister, also held the defense portfolio at this time. See G. Papandreu, *Η απελευθέρωσις της Ελλάδος*, Athens, 1948, p. 202.

<sup>42</sup>J. O. Iatrides, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>43</sup>NARS RG 226:L54316.

<sup>44</sup>G. M. Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 162. Article V of the Varkiza Agreement provided for the establishment of a national army, and the appointment of officers was made by a special military council. This did not apply to officers of the Mountain Brigade or the Sacred Battalion (see Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, *op. cit.*, Appendix I).

<sup>45</sup>S. Sarafis, *op. cit.*, p. lxxvii; G. M. Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162.

darmerie.<sup>46</sup> As such, with the exception of the 224 officers appointed to the national army, the majority of those who had transferred from the security battalions to the national guard now found themselves removed from active service.

This setback was only temporary; the outbreak of hostilities in 1946 and the conditions within the national army created a new opportunity for officers of the battalions to gain admission into the Greek army. The civil war forced the government to commit the Greek army while it was in the process of reorganization.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the new army had come under the influence of conservative officers who favored the monarchy since they regarded it as the best safeguard against communism.<sup>48</sup> To enforce their brand of nationalism, some of these officers, in the autumn of 1944, formed a secret organization which came to be known by its acronym of IDEA. Initially, the efforts of IDEA were confined to infiltrating the new divisions raised by the government but there is no evidence to suggest that any contacts developed with officers from the national guard.<sup>49</sup> In the summer of 1946, representatives of IDEA took the initiative and persuaded the minister of defense to incorporate into the army officers who had served in the security battalions. The reason for this, according to the unofficial biographer of IDEA, Karagianis, was that officers of the battalions were not only capable professionals but also the most fanatical anticommunists.<sup>50</sup> Another relevant factor was that those who had served with the security battalions and later with the national guard had the most experience in counterinsurgency operations. This was particularly important since the officers at that time in the national army were trained for conventional warfare and ill-prepared to lead units against the more experienced formations of the Democratic Army.<sup>51</sup>

We can assume that, since IDEA was instrumental in rehabilitating officers of the security battalions, they in turn provided another support for that organization within the officer corps. This became evident after

<sup>46</sup>G. M. Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>47</sup>J. O. Iatrides, "Civil War, 1945-1949," *Greece in the 1940's*, *op. cit.*, p. 205; D. Vlandas, *Ἐμφύλιος Πόλεμος 1945-1949*, pp. 104-105 and p. 131; C. M. Woodhouse, *The Struggle for Greece 1941-1949*, London, 1976, pp. 186-187; L. S. Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949*, N.Y., 1982, pp. 224-225; E. O'Ballance, *The Greek Civil War 1944-1949*, N.Y., 1966, p. 129; *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948*, vol. iv, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup>W. H. McNeill, *op. cit.*, pp. 207 and 227; W. H. McNeill, *The Metamorphosis of Greece Since World War II*, Chicago and London, 1978, p. 78; G. Karagiannis, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-217; D. Charalambis, "Η θέση των στρατού στη δομή τῆς κρατικῆς ἔξουσίας στὴν Ἑλλάδα μετὰ τὸ Δεύτερο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο," *Θέσεις*, July-September 1983, No. 4, pp. 106-107.

<sup>49</sup>G. M. Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119 and also see Note 33; G. Karagiannis, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>50</sup>G. Karagiannis, *op. cit.*, p. 234; F. N. Grigoriadis, *Ἐμφύλιος πόλεμος 1944-1949*, vol. 10, Athens, 1975, pp. 90-92.

<sup>51</sup>See Note 48.

the end of the civil war, when a large number of these officers remained in the Greek army and some survived to participate in the 1967 coup.<sup>52</sup> In the final analysis, it was the civil war which thus paved the way and served as the catalyst for the security battalions to merge with the national army and complete a process which had begun on the eve of liberation.

<sup>52</sup>For example, the director of the Agricultural Bank of Greece after the 1967 coup, Kourkoulakos, commanded a security battalion in Patras (N. Kakaounakis, 2650 μερόνυχτα συνωμοσίας, vol. 1, Athens, 1976, p. 11; NARS RG2261), and according to H. Richter (*op. cit.*, 309), Papadopoulos was also a member of the security battalions.

# Documents: Dispatches of Lincoln MacVeagh

*Edited and with an introduction  
by YIORGOS CHOULIARAS AND DAN GEORGAKAS*

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## *INTRODUCTION*

For forty years, Greeks have been debating the root causes of the civil war of the late 1940s. Key issues have included the determination of which side provoked the conflict and the role of various foreign powers. We have recently uncovered six documents sent to the Secretary of State from the American Embassy in the fall of 1945 which clearly indicate American knowledge of monarchist preparations for civil war. These materials, classified as secret at the time, consist of three letters and three intelligence reports. The letters were written by then U.S. Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh and the reports were composed by operatives of the Office of Strategic Services, precursor of the Central Intelligence Agency. Topics dealt with were the forthcoming Greek elections, which eventually took place in 1946, the "X" organization, and the secret military societies within the Greek military.<sup>1</sup>

These materials are enlightening in terms of their content

<sup>1</sup>The MacVeagh letters and OSS reports reproduced here were found in the Greek collection of the Tamiment Library of New York University. They are part of an extensive collection of newspapers, correspondence, booklets, and other materials collected by John Poulos. A substantial portion of the material relating to the 1944-1945 period was originally gathered by Constantine Poulos, who was the major American foreign correspondent in Greece from 1944-1946. He was the first American to report from the liberated zones and was in personal contact with all major Greek political figures. Although his articles were printed in major journals such as *The Nation* and the *New Republic*, and the dispatches he wrote for an international news agency appeared in almost every major American newspaper, he was eventually expelled from Greece because he was considered too sympathetic to EAM-ELAS. From the 1950s through the 1960s, he was blacklisted from major American journals.

and for what they reveal about American knowledge of Greek affairs. In terms of content, the reports substantiate from an unexpected source much of what radicals have always maintained about this period: that the right was actively persecuting resistance fighters and was preparing for a civil war if power could not be obtained through other means. Although Great Britain was the major Allied power responsible for Greece, the United States clearly had developed the highest quality information on Greek developments, and thus American policy was never based on ignorance or misunderstanding of the issues. One striking feature of the comments by Ambassador MacVeagh is his decided discomfort with the fascist nature of the right and its blatant use of Nazi collaborators and common thugs.

MacVeagh's letter of October 2, 1945, and the accompanying special memorandum on the Greek elections, express concern about the fraudulent nature of those elections. The memorandum candidly outlines the disenfranchisement and persecution of EAM-ELAS supporters and the prospect that activists of the right would have multiple voting cards. The report concludes with fears concerning right-wing terrorism and the negative effect a dubious election might have on international public opinion.

On October 26, 1945, MacVeagh sent a letter and dispatch concerning the royalist organization known as "X." The writers were alarmed by the criminal and fascist nature of the organization. Just as so often stated by EAM-ELAS sympathizers, MacVeagh acknowledges that "X" actively collaborated with the Nazis against the resistance throughout the war. The public and secret units of "X" are seen as foci for a civil war, and MacVeagh notes that his "British colleague" fears that if the right should start a civil war, the left is likely to win it.

In another letter sent on October 26, MacVeagh deals with secret leagues within the Greek army. His dispatch lists the specific names of leaders and units involved in such societies and their political outlook. MacVeagh affirms that democracy in Greece will always be perilous as long as these societies exist. This observation is particularly pertinent as among the members of these societies were the men who would emerge as the junta of 1967-1974.

These communications of 1945 also indicate that while the U.S. Ambassador was concerned about the nature of Greece's monarchist party, he did not suggest that American policy should be aimed at supporting more democratic forces. Rather than attempting to thwart the growing power base of the right through vigorous means, he was more concerned with presenting a good public image and moderating the rightist position. These documents and others already available<sup>2</sup> reveal that when the United States took over from Great Britain as the major foreign power in Greece, there was no lack of information about the nature of the regime inherited. In the decades which followed, the United States appears to have made no effort to disempower the collaborators of Nazism or the criminals MacVeagh wrote about.

— *Yiorgos Chouliaras and Dan Georgakas*

<sup>2</sup>"Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece, 1933-1947" ed. by John O. Iatrides, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980.

P.S. To place the events discussed in the documents in context, in addition to an earlier issue of the *Journal* (vol. XI, no. 3, fall 1984), which was mostly devoted to articles on the Greek Resistance and in which relevant contributions published in past issues were indexed, two books readers may wish to consult are: *Occupation and Resistance: The Greek Agony 1941-44* (Pella, 1983) by John Louis Hondros and *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949* (Columbia University, 1982) by Lawrence S. Wittner. The issue of changing evaluations, from a left perspective, of the elections of 1946 is addressed by Ole L. Smith in "The Boycott of the Elections [of] 1946. A Decisive Mistake?" which was published in *Scandinavian Studies in Modern Greek* (no. 6, 1982).

EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Athens, Greece,  
October 2, 1945

*SECRET*

No. 1622

Subject: Preparations for Greek Elections.

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

Confirming and supplementing my despatch No. 1567 of September 26, 1945, I have the honor to enclose herewith a report on "The Greek Elections" prepared for me by a member of the OSS who has been working for some time with this Embassy in a confidential capacity. This report covers Problems, Registration, Voting, Apparent Abuses and Frauds, and Comments, and is, to my mind, admirably succinct and to the point. Of particular note would seem to be the statement that though the laws provide for prosecution of holders of duplicate election booklets no case of such prosecution has yet come to the writer's attention (see paragraph 2 of my telegram 1078 of September 25). In connection with Section C. *Voting*, it should be kept in mind that this whole matter, and not merely the question of the use of the majority or proportional system, is under consideration in connection with a new electoral law shortly to be promulgated.

Previews of this kind may be of interest to whoever heads the forthcoming commission of observers for the United States, as giving a general picture of the set-up of a Greek election, and of the various aspects of this

one likely to require special vigilance, but nothing can be of such value to the commission as its own presence on the ground here at an early date.

Respectfully yours,  
[signed]  
Lincoln MacVeagh

Enclosure:

Report on "The Greek Elections".

Sent in ozalid to Department.

Copy to Division of Near Eastern Affairs.

File No. 800

LMacVeagh/efb

Enclosure to Despatch No. 1622  
from the American Embassy, Athens,  
dated October 2, 1945 concerning  
Preparations for Greek Elections.

AIR MAIL

29 September 1945

*SECRET*

*SPECIAL MEMORANDUM*

To: The Honorable Lincoln MacVeagh  
American Ambassador, Athens

Subject: The Greek Elections.

Sir:

Following our conversations concerning the problems raised by the forthcoming Greek elections, and in accordance with your request for a memorandum in this connection, I have the honor to submit the following outline of the situation as it has developed, together with certain comments which seemed to recommend themselves in the course of my inquiry.

**A. The Problems**

1. Principal impasse in the situation is the decision of EAM/KKE

to refrain from taking part in the elections unless the government is changed and unless many other political demands are granted; and the apparent improbability of any such change until the elections.

2. A second problem is the possibility of multiple, fraudulent voting by members of royalist organizations who are presently being provided with duplicate and triplicate voting booklets by their organizations.

3. A third problem is the possibility of terrorism and coercion during the campaigns, and on election day, by the various right-wing organizations.

#### B. *Registration*

1. Voting is based on prior registration rolls. These are supplemented, in the cities and large towns, by electoral booklets (*eklogika bibliaria*) which are valid for several elections and which consist of a small paper booklet containing a photograph, name, birthdate, birthplace, and occupation of the voter. When he votes, the fact is entered in his booklet.

2. The voter obtains the booklet by appearing at his local parish and presenting his police identity card, a certificate of birth, and his bread ration card. He also can present his old booklet, if he possesses one. The parish committee which handles the issuance of booklets, (and consequently, the registration of voters), consists of the local priest, a member of the community who has legal training, and a third member. The government appoints the legal and the third member.

3. The law (Law No. 392/1945 of the Voulgaris government) which set up this procedure also provides for a committee of observers at each parish, the committee to consist of one representative of each of the major parties,—Liberal, Communist and Populist. These observers have the right to note and refer complaints to the government.

4. The law called for a review of all registration rolls throughout the country; and a drawing up of new registration rolls in Athens, Piraeus and Salonika because of the many changes which have occurred in the constitution of these centers as cities and townships. (The unit, in all cases, is the parish.) Although election laws formerly called for a review of the registration lists every year, the Metaxas government curtailed all such activities and the revisions have to cover a period of nine years during which time no work has been done at all in this connection.

5. When the lists are completed, the law calls for their being presented to the courts of First Instance for decision on complaints and objections raised by the parish committees of observers.

6. The laws provide for a six-month to two years imprisonment of anyone convicted of possessing more than one electoral booklet.

#### C. *Voting*

1. There have been no elections in Greece since 1936. In January

of that year, elections were held and the "proportional representation" system was employed. No decision has yet been announced by the government as to whether it will use "P.R." or plurality count. It is believed that the Liberal party will prefer plurality count. Generally, the most prominent party is able to choose the method of counting votes, and the government announces the method to be used, by decree, just before the election.

2. Greece is divided into electoral districts on the basis of an average of 1000 voters to each. 25,000 votes elect a deputy under "P.R.", or fewer votes if the county is not so heavily populated. The county gets a second deputy if the remaining votes exceed 17,000. Thus, roughly, about 250 are elected.

3. "P.R." was first used in Greece in 1926, when Papanastasiou introduced it. It has since been used also in 1932 and 1936. The plurality system has been used in 1928, 1933 and 1935.

#### D. *Apparent abuses and frauds*

1. Most of the alleged abuses and frauds in registration, and most of the complaints concerning the election itself, stem from the fact that almost all election officials have been appointed by the Voulgaris government and are, in the main, of strong royalist sympathies. The various political parties cannot, by law, take exception to any of the members of parish committees.

2. The fact that most parish committees are of rightist views explains how the local heads of organizations such as "X" and E.D. (Ethniki Drasis) are able to procure, with great facility, as many fraudulent duplicate and triplicate booklets as their trusted friends may require. Several such booklets were obtained by one of our agents within one week, through two friends of his in rightist organizations. All he had to produce were photos, and fake names and statistics. This practice, which we know to be flagrantly wide-spread among royalist groups, may well result in the extraordinary phenomenon of having a larger registration in Athens and Piraeus than ever before, in spite of the abstention of the EAM/KKE leftists.

3. To date, no arrests of persons possessing duplicate booklets have come to our notice, although it is common knowledge that some hold as many as 25 booklets.

4. The confusion attendant upon the police practice of arresting left-wingers even when there is no credible evidence of the commission of a crime has led to a large number of such persons keeping away from registration centers where they fear they might be turned in to the police for merely having been known to be Communists last December. Several thousand such arrestees are still under detention, all over the country, and this is one of the main KKE talking points.

### E. *Comments*

1. It is believed that if elections are held in the near future with no modifications or corrections in registration rolls and with the abstention of the EAM, their outcome will be subjected to sharp criticism and non-recognition from Russia, regardless of the number of Allied observers who may be present on election day. No observer will be able to know how many booklets a voter has, how many times he has voted prior to appearing at the observer's polling place, or how many times he may vote thereafter at another polling place. Even trained observers would be helpless in a situation such as this.

2. One way to insure that each voter votes only once is to stamp the palm of each voter as he enters the "booth"; and to stamp his book with a unique stamp, so as to invalidate all duplicate books for future use. The ink could be obtained from the United States, and would need to be an indelible ink. The stamps could likewise be obtained from the United States. The stamping could be done either by a Greek police officer under the supervision of the local tri-party committee, or by the Allied observer.

3. An early and definite statement by the Allies that a positive method had been devised to guarantee freedom from multiple voting would go far towards minimizing the KKE argument that many royalists will vote several times each.

4. Specific, public orders to the police to protect and assist persons finding it difficult to register or vote would also help dissipate the leftist clamor.

5. It is believed that only if such positive steps are taken by the government can it properly refute the charge that it seeks to foster a fraudulent election by tolerating abuses which, in actual fact, are occurring. The taking of these steps will make it extremely difficult for any side to claim that it has been wronged.

6. Since September 30 is the last day of registration, and in view of the fact that not many more than 60% of the voting population of Greece has registered, it is submitted that a further extension of the registration period, plus the taking of the steps mentioned above, would deprive the extreme left of most of its argument against participating in the elections, and would lend needed prestige to the combined Greek-Allied effort to hold honest elections.

EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Athens, Greece,  
October 26, 1945.

**SECRET**

No. 1733

Subject: Origin, Growth and Activities of the Greek Royalist Organization known as "X".

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

For the Department's information and in view of the many references in my recent despatches and telegrams to a Greek royalist organization known as "X" (pronounced Khee), I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a report prepared in the Military Attaché's office of this Embassy, giving a thoroughgoing account of that organization's origin, growth, and activities. Based largely on secret sources, this report on what would appear to be the key organ of military reaction in Greece is of particular interest at this time in relation to the possibility of an attempt by the right to resolve the present political stalemate by forceful action (see my telegram No. 1190 of October 20, item 1). I also refer in this connection to my despatches of today's date, Nos. 1734 and 1731, on secret leagues within the armed forces and on Communist Party plans in the event of a rightist *coup*.

The enclosed report traces the history of "X", from its foundation in 1941 by its present leader, Lieutenant Colonel Georgios Grivas, and his former superior, General Lavdas, through its period of growth following the disarmament of ELAS this year, up to its present dominating position in Greek reactionary circles. It states that the organization derives its principal financial support from Theos Cozzika, wealthy and arch-conservative Greek industrialist in Egypt, while in Greece the key figures of the organization, apart from Grivas himself, are one Zephiros Valvis, an Athenian lawyer, Father Alexandros (Gorgiades), a priest, and Petros Mavromichalis of the Populist Party, who appears once more side by side with his old friend General (now Air-Marshall) Reppas. The Department will remember the bitter and dangerous partisanship of these two in the trial of the republican political leaders in 1935. (In addition, OSS has reported Generals Ventiris, Spiliopoulos and Liossis and Colonels Laios, Lamaris and Tavoularis as being prominent military members of "X" along with Grivas—see my despatch No. 1053 of May 22). "X" is described as a dual organization consisting of a public *Political Branch*, with a claimed membership of 200,000 (50,000 in Athens alone), and

a secret *Operational Branch* of unknown membership but which is thought to possess something over 5,000 firearms. It is the latter which is probably responsible for most of the current right-wing excesses in Greece and which is also said to be busily engaged in drawing up lists of Communists and other undesirables for use if and when the powers-that-be decide that the time has come for action.

Whether or not that decision will be made remains as problematical as it was when I discussed the matter in my despatch No. 1053 of May 22. The same internal factors militating for and against a royalist *coup* still hold, although the situation may be said to have become exasperated by the continued disruptive tactics of the extreme left, the inability of the Greek politicians to get together despite the Communist threat, the apparent tergiversations of British policy, and the manipulations of vested financial interests, all of which have combined to prevent any real progress towards political and economic stability. On the other hand, the fact that the international situation has also deteriorated, together with Mr. McNeill's recent forthright warning in the House of Commons against any attempted use of force by the Greek factions, might be expected to curb the spirit of adventure. Unfortunately, short-sighted elements of the right remain stubbornly convinced that Britain would fail to offer effective resistance to a royalist *putsch*, particularly a bloodless one, and would continue to support Greece under any circumstances against Soviet or Balkan intervention.

Regardless of their immediate intentions, recourse of the extreme rightists to such an instrument as "X" reveals an undemocratic attitude which is disturbing in its present effects and in its future implications. It has undermined the authority and prestige of the Regent and his interim "caretaker" Governments, driven the republicans into a position paralleling that of the Communists, and provided the latter with justification for their own militancy and their appeals for foreign support—appeals which are likely to elicit an increasingly sympathetic and active response as the threat of "X" becomes more precise. My British colleague undoubtedly had this in mind when he recently expressed the hope to me that the right would not, after all, provoke serious trouble. "For," he said, "if the right begin it, the left will win it".

Respectfully yours,  
[signed]  
Lincoln MacVeagh

Enclosure:

Report on "X" Organization in Greece.  
Sent in ozalid to Department  
Copy for American Embassy, Moscow  
Copy for Division of Near Eastern Affairs

File: 800  
LJCromie/LMacVeagh/mpe

AIR MAIL

Enclosure to Despatch No. 1733,  
dated October 26, 1945, from the  
American Ambassador, Athens, Greece,  
entitled: "Origin, Growth, and  
Activities of the Greek Royalist  
Organization known as 'X'".

*COPY*

1. X (pronounced Khee), formed in 1941 as an association of Greek army officers, was reduced in October 1944 to minuscule proportions, but has grown during the past year into a powerful, nation-wide, para-military organization. The organization has recently developed a double organization: the one political and public, the other armed and secret. The inner members of the organization carry on rather intensive organizational activity, and upon occasion sally forth to engage in demonstrations or street brawls. Relations with the police and National Guard have been very close since X has admitted key policemen and soldiers to its ranks. The organization is designed to fight the Communists, and to assure the return of King George, by force if necessary. It is financed, in part at least, from Egypt, is closely associated with the Popular Party, and in daily liaison with high officers of the General Staff.

*Origin and Early Vicissitudes of X*

2. X was formed in 1941 by General Lavdas, ex-Commander of the 2 (Athens) Division, and his Chief of Staff, Lt. Col. Georgios Grivas. At inception it was an association of army officers, centering around the men who had served in General Lavdas' Division. Its purpose was to prepare the way for the allied forces when they should come to liberate Greece from the Germans. In 1942 a difference of opinion arose between Lavdas and Grivas over the question as to whether or not to admit civilians, i.e., demobilized soldiers of the Athens Division, to the organization; and the upshot of this disagreement was that Lavdas resigned from X and left Grivas in sole command.

3. Under Grivas' leadership the organization grew to include (he claims) about 4,000 members (1943), with small branches in the towns of Attica and Boeotia. As Communist control over ELAS developed, X turned more and more into a purely anti-Communist organization; and is said to have cooperated with the Germans by giving them information as to the whereabouts of leading Communists, and at the same time to have received some arms from the German authorities with which they carried on occasional street fights against Elasites. As German control over Athens weakened, sporadic fighting between ELAS and X increased,

and X on the whole got the worst of it. Col. Grivas says that on the day when the British troops landed in Greece, X consisted of 200 men barricaded in a house in Pancrati, ringed round by ELAS rifles. Another report, however, says that General Spiliotopoulos, (Appointed Military Governor of Attica by the Papandreou Government), delivered 5,000 sub machine guns to X about a week before the final withdrawal of the Germans; and that with this formidable armament, the Xites were able to hold their own in a number of districts of Athens, especially in the area near the Thesion, which became a X stronghold.

4. After the arrival of British troops and the Papandreou government, opening fighting in Athens lapsed for a few weeks, and Grivas had an opportunity to regroup his forces and recruit sympathizers. The outbreak of the December revolt was heralded by the renewal of fighting between X and ELAS in the Thesion area; but after the British had become directly involved in the fighting (December 6) and General Scobie had ordered all civilians to turn in their arms, X ceased to fight openly. Instead many members of the organization volunteered for the National Guard battalions. Much of the misbehavior of the so-called "Athens battalions" of the National Guard may be attributed to the actions of these bravos who had served with X against the Communists.

#### *Growth of X during 1945*

5. With the disarmament of ELAS and the extension of the authority of the Greek Government through the provinces, a swarm of "nationalist" organization [sic] began to appear in every town. These organizations were headed by an assortment of former army officers, old government office holders, politicians, or simple adventurers, and often consisted of an ambitious title, some letterhead stationery and not much else. Some of these organizations, however, like BEN in Salonika, developed substantial membership and began to set up club houses, hold parades, etc.

6. During the course of the summer, a tendency began to show itself for these Nationalist organizations to coalesce; and the organization under whose auspices the resultant federations found themselves was X. The sequence of events in Salonika happens to be well known, and is probably typical of most towns of Greece. In early spring 1945 six individuals wrote a letter to Col. Grivas in Athens suggesting that he establish a branch of X in Salonika with themselves as charter members. A few weeks later a representative of the Athens X organization arrived in Salonika and administered the oath to a few willing initiates. It appears, however, that this first start did not prove satisfactory to the Athens organization, and in July Air Marshal Reppas (retired) came to Salonika, carried through a purge, and installed Panos Voudouris, a retired army officer, as head of the Operational Section of X. Alexander Kouskoulakis, Manager of the Agrarian Bank in Salonika, was made head of the newly established Political Branch at the same time. Under this new regime, the

Operational Section was to be limited to 500 members, organized into secret cells of 10 men; while the Political Section was thrown open to all.

7. In August, Reppas visited Salonika again, and at his instigation a Federation of the leading Nationalist organizations of the city was founded. It was to have a common treasury, from which the constituent organizations would draw in proportion to their membership. (In fact it seems that the main reason that persuaded the various leaders of these organizations to join the federation was that Reppas promised liberal subvention from Athens, and each organization saw the opportunity of drawing more money from the treasury than they put in.) The Federation is known as Omospondiaton [sic] Ethnikon Organoseon, Federation of the Nationalist Organizations, and is directed by a committee of representatives from each component organization.

8. In September, Zephiros Valvis, an Athens lawyer, made a tour of Northern and Central Greece with the purpose of inspecting and organizing X in those areas. In Salonika he established a committee of four members to supervise the Political Branch of X, made a public speech in which he announced the pacific and nationalist intentions of his organization; held a private meeting with the Operational Section of the organization at which he was informed that 300 of the 500 man quota had already been recruited into the Operational Section; that 1500 small arms (delivered from Athens) were in the safekeeping of three Gendarme officers: Vardoulakis, the Director General of Security; Tsalamides, Chief of Gendarmerie; and Moschatos, Deputy chief of Security. He was also told that a total of 500 gendarmes had been initiated into the Political Section including the heads of all the police stations of the city except for two. Valvis did not, however, bring the funds which had been promised; and there was general disappointment among the leaders of the Nationalist organizations at this omission; and some of the civilians in the Operational Section questioned the wisdom of allowing all the arms to be kept by the Gendarmes, fearing that their independence of action might be compromised thereby.

9. This development has seemingly been paralleled elsewhere in Greece. Branches of X have been established in nearly every town and in many villages. The organization is particularly strong in the Peloponnese, Attica-Boeotia, Akarnania, and Thrace; and in all parts of the country has many members among the police, National Guard, and to a lesser extent, the Army. Grivas claims a total membership (in the Political Branch) of 200,000 with 50,000 in Athens alone.

#### *Organization and Leading Personalities of X*

10. Since mid-summer X has had a double organization: the Political Branch, which is public and pacific; and the Operational Branch, which is armed and at least potentially violent. Officially, Griyas and other Xites, insist that the organization has been totally transformed from

the secret armed society which it was under the Germans; and in their public statements, the Political Branch emphasizes respect for the will of the people and for the Government, insists on early elections, and in all respects echoes the program of the Popular Party. The Operational Branch, however, remains the heart of the organization, and the Political Branch was probably designed largely to serve as a cover. It is not known how many arms the organization possesses, but the number is probably something more than 5000 which X is thought to have taken over in October 1944. If the quota for Salonika of 1500 is correct, it would be reasonable to suppose that at least twice that many are kept in Athens, and proportionately large number assigned to other parts of the country. The Operational Branch is organized into ten-man cells, with a direct chain of command reaching downward from Grivas. In the provinces, control is necessarily relatively slack due to difficulties of communication, and the local heads of the Operational Branch undoubtedly have considerable autonomy of action.

11. The central control of X is apparently firmly in the hands of Lt. Col. George Grivas. His two most prominent confederates are Zephiros Valvis, a lawyer from Athens, and Georgiades (a priest usually known by his ordination name of Father Alexandros). The treasurer of X is said to be Petros Mavromichalis, one of the most prominent leaders of the Popular Party; and the principal source of income, apart from what is raised locally, is contributions from Theo. Cozzika, a very wealthy Egyptian industrialist, who is an extreme Royalist and conservative. (His enemies say that Cozzika, foreseeing difficulties in Egypt in the next few years, is seeking to find a country where he can transfer his capital safely and remain exempt from taxation or hampering regulations.)

12. It is also said that there is considerable friction between Grivas, Valvis and Father Alexandros. Father Alexandros, in particular, is of a rougher, more turbulent nature than the other two men, and favors direct and violent action in cases when the other two draw back. This friction is not serious, however, and does not seem likely to fracture the organization in the immediate future.

### *Activities of X*

13. Men in the inner circle of X have been busy during the past months in organizing and recruiting. The activities of ordinary members is less well known. There are periodic meetings of the Political Branch, but they are relatively few and unimportant. The Operational Branch maintains an Intelligence service, (under Valvis), which devotes its major attention to listing Communists, their residence, habits, associates etc. with a view to effective liquidation at some future time. In addition, the Xites occasionally come out into the streets at night, have been known to cordon off a section of town and search houses for arms or for Communists, who, if found, are beaten up. In Athens, these more violent

methods have not been much used; in Salonika and other provincial towns such behavior is far more common. Sign painting is another pastime, and the walls of nearly every town and village of Greece are decorated with blue X's. (Note: the X not only stands for the letter Khi in the Greek alphabet, but also is the monogram King George, being a crossed gamma, standing for Georgios Glucksburg.)

14. The activities of the organization definitely look to some day when it will be possible to loose their hatred against the Communists, whether after a coup d'etat, or after the King's government has been installed by legal processes. Organizers talk of a rapidly approaching day: they whispered that when the Regent returned from London, the day would come; but in actual fact, the organization up to the present has been kept in close check, and, in Athens at least, has not resorted to violence on any organized basis. Individual members of X have not infrequently disobeyed the instructions of the central command, as when some Xites beat up the Chief of the Athens Police, 12 October, after the police had broken up a Nationalist demonstration in Constitution Square. By continued inaction, the organization runs the risk of losing its more extreme adherents; and it seems not impossible that X will soon take a more aggressive line of action, especially if the Regent-Prime Minister makes a serious effort to separate the police and army from Royalist control.

#### *Comment*

15. It is impossible to assess the real power of X. Up to the present it has flourished with the tacit or active blessing of the police and army; and its arms are nearly all stored in police stations. Without such support, X would probably lose most of its power; but under present conditions, the organization seems to offer a real threat to the stability of the Government and to the peaceful evolution of Greek politics.

Report No. R 171-45

EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICAAthens, Greece,  
October 26, 1945.**SECRET**

No. 1734

Subject: Secret Leagues within the Greek Army.

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

As of possible interest to the Department, I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a report prepared in the office of the Military Attaché of this Embassy on secret leagues within the Greek Army, which would appear to be especially timely in view of current discussions relating to the possibility of a rightist *coup d'état*. (See my despatches Nos. 1733 and 1731 of this date on the royalist "X" organization and on Communist Party plans in the event of a royalist *coup*.)

The enclosed report emphasizes that the tradition of political leagues within the Greek Army dates back to the war of independence, or, in other words, to the very origin of the modern Greek state. Under the Metaxas regime, the report continues, royalist officers completely dominated the Army, their opponents being driven into exile or retirement, resulting in a legacy of bitterness which was accentuated during the 1944 mutiny in Egypt and the subsequent ELAS uprising. The purges which followed these events, however, resulted in an Army which, while dominated by strongly conservative elements, is not uniformly royalist. The following groups are named as having the most influence today: the Officers' League (*Syndesmos Axiomatikon*), the Royalists (*Basiloprones*), IDEA (*Ieros Desmos Ethnikon Axiomatikon*, Sacred Association of Nationalist Officers), and a Republican League. It appears that SAN (*Syndesmos Axiomatikon Neon*, League of Young Officers), still a favorite target of Communist propaganda, has actually been more or less inactive since its exposure by Emmanuel Tsouderos last May (see my despatch No. 965 of May 1, page 11, and the enclosure to my despatch No. 1511 of September 14.) All of these leagues vie and intrigue with one another, but more with reference to preferential promotions and assignments than to ideology. At the moment, the Officers' League, under the dynamic personality of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Major General Ventiris (who

has also been identified with the "X" organization) would appear to have the upper hand. The report concludes that the new Greek Army, like its predecessors, is bound to be of a political character, but indicates that the preponderance within it of any one group is also likely to be precarious.

While the Army remains in politics it is hard to see how Greece can ever become a democracy in our sense, and it is equally hard to see how a tradition so intrenched [sic] can be eradicated. However, the present situation is perhaps not as unhappy as it might be, since the Army as now constituted can be counted on to oppose any attempt at a Communist uprising, while at the same time the presence in its ranks of a Communist-controlled minority estimated at 15 percent, which is probably roughly equivalent to Communist strength in the general population, should tend to discourage military action in support of the right. Existing rivalries between the different factions as exemplified by the struggle for control over officer appointments between the royalist-dominated General Staff and the republican Minister of War, General Merenditis, (see my telegrams No. 1102 of September 29, item 6, and No. 1112 of October 2) are a further guarantee in this stabilizing sense. The problem facing the British Military Mission in Greece and Greek civilian authorities concerned for the observance of constitutional procedures, therefore, is not one of creating a non-political Army (which would be utopian) but of ensuring so far as possible equilibrium of forces.

Respectfully yours,  
[signed]  
Lincoln MacVeagh

Enclosure:

Report on Secret Leagues  
within the Greek Army.

Sent in ozalid to Department.  
Copy for Division of Near Eastern Affairs.  
Copy for American Embassy, Moscow.

File No. 800  
LJCromie/LMacVeagh/mpe

**AIR MAIL**

Enclosure to Despatch No. 1734,  
dated October 26, 1945, from the  
American Ambassador, Athens, Greece,  
entitled: "Secret Leagues within  
the Greek Army".

**COPY**

1. The Greek Army is honeycombed by secret leagues and Associations. These secret leagues are often rivals, and usually have affiliations with different political parties, so that what may start as purely private and personal spite over promotion is quickly transformed into political antagonism, confirmed, intensified, and, one may say, institutionalized, by the oaths, activities, and inner discipline of the leagues. The military leagues constitute a standing and serious threat to normal political processes, constantly holding over the head of any Government the threat of a coup d'etat.

*Historical Background*

2. Secret armed societies are nothing new in Greece. The Greek War of Independence (1821-30) was initiated by a secret society, (the Philiki Etaireia), which ramified over the whole Balkans. More recently, Eleftherios Venizelos was called from Crete to become Prime Minister of Greece in 1910 by a revolt of a Military League; and throughout the period of World War I, the Greek army was torn between rival Military leagues, loyal respectively to Venizelos and King Constantine, until the Venizelist Military League became the framework for his revolt against the King (1916). After the reconciliation of Venizelos' insurrectionary Salonika Government with the Government in Athens (1917), the rivalry between Royalist and Republican officers continued, crystallized throughout the inter-bellum years, into rival secret leagues. Factionalism was intensified by the fact that the Greek army had a large surplus of officers and the Government could not afford to pay them all. Consequently, when a man was put in retirement, he blamed his dismissal on whatever political group was then in power, and lent his support to the rival group in the hope of thereby returning to active service and recovering full pay and emoluments.

3. Under the Metaxas regime (1936-40) Royalist officers were exclusively in control of the army, and the more prominent Republican leaders went into exile. Under the occupation, a large number of leagues and associations of Greek officers were formed, and some of them (like PAO) took to the hills and formed small guerrilla bands without any

pronounced political color. But during the last two years of the German occupation of Greece, all middle groups were absorbed in the two extremes: on the one hand the Communist-dominated ELAS, which recruited to itself a substantial number of Regular officers, mostly of relatively junior rank; and the Security Battalions, mobilized by the Germans through the Rallis Government to counteract ELAS. This dichotomy between Left and Right was reflected in the Greek Forces in the Middle East and resulted in the mutiny of April 1944, when sympathizers with the EAM/ELAS/KKE movement attempted to seize control of the Greek Army in the Middle East. The failure of this revolt led to the reorganization of the Greek Army into a small but thoroughly conservative and strongly anti-Communist force. In December 1944, a second resort to the arbitration of force, led a second time to failure of Leftist plans, and guaranteed the effectual banishment of leftists from all positions of responsibility in the Greek army. Regular Greek officers who served with ELAS have not been returned to active duty; and any associations or leagues which may exist (and certainly do exist) among them have practically no power in the Army as it is now constituted, and are consequently omitted from this report. (It is planned to attempt to describe these leagues in a subsequent report which will be devoted to armed societies of the Left.)

#### *Military Leagues in the Greek Army Today*

4. So far as this office has been able to find out, there are four important secret leagues in the Greek army today: The Officers' League (*Syndesmos Axiomatikon*), the Royalists (*Basilophrones*), IDEA (*Ieros Desmos Ethnikon Axiomatikon*, Sacred Association of Nationalist Officers), and a Republican League (name unknown).

5. The Officers' League is, in effect, the inner cabal of the Greek General Staff. The three senior officers of this league are: Major General Konstantinos Vendiris, Assistant Chief of Staff; Major General Panagiotis Spiliopoulos; Major General Efstatios Liossos. Other prominent members of this league are the following: Cols. Laios, Kitrilakis, Zanglis, Valodimos, Granitsas (in Egypt); Lt. Cols. Dovas, Karadjennis, Argyropoulos, Messinopoulos, Stathatos, Lamaris, and Major Papageorogopoulos [sic]. All of these men hold important positions on the Greek General Staff, and, under the leadership of General Vendiris, are in a position to make or break the career of any army officer, since army appointments pass through their hands. More or less subordinate to this League is an association of the leading spirits among the officers of the old Rimini Brigade. Most of these officers are now assigned to the 2 Division, and, under the leadership of Col. Tsakalotas, Commander of the Division, the association devotes itself to looking after the interests of veterans of the Rimini brigade, assuring them, (with the help of General Vendiris), of good assignments, etc.

6. The Officers' League is interested first of all in maintaining its present predominant power over the Greek army, and its policies are designed largely with that in view. Its members are all strongly anti-Communist and tend to be rather lukewarm Royalists. In general, their attitude is that the King is the only bulwark against Communism available to Greece; but their enthusiasm for King George is damped by the fear that should he return he might reinstate his old generals of the Albanian campaign.

7. The Royalist League represents the group of officers who controlled the Greek army before the war. It is led by Lt. Gen. Alexander Papagos, Commander in Chief during the Albanian War, (recently returned from internment in Germany, see Report No. R 96-45, this office). The League is composed of the men who worked with Papagos in the War. Among the more prominent of these are: Lt. Generals Georgios Kosmas, Constantine Vacopoulos, Panagiotis Dedes; Major Generals Maraveas, Stanotas and Papadopoulos; Cols. Mavrogennis, Gerolimatos and Papageorgiou. All of these men are now on the inactive list, but they hope that King George will restore them to at least some of their former power. Consequently, their League works and hopes wholeheartedly for the return of the King. It does not have many adherents, since only a man who despairs of preferment under the Vendiris regime will join what looks like the forlorn cause of these Metaxas generals.

8. The IDEA is a League of junior officers, formed in Egypt after the April mutiny in 1944. It is limited to officers below the rank of captain; is organized into secret cells of three; has an estimated membership of about 2000; and is directed by a committee of three majors (names unknown) and a Captain Tzonvalosis. Its announced aims are to insure the dismissal of all officers (especially senior ones) who in any way were compromised by the April Mutiny, and to advance the military career of its own members in every possible way. IDEA is politically conservative and Royalist. Many individuals probably belong both to IDEA and to the less secret and more informal association of Rimini veterans, described above.

NOTE: This League is not identical with SAN (Report No. 84-45, this office). It appears that SAN, after the publication of its constitution by Emmanuel Tsouderos in April, has become inactive, and has, perhaps, disbanded.

9. The Republican League draws its members from those officers who were ejected from the Greek army after the abortive revolutions of 1933 (Plastiras) and 1935 (Venizelos). The leader of this league is General Nicholas Plastiras (See Report No. 3-45, this office, for an outline of his checkered career) and his prominent associates include the following: Lt. Gen. Andreas Spanopoulos, Military Governor of Central Greece, Lt. Gen. Alexander Merenditis, Minister of War, Lt. Gen. George Dromazos, Chief of Staff, Major General Athanasios Bitsanis, Military Governor of Central Macedonia, Major General Avramides, Military Governor of Thessaly, Major General Leonidas Spais, former Minister

of War under Plastiras, and Major Generals Vlachaitopoulos, Protopoulos, Chaviniis and Georgoulis. This League is composed of old, high ranking officers, who have long been identified with the Liberal Party and republicanism. They believe that tenure of their present posts depends on the establishment of a republic in Greece, for a Royalist government would not allow senior commands to remain in the hands of unsympathetic officers, especially when, by retiring republicans, vacancies for promotion of Royalist officers would be created. Consequently, the members of this league work and hope to establish a Republic, and support the Liberal Party. They strongly reject cooperation with the Communists, however; and are definitely conservative in their social opinions. They seem to have rather small following among the junior officers, who, finding that preference now comes through the Vendiris group, think it more profitable to be Royalist.

10. It is not easy to say just what are the activities and importance of these various leagues. Each has a constitution; members are admitted by careful selection and received into the society after swearing a solemn oath. So far as is known, the Leagues have no great monetary resources, and it is not clear what sort of disciplinary power they can wield over their members to keep them in line. Indeed, it is probably the case that these Leagues would quickly break up if the alignment of the individual interests of members should alter, and now [sic] leagues conforming to new cliques would be formed in their place. Nevertheless, the Leagues formalize and thereby intensify the factional quarrels of the Greek officer corps, and provide a standing secret machinery through which it is possible and tempting to plot coups d'état. (General Spais is said to have threatened revolt at the time of Gen. Plastiras' resignation from the Prime Ministry last spring.)

#### *Relations between the Military Leagues*

11. As indicated above, all of these military leagues are conservatively inclined and strongly anti-Communist. Actual possession of high office is divided between the Officers' League, headed by Assistant Chief of Staff, Major General Vendiris, and the Republican League, represented in the army by the Minister of War, Lt. General Alexander Merenditis, and by the Chief of Staff, Lt. General George Dromazos. At first glance it would appear that the Republicans had the upper hand, since the highest offices are held by Republican sympathizers. In fact, the relation is quite the reverse. Dromazos, although titular Chief of Staff, in fact is quite overshadowed by the aggressive personality of his assistant, Vendiris; and Dromazos' power is nullified by the fact that Vendiris and his friends have effective control of the all-important assignment of officers within the army. Republicans holding high military positions are, with the exception of Lt. General Merenditis, Minister for War, all hold-overs from the time when Plastiras was Prime Minister; and they are area command-

ers, *not* troop commanders. In other words, they would have relatively little power to govern events in case things came to the point of armed insurrection. More than this, the republican generals seem personally ineffectual, and do not exert the full measure of their authority to build up a republican machine under their command. As a result, perhaps because many of them have a deep-running fear of Communism, and secretly doubt the viability of republican government in Greece under present conditions, or perhaps merely because they are old men, the republican generals do not exercise an influence in the Greek army commensurate with their rank and position.

12. Relations between the Officers' League and the Basilophrones are not cordial, even though both are Royalist and conservative. A personal animosity exists between Vendiris and Papagos, for the latter as C in C in 1940, refused to reinstate Vendiris, even as a private soldier. (Vendiris had been read out of the army in 1935 for participation in the abortive Venizelist coup of that year, and was, at that time, regarded as a ring-leading republican.) Apart from this personal feud, the Metaxist Generals naturally look with envy upon the newcomers who are now in control of the Greek army; while the officers around Vendiris, for their part, look at the superior rank of the Basilophrones, and fear for their jobs.

13. It is believed that General Vendiris and Colonel Tsakalotas have made considerable efforts to win control over IDEA, and have deliberately favored the junior officers who belong to it by giving them the choice posts in the new Greek army; but, although relations are consequently good between the Officers' League and IDEA, the senior officers have not been admitted to the secrets of their junior's [sic] organization.

#### *Comment*

14. The Greeks have been chronically unable to establish an army free from political intrigue; and the army which is now in process of reconstruction shows no signs of differing from the turbulent army of time past. At the moment, the group of officers around Major General Vendiris seems firmly in control of the army; but his power may at any moment be challenged either by the republican Minister for War, or in the event of King George's restoration, by the Metaxist Generals. Furthermore, in the event of a dearth of promotions, a coalition between the IDEA and either of the rival senior officers' Leagues is entirely within the bounds of possibility, and such an alliance would seriously embarrass if not overthrow the Vendiris regime in the General Staff and Greek army.

# ’Ορέστης

τοῦ ΓΙΑΝΝΗ ΡΙΤΣΟΥ

[Δυὸς νέοι, δις 20 χρονῶν, σταράτησαν στὰ προπύλαια μὲ μιὰν ἔκφραση σὰ νὰ προσπαθοῦσαν κάτι νὰ θυμηθοῦν, κάτι ν' ἀναγνωρίσουν, ἐνδι τὸς εἰταν δλα ἀφάνταστα γνωστὰ καὶ συγκινητικά, μόνο ποὺ κάπως μικρότερα—πολὺ μικρότερα—ἀπ' διο τὰ σκέφτονταν στὴν ἔνιτειά, ἀπὸ ἄλλο χῶρο κι ἀπὸ ἄλλο χρόνο,—πολὺ μικρότερα καὶ τὰ τεῖχη κ' οἱ τεράστιες πέτρες κ' ἡ πύλη τῶν λεόντων καὶ τὸ παλάτι κάτω ἀπ' τὸν ἰσιο τὸ διονοῦ. Καλοκαλί πιά. Νυχτώνει. Τὰ ίδιωτικά αὐτοκινήτα καὶ τὰ μεγάλα ἐκδρομικά λεωφορεῖα ἔχουν φύγει. Ὁ χῶρος ἀνασαλεῖ μὲς στὴν ἥσυχία,—μιὰ διθεὶά ἀναπνοὴ ἀπ' τὰ στόματα τῶν ἀρχαίων τάφων καὶ τῶν ἀναμνήσεων. “Ενα κομμάτι ἐφημερίδα σάλεψε στὰ καμένα χόρτα, φυσημένο ἀπὸ ἀδρίστη πνοή. Ἀκούγεται τὸ δῆμα τοῦ νυχτοφύλακα καὶ τὸ μεγάλο κλειδί ποὺ κλειδώνει τὴ μέσα πόρτα τοῦ πόργου. Τότε, σὰ ν' ἀπελευθερώθηκαν μὲς στὴ ζεστὴ δροσιὰ τῆς νύχτας, οἱ γρύλλοι χτυπήσαν τὰ μικρὰ ταυμούρλα τους. Κάπου, πιὼν ἀπ' τὸ διονοῦ, ἔρπει μιὰ ἀμφιβολη λάμψη—ἴσως εἰναι: τὸ φεγγάρι. Καὶ τὴν ίδια ἀκριδίως στιγμὴ ἀκούστηκε ἀπ' τὴν πέτρινη σκάλα, δέξι, σκληρός, παράτονος, δ θρήνος μιᾶς γυναίκας. Οἱ δύο νέοι δὲν υπτάχθηκαν. Δέθηκαν μὲ τὸ κάτω τεῖχος σὰ δυὸ μεγάλες σκιές. Σὲ λίγο δ ἔνας σκούπισε τὸν ίδρωτα του ἀπ' τὸ μέτωπό του μὲ τὸ μαντίλι του, ἔδειξε πρὸς τὰ ἑκεῖ μὲ χαλαρωμένο δάχτυλο καὶ μίλησε στὸν ἄλλον, ποὺ ἔμενε πάντα στοργικὰ διονοῦσαν καὶ ἀφοσιωμένος σὰν Πυλάδης.]

“Ἀκου,—δὲν ἔπαψε ἀκόμη, δὲν κουράστηκε. Ἀνυπόφορη, μέσα σ' αὐτὴ τὴ γύχτα τὴν ἐλληνικὴ—τόσο ζεστή, τόσο γαλήνια, τόσο ἀγεξάρτητη ἀπὸ μᾶς κι ἀδιάφορη, ἐπιτρέποντάς μας μιὰν ἀγεστῇ—γάμαστε μέσα της, γά τὴν κυττάμε ἀπ' τὰ μέσα κι ἀπὸ μακριὰ ταυτόχρονα. νὸ διλέπουμε τὴ γύχτα γυμνὴ ὃς τὶς ἐλάχιστες φωνές τῶν γρύλλων της, ὃς τὶς ἐλάχιστες φρικιάσεις τοῦ μαύρου δέρματός της.

Πῶς νὰ γινόταγε γὰ μέναιμε ἀγεξάρτητοι κ' ἔμεταις, μὲ τὴν ὥραια χαρὰ τῆς ἀδιαφορίας, τῆς ἀγεξιθρησκείας, πέρα ἀπ' τὰ πάγτα, μέσα στὰ πάγτα, μέσα μας—μόγοι, ἔγωμέγοι, ἀδέσμευτοι, δίχως συγκρίσεις, ἀνταγωνισμούς, ἐλέγχους, δίχως γὰ μᾶς μετράει ἡ ὅποια ἀγαμογή κι ἀπαίτηση τῶν ἄλλων. Ἔτσι μόγο γὰ διλέπω τὸ λουρὶ τοῦ σαγδάλου σου, ποὺ μού χωρίζει τὸ μεγάλο σου δάχτυλο, τὸ δημευπτό, πρὸς μιὰ δική μου θέση, πρὸς ἕνα χῶρο μυστικό, δικό μου, πλάϊ στὶς ροδοδάφγες, καὶ τ' ἀσημένια φύλλα τῆς νύχτας νὰ πέφτουν στὸν ὄμιο σου κι ὁ ἥχος τῆς κρήνης νὰ περνάει ἀγεπαίσθητα κάτω ἀπ' τὰ νύχια μας.

# Orestes

by YANNIS RITSOS

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[Two young men in their twenties stood before the gates. The expression on their faces made it seem as though they were trying to remember or recognize something, only somehow smaller—much smaller—than they remembered while they were in that strange land; as if they belonged to a different place, to a different time,—even the walls, the huge stones, the lion-gate and the palace beneath the shadow of the mountain, were all smaller. It is summer already. Night is falling. The cars and the big charter busses have gone. The place can breathe again in peace,—a deep sigh from the mouths of ancient graves and memories. A piece of newspaper, blown by an indefinite breath, fluttered on the burnt grass. The footsteps of the nightwatchman and then the large key that locks the inside gate of the tower are heard. Then the crickets, as if they found their freedom in the hot coolness of the night, beat their small drums. Somewhere behind the mountain, an uncertain light crawls—maybe it's the moon. And exactly at that moment, a woman's wailings, sharp, harsh, out of tune, were heard coming from the stone stairway. The two young men didn't look at each other. They hugged the lower wall like two shadows. After a while, one of them wiped the sweat of his forehead with his handkerchief. With a slackened finger, he pointed in that direction and said to the other, who always stood there compassionately mute and devoted like Pylades].

Listen,—she hasn't stopped, she's not tired yet. She's unbearable, in this Greek night,—so warm, so peaceful, so independent from us and so indifferent, allowing us the comfort—to be in it, to look at it from within and the same time from afar; to see the night naked to the tiniest voices of her crickets, to the tiniest horrors of her dark skin.

How could we, too, have found a way to stay independent in the wonderful joy of indifference and tolerance, away from everything, inside of everything, inside of ourselves,—alone, united, unbound, without comparisons, antagonisms, criticism, without being measured by the expectations and claims of others. So I only want to see the strap of your sandal that keeps your big toe, the blameless one, pointed in my direction, toward a secret spot of my own, next to the rhododendrons, with the silvery leaves of the night falling on your shoulders and the sound of the spring water passing unnoticed under our fingernails.

"Άκου τηγ,—ή φωνή της τή σκεπάζει σὰ θαμύνουσος θόλος κ' είγαι ή ίδια κρεμασμένη μέσα στή φωνή της σὰ γλωσσίδι καμπάνας, καὶ χτυπιέται καὶ χτυπάει τὴν καμπάνα, ἔνω δὲν είναι μήτε σκόλη μήτε ξόδι, μόγο ή δισπιλή ἐρημιά τῶν θράχων καὶ κάτω ή ταπεινή ήσυχία τοῦ κάμπου, μποραμένοντας αὐτὴ τὴν ἀδικαιώτη παραφορά, ποὺ γύρω τῆς σαλεύουσα σὰν ἀθώοι παιδικοὶ χαρταστοὶ τ' ἀγαρίθμητα ἀστέρια μὲ τὸ χάρτινο ἀεροῦ θρόσιμα τῆς μεγάλης οὐρᾶς τους.

"Ἄς μακρύνουμε λίγο ἀπὸ δῶ, νὰ μὴ μᾶς φτάνει ή φωνή τῆς γυναικας· δές σταθοῦμε πιὸ κάτω.—δχι στοὺς τάφους τῶν προγόνων· δχι σπογδὲς ἀπόφε. Τὰ μαλλιά μου δὲ θέλω γὰ τὰ κόψω, —ἔδω πάγω συχνὰ σεργιάνισε τὸ χέρι σου. Τί δικροφη νύχτα— κάτι δικό μας, ποὺ μακραίγει, ἀποσπασμένο ἀπὸ μᾶς, καὶ τὸ ἀκοῦμε σὰ σκοτειγὸ ποτάμι νὰ πορεύεται κατὰ τὴ θάλασσα, φέγγοντας πότε-πότε κάτω ἀπ' τὰ κλαδιά, στὸ σπίθισμα τῶν ἄστρων, μέσα σὲ τοῦτο τὸ δυναστικό, τὸ ἀνήλεο καλοκαίρι, μὲ ἀδιόρατες παύσεις, στιγμαῖες, μὲ τυχαῖα σκιρτήματα (ἴσως κάποιος νὰ ρίχνει πέτρες στὸ ποτάμι) —αὐτὴ ή μικρὴ ἀναπήδηση κι ἀστράφτουν χαμηλὰ τὰ τζάμια τῶν ἀμπελουργῶν. Παράξενο,

μιὰ δλούληρη ζωὴ μὲ ἑτοίμαζαν κ' ἑτοίμαζόμουνα γι' αὐτό. Καὶ τώρα, μπροστά στὴν πύλη αὐτή, γιώθω δλότελα ἀνέτοιμος— τὰ δυὸ μαρμάρινα λιοντάρια—τάδες;—τιθαεσύτηκαν, αὐτά, ποὺ ζεκινήσαν ἀπ' τὰ παιδικά μας χρόνια τόσο ἀγένδοτα, δηγια σχεδόν, μὲ τὴ χαίτη δρθωμένη γιὰ ἔνα παράτολμο πήδημα, κατακάθησαν πιὰ συμβιβασμένα στὶς δυὸ ἐπάνω γωνίες τῆς ἔξωθυρας μὲ τρίχωμα γεκρό, μὲ μάτια ἀπόγυτα,—δὲν τρομάζουν κανένα, —μὲ μάνη ἔκφραση σκυλιῶν τιμωρημένων, κι οὕτε μάλιστα θλιψμένων, πιστῶν, τυφλῶν σκυλιῶν, χωρὶς μυησικακία, γλείφοντας πότε-πότε μὲ τὴ γλώσσα τους τὸ χλιαρὸ πέλμα τῆς νύχτας.

"Ἀνέτοιμος, ναι!—δὲν τὸ μπορῶ μοῦ λείπει ή ἀναλογία ἔκείνη ή ἀπαραιτητὴ μὲ τὸ τοπίο, τὴν ὥρα, μὲ τὰ πράγματα καὶ μὲ τὰ γεγονότα.—δχι λιγοψυχία, —ἀνέτοιμος μπροστά στὸ κατώφλι τῆς πράξης, δλότελα ξέγος μπροστά στὸν προορισμὸ ποὺ οἱ ἄλλοι μοῦ ἔταξαν. Πῶς γίνεται οἱ ἄλλοι νὰ δρίζουν λίγο-λίγο τὴ μοίρα μας, νὰ μᾶς τὴν ἐπιβάλλουν κ' ἐμεῖς νὰ τὸ δεχθαστε; Πῶς γίνεται μ' ἐλάχιστα νήματα κάποιαν δικῶν μας στιγμῶν νὰ μᾶς ὑφαίγουν

Listen to her,—her voice covers her like a resonant dome  
and she hangs there from her voice  
like a bell's clapper that's struck as it strikes the bell,  
and yet it's neither a holiday or a funeral, only the pure solitude  
of the rocks  
and the humble peace of the valley down below that underline  
this unjustified rage surrounded  
by countless stars that stir like innocent children's kites  
with the restless paper-rustle of their long tails.

Let's move a little further away from here, so the woman's voice  
won't reach us;  
let's stop down there;—not among the ancestral graves;  
no libations tonight. I don't want  
to cut my hair,—your hand  
often wandered there. What a beautiful night—  
something of our own that moves away, detached from us, and  
we hear it  
flowing toward the sea like a dark river,  
now and then reflecting the starlight under the branches,  
in this sovereign sunless summer,  
with invisible, momentary pauses, with random skips (maybe someone's  
skipping stones over the river)—such a tiny leap,  
and the windowpanes of the vinegrowers flash down below. Strange,  
all my life they prepared me and I prepared myself for this. And now,  
before this gate, I feel totally unprepared;—  
the two marble lions—did you see them?—they've become tame,  
the same ones that in our childhood years started out unyielding,  
almost wild, with their manes erect for a bold leap,  
they've settled in reconciliation on the top corners over the main gate,  
their hair lifeless, their eyes vacant—they don't scare anyone—  
with the look  
of whipped dogs, certainly not sad,  
but loyal, blind dogs, without resentment,  
now and then licking the tepid paw of the night with their tongues.

Unready, yes;—I can't do it;  
I lack that inevitable relation to  
the place, the time, the objects  
and events;—not cowardice,—unready  
before the threshold of the act, a complete stranger  
to this mission that others have arranged for me. How does it happen  
that others determine our fate, little by little, that they impose it on us  
and that we accept it? How does it happen that, with the smallest  
piece of thread  
from some of our moments, they weave

δλόκληρο τὸ χρόνο μας, τραχὺ καὶ σκοτειγόν, ριγμένογ  
σὰν καλύπτρα ἀπ' τὸ κεφάλι ὡς τὰ πόδια μας, σκεπάζοντας  
δλόκληρο τὸ πρόσωπό μας καὶ τὰ χέρια μας, ὅπου ἀποθέσανε  
ἔνα ἄγνωστο μαχαίρι—δλότελα ἄγνωστο—καὶ γά φωτίζει  
μὲ τὴ σκληρή του λάμψη ἔνα τοπίο, ὅχι δικό μας,—  
αὐτὸ τὸ γνωρίζω: ὅχι δικό μας. Καὶ πῶς γίνεται

γὰ τὸ ἀποδέχεται ἡ δική μας μοῖρα, γ' ἀποσύρεται  
καὶ γὰ κυπτάει σὰν ξένη ἐμᾶς τοὺς ἴδιους καὶ τὴν ξένη μοῖρα μας,  
μουγγή, ἀντηρή, παραιτημένη, ἀμέτοχη,  
οὕτε μὲ τὸ ῦφος καν μιᾶς μεγαλοφυχίας ἢ στωϊκότητας,  
χωρὶς τουλάχιστο νὸ έξαφανίζεται, χωρὶς γὰ πεθαίνει,  
γὰ μείγουμε ἔρμαιο ἔστω μιᾶς ἀλλότριας μοῖρας,  
ἀλλὰ μιᾶς μόνον—ὅχι δίσουλοι καὶ μοιρασμένοι. Νά την, ποὺ μένει  
ἐκεῖ, σὰν γυσταγμένη—τόντα της μάτι αλειστὸ καὶ τ' ἄλλο διεσταλμένο,  
ἀφήγοντάς μας γὰ τὴ βλέπουμε ποὺ μᾶς παρατηρεῖ καὶ διακρίγει  
τὸ αἰώνιο μας ταλάντευμα, χωρὶς ἐπιδοκιμασία ἢ ἀποδοκιμασία.

Δυὸ Ξλέξεις ἀντίρροπες μοῦ φαίνεται γ' ἀγιτιστοιχοῦν στὰ δυό μας πόδια,  
κ' ἡ μιὰ ἔλξη ἀπομακρύγεται ὅλο πιὸ πολὺ ἀπ' τὴν ἄλλη  
φαρδαίγοντας τὸ διασκελισμὸ μας ὡς τὸν διαμελισμό· καὶ τὸ κεφάλι  
εἶναι ἔνας κόμπος ποὺ κρατάει ἀκόμη τὸ κομμένο τοῦτο σῶμα,  
ἔνω, θαρρῶ, τὰ πόδια εἶναι πλασμένα γὰ μετακινοῦται,  
ἔνα-ἔνα μόνο του, σ' ἔνα ρυθμὸ καὶ τὰ δυό, σὲ μιὰ κατεύθυνση,  
στὸν κάμπο κάτω, δίπλα στὰ τσαμπιὰ τῶν σταφυλιῶν, ὡς τὸν δρίζοντα  
πέρα ποὺ ροδίζει,  
μεταφέροντας ἀκέριο τὸ σῶμα μας.—ἡ μήπως  
γι' αὐτὸν τὸν μέγα, τρομερὸ διασκελισμὸ πλαστήκαμε  
πάγω ἀπ' τὸν ἄγνωστο γκρεμό, πάγω ἀπ' τοὺς τάφους καὶ τὸν τάφο μας;  
Δέγε Ξέρω.

"Ομως, πίσω ἀπ' τὰ τόσα στρώματα τῆς ταραχῆς καὶ τοῦ φόνου, μαν-  
γυτεύω  
γ' ἀπλώνεται ἡ ἀπέραντη σιγή,—μιὰ δικαιοσύνη,  
μιὰ Ισορροπία αὐθύπαρκτη ποὺ μᾶς περιλαμβάνει  
στὴν τάξη τῶν σπόρων καὶ τῶν ἀστρών. Πρόσεξες;—τὸ μεσημέρι,  
καθὼς ἔρχομασταν ἑδῶ, ἡ σκιὰ ἔνδες σύγγεφου σερνότανε στὸν κάμπο,  
σκεπάζοντας τὰ σταροχώραφα, τ' ἀμπέλια, τοὺς ἐλαιῶνες,  
τ' ἄλογα, τὰ πουλιά, τὰ φύλλα,—ἔνα διάφανο ἰχνογράφημα  
ἀπόντα μακρινὸ τοπίο τοῦ ἀπείρου, πάγω ἑδῶ στὸ χῶμα·  
κι ὁ ἀγρότης ποὺ πορεύονταν στὴν ἄκρη τῆς πεδιάδας  
εἴται σὰ γὰ κρατοῦσε περασμένην κάτω ἀπ' τὴν ἀριστερὴ μασκάλη του  
ὅλη τὴ σκιὰ τοῦ σύγγεφου σὰν πελώριο μαγδύα  
μεγαλόπρεπον κι ὅμως ἀπλὸν σὰν τὴν προδιά του.

our whole lifetime, harsh and dark, thrown  
over us like a veil from head to toe, covering  
our entire face and hands where they've placed  
a strange knife—totally unknown—and its harsh  
reflecting light falls upon a landscape that's not ours,—  
that much I know: not ours. And how can

our fate approve of it and withdraw and look at us and our alien fate  
like a stranger, mute, austere, resigned, aloof,  
without even a pretense of magnanimity or stoicism,  
without at least disappearing, without dying,  
so that we can become the prey of an alien fate,  
but one only—not wavering and divided. There she is: our fate stands  
there, she looks drowsy;—her one eye closed and the other open,  
letting us see her as she looks and observes  
our perpetual wavering, without approving or disapproving.

It seems to me that two counterbalancing centers of gravity are matched  
with our legs,  
and the one center keeps moving away from the other,  
widening our stride to the point of splitting the body in two;  
and the head  
is a knot that keeps the torn body together  
while, I think, the legs are made to move  
one at a time, on their own, both in the same rhythm, in one direction,  
carrying our body intact on the plain below, next to the clusters  
of grapes,  
to the horizon beyond that turns red;—could it be  
that we were created for that long, terrifying stride  
over that unknown void, over the graves and over our own graves?  
I don't know.

But behind the many layers of confusion and fear, I foresee  
the endless spread of stillness,—a justice,  
a self-perpetuating balance that includes us  
in the class of seeds and stars. Did you notice?—at noon,  
as we were coming this way, the shadow of a cloud dragged itself  
over the plain,  
covering the wheat-fields, the vineyards, the olive groves,  
the horses, the birds, the leaves,—a translucent sketch  
of a distant landscape of the infinite, here on the ground;  
and the farmer who was walking on the far side of the plain  
looked as though he were carrying under his left arm  
the whole shadow of the cloud, like an enormous cloak,  
majestic and yet as plain as his own sheep-skin.

Ἐτοι οἰκειώνεται ἡ γῆς μὲ τὸ ἀπειρό, παίργοντας κάτι  
ἀπὸ γαλάζιο κι ἀπὸ ἀόριστο· καὶ τὸ ἀπειρό πάλι  
κάτι ἀπ' τὴν γῆ, κασταγὸν καὶ ζεστό, κάτι ἀπὸ φύλλα,  
κάτι ἀπὸ στάμνης καὶ ρίζες, κάτι ἀπ' τὰ μάτια  
ἐκείνης τῆς καρτερικῆς γελάδας (τὴν θυμᾶσαι;)·  
κι ἀπ' τὰ στέρεα πόδια τοῦ γεωργοῦ ποὺ χάγονταν στὸ βάθος.

Ωστόσο αὐτὴ ἡ γυναικα δὲ λέει νὰ σωπάσει. "Ακουσέ την.  
Πῶς δὲν ἀκούει τὴν ἔδια τὴν φωνὴν της; Πῶς μπορεῖ νὰ μένει  
κλεισμένη ἀσφυχτικά σὲ μιὰ στιγμὴ παρωχημένου χρόνου,  
παρωχημένων αἰσθημάτων; Πῶς μπορεῖ, καὶ μὲ τί,  
ν' ἀνανεώγει αὐτὸ τὸ πάθος τῆς ἐκδίκησης καὶ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ πάθους  
ὅταν δλοι οἱ ἀντίλαλοι τὴν διαφεύδουν, τὴν χλευάδουν μάλιστα· οἱ ἀντί-  
λαλοι;  
ἀπ' τίς στοές, ἀπ' τίς κολῶνες, ἀπ' τίς σκάλες, ἀπ' τὰ ἔπιπλα,  
ἀπ' τὰ πιθάρια τοῦ αήπου, ἀπ' τίς σπηλιές τῆς Ζάρας, ἀπ' τὸ βδραγω-  
γεῖο,  
ἀπ' τοὺς σταύλους τῶν ἀλόγων χαμηλά, ἀπ' τίς σκοπιές τῶν φρουρῶν  
πάνω στοὺς λόφους,  
ἀπ' τίς πτυχήες τῶν γυναικείων ἀγαλιμάτων στὸ προαύλιο  
κι ἀπ' τοὺς εὐγεικούς φαλλούς τῶν πέτρινων δρομέων καὶ δισκοβόλων;

Ἀκόμη καὶ τὸ ἀνθοδοχεῖα τοῦ σπιτιοῦ λέει κι ἀντιτάσσουν στοὺς δλολυ-  
γμούς της  
μιὰ κίνηση ἐπιεκείας λίγων εὐαίσθητων τριαντάφυλλων  
μὲ χάρη τοποθετημένων ἀπ' τὸ χέρι τῆς μητέρας  
ἐκεῖ, στὴ σκαλιστὴ κογσόλα, μπροστά στὸ μεγάλο, πατρογονικὸ κα-  
θρέφτη,  
σ' ἕνα φέγγος διπλό, ἀπὸ ἀνταύγεια σ' ἀνταύγεια, ὑδάτινο,—τὸ ἀγαθυ-  
μάτιαι  
ἀπὸ τὰ παιδικά μου χρόνια—αὐτὸδ μοῦ μένει ἀσκιαστο—  
ὑδάτινο φέγγος, λεπταίσθητο, οὐδέτερο—μιὰ ἀοριστία—  
τὸ ἄχρονο, τὸ ἀγαλιμάτητο,—κάτι ἀπαλὸ καὶ ἔξαίσιο  
ὅπως τὸ χγούδι στὸ λαιμὸ τῶν κοριτσιών εἴτε στὰ χεῖλη τῶν ἐφήβων,  
ὅπως ἡ μυρωδιά ἔνδις σώματος φρεσκοπλυμένου στὰ σεγνόνια  
τὰ δροσερὰ θερμασμένα ἀπ' τὸ χυῶτο μιᾶς νύχτας θερινῆς, γεμάτης  
ἔστρα.

Τίποτα ἐκείνη δὲν καταλαβαίνει· μήτε τοὺς ἀντίλαλους  
ποὺ μυκτηρίζουν τὴν ἀγάρμοστη φωνὴν της. Φοβοῦμαι· δὲ δύναμαι  
ν' ἀποκριθῶ στὸ κάλεσμά της—τόσο ὑπέρογκο καὶ τόσο ἀστείο συγάμα—  
σ' αὐτὰ τὰ στομφώδη της λόγια, παλιωμένα, σάμπως ξεθαμμένα  
ἀπὸ σεγνούκια «καλῶν ἐποχῶν» (ἔτσι ποὺ λένε οἱ γέροντες),  
σὰν μεγάλες σημαίες, δισιδέρωτες, ποὺ μέσα στὶς ραφές τους  
ἔχει εἰσόδυσει ἡ γαφθαλίγη, ἡ διάφευση, ἡ σιωπή,—τόσο πιὸ γερασμένες  
ὅσσο καθόλου δὲν ὑποψιάζονται τὰ γηραστεά τους, καὶ ἐπιμέγουν

That's how the earth becomes intimate with the infinite,  
by taking something from its azure and from its vagueness;  
while the infinite  
takes something from the earth, chestnut-brown and warm,  
something from the leaves,  
something from water jugs and roots, something from the eyes  
of that patient cow (do you remember her?)  
and from the sure feet of the farmer who vanished in the distance.

Meanwhile, this woman's not about to quiet down. Listen to her.  
Can't she hear her own voice? How can she stay  
closed in, suffocating in an instant of time that has long gone,  
of feelings that have long gone? How can she, and with what  
can she revive this passion for revenge and the voice of that passion  
when every echo contradicts her, even mocks her? echoes  
from the huge storage vases in the garden, from the caves of Zaras,  
the aqueduct,  
from the horse-stables down below and the watchtowers of the  
guards on the hilltops,  
from the folds of the statues of women in the front yard  
and from the noble phalluses of the stone runners and discus throwers  
Even the vases in the house seem to resist her wailings  
by a gesture of compassion from the few delicate roses  
gracefully placed by Mother's hand  
there, on the carved console, before the large ancestral mirror  
in a double light, a reflection within a reflection, watery—  
I remember that  
from my childhood years—that much remains unclouded for me—  
a watery, refined, neutral light—an infinity—  
timeless, sinless,—tender and excellent,  
just like the down on girls' necks or above the lips of young men,  
just like the scent of a freshly bathed body on the cool sheets  
that have been warmed by the breath of a summer night full of stars.

She doesn't understand a thing; not even the echoes  
that mock her untuned voice. I'm afraid; I don't have the strength  
to respond to her call—so monstrous and so comic at the same time—  
or to her bombastic words, old words, almost as if they've  
been exhumed  
from the chests of "the good old days" (as the old folks say),  
like old flags, unironed, whose seams  
have been penetrated by mothballs, deception and silence—  
they're so old  
that they don't suspect their own age at all, and they insist

νὰ πλαταγίζουν μὲν ἀρχαιόπρεπες χειρονομίες πάνω ἀπὸ ἀγύποπτους διαδάτες πολυάσχολους η̄ ἀπαυδημένους, πάνω ἀπὸ ἀσφαλτοστρωμένους δρόμους σεμγούς, παρὸ δόλο τους τὸ πλάτος καὶ τὸ μέγεθος, μὲ τὶς κομψὲς διτρήνες τους δόλο γραβάτες, κρύσταλλα, μαριώ, καπέλα, τσάντες, βοῦρτσες, ποὺ ἀντιστοιχοῦν καλύτερα στὶς ἀνάγκες τῆς ὥρας μας ἅρα καὶ στὴν αἰώνια ἀνάγκη τῆς ζωῆς ποὺ μᾶς προστάζει.

Κι αὐτὴ ἐπιμένει νὰ ἔτοιμάζει διδρομέλι καὶ τροφές γιὰ πεθαμένους ποὺ πιὰ δὲ διψοῦν καὶ δὲν πειοῦν καὶ οὔτε ἔχουν στόμα κι οὕτε διγειρεύονται ἀποκαταστάσεις η̄ ἑκδικήσεις. "Ολο ἐπικαλεῖται τὸ ἀλάθητό τους (—ποιὸ ἀλάθητο τάχα;) Ἰσως γιὰ νὰ γλυτώσει ἀπ' τὴν εὐθύγεια μιᾶς δικῆς της ἐκλογῆς κι ἀπόφασης— δταν τὰ δόγτια τῶν νεκρῶν, δλόγυμα, σκόρπια στὸ χώμα, εἴναι η̄ λευκὴ σπορὰ σὲ μιάν ἀπέραντη μαύρη κοιλάδα δλασταίνοντας τὰ μόγα ἀλάθητα, ἀδρατα, πάλλευκα δέντρα ποὺ φωσφορίζουνε στὸ φεγγαρόφωτο, ὃς τὸ τέλος τοῦ χρόνου.

"Α, πῶς τ' ἀντέχει τὸ στόμα της τὰ λόγια ἔτοιτα, ἀγασυρμένα, γάλι, ἀπὸ σεγτούκια παλιά (ὅπως ἐκεῖνα τὰ στολισμένα μὲ μεγάλα καρφά), ἀγασυρμένα ἀνάμεσα ἀπὸ τὰ παλιά καπέλα τῆς μητέρας, περασμένης μόδας, ποὺ πιὰ δὲν τὰ φορεῖ η̄ μητέρα—δὲν τὰ καταδέχεται. Τὴν εἰδές τὸ ἀπόγευμα στὸν κῆπο;—τί διμορφη ποῦναι ἀκόμη—δὲ γέρασε διόλου, Ἰσως γιατὶ ἐποπτεύει τὸ χρόνο καὶ τὸν πράττει κάθε στιγμή,—θέλω γά πώ ἀγανεώνεται γνωρίζοντας τὴν νεότητα ποὺ χάγει—ἴσως γι' αὐτὸ τὴν παίρνει πίσω.

Κ' η̄ φωνὴ τῆς μητέρας, πόσο σύγχρονη, καθημερινή, σωστή,— μπορεῖ γά προφέρει φυσικὰ τὰ πιὸ μεγάλα λόγια, η̄ καὶ τὰ πιὸ μικρά, στὴν πιὸ μεγάλη σημασίᾳ τους, ὅπως: «μιὰ πεταλούδα μπήκε ἀπ' τὸ παράθυρο», ή: «ὁ κόδσιος εἶναι ἀνυπόφορα ὑπέροχος», ή: «θὰ χρειαζόταν πιὸτερο λουλάκι στὶς λιγένες πετσέτες», ή: «μου διαφεύγει μιὰ νότα ἀπ' αὐτὴν τὴν εὐδαιμονία τῆς γύχτας», καὶ γλάσει,

ἴσως γιὰ γά προλάβει κάποιου ποὺ μπορούσε γὰ γελάσει—

Αὐτὴ η̄ θαθειά της καταγόησῃ κ' η̄ τρυφερὴ ἐπιείκεια γιὰ δλους καὶ γιὰ δλα (σχεδὸν μιὰ περιφρόνηση) —τὴ θαύματα πάντα καὶ τὴν τρόμαξα μ' αὐτὴ τὴν ἐνσυνείδητη, ὑψηλὴ περηφάνεια της, ἀναμιγνύοντας τὸ μικρό, πονηρό, πολυδιάστατο γέλιο της, μὲ τὸ μικρό κρότο τοῦ σπίρτου καὶ τὴ φλόγα τοῦ σπίρτου, καθὼς ἀγαθε τὴν κρεμαστὴ λάμπα τῆς τραπεζαρίας, κ' εἰταν ἐκεῖ, φωτισμένη ἀπ' τὰ κάτω,

on flapping in an old-fashioned way over unsuspecting passers-by,  
busy or exhausted, over asphalt streets, modest streets  
in spite of their width and size, with their elegant store windows  
full of neckties, sets of crystal, bathing suits, hats, hand bags,  
hair brushes,  
all suitable for the necessities of our time,  
and, therefore, of the life that commands us.

And she insists on preparing mead and food for the dead  
who are no longer thirsty or hungry and don't even have a mouth  
or dreams of restoration and revenge. She constantly invokes  
their infallibility (—what infallibility, really?) perhaps because  
she wants  
to avoid the responsibility of her choice and decision—  
when the teeth of the dead, completely exposed, scattered  
on the ground,  
are white seeds in an endless dark valley,  
growing only into the infallible, invisible, pure white trees  
that glow in the moonlight, till the end of time.

Ah, how can she stand to let her mouth shape these words,  
dragged out of old linen-chests, yes (like the ones decorated with large  
nails), dragged out  
from Mother's old hats, the ones she doesn't stoop to wear any more—  
did you see her  
in the garden this afternoon?—how beautiful she still is—she hasn't  
aged a bit,  
maybe because she oversees time and uses  
every moment,—I mean, she rejuvenates herself,  
aware she's losing her youth—maybe that's why she takes it back.

And Mother's voice, so contemporary, casual, correct,—  
can pronounce the longest words naturally,  
or even the simplest ones, each in its broadest sense, such as:  
"a butterfly came in from the window"  
or: "the world is unbearably wonderful"  
or: "more bluing should've been used for the linen towels"  
or: "a note from this night's fragrance escapes me" and she laughs,  
maybe to forestall someone who could've laughed.

Her deep sense of understanding and tender compassion  
for everyone and for everything (almost a sense of disdain);—  
I always admired her and was terrified of her  
and her conscious, lofty arrogance,  
as she'd blend her small, sly and many-sided smile  
with the small sound of a struck match and its flame as she was lighting  
the hanging lamp in the dining room, and there she'd be, lit from below

μ' ἐντοπισμένο πιὸ ἴσχυρὸ τὸ φωτισμὸ στὸ εὔγραμμὸ πηγούνι τῆς καὶ στὰ λεπτά, παλλόμενα ρουθούγια της, ποὺ γιὰ λίγο σταματοῦσαν ν' ἀγασταίγουν καὶ στέγευαν σὰν γιὰ γὰ μείνει κοντά μας, γὰ σταθεῖ, ν' ἀκιγητήσει μὴ διαλυθεῖ σὰ μὰ στήλῃ γαλάζιος καπνὸς στὶς πνοὲς τῆς νύχτας, μὴν τὴν πάρουν τὰ δέντρα μὲ τὰ μακριὰ κλαδιά τους, μὴ φορέσει τὴ δαχτυλῆθρα ἐνὸς ἀστρου γιὰ ἔνα ἀπέραντο ἐργόχειρο—

"Ἐτσι εὑρισκε πάντα ἡ μητέρα τὴν πιὸ ἀκριβῆ τῆς κίνηση καὶ στάση ἀκριβῶς τῇ στιγμῇ τῆς ἀπουσίας της,—πάντα φοδόμουνα μήπως χαθεῖ ἀπ' τὰ μάτια μας, μήπως ἀναληφθεῖ καλύτερα,—ὅταν ἔσκυνε

γὰ δέσει τὸ σαγδάλι της ποὺ ἀφηγε ἀπ' ἔξω τὰ ὑπέροχα, δαιμόνια, κυκλαψένια νύχια τῆς ἡ ὅταν διόρθωνε τὰ μαλλιά της μπροστὰ στὸ μεγάλο καθρέφτη μὲ μὰ κίνηση τῆς παλάμης τῆς τόσο χαριτωμένη, γεανικὴ κι ἀνάλαφρη σὰ νὰ μετακινοῦσε τρία-τέσσερα ἀστέρια στὸ μέτωπο τοῦ κόσμου, σὰ νᾶδαζε γὰ φιληθοῦν δυὸ μαργαρίτες πλάτι στὴν κρήνη ἡ σὰ γὰ κύτταξε μὲ τόλμη στοργικὴ δυὸ σκυλιά γὰ κάνουν ἔρωτα καταμεσίς τοῦ σκονισμένου δρόμου σ' ἔνα καυτό, θεριγὸ μεσημέρι. Τόσο ἀπλὴ καὶ πειστικὴ εἶταν ἡ μητέρα καὶ δυγατὴ μαζί, ἐπιβλητικὴ κι ἀγεέερευνητη.

"Ισως αὐτὸ δὲν τῆς συγχώρεσε ποτὲ ἡ ἀδελφὴ μου—τὴν αἰώνια τῆς γεύτητα—

αὐτὴ ἡ γριὰ παιδίσκη, συνετή ἀπὸ ἀντίθεση, δοσμένη στὴν ἀργηση τῆς διμορφιᾶς καὶ τῆς χαρᾶς—ἀσκητικὴ, ἀποκρουστικὴ στὴ σωφροσύνη τῆς,

μόνη κι ἀσύνδετη. Ἀκόμη καὶ τὰ ροῦχα της πειραματικὰ γεροντικά, ριχτά, ἔπεισμένα, γερασμένα, καὶ τὸ κορδόνι τῆς μέσης της ἄτονο, φθαρμένο, σὰ φλένα χωρὶς αἷμα γύρω στὴν κοιλιά της (καὶ τὸ σφίγγει ὠστόσο) σὰν τὸ κορδόνι μιᾶς πεσμένης κουρτίγας ποὺ πιὰ μήτε ἀγοίγει μήτε κλείνει

δείχγοντας ἔτσι λοξὰ ἔνα τοπίο μιᾶς αἰώνια στρυφηῆς αὐστηρότητας μὲ κοφτὰ δράχια καὶ δέντρα πελώρια, γυμνά, διακλαδωμένα πάνω σὲ στερεότυπα, ποιμάνδη σύννεφα· κ' ἔκει, στὸ δάκιος

ἡ ἀδιόρατη παρουσία ἐνὸς χαμένου προβάτου, ἔνα ἔμψυχο στίγμα λευκό, ἔνας κόκκος τρυφερότητας—δὲ φαίνεται—κ' ἡ ἕδια ἡ ἀδελφὴ μου ἔνας κάθετος δράχος

περικλεισμένος στὴ σκληρότητά του—ἀνυπόφορη. "Ἀκου την, σχεδὸν μικρόλογη—παρατηρεῖ τὴ μητέρα καὶ διαρκῶς ἔξεγείρεται ὅταν ὕδει ἔνα λουλούδι στὰ μαλλιά της ἡ στὸν κόρφο της. ὅταν περγάει τὸ διάδρομο μ' ἔκειγα τὰ ἐπιτυχημένα μουσικὰ δήματά της,

by a light that focused on her well-defined chin  
and delicate, pulsating nostrils which for a moment  
stopped breathing and narrowed  
as if to stay near us, to stand, to be still,  
so that she wouldn't be dispersed like a column of blue smoke in  
the night-breezes,  
so that the trees wouldn't snatch her away with their long branches,  
so that she wouldn't wear the thimble of a star for an endless  
embroidery—

That's how Mother always found her most precise movement and pose,  
exactly at the moment of her absence,—I was always afraid  
that she'd disappear before our eyes; better yet, that she might rise,—  
whenever she would bend  
to tie the sandal that left her fine,  
painted, rose-colored toes exposed, or when she would fix  
her hair before the large mirror  
with a stroke of her palm, so charming, youthful and light,  
as if she were rearranging three or four stars on the forehead of  
the universe,  
as if she were placing two daisies close enough to kiss each other by  
the water fountain,  
or as if she were watching with affectionate boldness two dogs  
fucking in the middle of the dusty road  
on a blazing hot summer noon. That's how plain and convincing  
Mother was,  
and strong, too, imposing and mystifying.

Maybe my sister never forgave her—for her perpetual youthfulness—  
that old kid, sensible by contrast, given to the denial  
of beauty and joy;—ascetic, repulsive in her prudence,  
alone and desolate. Even her clothes  
are stubbornly the clothes of an old woman, loose, untidy, aged,  
and the cord around her waist is unflattering, worn out,  
like a vein without blood around her belly (and yet she tightens it)  
like the cord of a fallen curtain that neither opens nor closes  
showing, slantwise, a landscape of an always harsh austerity  
with sharp rocks and huge trees, naked, that branch out  
over conventional, pompous clouds; and there, in the distance,  
the obscure presence of a lost sheep,  
an animate white stain, a grain of tenderness—it doesn't show—  
and my sister, herself a rock, upright,  
locked in its toughness;—She's unbearable. Listen to her,  
almost trifle; she carefully watches Mother and gets absolutely furious  
when she puts a flower in her hair or in her cleavage,  
whenever she walks the hallway with her footsteps full of certainty  
and music,

δταν γέρνει, μὲ μιὰν ἀγεση περίλυπη, κάπως λοξά τὸ κεφάλι τῆς στάζοντας ἔναν ἥχο πολυσήμαντο ἀπ' τὸ μακρὺ σκουλαρίκι τῆς στὸν ὕμιο τῆς ποὺ τὸν ἀκούει μόνο αὐτή,—τὸ γλυκύ τῆς προγόμιο. Κ' ἡ ἄλλη ἐξօργιζεται.

Συντηρεῖ τὴν δργή τῆς μὲ τὴν ἔνταση τῆς ἴδιας τῆς φωνῆς τῆς—  
(ἄν θὰ τὴν ἔχανε κι αὐτὴν τί θὰ τῆς ἔμενε;) —θαρρῶ πώς φοβᾶται τὴν ἐκπλήρωση τῆς τιμωρίας, μὴ καὶ δὲν τῆς μείνει τίποτα. Ποτέ τῆς δὲν ἀκούεις κι αὐτὴ τὸ νύχτιο χόρτο γὰρ θροῖζει μυστικὰ ἀπ' τὸ πέρασμα ἑνὸς εὐλύγιστου, ἀδρατου ζώου μπροστά στὰ παράθυρα, τὴν ὥρα τοῦ δείπνου<sup>1</sup>  
δὲν εἰδεις ποτὲ τὴν ἀγεμόσκαλα, τὴ δίχως λόγο ἀκουμπισμένη σ' ἔναν τοίχο ψηλὸν καὶ γυμνό, μιὰ μέρα ἀργίας<sup>2</sup> δὲν πρόσεξεις αὐτὸ τὸ «δίχως λόγο»<sup>3</sup> δὲ διέκρινε  
τὴ φούντα ἑνὸς καλαμποκιοῦ γὰρ ἔνει τὸ πέλμα ἑνὸς μικρότατου σύγγεφου,  
ἢ τὸ σχῆμα τῆς στάμνας μπρὸς στὸν ἔναστρο οὐρανό, ἢ ἔνα δρεπάνι παρατημένο μόνο του, πλάι στὴν πυγή, ἔνα μεσημέρι,  
ἢ τὸν ἵσκιο τοῦ ἀργαλειοῦ στὴν αλειστὴ κάμαρα, ὅταν θειαφίζουν τ' ἀμπέλια  
κι ἀκούγονται οἱ φωνὲς τῶν ἀγροτῶν κάτω στὸν κάμπο,  
ἔνῳ κάποιο σπουργίτι, καταμόναχο σ' ὅλο τὸν κόσμο,  
τσιμπολογώντας στὴν αὐλὴ μυγάκια, σπόρους, λίγα ψίχουλα,  
ἐπιχειρεῖς γὰρ συλλαβίσεις τὴν ἐλευθερία του. Τίποτα δὲν εἰδει.  
Θεότυφλη, φυλακισμένη στὴν τυφλότητα τῆς. Μὰ πῶς γίνεται νὰ ζει μιὰ ζωὴ μονάχα ἀπ' τὴν ἀντίθεσή τῆς σὲ μιὰν ἄλλη,  
μονάχα ἀπ' τὸ μίσος γιὰ μιὰν ἄλλη, κι ὅχι ἀπ' τὴν ἀγάπη τῆς δικῆς της ζωῆς, χωρὶς μιὰ θέση δική της; Καὶ τί θέλουν;  
Τί θέλουν ἀπὸ μένα; «Ἐκδίκηση. Ἐκδίκηση», φωνάζουν.  
“Ας τὴν πράξουν λοιπὸν μοναχοὶ τους, μιὰ κ' ἡ ἐκδίκηση τοὺς τρέψει.

Δὲ θέλω πιὰ γὰ τὴν ἀκούω. Δὲν τὸ ἀγέχομαι. Κανένας δὲν ἔχει τὸ δικαίωμα γὰρ ἐξουσιάζει τὰ μάτια μου, τὸ στόμα μου, τὰ χεριά μου, τοῦτα τὰ πόδια μου ποὺ πατῶνται τὴ γῆς. Δός μου τὸ χέρι σου. Πᾶμε.

Μεγάλες νύχτες, θερινές, ἀπόλυτες, δικές μας,  
ἀνάμικτες ἀστέρια, ἰδρωμένες μασκάλες, σπασμένα ποτήρια,—  
ἔνα τοιμο δομῆζει εὐγενικὰ σ' αὐτὶ τῆς ἡσυχίας,  
οἱ ζεσταμένες σαῦρες μπρὸς στὰ πόδια νεανικῶν ἀγαλμάτων,  
οἱ γυμνοσάλιαγκοι στὰ παγκάκια τῶν κήπων ἢ καὶ μέσα στὸ αλειστὸ σιδηρουργεῖο  
σεργιανῶντας ἐπάγω στὸ πελώριο ἀμόνι, ἀφήγοντας στὸ μαῦρο σίδερο λευκές γραμμές ἀπὸ σπέρμα καὶ σάλιο.

whenever she tilts her head to the side with sorrowful ease  
letting a deep sound fall from her long earring to her shoulder,  
a sound that only she can hear,—that's her sweet privilege.

And the other one becomes furious.

She sustains her rage with the intensity of her own voice—  
(if she lost that, what else would she have left?)—I think she's afraid  
to carry out

the punishment, since she'd have nothing left. She never  
heard the night-grass rustle secretly with the passing  
of a graceful, invisible animal outside the windows at dinner time;  
she never saw the rope ladder leaning, for no reason,  
against the tall and bare wall on a holiday; she never paid attention  
to that "for no reason"; she never noticed  
the tuft of a corn stalk scratching the sole of a tiny cloud's foot,  
or the shape of a water jug against the starry sky, or a sickle  
left alone, next to the spring, one afternoon,  
or the shadow of the loom in the closed room, when they sprinkle  
the vineyards with sulphur  
and the voices of the farmers are heard down below on the plain,  
while, left alone in this world, some sparrow,  
pecking at small flies, seeds, or some bread crumbs in the yard,  
is trying to spell out his freedom. She saw nothing.

She's totally blind, a prisoner in her blindness. But how can she  
live a life only by opposing someone else,  
only by hating someone else, and not by love  
for her own life, without taking a stand of her own? And what do  
they want?

What do they want from me? "Revenge. Revenge," they shout.  
Let them do it themselves, since they feed on revenge.

I don't want to hear her any more. I can't stand it. No one  
has the right to rule over my eyes, my mouth, my hands,  
and over these feet that tread the earth. Give me your hand. Let's go.

Long summer nights, absolute, our own,  
a blend of stars, damp armpits, broken glasses,—  
an insect buzzes gently in the ear of silence,  
lizards warm themselves at the feet of youthful statues,  
slugs on park benches or even inside the closed blacksmith's shop  
wander about on the huge anvil and leave  
white lines of sperm and saliva on the black iron.

Νὰ ἔγκαταλείπαμε ξανά τὴ γῆ τῶν Μυκηνῶν—πῶς μυρίζει τὸ χῶμα δῶ πέρα

σκουριὰ χαλκοῦ καὶ μαύρο αἷμα. Η Ἀττικὴ πιὸ ἀγάλαφρη. Δὲν εἶγαι;

Νιώθω

πῶς τώρα, αὐτὴ τὴν δρισμένην ὥρα, εἶγαι τὴ ὥρα

τῆς τελικῆς μου παραίτησης. Δὲ θέλω

γάμαι τὸ θέμα τους, δὲν πάλληλός τους, τὸ ὅργανό τους, μήτε δὲ ἀρχηγός τους.

"Ἐχω κ' ἔγώ μιὰ δική μου ζωὴ καὶ πρέπει νὰ τὴ ζήσω. "Οχι ἐκδί-  
κηση—"

τὶ θὰ μποροῦσε ν' ἀφαιρέσει ἀπὸ τὸ θάνατο, ἔνας θάνατος ἀκόμη καὶ μάλιστα θίλαιος;—στὴ ζωὴ τὶ νὰ προσθέσει; Πέρασαν τὰ χρόνια.

Δὲ νιώθω μίσος πιᾶ—ξέχασα μήπως; Κούραστηχα; Δὲν ξέρω.

Κάποια συμπάθεια μάλιστα μ' ἀγγίζει γιὰ τὴ φύγισσα—μεγάλους

γυρεμούς ἀναμέτρησε,

μεγάλη γγώση μεγάλωσε τὰ μάτια τῆς μὲς στὸ σκοτάδι

καὶ βλέπει,—βλέπει τὸ ἀνεξάντλητο, τὸ ἀνέφικτο καὶ τὸ ἀμετάβλητο.

Μὲ βλέπει.

Θέλω κ' ἔγώ νὰ δῶ τοῦ πατέρα τὸ φόγο μὲς στὴν κατευγαστικὴ τοῦ θα-  
γάτου γεγικότητα,

γὰ τὸν ξεχάσω μὲς σ' ὀλόκληρο τὸ θάνατο

ποὺ περιμένει κ' ἐμᾶς. Τούτη ἡ νύχτα μὲ δίδαξε

τὴν ἀθωότητα ὅλων τῶν σφετεριστῶν. Κι ὅλοι μας

σφετεριστὲς σὲ κάτι, —αὐτοὶ τῶν λαῶν, αὐτοὶ τῶν θρόνων,

ἐκεῖνοι τοῦ ἔρωτα ἢ καὶ τοῦ θαγάτου ἢ ἀδελφή μου

σφετεριστρια τῆς μόνης μου ζωῆς κ' ἔγώ τῆς δικῆς σου.

Καλέ μου, ἔσύ, μὲ πόση ὑπομονὴ μοιράζεσαι  
ξένες, ἀνόητες ὑποθέσεις. Ωστόσο τὸ χέρι μου  
εἶγαι δικό σου· πάρ' τὸ σφετερίσου τὸ κ' ἔσύ—δικό σου,  
γι' αὐτὸ καὶ δικό μου· πάρ' τὸ σφίξε τὸ τὸ περιμένεις  
ἔλευθερο ἀπὸ τιμωρίες, ἀντεκδικήσεις, ἀγαμνήσεις,  
ἔλευθερο—τὸ ἴδιο κ' ἔγώ τὸ θέλω,  
γιὰ νὰ μοῦ ἀνήκει δλότελα, κ' ἔτσι μογάχα  
νὰ σοῦ τὸ δώσω δλότελα. Συχώρεσέ μου  
τούτη τὴ μυστικὴ μοναξία καὶ μοιρασία—τὴν ξέρεις—  
που μὲ χωρίζει στὰ δυό. Τί διμορφη νύχτα—

Μιὰ γοτισμένη μυρωδιὰ ἀπὸ ρίγανη, θυμάρι, καπαρη,—

ἢ μήπως ἀριταρόριζα;—συγχέω τὰ ἀρώματα· κάποτε,

τὸ αἷμα μυρίζει δρυμύρα πόντου, καὶ τὸ σπέρμα δάσος—

μιὰ ἑκούσια μετατόπιστη ἵσως,—τὴ γυρεύω ἀπόφε,

ὅπως ἐκεῖνος δ στρατιώτης που μᾶς ἔλεγε μιὰ νύχτα στὴν Ἀθήνα:

ἀντιλαλοῦσε τ' ἀκρογιάλι ἀπὸ τὶς κλαγγές κι ἀπὸ τοὺς βόγγους,

κι αὐτὸς κρυμμένος στὰ καμένα θάλμα, πάγω ἀπὸ τὸ ἀκρογιάλι

If we could only leave the land of Mycenae again;—here the ground  
smells like  
rusted copper and dark blood. Attica is lighter, isn't it? I feel  
now, at this particular moment, the moment  
of my final resignation. I don't want  
to become their topic of conversation, their agent, their instrument,  
not even their leader.

I've a life of my own, too, and I must live it. No revenge;—  
how much could death lose by one less death,  
especially a violent one?—what would that add to life? Years  
have gone by.

I don't feel hatred any more;—maybe I've forgotten? Am I tired?  
I don't know.

I can even feel some compassion for the murderers;—she carefully  
calculated the risks,  
a great knowledge opened her eyes wide in the darkness  
and she sees,—she sees the inexhaustible, the impossible, the inevitable.  
She sees me.

I, too, want to see Father's murder as part of the soothing totality  
of death,  
to forget him in the wholeness of death  
that awaits us, too. This night has taught me about the innocence  
of all usurpers. All of us are usurpers of something,—  
some, usurpers of people; some, of power,  
some, of love, or even death; my sister  
a usurper of my only life; and I of yours.

My dear friend, how patiently you share  
the strange, foolish affairs of others. Anyhow, my hand  
is yours; take it; you too can usurp it;—it's yours,  
and so it's mine, too; take it; hold it tight; you expect it  
to be free of any punishments, revenge, memories,  
free;—that's how I want it, too,  
to belong to me completely, that's the only way  
I'd give it entirely to you. Forgive this  
mysterious solitude and sharing of mine—you know about it—  
that tears me in half. What a beautiful night—

A damp smell of oregano, thyme, caper,—  
or is it geranium?—I confuse the smells; sometimes,  
blood smells like sea-brine, and sperm smells of the forest;—  
a willful transposition, perhaps,—that's what I need tonight,  
as that soldier was telling us one night in Athens:  
the seashore echoed the clashes and groans,  
and he, hidden in the burned bushes, above the shore,

κυττοῦσε στὸ φεγγάρι τὴν ταλαντευόμενη σκιὰ τῆς ἥβης του πάνω στὸ μηρό του  
σὲ μιὰν ἀδέναιη στύση, πασκίζοντας γὰρ ὑπάρξει, δοκιμάζοντας  
τὴν θέλησή του ἐπάγω στὸ ἔδιο του τὸ σῶμα, γιὰ μιὰ μετατόπιση  
ἀπ’ τὸ πεδίο τοῦ θαυμάτου, στὴν ἐλπίδα ἔνδος ἀμφίβολου αὐτεξούσιου.

Πᾶμε πιὸ κάτω· δὲν μπορῶ γὰρ τὴν ἀκούω· οἵ γροι τῆς  
χτυποῦν τὰ γεῦρα μου καὶ τὰ ὅγειρά μου, δπως χτυποῦσαι  
ἐκεῖνα τὰ κουπιὰ τοὺς ἐπιπλέοντες σκοτωμένους  
ποὺ τοὺς φωτίζουν πότε-πότε οἱ πυρσοὶ τῶν καραβιῶν, οἱ διάττοντες τοῦ  
Ἄγγούστου.  
κι ἀστραφταν ὅλοι, γέοι κ' ἔρωτικοί, ἀπίστευτα ἀθάνατοι,  
σ' ἔναν ὄντας θάνατο ποὺ δρόσιζε τὴν πλάτη τους, τὰ σφυρά τους, τὰ  
σκέλη τους.

Τί σιωπηλὰ ποὺ ἀλλάζουν οἱ ἐποχές. Νυχτώνει ἀπέραντα.  
Μιὰ φάθινη καρέκλα μένει μόνη, ἔχασμενη κάτω ἀπ’ τὰ δέντρα,  
μὲς στὴ λεπτὴ ὑγρασία καὶ στοὺς ἀχνοὺς ποὺ ἀναδίνει τὸ χῶμα.  
Δὲν εἶναι θλίψη· μήτε ἀναιμονή σχεδόν· τίποτα.  
Μιὰ κίνηση ἀκίνητη ἀπλώνεται στὸ χτές καὶ στὸ αὔριο.  
Ἡ χελώνα εἶναι μιὰ πέτρα στὰ χόρτα· σὲ λίγο σαλεύει—  
ἡρεμο ἀπρόσπτο, κρυφή συγενοχή, εὐτυχία.

Ἐνα μικρὸ στίγμα κενοῦ μένει μὲς στὸ χαμόγελό σου·—μήπως  
γι' αὐτὰ ποὺ σοῦ λέω ἢ ποὺ πρόκειται γὰρ πῶ κι ἀκόμη δὲν τὰ ξέρω,  
ἀκόμη δὲν τὰ δρῆκα στὸ ρυθμὸ τοῦ λόγου ποὺ θαδίζει  
πρὶν ἀπ' τὴ σκέψη μου—πολὺ πιὸ πρὶν,—μοῦ ἀποκαλύπτει  
τὸν ἔδιο μου ρυθμὸ καὶ τὸν ἔαυτό μου. Ὁπως τότε στὸ στίδο,  
ποὺ φτάγαν κάθιδροι οἱ δρομεῖς, καὶ πρόσεξα κάποιον  
ποῦχε δεμένο γύρω στὸν ἀστράγαλό του ἔνα κοιμάτι σπάγγο,  
ἔντελῶς ἀγαίτια καὶ τυχαῖα. Κ' εἴταν αὐτὸ ἀκριβῶς. Τίποτ' ἄλλο.

Θυσίες, λέει, καὶ ἡρωϊσμοί,—ποιά ἡ ἀλλαγή; Χρόνια καὶ χρόνια. Ἱσως  
γάρθαμε  
γιὰ τοῦτες τις μικρὲς ἀνακαλύψεις τοῦ μεγάλου θανματος  
ποὺ πιὰ δὲν ἔχει μικρὸ καὶ μεγάλο μήτε φόνο κι ἀμάρτημα.

Ὄλα ἔνας ἔρωτας—μαγεία καὶ θάμbos (ὅπως ἔλεγε κάποτε ἡ μητέρα),  
ὅταν πλατειά, σαοκάδη, δροσερά, τὰ φύλλα τῆς νύχτας  
ἔγγιζουνε τὰ μέτωπά μας κι ὁ καρπός ποὺ πέφτει  
εἶναι ἔνα μήνυμα δρισμένο κι ἀμετάδοτο  
ὅπως ὁ κύκλος, τὸ τρίγωνο ἢ ὁ ρόμβος. Συλλογιέμαι  
ἔνα πριόνι ποὺ σκουριάζει σ' ἔνα ἐγκαταλειμμένο ξυλουργεῖο,

was watching, in the moonlight, the wavering shadow of his penis on  
his thigh  
in an uncertain erection that he was trying to sustain, testing  
his will on his own body, trying to remove himself  
from the battlefield of death to the hope of a doubtful self-reliance.

Let's go further down; I can't listen to her; her wailing  
shatters my nerves and my dreams, just as  
those oars were striking the floating corpses  
that the torches from the battleships and the shooting stars of  
August illuminated,  
and all of them were shining, young and passionate, unbelievably  
immortal,  
in a watery death that was cooling their backs, their ankles, their  
arms and legs.

How quietly the seasons change. Everywhere night is falling.  
A straw chair stays alone, forgotten under the trees,  
in the light humidity and the vapors that the ground gives out.  
It's not grief; not even an expectation; it's nothing.  
A motionless motion is spread over yesterday and tomorrow.  
The turtle is a rock in the grass; it will move soon—  
calmly unexpected, secret complicity, happiness.

A small spot of emptiness stays in your smile;—maybe  
because of what I've said to you or what I'm about to say  
though I don't know what that is yet,  
I still haven't found the rhythm of the word that walks  
ahead of my thoughts—way ahead,—it shows me  
my rhythm and myself. Like that time in track,  
when the runners arrived drenched in sweat, I noticed someone  
who had a piece of string tied around his ankle  
by chance, for no particular reason. And it was exactly that.  
Nothing else.

Sacrifices, she says, and heroic deeds—what kind of change is that?  
Years and years the same. Maybe we came  
to make these small discoveries of the great miracle  
that has nothing to do with great or small, murder or sin.

All a single passion—an enchantment and dazzle (as Mother  
used to say),  
when the night's leaves, broad, fleshy, refreshing,  
touch our foreheads and the fruit that falls  
is a fixed and untranslatable message  
like the circle, the triangle or the rhomb. I'm thinking  
about a saw rusting in an abandoned carpenter's shop,

κ' οἱ ἀριθμοὶ τῶν σπιτιῶν μετακιγοῦνται πέρα στὸν δρίζουτα—  
3, 7, 9,—δὲ ἀριθμὸς ὁ ἀναρίθμητος. "Ἄκου· σταμάτησε.

Μεγάλη ἡρεμία, ἀκατόρθωτη—θαρρῶ χιλιάδες ἄλογα κατάμαυρα  
ἀνηφορίζουν σκοτεινὰ πρὸς τὸν Τρητό, ἐνῷ ἀπ' τὸν ἄλλο μέρος  
κατηφορίζει ἔνα χρυσό ποτάμιο πρὸς τὸν κάμπο  
μὲ τὶς νεκρὲς πηγές, τοὺς ἀκατοίκητους στρατῶνες καὶ τοὺς σταύλους  
ποὺ ἀχνίζουν τὸν ἄχυρό τους ἀπὸ μιὰν ἀρχαία θερμότητα χαμένων ζώων,  
καὶ τὰ σκυλιά, μὲ τὶς οὐρές χαμηλωμένες, χάνονται  
σὰ μελανὰ σημάδια στὸν ἄργυρο δάθος τῆς νύχτας.

"Ἐπιτέλους, σταμάτησε·—ἡσυχία—μιὰς ἀπολύτρωση. Εἶναι ὅμορφα.  
Κύττα οἱ σκιές τῶν φευγαλέων ἐντόμων πάνω στὸν τοῖχο  
ἀφήνονται ἔνα σταγονίδιο ὑγρασίας ἢ ἔνα μικρὸ κουδουνάκι  
ποὺ ἦχει λίγο ἀργότερα. Πέρα, μιὰ λάμψη—  
μιὰ παρατεταμένη ὑπόνοια, πορφυρὴ—ἡ σελήνη,  
μικρή, μονήρης πυρκαϊδὸ πίσω ἀπὸ τὰ δέντρα, τὰ φουγάρα τῶν σπιτιῶν  
καὶ τὸν δαγκωδεῖτες,  
καίγοντας τὰ μεγάλα ἀγκάθια καὶ τὶς γτεσινὲς ἐφημερίδες,  
ἀφήνοντας αὐτὴ τὴ συγκατάνευση—δοξαστικὴ σχέδην—  
τῆς μὴ ἀναμονῆς, τῆς μὴ ἐλπίδας, τῆς ἀποδεγμένης ματαιότητας,  
ῶς πέρα στὴν ἀπέβητη ἐρημιά, ὡς τὴν ἀκρη τοῦ δρόμου  
μὲ τὸ φασματικό, μεγεκεδένιο πέρασμα μιᾶς γάτας.

"Οταν δηγανεὶς ἡ σελήνη, χαμηλώνουν τὰ σπίτια στὴν πεδιάδα κάτω,  
τὰ καλαμπόκια τρίζουν ἀπὸ τὸ ἀγιάζι, ἢ δὲ τὸ νόμιο τῆς αἰβῆσης,  
τὸ ἀσθετωμένα δέντρα φέγγουνε στὴ δάση τους σὰ θερισμένες κολῶνες  
σ' ἔναν πόλεμο ἀθόρυβο, ἐνῷ οἱ ταμπέλες τῶν μικρομάγαζων  
κρέμονται σὰν χρησμοὶ ἐπαληθευμένοι πάνω ἀπὸ τὶς κλεισμένες πόρτες.

Οἱ ἀγρότες θὰ κοιμήθηκαν μὲ τὰ μεγάλα χέρια τους πάνω στὴν κοιλιά  
τους  
καὶ τὰ πουλιά μὲ τὰ μικρά τους χέρια ἐλαφρὰ γαντζωμένα ἀπὸ τὰ κλα-  
διά μὲς στὸν ὕπνο τους  
σὰ νὰ μὴν προσπαθοῦν γὰρ κρατηθοῦν, σὰ νὰ μὴν εἶναι τίποτα ἢ προσπά-  
θεια,  
σὰ νὰ μὴν ἔγινε τίποτα, σὰ νὰ μὴν πρόκειται τίποτα γὰρ γίνει—  
ἀγάλαφρα-ἀγάλαφρα, σὰ νὰχει εἰσόδουσι δὲ οὐρανὸς στὰ φτερά τους,  
σὰν κάποιος νὰ περγάσει τὸ στενόμακρο διάδρομο μὲ ἔνα λύχνο στὸ χέρι  
κ' εἶναι δλα τὰ παράθυρα ἀγοιχτὰ κ' ἔξω στὸ ὕπαιθρο ἀκούγονται  
τὰ ζῶα γ' ἀγαμηρυκάζουν γαληγιαῖα σὰν μέσα στὴν αἰωνιότητα.

Μ' ἀρέσει αὐτὴ ἡ νωπὴ ἡσυχία. Κάπου ἐδῶ κοντά, σ' ἔνα χαγιάτι,  
μιὰ γέα γυγαίκα θὰ χτενίζει τὰ μακρὰ μαλλιά τῆς  
καὶ πλάι της θ' ἀγαστίγουν τὸν ἀπλωμένα ἐσώρρουχα στὸ φεγγαρόφωτο.  
"Ολα ρευστά, γλυστερά, εὐτυχισμένα. Μεγάλες ύδρεις μὲς στοὺς λου-  
τῆρες

and the numbers on the houses move far in the horizon—  
3, 7, 9,—the countless number. Listen: she's finished.

Impossible, this great stillness;—I picture thousands of jet-black horses climbing the slopes toward Treto in the dark, while on the other side a golden river flows down toward the plain with its dried-up springs, vacant barracks, and the stables where the straw gives off vapors from an ancient warmth of lost animals, and the dogs, with their tails between their legs, vanish like ink-black spots in the silvery depth of the night.

At last she's stopped;—silence;—what a relief. That's beautiful.

Look, the shadows of fleeting insects on the wall leave behind a drop of moisture or a tiny bell that sounds a little while later. Far away, a blaze—a prolonged suspicion, purple—the moon, a small, solitary fire behind the trees, the chimneys of the houses and the weather vanes, burns the big thorns and yesterday's newspapers, leaving behind this confirmation—almost a praise—of the unexpected, the hopeless, of the proven futility, far into the bold wilderness, to the end of the road with the ghostly, violet passage of a cat.

When the moon rises, the houses shrink in the plain below, the corn creaks with the morning chill or with the laws of growth, the whitewashed tree-trunks glow at their bases like columns reaped in a noiseless war, while the signs of the small stores hang down like prophecies fulfilled over closed doors.

The farmers must have fallen asleep by now with their large hands on their bellies

and the birds with their small hands hooked over branches in their sleep, as if they were not trying to hold on, as if such effort meant nothing, as if nothing had happened, nothing was going to happen—light, light, as if the sky had come under their wings, as if someone walks on the long, narrow hallway with a lamp in his hand while all the windows are open and outside in the country you can hear the animals ruminate peacefully as if in eternity.

I like this fresh silence. Somewhere nearby, on a patio, a young woman should be combing her long hair and near her, underwear hung out to dry will breathe fresh air in the moonlight.

Everything is liquid, slippery, happy. Large water jugs in the bath house,

Θαρρῶ πὼς χύνουνε γερὸς στῶν κοριτσιῶν τοὺς αὐχένες καὶ τὰ στήθη,  
γλυστρᾶνε τὰ μικρά, ἀρωματικὰ σαπούνια στὰ πλακάκια,  
οἱ φυσαλίδες διασχίζουν τοὺς θορύβους τῶν γερῶν καὶ τῶν γέλιων,  
μιὰ γυναικα γλύστρησε κ' ἔπεσε,  
γλύστρησε τὸ φεγγάρι ἀπ' τὸ φεγγίτη,  
ὅλα γλυστροῦν ἀπ' τὸ σαπούνι—δὲν μπορεῖς γὰ τὰ κρατήσεις  
οὔτε μπορεῖς γὰ κρατηθεῖς—ἀυτὸ τὸ γλύστρημα  
εἶναι δὲ παγερχόμενος ρυθμὸς τῆς ζωῆς οἱ γυναικες γελᾶνε  
τραυτάζοντας λευκούς, παγάλαφρους πυργίσκους σαπουνάδας  
ἔπανω στὸ δασάκι τοῦ ἐφηβαίου τους. Ἐτσι νᾶναι ἡ εὐτυχία;

Ἡ γύχτα ἐτούτη τῆς παραμονῆς, μοῦ ἀφήνει ἔνα ἀνοιγμα πρὸς τὰ ἔξω  
καὶ πρὸς τὰ μέσα. Δὲ διακρίνω ξάστερα. Ἰσως νᾶναι  
μεγάλα προσωπεῖα βαραθρώμενά, μετάλλιας πόρτες  
καὶ τὰ σαυδάλια τῶν γεκρῶν σκεδρώνουν ἀπ' τὴν ὑγρασία,  
κινοῦνται μόνα τους, σὰ γὰ βαδίζουν δίχως πόδια—δὲ βαδίζουν·  
καὶ τὸ μεγάλο ἐκεῖνο δίχτυ τοῦ λουτροῦ—ποιός τὸ ὄφανε;—  
κόμπο, τὸν κόμπο,—δὲ λύνεται—μαῦρο,—δὲν τὸ ὄφανε ἡ μητέρα.

Ἄπεραντος ἵσκιος ἀπλώγεται πάνω ἀπ' τὶς ἀψίδες·  
μιὰ πέτρα ἔκοιλάει καὶ πέφτει στὴ χαράδρα—διμις κανένας δὲν περ-  
πάτησε—  
ὅστερα τίποτε· καὶ πάλι ἔνα κλαδί ποὺ σπάει  
ἀπ' τ' ἀγάλαφρο βάρος τ' οὐρανοῦ. Μικρὰ βατράχια  
πηδᾶνε μαλακὰ κι ἀμίλητα στὰ νωπά χόρτα. Ἡσυχία.

Μές στὰ πηγάδια πέφτουνε καὶ πνίγονται σταχτιὰ ποντίκια,  
ἀργοσαλεύουν πηγήτοι ἀστερισμοὶ· ἔκει μέσα  
πετοῦν ἀπ' τὰ συμπόσια στάμιγες, κύπελλα, καθρέφτες καὶ καρέκλες,  
κόκκαλα ζώων, λύρες καὶ σοφούς διαλόγους. Τὰ πηγάδια ποτὲ δὲ γεμ-  
ζουν.

Κάτι σὰ δάχτυλα φωτιᾶς καὶ δροσιᾶς περνοῦν διαδοχικὰ στὸ στήθος  
μας,  
γράφοντας κύκλους ἀνιχνευτικούς γύρω στὶς ρῶγες,  
κι ἀνεμίζομαστε κ' ἐμεῖς, κύκλῳ τὸν κύκλο, γύρω σ' ἔνα κέντρο.  
ἄγνωστο, ἀδρίστο, κι ὕστερο δρισμένο·—κύκλοι ἀτέλειωτοι  
γύρω ἀπὸ μιὰ βουδή κραυγή, γύρω ἀπὸ μιὰ μαχαιριά· καὶ τὸ μαχαίρι  
εἶναι θαρρῶ μπηγμένο στὴν καρδιά μας, κάγοντας κέντρο τὴν καρδιά μας  
δπως δ πάσσαλος στὴ μέση τ' ἀλωγισμ πάγω, στὸ λόφο,

καὶ γύρω τ' ἀλογα, τὰ στάχυα, οἱ λυχνιστές, οἱ ἀγωγιάτες  
κ' οἱ θερίστριες πλάτι στὶς θημωνιές, μὲ τὸ κεφάλι τοῦ φεγγαριοῦ στὸν  
ώμο τους,  
ἀκούγοντας τὸ χρεμέτισμα τῶν ἀλόγων ὃς τὰ πέρατα τοῦ ὄπγου τους,  
ἀκούγοντας τὸ κατούρημα τῶν ταύρων στὶς λυγαριές καὶ τὰ βάτα,  
τὰ χίλια πόδια τῆς σαρανταποδαρούσας πάνω στὸ λαγήνι,

I suppose, are pouring water over the necks and breasts of  
young girls,  
small, aromatic bars of soap slide on the tiles,  
bubbles tear through the noise of water and laughter,  
one woman slipped and fell,  
the moon slipped down on the skylight,  
everything slides from the soap—you can't hold them  
or yourself;—this sliding  
is the rhythm of life coming round again; the women laugh  
shaking the white, airy turrets of soap  
on the small forest of their pubic hair. Is happiness like that?

This night of expectation allows me an opening to see outside  
and inside as well. I don't see things clearly. Maybe they are  
large, abysmal masks, metal clasps;  
the sandals of the dead are warped from humidity,  
they move by themselves, as if they walk without feet—they don't walk,  
and the large net in the bath—who wove it?—  
knot by knot,—it can't be untied—black,—Mother didn't weave it.

An endless shadow spreads over the arches;  
a stone comes loose and falls down the ravine—but no one was  
walking there—  
after that, nothing; and again, a branch that breaks away  
from the airy weight of the sky. Tiny frogs  
leap softly and noiselessly on the young grass. Silence.

Gray mice jump in the wells and drown,  
compact constellations move slowly; that's where  
the drinking-parties throw water-jugs, cups, mirrors and chairs,  
bones of animals, lyres and wise dialogues. The wells never fill.

Something like fingers of fire and dew run continuously over our chests  
and trace circles that search around the nipples,  
and we ourselves are spinning, circle after circle,  
around an unknown, indefinite and yet definite center;—  
endless circles  
around a mute scream, around a stabbing; and the knife,  
I think, has pierced our hearts, making a center of our hearts  
like the pole in the middle of the threshing-floor up there on the hill,

around it the horses, the wheat, the winnowers, the cart drivers,  
and the women reapers, next to the hay stacks, the head of the  
moon on their shoulders,  
hear the neighing of the horses in the furthest reaches of their sleep,  
hear the bulls pissing on the willow trees and the berry-shrubs,  
the thousand feet of the centipede on the water-jug,

τὸ σύρσιμο τοῦ ἡμερου φιδιοῦ στὸν ἐλαιώνα  
καὶ τὸ τρίξιμο τῆς ζεσταμένης πέτρας ποὺ δροσίζεται καὶ σφίγγει.

Μιὰ λέξη ἔρωτικὴ μένει πάντα κλεισμένη στὸ στόμα μας, ὀνείπωτη,  
σὰν ἔνα χαλίκι στὸ σανδάλι μας ἥ καὶ καρφὶ θαρυέσσαι  
νὰ σταθεῖς, νὰ τὸ δγάλεις, νὰ λύγεις τὰ κορδόνια σου,  
ν' ἀργοπορεῖς—σ' ἔχει κυριεύσει διματικὸς ρυθμὸς τῆς πορείας  
πιότερο ἀπ' τὴν ἐγόχληση τοῦ χαλικιοῦ, πιότερο  
ἀπ' τὴν ἐπίμονη ὑπενθύμιση τῆς κούρασής σου,  
τῆς ἀναβλητικότητάς σου· καὶ εἶγαι ἀκόμη  
κάποια μικρή, ἀγκαθωτή ἀγαγάλλια καὶ ἀγαπόληση  
ποὺ τοῦτο τὸ χαλίκι τὸ κρατᾶς ἀπὸ ἀκρογιάλι ἀγαπημένο,  
ἀπὸ σεργιάνι εὐχάριστο μὲν ὠραίους διαλογισμούς, μὲν ὄνδατινες εἰκόνες,  
ὅταν ἀκούγονταν ἀπὸ τὸ παραθαλάσσιο καπηλεὶδ οἱ κουδένες τῶν κα-  
πνευμόρων  
μαζὶ μὲν τὸ τραγούδι τῶν θαλασσιγῶν καὶ τὸ τραγούδι τῆς θάλασσας  
μακρύ, μακρύ, χαμένο, κοντινό, ξένο, δικό μας.

Σώπασε πιὰ ἥ δυστυχισμένη. Μέσα στὴ σιωπὴ της σὰ ν' ἀκούω τὸ δι-  
κιο τῆς,—  
τόσο ἀπροστάτευτη μὲς στὴν δργή της, τόσο ἀδικημένη,  
μὲ τὰ πικρὰ μαλλιά τῆς πεσμένα στοὺς ὅμοιους της σάγη ἐντάφια χορτάρια,  
ἐντειχισμένη στὴ στεγὴ δικαιοσύνη της. Μπορεῖ γὰρ κοινήθηκε,  
μπορεῖ καὶ νὰ δινειρεύεται μιὰ ἀθώα περιοχὴ μὲν ὀραθά ζῶα,  
μὲν ἀσθεστωμένα σπίτια, μὲν ὕδωριες ζεστοὺ φωμιοῦ καὶ μὲ τριαντάφυλλα.

Καὶ τώρα θυμήθηκα—δὲν ξέρω γιατί—τὴν ἀγελάδα ἔκείνη  
πούχαμε δεῖ, δραδάκι, σ' ἔγανον κάμπο τῆς Ἀττικῆς—θυμίδας;  
Στεκόταν, ξέζεμένη μόλις ἀπὸ τὸ ἀλέτρι, καὶ κυττοῦσε πέρα,  
ἀχνίζοντας, μὲ δυσὶ μικροὺς ὅχγοὺς ἀπὸ τὰ ρουθούγια της,  
τὸ πορφυρό, μεγεξεδί, χρυσὸς ἥλιοδασίλεμα, βουδή, λαδωμένη  
στὰ πλευρὰ καὶ στὴν ράχη, ραθδοισμένη στὸ μέτωπο,  
ἴσως γνωρίζοντας τὴν ἀρνησηνή καὶ τὴν ὑποταγή,  
τὴν ἀδιαλλαξία καὶ τὴν ἔχθροτητα μέσα στὴ συμφωνία.

Άγάμεσα στὰ δυσὶ της κέρατα κρατοῦσε  
τὸ πιὸ διαρὺ κομμάτι τὸ οὐρανοῦ σὰν ἔγα στέμμα. Σὲ λίγο  
χαμήλωσε τὸ μέτωπο καὶ ἤπιε νερό ἀπὸ τὸ ρυάκι  
γλείφοντας μὲ τὴ ματωμένη γλώσσα της, τὴν ἀλλη ἔκείνη  
δροσερὴ γλώσσα τοῦ νερένιου εἰδώλου της, σὰν γάγλειφε  
φαρδιά, γαλήνια, μητρικά, ἀγαπότρεπτα,  
ἀπὸ τὰ ἔξω, τὴ μέσα της πληγή, σὰν γάγλειφε  
τὴ σιωπηλή, μεγάλη, στρογγυλή πληγή τοῦ κόσμου—ίσως καὶ γὰρ ξε-  
δίψασε—  
ἴσως μογάχα τὸ δικό μας αἷμα νὰ μᾶς ξεδιψάει—ποιός ξέρει;

the crawling of the tame snake in the olive grove  
and the creaking of the heated rock that cools and contracts.

A word of love remains unspoken, always locked in our mouths,  
like a pebble in our shoes, or even a nail; you don't feel like  
taking the time to stop and take it out, to untie the laces  
and waste time;—you've been captivated more by the secret pace  
of your journey

than by the arrogance of the pebble or  
the stubborn reminder from your exhaustion,  
from your procrastination; and still it's  
a kind of small, thorny delight and recollection  
that you carried from a beach that you're fond of,  
from a pleasant walk with fine reflections and watery images,  
when the conversations of the tobacco merchants  
along with the sailors' song and the song of the sea  
could be heard far, far away, lost, close, strange, ours, in the  
tavern by the sea.

The poor woman's quiet now. In her silence, I can hear that  
she's right,—  
she's so unprotected in her wrath, so wronged,  
her bitter hair hangs loose on her shoulders, like weeds on a tomb,  
walled off in her narrow justice. Maybe she fell asleep,  
maybe she's dreaming of an innocent place with kind animals,  
with whitewashed houses, with the aroma of freshly-baked bread,  
and with roses.

I've just remembered—I don't know why—that cow  
we saw that evening, in a field in Attica—do you remember?  
She was standing, unyoked from the plow, and was looking far away,  
two small streams of vapor coming from her nostrils,  
misting the purple, violet, golden sunset, mute, wounded  
on her sides and back, marks from a flogging on her forehead,  
maybe she knew about denial and submission,  
things irreconcilable, and hostility within the agreement.

Between her two horns, she was carrying  
the heaviest piece of the sky, like a crown. A while later  
she lowered her head and drank water from the stream,  
licking with her bloody tongue the other  
cool tongue of her image in the water, as if she were licking  
broadly, peacefully, like a mother,  
her own inner wound from the outside, as if she were licking  
the silent, large, round wound of the world;—maybe she  
quenched her thirst—  
maybe only our own blood can quench our thirst—who knows?

"Υστερα σήκωσε ἀπ' τὸ γερὸ τὸ κεφάλι της, μὴν ἀγγίζοντας τίποτα, ἀνέγγιχτη ἡ ἔδια καὶ ἥρεμη σὰν ἔνας ἄγιος, καὶ μόνο ἀνάμεσα στὰ πόδια της, σὰν ριζωμένα στὸ ποτάμι, ἔμενε καὶ μετασχηματιζόταν μιὰ μικρὴ λίμνη ἀπ' τὸ αἷμα τῶν χειλιῶν τῆς,

μιὰ λίμνη κόκκινη, στὸ σχῆμα ἑνὸς χάρτη, ποὺ λίγο-λίγο πλάταινε καὶ διαλυόταν. ἔσβηγε σὰν γὰ περνοῦσε τὸ αἷμα της μακριά, ἐλευθερωμένο, ἀνώδυνο, σὲ μιὰν ἀδρατη φλέβα τοῦ κόσμου· κ' εἶταν γαλήνια γι' αὐτὸν ἀκριβῶς· σὰν νᾶρες μάθει πώς τὸ αἷμα μας δὲ χάνεται, πώς τίποτα δὲ χάνεται, τίποτα, τίποτα δὲ χάνεται μέσα σ' αὐτὸν τὸ μέγα τίποτα τὸ ἀπαρηγόρητο καὶ τὸ ἀσπλαχνό, τὸ ἀσύγκριτο, τόσο γλυκύ, τόσο παρηγορητικό, τόσο τίποτα.

Αὐτὸν τὸ τίποτα εἶγαι ή οἰκεῖα ἀπεραγυτοσύνη μας. Μάταιο λοιπὸν ἐτούτο τὸ λαχάνιασμα, ή ἀδημογία, ή δόξα. Μιὰ τέτοια ἀγελάδα σέργω μαζί μου, μὲς στὸν ἵσκιο μου—δχι δεμένη· μογάχη της μὲν ἀκολουθεῖ·—εἶγαι δὲ ἵσκιος μου πάνω στὸ δρόμο ὅταν ἔχει φεγγάρι· εἶγαι δὲ ἵσκιος μου πάνω σὲ μιὰ κλεισμένη πόρτα· καὶ, πάντα, τὸ ξέρεις· δὲ ἵσκιος εἶγαι μαλακός, ἀσώματος· κ' οἱ σκιές τῶν δυὸς κεράτων μπορεῖ καὶ νῦνοι δυὸς αἰχμηρές φτεροῦγες καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ πετάξεις κ' ἵσως μπορεῖς νὰ περάσεις ἀλλιώς τὴν κατάκλειστη πόρτα.

Καὶ τώρα θυμήθηκα (Δὺ κι αὐτὸν δὲν ἔχει σημασία) τὰ μάτια τῆς ἀγελάδας,—σκοτεινά, τυφλά, παμμέγιστα, καμπύλα, σὰν δυὸς λοφίσκοι ἀπὸ σκοτάδι ἡ ἀπὸ μαύρο γυαλί· πάνω τους καθρεφτιζόταν ἀνεπαίσθητα κάποιο καμπαναριδ κ' οἱ κάργιες ποὺ κάθονταν πάνω στὸ σταυρὸν καὶ τότε κάποιος φύγαξε καὶ φύγαν τὸ πουλιδ ἀπ' τὰ μάτια τῆς γελάδας. Θαρρῶ πώς ή ἀγελάδα εἶται τὸ σύμβολο κάποιας ἀρχαίας θρησκείας. Μακριὰ ἀπὸ μέγα τέτοιες ἰδέεις καὶ τέτοιες ἀφαιρέσεις. Μιὰ κοινὴ ἀγελάδα γιὰ τὸ γάλα τῶν χωρικῶν καὶ γιὰ τὸ ἀλέτρι, μὲν δὴ τὴ σοφία τῆς ἐργασίας, τῆς καρτερίας, τῆς χρησιμότητας. Κι διμώς,

τὴν τελευταία στιγμή, λίγο προτού γυρίσουν στὸ χωριό τὰ ζῶα—θυμᾶσαι;— ἀφησε ἔνα σπαραχτικὸ μουγγανητὸ πρόδες τὸν δρίζοντα, τόσο ποὺ σκόρπισαν τριγύρω τὰ κλαδιά, τὰ χειλιδόνια, τὰ σπουργίτια, τ' ἀλογα κ' οἱ κατσίκες καὶ οἱ ἀγρότες, ἀφήνοντάς την μόνη μέσα σ' ἔναν κύκλῳ δλόγυμνο, ἀπ' ὃπου ἀγέναιγε δλο πιὸ ψηλὰ στὸ διάστημα ἢ σπείρα τῶν ἀστερισμῶν, ὃσπου ἡ γελάδα ἀναλήφθηκε· δχι, δχι, θαρρῶ πώς τὴν ἔχειώρισε τὸ μάτι μου μὲς στὸ κοπάδι γ' ἀνηφορίζει τὸ θαμνωδεῖς μονοπάτι, σιωπηλή, πειθήνια,

Later, she raised her head from the water, without touching anything,  
untouched herself and calm as a saint,  
and only between her legs, as if they'd been rooted in the river,  
the blood from her lips gathered and was changed into a small lake,  
a red lake, in the shape of a map,  
that little by little broadened and dispersed; it disappeared  
as if her blood flowed far away, free and painless,  
into an invisible vein of the world; she was calm  
for this very reason, as if she'd learned  
that blood is not wasted, that nothing is wasted,  
nothing, nothing is wasted in this great nothing, inconsolable,  
unmerciful, incomparable,  
so sweet, so consoling, so nothing.

That nothing is our familiar vastness. In vain this panting,  
this anxiety, this praise. That's the kind of cow  
I drag along with me, in my shadow—not tethered;  
she follows me on her own;—she's my shadow on the road  
when the moon's out; she's my shadow on a closed door; and  
you know it always:  
the shadow is soft, bodiless; and the shadows of those two horns  
could be two spearlike wings, and you can fly,  
or maybe you can pass through that locked door in another way.

I've just remembered (even though this doesn't mean anything)  
the cow's eyes,—dark, blind, huge, arched,  
like two mounds of darkness or of black glass; on those mounds  
a steeple and the blackbirds that sit on its cross are dimly reflected;  
and then, someone shouted  
and the birds flew from the cow's eyes. I think the cow  
was the symbol of an ancient religion. Keep  
such ideas and abstractions away from me. A common cow  
for the villagers' milk and for the plow, with all the wisdom  
of work, perseverance and usefulness. And yet,

the last minute, just before the herd returned to the village—  
remember?—  
she sounded such a harrowing cry at the horizon  
that the branches around her, the swallows, the sparrows,  
the horses, the goats and the farmers  
scattered in all directions, leaving her alone in a completely  
empty circle  
from which the group of constellations  
was rising higher and higher in space, until the cow ascended;  
no, no,  
I think I could make her out in the dark  
as she climbed the path with the bushes, silently, submissively

πρὸς τὸ χωριό, τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ἀγαθαὶ οἱ λύχγοι στὶς αὐλές, πίσω ἀπὸ τὰ δέντρα.

Κύττα ποὺ ἔγημερώγει. Νά, κι ὁ πρῶτος πετειγός λαλεῖ στὸ φράχτη. Εύπνησε ὁ καήπουρός· κάποιο δεντράκι θὰ στεριώγει στὸν κῆπο. Οἰκεῖος θόρυβος ἀπὸ τὰ ἔργαλεῖα τῆς δουλειᾶς—πριόγια, ἀξίγεες— καὶ τὸ δρυσάκι τῆς αὐλῆς· κάποιος πλέγεται· μυρίζει τὸ χῶμα· κοχλάζει τὸ γερδ στὰ μπρίκια· οἱ πρᾶες κολῶνες τοῦ καπγοῦ πάγω ἀπὸ τίς στέγες· μιὰ ζεστὴ μυρωδιὰ ἀπὸ φασκόδηλο. Ἐπιδιώσαμε λοιπὸν κι αὐτῆς τῆς νύχτας.

“Ἄς σηκώσουμε τώρα αὐτὴ τῇ λήκυθῳ μὲ τὴν ὑποτιθέμενη τέφρα μου”— ἢ σκηνὴ τῆς ἀναγνώρισης θ’ ἀρχίσει σὲ λίγο.

Ολοὶ θὰ βροῦν σ’ ἐμένα ἔκεινον ποὺ περίμεγαν, θὰ βροῦν τὸν δίκαιον, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν νομοθεσία τους, καὶ μόνο ἐσύ κ’ ἔγώ θὰ ξέρουμε πῶς μὲς σ’ αὐτὴ τῇ λήκυθῳ κρατάω, στ’ ἀλήθεια, τὴν ἀληθινή μου τέφρα·—μόνο οἱ δυό μας.

Κι δταν οἱ ἄλλοι θὰ θριαμβεύσουν μὲ τὴν πράξη μου, οἱ δυό μας θὰ κλαίμε πάνω ἀπὸ τὸ λαμπτό, ματωμένο σπαθί, τ’ ἀξιο τῆς δόξας, θὰ κλαίμε αὐτὴ τὴν τέφρα, τὸν νεκρὸν αὐτὸν, ποὺ ἔγας ἀλλος πῆρε τὴ θέση του, καλύπτοντας ἀκέριο τὸ γδαριμένο πρόσωπό του μ’ ἔνα χρυσό, χρηστό, σεβάσμια προσωπεῖο, ἵσως καὶ χρήσιμο μὲ τὸ χοντροκομμένο σχῆμα του γιὰ συμβουλή, παράδειγμα, μέθη τοῦ λαοῦ, φόρο τοῦ τύραννου, ἀσκηση ποὺ συνεχίζει, ἀργά, διαριά, τὴν ἴστορία μὲ ἀλλεπάλληλους θαγάτους καὶ θριάμβους,

ὅχι μὲ γνώση τρομερή (ἀκατόρθωτη ἀπὸ τὸ πλήθος) ἀλλὰ μὲ πράξη δύσκολη, κ’ εἴκολη πίστη, τὴν ἄκαμπτη, τὴν ἀναγκαῖα, δυστυχισμένη πίστη, χλίεις φορές διαψευσμένη κι ἀλλες τόσες κρατημένη μὲ γύχια καὶ μὲ δόντια ἀπὸ τὴν ψυχὴ τοῦ ἀγθρώπου·—ἀνίδεη πίστη ποὺ μυστικὰ μεγαλουργεῖ, μερμήγκι, μέσα στὸ σκοτάδι.

Κι αὐτὴν διαλέγω δ ἀπιστος ἔγώ (δὲ μὲ διαλέγουν οἱ ἄλλοι), γγωρίζοντας διμώς ἔγώ. Διαλέγω τὴ γνώση καὶ τὴν πράξη τοῦ θαγάτου ποὺ τὴ ζωὴ ἀγενάζει. Πάμε τώρα—

ὅχι γιὰ τὸν πατέρα μου, ὅχι γιὰ τὴν ἀδελφή μου (θᾶπρεπε ἵσως κι αὐτὸς κι αὐτὴ γὰ λείψουν κάποτε), ὅχι γιὰ τὴν ἐκδίκηση, ὅχι γιὰ τὸ μισος—διόλου μισος— μήτε καὶ γιὰ τὴν τιμωρία (ποιός καὶ ποιόν γὰ τιμωρήσει;) μὰ ἵσως γιὰ τὴ συμπλήρωση ὁρισμένου χρόνου, γιὰ νὰ μείνει ἐλεύθερος δ χρόνος,

toward the village, at the hour when the lamps were lit in  
the yards, behind the trees.

Look, it's dawning. There, the first rooster's crowing on the fence.  
The gardener's up; a small tree takes root in the garden.

Familiar noises  
of tools—saws, hoes—  
and the running water in the yard; someone is washing himself;  
the ground smells;  
the water is boiling in the coffeepots; quiet columns of smoke over  
the rooftops;  
a warm aroma of sage. We've survived this night, too.

Now let's lift this urn that's supposed to keep my ashes;—  
the recognition scene is about to begin.

Everyone will find in me the one they've been expecting,  
they'll find the just man, according to their laws,  
and only you and I will know  
I really carry my true ashes in this urn;—only the two of us.

And when the others triumph through my act, the two of us  
will cry over the bright, bloody sword, the one worthy of praise,  
we'll cry over these ashes, this dead man whose place was taken  
by someone else, completely covering his flayed face  
with a golden, auspicious, venerable mask,  
maybe even useful with its rough-hewn shape,  
as a piece of advice, an example, a delirium of the masses, a fear of  
the tyrant, an exercise  
that perpetuates history, slowly, heavily, with successive deaths  
and triumphs,  
not with a terrible knowledge (impossible for the masses)  
but by a difficult act and an easy faith,  
an unyielding, necessary, unhappy faith,  
falsified a thousand times, and again that many times held  
for dear life by man's soul;—ignorant faith  
that secretly accomplishes great things in the dark.

And I, the infidel, chose this faith (the others don't choose me)  
knowingly, however, in my case. I choose  
the knowledge and the act of death that raises life. Let's go now—  
not for my father, not for my sister (maybe  
he and she both will be gone some day), not for revenge, not for hatred—  
not at all for hatred—  
not for punishment (who'd punish who?)  
but maybe for the fulfillment of an appointed time, to keep time free,

ἴσως γιὰ κάποια γίκη ἀγώφελη πάνω στὸν πρῶτο μας καὶ τελευταῖο  
μας φόβο,  
ἴσως γιὰ κάποιο «γαῖ», ποὺ φέγγει ἀδριστο κι ἀδιάδλητο πέρα ἀπὸ σένα  
κι ἀπὸ μένα,  
γιὰ ν' ἀγασάνει (ἄν γίνεται) τοῦτος δ τόπος. Κύττα τι ὅμορφα ποὺ ξη-  
μερώνει.

”Εχει λίγη υγρασία τὰ πρωΐγα στὴν Ἀργολίδα. Ή λήκυθος  
παγωμένη σχεδόν, μὲ κάτι δροσοστάλες  
σὰ νὰ τὴν ἔρρανε, ὅπως λέγε, ἡ ροδοδάκτυλος αὐγὴ μὲ τὰ δάκρυα τῆς,  
κρατώντας την ἀνάμεσα στὰ γόνατά της. Πᾶμε. Ή ὥρα ἡ ὁρισμένη  
ἔφτασε πιά. Γιατί χαμογελᾶς; Συγκατανεύεις;  
Εἶταν αὐτὸ ποὺ γγώριζες ἀκόμη καὶ δὲν τόπεις;  
Αὐτὸ τὸ δίκαιο τέλος—γαῖ;—μετὰ ἀπὸ τὴν πιὸ δίκαιη μάχη;

”Ασε, μιὰ τελευταία φορά, νὰ σοῦ φιλήσω τὸ χαμόγελό σου,  
δσο ἔχω ἀκόμη χείλη. Πᾶμε τώρα. Ἄναγγωρίζω τὴ μοῖρα μου. Πᾶμε.

[Προχώρησαν πρὸς τὴν πόλη. Οἱ φρουροὶ παραμέρισαν σὰ νὰ τοὺς περίμεναν. Ὁ γερο-θυρωρὸς ἔνοιξε τὴ μεγάλη πόρτα, κρατώντας πάντα ταπεινὰ σκυμμένο τὸ κεφάλι του σὰ νὰ τοὺς καλωσόριζε. Σὰ λίγο ἀκούστηκε τὸ πηχτὸ θογγητὸ ἐνὸς διντρα, καὶ διπέρα μιὰ ἔαφνιασμένη, δύσνηρῃ γυναικεία κραυγὴ. Μεγάλη ἡσυχία καὶ πάλι. Μόνο, στὸν κάμπο κάτω, οἱ ἀραιές ντουφεκιές τῶν κυνηγῶν καὶ τὸ ἀναρίθμητα τιτιβίσματα ἀπὸ ἀδρατα σπουργίτια, σπίνους, κορυδαλλούς, μελισσούργούς, κοτσόφια. Τὰ χελιδόνια στριφογυρίζουν ἐπίμονα στὴ βορεινὴ γωνιὰ τοῦ ἀνακτόρου. Οἱ φρουροὶ ἔβγαλαν ἀτάραχοι τὰ πηλήκια τους καὶ σκούπισαν τὸν ἀπὸ μέσα πέτσινο γύρο μὲ τὸ μανίκι τους. Τότε, καταριεσίς στὴν πόλη τῶν λεόντων, στάθηκε μιὰ μεγάλη ἀγελάδα, κυττώντας κατάματα τὸν πρωΐνδ οδρανδ, μὲ τὰ πελώρια, κατάμαυρα, ἀσάλευτα μάτια τῆς.]

ΒΟΥΚΟΥΡΕΣΤΙ, ΑΘΗΝΑ, ΣΑΜΟΣ, ΜΥΚΗΝΕΣ, 'Ιούνιος 1962 - 'Ιούλιος 1966

maybe for some useless victory over our first and last fear,  
maybe for some "yes" that shines, vague and blameless, apart  
from you and me,  
so that (if possible) this place can breathe. Look how  
beautiful daybreak is.

In the morning it's a little humid in the Argolid. The urn  
is almost frozen, with some dew-drops  
as though rosy-fingered dawn, as the saying goes, sprinkled it  
with her tears,  
as she held it between her knees. Let's go. The time  
has come already. Why are you smiling? Are you nodding in approval?  
You knew about it and didn't say anything?  
This fair ending—yes?—after the fairest combat?

Let me kiss your smile for the last time,  
as long as I still have lips. Let's go now, I recognize my fate. Let's go.

[They walked toward the gate. The guards moved out of the way as if they were expecting them. The old doorkeeper opened the large door, his head kept humbly bowed, as if he were welcoming them. Minutes later, the deep groaning of a man was heard and then the frightening, painful scream of a woman. Again, deep silence. In the plain down below, the sparse gunshots of hunters and the countless chirpings of invisible sparrows, finches, bee-eaters and blackbirds. The swallows flew stubbornly in circles over the north corner of the palace. The guards, undisturbed, took off their caps and wiped off the inside leather rim with their sleeves. Then right in the middle of the lion gate, a large cow stood, looking the morning sky right in the eyes with her own huge, pitch-black, motionless eyes.]

Bucharest, Athens, Samos, Mycenae, June 1962-July 1966

*—Translated by Philip Pastras and George Pilitsis*

## Book Reviews

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*The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974* by ALEXIS ALEXANDRIS. Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1983. pp. 371. 700 Drs.

The author and the Center for Asia Minor Studies should be congratulated on bringing us a long-overdue book on this subject, a book that is objective, balanced, and thoroughly documented. Alexandris utilizes archival material from the British Public Records Office, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the limited Turkish documentation which is currently available, in addition to interviews and other secondary sources. This book is a must reading for anyone interested in Greek-Turkish relations and should be part of any serious library collection on Greece and Turkey. The book also contains a most useful bibliography with sources in various languages.

The introductory chapter offers a challenging overview of what the author calls an "extraordinary symbiosis of 500 years" between the Ottomans and the influential Constantinopolitan minority. However, this attempt at symbiosis had failed by 1974 for a number of reasons, starting first with the unique Ottoman administrative system known as the *Millet*. This system established the Patriarch as an *ethnarch* and gave the Patriarchate its ecumenical

character, but it did not contribute to the incorporation of non-Muslims into the Ottoman body politic. It also offered opportunities for foreign agitation and intrigue among the minorities of the empire. The economic growth of the nineteenth century also intensified the social differences among the ethnic elements of the empire. Finally, the minority's Greek consciousness was also strengthened by a sophisticated educational system that promoted Helleno-Christian education and avoided the teaching of Turkish well into 1895.

The growing power of the Greek minority also had repercussions on the relations of the minority community and the Patriarchate, as the political aspirations of entrepreneurial elites and the secular intelligentsia came into a conflict with the traditionalist and submissive ideology of the Patriarchate and its leaders that lasted into 1923. Moreover, by the time of the First World War, relations between the Greek minority and the Ottoman government also deteriorated in view of the Turkification policies of the Young Turks and the minority's support and involvement in the irredentist politics of the *Megalí Idea* and Venizelos's efforts to achieve it. These trends culminated in the Phanar's decision in the spring of 1919 to sever its relations with the Porte, engage in anti-Turkish international activities, and

even sponsor separatist activities in Western Anatolia and the Black Sea. However, these ill-conceived actions involved a total misreading of international politics as well as a total disregard of future Turkish reactions. The Turkish reaction followed the Asian debacle of Greece, which provided Turkey with the opportunity to deal with its "disloyal" minority and the Patriarchate. Having obtained the reduction of the Greek minority under the population exchange agreements and restrictions on the activities of the Patriarchate, the New Republican Turkish leaders proceeded with the gradual Turkification of their society and economy.

The acrimonious Greco-Turkish relations of the immediate post-Lausanne period had a negative effect on the Constantinopolitan Greek minority. However, Venizelos's election in Greece opened new possibilities for Greco-Turkish cooperation because of common economic and defense needs. Similar conditions were also created in the aftermath of World War II and the height of the Cold War. In his analysis of the 1918-1974 period, Alexandris shows that the Lausanne Treaty's provisions on minorities and the Patriarchate created a "hostage value" situation that Turkey was able to exploit effectively in its relations with Greece. Consequently, periods of détente between Greece and Turkey had beneficial effects on the status of the Greek minorities, and their status in Greece and Turkey also affected the course of Greco-Turkish relations throughout the 1958-1974 period.

Suspicious and distrustful of their influential Greek minority, succes-

sive Turkish governments proceeded with gradual Turkification policies in search of self-sufficiency in the political and economic fields and the secularization of Turkish society. The effect of these policies, most of which were intentionally discriminatory, was the reduction of the size, influence, and economic power of the Greek minority and the Patriarchate. The author effectively documents and discusses Turkish discriminatory policies and their effect on the Greek minority and the Patriarchate, which included among others: restrictions on the economic activities of the Greek minority; the imposition of discriminatory taxation as the *varlik vergisi* during World War II; liberal interpretation of oral guarantees given by Turkey on its minorities; violations of international agreements on the minorities and the Patriarchate; educational policies that lowered the quality of Greek education; forcible expulsions; the sponsorship and use of the Turkish Orthodox Church as leverage against the Patriarchate; and the pogrom of September 6, 1955.

Alexandris, in addition to pointing to the benefits of Greek-Turkish détente on the respective minorities, also shows very effectively that détente among governments, brought about by charismatic leaders and based on economic and security needs, is not strong enough to overcome deeply rooted suspicions, fears, and problems such as that of Cyprus. His conclusions on the irredentist activities of the Greek minority and the Patriarchate during World War I, and the effect these activities had on the future of this minority, are carefully

drawn. But more disturbing are his objective and fully documented conclusions on the Turkish attitude and actions toward its minorities: Turkey's bargaining tactics and pragmatic assessment of international conditions in dealing with the issue of the minorities and the Patriarchate; the international unwillingness to deal with Turkish violations of international agreements, due to the belief that international pressure will make Turkey more intransigent; and the constant Turkish complaints over the status of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace. In the long run, this might indicate the roots of a major problem between Greece and Turkey, because the Muslim minority is growing in numbers at a time when the balance established under the Lausanne Treaty has been upset by the near extinction of the Patriarchate and the Greek minority. Another consequential conclusion is Turkey's ability to formulate policy based on long-term domestic and foreign policy objectives which are pursued consistently and patiently, as international conditions permit.

Since 1954, under the impact of the Cyprus issue and other Greco-Turkish differences, the Greek minority and the Patriarchate have suffered the final blow. In contrast triarchate was slowly dying because to the interwar period, the improvement of the Turkish economy

and the rise of a Turkish managerial and professional class has made the Greeks of Constantinople expendable. By the time this book was published, the once prosperous and influential Greek community numbered under 7,000, while the Pa of the loss of its clientele and the restrictions imposed on its internal and external relations by successive Turkish governments. The Turkish press in 1923 had hailed the results of the Lausanne Treaty as the "second conquest" of Istanbul. Inonu presented at Lausanne maximum demands for the removal of the Greek minority and the Patriarchate in view of their "disloyalty" during and after World War I. Some sixty years later, despite the loyalty and the contributions of the Greek minority to the growth and development of the Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey, Turkey is close to being freed of its Lausanne pledges as a result of the extinction of the Greek minority.

Alexandris's book is a major contribution to the study of Greek-Turkish relations. Having been written in English, this book will serve the needs of a wider audience. Until this most valuable book becomes widely available in American libraries and bookstores, the interested reader may have to rely on the services of some major reliable Athenian bookstores to obtain a copy.

—*Van Coufoudakis*

*Cyprus* by CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS.  
Quartet Books, New York, 1984  
pp. 192, \$15.95.

Much has been written about Cyprus, but unfortunately it has tended to be highly polemical. It is therefore not only refreshing but informative to have a volume on Cyprus, Hitchens's study, which is not a diatribe either against the Greek Cypriots or against the Turkish Cypriots. This is not to say that this volume is dispassionate, for as the author himself admits, it is an impassioned plea for Cyprus *qua* Cyprus. Hitchens, by contrast to the partisans of one or another side, directs his anger against the foreign powers who have repeatedly, in devious and malicious ways, intervened in Cyprus and precluded a resolution of ethnic differences, which they have magnified and exploited to their fullest for their own national interests.

The focus of Hitchens's study is the role of foreign powers, and as such it is a masterful piece of what one is tempted to label investigative reporting. The volume is full of new information, and the author has made his way through the labyrinth of Byzantine politics—not of the Near East, but of the Western powers—with incredible skill and with a mastery of the dynamics of international politics as they narrow in on Cyprus. Particularly in dealing with the more recent years of the island's tortured history, namely from the later phase of the Greek military junta, when Ioannides reigned supreme, to the present time, Hitchens makes superb use of the words of the political

actors themselves to indict the role of foreign powers, in particular the United States.

From the perspective of an academic, it would be possible to fault Hitchens for the absence of footnotes, but his original research, his interviews with all relevant parties, and his direct quotations from the principal actors, more than compensate for the academic tradition of footnotes. Statements taken from documents, memoirs, and/or interviews, of President Johnson and Secretary of State Kissinger, among others, methodically and relentlessly build his scathing condemnation of the role of Great Britain and the United States. Nor are Greece and Turkey free of responsibility for the fate of Cyprus, the worst offender at a particular time depending on the political regime. Thus when Greece was ruled by the military junta, in alliance with the United States it precipitated the current division of Cyprus and its invasion by Turkish troops, whereas in recent years it is Turkey, again in alliance with the United States, that perpetuates the division. Hitchens's well-documented argument appears to be irrefutable.

For a reader without an intimate knowledge of the events in Cyprus, or in Greece and Turkey, in the post-World War II years, or even for those familiar with them, it would have been invaluable if the author had generalized from the accounting of the interplay of specific foreign actions in Cyprus by placing them in a broader international context. While, for example, Hitchens refers to the Acheson plan on several occasions and in fact

details the provisions of this proposal for the double *enosis* of Cyprus, and while he refers to the United States view of Archbishop Makarios as the "Castro of the Mediterranean," he does not place such actions and perceptions within the framework of British and, after 1960, United States foreign policy. A general analysis of United States national interests in the eastern Mediterranean, and the foreign policy that flowed therefrom, would have provided greater insight into an understanding of the destructive role of the United States. An overall analysis of the objectives of the United States and its allies at different times would highlight Hitchens's claim that the underlying tragedy of Cyprus is not, as many would like to portray it, the historically deep-seated enmity between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, but the strategic interests of the United States. The latter in turn has allied itself with whatever regime, party, or individuals in Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus that has been or is amenable to its designs.

The history of Cyprus is that of many small states, with little control over their destiny, struggling for survival in a world dominated by major powers and superpowers. In the case of Cyprus, an island which was never part of Greece, ancient or modern, at the crossroads of many peoples and many empires throughout its history, the struggle for survival has been on the verge of defeat many times. It is important to remember that the emergence of nationalism and the formation of the nation-state are relatively recent phenomena in world history. France, Great Britain,

and Italy, for example, were forged together out of disparate groups, often with different languages. But in these lands, the process of forming a nation was initiated by a powerful central authority, a monarch, attempting to weld together the divergent elements residing within the boundaries of a single territory. By contrast, in Cyprus, power resides outside the boundaries of the Cypriot state, not only when it was ruled by the Ottomans and the British, but since independence. Sovereignty for Cyprus in 1960 was severely restricted since both the treaty of independence and the constitution, in essence drafted by Great Britain in conjunction with Greece and Turkey—but not by the Cypriots—provided legal rights in Cyprus for the three, including the stationing of Greek and Turkish armed forces on Cypriot territory. Clearly, the preconditions for the evolution of a Cypriot nationality were not established.

Prospects for the emergence of a Cypriot nationality, rather than a Turkish or Greek one, were significantly diminished when the British took over Cyprus from the Ottomans in 1878 and made it into a British colony. Its policies—the establishment of different educational systems for the Muslim and Orthodox populations which they defined as Greek and Turk, separate representation of the two ethno-religious groups in various advisory bodies, pitting one against the other in the classic British policy of divide and rule—resulted in a gradual politicization of differences.

Prior to British rule, even when Cyprus was part of the Ottoman Empire, the polarization between

Greek and Turk so critical in discussions about Cyprus today was not of central concern to the peoples of Cyprus. Hitchens relates some recent examples of positive ethnic relations, such as the assistance which Greeks and Turks provided each other at the time of the Turkish invasion in 1974, the continuation of mixed villages until this became politically untenable, the entrusting of house and property when forced to move after the division of the island by Turks to Greek friends.

Historically, integration of the Cypriots was striking, despite, as Hitchens points out, the deeply rooted Hellenism of the island. The existence of villages composed of both Greeks and Turks, the uprisings in earlier centuries of both Muslim and Orthodox peasants against their oppressors (the Ottoman officialdom and often the Christian tax-gatherers), the failure, despite intense efforts by the British rulers, to create separate municipal councils for the two ethnicities, the interchange between Muslims and Christians of their respective houses of worship, at a minimum attests to the absence of enmity.

It is not possible to rewrite history and speculate on whether a Cypriot nationality would have evolved. It is certain, however, that the potential for the emergence of an integrated state has been severely fractured, first by the British colonial policy of divide and rule, then by the establishment of separate institutional structures for each ethnicity—which were incorporated into the constitution of the Cypriot state and which empowered each

community to veto the actions of the other—and finally by the recent policies of the foreign powers which, as Hitchens effectively documents, have been destructive to the people of Cyprus.

A minor criticism of Hitchens's volume can be made. At times, his passion for Cyprus is so intense that he attributes too much weight to that country's plight being indirectly responsible for developments in other countries. Thus, for example, while it is true that Papandreou's resistance to the Acheson plan was a major factor contributing to the events that led to the Greek military junta in 1967, of at least equal importance were domestic developments in Greece, which threatened the existing status quo and the monopoly of power in the hands of the coalition of the Greek right and the United States. Moreover, the author ignores the fact that the Aegean is of greater importance for Greece than Cyprus, and this reality has potentially significant implications for Greek foreign policy toward Cyprus.

Hitchens ends his book on a poignant note. Having documented the betrayal of Cyprus, he then states "but fatalism would be the worst betrayal of all." But neither the author nor this reviewer can suggest meaningful solutions. The media lament the failure of the recent meeting between President Kyprianou and the leader of the Turkish Cypriots, Rauf Denktash, for the success of which the United Nations Secretary General had worked so assiduously. But the proposals were little more than a reconstitution of the institutional structures of the unworkable 1960

constitution under conditions of even greater segregation of the two communities, and with the presence on the island of Turkish troops, whose departure date remains uncertain.

Hitchens's study is of the role of foreign powers in Cyprus. It is not intended to be an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of domestic Cypriot politics in both communities. Such a study, investigating the social forces in both communities, their articulation within the Cypriot leadership, the conflicts among and between the political elites in both communities, and the linkages be-

tween the political elites and/or parties to various foreign powers, would provide an additional dimension to an understanding of the Cypriot tragedy. If there is hope for avoiding the demise of Cyprus and for reversing the relentless step-by-step division of the island, it will have to be accomplished by the Cypriot people, both Greeks and Turks. An intensive scrutiny is needed of their own flawed strategies, a critique of their leadership, and possibly the development of new modes of action, if Cyprus is to survive as an independent state.

—Adamantia Pollis



Αμητός στή Μνήμη τοῦ Φώτη  
Αποστολόπουλου [Harvest in  
the Memory of Photis Apostolopoulos]. Athens: Center for  
Asia Minor Studies, 1984. 519  
pp. Illustrated.

Photis Apostolopoulos (1914-1980) belongs to that generation of Greek intellectuals whose scholarly production was interrupted by the price they were forced to pay for taking the side of the left during the 1940s. Apostolopoulos spent five years in the internment camps on the islands of Makronisos and Aghios Efstratios between 1947 and 1952. He left Greece soon after April 1967 in order to avoid arrest and settled in Paris, where he completed a doctoral dissertation on Byzantine literature and worked as a researcher and lecturer. He returned to Greece in 1975, and took charge of the Center for Asia Minor Studies, where

he remained until his death in 1980. The Center has just published a fitting tribute to Apostolopoulos's memory, a volume containing thirty-two articles covering a number of disciplines.

Such is the scope of this volume that it would be impossible for a single reviewer to do it justice. Most of the articles are monographs, some of which will attract mainly specialist interest and others which will have a wider appeal. A few of the contributions go beyond the usual limitations of monographs and attempt an analysis set in a broader context.

The articles by Catherine and Spyros Asdrachas on name-giving in Patmos and by Vasilis Kremmydas on Mani's population will be of special interest to demographic historians, while the articles by Vasilis Panayotopoulos on pre-revolutionary agricultural production and by Evangelia Balta on

fifteenth century grain production concern economic history. A short piece by Eleni Karatza can be classified under historical geography. Nineteenth century history is represented by a detailed description of the activities of the Philomousos Etaireia by Ellie Yotopoulou-Sisilianou, two hitherto unpublished letters from Pouqueville's correspondence presented by Stamatis Karatzas, and excerpts from the unpublished correspondence of Dionisios Therianos, an intellectual living in Trieste, produced by Apostolos Papaoannou. There are two articles on Byzantine art, one by Sophia Kalopisi-Verti on the Cave of St. Marina in the Mani and another by Dori Papastratos on the Soumela monastery, and two articles with anthropological interest, by Denise Papachrysanthou on houses in fourteenth century Thessaloniki and by Guy Saunier on folk laments.

The area Apostolopoulos specialized in, classical philology and language, is represented by the contributions of Paul Lemerle on the continuity of Greek, Jean Irigoin on grammar, Katerina Sinodinou on "time" in Sophocles' *Electra*, and A. K. Papachristos on the ideology of legal terminology. There is also a critical examination of the "use" of Solomos by Babis Nikiphoridis.

Several specialist monographs are certain to attract wide interest. Some have already been mentioned; others include the article on Plato by one of the experts in the field and a contemporary of Apostolopoulos who was also interned and forced into exile, the philosopher Constantinos I. Despotopoulos. There is another valuable philo-

sophical contribution by Menelaos Gavalos; Kosmas Psychopaidis's article also falls into this category, as it is a methodological examination of the laws of political theory, together with two articles on the problems of contemporary schooling by Maro Maniadaki and by Angheliki Nikiphoridou. Another less specialist oriented article is by the musicologist M. F. Dragoumis, a perceptive commentary on the meaning of the Islamic influence in Greek musical tradition. Rena Stavridi-Patrikiou describes the educational reforms of 1917 and the attitude of George Skleros, in a long and detailed article. Nikos Svoronos's contribution is based on a paper presented in 1971 on urban development during the Ottoman period, which outlines the main aspects of this subject.

There are also a few articles which go beyond the usual scope of monographs, as mentioned above. Aristidis Baltas discusses the "autonomy of meaning" in physics and the problems of popularizing the science. Baltas deals with the ideological functions of language, concluding that science itself, rather than its popularized form, can and ought to be made accessible to a larger audience. Panayotis Kondylis examines the debates during the "Greek Enlightenment" in the eighteenth century on the heliocentric system and on the number of the universes. The article affords a detailed and concise view of the intellectual currents along with the differences between various philosophical trends in eighteenth century Hellenism. Maria Iliou's article is essentially a report of a research program conducted by the

Center for Social Sciences in Athens with the help of the Ministry of Education from 1965 until the military coup of 1967. The aim of the program was to examine the problems of schooling, with reference to illiteracy and absenteeism in Greece. Facts and figures from Athens, Etoloakarnania, and Larisa were used. The article describes the method and material of the research program and then presents the findings with the help of a number of tables. The interpretation of the findings provides us with a kaleidoscope of contemporary attitudes toward primary and secondary education.

Nikos Alivizatos's essay is a presentation of an article written in criticism of Venizelos's anticomunist legislation of 1929. The author was the lawyer, Pandelis Pouliopoulos, and the article was published in a journal of law studies in 1930. Pouliopoulos is better known as the leader of the Trotskyist tendency in the interwar communist movement in Greece. The first part of Alivizatos's presentation describes the contemporary historical background and contains a number of interesting points on the history and historiography of the communist movement, some of which have been unfairly relegated to footnote form. Historians of the communist movement will appreciate Alivizatos's sense of balance: it is often the case with articles about Pouliopoulos and the prewar Greek Trotskyists either to dismiss them completely or to overestimate their role as an *ex post facto* "condemnation" of the leadership under Nikos Zachariadis. The second part of the presentation is devoted to a

commentary on the legal points made by Pouliopoulos, which is followed by the text itself.

In an article entitled "The End of the Ethnarchical Tradition," Paschalis Kitromilidis presents and comments upon three unpublished letters of Chrysostomos, Patriarch of Smyrna from 1911-1922, to the diplomat and nationalist ideologue, Ion Dragoumis.

By means of a concise exposition of the historical background, Kitromilidis shows how the letters are connected with the contradiction between the ethnarchical tradition of the Church and the nationalist current within it, which became manifest during the Greek nationalist movement in Macedonia. The former tradition was exemplified by the discouraging attitude taken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate toward the 1821 uprising. As the author has shown in several of his earlier articles, the creation of the Greek state created two antagonistic centers of Hellenism after 1830: one in Constantinople representing Orthodox Hellenism and one in Athens representing irredentist nationalism. This division was reflected within the Church. This presentation of Chrysostomos's letters provides us with an example of the attitudes of one of the leading clerics who embraced the nationalist cause. The importance of this article is not limited to the study of Orthodoxy and nationalism. As the author points out, it can lead to a discussion of the relationship between religion and nationalism. It also leaves open the question as to what would have happened to Asia Minor Hellenism had the Church not iden-

tified itself with nationalist irredentism. At a time when Orthodoxy has been discovered as an important factor in modern Greek culture, it seems appropriate that historiography should set out the historical antecedents of the ideological role of Orthodoxy. One cannot help but compare the empirical and theoretical solidity of this article with most utterances on neo-orthodoxy, which are now made to look so superficial.

"Finally, one cannot help concurring with a forceful and topical intervention by Anna Frangoudakis on the subject of language and 'progressive intellectuals.' The elitist connotations jargon-packed articles have rarely been openly discussed within Marxist and especially 'post-Marxist' intellectuals. Frangoudakis's reminder about the problems of being theoretical and analytical while avoiding a mystical shell should not be ignored."

—*Alexandros Kitroeff*



*Costas Discovers America: An Odyssey* by JOSEPH GEORGE VASILIOU. Lynchburg, Virginia: Piedmont Publishing Company, 1984. 264 pp.

The Reverend Father Vasiliou captured my interest through his articles in the *Orthodox Observer* in the early nineteen-fifties. I always wondered about his early career in America. This autobiography unfolds a long life over the period from 1912 to 1975.

The original name of the young man who came to America in 1912 was Costas Vasiliou. He left Greece at the age of fifteen to come to America to improve the economic situation of his family.

In America, like most Greek immigrants, he worked in a restaurant to make a living. However, this young man was interested in education. Even with low finances, he managed to fulfill his dream and he received a college education.

While in college, he was influenced by his Protestant friends to enter the ministry. He entered Yale

divinity school, where he received his B.D. Following his studies at Yale, he went to the University of Athens, with the option of becoming a Greek Orthodox priest in America. However, after his return to America, he decided to become a Methodist minister. His American Methodist wife and her family helped in his ministry in the Methodist Church.

As a Methodist minister, Vasiliou served several churches in the South, where he had a most rewarding experience. However, after thirteen years as a minister of the Methodist Church, Fr. Vasiliou returned home to Orthodoxy. He was ordained an Orthodox priest and served the Orthodox Church until his retirement in 1971. Now he is researching and writing.

The autobiography of Fr. Vasiliou is very moving. He came to a strange and great country from a village in Greece, and he discovered America as he lived and found opportunities to be educated and to advance socially.

Fr. Vasilios changed his religion from Orthodox to Protestant, and he also changed his name from Costas to Joseph, as he was going through life in this American pluralistic society. However, this man, who was educated in the theology of Methodism and Orthodoxy, finally found his way back to the Church of his ancestors. The example of Fr. Joseph can be retold many times by numerous Greek Orthodox immigrants.

This book is a contribution to the understanding of the Greek-American experience. The hardships and personal sacrifices were the experiences of the early Greeks who came to America. With their untiring effort, they succeeded in attaining the heights of education, business accomplishment, and political success. The life of Fr. Vasilios should be read by all Greek-Americans in order to understand their Greek-American background.

—Rev. George C. Papademetriou



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