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UNWAVERING LOYALTY: GREEK WOMEN IN RESISTANCE AND EXILE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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by

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Date Approved: _____

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ABSTRACT

UNWAVERING LOYALTY: GREEK WOMEN IN RESISTANCE AND EXILE

Helen Drivas

The Greek Resistance during World War II enabled the induction of women within the public sphere en masse. The opportunities the young women found in the 1940s were rooted in the struggles of feminist and socialist women in the pre-World War II era. During the interwar years, women organized within trade unions and political parties, influencing the next generation. This dissertation explores women's participation in national and radical social movements, and focuses on female partisans who joined the antifascist struggle, who as a result of their actions were internally exiled on the Greek islands of Chios, Trikeri, and Makronisos between 1948 and 1954. It examines the women's motivation, defense mechanisms, and survival methods. Furthermore, it argues that while in exile they implemented ideals they fought for in the Resistance, maintained solidarity amongst each other and demonstrated unwavering loyalty to the cause for equality and justice. Based on oral testimonies and archival material, this dissertation sheds new light on concentration camps and life in exile for women in Greece in the post-World War II period.

DEDICATION

*To my parents Vasiliki and Anastasios
To my husband Giorgo
To Eleni, Ellie, Nitsa, Plousia, Pota, Zozo
and all the other women of the
Greek Resistance who fought so dearly for
what they believed in.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Initially, I was interested in the children of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and the controversial argument between the Right and the Left of whether the 25,000 children that were sent to Eastern Europe in 1948 was an abduction or child-saving. As I was researching this topic at the Modern Greek Archives at Kings College London, I came across some mothers who had been exiled and their children were taken away from them. The mothers were implored by family members to sign the Declaration of Repentance, a document denouncing their political beliefs, and return to their children. These documents raised questions that I wanted to explore. What made a mother leave her child and endure exile? What made a young woman withstand exile and give up the best years of her life? Furthermore, I wanted to research about what life was like for women in exile. I remembered Regina Pagoulatou, who was an ex-exile that I had known as a child. She was a journalist and a revered member of the Greek-American community in New York, which I belong to. I had first “met” exiled women through her chronicle of her own experience in exile.

My collaboration with two filmmakers on a documentary on the Greek exiled women brought me in contact with some of the women. Interestingly, I met some of the women I had read about in Regina’s book and I was able to form a relationship with them. Through numerous informal interviews and conversations I realized that they were influenced by the previous generation, by the women who fought for women’s rights in 1920s and 1930s Greece; women such as Roza Imvrioti, or “their Roza” as the women often expressed. I also realized how these exiled women profoundly contributed to the

Greek Resistance during World War II. I began to understand that these women were not victims and as ex-exile Ellie Nikolaou said to me on a summer afternoon: “We knew what we were doing. We took our lives in our own hands and never let anyone dictate what we were going to do with it.” They lived the best years of their lives in exile and they have said that they would do it all over again. I wanted to write about these women.

At first the women were curious as to what I, a Greek-American, wanted from them. They expressed their frustration with researchers, journalists, and historians, because they argued that most of what they said was never included in the projects, and was portrayed through the lenses of the interviewer. As we got to know each other they opened up and shared their stories with me. They wanted me to tell their story, unfiltered; not what men thought they contributed, not whether they were “allowed” to contribute. They wanted me to tell their story from their perspective. So, that is what I set out to do. I thank them for their trust, for their candidness, and for their love. I am fortunate to have known them. This dissertation is dedicated partly to these amazing women.

There are so many that I must thank. I am grateful to my professors in the History Department at St. John’s University for encouraging and supporting me from my very first semester. I am above all grateful to my mentor Dr. Elaine Carey, without whom this dissertation would not have been completed. I thank her for not losing her faith in me and guiding me to the finish line. Thank you, to my committee members Dr. Lara Vapnek and Dr. Mauricio Borrero for their insight, constructive feedback, and support. I especially thank Dr. Borrero for his continuous support and guidance ever since I was a Master’s student. I would like to thank Dr. Timothy Milford and Dr. Philip Misevich for all their help and support and for always being there to answer my queries. Thank you to our

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I would like to express my gratitude to the staff at the Modern Greek Archives at King's College London, at the Greek Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA), at the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), and at the Charilaos Florakis Educational Center.

To my parents, Anastasios and Vasiliki, thank you for teaching me the importance of history, and for supporting all of my endeavors. Had it not been for your guidance, I would have never begun this long but incredible journey.

To my husband, Giorgio, there are no words to express how grateful I am to you. Thank you for your constant support throughout the years. Thank you for your understanding during the numerous trips for archival research and for conducting interviews, thank you for your invaluable help with transcriptions and the ever so many hours of listening to me discuss my work, and listening to my chapters from their inception, and most of all, thank you, for always knowing how to keep me sane during my bouts of despair.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AETO-ESAG First Special Battalion of Soldiers-Special School for Rehabilitation of Women

AKE Agrotiko Komma Elladas-Agricultural Party of Greece

ASKI Archeia Synchronis Koinonikis Istorias-Contemporary Social History Archives

DINA Direccion de Inteligencia Nacional-The Chilean Secret Police

DNL Demokratiki Neolea Lambrakis-Lambrakis Democratic Youth

DOR Declaration of Repentance

DSE Demokratikos Stratos Elladas-Greek Democratic Army

EA Ethniki Allilengyi-National Solidarity

EAM Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo-National Liberation Front

EDA Eniaia Demokratiki Aristera-United Democratic Left

EDES Ethnikos Demokratikos Ellinikos Sindesmos-National Republican Greek League

EKKA Ethniki Kai Kinoniki Apeleftherosi-National and Social Liberation

ELAS Ellinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos-Greek People's Liberation Army

ELIA-Elliniko Logotechniko kai Istoriko Archeio-Greek Literary and Historical Archive

EON Ethniki Organosi Neoleas-National Youth Organization

EPON Eniaia Panelladiki Organosi Neon-United Panhellenic Organization of Youth

ERE -Ethniki Rizospastiki Enosi-Conservative National Union

ESA Ethniki Stratiotiki Astynomia-Greek Military Police

KKE Kommounistiko Komma Elladas-Communist Party of Greece

KYP Kentriki Ypiresia Pliroforion Ellados-Greek Intelligence Service

MAY Monades Asfaleias Ypaithrou-Country Security Units

ND Nea Demokratia-New Democracy

OAM Organismos Anamorfotirion Makronisou-Organization of the Reformation of Makronisos

OKNE Omospondia Kommounistikis Neoleas Elladas- Federation of Communist Youth of Greece

PASOK Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima-Panhellenic Socialist Movement

PDG Prosorini Demokratiki Kivernisi-Provisional Democratic Government

PEAN Panellinios Enosis Agonizomenon Neon-Panhellenic Union of Fighting Youth

PEEA Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Apeleftherosis-Political Committee of National Liberation

PEG Panellinia Enosi Gynaikon-Panhellenic Union of Women

PEKAM Panellinia Enosi Kratoumenon Agoniston Makronisou- Panhellenic Association of Detained Fighters of Makronisos

PKF Pistopiitiko Kinonikon Fronimaton-Certificate of Political Convictions

SEKE Sosialistiko Ergatiko Komma Ellados- Socialist Worker's Party of Greece

SKE Sosialistiko Komma Elladas-Socialist Party of Greece

SYRIZA Synaspismos Rizospastikis Aristeras-Coalition of the Radical Left

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Everywhere you go in Greece the atmosphere is pregnant with heroic deeds. . . And the women, when you look into the history of this little country, were just as heroic as the men. In fact, I have even a greater respect for the Greek woman than for the Greek man,” wrote Henry Miller, in *Colossus of Marousi*, his travelogue of pre-war Greece.¹

Though Greek women, as Miller wrote, have been heroic and active historical actors in modern Greek history, recognition of their contributions in national conflicts was profoundly delayed within Greek historiography. Women’s involvement in the Greek Resistance (1941-1944), both in armed struggle and social revolution, has been examined by scholars within the last few decades. Yet, in the words of Joan Scott, “paradoxically, the history of women has kept ‘women’ outside history.”² Moreover, the discussion has often remained within a male perspective, placing greater emphasis on the intentions of the male revolutionaries in regards to the extent of women’s participation; whether the male leaders of the Resistance granted or restricted women’s involvement, which ultimately degrades the actual accomplishments of the women. More attention and focus on the women’s perspective of the Resistance, of how they perceived their own involvement is required. This PhD dissertation explores the activities of antifascist women during the Resistance and their subsequent life in concentration camps, or camps of “disciplined living,” throughout Greece, arguing that their experiences defined their

¹ Henry Miller, *The Colossus of Marousi* (UK: Penguin Random House, 2016), 31.

² Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis? Diogenes* 225: 7-14, 10.

life path. The antifascist women were penalized and exiled during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) for their antifascist activity in the Resistance. Nevertheless, they never wavered in the face of hardship, torture, discrimination or isolation. Moreover, their loyalty to the cause for a just society never wavered; on the contrary, it was strengthened. This dissertation contributes to the study of women and war, as well as to the study of exiles, political detainees, and concentration camps in Southern Europe. It explores the political other and the Greek State's "crusade" against a group of citizens within a cold war backdrop. The women exiles in this dissertation take center stage.

Never have Greek women been more heroic than in the Resistance against the Axis powers during World War II. The Resistance Movement in Greece during the Occupation (1941-1944), had two purposes: the liberation of the country from foreign occupation and the formation of a government following liberation that would be in the interests of the people, what was referred to as "laokratia," the people's rule.³ Most importantly, for the women, it enabled their induction within the political life of modern Greece. Furthermore, the rhetoric of the Resistance, which presented a blueprint of a democratic and progressive state in postwar Greece, in conjunction with calls for liberation, fueled women's motivation to join the movement. For a limited time, the short-lived social "revolution" within the Occupation opened avenues for new gender roles and images, while empowering women to freely express themselves in the political and public sphere. Although traditional gender roles were not fundamentally changed, the

³ The Resistance in Greece (1941-1944) against the Italian, Bulgarian and German forces during World War II was formed under EAM (National Liberation Front). By the end of the war EAM had about two million members. Men and women of all ages fought side by side at the battle front under ELAS (EAM's military wing) or clandestinely in cities.

demands of the war opened real opportunities for women to expand their activities beyond the confinement of the home. Moreover, some opportunities found in the Resistance held their roots in the struggles of feminist and socialist women in the pre-World War II era. Furthermore, I argue that they implemented the ideals that they fought for in the Resistance, within the small community that they created in exile. They maintained solidarity amongst each other and unwavering loyalty to the cause for justice and equality.

The Resistance was a starting point for many women and particularly for the young women in their teens, as they were able to engage in activities in the public sphere. The women's drive to fight for the liberation of their country, in addition to their hopes of "laokratia" that the *Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*, EAM (National Liberation Front), which was the leader in the Resistance, propagandized it would establish after the war, led them to join it. Furthermore, the promise of laokratia fueled their loyalty to EAM. Although faced with prison and exile they demonstrated unwavering strength and loyalty to their convictions. What was their motivation? How were they so resilient in spite of state persecution? What were their defense mechanisms? How did they survive the years in exile? In this PhD dissertation, I explore these questions utilizing testimonies and autobiographies. Much of this hasn't been explored by historians.

As a conservative society influenced to a great extent by the Greek Orthodox Church, women were considered to be the "weaker" of the two sexes. Although they were to be "protected" they were not to be heard. Like women in other southern Mediterranean countries, Greek women faced occupational and gender segregation, as

well as political and educational inequality.⁴ Moreover, the Church asserted a pervasive role in society as a social institution, playing a decisive role in maintaining the status quo and advocating a conservative stance toward women, as for example the role of mother and wife being a woman's prominent role in society. This began to change during the interwar period with the formation of radical feminist organizations, led by women such as Roza Imvrioti, such as the "Sindesmos gia ta Dikeomata tis Gynaikas" (Association for Woman's Rights), which resisted the conservative social structures. Women such as Imvrioti greatly influenced the women's lives in exile as she stressed the importance of education.

The Resistance Movement advanced the 'woman question,' which the traditional political system had ignored. According to Constantine Poulos, an American correspondent who traveled throughout the provinces of the areas liberated by the EAM, the struggle against the Nazi's became synonymous with the fight against the old Greek Order.⁵ As they participated in the EAM, women gained self-confidence, and a sense of equality, significantly garnering great esteem. They joined EAM's branches which were geared toward the needs of the struggle for liberation and the effects of the war. *Ethniki Allilengyi*, EA (National Solidarity) fulfilled the basic needs for survival, such as food and clothing. The *Eniaia Panelladiki Organosi Neon*, EPON (United Panhellenic Organization of Youth) was the youth group of EAM, and finally, the *Ellinikos Laikos*

⁴ Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* (Denver, Colorado: Arden Press, 1995), 7.

⁵ Leften S. Stavrianos, *Greece: American Dilemma and Opportunity* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 90.

Apeleftherotikos Stratos, ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army) the military wing of EAM.

The EAM promoted a similar stance to the 'woman' question as Josip Broz's Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which entailed equal political rights, and suffrage. Unlike the Yugoslav case, however, the program of the EAM wasn't implemented in post-World War II Greece due to the civil war that ensued, which led to the outlaw of all of EAM's organizations. In contrast, in Yugoslavia, the establishment of a socialist state after the war, enabled the implementation of the program that was propagandized by the Partisans, led by Josip Broz, commonly known as Tito.⁶ In Greece, the post-war conservative governments re-established control of the political arena, resuscitating women's traditional gender roles of the prewar period. Members of the Resistance were persecuted and the government maintained a blind eye when paramilitary groups terrorized, tortured, or even killed citizens for their alleged or real leftist political convictions. The Greek governments of the postwar period did not differ from Spain's fascist regime under Francisco Franco in the persecution of alleged subversives, although Greece was a parliamentary constitutional monarchy.

There are similarities between the Greek Resistance and the Nicaraguan revolution of 1978-1979; a youth movement, combined with a patriotic struggle, and moreover, the inclusion of women on a mass scale. Maxine Molyneux recounts the way in which Nicaraguan women from all social classes became political subjects-many for the first time-during the resistance to the brutality and repression of the Somoza Regime.

⁶ Ingrid Strobl, *Partisanas: Women in the Armed Resistance to Fascism and German Occupation (1936-1945)* (UK: AK Press, 2008), 52.

Initially led by Anastasio Somoza Garcia, who was succeeded by his sons Luis and Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the Somoza Regime was a dictatorship that ruled Nicaragua from 1936 until it was overthrown by the Sandinista National Liberation Front in 1979.⁷ As also argued by historian Margaret Poulos, women's participation in the Nicaraguan Revolution was almost equal to that of Greece's during World War II.⁸ Yet, as in the Yugoslav case, the guerrillas set up the ensuing government.

While in the case of Nicaragua the women revolutionaries were in a sense betrayed in the post-revolutionary period, in the Greek case we don't see the victory of the Left, and therefore we will never know what could have been. As argued by Poulos, EAM's defeat "occurred before any opportunity to refashion state power and to dash expectations was given."⁹ In both the Yugoslav and Nicaraguan examples, women enter political and social movements that are in the end victorious. Similar to these cases, Greek partisan women fought for a progressive state, yet their movement was defeated. The closest example to their defeat would be Republican Spain, where women were persecuted under Fransisco Franco in a similar fashion as the Greek women under post-World War II conservative governments.

Despite the defeat of EAM, as anthropologist Janet Hart argues in *New Voices of the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance 1941-1964*, the women "have no regrets for

⁷ Maxine Molyneux, "Socialist Societies Old and New: Progress Towards Women's Emancipation," *Feminist Review*, 8 [July 1981]: 1-34.

⁸ Margaret Poulos, *Arms and the Woman: Just Warriors and Greek Feminist Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), xv.

⁹ *Ibid.*, xvi.

what they did.”¹⁰ Even today, the female members of EAM, as historian Tasoula Vervenioti has argued, “Feel that they acted as historical subjects.”¹¹ The women whom I have interviewed have confirmed these arguments. Nevertheless, their contribution wasn’t recognized by the Greek state. Unlike other European countries, such as France for instance, where antifascists were praised at the end of World War II, those that liberated Greece were persecuted, tortured, detained, and in many cases, executed. Moreover, unlike in France, Greek women were not granted political rights immediately after the end of the war; they gained complete and universal suffrage in 1952.

Women’s fate after World War II was affected by the political climate of the period; female antifascists endured the same consequences as their male counterparts. Women’s position in society may have been improved had EAM not been persecuted by subsequent right-wing governments. In the end we do see women’s emancipation, however because of the political climate it is the women on the Right that reap what the women from the left of the political spectrum sowed. For example, women such as Eleni Skoura, who was the first Greek female member of Parliament elected in 1953 with the right wing party, Ellinikos Sindesmos (Greek Alliance) led by general Alexandros Papagos.¹²

Since the 1990s scholars such as Tasoula Vervenioti, Janet Hart, and Margaret Poulos have significantly contributed to the study of antifascist Greek women in works

¹⁰ Janet Hart, *New Voices of the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance 1941-1964* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 33.

¹¹ Tasoula Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis* [Woman of the Resistance] (Athens: Odysseas, 1994), 67.

¹² Maro Pantelidou Malouta, *Misos Eonas Ginekias Psifou, Misos Eonas Gynaikes sti Vouli* [Half a century of women’s Vote, half a Century of women in parliament] (Athens: Greek Parliament, 2007), 39.

such as, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis* (Woman of the Resistance), *New Voices of the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance 1941-1964*, and *Arms and the Woman: Just Warriors and Greek Feminist Identity*, respectively.¹³ All three works are significant histories of women and the Greek Resistance and have proven invaluable to this dissertation. Historian Tasoula Vervenioti's leading work on Greek women and the Resistance has greatly influenced the study of women in 1940s Greece. Vervenioti has argued that women's traditional gender roles were changed during the Resistance. Nevertheless, in her work on women partisans in the Greek Civil War she argues that women were accepted because they were needed militarily, not by choice.¹⁴

Anthropologist Janet Hart's *New Voices of the Nation*, was the first scholarly work on the women of the Greek Resistance in the English language. Along with Vervenioti, Hart focuses on the women of the 1940s, employing a Gramscian approach; she examines the social transformation within Greece during the period of the Resistance. Hart questions whether EAM prepared women to participate in the hypothetical postwar republic and how a critical mass of women grew to expect the full benefits of Greek citizenship. By including personal testimonies of participants, her work focuses on the origins of women's political involvement in the Resistance. Hart demonstrates how the members of EAM viewed the Nazi occupation as an opportunity for social transformation, which according to Hart was a national bid for modernity. She argues

¹³ Janet Hart, *New Voices of the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance 1941-1964* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), Margaret Poulos, *Arms and the Woman: Just Warriors and Greek Feminist Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), Tasoula Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis* [Woman of the Resistance] (Athens: Odysseas, 1994).

¹⁴ Tasoula Vervenioti, "I Machitries tou Demokratikou Stratou Elladas" [The female fighters of the Democratic Army of Greece] in *O Emfilios Polemos: Apo tin Varkiza sto Grammo. Fevrouarios 1945-Avgoustos 1949* [The Civil War: From Varkiza to Grammos. February 1945-August 1949] eds. Elias Nikolakopoulos, Alkis Rigos, and Gregoris Psallidas (Athens: Themelio, 2002), 125-142.

nationalism and hopes for a better society were the women's driving force in joining the Resistance.¹⁵

Margaret Poulos focuses on the *adartissa*, the female guerrilla, of the civil war challenging both Hart's and Vervenioti's judgment that "the only period of transformative significance to women's political identities was the Resistance movement," which initially mobilized them.¹⁶ Shortly after liberation in 1944, Poulos maintains, as the country was plagued by civil strife "the ratio of women fighters in the partisan forces rose to an unprecedented level by the standards of the Second World War."¹⁷ For the first time "the call to extend national citizenship to include women...was brought to the attention of the masses."¹⁸

According to Poulos, there are three key nation building moments in modern Greek history where women's armed participation was a defining feature: The War for Independence of (1821-1930), Occupation (1941-44), and the Civil War (1946-1949). Poulos' work analyzes the relationship between feminism and nationalism in modern Greece. She employs the "female warrior" as an analytical category in order to investigate the relationship between Greek feminism and nationalism, arguing that there has been a historical association between the right to bear arms and the acquisition of citizenship rights. She explores the manner in which Greek feminists focused on the established nationalism and national identity formulations to promote their scope of inclusion within society without disturbing the gender system that was in place. For

¹⁵ Hart, *New Voice of the Nation*, 138.

¹⁶Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, 108.

¹⁷Ibid., 76.

¹⁸Ibid., 77.

Poulos the Resistance represented a significant milestone in the trajectory of gender politics in Greece. She doesn't focus on the reinstatement of traditional gender activities; she is interested in the ways that gendered nationalist narratives were constructed to legitimize the backlash of the Greek State.¹⁹

What EAM espoused was patriotism, not nationalism. Hart misuses the term nationalism when referring to the women in EAM. For example, Hart makes constant reference to Greek nationalism when referring to women in the Resistance: "The case of the women who joined the Greek resistance shows how strong and ubiquitous Greek nationalism actually cut across societal cleavages and offered powerful motivation for participation."²⁰ In its simplest definition, nationalism is the policy or doctrine of asserting the interests of one's own nation viewed as separate from the interests of other nations. It has a negative connotation. Furthermore, in a Greek context, nationalism can be associated with fascism. It has a different meaning; nationalism translated in Greek is "ethnikismos," which is a form of patriotism, but conservative and ultra Right wing. EAM was a "patriotic" organization; meaning, in Greek context, and in a general context, love for one's country, not in the belief of "ethnikismos," which is the belief that one's country is better than another's.

Like Hart, I examine how the women joined the Resistance. I do not, however, question to what degree the Resistance fulfilled its mobilization potential. What I demonstrate, is the manner in which the women themselves perceived the potential of the Resistance, and how it empowered them. As found in Hart's oral histories of surviving

¹⁹Ibid., xvii.

²⁰Hart, *New Voices of the Nation*, 217.

female anti-fascists, the Resistance demonstrated the manner in which women connected their active participation in national liberation with their own liberation as citizens and women. Hart has maintained that a defining feature of the Greek Resistance was the formation of the female political subject. According to Hart, “it would be an exaggeration to claim complete success for EAM policies among the rank and file. Nevertheless, on the whole the trend initiated by the organization was inclusive and sensitive to women’s plight.”²¹

I disagree with arguments posed by scholars that women were used by EAM for propaganda purposes, such as their presence was used to “prod” male honor.²² Similar arguments have been made about women in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), such as that the *miliciana*²³ was used as a means in stimulating men to comply with their duty as soldiers in the anti-fascist struggle in Spain during the Spanish Civil War.²⁴ Like historian Mary Nash, Vervenioti has argued that the presence of women instill in men a sentiment of honor and commit to the struggle.²⁵ The *adartissa*²⁶ and the antifascist Greek woman’s’ image however, doesn’t seem to have been altered in a sexual image as Nash has argued about the *miliciana*. Through oral histories, this PhD dissertation argues that the women in the Greek Resistance were not used as “pawns.” Furthermore, the women in this dissertation did not revert to pre-war status, although there was essentially a general re-instatement of the old political order. As argued by Hart “ignoring the voices

²¹ Hart, *Voices of the Nation*, 207.

²² Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, 89, Vervenioti, *Woman of the Resistance*, 316.

²³ A female soldier in the Spanish Civil War

²⁴ Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, 6.

²⁵ Vervenioti, *Woman of the Resistance*, 316.

²⁶ A female guerilla in ELAS

of the women themselves,” fails in allowing “participants to contribute to the discourse about participation based on their own experiences.”²⁷

In *Arms and the Woman*, Poulos argues that “the organization and management of women in ELAS echoed tradition and established social norms, which echoed the traditional family power structure. The gendered honor/shame-based moral code continued, as an effective mechanism of social control within the ‘mixed’ ranks of EPON (and EAM-ELAS). This system imposed a disproportionate burden for girls and women.”²⁸ However, Plousia Liakata, the last living member of the girl’s EPON Platoon of the Thirteenth Division of ELAS, refutes this claim. Liakata also refutes the claim that Meni Papailiou, known by the pseudonym Thiella,²⁹ one of the most revered female guerillas of ELAS, was drawn to the Resistance as an “escape” “from a rigidly defined existence.”³⁰ In addition to knowing Thiella, Plousia has also met and spoken with Thiella’s daughters and there is no foundation to this claim.³¹

I concur with Poulos’s argument that most of the women who fought for women’s rights did not consider themselves feminists. However, I disagree with her argument that it could be plausible that “girls and women saw the possibility of becoming involved in the Resistance as an escape route from, at the very least, a mundane experience.”³²

²⁷ Hart, *New Voices of the Nation*, 151.

²⁸ Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, 92.

²⁹ Thiella=Storm

³⁰ Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, 93.

³¹ Poulos uses Costas Couvaras, an OSS agent as a source, who it is worth mentioning was unfamiliar with the Resistance movement and had no knowledge of EAM’s program, as he asked a young guerrilla to define laokratia, see Hart, *New Voices*, 295.

³² Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, 93.

Although they may have enjoyed the freedom that they experienced as a result of their participation, referring to women's involvement in the Resistance as an "escape" undermines their contributions. She also argues, however, that although change to women's status in post-war Greece was minimal, the protagonists found their experiences transformative.

This historical study seeks to enhance the historiography of the women in 1940s Greece by adding the women's voice, steering away from the analysis of the *Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, KKE's (Communist Party of Greece) which significant scholarly works have exhaustively explored. My focus is not on the KKE's intentions or in questioning their motives. I am interested in the women's intentions, in their trajectories, in their own motivations to join the struggle against fascism, and how the Resistance and its aftermath stigmatized their lives. The women that I focus on believed in something so profoundly and were not disillusioned when they were "defeated;" no matter the hardships and punishment they endured, they never wavered. Although they were imprisoned, tortured, and exiled, they never saw themselves as victims. As ex-exile Pota Kakkava has declared: "I haven't regretted a thing. Why would I regret our struggle? It was justified. We saw the injustice of the Occupation and the Greek State and didn't accept it. We wanted to change society. If we weren't successful, it doesn't matter. We tried and that's what counts."³³

The women were exiled to islands of the Aegean as a measure of "reformation" and "redemption" for their activities within the EAM, which as its dominant force the

³³ Pota Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, September 5, 2015.

KKE, had “infected” with communist ideology. The logic behind internal exile and the camps of disciplined living was that the women would reform and return to society “nationally sound.” In its attempt to break the legacy of the Resistance Movement and re-establish and secure its power, the Greek State and its forces systematically tortured the exiles. The island of Makronisos was the epitome and ultimate reform center where the state believed the detainees would surely “break” and sign the Declaration of Repentance (DOR) a document denying any connection to the KKE. Through torture and horrendous living conditions, the Greek state anticipated that the women would succumb to signing the DOR. By signing it the women would have denied their loyalty to everything that EAM stood for and the ideals that they fought for. Signing the DOR also entailed public denouncement. Moreover, the signing of the DOR did not guarantee one’s freedom from exile or imprisonment. Furthermore, the DOR, which was implemented during the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas in the late 1930s was a “weapon” used by the Greek State to intimidate and break the members of the Left.

Margaret E. Kenna’s significant work, *The Social Organisation of Exile: Greek Political Detainees in the 1930s* focuses on the communes of exiled political detainees in the 1930s, during the Metaxas dictatorship. The exiles were interned for their involvement in trade unions and suspected or real leftist activities and political convictions. Focusing on the island of Anafi, Kenna interviewed former detainees, living in the Athens area who had been detained under the Metaxas Regime (1936-1941). As argued by Kenna, “the human story of exile life brings to light events which are, in a

sense, ‘missing from history’ in most accounts of modern Greece.”³⁴ Furthermore, some of the stories Kenna was told by the former detainees, confirmed published histories of the period, while others shed new light on conditions of life in exile.³⁵ In the same vein, the interviews by former women exiles in my case study in this dissertation shed new light on the circumstances of life in exile in the post-World War II period. The use of memory, both collective and individual, is also examined in this dissertation.

The use of internal exile in Greece as a means of political persecution was not unique. It was also employed in Italy between 1926 and 1943 when thousands of Italian citizens considered social and political outcasts were arrested and deported to islands of exile, as well as to isolated villages, by Benito Mussolini’s fascist regime.³⁶ *Confino politico*, or political confinement, is a measure used by regimes who seek to eliminate the virus from the body of the nation; to prevent it from contaminating the social and political life of the nation. Scattered islands, such as the Aeolian Islands in Italy and the numerous islands of the Aegean in Greece, were used to “relocate political and social undesirables to the desolate margins of the nations.”³⁷

In spite of interest in the period of the Greek Civil War in the last twenty years, the internal exile of antifascist women isn’t explored in Greek historiography. Since the restoration of democracy in 1974,³⁸ a plethora of memoirs dealing with the period of the

³⁴Margaret Kenna, *The Social Organization of Exile: Greek Political Detainees in the 1930s* (UK: Routledge, 2013), 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶ Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

³⁷Piero Garofalo, Elizabeth Leake and Dana Renga, *Internal Exile in Fascist Italy: History and Representations of Confino* (Manchester University Press, 2019), 9.

³⁸ After the fall of the seven year military dictatorship 1967-1974

Resistance and exile were published; Notable works by exiles include: Ourania Staveri's *To Martiriko Trigono ton Exoriston Gynaikon: Chios-Trikeri-Makronisi* (The Torturous Triangle of the Exiled Women: Chios-Trikeri-Makronisos), Nitsa Gavriilidou's *Apopse Chtipoun tis Gynaikes* (Tonight they beat the women), Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exoristes: Chios, Trikeri, Makronisos* (Exiled Women: Chios, Trikeri, Makronisos) Natalia Apostolopoulou, *Perifanes kai Adoulotes* (Proud and Unconquered) Eleni Lefka's *Gynaikes stin Exoria* (Women in Exile), and Regina Pagoulatou's *Exiles: A Chronicle, 1948-1950*. Pagoulatou's work is the only one that has been published in English. It was translated by Theony Condos, and it is this version that I use.

While scholarly works have focused on the Greek men in exile, such as the notable work by historian Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners during the Greek Civil War, 1945-1950* which examines prison and camp life during the Greek Civil War and is integral to the understanding of the use of torture in the immediate postwar era period, there hasn't been a concentration on Greek women and their life in exile. Until the very recent work by Maria Fafaliou, *Koritsia se Periklistous Horous: Martiries 1942-1952* (Girls in enclosed spaces: testimonies 1942-1952), literature on women in exile has been limited to autobiographies. Nevertheless, although Fafaliou's work is a valuable source, it is an anthology of texts taken from autobiographies and excerpts from documentaries, although she also includes excerpts from her own interviews with exiled women. Kyriaki Kamarinou's extensive work of the lessons conducted in exile, *Ta "Petrina" Panepistimia: O Agonas gia ti Morfosi stis Filakes kai tis Exories, 1924-1974* (The "Stone" Universities: The Struggle for education in the prisons and in exile, 1924-1975), has greatly contributed to the historiography of

exile in Greece, in understanding the organization of education, although it centers more on men's experience.

My first detailed encounter with exiled women was journalist Regina Pagoulatou's work *Exile: a Chronicle*. I remember reading about one of the women who is included in this dissertation, Plousia Liakata, in Regina's chronicle. Pota Kakkava, the woman who is responsible for the marble plaque commemorating the exiled women on the island of Trikeri, which I had first seen on the back cover of Regina's chronicle, is also a protagonist in this dissertation. It was remarkable meeting some of the women I read about, who knew Regina, and having the chance to share memories of her.

Oral histories and autobiographies reveal the energy of an entire generation of Greek women that were marginalized during post-World War II Greece. Documentaries, which for the first time completely and solely focused on the women in the Resistance and exile, were produced by Greek director Alinta Dimitriou in 2008 and 2009, such as her documentaries *Poulia sto Valto* (Birds in the mire) and *Zoi stous Vrachous* (Life on the rocks), respectively. As the historical consultant on *Orama Pictures'* award winning documentary feature film *Beneath the Olive Tree* (2015), I was given the opportunity to examine hours of footage and interviews of imprisoned and exiled women. I then had the opportunity to personally meet and interview some of these women, in addition to many others. Spending time with them on the island of Trikeri, one of the islands in which more than five thousand women were exiled during the Greek Civil War, enriched my perspective on women's contribution to modern Greek history.

This case study relies heavily on oral testimonies. The women's testimonies and experiences are a vital component of this dissertation. Obtaining the women's trust was a

vital element and prerequisite in conducting my field work. My first attempt was to attend various events at the *Panellinia Enosi Kratoumenon Agoniston Makronisou*, PEKAM (Panhellenic Union of Detained Resistance Fighters of Makronisos) in the center of Athens. By the time I attended the women's annual trip to Trikeri, in September 2012, I had already befriended some of the women who I interviewed.

The oral histories that I have collected include both personal, individual experience, as well as collective. The interviews that I conducted took place on the islands of Ikaria, Trikeri, and Makronisos, and in the cities of Athens, Sparta, Kalamata, and New York. I conducted several hours of informal interviews, including numerous follow-up conversations, in person and over the phone with former exiled women, as well as a few men; five that were guerillas, one that was imprisoned, and one that was exiled. Most of my interviewees had a primary school or high school education and in terms of political ideology lie on the spectrum of the center-Left to KKE and SYRIZA.³⁹

During group interviews with the women, the atmosphere notably lightened. Each woman contributed with her own recollection of the same events. Throughout the interviews, the women whose trajectories I follow illustrate life on each of the three islands, Chios, Trikeri, and Makronisos. They discuss how exile began for them, which was for most on the island of Chios, and how it climaxed to what they refer to as “hell on earth”—the island of Makronisos. The women affirm their defense mechanisms, their struggles, and how they organized their lives. What becomes evident from each testimony is that these women succeeded in organizing their lives in a manner which maintained to

³⁹ SYRIZA-Is a political party in Greece which is a coalition of the radical Left. Led by Alexis Tsipras, it was in power between January 2015 and July 2019.

some degree the thread with what would have been their life's trajectory had they never been detained. The general qualities that the women that I examine in this case study shared was their expression of empathy, love, and solidarity amongst each other, which enabled them in living in solidarity with one another.

Testimonies enable a researcher to establish connections between historical actors and historical memory. I strongly believed, from the beginning of my research, that oral history can strengthen and balance a written document. A document is ultimately a product of an individual, and therefore its objectivity can also be questioned. Nevertheless, a written document is a product of its time and carries a certain weight. For this reason, the nine journals that I utilize are a valuable body of testimonies, as they were written in 1951, while the women were still in exile, and hence their memory is less blemished. Of course, I do not take it for granted that these journals are written by the women exiles, and therefore carry a certain weight of subjectivity. These journals are descriptive in nature and each woman has written about one specific aspect of exile, which Roza Imvrioti assigned to each of them: Evangelia Fotaki from Iraklio, Crete, wrote about the women in the detention centers, Athena Konstantopoulou, a pharmacist from Thessaloniki, wrote about the Chios Camp, Stasa Kefalidou, a dentist from Thessaloniki wrote about the guerrilla families who were sent to Trikeri, Victoria Theodorou, a poet, editor, and publisher of the original publication, from Chania, Crete, wrote two of the notebooks about the island of Trikeri, Roza Imvrioti, wrote hers about the Larissa Camp, which she was sent to and severely tortured before being sent back to Trikeri, Aphrodite Mavroeidi, a journalist from Athens wrote about Makronisos, and Nitsa Gavriilidou, wrote about the alleged "dangerous" women exiles on Chios.

Upon leaving the island in the early 1950s the women buried their journals under an olive tree on the camp site. Victoria Theodorou, an ex-exile, and co-author/editor of the journals, retrieved them from where they were buried for so many years, and published them in 1975 with the title, *Stratopeda Gynaikon* (Women's Camps); A second edition circulated in 1976, which included Nitsa Gavriilidou's journal as well. In 2006, Alfeios Publications published a new edition which included a photo album of the women while in exile.

In addition to oral histories and testimonies, I utilize archives, newspapers, memoirs, and scholarly works, in both the English and Greek language. All translations of testimonies are my own, including all quotes and paraphrases from all Greek sources, except Regina Pagoulatou's *Exile*, which I use the published English translation. I have examined a significant number of invaluable primary sources while in Athens, Greece when visiting the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), the Archives of Benaki Museum, and the Museum of Makronisos, as well as significant material from the Epimorfotiko Kendro Charilaos Florakis (Charilaos Florakis Educational Center), where the historical archives of the KKE that are open to the public are housed, and the Greek Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA) was invaluable to understanding the socialist feminist movement of the 1920s-1950s. The Modern Greek Archives housed in Kings College London have also been a very useful resource, as the archives of the League for Democracy in Greece, a political organization founded in the postwar period in support of the Greek political prisoners, refugees, and their families, are housed there.

This PhD dissertation provides a feminist theoretical approach, and draws on the most significant works on Greek women during the Resistance and Greek Civil War, yet

it seeks to enrich the historiography with the voice of the historical actors; it seeks to present the events through the women's testimonies. Chapters three, four, five and six are greatly based on personal testimonies of the antifascist women. Although it does not take on a comparative approach, it provides a dialogue between the micro and macro history of women in resistance, exile and torture.

Chapter Overview

In addition to this introductory chapter, this PhD dissertation is comprised of five subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on women's predicament before and after the war. It focuses on the social and political environment regarding the 'woman question' in Greece before World War II, from the birth of the new republic. It discussed the rise of fascism, to the birth of the Resistance, and gives a historical overview of the main events that sealed the women's fate in exile between 1948 and 1954. It argues that the reforms and women's rights that women's organizations fought for in the 1920s and 1930s were implemented, to a certain degree, in the Resistance. In post-World War II Greece, these antifascist women were penalized and exiled during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) for their activities in the Resistance.

Chapter 3 examines the Nazi Occupation, and the call for resistance, while focusing on the women's antifascist actions, demonstrating their contributions, as well as the consequences of their actions. Furthermore, it demonstrates that women were a vital component of the Resistance; they prove to be significant in many positions and their participation was not limited to traditional gender roles of pre-World War II Greece.

Chapter 4 explores the women's journey from arrest to exile and their life on each of the islands, Chios, Trikeri, and Makronisos. It delves into their everyday life, the ways in which they organized their lives on each island, examining their anxieties, their defense mechanisms and survival skills. Chapter 5 focuses on the torture that was inflicted upon the women, concentrating on the island of Makronisos where the systematic torture of the exiled women was conducted. Although a comparative approach isn't employed, there is a discussion of other examples of state torture during the twentieth century.

Chapter 6 concludes this dissertation with the women in the post-exile period, giving a historical overview of events in the post-civil war period that influenced their continued detainment until the mid-1950s. It also explores the collective memory of 1940s Greece, of the Resistance and the civil war. It discusses the period of reconciliation and the ways the former exiled women remember the period in question, with anniversary pilgrimages, while also focusing on the ways the official state has or hasn't paid tribute to the fighters of the Resistance and former exiles. Furthermore, there is a brief comparison between the modes of preservation of collective memory in Greece with that of countries in Latin America, such as Argentina and Chile.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

At a gathering of the International Congress for the Rights of Woman in Paris on July 16, 1889, American and European women were surprised to see that Greek women were no longer wearing caftans.¹ Led by Kalliroe Parren, a delegation of the first Greek feminists, demonstrated that Greek women were ready for change. While the early feminists were not socialists, it is during this same period that socialist ideas gradually infiltrated Greece. In particular, socialist rhetoric gave hopes of inclusion and acquisition of equal rights and opportunities. Furthermore, it provided the foundation for a more vigorous and radical feminist movement, and new concepts of gender.

As French political activist Olympe de Gouges argued in 1791, a true revolution cannot materialize if women's rights are not recognized.² Almost half a century later Flora Tristan argued that women's progress is directly related with the progress of the working class. For socialists it is through a revolutionary transformation of society that women gain equality; the barrier to women's fate is economic. In Greece, socialists sought to first transform society, while also calling for the betterment of women. During the Occupation they were able to put their rhetoric to practice. It is during the 1940s, that women in Greece were given more opportunities to stand equally beside men than ever before.

¹Margaret Poulos, *Arms and the Woman: Just Warriors and Greek Feminist Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 38.

²Olympe de Gouges, *The Declaration of the Rights of Women: The Original Manifesto for Justice, Equality and Freedom* (UK: Ilex Press, 2018).

This chapter will delve into Greek women's lives before and immediately following World War II, placing their experiences into context. It will focus on the social and political environment regarding the 'woman question' in Greece before World War II and give a historical overview of the main events that sealed the women's fate in exile between 1948 and 1954. It will demonstrate how the members of the first feminist wave, gradually opened paths for the younger generation within the Greek traditional system, and directly and indirectly influenced the World War II generation of young women.

As argued by historian Margaret Poulos, there have been three significant moments in modern Greek history in which women played a critical role in national conflict, and which in turn, were given the opportunity to surpass traditional roles in society, although ephemeral; the Revolution of 1821 (War of Independence) against the Ottoman Empire, the Resistance Movement during World War II, and the Civil War. Yet, as argued by historian Vasiliki Lazou, women's participation in the Revolution of 1821 proved to be fruitless as it didn't elevate their status in the least. It is not until the late 1880s that women's contribution to the war for independence is even recognized in literature.³

During the interwar period socialist political organizations began to form; young intellectual women and workers became inspired by these organizations' agenda and saw potential in gaining political agency through the proletariat's joint struggle. The advent of World War II attracted women of all ages to these organizations. Their enthusiasm for freedom drew them toward the largest Resistance group, the *Ethniko Apeleftherotiko*

³ Vasiliki Lazou, *Women and Revolution: 1821, from the Ottoman World to the Free Greek State* (Athens: Diopetra, 2021), 20.

Metopo, EAM (National Liberation Front) and consequently they became more affiliated with the Left. During the Occupation, EAM attempted to implement elements of socialist rhetoric such as the woman's vote, to practice. EAM gave women opportunities in the public sphere alongside men than ever before.

Women's experience in EAM forever changed them, enabling them in realizing their full potential as citizens and unable to revert to "traditional" gender norms. Moreover, the Greek Resistance and the subsequent civil war brought to the fore social and cultural wars that were simmering for years. Tradition clashed with modernity, socialism battled conservatism, traditional gender roles clashed with the "new" woman. Leaders of the first feminist wave such as Roza Imvrioti⁴ participated in the Resistance, and would mentor the young female members of the Resistance later on in exile, persecuted, like Imvrioti, for their anti-fascist activities during World War II.

Women and the New Republic

The Constitution of Greece of 1844 granted that all Greeks are equal under the law.⁵ Yet, in reality the reference to "all Greeks" was solely to all men. Despite their contribution during the War of Independence (1821-1830), there is no reference to women. The woman's vote was first mentioned in Greece in the constitution of 1832, of

⁴ Roza Imvrioti was born in Athens, Greece, in 1898. She was an educator, who worked in schools throughout Greece. In the late 1920s she became involved in the first feminist wave and in 1941 joined EAM. Because of her participation in the Resistance she was imprisoned and exiled along with thousands of women, including the women in this dissertation, whom she takes under her wing and helps organize their lives in exile, particularly in regards to lessons.

⁵ <https://www.elsyn.gr/sites/default/files/%CE%A3%CF%8D%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%BC%CE%B1%201844.pdf> Accessed October 11, 2021.

which stated that they were excluded from voting as they weren't freely able to manage their wealth or property.⁶ Nevertheless, a nationalist zeal during the end of the nineteenth century bestowed upon Greek women the role of promoting Hellenism and the reclaiming of historically ethnic “Greek lands” from the confinement of their kitchens. The need for national rehabilitation after the defeat of 1897, (Greco-Turkish War), granted women more active roles such as caring for the refugees, training nurses, and sewing soldiers’ uniforms. Women were responsible in instilling in children national pride and to support the country’s spirit; they became significant caretakers of the wounded soldiers.

According to historians Angelika Psarra and Eleni Varika, late-nineteenth-century feminists utilized the ‘identity question’ in order to pave the way for the integration of women into the new Republic.⁷ Although not comparable to the first-wave feminist movement in other European countries such as Germany, England, and France, an organized feminist movement developed in Greece in the 1920s, similar to Spain's- it was sluggish but hopeful. Yet the feminist movement in the interwar period wasn’t a united homogeneous one. Socialist women were not in complete symbiosis with the feminists. However, although they differed in ideology, they were all pro-woman’s vote.

As in Spain, at the turn of the century, a small group of elite women, whose demands were not explicitly suffragist, promoted the feminist movement in Greece. This group of elite women was greatly influenced by journalist Kalliroe Parren, who formed the first Greek feminist collective in the late 1800s. The collective was made up of

⁶ <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/f3c70a23-7696-49db-9148-f24dce6a27c8/syn11.pdf>
Accessed October 11, 2021

⁷ Efi Avdela and Angelika Psarra, “Engendering ‘Greekness’: Women’s Emancipation and Irredentist Politics in Nineteenth-Century Greece” (*Mediterranean Historical Review*, Vol 20, No1, June 2005 pp.67-79), 69.

middle to upper-class women who focused on a liberal struggle for women's rights, in the same vein as Mary Wollstonecraft. It advocated that women ought to have an education commensurate with their position in society and claimed that women are essential to the nation because they educate its children and could be better companions to their husbands if they obtained equal rights. Greek women ought to obtain equal rights to literacy which would make her a better wife and mother. Furthermore, like Wollstonecraft, the collective never explicitly argued that men and women were equal. Parren's feminist perspective focused primarily on education by promoting a woman's right to literacy as necessary for becoming a capable wife and mother, one who could rear and educate her children in becoming honorable citizens. Specifically, she founded the *I Efimeris ton Kirion* (The Ladies Newspaper) in 1887, where the call for women's right to vote was first brought to discussion and made an issue. The first edition circulated on March 8, 1887.⁸

The "Ladies Newspaper" emphasized the significance of access to paid work for working-class women and literary pursuits for middle-upper class women. It intended to provide the proper forum for literary developments of middle-class women. Furthermore, according to Poulos, the paper operated as a propaganda tool and an effective means of forming a collective women's identity. The authors who contributed to the newspaper often aligned their demands with the era's dominant nationalist concerns. They promoted the notion that a woman's family must include the nation and humanity in addition to her husband and children. Interestingly, Athenian society received the first edition so well

⁸ Yiannis Kairofilis, *I Epanastasi ton Gynaikon stin Athena tis Bel Epoch* [Women's revolution in Athens during the Belle Epoch] (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2013).

that it sold out on the first day. French and American intellectuals and Greek women of the diaspora made regular contributions to the paper, adding a certain prestige.⁹

Furthermore, the “Ladies Newspaper” sought to justify the purpose of women’s national advancement fundamentally on the basis of history.

Greek women had, according to Poulos, a narrative of the struggle for independence in their national psyche; a narrative that boasted of heroic accomplishments of historical figures such as Laskarina Bouboulina and Manto Mavrogenous.¹⁰ Yet, further examination into the lives of these women was never encouraged. Nevertheless, it was a folktale, which during the Resistance young women alluded to when trying to describe how courageous they felt. Until the publication of *Gynaikes tou '21*¹¹ (Women of 1821), by Koula Xiradaki, a self-taught historian and member of the Resistance, and the very recent publication of historian Vasiliki Lazou’s work *Women and Revolution*,¹² the experience of women in the war hadn’t been studied in depth. Women didn’t attract the attention of a historians’ gaze nor were they perceived as a separate entity. It isn’t until Parren and the Ladies Newspaper that women are given a rightful place in the history of the national struggle. In the end of the nineteenth century numerous articles

⁹ Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, 35

¹⁰ Laskarina Pinotsi, known as “Bouboulina” originally from the island of Hydra, was born in Constantinople in 1771. She lived on the island Spetses and was a Greek naval commander and is considered a hero of the War for Greek Independence. She died in 1825, Manto Mavrogenous, born in Trieste in 1796, also considered a hero of the war as she played a significant role in financially supporting the Greeks. After using all her funds for the cause, she died penniless in Paro in 1848.

¹¹ Koula Xiradaki, *Gynaikes tou '21: Prosfores, iroismi kai thisies, simvoli stin erevna* [Women of '21: contributions, heroism and sacrifices, contribution to research (Athens: Koukida, 2021).

¹² Lazou, *Women and Revolution: 1821*.

and monographs were written on behalf of women's contribution to the Revolution; it was a period of national pride.¹³

Tributes to the efforts of revolutionary figures such as Laskarina Bouboulina and Manto Mavrogenous were ubiquitous throughout the editions. Women's writing was seen as a means of advancing the spiritual growth which would support emancipation. Parren's perception of a modern Greek woman was deserving of all liberties of men, yet she "delayed the campaign for suffrage, arguing instead for the establishment of basic literacy as a necessary prerequisite before any such considerations were pursued."¹⁴ Moreover, her newspaper didn't reach the lower classes as a great percentage was illiterate and endured a daily life significantly different from upper class women that Parren and her collective targeted. Greek feminists, such as Parren, worked for the emancipation of the women of the upper classes. Within Greek historiography they are regarded as being the "first feminists" but they didn't serve the 'woman question' universally. The working class woman's concerns focused on the basic means of survival; employment and the means to feed and clothe her family. It wasn't until the formation of socialist parties that the plight of the women of the Greek working class was addressed.

German Marxist theorist, Clara Serkin, argued that a woman can only achieve full emancipation when she achieves economic independence; "until the woman achieved economic independence she would be enslaved to the man, just as the worker was to

¹³ Ibid., 16.

¹⁴ Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, 36.

capital.”¹⁵ The victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917 spread hopes that a socialist state was possible and could be emulated. Just one year later, socialist parties formed in Greece, such as the *Sosialistiko Ergatiko Komma Ellados*, SEKE (Socialist Worker's Party of Greece) in 1918, which later became the *Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, KKE (Communist Party of Greece) in 1924, and the *Sosialistiko Komma Elladas*, SKE (Socialist Party of Greece), an anti-Comintern party, which survived until the early 1950s.

Greece's universal first wave of feminism emerged in the interwar period. These feminists advocated for political equality for all, while also for a woman's right to employment, education, her place in the household and in the family, the protection of her children and any children out of wedlock, and the rights of the refugees from Turkey in the early 1920s. The Greek feminists that supported the new socialist parties labored to educate women on their oppressed circumstances and how to better their lives; they attempted to form a collective conscience.

On April 16, 1920 the “Sindesmos gia ta Dikeomata tis Gynaikas” (Association for a Woman's Rights) was founded.¹⁶ Feminism for Greek women of the interwar period was their reluctance to accept a second-class status. Founders of the Association were: educator Roza Imvrioti, music teacher Avro Theodoropoulou,¹⁷ and writer Athena

¹⁵ Jane Slaughter and Robert Kern, eds., *European Women on the Left: Socialism, Feminism, and the Problems faced by Political Women, 1880 to the Present* (Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981), 33.

¹⁶ *Elliniko Logotechniko kai Istoriko Archeio*, ELIA (Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive) Athena Yianniou, Box 3.

¹⁷ Avra Theodoropoulou was a musician and activist, born in 1880 in Andrianoupolis, in modern day Turkey. She was part of a wealthy family that relocated to Athens, Greece in the late nineteenth century. Avra married Spyros Theodoropoulou, a writer who went by the name Agis Theros. He was also a Venizelist politician. She was one of the founders of *Adelphi tou Stratioti* (Sister of the Soldier) an

Yianniou.¹⁸ Influenced by socialist ideas, these radical feminists demanded better work facilities, suffrage, and combating discriminatory laws. Writing in 1927, Theodoropoulou argued that feminism is “the international movement for the attainment of equal rights with that of man in state, law, work and society.”¹⁹ The movement sought equal rights for women’s employment, for their economic independence and the ability to be in charge of their own destiny. They sought to help women of all classes understand that it is in their own interest to struggle and obtain equal rights with men, and in due course society as a whole will benefit, and furthermore, to increase their level of education in order to be able to be in charge of their own affairs. Their struggle was on two fronts-the vote, and the reforms needed to ensure women’s equal status in society. All feminist groups agreed that the changes in law were a prerequisite for any social changes in women’s status.

As in other southern Mediterranean countries, Greece’s social and political environment was significantly disparate amongst the two sexes at the turn of the twentieth century. Within a prevailing ideology that women were to be limited to domestic duties, women worked in specific kinds of labor, such as seamstresses or in grocery stores that they tended, which were adjacent to their homes. The predominant model for a woman was that of mother and wife. Southern Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Greece traditionally have been conservative, and the majority of women were to a great degree conservative, which was greatly due to the Church's influence.

organization which addressed social issues caused by war, giving women an active means to participate in civic affairs.

¹⁸ Athena Gaitanou-Yianniou, socialist and feminist and teacher, originally from Constantinople, formed the Socialist Women’s Association in 1919. She was also a member of the League, as well as the *Ethniko Symvouleio* (National Council). She was married to Nikos Yiannios, who was the first editor of *Rizospastis*, which was the KKE Party’s newspaper.

¹⁹ Avra Theodoropoulou, “Feminism in Greece,” *Nea Estia* 1927, Charilaos Floraki Educational Center Archives, AM:544875.

The Greek Orthodox Church was instrumental in suppressing women, as they preached and proselytized on the “acceptable” and conservative gender norms that structured women’s lives. Like their Spanish counterparts, society treated and perceived Greek women as vulnerable beings that needed to be “sheltered.” Moreover, men considered women’s lives of lesser value, particularly in rural Greece, where a mule’s life was more important to a husband than his wife’s. For example, when walking over a mine, he had his wife lead the way, for the loss of a mule or a donkey was more detrimental to him.²⁰

Like in Spain, where socialist groups led by Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent were established, women in Greece, such as Athena Yianniou, Avra Theodoropoulou and Roza Imvrioti established women’s socialist organizations, beginning the long struggle against the underestimation and disrespect of women within Greek society. Yianniou struggled for suffrage, yet, like Spanish lawyer and socialist, Victoria Kent, she was ambivalent as to whether Greek women were ready for universal suffrage. Due to the high percentage of illiteracy amongst the working class, Yianniou was skeptical as to whether women had a political conscience and awareness of what party was in their best interests. Furthermore, she was concerned that women would be influenced by their male family members and “would go to the voting booth like. . .sheep in a herd.”²¹

²⁰ Pota Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, September 5, 2015.

²¹ “Mia agnosti protopora stis arches tou eona,” [An unknown pioneer of the twentieth century] *Rizospastis*, July 20, 1997.

Women Menstruate, Hence are Dangerous

In 1921, the Greek Parliament debated women's suffrage. Violent backlashes prevented it, however, from becoming law. Opponents of the women's vote fought fervently against it. In 1928 the newspaper "*Nea Imera*" (New Day) published an article arguing that "a woman's vote is dangerous, therefore rejected." A woman's vote was dangerous, according to the article, because "women menstruate every month, and are therefore emotionally unstable." Since all women do not menstruate on the same day, the article argued, there isn't one specific day that would be "safe" for them to vote:

Certain Greek females request that women be given the right to vote. In regards to this matter, well renowned experts have argued from the Parliament's podium, the well-known fact, that all women have an unstable and extreme spiritual condition during some days of the month. New and more accurate studies demonstrate that not only on certain days, but throughout the whole month, women are spiritually and emotionally unstable, which climaxes throughout the year. Because these days are not the same for all women, it is impossible to find specific days of spiritual stability and psychological tranquility for all women in order to have elections. Consequently, a woman's vote is dangerous, therefore, unwanted.²²

Nevertheless, there was a small victory in 1930 for literate women over the age of thirty years old as they were granted the right to vote in municipal elections. On November 21, 1930, the then mayor of Athens, Spyros Merkouris, wrote to Athena Yianniou, who was the President of the Socialist Women's Association, declaring that women could vote in

²²*Nea Imera*, March 20, 1928, ELIA Archives.

municipal elections.²³ Yet, according to a 1928 census, only sixty-five percent of Greek women over thirty were literate. Women were almost sixty percent illiterate.²⁴

Women's educational achievement throughout the country, particularly of the lower class, was profoundly lower than males.' The literacy rate was minimal for female students at university level. The realization that the furthering of women's education was essential surfaced in Greece at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet, collective action and the development of a female consciousness was a gradual process. The issue was given serious attention after women involved in political organizations began organizing to address it. They campaigned to increase women's enrollment in schools and were more assertive in their demands for equality.

At the end of the 1930s females made up forty-five percent of the student population in elementary school and thirty-three percent at secondary level education.²⁵ While in private education the percentage was higher. This demonstrates that the upper classes schooled their children to a greater degree. Moreover, women who obtained a secondary education usually became teachers and comprised forty percent of the teachers in public education.²⁶

In the countryside, families usually allowed one child to obtain a higher education, and usually a boy. Parents perceived the education to be equivalent to a

²³Letter from the Mayor of Athens to Athena Yianniou, ELIA-Yianniou Box 2.

²⁴ Janet Hart, *New Voices of the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance, 1941-1964* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 112, Demetra Samiou, *Ta Politika Dikeomata ton Ellinidon 1864-1952: Idiotita tou Politi kai Katholiki Psifoforia* [Greek women's political rights 1864-1952](Dikeo kai I Koinonia P.N. Sakkoula, 2013), 68.

²⁵ Tasoula Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis* [Woman of the Resistance] (Athens: Odysseas), 40.

²⁶ Ibid.

dowry, particularly if the son obtained a civil servant job. Girls who continued their education beyond high school belonged to the middle to upper class, and usually had a progressive father. In the case studies of the six women that I have developed, Nitsa Gavriilidou, Pota Kakkava, Plousia Liakata, Ellie Nikolaou, Zozo Petropoulou and Eleni Savvatianou, their parents believed in education, whether they were on the Left or the Right.

“Women’s place is in the home”

Prior to World War II, the Greek women’s sphere consisted of the home. They were in charge of maintaining the home and taking care of the children. Women were visible in the public sphere mostly running family errands or in very specific areas of the labor force or what was called women’s work, such as the textile industry. Moreover, “women had to behave in a manner considered above reproach to avoid punitive social sanctions.”²⁷ Social regulations in the 1930s were not “fairly uniform from Athens to Salonika to Sparta and Lamia to the tiny mountain villages of Roumeli and Thessaly,”²⁸ as Hart has argued. On the contrary, Athenian girls and women were less restricted than women in the countryside. For example, young women in the capital were allowed to leave their home for a social gathering without a chaperone, attend parties, and played

²⁷ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 136.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 153

sports, such as basketball. In villages, on the other hand, many had never even seen a basketball hoop.²⁹

In 1940s rural Greece women made up more than fifty percent of the population. They worked long hours in the fields, cared for the animals, kept the house, raised the children, in addition to cooking and producing the main staples for food on their own. For example, women made yogurt, cheese, bread, even the soap they needed for washing clothes and bathing. They produced textiles needed for the home such as: carpets, comforters, blankets, pillows. Women's participation in the family's economic production (wheat, vegetables, and animals) gave her the sense of communal participation. They fought for the household income, for their daughter's dowry and their family's fortune. A Greek woman's power and position in the family was established after her marriage and birth of her children, while a barren woman was thought to have been "broken" or "damaged." At her ripe old age, a woman reached the highest level of autonomy and recognition.³⁰

Marriage was of utmost importance for a female; it was the transfer of a daughter from her father to her husband. Virginity was imperative for a woman to be a "good" candidate for marriage. Women were not allowed by law to be self-employed without the consent of their husband. Furthermore, in cases where they did obtain their husband's approval, they were not allowed to keep their earnings. In instances where women worked outside the home, they took on jobs that were of a domestic nature such as maid, usually leaving their village to work in the cities.

²⁹ Eleni Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 21, 2017.

³⁰ Pota Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, September 5, 2015.

Women Organize

During the interwar period in Greece, Marxism attracted numerous movements for social reform. It was a period of severe disorder and instability. The Greek people were tired of the ten year mass mobilization between the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the Catastrophe of Smyrna in 1922;³¹ from 1922 to 1928 “military factions made repeated efforts to seize control of the state.”³² The nationalist propaganda of the period was fueled by the objective of the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea), which was a campaign of “re-capturing,” “liberating,” and “unifying” Istanbul (Constantinople for the Greeks), “the Hellenic genos-the orthodox community of the Ottoman Empire-and the establishment of a great Greek state in the lands that had once formed part of the Byzantine Empire with Constantinople as its capital.”³³ This campaign led to a bloody and profoundly devastating defeat of the Greek forces in 1922 and the consequent Asia Minor Catastrophe. As a result the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 brought about the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey; all Muslims Greeks from Greece were relocated to Turkey, and all Greek Christians from Turkey were sent to Greece.³⁴ The refugees enhanced the membership of the socialist parties.

³¹ The Catastrophe of Smyrna is in reference to the burning of the city of Smyrna, a predominantly Christian city where the majority of its inhabitants were Greek, in Asia Minor in 1922 when the Turkish forces burned it, completely destroying it. As a result, ethnic Greeks from Asia Minor emigrated to Greece as refugees.

³² Kofas, *Authoritarianism in Greece*, viii.

³³ Demetra Tzanaki, *Women and Nationalism in the Making of Modern Greece: The Founding of the Kingdom to the Greco-Turkish War* (London: Palgrave, 2009) 3.

³⁴ Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94-99.

In the interwar years, there were two major parties. Eleftherios Venizelos founded the Liberal Party in August 1910, and he led it until his death in March 1936. The Populist Party was founded by Dimitrios Gounaris in 1920 but led by Panagiotis Tsaldaris after the fall of General Theodoros Pagalos' fleeting dictatorship in 1925. Major difference between the two parties included different ideologies, the Populist Party supported the monarchy, while the Liberal Party supported republicanism. Many elected but non self-reliant governments, which rose and fell within a very short period of time, took place until the monarchy was restored in 1935, one year before the rule of dictator Ioannis Metaxas. Nevertheless, it is during this period where new political parties such as the KKE began to gain support, although the mainstream press of the 1920s portrayed the KKE as an entity of unethical people whose chief concern was the destruction of the family, the elimination of religion, and the sharing of women.³⁵

Socialist ideas spread among urban workers through intellectuals and professionals. People embraced such ideas chiefly because social injustice was severe and evident at all levels in Greece. Furthermore, the repression the people of Greece suffered by the police caused many to turn to the Left.³⁶ Students in technical and commercial colleges, as well as in universities, leaned toward the left in the late 1920s since communists provided a large youth organization, the *Omospondia Kommounistikis Neoleas Elladas*, OKNE (Federation of Communist Youth of Greece) which was founded

³⁵ Ayra Partsalidou, *Anamnisiv Apo Ti Zoe Tis OKNE* (Memories from OKNE) (Athens: Synchroni Epochi, 2017), 95.

³⁶ David Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1995), 17.

in the fall of 1922. According to historian David Close, by 1935 about nine percent of the students in Athens belonged to a leftist organization.³⁷

Women who worked as civil servants, such as teachers, phone operators, nurses, stenographers, had a high school or university level education, which gave them a sense of self-worth and enabled them to perceive injustice, while it also gave them courage to fight against discrimination. They were aware that they were paid less for the same job, and lacked advancement in the workplace, and furthermore, they understood the limitations in married women's lives.³⁸ A small percentage of politically active women turned to the KKE as they perceived it to be a party that seriously included them.

Women such as Roza Imvrioti led the women's movement and women's organizations which mobilized for their right to suffrage and denounced discrimination against women in the workplace. Imvrioti, a highly educated feminist, was conscious of the barriers women needed to surpass. Coming from a middle to upper class family, whose father was a professor and her mother was from a family of merchants from Asia Minor, Imvrioti came in close contact with intellectuals from an early age. She was influenced by Venizelist politicians, as they were often guests of her parents. After studying at the Philosophy School of the University of Athens, Imvrioti continued her studies in Berlin and Paris. She had a heightened sense of duty to educate the youth and compassion for children who had special needs. After her term as principal of a high school in Kilkis, in northern Greece, a title which no other women held before, Imvrioti

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 49-51.

founded the “Protypo Idiko Scholio Athenon” in 1937. This school was the first school for children with special needs to be founded in Greece.³⁹

Imvrioti, as a feminist, educator, and socialist, believed that drastic actions were needed in order to change the traditional mindset⁴⁰ of Greek citizens. Although she was a founding member of the Association for a Woman’s Rights, in 1930 Imvrioti along with her colleague Liza Kottou, left the organization as they believed that a woman’s status would remain unchanged with the current system; women’s rights could not be separated from the general problems and inequality of society. They looked to organize with the KKE, which they perceived to have been more active in bringing about change.⁴¹ Although the KKE believed in the woman’s vote, it didn’t believe it would solve women’s “real” issues.⁴² There was more that needed to be done for women’s emancipation. The rights of women were intertwined with the rights of the workers.

The KKE sought to attract women from the lower classes, from blue collar workers; from the proletariat. As a member of Comintern, the KKE adopted the Soviet Union’s convictions of the ‘woman question.’ In his speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women on November 19, 1918, Vladimir Lenin claimed: “There

³⁹ “Roza Imvrioti: ‘I Kokkini Daskala’”[Roza Imvrioti: The red teacher], *Rizospastis*, December 12, 1999.

⁴⁰ A traditional mindset in 1940s Greek society constituted of the man being the head of the household and making most of the decisions. Housework, sewing, and caring for the sickly, elderly, and children, was considered to be a “woman’s” domain.

⁴¹ Iris Avdi-Kalkani, *Mia Adartissa tis Polis Stin Taragmeni Athena* [An urban guerilla in turbulent Athens] (Athens: Elliniko Logotechniko kai Istoriko Archeio, 1997), 125-126.

⁴² Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 55.

can be no socialist revolution unless very many working women take a big part in it.”⁴³

The Bolsheviks expounded equality amongst the sexes in public and private life. As argued by historian Wendy Z. Goldman, “the Soviet marital ideal of the 1920s was a partnership of equals, a union of comrades founded on mutual affection and united by common interests.”⁴⁴ According to historian Donald Sassoon, “in 1920 Lenin urged the Bolsheviks to elect more women to the Soviet, both communist women and non-party women... The Proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won complete liberty for women.”⁴⁵ Following the Soviet party line, the KKE reached out to the women who were members of the working class. Many of these women hadn’t finished primary school, worked from a very young age, and were low paid unskilled factory workers. Furthermore, these women worked in the numerous and various factories that were founded throughout Greece. As a result, protests and worker’s unrest increased; an unrest that women also partook in.

The women who steered toward the KKE believed that the only way to gain emancipation was through radical social change. The KKE supported equality for women embracing the model of the Soviet Union, which had already established women’s emancipation in its constitution. The KKE had included in its agenda the right for women to vote and to be voted for since 1924.⁴⁶ The party argued that equality must be attained

⁴³Vladimir I. Lenin, “Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women, November 19, 1918” in *The Emancipation of Women: From the Writings of V.I. Lenin* (New York: International Publishers, 2011), 59.

⁴⁴ Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6.

⁴⁵ Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New Press, 1996), 683.

⁴⁶ Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 55.

at all levels, for all members of society, and that the vote for women should not be a struggle fought separately. Although the female KKE members were a small percentage, they fought the most against the traditional or conventional theories of the time, which argued that women's place was in the home. Compared to any other social entity within Greek society, the KKE was, as argued by Vervenioti, the most egalitarian.⁴⁷ As women, primarily urban women, entered the labor market *en masse*, they made up almost one-fourth of the Greek working class by the late 1920s. By 1928, more than sixty thousand women were in the labor force, particularly in the textile industry.⁴⁸

The textile industry first began in Greece with the first steam-driven factory in Piraeus in 1844 and the second one in Athens in 1855. In both factories most of the employees were young women. In Piraeus there were nine steam-driven textile factories. According to historian Zizi Salimba, in the 1875 census there were 696 male employees and 1,632 women, while in the 1907 census the numbers increased to 2,050 and 3,939 male and female employees, respectively. It is evident that female workers were a significant number in the textile industry, as it was considered gender "appropriate." Moreover, the mechanization of the textile industry created unskilled jobs, which could easier absorb young inexperienced and unskilled young women coming from the countryside, who were preferred, as they were paid less than men.⁴⁹

As in other European countries during this period, Greek women who worked in the factories toiled for their survival. To claim that most young and poor women used to

⁴⁷ Ibid., 65-66.

⁴⁸ *Rizospastis*, March 8, 1928, *Rizospastis* "7 Meres Mazi"[7 Days Together] March 21, 2010.

⁴⁹ Zizi Salimba, *Gynaikes Ergatrides 1870-1922*[Women Workers, 1870-1922] (Athens: Geniki Grammateia Neas Genias, 2004), 63-65.

work in order to collect money for their dowry, would be inaccurate. In fact, married women returned to their jobs after their children were old enough. Married female workers were preferred by factory owners as they were considered, according to Salimba, to be disciplined and “quiet” workers.

The price of bread can help one understand or contextualize the level of how poorly paid these women were. In 1876, for example, the daily payment was between 1 and 1.5 drachmas while the price of bread ranged between 0.36 and 0.48 drachmas per Oka⁵⁰ depending on the quality, and the bean’s cost was 0.43 drachmas per Oka. Bread and beans were the major food staples, and the products were expensive compared to wages. In 1894 some job positions that were more popular for women, paid between 0.80 to 2 drachmas per day. The lowest paid young women were paid 0.60 drachmas per day, while older women were paid no more than 1.5 drachmas per day. In 1898, the cost of bread ranged between 0.45 and 0.60 drachmas, while the cost of beans was 0.53 drachmas per Oka. Furthermore, although in 1920 the number of men to women was higher, at 8,915, women were still a larger percentage of the workforce, numbering 7,119 of the total workforce in the textile industry in Greece.⁵¹

The KKE began its attempts to organize the textile workers and other women who worked in factories, such as in the tobacco industry. The working class women’s movement had altered its character, furthering demands beyond education for women. Women who belonged to the unions were encouraged and promoted by the local organizations of the KKE. Demands for worker’s rights within the tobacco industry

⁵⁰ Oka was an Ottoman measurement of weight which was still kept during this period; one oka was equal to 1.22 kilograms and 2.69lbs.

⁵¹Salimba, *Gynaiques Ergatries*, 81-82.

began in the early 1920s; by 1926 workers proceeded in organizing protests and demonstrations. Women were included in the demonstrations in their demands for better wages and medical care. In contrast to the spontaneous demonstrations of the female workers of the textile factory owned by the Retsina Brothers, where the demands were limited to maintaining the current wage, the female factory workers demonstrations in the 1920s were organized and pursued higher wages and better working conditions. In a rally organized by tobacco workers in Agrinio on August 8, 1926, the police shot into the crowd; Vasiliki Georgantzelis, a pregnant mother of two and a tobacco worker was shot to death, along with eight other workers. A spontaneous protest occurred at their funeral. As a result, the workers' demands were met-a wage increase of 25 drachmas, six hundred drachmas for the unemployed, and the establishment of an insurance fund for the tobacco workers.⁵²

Fascism, the KKE, and Dangerous Citizens

In *Authoritarianism in Greece: The Metaxas Regime*, historian Jon V. Kofas states, “the political history of modern Greece has been characterized by foreign interventions in the country’s internal affairs, military interference in the political arena and a tradition of authoritarian governments.”⁵³ The presence of the military in politics

⁵²Rizospastis, November 12, 2000.

⁵³ Jon V. Kofas, *Authoritarianism in Greece: The Metaxas Regime* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983), vii.

began with the coup which was attempted by General Theodore Pagalos⁵⁴ in 1925. He ruled Greece as a dictator for six months until the ascension to power of General Ioannis Metaxas in 1936.

In the years from 1928-1932 Greece experienced the worst economic depression in its modern history. As a result, liberal Eleftherios Venizelos, who was prime minister for his last term in 1928, lost to a royalist coalition, which later helped Metaxas become dictator on August 4, 1936 and returned King George II to the throne.⁵⁵ The death of Venizelos left Metaxas without a significant opponent because the citizens of Greece saw Metaxas' dictatorship as an imperative necessity in the prevention of communism.⁵⁶ Under the Pagalos regime leaders created a special police, the *Ypiresia Idikis Asfaleias* (the Special Security Service), in 1925. Its purpose included to battle "the specter of communism," led by Georgios Fessopoulos. Metaxas' regime enhanced the already instilled laws, with Emergency law 117, which would fight communism and its consequences.⁵⁷

Politically active women sought to educate workers about their right to better wages and working conditions with newspapers such as *Ergatria*, meaning "female worker." OKNE formed the Women's Bureau of Athens and began the newspaper publication in 1929. It consisted of a small four-leafed paper. The women distributed the

⁵⁴ Interestingly, Pangalos later joined, along with many of his supporters, the Nazi-controlled Security Battalions who fought the left-wing resistance during the occupation.

⁵⁵ Kofas, *Authoritarianism in Greece*, vii.

⁵⁶ Harry Cliadakis, "The Political and Diplomatic Background to the Metaxas Dictatorship, 1935-36," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 117-138.

⁵⁷ Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners during the Greek Civil War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 35-39

paper door to door and often outside of factories. As they handed it to the factory workers, they lectured on women's status and the plight of the female worker. *Ergatria* was also sold in a socialist bookstore, however there were no sales. The owner, according to KKE party member Avra Partsalidou⁵⁸ seemed to feel guilty about this as he murmured "underestimation of women, what can I do?"⁵⁹

According to Partsalidou, female members of the KKE felt comfortable in expressing their opinion.⁶⁰ There were prominent female members of the Party such as Chrysa Chatzivasiliou, who was one of the most prominent since the 1930s and a significant member of the regional committee of the KKE. Chatzivasiliou lived with little means in a small house in the Jewish neighborhood of Thessaloniki.⁶¹ She was so loved by her comrades that they once raised funds to buy her a new dress, because as they continuously saw her wearing the same one, they feared that it would signal an alarm to the secret informers.

KKE saw an increase in its membership from 6,000 to 14,000 between 1934 and 1936. As a result, they were more successful in the elections of 1936, gaining fifteen seats in Parliament. Although the female KKE members were a small percentage, they fought labor unrest. The party's success in the elections instigated a "red scare" which led to the dictatorship of General Ioannis Metaxas on August 4, 1936. Consequently, almost

⁵⁸ Avra Partsalidou was a member of OKNE and KKE.

⁵⁹ Partsalidou, *Anamnesis*, 61-63.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

all significant members of the KKE were imprisoned or sent into exile once Metaxas took power.⁶²

In 1934, the *Panellinia Epitropi Gynaikon kata tou Polemou kai tou Fasismou* (Pan-Hellenic Committee of Women against War and Fascism) was founded with the assistance of Avra Theodoropoulou who was on the committee.⁶³ Feminist and leftist women participated, and formed a committee. They organized a big event at the Argyropoulou Theater. Speakers such as Theodoropoulou connected women's limited rights to fascism and the war that they saw approaching.⁶⁴ Electra Apostolou⁶⁵ and Dido Sotiriou⁶⁶ attended the Universal Women's Antifascist Conference in Paris in August of 1936 as representatives of the *Panellinia Epitropi Gynaikon kata tou Polemou kai tou Fasismou*.

Only ten to fifteen percent of the women who met the criteria to vote took advantage of their right to vote in the municipal elections of 1934. According to Vervenioti women didn't seriously commit to voting; they were hesitant and distrustful of the decree and new law. It appeared to Greek feminists that women weren't interested in the vote; they weren't interested in exercising their political rights, or else why did only ten percent of the women eligible to vote in the local elections of 1934 vote? According

⁶² Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, 123; Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 63.

⁶³ *Antifasistiko Metopo*, May 19, 1934, Charilaos Florakis Educational Center Archives.

⁶⁴ "Me Enoiaze na kano zoi"[I was interested in making a life] *Eleftherotypia*, October 2, 2004.

⁶⁵ Electra Apostolou was a member of OKNE, KKE's youth organization, since 1926. She was exiled during the Metaxas dictatorship on the Aegean island of Anafi. She was an active member in the Resistance, organizing the youth in EPON. On July 26, 1944 she was tortured to death at the General Police Headquarters by German collaborators. She became a symbol of resistance. See Kostas Birkas, *Electra Apostolou* (Athens, 1978).

⁶⁶ Dido Sotiriou was a Greek writer and journalist born in Asia Minor, who came to Piraeus, Greece, after the destruction of Smyrna in the 1922. She became a member of the Left, initially of the KKE, and was a member of the Resistance.

to Vervenioti, one reason for this included the lack of preconditions for these women being interested in voting. Moreover, clientelism⁶⁷ dominated political life.⁶⁸ Dating from the Ottoman period, clientelism remained deeply rooted in Greek society as the voter and head of the household sought to promote his family's fortunes by seeking the intervention of politicians and other those who had power, each of whom had to seek favors for their constituents. As a result, there were more MPs in relation to the population of Greece.⁶⁹ Even today, for example, for a population of over sixty million, Italy has four hundred MPs, while Greece has three hundred members in its Parliament, for a population of less than eleven million.⁷⁰

Prison and Exile in the Interwar Period

The government enacted Law 4229, the *Idionymon* law,⁷¹ in 1929, which sought the imprisonment of anyone suspicious of overthrowing the government. The law targeted trade unionists and leftists. Enacted under liberal Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, the law was designed to attack the KKE, albeit the largest share of the vote that it had in elections until then was four per cent. Historian Richard Clogg argued that

⁶⁷ An exchange of favors between politicians and their constituents.

⁶⁸ Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 104.

⁶⁹ David Close, *Greece Since 1945*, 8.

⁷⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-49979103> Accessed October 2, 2021.

⁷¹ Neni Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens: The Greek Left and the Terror of the State* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 25.

the law “made attempts to undermine the existing social order illegal and eagerly seized on by the subsequent governments to harass opponents.”⁷²

In twentieth century Europe governments demonstrated a tendency to internally exile the unwanted; to exile the social and political outcasts who were perceived threats to society. The mainland must be “cleansed” of the miasma. Like the lepers who were interned on the island of Spinalonga off the coast of Crete, citizens in Greece who espoused or allegedly espoused socialist beliefs were to be separated from the body of the nation, lest they poison it. As lepers were thought to poison the body, socialists were thought to poison the mind.

Internal exile was institutionalized in Greece since 1871 as a measure against theft; to suppress and punish thieves by preventing them from seeking asylum or protection. The island of Kythnos was actually the first organized camp for exile in Greece as it was used in the early 1860s when members of the army formed a movement against King Othon.⁷³ Hence, internal exile had been a form of political persecution only a few decades after the birth of the republic.

The first political prisoners were trade unionists. Under the *Idionymon* law, university students who were “caught” in communist gatherings would be persecuted. Interestingly, this caused such an alarm to Albert Einstein, according to historian Kyriaki Kamarinou, that he wrote a letter to Prime Minister Venizelos expressing his disdain of

⁷² Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, 107.

⁷³ Kyriaki Kamarinou, *The “Stone” Universities: The Struggle for education in the prisons and exile, 1924-1974* (Athens: Synchroni Epochi, 2015), 79-80.

the expulsion of students due to their political convictions.⁷⁴ Although the KKE and its sympathizers were never really a threat to political order in the interwar period, the laws created under the Venizelos government were extended under the Metaxas regime to combat “the reds.”⁷⁵

To the Drum of Metaxas

“I was a drummer in the *Ethniki Organosi Neoleas*, EON (National Youth Organization) during the Metaxas dictatorship,” Plousia Liakata exclaims.⁷⁶ Like other young students during this period, Plousia, from the city of Messolonghi in Central Greece, was forced to join youth groups, which were modeled after Hitler’s youth groups. EON was the sole youth organization in Greece and obligated all Greek Orthodox youth to join. For Metaxas, a national revival depended on the preparation of the entire youth population. Religion, the nation and the fatherland formed the ideological core of his dictatorship.

Metaxas abolished all other youth organizations by 1938, and he imposed religious education upon state schools. The EON committed to fascist values that mirrored Hitler’s Youth group, which heavily relied on ritualized indoctrination, propaganda, and mass membership. Metaxas envisioned a ‘Third Hellenic Civilization’ as a continuation from the ancient and from Byzantium. He revered the heritage of the Greek Orthodox Church, which he deemed had continuity from the medieval period and

⁷⁴ Ibid., 81.

⁷⁵ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 37.

⁷⁶ Plousia Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 8, 2016.

which was a foundation for the nationalist narrative of “cultural specificity.”⁷⁷ EON allowed students to “choose” what they wanted to take part in. For example Eleni Savvatianou, a student in Kifissia, a neighborhood in outskirts of Athens, opted for helping to care for hospital patients.⁷⁸

Under the Metaxas regime, any expression of ideas that didn’t fit his triptych religion-fatherland-family became a target for repression. For example, books by Karl Marx, Leon Tolstoy, and Sigmund Freud were banned. Those that didn’t join EON faced difficulties in obtaining employment, as they would need to demonstrate allegiance to the regime. All members of EON were obligated to swear allegiance to the Metaxas regime, to the cultivation of faith in Greek civilization, have contempt for communism, and any democratic principles, as well as accept and welcome the monarchy.⁷⁹ By 1939, there were 750,000 members throughout Greece.⁸⁰ Furthermore, any political and social organizations that were not controlled by the regime were forbidden.⁸¹ The KKE was outlawed and many members were exiled to the islands of Anafi and Folegandro, Amorgos, Ios, Kimolos, Sikinos, and St. Efstratios. Anafi and Folegandro were the two islands where more than three hundred citizens were exiled to in the interwar period.⁸²

The dictatorship of Metaxas lasted more than four years. When Italy invaded Greece in October of 1940, Metaxas was still in power and is credited with declaring the

⁷⁷Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, Tudor Georgescu, eds., *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe* (Routledge: 2013), 25-28.

⁷⁸ Eleni Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 19, 2017.

⁷⁹ Bernd Jürgen Fischer, *Balkan Strongmen: Dictators and Authoritarian Rulers of South Eastern Europe* (Purdue University Press, 2007), 185-186.

⁸⁰Neni Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 35.

⁸¹ http://www.arch.uoa.gr/fileadmin/arch.uoa.gr/uploads/drast_hist/fasismos_ekpaid/ploumidisspiros.pdf

⁸² Kenna, *The Social Organization of Exile*, 43-45.

infamous “OXI,” (NO) to Benito Mussolini. His act is still celebrated. Yet in reality it was a quiet rejection to Mussolini’s ultimatum, Metaxas entered Greece in World War II on the side of the allies.⁸³ The international community had little hopes that Greece would be able to withstand the Italians. The Greeks, however, surprised them, gaining the praise of the international community for their heroic fight against the Italians at the Albanian front. It was a time of “great euphoria in Greece.”⁸⁴ Men rushed to join the Greek army at the front. Unfortunately, this euphoria was short-lived. Without declaring war, Bulgaria took advantage of the situation and invaded Thrace and Eastern Macedonia.

The mood quickly changed; the German’s began advancing towards Greece. On April 6th 1941, at dawn, “Field Marshal List’s 12th Army launched its assault.”⁸⁵ German units entered the northern port of Thessaloniki just three days later. Almost two weeks later on April 19, the then prime minister Alexander Koryzis committed suicide. As a result King George of Greece placed Emmanuel Tsouderos as prime minister of the government in exile; they both fled, along with their families, to Crete on April 23 and then on to Cairo, Egypt. While in Greece, the Hellenic State is formed, a collaborationist government, led by Georgios Tsolakoglou, officer of the Hellenic Army.

⁸³*Partisans of Athens*, documentary.

⁸⁴ Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

The Famine

Throughout the Occupation Greek citizens faced hunger, tyranny, and death. They suffered to an unprecedented degree, under the tripartite Occupation of the Italians, Germans, and Bulgarians during World War II. Over forty thousand citizens died in the first year of the occupation alone.⁸⁶ It has been estimated that between 1941 and 1942 more than three hundred thousand Greeks starved to death due to the requisitioning of supplies by the Axis powers. The majority of the people had lost their jobs and those that continued to work couldn't purchase products for their basic needs due to inflation. Furthermore, the phenomenon of traitors, Greeks who collaborated with the Germans, divided society. The first and most vital objective of survival was the country's liberation from the occupiers, and to defend the people's rights in life and society.

Shortly following the German invasion in the spring of 1941, the famine began. It didn't take long for food shortages and for people to take advantage of the situation. Unfortunately, there were people who were referred to as black marketers who had food supplies, sacks of wheat and corn, hidden in their homes. They looked to profit from the destitute Greek citizens, who already were short of food supplies as the Nazis transported the agricultural products to Germany. People sold their furniture or even their wedding bands in order to purchase basic needs such as olive oil, sugar, and coffee, while some sold their property. The Germans requisitioned homes, civil servants were laid off, and wheat became scarce as it was sent to Bulgaria. The Germans ate well, while the Greeks ate bread made of saw dust and carob tree flour. People were so hungry and malnourished

⁸⁶Kofas, *Authoritarianism in Greece*, xi.

that they ate turtles, cats and dogs. Those that lived in the countryside had it easier because they grew their own crops, had chickens and livestock. In cities, particularly in Athens, people found dead bodies on the street, or people holding a cup in their hand begging for money, or they heard cries of hunger-“I’m hungry.” After a certain time they became immune to this; it didn’t shock them anymore.⁸⁷ It didn’t take long for the Greek people to begin to resist the Occupation. In order for the struggle to succeed it had to correspond to the people’s real needs and their will to resist. The need of an organization that would unite all purposes, equality and guidance was evident. On September 27, 1941, EAM was founded.⁸⁸

Resistance

The Greek Resistance, as also argued by Janet Hart, “acted as a ‘socializing movement,’ where new participatory values were taught and national identities formed. A defining feature of this new social order was the female political subject, the female citizen.”⁸⁹ The leaders of the Greek Resistance were inspired, according to Poulos, by ideals of the European Enlightenment as well as the success of the Russian Revolution. There was a desire to break the tradition of clientelism, and a hope to economically, socially, and pedagogically attain a similar economy as other European countries “that had been at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, which had largely bypassed Greece.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ellie Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 19, 2012.

⁸⁸ Dimitris Glinos, “*Ti Einai kai ti thelei to Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*” (Athens: O Rigas, 1944), 40.

⁸⁹ Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, xvi. Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 50

⁹⁰ Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, xvi.

Of all the resistance groups that emerged in Greece⁹¹ during the Occupation, the EAM was the most effective, the strongest and the largest. The leadership of EAM was comprised of the KKE, led by Yiannis Ioannidis,⁹² Petros Rousos,⁹³ Demetrios Partsalides,⁹⁴ Chrysa Chatzivasiliou,⁹⁵ and Keti Zevgou,⁹⁶ the *Sosialistiko Komma Elladas*, SKE (Socialist Party of Greece), the *Agrotiko Komma Elladas*, AKE (Agricultural Party of Greece), led by Konstantinos Gavriilides,⁹⁷ and the Union of Social Democracy, led by Alexandros Svolos.⁹⁸ In 1942 they published a pamphlet which was entitled *Ti Einai kai Ti Thelei to Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo* [What is EAM is and what it wants], whose author was Demetrios Glinos, one of the most intellectual and respected educators of modern Greece.⁹⁹ EAM aims, according to Glinos were:

⁹¹ EKKA-*Ethniki Kai Koinoniki Apeleftherosi* (National and Social Liberation) led by Demetrios Psarros, which had a monarchist and collaborationist direction; EDES-*Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Sindesmos* (Greek National Democratic League) led by Napoleon Zervas, also formed in Autumn of 1941.

⁹² Yiannis Ioannidis was a MP of the KKE, which he helped organize in the Resistance.

⁹³ Petros Rousos was a politician and leading member of the KKE. He was also the chief editor of the newspaper *Rizospastis*, the organ of the KKE. During the Greek Civil War he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Democratic Government which was fighting against the Greek State.

⁹⁴ Demetrios Partsalides was a trade unionist and leading member of the KKE. He was mayor of the city of Kavala, and president of the Provisional Democratic Government during the Greek Civil War. He was married to Avra Partsalidou.

⁹⁵ Chrysa Chatzivasiliou was a leading member of the KKE and member of the Central Committee in 1935. She was exiled during the Metaxas dictatorship and was involved in the Resistance, taking part in many important decisions in EAM, particularly after liberation. She promoted the woman question within the KKE. She died one year after the end of the Greek Civil War in Budapest, Hungary.

⁹⁶ Keti Zevgou was one of the few leading women members of the KKE, along with Chatzivasiliou, and elected in the first elections held for Political Committee of National Liberation during the Occupation. She was married with Yiannis Zevgos, who was also a leading member of the KKE.

⁹⁷ Konstantinos Gavriilides was the secretary of the Agricultural Party, who died in exile on the island of St. Efstratios in 1952.

⁹⁸ Alexandros Svolos was a prominent lawyer who was a member of the Political Committee for National Liberation.

⁹⁹ Leften S. Stavrianos, *Greece: American Dilemma and Opportunity* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 65.

1) The daily struggle to feed the people. When people are left to die in the streets, to be destroyed in body and in soul and you insist that you will struggle for liberation when the time is ideal, then you are a crook and collaborator with the enemy. . . The struggle starts from the daily fight for food, food kitchens, daily payroll and medicine against the people's exhaustion due to starvation 2) The daily resistance, passive or active, against the occupiers and their partners 3) The daily effort to paralyze the occupier's power, to not let him succeed in his goals, utilizing our work and our materials 4) The active resistance to violence, the response to violence with violence, the armed struggle and the final armed rebellion.¹⁰⁰

The pamphlet alludes to another crucial point in Greek collective historical memory, that of the War for Independence of 1821. By using Greek revolutionary Regas Fereos' infamous words of 'better to have one hour of freedom than forty years of slavery and prison' Glinos spoke to patriotic hearts of the people. They were to once again rise up against the oppressor, united with one another, focus on the collective across all sectors of their lives, whether it is their village, town or city, or place of employment. If one subscribed to its chief aims of resistance to the Axis powers and support of a postwar regime based on the will of the people, one could join EAM.¹⁰¹

EAM believed that the struggle shouldn't stop at liberation. EAM should make it unyielding and stable and in order to succeed, it should do the following after the occupiers depart:

1) Government will be created by the leaders of the national-liberal struggle and by the parties and teams, which will drive it toward struggle and victory 2) Immediately restore all popular freedoms, the freedom of speech, of the press and of gatherings and give general amnesty 3) Call for elections will take place immediately for a National Council, which will declare the type of government that the majority of the people desires.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Glinos, *Ti Einai kai Ti Thelei to Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*, 40.

¹⁰¹ Stavrianos, *Greece*, 68.

¹⁰² Glinos, "*Ti Einai kai ti thelei to Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*," 41.

There was hope that EAM would have the ability to set up the government that they propagandized, and as the Resistance progressed, there were indications that it could. As argued by historian Leften S. Stavrianos, “The EAM. . . was literally a state within a state. . . . Toward the end of the occupation period, it was a state in own right, governing two-thirds of Greece which it had freed.”¹⁰³

EAM was greatly organized by the KKE as it dictated strategic decisions, and it organized the military wing *Ellinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos*, ELAS (Greek People’s Liberation Army). Yet, its rhetoric was open to people of all political backgrounds in a common struggle against the Occupation.¹⁰⁴ The power vacuum that was left behind after the government in exile fled to Cairo, Egypt, enabled the KKE in becoming a patriotic party, with a profoundly greater following from the small party it was prior to World War II. It mobilized individuals from different backgrounds; urban workers, farmers, students, middle class citizens. Moreover, the hardships that the Greek people faced during the Occupation and the radical nature of the Resistance attracted girls in their teen years, which had yet to accept their traditional roles. They assisted in the organization of the *Eniaia Panelladiki Organosi Neon*, EPON (United Panhellenic Youth Organization), which was the youth group of EAM, in *Ethniki Allilengyi*, and EA (National Solidarity) as well as in ELAS.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Stavrianos, *Greece*, 72.

¹⁰⁴ Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece*, 100-101.

¹⁰⁵ Tasoula Vervenioti, “Left-Wing Women between Politics and Family” in *After the War was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 105.

The first action EAM took was to create the *Ethniki Allilengyi* EA, and soup kitchens. EA functioned like the Red Cross. It was formed to meet the needs of the famine and assist in removal of the dead in the cities. The women gathered the dead and treat the wounded after demonstrations. They searched for food to feed those forced to live underground and work clandestinely, while also finding shelter for many. Yianna Trikalinou was part of a committee in her village which organized EA. Their first task was to distribute food for the children.¹⁰⁶

In 1942, EAM established an army which was called the National Popular Liberation Army, or ELAS. Colonel Stefanos Sarafis was appointed commander-in-chief and the officers of ELAS consisted of colonels, generals, commissioned officers of the prewar Greek army, priests and bishops of the Greek Orthodox Church, labor leaders, professors and even the president of the Polytechnic School, as well as members of the Academy of Athens.¹⁰⁷ The first guerrilla groups, led by Aris Velouchiotis,¹⁰⁸ took to the mountains in the beginning of 1942.¹⁰⁹

Greek citizens put their hopes in EAM as it “invested money and effort into alleviating the considerable hardships which ordinary Greeks had suffered since the German occupation.”¹¹⁰ Unlike other resistance groups such as the *Ethnikos*

¹⁰⁶ Yianna Trikalinou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 8, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Stavrianos, *Greece*, 68.

¹⁰⁸ The leading guerillas took on pseudonyms in order to prevent retaliations against their families. Aris Velouchiotis' real name was Thanasis Klaras.

¹⁰⁹ Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Red Terror: Leftist Violence during the Occupation,” in *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960*, ed. Mark Mazower (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 145.

¹¹⁰ Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 538.

Demokratikos Ellinikos Sindesmos, EDES (Greek National Democratic League), led by Napoleon Zervas, which rather than focus on the collective, emphasized “faith in the leader.”¹¹¹ Furthermore, members of EDES were monetarily compensated.¹¹² There were very few women who joined EDES.

Hart states that it was difficult to find women who didn’t belong to EAM. “After a fairly exhaustive search, I was able to find only four women who were in organizations other than EAM,” she has written.¹¹³ According to Hart, her research and historical record demonstrate “that women who were not in the EAM were probably exceptions to the rule. This was almost certainly due to the fact that EAM, in aspiring to become a populist organization, specifically targeted women for group mobilization, whereas the other organizations had less resolute reasons for recruiting women. . . The few women in the EDES, which Zervas headed, served as nurses.”¹¹⁴ Hart wasn’t able to find any firsthand accounts or any archival documents of EDES recruiting women in any kind of role. This is perhaps due to the fact that, as argued by Zerva’s niece Evanthia Zervas, her uncle “did not believe in women,”¹¹⁵ He didn’t believe they should partake in war. *Panellinos Enosis Agonizomenon Neon*, PEAN (Panhellenic Union of Fighting Youth), another Rightist organization had about one hundred and fifty female members.

EAM extended to every town and every village; it reached every group in cities, and was widespread among all classes and occupations. It had a structure that was

¹¹¹Glenny, *The Balkans*, 67.

¹¹² Plousia Liakata’s brother-in-law confessed to her; interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, October 9, 2020.

¹¹³ Hart, *New Voices of the Nation*, 212.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

organized to include all members, and addressed men, women and children of all social strata. Everyone over the age of eighteen could vote. For the first time all women could vote. Evidence of EAM's promises is that women were able to vote and to participate actively in local government. Furthermore, women were given posts in EAM, and were inducted into the ranks of ELAS.¹¹⁶ According to Stavrianos, "among the Greeks, EAM was incomparably the best organized political group at the time of liberation."¹¹⁷ It is estimated, that about two million people out of a population of about seven million people were members of EAM.¹¹⁸ Forty percent of the 350,000 EPON members were women.¹¹⁹

The Resistance period was the first occasion that Greek women entered the public sphere en masse. EAM assumed a "proactive stance regarding the reconstruction of popular attitudes and seeking to condition both sexes for a relatively more equitable existence in postwar politics and society."¹²⁰ Women that participated in EAM felt that they gained self-confidence, a feeling of equality, and great esteem for their activities in the Resistance. Members of OKNE took relevant initiatives, particularly in universities in the two largest cities, Athens and Thessaloniki, through EAM's frontal cultural organizations.¹²¹ Hence, young people came in contact with the Resistance in the cities as

¹¹⁶Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, xvii.

¹¹⁷ W.H. McNeil, "The Outbreak of Fighting in Athens, December, 1944" *American Slavic and East European Review*, 8 (1949): 253.

¹¹⁸Stavrianos, *Greece*, 69.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 86.

¹²⁰ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 198.

¹²¹Petros Antaios, *Simvoli stin Istoriatis EPON (A contribution to the history of the EPON)* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1977), 338.

a result of various cultural activities such as lectures, excursions, and theatrical performances.

When the armed struggle commenced in 1942, with the establishment of ELAS, women who enlisted with the guerrillas didn't feel their gender hindered them in any way. They were influenced by the heroic fight for freedom and acceptance by the men in EAM. The Resistance gave way to women to partake in something so significant, alongside men. The years of women's struggle bore fruit. As a member of EPON in Athens, Eleni Savvatianou remembers events which raised her political awareness, particularly about the betterment of women's position in society. Plousia Liakata, a guerilla in ELAS, has often recounted how women were viewed as equal by their male counterparts, and how she always felt safe with her comrades. Along with her friend and co-resistance fighter Maria Beikou, she has described how women were often in charge of the meetings as they knew the problems of each village very well.¹²² It is no wonder that forty percent of the membership of EPON consisted of women.¹²³

EPON organized numerous demonstrations and strikes, which women were active in; demonstrations which were usually successful. Women and men marched and shouted in the streets. The demonstrations in the cities were also organized by the Worker's EAM and were influential in preventing the Nazi's from exploiting Greek manpower.¹²⁴ One of the first large demonstrations where people demanded food distribution occurred

¹²²Maria Beikou, *Since You Ask, Let Me Remember* (Athens, Kastaniotis, 2010), 48-49.

¹²³Stavrianos, *Greece*, 70-80.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

at Psiri Square.¹²⁵ The major demonstrations occurred in April 1942, where all civil servants in all major cities went on strike demanding pay increases and payment of part of their salaries in kind. The demonstration on March 5, 1943, against the Nazi's "work mobilization" of Greeks to Germany was massive. On July 22, 1943 there was another massive demonstration in Athens against the Bulgarian threat of taking over Central Macedonia, where many were injured. It is estimated that up to sixty protesters were killed, hundreds wounded, and arrested.¹²⁶ Due to the unrest, the Bulgarians were held back from extending their occupational territory. Three hundred thousand people demonstrated in Athens and Pireaus. Men, women, and children marched and shouted in the streets. The machine guns and tanks that they were met with killed Panayiota Stathopoulou, a young girl who tried to stop the tank. Ellie Nikolalou, one of the protagonists in this study was behind her. Luckily, Ellie lived to tell the story, and unfortunately Stathopoulou was killed by the tank. Her candle at her grave in the cemetery in the neighborhood of Zografou in Athens is continuously lit.¹²⁷

Italy's capitulation in 1943 to the Allies gave ELAS an increase in their ammunitions, enabling it to organize cavalry and artillery units as well as the ability to increase the number of armed regulars. By autumn of 1943, ELAS reserves had increased in both the cities and the villages, which helped supply the regulars of ELAS, and attacked enemy transportation and communication systems, and gathered

¹²⁵ Eleni Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 17, 2015.

¹²⁶ Menelaos Charalambidis, *I Ebiria tis Katochis kai tis Adistasis stin Athena* [The Experience of the Occupation and Resistance in Athens] (Athens: Alexandria, 2012), 173; "1943: Diadilosi kata tis epektasis tis Voulgarikis Katochis," [1943: Demonstration against the extension of the Bulgarian Occupation] *Rizospastis*, July 22, 2000.

¹²⁷ Ellie Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18 2012.

intelligence. Nearly all the liberated villages were connected by a telephone network operated by ELAS. In September of 1943 the first class of one hundred and thirty-six cadets graduated from the ELAS School of Reserve Officers.¹²⁸ While ELAS fought in the mountains, however, the members of EPON faced arrests by the Gestapo. Many were sent to the Haidari camp just outside of Athens, operated by the Nazis.

While continuously opposed by the British, and the Greek government in exile in Egypt, EAM had the support of the majority of the people of Greece, who found in the organization the opportunity to work towards a common good.¹²⁹ According to Constantine Poulos, an American correspondent at the time, the Greek people had hopes for a better future. The peasants spoke of the creation of more schools for their children, of the improvement of farming methods. People spoke of public works programs to build water systems, roads, bridges and public utilities; the youth spoke of exchange scholarships and libraries; mothers spoke of public clinics and free healthcare.¹³⁰ EAM improved communications, health and educational facilities, and also brought theatrical performances to the villages.¹³¹ The Theater of the Mountain recruited women and girls, and went around all the villages introducing theater to the masses. Many had never seen theater before in their life. *Katharevousa*, which was the formal and official Greek spoken and read, particularly by the educated, and elite, was replaced by demotic

¹²⁸Stavrianos, *Greece*, 76-77.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., 86.

¹³¹Thanasis Sfikas, *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War: The Imperialism of 'Non-Intervention.'* (Keele, England: Keele University Press, 1994), 23.

Greek¹³² in EAM's official publications. As argued by Hart, "the overall effect was to broaden the circles of communication to encompass much of the country's marginalized population, including many peasants and many women not conversant in the" *Katharevousa*.¹³³

According to Vervenioti, women's participation in the Resistance was gradually slow. Moreover, she argues, ELAS needed women's participation so terribly that in the summer of 1943, "three separate documents from three different authors in different areas all granted women the right to vote."¹³⁴ Nevertheless, Vervenioti has argued that ELAS didn't believe in women. According to Plousia Liakata, ELAS' commander Aris Velouchiotis' apprehension in allowing females in ELAS centered on their age and their background. Each female had to be at least seventeen years old and obtain their parents' permission to enlist in the guerrilla army. They also had to be examined by a doctor. The women's platoon belonged to the general guerrilla headquarters. Liakata also argues that the women in EPON and ELAS were not limited to traditional "female" activities. They were given the freedom to contribute in any aspect as long as they were capable to. It was each woman's ability and capability that dictated which sector they would contribute to. Women may have been a vital component in the departments of social welfare, food distribution, and education, but they were also given the liberty to join and participate in combat if they wished and had the skills required.¹³⁵

¹³² Demotic Greek was everyday spoken language.

¹³³ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 207.

¹³⁴ Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 104.

¹³⁵ Plousia Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 8, 2016.

The KKE won the self-government elections in certain villages during the Occupation because of the vote of women. Women in villages were, for the first time, given the opportunity to enter the public sphere. Suddenly their opinion mattered, and they were allowed to voice it. They were not only allowed to elect but also be elected. On March 10, 1944, in Korischades, Evritania, in Central Greece, EAM set up the *Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Apeleftherosis*, PEEA (Political Committee of National Liberation) under the greatly respected professor Alexandros Svolos. George Siantos was head of the KKE and Secretary of Internal Affairs of PEEA. The responsibilities of PEEA were the coordination and leadership of the struggle for liberation, the administration of the significant areas under EAM/ELAS control, and the continuation of the efforts towards forming a government of national unity.¹³⁶ In April of 1944 women in Greece voted for the first time in a general election. According to Vervenioti, about fifty percent of women went to the polls in 1944, which was about twenty-five percent of the elections.¹³⁷

Women's Gains during the Resistance

The July 30, 1944 issue of the PEEA Bulletin of Actions and Decisions “reported that on May 27, the first Greek equal rights clause was put to a vote and approved. According to Article 5 of the PEEA constitution, ‘All Greeks, men and women, have equal political and civil rights.’ A number of women deputies were elected, including Fotini Filippidi from Larissa, Kaiti Zevgou from Athens, Mahi Mavroeidi from

¹³⁶ Aggelos Aggelopoulos, *Apo thn Katochi ston Emfilio* [From Occupation to Civil War] (Athens: Parousia, 1992), 54.

¹³⁷ Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 105.

Kalamata, and Maria Svolos from Athens.”¹³⁸ The appointment of PEEA decree of a female, Irini Strataki, also married to a teacher, as the first superintendent of public schools in 1944, is evidence of a revolutionary and progressive shift in education.¹³⁹ Roza Invrioti was also a member of the Council and participated in PEEA’s program for “Democratic Education.”¹⁴⁰

Maria Karagiorgis,¹⁴¹ an EAM member who was in charge of the Women’s Group of the region of Thessaly, argued that at the Second Conference of EAM of Thessaly that took place on July 26, 1944, underwent a vast change during the Resistance:

Whomever had lived outside of the city and knew how women were three years ago, could see the drastic difference. They had absorbed the whole soul of the struggle, they had learned the whole process of how the organizations functioned, as if they had been troubled for years with what they would say, how they would elect a board, how they would nominate representatives, how they would be able to say anything they needed to in the limited time they had at their disposal, how they would manage the work of the organization on their own. They now had another air to them, a different kind of courage, for these women until recently followed the ‘boss,’ their husband, banal, mundane, loaded with logs of wood on their backs and crocheting socks, shirts, and the clothes of the household or having a suckling baby in their arms. The “*afenti*” [master] would ride ahead on a horse, a mule, or a donkey. There were about two hundred women at that Conference, sent by their organizations. Young, middle-aged, old, some with ‘European’ dress . . . others with folk traditional dress. . . One by one, they took the floor, talking with ease. And how well they said everything! That day, I realized how far these women had come.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 31-32

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 192-193.

¹⁴⁰ “Roza Invrioti: ‘I Kokkini Daskala’”

¹⁴¹ Maria Karagiorgis was born in 1918 in Pilio, Greece. As a college student she became a member of OKNE, which resulted in her arrest in 1936, and was exiled to the island of Kimolo, where she escaped from during the Occupation and joined EAM.

¹⁴² Katerina Zoitopoulou-Mavrokefalidou, *Maria Karagiorgis: To Oniro Den Esvise* [Maria Karagiorgis: the dream never died](Athens: Paraskinio, 2013), 81-82.

Additionally, Marion Sarafis, the British wife of the general of ELAS Stefanos Sarafis, made statements on whether EAM was victorious in changing women's status in Greek society:

Now, to what extent was EAM successful in changing public opinion about equality and all that? Well, what I think they did was I think they encouraged the women! They encouraged the women to find their own resources rather than changing the men. I mean what had happened with the men was that they'd had to accept this theoretically, and well, after that it was for the women to make them accept it practically!¹⁴³

From Liberation to the Civil War

EAM's domination raised concerns for the Greek government and the British after liberation on October 12, 1944. In hopes of restraining communist influence, they sought to disband ELAS and the former national army to pave the way for elections. On October 26th Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou declared that ELAS, EDES, and the Greek forces of the Middle East would be disbanded. However, the Third Mountain Brigade, the right-wing unit, would remain intact. This made EAM lose faith in the new government. It demanded the disbandment of the Brigade, but Papandreou refused. George Siantos, the KKE Secretary, reached an agreement with Papandreou that if ELAS disbanded then the Brigade would be given a 'generous leave.' The British however disagreed. In light of this Papandreou reached another agreement with the KKE to incorporate units of ELAS and EDES into the Brigade. According to Thanasis Sfikas, author of *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War*, Papandreou,

¹⁴³ Hart, *New Voices of the Nation*, 236.

however, didn't inform the British know of this integration. This negotiation ultimately fell apart and left-wing ministers resigned from the government on December 2, 1944. As a result EAM called for a mass demonstration for December 3 and a general strike for December 4.¹⁴⁴

Initially, Papandreou granted permission to EAM for the demonstration and strike; however he withdrew it a few hours later. It was too late for EAM to notify all of its followers throughout the city that the demonstration was called off. Hence, on December 3, 1944, a euphoric crowd of thousands and thousands of people gathered unarmed at Syntagma Square, in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, carrying Greek and allied flags, and singing resistance songs. A young man "surged from the front ranks and began a wild dance. He leapt high in the air once, twice. Suddenly, he doubled up and fell to the ground, his chest covered with blood."¹⁴⁵ The police began firing machine guns indiscriminately into the crowd, from atop the official buildings in the square. Over a hundred were injured and twenty-eight were killed, "as foreign journalists looked on in horror from the safety of General Scobie's headquarters, the Hotel Grande Bretagne."¹⁴⁶ When the shooting ended Demetrios Partsalides, the then communist Secretary-General of EAM, declared Papandreou an 'outlaw' and affirmed that the people would "fight for liberty without counting their sacrifices."¹⁴⁷

On December 4, a general strike was proclaimed throughout the country. ELAS reserve units of Athens attacked police stations; although, according to Mischa Glenny,

¹⁴⁴ Sfikas *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War*, 32-33.

¹⁴⁵ Dominique Eudes, *Les Kapetanios*, trans. Giorgos Papakiriakos (Athens: Exandas, 1975), 190.

¹⁴⁶ Glenny, *The Balkans*, 539.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

“they were careful not to provoke the few thousand British and loyalists forces.”¹⁴⁸ An armistice was called in the beginning of January. As a result of what is now called the December Events, Papandreou resigned. Negotiations began with the Liberal Themistoklis Sofoulis, who prepared to form a new government that was to be supported by EAM.¹⁴⁹

On February 12, 1945 the Greek government and EAM signed the Varkiza Agreement. According to this agreement the Greek government had to abolish any illiberal laws, safeguard individual liberties, and secure the free expression of the citizens’ political convictions, while EAM had to disband ELAS. The members of ELAS and party members of the KKE were distraught by the Varkiza Agreement and the surrender of arms. Bitterness and mistrust towards the party leadership engulfed the rank and file, with ELAS members voicing their feelings openly. The leaders, however, were determined to uphold their end of the Varkiza Agreement.¹⁵⁰

Although most of the guerrillas handed over their weapons after the signing of the Varkiza Agreement, Aris Velouchiotis, the most prominent captains of ELAS, was against it and refrained from handing over his weapons. He argued that the guerillas would be chased by the Right leaning government. As a result the KKE denounced him and forced other party members to refrain from helping him in any way. Nevertheless, Velouchiotis defied orders and organized another resistance movement of a group of men who were in ELAS and shared his views, and headed off to the mountains once again. A

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Sfikas, *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War*, 34.

¹⁵⁰ George Margaritis, *Istoria tou Ellinikou Emfiliou Polemou 1946-1949, Tomos 1* (The history of the Greek Civil War 1946-1949, Volume 1), 4th ed. (Athens: Vivliorama, 2002), 78-85.

few months later, Velouchiotis was killed by government troops; “his severed head was displayed in the main square of Trikala.”¹⁵¹

According to W.H. McNeil, who was at the time the Assistant Military Attaché at the US Embassy in Athens, only weeks after the Varkiza Agreement was signed right-wing nationalist organizations launched an unparalleled persecution against republican and leftist citizens. Right wing groups stormed into leftist newspaper offices and harassed them. According to a former EDES officer, he “quietly organized bands and they broke up the local offices of EAM and spread terror among the cadres of the KKE” without anyone realizing that it was he who had given the orders.¹⁵² These nationalist bands were supported by the National Guard, which had been quickly formed during the December Events in order to fight ELAS, hence defying the Varkiza Agreement. Furthermore, members of the upper class and the Church commended these acts.¹⁵³

Although the Greek government according to the Varkiza agreement was said to grant amnesty to the guerrillas who would surrender, they did not. Many leftists continued to wait for trial for minor offenses and those that signed the Declaration of Repentance (DOR) were continuously harassed. Furthermore, those that did not name names were arrested and exiled and the Greek army was recruited exclusively from royalist quarters.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Mazower, *Hitler's Greece*, 373.

¹⁵² Sfikas, *The British Labour Government*, 45.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Andreas Gerolymatos, *Red Acropolis, Black Terror: The Greek Civil War and the Origins of Soviet American Rivalry* (New York: Basic Books, 2004) 194-195.

The surrender of ELAS was followed by what is known as the period of “white terror” where leftists were hunted and persecuted by paramilitary groups and the state for participating in EAM. As observed by Colonel C.M. Woodhouse, who was sent to Greece by the British to oversee the situation, it was worse to be a Communist at this time than to have collaborated with the Germans.¹⁵⁵ Waves of right-wing repression had spread throughout Greece. In places such as Macedonia, where they found less support because EAM had a stronghold there, they were even more brutal against the people.¹⁵⁶ The women whose lives are studied in this dissertation were hunted and forced into the underground.

The Woman Question and the Left after the war

In the spring of 1945 the female members and supporters of the KKE established the *Panellinia Enosi Gynaikon* PEG (Pan-Hellenic Union of Women). At the Seventh Conference of the KKE, on October 6, 1945, the Women’s Vote was one of the central issues on the agenda. It was acknowledged that Greek women stood equally beside men in the struggle for freedom, sacrificing everything; her home; her profession. She was at the battlefield, at the home front, in the mountains, in the cities, at the frontline, in protests and in strikes. EAM and the KKE had aided in women’s political awakening and it was now time that she be utilized.¹⁵⁷ We shouldn’t allow for women to be brought back

¹⁵⁵ C.M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord* (London: Hutchinson, 1948), 241.

¹⁵⁶ Sfikas, *The British Labour Government*, 45-47.

¹⁵⁷ “A Vote for the Women” the Seventh Conference of the KKE, October 6, 1945, Charilaos Florakis Educational Center Archives, AM: 325225.

to abject subjection and fatalism, Chrysa Chatzivasiliou argued. A democratic army of the Greek people cannot be conceived if half of the population, which is made up of women, isn't included. Women need to be included in the equation, politically, socially and economically, if a People's Democracy is to be realized.¹⁵⁸

In November 1945 the delegation of the PEG participated in the founding conference of the International Democratic Federation of Women in Paris. The first Pan-Hellenic KKE Women's conference commenced on February 11, 1946, which was called by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee for the best outcome of the Seventh Conference of the Party. They concluded: that there wasn't a radical turn in the work sector of the women. The belittlement and underestimation of women which is incompatible with communist mentality, was a barrier which they needed to rectify. Members of the KKE were captive to the medieval mentality regarding the woman question, which is a product of the reactionary oligarchy; a mentality that contradicts with the scopes and endeavors of the people's movement. The understanding of the woman question as a social problem had to be solved, connected and linked with all the other economic, political, and social problems or issues and an understanding of the meaning of women's demands was needed. The formation of a broad, democratic women's party was a duty and communist women and men must aid the development of the movement with all their power throughout the country.¹⁵⁹

A study of issues that were to have the attention of women such as politics and economic equality, educational equality was needed, according to Chatzivasiliou.

¹⁵⁸ Chrysa Chatzivasiliou: The Pan-Hellenic Party Women's Meeting KOM.EP March 1946, Charilaos Florakis Educational Center Archive, AM 2728 p117-118.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Language in propaganda material and banners was to be simplified due to the illiteracy of many women. The achievement of this goal was not only the women's committee aids, which would continue to create wherever they didn't exist, but the change of their role from aids to organs. There was a call for systematic politics for the emergence of leading women party members, the mobilization of women's organizations in all cities, a focus on the women's vote in the upcoming elections, the publishing of Pan-Hellenic women's magazine, and other local newspapers. And foremost, it was argued that all the organizations combine, no matter what political party they belong to in one women's party.¹⁶⁰

Road to Civil War and Exile

After the war the Greek government equated EAM members with subversives who conspired with the Soviet Union in a communist takeover. Pre-emptive policies against EAM members and individuals closely associated with them were "imperative," hence the witch hunt that ensued was fully "justified" by the Greek government. Rural security units were formed throughout the country, known as Monades Asfaleias Ypaithrou, MAY (Rural Security Units). Furthermore, paramilitary groups operated freely, particularly in the countryside, harassing EAM members, beating them, and in many cases murdering them. Women were often raped by members of these groups. One such group was the 'X' organization, which had a stronghold in Peloponnesus and within

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

which many men completed their army service. Other similar groups were the Sourlides in Northern Greece. All these groups operated unrestrained throughout the country. Entire villages were destroyed, and families obliterated.¹⁶¹

The Greek State's nationalist discourse alleged that the Slavic neighboring countries, which had established a communist state and hence had KKE's allegiance, posed a threat to the nation, since they assisted the guerrillas of the *Demokratikos Stratos Elladas*, DSE (Greek Democratic Army). The term "Eamovulgari" or EAM-Bulgarians stemmed from the State's accusation of a KKE "plan" to collaborate with the Slavic countries of the north, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, in particular. Along with "traitors," and "bandits," the term "Eamovulgari" was a curse that the Left withstood by the Right in the aftermath of the Resistance. The Greek government appealed to the United Nations Security Council in December 1946, according to which Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria enhanced the armed struggle of the Democratic Army, aiming at the secession of territories from northern Greece. The "Slavic threat" merged with the anti-communist rhetoric of the Cold War, in which Greece's freedom was threatened by Soviet expansion. This rhetoric was used in the nationalist narrative against the partisans and specifically, against the female members of the Resistance who were later sent into exile. The rationale was that the women were not fit to be mothers of Greek children as they were infected with the poison of communism. Labels such as the "eamobulgarians" were used in a derogatory manner to attack women and especially in the cases where children

¹⁶¹ Demetra Petroula, "*Pou 'nai I Mana Sou Mori*" [Where's your mom, you stupid girl?]. Athens: Synchroni Epochi, 2011.

were involved; to excuse the violent grabbing of the children from their mothers arms, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Members of the Resistance were perceived as gangsters, traitors and anti-patriots. In areas such as Soufli, in northern Greece, where paramilitary groups wildly roamed, antifascists were killed, and in many instances had their decapitated heads kicked around like soccer balls. “And after they would. . .place them on the windows of the holding cells and call to the wretched mothers, wives, and sister, to identify them.”¹⁶² In some areas, such as Iraklio, Crete, the paramilitary gangs were allowed to enter the holding cells of the General Police Stations as they pleased, and then beat the women as they pleased. On the way to her execution, a Cretan woman, Evangelia Fotiadou stuck her head out of the car and called out to some workers: “We’re going to die. You hang on and take revenge for our blood.”¹⁶³ Another, young woman, Katina, beaten in June 1948 for hours, hemorrhaged and fainted. Her uterus was fractured from the severe beatings, and she died three months later.¹⁶⁴

Many found themselves in holding cells due to an informant. The *hafie* or snitch was a phenomenon that was cultivated in Greek society in the years from the Metaxas dictatorship and throughout the 1950s; some have argued it lasted until the fall of the Junta in 1974. A *hafie* facilitated many arrests and the death of people in the countryside by the paramilitary groups. As in Spain, a difference amongst neighbors was all it took

¹⁶² Evangelia Fotaki, “Gia tis Gynaikes sta Kratitiria Metagogon,”[About the women in the holding cells of the transport prisons] in *Stratopeda Gynaikon: Ennea thamma tetradia me afgisis Kratoumenon Gynaikon sta Stratopeda Chiou, Trikeri, Makronisou, sta chronia tou Emfiliou Polemou 1947-1951*[*Women’s Camps: Nine buried notebooks with detained women’s narrations on the camps of Chios, Trikeri, Makronisos, in the years of the civil war*] (Athens, 1975), 16.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 23.

for someone to be arrested. Consequently a climate of what anthropologist Talal Asad has referred to as “organized suspicion,” a culture of mistrust and fear of informers and snitches permeated the KKE.¹⁶⁵ At any rate, those that didn’t give names or refused to sign the DOR were imprisoned, jailed, or executed.

From the beginning, the Greek government adopted a policy of no reconciliation with guerillas, appointing fervent anti-communists such as the leader of EDES, Napoleon Zervas, to vital ministries such as that of Public Order. This only intensified the polarization.¹⁶⁶ And as a result, in July 1947 alone, over ten thousand Greek citizens “were arrested and deported to islands on the grounds of a fictitious plot for insurrection in cities.”¹⁶⁷ Public Law No. 509, which was passed in 1947, to protect the Greek national security against a takeover by the KKE, sealed the fate of thousands of members of the Resistance, bringing about mass arrests, trials, executions, imprisonment, and internment in concentration camps. There were at least eight thousand death sentences between 1946 and 1949.¹⁶⁸ By 1948, the Greek army had about 150,000 men, while the Greek Democratic Army had, even at its peak, no more than 26,000 men and women. With the backing of the United States, which allocated 345.5 million dollars to the Greek government between 1947 and 1949, the defeat of the Greek Democratic Army was inevitable.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 76.

¹⁶⁶ Zervas was convicted later on of being a German collaborator.

¹⁶⁷Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 61.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

In their scope of “rehabilitating” the detainee, the Greek government used islands as concentration camps, due to a lack of space in the prisons. The exiles had no connection to the outside world, albeit letters from their families, which were censored and inspected by the guards. There were about fifty prisons in Greece during the civil war. Furthermore, there were thirty- five places of exile throughout the country, in addition to the holding cells of the Gendarmerie and the Security Police, and the over twenty hospitals such as “Sotiria Hospital” in Athens, which held members of EAM as patients.¹⁷⁰

As argued by Voglis, the detainees referred to themselves as political prisoners; to the Greek government, however, they were subversives, anti-patriots, and enemies of the State. The government repeatedly denied that there were any political prisoners in Greece. It denied that there were any political detainees and declared that there were no executions on the grounds of political crimes. Most political prisoners were in “violation” of Law 509; for allegedly implementing ideas that aimed at overthrowing the government. This law had its roots in the interwar years, in the *Idionymon* law of 1929, and the laws of 1936 and 1938 under the dictatorship of Metaxas.¹⁷¹

According to Voglis, there are four different categories of political prisoners between 1945 and 1950: 1) political exiles-those that were banished to islands following decrees of public security committees, 2) citizens who were convicted of common crimes during the Occupation and December Events, and sentenced by civil courts, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, 3) citizens convicted of offenses against the State,

¹⁷⁰ Pota Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, September 5, 2015.

¹⁷¹ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 65.

as defined by the laws such as Emergency Law 509, under the Ministry of War and sentenced by special courts-martial, 4) Soldiers and army officers interned on Makronisos Camp for re-indoctrination, and were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War, and the Greek Army.¹⁷²

The protagonists in this dissertation fell under category 1. If they were recognized as “political” prisoners they would have been given certain privileges such as no censorship of letters, wouldn’t have been obliged to work, would had the freedom to roam around the camp grounds as they pleased, they would have been able to have access to newspapers and books, all of which were, however, forbidden to them.¹⁷³ The women in this dissertation were amongst the more than fifty thousand Greek citizens interned in camps or prisons within Greece between 1947 and 1956. In the chapters that follow the women’s trajectories from the period of the Occupation to their internment and life in exile are examined.

¹⁷²Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 64.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 67.

CHAPTER 3

RESISTANCE

Freedom

*Freedom, beautiful daughter, comes down from the mountains and the people embrace her and dance and celebrate, EAM, EAM, EAM, the people's voice. It reaches the stars in the sky. . . Now, the tyrant will tremble.*¹

“EAM, EAM, the voice of the people. That’s exactly what EAM was. It was the voice of the people,”² expresses Eleni Savvatianou, a member of the *Eniaia Panelladiki Organosi Neon*, EPON (United Panhellenic Youth Organization) the youth wing of the *Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*, EAM (National Liberation Front) and survivor of prison and exile. As discussed in chapter two, during the period of the Resistance, the Greek people believed they had control over their own destiny rid their country of the occupiers, and build it anew. Throughout the hardships, the members and supporters of EAM believed that from the ashes of the war they could create a just Greek state. They fought for “laokratia,” a government by the people. Although, as historian Leften S. Stavrianos has argued, “laokratia” has the same meaning as “demokratia” (democracy), it meant so much more under EAM’s influence. It stood for “a new and more meaningful democracy, a democracy based on people rather than institutions. ‘Laokratia’ was a one-word

¹EAM song, “Freedom,” written by Vasilis Rotas, found in Anna Teriaki-Solomou, *Mia Zoi Mesa Apo Kategides . . . Nikos-Anna (1944-1996)*[A Life through the Storms. . . Nikos-Anna (1944-1996) (Athens: Paraskinio Publications, 2009), 64.

²Eleni Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 8, 2014.

summary of the new intellectual climate in occupied Greece.”³ The people believed that they could reconstruct Greek society and form a state that would be for all people, for all classes, and they themselves would play a significant role in its reconstruction.

In their struggle to free Greece from the Axis powers during World War II, the protagonists in this PhD dissertation paid a heavy price. Nevertheless, they survived to tell their story; they are as they declare, “the lucky ones.” Nitsa Gavriilidou, Pota Kakkava, Zozo Petropoulou-Krizilaki,⁴ Plousia Liakata, Ellie Nikolaou, and Eleni Savvatianou, represent the different categories of antifascist women that joined EAM and its various branches.

The women were part of the mass uprising against the Nazis, and they formed part of the Resistance in Greece (1941-1944). The Resistance served two purposes: to rid the country of the occupiers and a simultaneous desire to radically change Greek society. It was successful in mobilizing the cities and the countryside, and instilling trust in the people as they believed in EAM’s narrative of national and social liberation. It offered women an opportunity to push through the limitations of the prewar era rigid way of life and enter the public sphere.

When the Resistance was born in the fall of 1941, the women whose lives are described in this chapter were school girls. Their need to participate in the struggle drove them to join *Ethniki Allilengyi*, EA (National Solidarity). With the establishment of EPON in 1943, which served as an umbrella organization for all the youth groups, the

³ Leften S. Stavrianos, *Greece: American Dilemma and Opportunity* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 64.

⁴ Everyone knew her by her maiden name Petropoulou; I will continue using it instead of the hyphenated form from here on.

young women quickly joined. Although they have common trajectories, the women share unique experiences, which shed light on various aspects of the Resistance in the fight against fascism and Nazism. Each woman represents different elements that made up EAM: Plousia Liakata represents the *Ellinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos*, ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army) female guerilla, Pota Kakkava represents the very young rural anti-fascist woman, Ellie Nikolaou, Eleni Savvatianou, and Zozo Petropoulou represent the urban antifascist woman, as well as the imprisoned Greek citizen in both German and Greek concentrations camps. Nitsa Gavriilidou represents the consequences of being the daughter of a political leader within EAM. But who were these women? What was their involvement in the Resistance? How did they get organized? What were the effects of their antifascist activities?

Through their testimonies this chapter delves into the Greek women's antifascist actions demonstrating their contribution to the war against fascism and Nazism, and their drive for liberation of their country. Furthermore, it unfolds the fearless manner in which they faced the consequences of their actions. It demonstrates how their experiences in the Occupation and participation in the Resistance developed their conscience of women's socio-political position in society and strengthened their conviction that an equal society was possible, which became evident both in theory and in practice within the organizations that they joined. This chapter moreover illustrates that women were a vital component of the Resistance. They prove to be indispensable in many positions within the Resistance Movement and their participation was not limited to traditional gender roles of pre-World War II Greece. It is due to the support of the women in the Resistance that ordinary women engage in the struggle. As in Republican Spain, women surpassed

traditional constrictions and “eagerly participated in the struggle against fascism.”⁵ Most importantly, this chapter reveals that antifascist women perceived that they played an active and decisive role in altering ordinary women’s opinion of the boundaries and limits that women can surpass. As Plousia Liakata, the last living female guerilla of the EPON Platoon of the Thirteenth Division of ELAS, has attested: “It was unprecedented for local village women to see an armed woman on a horse entering a village and giving orders to the Platoon as a Second Lieutenant.”⁶ The organizations of EAM left a lasting mark on many ordinary women. Women who were never politically active before the Resistance responded to EAM’s call for the struggle against the fascist invaders.⁷

Nazi Occupation and the Call for Resistance

It was a Sunday morning, on April 27, 1941, when the Germans entered Athens; one week after Greek Orthodox Easter.⁸ Eleni Savvatianou recalls: “When the Germans entered Athens, there wasn’t a person in sight in my neighborhood in Kifissia. Everyone was locked up in their homes. I saw the Germans pass through our main square with their tanks. They were coming from Erithrea, a town north of Kifissia, and they continued on toward the center of Athens.”⁹ On that day, Athens public radio transmitted, “This is the voice of still free Athens. The German invaders are at the borders of Athens. Brothers

⁵ Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* (Denver: Arden Press, 1995), 50.

⁶ Plousia Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 23, 2017.

⁷ My grandmother used to talk to me about World War II and mention singing EAM songs although her family wasn’t Leftist. She argued that it wasn’t a Left or Right matter; it was resistance and a desire for liberation.

⁸ *Kathimerini*, April 28, 1941.

⁹ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 8, 2014.

and sisters, keep the spirit of the Front well in your hearts. . .Greeks keep your hearts elevated.”¹⁰

At 8:45 AM the Nazi flag replaced the Greek on the holy rock of the Acropolis. Two hours later, at the café Parthenon, at the intersection of Kifissias Avenue and Alexandras Avenue, army commander of Attica-Viotias, Christos Kavrakos and the prefect Konstantinos Pezopoulos, as well as Amvrosios Plytas, the mayor of Athens, and Michalis Manouskos the mayor of Piraeus, surrendered Athens and Piraeus to the Germans. The country was now officially under Nazi occupation.¹¹ Now, Athens public radio transmitted, “Attention, the Athenian radio station will soon no longer be Greek. It will be German and it will transmit lies. Greeks, don’t listen to them. Our struggle continues, and will continue until our final victory.”¹²

Ellie Nikolaou, born in 1925 in Zinnovo, near Greece’s border with Bulgaria, raised in Athens, and was sixteen years old and a high school student at the time, remembers: “School had closed for two months and the era of hunger and terror, had begun.”¹³ The Athenians were locked in their homes, as was Ellie, her parents and two younger siblings. Radios and weapons were confiscated, homes were requisitioned by the Germans, and the famine began because of the lack of wheat. People were forced to live on four hundred calories a day.¹⁴

¹⁰<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wENKmctdgew> Accessed May 28, 2021.

¹¹ Menelaos Charalambidis, *I Ebiria tis Katochis kai tis Adistasis stin Athena* [The Experience of Occupation and Resistance in Athens] (Athens: Alexandria, 2012).

¹²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wENKmctdgew>

¹³ Ellie Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

¹⁴Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941-1944* (Cambridge University Press, 2006, 196).

The effects of hunger were ubiquitous throughout the city. It didn't take long for people to organize in fighting it:

We, the youth, were indignant about the situation. Hunger was our motivation. Most of us went to bed hungry, woke up hungry, and were hungry when we went to school. I wasn't from a rich family. My father was a trade unionist. We lived in a small house on the second floor, with two rooms and a kitchen. We had some furniture. We sold it all for food; and my mother's ring. Because of this we were able to survive the first year. The second year of the occupation was the worst. I was in the last year of high school. Hunger was everywhere. Whatever working class or middle class families had to sell, they had already sold. All local grocery stores were empty. Whenever they used to bring something, it would disappear within minutes. The black marketers held products from the people and sold them at very high prices. It was so hard to buy food. The food we got with the ration books was minimal. You saw dead people on the streets. It was impossible even to take them and bury them, there were so many. The municipality's carts took the bodies to the 3rd cemetery and buried them in mass graves. These things affected us and we discussed it with older people too. We started doing something, such as protests against the executions. People we knew were being executed. We formed small groups for the protests and also started also writing slogans on the walls of buildings. Later on I was informed that those groups were formed by the KKE. I remember Aspa Papathanasiou, the actress, who was with us and she was involved in the KKE. The teams were formed by ten to fifteen people.¹⁵

Eleni Savvatianou shares a heartbreaking story which encapsulates the effects of the hunger, of the famine, on the population:

There was a man in our neighborhood, Kifissia, who was a very good man, a family man, as they say. One day, he had his son's dead body in a cart and was trying to get rid of it without anyone knowing; so that he wouldn't lose the ration book that we were given. My youngest sister refused to eat for days after that incident. She would cry and say that 'It's not fair that I can eat while other children like me die from hunger.'¹⁶

¹⁵ Nikolaou, interview.

¹⁶ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 23, 2017.

The effects of the famine that the 1940s generation endured are synonymous with the term *katochi* (occupation). All cities throughout Greece were affected by the famine, yet the main cities of the country, Athens and Thessaloniki experienced it the most.

Born in 1925, Nitsa Gavriilidou was sixteen years old and living in Kilkis, a city in north-eastern Greece, when the Germans occupied Greece. She remembers her godmother telling her how Thessaloniki was empty of people and how terrified everyone was:

I was in Kilkis when the Germans invaded. I remember that the schools were closed. We heard about what the Germans were doing to the Jews; it was frightening. My godmother who lived in Thessaloniki helped a Jewish woman by hiding her in her home, which was dangerous. There was an organization before EAM which I joined. *Ethniki Allilengyi*. We felt that we resisted the German invader by joining this organization. I was in my village then, which was a few miles away from Kilkis, and close to a mountain where a guerrilla group began organizing. The first guerilla groups began in Kilkis and in Cardano, Crete. These two are the first Greek *andartika* or guerilla groups. After the formation of these two, many followed in other locations in Greece. So, our villages close to Kilkis were the first areas that were organized for resistance. Without realizing it, we were already in organizations resisting the Germans. We did not know what these groups were and what they were representing. We were very young. Our first contact with the guerrillas was when they used to come to our villages and we helped them with food and shelter. I became a member of KKE in 1943. I was 18 years old. EPON was not formed yet.¹⁷

Like Nitsa, the first resistance organization that many of the young women joined was EA.

EA formed during the Occupation and had a unified Pan-Hellenic foundation and character. It is estimated that women made up two thirds of EA's three million

¹⁷ Nitsa Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 9, 2012.

members.¹⁸ It initially began, on March 28 1941, by Dionisia and Dresios Papadomichelakis, to support those that were exiled and imprisoned during the Metaxas period.¹⁹ It was initiated by the political exiles who had escaped from the Aegean islands of Kimolos and Folegandros. Mothers, wives, and sisters of the political exiles were at the center of the organization. In time, civil servants, youth organizations, students, and professors such as Athanasios Rousopoulos, a civil engineer and professor at the Polytechnic School of Athens, joined EA.

EA saved many Greeks living in the cities. In contrast to historian Violetta Hionidou's argument that the EA "in actual terms of relief, the contribution. . . in the urban areas was minimal,"²⁰ EA organized soup kitchens, and provided clothing for the needy. Women visited prisoners, specifically those who didn't have families, and sent letters to exiled men for emotional support.²¹ Ellie Nikolaou describes some of the actions of EA in the city of Athens, such as distribution of food, and collecting donations:

When the soup kitchen started, we began searching for food supplies for the soup kitchens. We went door to door to get as much as we could. We went to great lengths to distribute the food; even if it was just watered down chickpea soup. I remember it was Christmas and I basically had water and five beans in my tin bowl. The piece of bread was so small that it was one bite. We went door to door asking people to donate whatever they were able to.²²

Although many gave whatever they could, there were those that weren't so charitable, as

Ellie attests:

¹⁸ <https://ethniki-antistasi-dse.gr/ethiki-allhleggyh.html>

¹⁹ Natalia Apostolopoulou, *Perifanes kai Adoulotes* [Proud and Unenslaved](Athens: Entos, 1997), 18.

²⁰ Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece*, 128.

²¹ Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 227.

²² Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

Most people gave us whatever they could, but there were some who closed their doors in our face or chased us away. Once, I remember we knocked on a door and a very tall guy opened. We asked if he could donate some food and he started cursing at us. He slapped our faces twice and told us to go home. He was a police officer. Another time, we gathered all the women and kids from the neighborhood of Gyzi in Athens and walked down to City Hall, banging on pots and pans. And we yelled: Bread! Food! And the police chased us.²³

There was however, an overall universal desire to aid those that were most affected by the famine. Solidarity cut across class and political affiliations. For example, Pota Kakkava's family was well off, and although she was very young, Pota, who was still in grade school when the Germans invaded Greece, was fully aware of the injustice of the war and conscious of the need for liberation. As Pota attests:

And I wasn't from a poor family. But I was against the fascists and believed in freedom, equality, *laokratia*, although I was very young at the time. My parents were very fair people. Although they were royalists, and had money to buy us new shoes and clothing for Easter, let's say, they didn't let us, because the other children in the neighborhood didn't have that opportunity. . . There was only one school for everyone on my side of town, and out of the twelve hundred students that attended about two hundred were what you could call middle class. My parents didn't give us money to buy a pretzel, for example, which were sold near the school grounds, since all the students couldn't have one.²⁴

EA collaborated with people from all political backgrounds. The winter of 1941 into 1942 was profoundly harsh. It is estimated that over three hundred thousand Greek citizens died from hunger, in addition to thousands of young children. According to many testimonies, EA was equated with soup kitchens, food distribution, and hospitals.

²³ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 19, 2012.

²⁴ Pota Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, August 28, 2014.

The young women had experience in solidarity from the early days of the war, such as Eleni Savvatianou who was a paramedic. She was born in 1925 in Kifissia, to a family that was considered working to middle class; her father drove a taxi, which he owned. He was a Venizelist, which was considered liberal. Eleni had social concerns for as long as she can remember; concerns which ripened during the Resistance yet had their roots in the Metaxas dictatorship. As a young member of *Ethniki Organosi Neoleas*, EON (National Youth Organization), Metaxas' youth organization, which was mandatory for students to join, Eleni volunteered at the local hospital and worked as a paramedic attending to patients from the Albanian Front at the beginning of the Italian invasion in October 1940:

When I was in school, I was in EON of Metaxas here in Kifissia. We used to collect wool and bring it to the Benaki's home where older women used to make scarves for the soldiers who were in the war. When the first injured soldiers returned from the battle front, from Albania, at the end of 1940, I became a paramedic. It just so happened that the soldiers that I attended to were all democratic. When Metaxas passed away we were told not to tell the soldiers that he died because they would supposedly be very sad. I went to the soldiers and I remember I talked to Elias, who was approximately twenty years old and I told him that Metaxas died; He was so overjoyed that he asked me if I could bring some wine to celebrate. I rushed home and brought him my father's wine and everybody celebrated. The injured soldiers influenced me and I later joined EAM.

Although Eleni was influenced by the soldiers, they didn't recruit her:

They didn't tell me something directly but I was always around them. Most of these people were democratic. They wanted fascism to fall. I realized that they were not only fighting against the Italians, they were also fighting against fascism. They protested in the hospital asking for food, and some were in their wheel chairs. So, being around all this and more you didn't need anything more to join the KKE or EAM.

Unlike Eleni, however, there were many people who didn't have political interests but felt the need to resist and to contribute to the struggle against the Occupation. EA was an ideal avenue in this case, particularly for women, who had experience in cooking and were needed in the soup kitchens.

EA was the easiest organization for one to join because it didn't have a political character, which helped broaden EA's activities. Specifically, EA began supporting the prisoner's or executed men's families and taking care of those that found themselves homeless as their homes were burned by the Germans, such as in the villages of Aetos in Messenia and Agioi Anargiroi in Laconia, in southern Peloponnesus, and dozens others.²⁵ Historian Violetta Hionidou, however, argues that its contribution in Athens was mostly focused on organizing strikes. And that in the "countryside it may have provided actual relief to persons in need."²⁶ On the contrary, it is EAM and later on, EPON, that organized the strikes. And, although it didn't focus on strikes, EA did have a significant role in strikes and protests, as asserted by Vervenioti.²⁷ Furthermore, EA was without a doubt, the organization that members of the Resistance refer to as the "savior" of the people from hunger, and as the "mother" of the Resistance.

People living in villages and cities in the countryside were in a better predicament than those living in the capital. Plousia Liakata, born in 1926 in the city of Messolonghi, in Central Greece, has stressed that people who lived there were "lucky" as they had access to fish. In addition to being a seaside town, it is also an area in which many

²⁵ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, August 5, 2015.

²⁶ Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece*, 128-29.

²⁷ Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 233-234.

families lived off of fish farms. Yet, although Plousia's family didn't starve, she wasn't immune to scenes of despair brought about by the German occupation:

The Italians occupied Messolonghi first. They didn't behave as badly, as the Germans. The Germans were something else. Far worse than the Italians. Fortunately my father and brothers were fishermen, and therefore we didn't starve. My brother had organized the fishermen's association. But there was hunger. In Messolonghi there was a hotel where before the war the employees used to go to its café. A young waiter worked there, always in a white shirt, elegant, wearing a bow tie. . .At one point, during the Occupation, I saw him outside the hotel, which was no longer operating. He was lying on a blanket. .You could only see his head. He had reached out and asked for help. Even today it upsets me when I think about it. I remember that it bothered me so much when I saw him that I ran to my mother, fell into her arms and cried.²⁸

Plousia's initial contribution during the war was to assist the town's doctor in helping those in need. Her training would prove invaluable in her life after exile, obtaining employment in the medical field.

EA formed groups throughout all the villages; young men and women came from Athens and helped form nurseries in rural Greece, particularly in the Karpenisi area.²⁹ In the Central Greece, women kept children occupied, and fed. Yianna Trikalinou was one of the three women who founded an EA branch in the village of Mikro Chorio in the Evritania Region. As she declared, "we managed with the aid and help of the local priest and teacher to collect beans and other food supplies, and began a soup kitchen."³⁰

Furthermore, Trikalinou has argued that they cooked daily for the villagers and is proud

²⁸ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 17, 2012.

²⁹ Karpenisi was one of the first areas of Greece to be freed from the Germans by ELAS in May 1943, more than one year prior to Greece's general liberation.

³⁰ Yianna Trikalinou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 5, 2016.

to say that “no child went unfed; no child died of hunger.”³¹ The children were also taught how to read and write. The committee was formed by the mothers of the children and they provided the cooking for all the children. EA also provided entertainment along with food distribution, as theater groups went around villages giving performances to gather food.³² In addition to practical aid, the youth desired more; they sought to organize and fight the root cause of the famine; the invaders-the Axis powers.

Omospondia Kommounistikis Neoleas Elladas, OKNE (Federation of Communist Youth of Greece) formed EAM Neon, EAMN (EAM Youth) on February 8, 1942, which was made up of various youth organizations such as “Demokratiki Enosi Neon” (Democratic Youth Union) and “Lefteri Nea” (Free Young Woman), which was founded in May 1942. As Zozo Petropoulou-Krizilaki has declared, “at first Greek society was not yet ready for co-membership in organizations.” As also argued by anthropologist Janet Hart, both boys and girls engaged in the same activities; for the first time young men and women came in such close contact with one another.³³ The scope of both EAMN and “Lefteri Nea” was to fight the occupation, to provide food and medicine for the needs of the youth, and to fight in solidarity with all antifascist organizations through propaganda, strikes, and armed struggle.³⁴

More and more, young students enrolled in EAM Neon, and Lefteri Nea. Maria Karagiorgis and Keti Zevgou created the name of the branch organization. Females

³¹ Ibid.

³² Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 19, 2019.

³³ Hart, *New Voices in the Nation*, 167.

³⁴ Zozo Petropoulou, speech at the commemoration dinner of the women on Trikeri Island, Greece, September 14, 2012.

joined EAM and its youth groups either through friends, family or acquaintances, or were directly recruited at public gatherings or meetings of the organization, or discovered the organizations on their own. Most Athenian girls began their resistance activities in *Lefteri Nea*. The youth groups saw a connection between the Resistance in World War II and the war for Independence of 1821. Images such as that of Laskarina Bouboulina were vivid characters of a righteous cause in collective memory and a reference for role model of a fierce woman fighting for freedom. As Zozo Petropoulou attests, “Many of us were around fourteen to sixteen year old girls. We felt as if we were Bouboulines. We wanted to rid Greece of its occupiers. We never imagined we would become ‘heroes,’ we didn’t even know if we would survive from one day to the next,”³⁵ Zozo Petropoulou-Krizilaki declares.

As a sixteen-year old in the eastern suburban neighborhoods of Athens, Zozo’s involvement in the anti-fascist movement included flooding the school yard of her high school in Ilioupoli, with handwritten flyers calling for “young girls to join *Lefteri Nea* to free [their] country of Nazism.”³⁶ And that’s how her participation began. “You were in contact with up to three people, and one was the team leader, which would be in contact with the leading team,” she said. The leading member on Zozo’s team was a teacher. She brought them short texts that they were to write on torn notebook pages and throw around their school and the National Gardens.³⁷ In the beginning of 1943, the struggle for liberation was at its peak. The conditions were ripe for a unified student organization.

³⁵ Zozo Petropoulou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 14, 2012.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

On February 23, 1943, in a small house on Doukissis Plakentias street in the neighborhood of Ambelokipous, in Athens, EPON unified all antifascist and antiwar youth organizations under one umbrella. Specifically, Lefteri Nea contributed over seven thousand members from Athens and Piraeus to EPON. According to EPON's constitution its mission was as follows:

a) The national liberation, full independence and integrity of Greece, with daily and uninterrupted struggle. b) The defense of the interests and rights of the youth in life, education, and culture. c) The destruction of fascism now and in the future, and in whatever formation it may present itself. This means that the Greek state will be formed from the free will of the dominant will of the people and the new generation. Furthermore, this means that the new generation will have equal rights over the age of eighteen, the age which one becomes active in society d) The struggle against the imperialistic wars to protect peace on the basis of self-determination of people and youth and their brotherly collaboration. e) The reconstruction of Greece from the ruins of the war and the occupying forces for a better life and in the interest of the entire population.³⁸

The most important activities conducted through EPON were publishing bulletins, announcement of meetings and demonstrations through the bullhorn, writing slogans of protest on public walls and buildings, and organized demonstrations. Zozo's voice was the first to be heard through the bullhorn in Ilioupoli, while Roza Imvrioti, was one of the leading organizers and founders of EPON, and took on giving lessons on resistance and struggle for liberation to the young members.³⁹

The bullhorn was instrumental and invaluable as it informed the Greek people on the war and the progress of the Resistance, as Ellie Nikolaou affirms:

³⁸ Theodoros Liakopoulos, *The EPON Youth of the National Resistance* (Athens: Odigitis, 1983), 59-61.

³⁹ *Dekemvris tou '44: Krisimi Taxiki Sygrousi* [December '44: Critical Class Clash] Ed. The Historical Department of the KKE's Central Committee, fourth edition (Athens: Synchroni Epochi, 2021), 153.

We used the bullhorn. It was usually made of cardboard paper and was used to call people for protests, to inform them when prisoners were taken from the Averoff prison, which was on Alexandras Avenue, early in the morning for execution and to deliver the news about battles and victories. Its purpose was to inform the people about the war, since people didn't have radios. The Germans had confiscated them. It also helped encourage the Greek people to continue the struggle; to not give up.⁴⁰

“Patriots, this is EPON talking to you!’ We would go the highest point we could and yell through the bullhorn,” says Eleni Savvatianou.⁴¹ They went out before curfew started, which was around 10:00 pm. A poem was dedicated to the bullhorn:

*To Honi*⁴² - The Bullhorn

Attention! Attention! This is ELAS!

The symbol of freedom!

The occupiers fear, symbol of freedom!

Which echoes deeply into the night

The glorious bullhorn

A dog that barks in the street, and it was a scary night!

The bullet's sound was near; it was like a great celebration

Long live!

Everyone clapped with one voice!

Attention! Attention!

This is ELAS!

My brave boy, may luck be with you

Wherever you go, wherever you are

Through you bullhorn, with secret melodies

Your free soul speaks, which was never enslaved

Haidari's pain speaks, the heroic Kaisariani

⁴⁰ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 19, 2012.

⁴¹ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 8, 2015.

⁴² A poem about the bullhorn found in AnnaTeriaki-Solomou, *Mia Zoi Mesa Apo Kategides, Nikos-Anna 1944-1996* [A life through storms, Nikos-Anna 1994-1996](Athens: Paraskinio, 2004), 39.

Your hungry body, your orphaned sister
 It is the people's voice, cries, and roars
 Within the walls of horror
 Free people, slaves, and fighters
 ELAS is talking to you
 The army of victory

The main slogans that the students and young men and women yelled through the bullhorn were numerous; some of the main slogans included: 'Liberty or Death,' 'Death to Fascism,' 'Death to German Collaborators,' 'Fascism will soon die.'

The same slogans were written on the walls throughout cities and towns. Eleni Savvatianou describes how the members of EPON collaborated on their writing on the wall "missions:"

When we painted slogans on the walls, there would be two EPON members on one corner of the street, and two at the other. Once someone would see a police officer, they would signal the writer to stop. . .At one point, I felt someone touch my shoulder and turn me to face him, and as he turned me to the side, I threw the bucket on his head and ran. The other kids had gotten scared and ran. I went to my friend Irene Tatasopoulou's house, and avoided arrest.⁴³

Many young members of EPON were imprisoned during the Resistance because they were caught writing anti-occupation slogans on the walls throughout their cities and towns. Eleni, Ellie, and Plousia were all "caught" and arrested for the same activities, as so many other young women, and men. In reality, they weren't physically caught in the act; they were snitched on. The phenomenon of the snitch, or *hafie*, as it is called in Greek, was one of the dark points of the Occupation. One can compare the Greek *hafie* or snitch to the individuals from different social groups within Italian society, for example

⁴³ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 22, 2017.

state employees, professionals, shop owners, white-collar workers, etc., who were fascism's constituencies and were given the power to exercise violence on political suspects of the regime. In Greece, the snitch conducted much of the leg work for the Nazis, putting many Greek citizens' lives in danger. As Ellie attests:

We went out every night painting the slogans on the walls; my father didn't know that I engaged in such activity; but my mom knew, she had seen the paint on me. She was afraid I would get arrested. We were chased by the Germans and their collaborators, and often shot at. Many young people died this way. Luckily there was a great level of solidarity back then and when there were shootings the people opened their doors to us, helped us clean up, so that the Germans and police wouldn't see the paint on us. Some people even gave us food. There were two groups of traitors. One was the group of people who worked for the Germans and killed for them and the other group was the one who bought and hoarded everything and started the black market. It was also the traitors who were giving names to German authorities. Major groups were the X, which we called Heetes, and the Tagmata Asfaleias. The country side had more groups. Greek traitors gave me in.⁴⁴

Other activities members of EPON engaged in were the transport of guns, and messages to locations where contacts waited to receive them. Plousia was in charge of transporting messages to the guerillas:

The organization [EAM] had put the notes on the hem of my skirt and I was to deliver them to the leadership in the mountains. I had to cross the road block. While singing "Lily Marlene" I used to dip under the wooden bar that was at the road block and pass through. The Germans were perplexed, but they figured it's just a girl! I was taking the note to a young man who was waiting for me in the fields.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

⁴⁵ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 25, 2014.

Young EPON female members were what was called a *sindesmos* (connection or liaison). From all over the country, these young women brought materials and intelligence to the guerilla headquarters of every town. Like Plousia, who lived in central Greece, so did Nitsa, who lived in the north, as did Antonia Kolontourou-Michalakakou, who was an EPON member in Laconia, in southern Peloponnesus.⁴⁶ Participation in the Laconia region was especially difficult as there were many *tagmatasfalites*⁴⁷ and members of the X-organization in the area.

Elpidos Street, Hatzikosta Prison, and the Haidari Camp

In addition to food requisitions, the Resistance was fueled by arrests and torture of citizens by the occupying forces. Many were tortured at Elpidos street, which within Greek collective memory is profoundly connected with the Special Police Headquarters. Merlin 6, which is where the Gestapo headquarters was located, in the upscale neighborhood of Kolonaki in the center of Athens, is also deeply connected with the German occupation. Furthermore, both are equated with inhumane acts where thousands of Greek patriots were tortured.

The Resistance to the tri-part Occupation, particularly to the Nazis, was again paralleled to the resistance to the Ottomans. Pota Kakkava compares the Resistance to the war of 1821 for liberation from the Ottoman Empire in the manner in which those that

⁴⁶ Antonia Kolontourou-Michalakakou, interview by Helen Drivas, Sparta, Laconia, Greece, August 30, 2012.

⁴⁷ Tagmata Asfaleias were Security Battalions formed during the Occupation which held allegiance to the Nazis. *Tagmatasfalitis* is a member of Tagmata Asfalias.

fought and liberated the people were treated; rather than being revered, revolutionary figures were attacked:

The Resistance was a continuation of the war of 1821. And just like Theodoros Kolokotronis was arrested, although he was one of the main figures in liberating Greece from Ottoman rule, we who fought in the Resistance against the Italians, the Germans and the Bulgarians, were chased, tortured, detained and executed, because we ‘scared’ the system, since we believed in a world where we would all be equal. All we wanted was a system where the people would have what they deserved. For example, it is unjustified for a worker to produce clothing and for him or her to not have the ability to purchase the product that they produced.⁴⁸

In 1943, under the government of Ioannis Rallis, the *Tagmata Asfalias* (Security Battalions) are formed. As argued by Pota Kakkava, “the *Tagmata Asfalias* displayed allegiance to Adolph Hitler. The oath of the *tagmatasfalitis* swore allegiance to Hitler while the oath of the guerrilla swore allegiance to the people.”⁴⁹ It is inconceivable that there were Greeks who actually swore to an oath that gave allegiance to Hitler:

I swear to God with this holy oath that I will absolutely obey the orders of the superior leader of the German’s Army, Adolph Hitler. I will be assigned to duties and will obey, without any conditions, orders from my superiors. I know very well that if I deny my obligations, which I undertake with this oath, I want to be punished under German military authorities.

The *tagmatasfalites* tortured Ellie Nikolaou and Eleni Savvatianou at the Special Police Headquarters on Elpidos Street. The women and the thousands others that were tortured there refer to it as “at Elpidos.” The partisans and the general population despised the *tagmatasfalites* even more than they do the Germans. The Germans were invaders, while

⁴⁸ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, August 5, 2015.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

it was unfathomable that Greeks would treat their fellow country men and women in such a way; to give them over to the invader. Moreover, they were just as inhumane in their beatings as the Germans were; the horror inflicted on them was immeasurable. “Can you believe what I am saying? Greeks gave us over to the Germans! It was the Greeks who gave us over to the Germans!” Eleni exclaims. “We were more afraid of the collaborators than the Germans,” Ellie declares.⁵⁰ Even the fascist Italian militiamen didn’t “hand anyone over to the Germans.”⁵¹

As the Resistance progressed, the members of EPON were recognizable, and as argued by Ellie Nikolaou, “people in our neighborhoods who were traitors and collaborated with the Germans, started recognizing us and linking us with resistance activities; they would snitch on us and we, members of EPON, would be arrested either by the SS or by the Greek Special Police Unit.”⁵² Eleni Savvatianou was arrested by Greek forces and given over to the Germans:

The gendarmes of Kifissia arrested me. My writings on the wall were still visible until recently when the building was demolished. I was taken to Elpidos Street, where the Athens Police Headquarters were located.⁵³

Savvatianou was kept for days at the general police headquarters-she recalls: “I was at the general police headquarters for about ten days. They kept you until they figured out which prison to transport you to. They would beat you in order to obtain information

⁵⁰ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece June 27, 2014 and Ellie Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

⁵¹ Ferdinando Camon, *Conversations with Primo Levi*, translated by John Shepley (Marlboro, Vermont: Marlboro Press, 1989), 8.

⁵² Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

⁵³ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 5, 2014.

from you.” At the headquarters there was the area where the officers were, and an area where the detainees were held:

There weren't many of us. About three or four at a time, and then they would send you off to a prison. You didn't stay there. You just went there for interrogation. For instance, they had me there until I had my hearing in military court. I was sentenced to death. And my husband, whom of course was just an admirer of mine at the time, along with the priest of Kifissia, managed to reduce my sentence to life in prison.⁵⁴

After a few days of detainment and interrogation at the general police headquarters Savvatianou was taken to the Hatzikosta Prison on Pireos Street.⁵⁵ The Hatzikosta Prison was originally an orphanage which was used as a prison after 1945 and demolished in 1963.⁵⁶ The harshest aspect of the living conditions in prison was sanitation: “In prison you are enclosed amongst four walls. You go to the bathroom in a cell amongst many other women. Each day you had to take and deposit the excrement that was in a bucket. We had to smell that stench until the next morning.”⁵⁷

Eleni was imprisoned in Hatzikosta for a few weeks “in filth and dirt,” before being sent to the German operated Haidari Camp.⁵⁸ Below, she describes a typical day at Hatzikosta:

We didn't really do anything. We were locked up all day. We didn't even have a bathroom, or a toilet. Nor did we have water to wash ourselves. We had these buckets, and we would go in those. And in the morning we would take them to what was like a bathroom, and clean the buckets. You know, we were women, so

⁵⁴ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 19, 2014.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Maria Fafaliou, *Koritsia se Periklistous Horous: Martiries 1942-1952* [Girls in enclosed spaces: Testimonies: 1942-1952](Athens: Alexandria, 2020), 115.

⁵⁷ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 5, 2014.

⁵⁸ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 19, 2014.

we had our periods. Can you imagine the filth? Our urine and whatever, and on top of that, our period, and everything. It was disgusting. It was horrific. Indescribable.⁵⁹

There were at least twenty women in each ward at a time. At times the number increased to up to forty at a time. The women were in charge of cleaning the vegetables or sift through the legumes. They mostly ate legumes which would be brought to them in a cauldron, which the men brought to them; “one cauldron per two women.”⁶⁰

When the Italians capitulated in September 1943, the Germans took over the Haidari Camp. Many women, including Eleni, were transferred there from the Hatzikostas Prison. The Haidari Camp was the largest concentration camp in occupied Greece. Yet, few scholarly works have been written. Located in western Athens, it initially operated under the Italians for a very short period. Then the Germans controlled it after Italy capitulated in 1943. The camp was run by the Germans from September 3, 1943 to September 27, 1944, where about twenty-five thousand antifascists, members of the KKE, and Jews were imprisoned. Leftist prisoners from various prisons in Greece, and specifically from Akronafplia⁶¹ and the island of Anafi, as well as other prisons, such as the Hatzikosta prison, located in the center of Athens, were sent there. The SS ran it as an annex of the Averoff prison, which was on Alexandras Avenue. The camp comprised five hundred acres with twenty buildings. It was the central camp for the transfer of prisoners to concentration camps in Germany, and it operated the same as other Nazi prisons. The infamous Building 15, known as “Block 15,” was the isolation ward, where

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Located in Nafplio, in north-east Peloponnesus. Communists were imprisoned there during the Metaxas Dictatorship in 1936.

soon to be executed prisoners were sent. It also operated as an interrogation center of men and women who were accused of antifascist activities, and where they were tortured.

Within the interrogation ward was a bed where the torture was conducted.⁶²

A common example of how many antifascist women ended up in the Haidari camp is Eleni Savvatianou's story:

“Freedom. A precious gift. I was locked up for twelve years for freedom. I was seventeen when they first arrested me and I was fully freed when I was twenty-nine. All because I wrote ‘freedom or death’ on the walls. If one can actually believe it. And I was arrested by Greeks. I wasn’t from a Leftist home. My father was a liberal. A Venizelist supporter. But the injustice that I witnessed throughout the dictatorship and the ensuing war turned me into a staunch Leftist. I mean can you believe it? I was arrested by Greek officers and that’s how I ended up at Haidari.”

Amidst the inhumane actions of the Nazis, one thing Eleni gave them credit for was that in terms of hygiene, things were better at Haidari than Hatzikostas:

About a week after we arrived there, they gave us a bar of soap and said ‘today you will take a shower.’ We were a bit afraid at first, because we thought that they may have opened the gas on us instead. Because they had done that to others. So we went to the bathrooms. Haidari was a military camp so it was organized and had a couple of faucets, and showers. We were able to go to the bathroom, and in the morning wash our face. So, we went that day, and took a shower, washed our hair. The whole works. They checked us for lice. At Haidari things were a bit more humane than at the Greek prisons. Which is crazy when you think about it. It was operated by the SS. They conducted executions. But in matters of cleanliness, things at Haidari were better. At Hatzikosta they had us living like pigs. You can’t grasp how horrible things were. You can’t write it down. Only us who lived through it can know how things were. And many times we are unable to fully describe the degree of the horror, of everything that we went through. It is indescribable. I mean, in terms of the filth. What can you say? The fact that they left us with a bucket for all to use, whether you had your period, whether you had diarrhea, or whatever. That says it all. I won’t go into details. One gets the idea. In the morning they took us out for an hour, or less. You tried to air out your

⁶² Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 1, 2015.

bedding in that time. To somewhat minimize the filth. The ward was large. Many women to one ward. After getting washed up, you were given an enamel plate. And I had brought it to my house when I was released and told my mom to save it, but she threw it out. You know, so that she wouldn't have any memories of that period. So, anyway, we had that plate, a spoon, and nothing else. Well, most of our food only needed a spoon. And then we would wash our own plate at the sink.⁶³

All the women that Eleni was imprisoned with at the Hatzikosta Prison were taken to Haidari. Most of them were executed. Only three survived from what Eleni remembers. She was saved by one letter in her last name:

When they would take people for execution, because of retaliation or something, they would take two and leave one. They would go by alphabetical order. The last name of the girl before me was Savaidou. They took her and left me. I was released after the liberation. Women were taken in the trucks for execution. They, like me, were captured by the Greeks. They were never taken to Merlin.⁶⁴

Ellie Nikolaou was also sent to the Haidari German camp. Nikolaou was arrested and beaten at the Special Police Headquarters. She describes her arrest and subsequent imprisonment:

I was arrested essentially because they were looking for my father. One day they broke into our house. It was early in the morning. I was with my brother and my younger sister, Irene, who was thirteen years old. They broke everything and ripped the mattress. They were searching for evidence. They arrested all of us. Except my father who had already left for the mountains to join the guerillas. When they saw my mother, they told her that we were all dead. She went crazy because she couldn't stand it and she was brought to Dafni, the psychiatric hospital. The three of us were brought to the special police office. A lot of people were tortured there. You know during Metaxas's government they used to force people to drink castor oil and let them hang standing on a block of ice. I was hung

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Merlin" was where the general headquarters of the Gestapo were. Many were severely tortured there. It was located on Merlin Street in the center of Athens.

as well and beaten. The Special Police was controlled by the SS. There were three torturers. Their names were Mandas, Papagrigrorakis and Partheniou. These torturers were in the SS as I learnt later. When the commander called me into his office and asked me if I did some specific things, I replied no to everything. Meanwhile, back then I was dating a guy from University of Athens and most of the kids from the groups that I told you about had been arrested. He kept asking me if I knew some names but I didn't budge; I said no to all his questions. Papagrigrorakis had it in for me. He wanted to examine me but every night I was called by the commander whose name was Hatzopoulos. He didn't torture me and he kept on telling me that he wanted to help me. Of course, I couldn't believe him. When I learned what his last name was I asked him if he was related with my uncle, my mother's sister's husband. He said no. Later on I learned that Papagrigrorakis wanted to examine me in order to rape me. A girl that left when we went to the police station was raped and worried she may get pregnant. So, I assume Hatzopoulos knew what was going on with Papagrigrorakis. Both times that Papagrigrorakis grabbed me to supposedly examine me Hatzopoulos would take me into his office. I think he protected me. One day he told me that we would be released and he wrote a number on my belt. After two hours my brother and my sister were released. I was given to the SS. I know that he couldn't do anything with me but he was probably able to help my younger brother and sister. Especially my sister who was so young.⁶⁵

Ellie was sent to Haidari. Unlike Eleni, Ellie states that she was in Block 15, the isolation ward throughout most of her time there:

I was in Haidari in isolation. I didn't know exactly where I was. Every ten days a bag was given to us with a change of clothes. We were given food once per day. At the beginning there were more of us. We were a lot of women in the beginning. Among us were traitors too but I was too young and with no experience to understand back then. I learnt who was there later on. In the end, it was four of us; Iro Konstantopoulou and Lela Karagianni, who were both executed, and a girl from Hungary. One evening they took Iro. Iro was a year younger than me. She was very tough. I remember one day they brought us food in tins which she kicked away, to the German. They took her, beat her immensely and brought her back. She didn't want to hear about her parents. You could see that she hated them a lot. I couldn't explain it. She didn't even take the clothes we

⁶⁵ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 19, 2012.

were given. She would return them. Anyway, they used to call people for execution around 5AM. Iro was called in the evening. Later on, I was informed that her mother paid, with British pounds, to release her. Me and Lela that the Germans put Iro in the first wagon of a train. Germans used to put prisoners in the first wagon of the train heading for Germany so that in case of an explosion the prisoners would die and the rest of the train, which had goods would be saved. Or that she might have been released. On September 7, I was called. I said bye to Lela and the Hungarian girl because I thought I was going for execution. That was the moment that I saw that Haidari was a camp. We couldn't see anything from where we were. I could also see the German who used to shoot at our window with his gun because we had a Jewish girl inside. Sometimes, women were killed from these shots. I was walking and saw people around me. I realized that we were released because the Germans were leaving Athens. I was walking away and people were going towards the camp to check for relatives. I was stopped by a man, who was informed that I was in isolation, and asked me if I knew Iro. I told him that Iro was released a few days ago. He started cursing them and he went out of his mind. He then turned and left. Later on, I was informed that Iro's father had a police officer arrest her just to scare her. Her father wanted her to stop what she was doing because it was dangerous.⁶⁶ Iro was in EPON then and she was listening to her parents. She was released but her name was still in the records. Probably she was arrested again at one of the check points. Her mother tried to have her released by paying with British pounds. It was very hard to be released. I know that if we had stayed more in Haidari, I would have been executed too for sure. Karagianni⁶⁷ and the Hungarian girl were executed that night.⁶⁸

When Ellie was released she didn't know where her father was, her mother was in a psychiatric hospital, her brother had been sent to Germany as a prisoner working on infrastructure projects, and her sister was home all alone. Although her siblings had both been released when Ellie was arrested, her brother was caught again. This time he was sent to Germany:

⁶⁶Iro Konstantopoulou was caught by the Germans for her participation in the explosion of a German train that was transporting ammunition on July 31, 1944.

⁶⁷ Lela Karagianni was the leader of the resistance group "Bouboulina," whose main activity was its collaboration with the British in sabotage and the protection of British officers.

⁶⁸ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 19, 2012.

Unfortunately, a week after I was arrested my brother was arrested during a checkpoint in Gyzi. There were checkpoints very often in many neighborhoods. They called all the kids over the age of fifteen to come out of the house otherwise they would be killed. Then a snitch wearing a bag over their face with holes so that they could see would point a finger at people accusing them of being in the Resistance. So my brother came out too. It was a traitor, an informant, whose name was Manolia and who snitched on my team, including my brother. He was hit very badly. They were brought to Goudi.⁶⁹ Every prisoner used to pass from Haidari before they went on to other camps. When he passed he asked about me but nobody knew anything and he left thinking that I was executed.⁷⁰

Many prisoners were sent from the Haidari camp to the Auschwitz and Dachau concentrations camps. Women were often taken to the Ravensbruck concentration camp. The Spanish Jews, who had been taken to the Haidari camp and numbered to about 180 people, were allowed visits by the Spanish consul who guaranteed them transfer to Spain.⁷¹ Eleni has recalled that a Greek Christian family asked a Spanish Jewish couple to take their children with them; to save them from Haidari. The couple, however, fearing getting caught, refused.⁷² On April 1, 1944, the Spanish Jews, along with other nationalities-French, Italian, Portuguese, and Greek, were driven to the Rouf railway station in secured vehicles. From there they “were loaded into thirty-seven packed train cars in groups of eighty to one hundred to be sent north.”⁷³ The Spanish Jews arrived at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Goudi, located in Athens, was where the Security Battalions tortured antifascists.

⁷⁰ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 19, 2012.

⁷¹ Sara J Brenneis and Gina Hermann eds., *Spain, the Second World War, and the Holocaust* (University of Toronto Press, 2020).

⁷² Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 1, 2015.

⁷³ Hermann, *Spain, the Second World War*.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Many from the Haidari camp were executed. Even on the eve of liberation, the Germans executed inmates of the Haidari camp. The bloodiest execution of inmates within the history of the Greek Resistance was that of the execution of the two hundred men that had been brought to Haidari from the Akronafplia prison. The killing of a Nazi German major general Franz Krech by ELAS in Molaous, Laconia, in southern Peloponnesus, on April 27, 1944, signaled the retaliation of the Nazis, which demanded the execution of two hundred communists.⁷⁵ The Nazis decided that it would be the two hundred men that were brought from the Akronafplia prison. Eleni gives a detailed description of the day of their execution, May 1, 1944:

The food at Haidari was cooked by the men from the Akronafplia prison. On the day that they were going to execute the two hundred men, they brought us three pots with marmalade. Whenever we saw them bring us marmalade we knew that there would be an execution. On the day that they executed the two hundred Greek anti-fascists from the Haidari camp, I asked the cook, ‘what is going on? So much marmalade, will there be a big execution?’ Yes, Kostaki, they are going to take a lot of people today. Some called me ‘Kostaki’ because I was like a tomboy, and since my name is Eleni, and there isn’t a male version for it, and the name Kostas celebrates on the same day as Eleni, they called me Kostaki. Anyway, because they were going to take so many, we couldn’t believe that they were actually going to execute so many. We thought that they may take them away to Germany. They gave us tea, and the marmalade, and the machineguns were there. The men got in line, as we did, when we were to go to our rooms. The German came with the dogs to inspect them. They had a list of names, and read them out loud, and kept on reading, and reading. They even called Napoleon Soukatzidis’ name. He was a remarkable person. He was the interpreter at the camp. When the Nazi said that they would allow him to be removed from the list, Soukatzidis replied, ‘Will someone else take my place?’ The Nazi replied, yes. ‘Then I will stay put,’ said Soukatzidis. He will never be forgotten. Nor will the blood that the two hundred men shed on that day.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 178.

⁷⁶ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 1, 2015.

On the days of executions, the prisoners were served marmalade with crackers along with their tea. When asked why she thought the prisoners were brought marmalade whenever there was going to be an execution, Eleni had no answer: “Because, that’s just how it was. I never understood what the rationale behind it was.” Themis Kornaros, a Haidari survivor expresses in his memoir, *Stratopedo Haidariou* (Haidari Camp):

It’s at the break of dawn. In ten minutes they will blow the whistle for breakfast. Everyone is wondering what they will be given for breakfast. They are asking with great earnest, as if they really care about what they will have to eat early in the morning. But it’s not that. They have all realized that when marmalade is given it is a sign that there will be an execution.⁷⁷

By September 10, 1944 there were about three hundred Christian and Jewish men, as well as fifty women left at the Haidari Camp. The last inmates were released on September 19, 1944. The remaining 110-115 prisoners were sent to the Averoff Prison.⁷⁸

People who were persecuted by the Germans or their collaborators during the Occupation and were “fortunate” enough to avoid arrest fled to the mountains and joined the guerillas. Plousia Liakata is such an example of how young women joined ELAS, EAM’s military wing. As an EPON member, Plousia went out at night and painted slogans on the walls. Someone recognized her and informed. The Greek police arrested her, taking her to the Gestapo headquarters of Messolonghi. Never losing her humor, Plousia recounts her arrest and practically choreographed “escape:”

I would go out at night and paint slogans against the Occupation on the walls just like all my friends did. But we had them, you know, the snitches. So someone must have given my name to the police. One night, after returning home from one of our missions, a gendarme came to my house, with two Germans. My friends Frynie and Teta were with them. I went out on the balcony and nonchalantly

⁷⁷Themis Kornaros, *Stratopedo tou Haidariou* (Athens, Synchroni Epochi, 2017), 76.

⁷⁸ Antonis I. Flountzis, *Haidari*, 739-741.

asked 'What do you want?' and Teta says 'Come down and don't delay us.' I knew the gendarme, and he seemed in such a hurry while we were walking that I said to him 'Relax, you don't have to push me!' I didn't lose my spunk. They took us all straight to the Gestapo, which was located in an old mansion. They had also arrested a dentist, a professor's mother, Mrs. Irene, and the French teacher Kalliroe Kalatzis, whom I was with later on in exile. They bullied us by telling us that we were going to be executed and instead of being scared, Teta, Frynie and I were pretending how we would look if we were to be hanged! We were kids; we made a joke of it! Then they started shouting out our names one by one. They said my name. It was pitch dark outside. I was on the fourth floor. They had offices there, and there was a winding staircase. They put me in the investigator's office. There were two more Germans and a gendarme; they threw the projector on me and asked me to give them names of other antifascists. I didn't give them any information. At one point, the gendarme was bullying me, but I did not pay attention to him. Since they had me there for so long and didn't get anything out of me, they kicked me out of the office. They didn't keep me because there was an officer who walked in that knew me. He had seen me at my piano teacher's house, where he also had lessons. He gave me a piece of paper that would help me through German patrol if I was to be stopped. This big guy appears, and is about to go down the stairs, I was next to him, so as he goes to go down the stairs, I take a turn, I go behind him, he starts to go down.. He was very tall, and huge. As soon as he went down the first step, I followed. When he stepped, I also stepped in such a way so that only one sound would be heard. It was as if I choreographed it. I was completely focused. As soon as he was on the ground floor, he stood and made absolutely no movement, I was behind him, as soon as he walked, he took a few more steps to get out on the sidewalk, and a gap was created between us, so I left. On my way home, I was indeed stopped by the German patrol. All I did was raise the piece of paper in the air and they let me leave. The next day my mother took me to my aunt's house that was close to Messolonghi. From there on, through a contact I went up to the ELAS headquarters in Sivista [Evrítania]. I climbed the mountain, of course you had to have an order from ELAS and be of a certain age, with parental consent. Aris Velouchiotis was hesitant at first. He didn't want young people to organize in ELAS because they were not yet organized into divisions, regiments. When an order came from Aris, orders were given to all the headquarters, so my brother Yiannis, who had joined ELAS, gave his consent for me and I joined the guerillas.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 22, 2014.

Plousia joined the EPON female platoon of the Thirteenth Division of ELAS, in Karpenisi, in central Greece. Like most, Plousia admired Aris Velouchiotis:

I saw Aris in Sperchiada. I was with Toula Tzaneti, who was also a guerilla. In a square with benches, it's as if I see him now. Aris was sitting with his soldiers on an iron bench, alone and his horse was next to him. He had his hand placed on his head. Once we saw him, we greeted him militarily. We were in our uniforms. It was right after his speech in Lamia, where I had also been. It was then when he said the infamous words, 'Those who believe in the struggle come forward.' There were many people in the square at that time and armed units of ELAS. I still remember that look he had. There was something about him that convinced people. A revolutionary gaze that at the same time was smart and sweet.

The feeling of being part of something so profoundly significant and to have been under the guidance of Velouchioti was enthralling for Plousia.

ELAS: Safety, Resistance, Women's Liberation

On February 16, 1942, EAM formed its military wing, ELAS. Those that were determined in liberating Greece were called to fight in its ranks and swear allegiance to its cause. Below is the oath of ELAS:

I swear to the Greek people and to my conscience that I will fight until the last drop of my blood for the complete liberation of Greece from the occupiers. I will fight to safeguard the interests of the Greek people and for the restoration and protection of its freedom and sovereign rights. For this reason, I will execute with conscience and discipline the orders and instructions of my superior commanders and I will avoid any actions which will dishonor me as a human being and as a fighter of working Greek people.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ The Oath of ELAS from the private collection of Mr. George Papageorge, who was a member of the Greek-American community in New York. I was allowed to examine his archive in April, 2008.

A regular ELAS High Command was formed with General Stephanos Sarafis as military chief, and Aris Velouchiotis as the *Kapetanio* (captain). The Kapetanio was usually a popular leader and maintained the morale of the unit “and directed relations between the unit and the civil populations and organizations.”⁸¹

Ari Velouchiotis, who was a popular the leader of ELAS, declared that all females who had been chased and persecuted by the Germans due to their antifascist resistance could join the army of ELAS. There were two youth platoons in the Thirteenth Division- one for EPON boys, and one for the EPON girls up to the age of twenty-five. The girls platoon, according to Maria Beikou, a captain of the Thirteenth Division, was formed by collecting all the females from all the battalions within the Thirteenth Division.⁸² This need came about as more and more females joined ELAS. Moreover, it was evident that more women were being persecuted and that they adhered to Aris’ call to join ELAS. Similar to the Yugoslav partisan women, who although were thousands more in number than the Greeks partisan women, in addition to their enthusiasm for fighting the occupiers, often joined the combat units due to the imminent danger of being arrested as was the case with the female partisans from Slovenia.⁸³

According to Plousia, Aris was a ‘savior’ for these young women, as the alternative to joining ELAS for an antifascist was most likely imprisonment, torture, or execution by the Germans and their Greek collaborators, the Security Battalions. “ELAS

⁸¹ Stavrianos, *Greece*, 75.

⁸² Beikou, *Since you ask*, 45.

⁸³ Stroble, *Partisanas*, 56.

gave us the opportunity to continue the struggle,” Plousia proclaims.⁸⁴ In addition to their parent’s permission, they needed to be examined by a doctor.

ELAS was a tactical army; a combination of a guerrilla and a conventional army, and engaged in battles with the Axis armies. According to Liakata, it was organized just like a conventional army. There were rules of how each division would be formed, its duties, organization, etc. ELAS divisions were also to help in the organization of gathering of supplies and food in the towns. These divisions were in the countryside. ELAS’s main headquarters was based in the countryside, in Central Greece; specifically, in Karpenisi, in the province of Evritania.⁸⁵ The ELAS High Command used prewar Greek army as the model for the internal organization, reorganizing all the ELAS groups on conventional military lines. It adapted military regulations, a penal code, the name of units, etc.⁸⁶ There were six women’s divisions that operated throughout the country: the First Division in Thessaly, the Second Division in Attica, the Eight Division in Epirus, the Ninth Division in Western Macedonia, the Tenth Division in Central Macedonia, and the Thirteenth Division in Central Greece, which Plousia was part of.

The Thirteenth Division had a female officer; her name was Georgia Paligianopoulou-Kallinou, who had graduated from the officers’ academy of ELAS in Rentina, in the region of Karditsa, and “was in charge of our military training,” Plousia states.⁸⁷ Maria Beikou, the Captain of the Thirteenth Division’s girls platoon, was in charge of culture, behavior, and education. Other women that were part of the female

⁸⁴ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 16, 2012.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Stavrianos, *Greece*, 75.

⁸⁷ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 7, 2017.

platoon included: Fotini Matraka, Toula Tzaneti, Poulcheria Makri, Koula Danou, Thiella, whose real name was Meni Papailiou, Konstantina Stefani, and other girls such as, Vagia, Tarsitsa, Demetra, Athena, Athanasia, whose last names Plousia doesn't remember.⁸⁸

Since many of the women were illiterate, it was perceived to be the educated women's duty to educate them. As Beikou states:

Some women were illiterate, and one of our duties was to educate them. Either or someone else, who could, gave these women lessons. Very few of these women had gone to high school, while the rest hadn't gone passed grade school.⁸⁹

There was great cooperation amongst the young guerillas. They carried out their duties wholeheartedly. Everyone demonstrated great solidarity. The people saw that ELAS' struggle and contribution would be something more than liberation from the occupiers; it would bring prosperity and social change.⁹⁰

Both the boys and girls platoons of the Thirteenth Division visited the villages when supplies were low. In addition, they informed the people of the progress of the war, of the Division's strategy, and even of what was going on in the Resistance in Athens. The villagers were not only updated about the war by the platoons, they also were given the chance to converse with the members of the platoon and engage in discussions about the war, having questions answered and any problems or issues they may have had were taken into account. According to Beikou, the women were especially enthusiastic.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 23, 2014.

⁸⁹ Beikou, *Since you ask*, 46.

⁹⁰ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 22, 2017

⁹¹ Beikou, *Since you ask*, 48.

The guerillas were evaluated and were placed according to what each could contribute. Plousia was placed in charge of the cultural wing of the Thirteenth Division, or as it was called *diafotisi* (enlightenment). Attending cultural events, such as theater, was a novelty for the majority of the people living in the countryside. Furthermore, it was a novelty for young men and women to be in each other's company, publicly, in entertainment settings.

Amidst the war, the guerillas engaged in festivities; whether it was a holiday, or after a battle. During a holiday celebration, Plousia recited a poem, which was written by Antonis Antoniadis, a staff officer of the Thirteenth Division, which still moves her today:⁹²

The barricades of Paris, Vienna, Canton, and Madrid which are painted
with the peoples blood, greet you.
Your bright columns, white upon the black wave,
stand tall . . . Within Athens' savage struggle. . . unenslaved,
unstirred like the soul that is petrified within your marbles,
contemporary and always young, your glow radiates
on your crown of thorns.
Oh! Athens, Athens, symbol of the free world.

“I loved this poem,” Plousia tells me after reciting it. “I love it so much that I worry that I will forget it. It always brings me back to those days. We had such enlightened people; So many intense poems and songs that were written.”⁹³

⁹² Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 16, 2012.

⁹³ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 24, 2019.

The guerrillas lived a regimented life. Plousia gives a brief description of a “regular” day as a female member of the EPON platoon of the Thirteenth Division:

We woke up early in the morning, around 6:00 AM. We had to do our military exercises and training drills. The girls who were illiterate had their lessons of reading and writing. We had lessons in arts and culture. That is, when we were in moments of ‘peace,’ meaning there were no battles. During these periods, we went around the villages putting on plays. Many of the villagers had never seen theater before in their lives. That was a great feeling! To see their faces, so happy and excited with what they were seeing. We were able to give them some joy and they were able to forget the horror of the war for a short while.⁹⁴

The EPON Platoons contributed a great deal to the upkeep of the people’s morale. Their presence in the villages with theater and their reciting of poems fueled the yearning for liberation and gave strength to the people to continue the struggle. One of the most popular resistance songs was the *Hymn of ELAS*:

With my rifle on my shoulder,
 in the cities, plains, and mountains
 I open the road to freedom
 and spread palm leaves where it passes
 come on ELAS for Greece
 for Justice and Freedom
 to the farthest mountain and valley fly!
 Fight with your heart
 Your breath is a song,
 as in battle you roll
 and the plains and slopes echo your voice
 ELAS, ELAS⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 19, 2014.

⁹⁵“Sofia Mavroidi-Papadaki: I Kritikopoula Piitria Piso apo ton Imno tou ELAS[Sofia Mavroidi-Papadaki: The Cretan girl behind the hymn of ELAS)
<https://agonaskritis.gr/%CF%83%CE%BF%CF%86%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%85%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%B5%CE%B9%CE%B4%CE%AE->

The hymn was written by two women- the writer Ellie Alexiou⁹⁶ and the poet Sofia Mavroidi-Papadaki in March, 1944.⁹⁷

The most important battle that Plousia partook in was the Battle of Karpenisi in August 1944. When asked if she was ever afraid during battles, if there were an instance during the war where she wanted to return home, if she ever wavered, her response was a clear-cut NO:

No. Not once. Why would I be afraid? I knew what I was getting into. In such a situation there is no room for fear. You want to fight for life. If you don't fight there is no future. For you, for others, for your country. You must have heard of the guerrilla's slogan that we fight and sing. Well it's not a folk tale. We did. I can't really explain how we had the courage to sing, but we did. And when we weren't in battle, we would also dance. When we weren't in battle we would gather and eat together, sing guerrilla songs, and dream of a better world. And how we would make it better. We spoke of how it was in our own hands to make it better. That gave us the strength to carry on. And nothing frightened us. We fought to be free. No, I never wavered. Everyone had become one body. You no longer existed as a singular entity. You thought and acted collectively. You knew that you could die at any moment. You fought for everyone else; for society as a whole.⁹⁸

It has been argued that EAM continued traditional practices by not allowing the men and women guerillas to engage in romantic relations.⁹⁹ Specifically, historians Vervenioti and Poulos have criticized ELAS for prudish behavior and policies, as for example, imposing harsh measures on recruits who engaged in romantic affairs. “A young woman partisan

[%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%AC%CE%BA%CE%B7-%CE%B7-%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%B7%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%BF/](#) , accessed November 27, 2020.

⁹⁶ Ellie Alexiou was born in Iraklio, Crete in 1894. She was a member of the KKE and of EAM; After the Greek Civil War, she lived in Romania, organizing the education of the Greek political refugees.

⁹⁷ Sofia Mavroidi-Papadaki was born in 1898, in Crete. She was a poet and graduate of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

⁹⁸ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 10, 2019.

⁹⁹ See Hart, *New Voices of the Nation*.

who did not ‘guard herself’ adequately or whose appearance was ‘provocative’ was dismissed as if she had committed an immoral act.”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Poulos exclaims “partisan women found guilty of conducting illicit affairs were dealt the penalty of disarmament!”¹⁰¹ According to Vervenioti a female partisan would rather die than have her armament confiscated. As she acknowledges, however, EAM inevitably called for the upkeep of a traditional gendered system so as not to put EAM’s image at risk, and thereby affect the struggle.¹⁰² For Plousia the disapproval of romantic relations in ELAS was logical, and questioned, what army allows romantic relations? Especially in this period, this was not something that would be allowed, nor was it something that troubled the women. The women maintain that they didn’t want to ‘spoil’ the struggle with such things. Plousia has stated:

We didn’t care about such things. We had a mission. For me, romantic relations were not on my mind in the least. I saw my fellow comrades like brothers I don’t think that there was a girl that said that she was a woman amongst men, even internally, to herself. We were one. We didn’t think of ourselves as women. We were soldiers, and we had the same mission as the men and fought side by side. We fought to voice our own opinion and to have it taken into account by the leadership and our male comrades. With our actions we demonstrated that our contributions were just as valuable as theirs.¹⁰³

For Plousia, the EPON boys in the Thirteenth Division were her fellow comrades. Yet, how did they perceive her and the rest of the EPON girls? According to Plousia, the boys respected her both as a young woman and as a guerilla; she was never made to feel less or incompetent in any way as a female guerilla:

¹⁰⁰Poulos, *Arms and the Woman*, 92.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰² Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Adistasis*, 313.

¹⁰³ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 8, 2017.

No. Never. I never felt less next to them. We had the same rifles as they did. We had the same uniform. We had the same training. Plus, we had weekly meetings, every Tuesday, and discussed any issues that we may have had. And we set an example for other girls as well. We made it clear that we were serious about the struggle in ridding our country of the occupiers.¹⁰⁴

Although it has been argued by scholars such as Vervenioti and Hart that the females in ELAS were given gendered roles such as cooking and cleaning, Plousia never mentioned such roles for herself. There is no doubt that the women engaged in such activities as well, however, in the case of Plousia and Beikou, at least, these roles didn't define their participation in ELAS. For Plousia, being in ELAS was being a soldier. There were she has argued women that were not able to contribute to armed combat, but they were equally significant in other areas such as the infirmary.¹⁰⁵ She consistently discussed military aspects as well as the cultural activities she was in charge of. In our hours and hours of conversations, in addition to her activities, she described a life where she felt free. Although she was fighting in a war, and under harsh conditions, that feeling of freedom was precious for her.

Females who participated in EAM, EPON, and ELAS, however, were considered "loose," degenerates and immoral in post-World War Two Greece due to the "freedom" they enjoyed in openly interacting in public with the opposite sex. As Hart has argued, "participation in EPON or subsequent imprisonment could call into question a young woman's virginity, an important part of an honorably drawn-up marriage contract."¹⁰⁶ "We were called all sorts of names," Ellie states. And when she was arrested, one of the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Hart, *New Voices of the Nation*, 242.

officers “wanted to supposedly see if she [was] a virgin.”¹⁰⁷ According to Hart, post-war propaganda suggested that women in the EAM organizations spent the war engaged in prostitution.¹⁰⁸ This, of course, was nonsense, the women affirm. As in Spain, the conservative narrative on women who were involved in antifascist activities was that they were in reality engaging in improper activities. This narrative was used in order to demean and degrade the movement.¹⁰⁹ According to all the women interviewed for this PhD dissertation, the male partisans never “dared” to disrespect them in anyway. They were comrades. To call one another comrade during this period carried a profound weight. When questioned if she was ever afraid of being alone with a male guerilla, Plousia’s reply mirrors the other women’s convictions:

No, I wasn’t. I even travelled with a comrade throughout central Greece on a motorcycle. We were told by the organization that we could rest for the night in a woman’s home in Galaxidi and continue in the morning. We told her that we were siblings and she made a bed for both of us to sleep in. He respected me one hundred percent. It was really as if I was with my brother. We were all friends with the boys in ELAS. They respected us. At first they may have been a little pensive as to whether we could fight well enough, but we showed them that we were not only capable and able, but we were good fighters, and just as good as them. . . They treated us as sisters, as family. . . I never felt afraid to be alone with any male guerrilla. We had given our word that we wouldn’t allow any romantic relationships to form. And we followed it to a tee.¹¹⁰

The members of the Thirteenth Division had vowed to “save” or put on hold any romantic feelings that may have existed amongst the partisans until after liberation. The same “rules” applied to EPON.

¹⁰⁷ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Hart, *New Voices of the Nation*, 242.

¹⁰⁹ Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*.

¹¹⁰ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 8, 2017.

When EPON was formed, Nitsa also joined. Her father, who was a member of the government of the “Mountain” as it was referred to, or PEEA had sent for his daughters to visit him; It is at this point where Nitsa, whom although had joined EPON, came in real contact with the Resistance:

My father was worried about our safety, so he asked that his family be brought to where he was located, in Korischades, Evritania.¹¹¹ At that time we were in our village. EAM started to organize this mission. I went with my older sister, Elpida. I was very surprised and happy, at the same time. My mother stayed in our village with my younger brother and sister. EAM couldn't send the whole family at once. It was very hard to find shelter and food for everybody. So, the first to go were Elpida and me. It took us seventeen days. EAM gave us some money to buy whatever we needed for our trip. The next day we left by train. We didn't know where we were going. The only thing that we knew was that we were going to see our father. We took the train to Katerini. We were told that in Katerini we would meet a guy from EAM, who would pick us up and walk us through the mountains to the location. It would be very risky to continue with the train. The train was crowded. Before we arrived to Katerini we heard that we were going to be searched for money, permits and IDs. We were very scared because we had fake IDs and no permits. When we arrived at Katerini, Germans came into the train with a translator and started asking for IDs, permits etc. We gave the IDs and told them that we didn't know that permits were required. We were told to wait until the train stopped. We were very afraid because we were told that when Germans arrested people they either sent them to Germany or to the Pavlos Melas camp.¹¹² So, they told us to get off the train and enclosed us in an area with other people. Throughout the night we were all scared and anxious about what would happen to us. A guy there told us that we would be treated differently because we were women. Men would be treated tougher. Probably they would be sent to Germany to work. A lady came and picked up all the women and put us in a hotel and told us that in the morning they would see what would happen. But, we were afraid of what would happen in the hotel remembering what the people were saying about our treatment. We kept close to an old woman for protection. Later on we realized that some of the women were sex workers who had gone with the Germans. We stayed with the old woman in the first room which didn't have any beds or any

¹¹¹Korischades, Evritania was the town in which the headquarters of the National Council was located.

¹¹² A concentration camp in Stavroupoli Thessaloniki during the German occupation.

other furniture. We sat on the wooden floor; then we suddenly heard Germans, who came in with flash lights and started investigating how many women were there. We were lucky because the old woman had locked the door. A German tried to get in but he couldn't and we were saved by the women who invited them from the next rooms. That night the guerillas came up to Litothoro and they did something, but I don't remember what it was. But all the Germans were called to go to the field.

Whenever the ELAS made an attack or advancement, the Germans had the tactic of retaliation. Nitsa and her sister were kept safe, however, with the help of the lady that they encountered. The older women were often a shield for the younger women, even to strangers; A phenomenon which was significantly found in exile. The women which Nitsa refers, who "saved" them as they invited the Germans into the rooms were sex workers. There were numerous women who became sex workers during the war in order to survive.¹¹³ The older woman that helped Nitsa and her sister apparently took care of the Germans' accommodations:

In the morning the same lady came and told us that we have to go to clean a villa where Germans were staying. We went and worked. My sister and I were very scared. You know, we had money, boots and other stuff that indicated that we were going to the guerillas. We thanked our lucky stars that they didn't search us. After we finished cleaning the villa, all women were released except us. They kept our IDs. We asked for them. We were lucky because Germans were with these girls and laughing and they did not bother to talk to us. They told us to get the IDs from the desk and leave. We were told to go to the train station and return to Thessaloniki since we didn't have permits to travel. While we were walking to the cashier for the tickets, a guy who was working for the train station saw us and I remembered that he was watching us while we were traveling to Katerini. Later on we learned that our connection had put him in charge of watching out for us. A high ranked man from EAM of Macedonia was also traveling with us. He was

¹¹³ <https://www.mixanitouxronou.gr/i-ekrxi-tis-pornias-sti-katochi-to-tmima-ithon-sinechos-kinigouse-tis-pornes-stin-omonia-sti-stoa-nikoloudi-se-ipogia-kampare-ke-se-megala-xenodochia-i-astynomia-tis-epiane-ke-i-nazi-tis-apelefth/> Accessed August 12, 2022.

going to Korischades as a counselor. I remember I had seen him on the train. He was well dressed so he wouldn't look suspicious. The guy, who worked for the train, approached us and told us not to buy tickets for Thessaloniki but for the next train station and that we would get out of the train and meet a guy with a hat and long coat, who would be waiting for us. So, this was what we did. We took the train and got off at the next train station where we were approached by the guy who was waiting for us. He told us to go to his place to stay for the night and the next day another guy would come to take us. He was a mechanic for the railways. We went to his room where he gave us food and let us sleep on his bed. He stayed outside at the corridor. In the morning a young kid around twelve years old was waiting for us. This kid was sent to pick us up. We were very surprised. The mechanic told us that this kid would bring us to Leprosaria in Litohoro. This kid was an Aetopoulo.

An *aetopoulo* was a kid that was involved in the Resistance, usually between the ages of ten and thirteen. Both girls and boys became an aetopoulo (little eagle) and contributed a great deal to the Resistance by taking part in battles, hiding grenades, delivering messages. They were able to contribute without causing any suspicion.¹¹⁴

These were kinds of things that they did because they didn't cause any suspicion. While we were going to Litohoro we were stopped by a guerrilla but the kid explained the situation to him and he let us go. When we arrived at Litohoro we met with the Litohoro's secretary who brought us to his house that he had with his fiancé and gave us some food. He also gave us two mules to ride to the mountain where our father was. My sister, Elpida, was very afraid of mules. I tried to show her how to ride. I stepped on a stone and I got on the mule but it was so wild that it raised its front feet and dropped me to the ground. Elpida was very scared and very nervous about how we would travel. The villagers called a chiropractor to take care of me. I remember that they broke an egg on my back and it started moving until it stopped at the location where I had a fracture. Amazing right?! How did he know!! I was amazed. Anyway, they killed a sheep, took the skin and wrapped me in it, including the egg, onions and some other things that he put on my back. They put me on a donkey and we went all the way to Karpenisi like that.

¹¹⁴ “Auta itan ta ‘Aetopoula’”[That’s what the Aetopoula were] *Rizospastis*, February 21, 2018. <https://www.rizospastis.gr/story.do?id=9719823>

When we arrived at Karpenisi I felt that it had worked. I remember when I went to a doctor in Paris, after I was released from exile, I was asked if I had any kind of accident and injured that specific area. I told him about the incident and the doctor told me that it healed very well and that the treatment was very effective. Can you believe it?! Anyway, we arrived at Karpenisi and we saw our father. It was a very important period back then because the National Council was taking place. We stayed there with him. You know the Government¹¹⁵ and the General Military Headquarters relocated frequently. And we followed them. The following location was Petrilia, Karditsa, which is where we finally saw our mother, and younger brother and sister.¹¹⁶

The National Council was elected on April 9, 1944 with two hundred and fifty delegates, which represented all parts of the country.¹¹⁷ As the daughter of a member of the National Council, Nitsa describes life in the mountains, and how they lived just like the guerillas, although unlike Plousia, she wasn't armed and didn't take part in battles:

We lived like the guerillas. We were even given military clothes. I was put in an office and worked as a stenographer. I had experience in stenography. My younger brother and sister got other small jobs. We were absorbed by the guerrilla community very fast. This was our life until October 1944 when Athens was liberated. So, we had the order to leave for Athens. We were very happy. We threw our military hats in the air. We went first to Livadia. We went of course to Lamia, where Aris spoke to people at the central square of Lamia. We stayed there for the night and in the morning we left for Athens. When we arrived in Athens everybody was in the streets cheering. We were finally liberated! It was beautiful to see so many happy people.

Athens was liberated on October 12, 1944. The ELAS divisions prepared for the celebratory parades.

¹¹⁵ She is referring to the PEEA, which was also referred to as the "Mountain Government."

¹¹⁶ Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 9, 2012.

¹¹⁷ Stavrianos, *Greece*, 84.

Upon liberation, everyone rejoiced. The whole country was elated. The streets were drowned in crowds of young and old, cheering on the member of ELAS, of EPON, the British, and waving flags in the air. The Thirteenth Division partook in the celebrations in Lamia, Central Greece, where Plousia danced with Russian diplomat and military officer, Gregory Popov:

When there was a big celebration in Lamia for the victory against the Germans, the diplomat Popov was also present. Maria Beikou and I made a presentation of Greek dances in the square. We thought of dancing the Karagouna and a Pentozalis. Pentozalis started, and at some point the music got louder and faster, and Maria left. I was left alone and suddenly Popov got up from his seat and started to dance the “kazashka,” which was in the rhythm of Pentozalis. He started coming towards me, and at some point we were face to face. The members of the orchestra who were my friends started increasing the beat. Popov went crazy. I remember it as if it was now!¹¹⁸

When the liberation victory parade was organized in Athens, however, “no room was found for the guerrillas,” is what C.M. Woodhouse, the British Special Operations Executive, remembers Lieutenant-General Scobie telling him. He was “offered a seat in one of the cars that accompanied the parade,” in which he replied he preferred “to be placed with the guerrilla leaders” and then Scobie rhetorically asked: ‘What has it got to do with them?’¹¹⁹ This is the atmosphere that was cultivated by the British and Greek forces against the Greek antifascists upon liberation. “And after liberation, a liberation that came about from our antifascist struggle, the tagmatasfalites were adorned as patriots, while we were called traitors and chased like dogs,” Pota Kakkava declares.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 17, 2012.

¹¹⁹ Woodhouse, *Struggle*, xv.

¹²⁰ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, August 28, 2014.

Dekemvriana

Following liberation and the exodus of the Germans, the Greek government- in- exile returned to govern the country. Georgios Papandreou was to be prime minister and EAM fostered hopes of it being included in the new government. As discussed in chapter two, EAM was to be given six ministries. However, Papandreou changed the course of events, as Nitsa describes:

In the meanwhile, we had the events in Cairo with the United National Government, with George Papandreou as a leader. But they did not have an EAM minister included. In Athens, this government gave six ministries to EAM with ministers Svolos, Aggelopoulos, Tsirimokos and others. Now the issue was what would happen from that point on. At the end they didn't agree because Papandreou wanted to have EDES, Rimini, and other shadow governmental organizations and to finish with ELAS, leaving only one military unit. The negotiations didn't go well and at the end Papandreou called us to surrender the weapons in order to create a new national army. Our ministers didn't accept it and quit from the government. Due to all these events we decided to protest. It was December 3, 1944.¹²¹

Papandreou approved the demonstration and gave the permit for it on December 2; however he quickly retracted it, as Nitsa attests:

Angelo Evert, who was the head of the police department, cancelled the permit. But we weren't informed in time and we all gathered the next day, as scheduled at Syntagma Square. The KKE's leaders were talking to the people. The KKE's office was located at Othonos Street. KKE had the entire building. Suddenly we heard gunshots. They were shooting directly at the people. People started yelling at the shooters. We were lucky because foreign reporters were there and saw how everything started. They reported the events immediately. We had seventeen dead people at Syntagma Square. We had their funeral the following day. There were more people in the streets. It was something else. You couldn't reach the cemetery from the crowd. Police beat the people very hard. After these events you

¹²¹ Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 9, 2012.

know what continued. Churchill said that Athens would be taken no matter what. Even with killing people. Scobie was in charge of the Greek army. Everybody was under Scobie's orders. December's events started and lasted for thirty three days. Many people died and many homes were destroyed.¹²²

The December Events sealed the beginning of a dark period in modern Greek history as they were the prelude to the civil war. It was a rude awakening for all who had envisioned "laokratia."

During the Dekemvriana Plousia was in Agrinio, in Central Greece. She was part of Colonel Antonis Zola's 42nd regiment, and served in the infirmary. They were not allowed to enter Athens. After the December events, they started chasing resistance fighters and making arrests:

We surrendered our weapons outside of Athens, and with the English whip we were led to the prisons. These moments, particularly the moment where we gave up our weapons, are indescribable.¹²³

Daily interrogations followed, which were exhaustive. Plousia was accused of murder, of providing sexual services to the guerillas, all the while being insulted and degraded by the officers:

I found myself accused of thirteen murders, of which of course I hadn't committed a single one.. They insulted us. The most common insult was references to our supposed sexual services to the male guerrillas. I must say this, it was really superhuman, our attempt to withstand the brutal behavior and abuse that we endured in those detention cells, and interrogation sessions.¹²⁴

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, September 16, 2012.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

The women remember the Dekemvriana as one of the worst periods. As a daughter of a politician and leader of EAM, Nitsa vividly remembered what it was like to live in Athens during this time:

We stayed in a hotel for two days, and then we were moved to a two bedroom apartment at Sigrou. The apartment was empty. We stayed there until we could figure out what to do. All guerillas were chased. The British army brought tanks up to Sigrou. British shooters went on the roof of the buildings to shoot people. They went on our roof too. We realized it when we saw people who were looking at our roof. We could see the guerrillas across the street but they couldn't see us. We tried to warn them by showing them notes from our windows. We wrote with huge letters that there were shooters on our roof. The next day police came and arrested us all. I was with my mother, my two sisters, and my younger brother George. When we opened the door, my neighbor grabbed my brother and dragged him into her apartment. This is how George was saved. The rest of us, my mother, my sisters and I went to the ESA. They beat us there. I remember that as they beat us they sarcastically told us 'And you wanted to be part of the government', referring to EAM. People, who were conservative, were outside and when we were transferred they told the police officers to shave our heads. They actually hit us without knowing who we were. We were transferred from ESA to a cabaret, where Alikis's theater¹²⁵ is now. It was full of women; so many that we couldn't all stay there and we were transferred to one of the University's clubs. An entire floor was occupied by female prisoners. We stayed there for a while. We got lice and I remember the British army came and sprayed us to kill the lice. For food they gave us two biscuits, a piece of yellow cheese and corned beef cans and nothing else. We were also given a blanket. But, they arrested more and more women every day. So, we were transferred again to Themistokleous to a building where nuns used to live. They requisitioned the building and put us there. Time passed and after the Varkiza Agreement which took place on February 12th, 1945, we were amongst the first women to be released. So, we went to our house at Sigrou. But the British had occupied it and we weren't allowed to go in. Luckily, a neighbor offered us hospitality. A lot of people in Athens were living like immigrants. They had come from their villages to hide, and had no place to stay. I remember we used to host a lot of people because they knew that Gavriilides was one of the leaders of KKE and no one would go to his house. Workers started going to the offices and newspapers started again as before. On the other hand the

¹²⁵ The reference is the "Alikis" Theater (which was named after the famous Greek actress Alikis Vougiouklaki) located on 4 Amerikis Street, Athens.

country side was a total different situation and much worse than Athens. One could hear about fires, robberies, rapes and vandalism. Newspapers were burned and offices were vandalized. It was a constant phenomenon. My father sent my mother and the two younger kids to Kilkis. My sister Elpida was in the house and I used to go to the office with my father because he needed a person who knew stenography. So, I stayed in Athens. So December finished with the Varkiza Agreement.

Nitsa's home hosted many people after the Dekemvriana as it was considered a "safe" house by members of the Left. The rampant persecution of Leftists, primarily in the countryside forced many to flee their villages and seek refuge in the cities, particularly in Athens. Those that lived in Athens had nowhere to flee and had to go "underground" and live in hiding. After the armed unit of ELAS that Zozo Petropoulou pulled out of Athens on December 29, 1944, Zozo returned to her neighborhood of Ilioupoli and participated in the underground struggle, until she was arrested on March 1, 1948.¹²⁶

Living in Hiding

After the Dekemvriana, the women were forced to live in hiding, secretly moving from one place to another, from one neighborhood to the next. For the women this was even more harrowing than the physical torture they endured when they were caught. Many have confessed that they were relieved when they were caught. "The worst thing was living underground. You knock on someone's door and they tell you to sleep on a bench. You can't sleep there because the police are going to come. I am referring to the

¹²⁶ Zozo Petropoulou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 17, 2014.

Dekemvriana period,” Eleni states. The home one sought refuge needed to be a “safe” house, meaning that the occupants had to be on the Left, or sympathizers of EAM, or else you would be betrayed. In contrast to the period of the Resistance, people weren’t very open to taking in those that were living underground.

Eleni, however, was courageous enough to go to Piraeus, where no one knew her and play basketball because she was on a team. She “had signed up for the Piraiko Sindesmos. . . No one knew that [she] was a member of EPON, other than two guys. I always had good relationships with guys, with women, not so much,” she exclaims.¹²⁷ During that period Eleni was staying in the neighborhood of Zografou, which at the time, she says “Zografou was full of shacks; it wasn’t like it is now. It was a ravine.” She was staying at a microbiologist’s house, whose husband was an engineer. Eleni was supported and loved dearly by the woman:

I’m telling you this incident so you can understand how I got caught after the war. The woman left and went to look for work on the island of Lesbos. She opened an office there. And she says to me, ‘Eleni, when I get settled there, you can come.’ I stayed in her home, and had my own room. I could read my books. This home was nice, comfortable, and had light. At others I would get infected by lice. I would get bitten by bed bugs, and such. I’m talking about poverty.¹²⁸

Eleni however had to leave abruptly one night. She went to one of the usual places she regarded as a safe place, however, she couldn’t stay for more than one night at a time. It was hard to find stable shelter. The constant uncertainty of where to spend the night was exhausting. Plousia was so tired of moving around that she returned to her hometown Messolonghi, although her mother warned her not to. While there, a man by name

¹²⁷ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 2014.

¹²⁸ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 19, 2014.

Kalliga, who knew her family, informed Plousia that she was on the list for arrest and should “pack her bags.”¹²⁹

White Terror

In 1945, in the countryside, women who were involved in EAM were chased by the paramilitary groups and were often raped, beaten, and at times murdered. Throughout the country, antifascist’s heads were decapitated and kicked around like soccer balls by the paramilitary groups. They would later place them on the windows of the holding cells and call to their mothers, wives, or sisters to identify them.¹³⁰ During the period of the “White Terror” in the years leading up to and throughout the civil war, women were attacked, had their heads shaved, they were raped, and in some cases gang raped, sexually abused as a punishment for being affiliated with a member of the Left, specifically, a member of the Demokratikos Stratos Elladas (Democratic Greek Army), DSE, and furthermore, to be intimidated and fearful of even thinking of entering the DSE, or supporting them in any way.¹³¹

Many girls as young as fourteen years old were severely tortured at the General Police Headquarters in Athens. Vagelio Skevofilaka, a young girl from Athens, was fifteen years old when she was caught and taken to the General Headquarters: “They strapped me to a bed and started beating me. They conducted bastinado. There were five men, hitting me all at once. They asked me to give them the names of my

¹²⁹ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, September 16, 2012.

¹³⁰ Fotaki, *Stratopeda Gynaikon*, 16.

¹³¹ Personal archive of Sarando Pliagianos.

collaborators.”¹³² Pota Kakkava expresses the unfairness that was imposed on those that had struggled against the Occupation:

There were many people who were executed for doing absolutely nothing. Many didn't even have any involvement in the Resistance. But, if you had some kind of ties with an antifascist they would cook up some 'evidence' that was given to them by a hafia or snitch. And there is a difference between a snitch and a traitor. A traitor gives over information that you have confided to them, while a snitch concocts or gives evidence against you purposely.¹³³

Pota was arrested, like so many others, because of an informant. Her cousin who had decided to join the Demokratiko Strato visited her home before he left for the mountain. Her neighbor snitched on them and Pota was arrested. She was court-martialed, found guilty, and given a death sentence. Fortunately, her family had saved the secretary of the military court from being executed by the guerillas, and he overturned the sentence, sending her into exile.¹³⁴

The fact that some of the women were young, many were still in school, made the security police and the torturers believe that they were weak, and would give in to the beatings. As Eleni attests:

When I was at Hatzikosta [Prison], seventeen years old, they brought in a woman, Diamanto Manousaki. She was an older university student who had escaped from Folegandros where she was exiled before the war. She had been beaten very badly by the security police. They had broken her ribs. Anyway, Panopoulos comes in; he was the commander of the security police and starts yelling 'Why are you guys beating her? She's a tough one, she doesn't need to be beaten, she's not going to crack. Beat them,' pointing at us, the younger ones. You understand? That's why they beat us. They knew that the older, more experienced, and members of the

¹³²Vagelio Skevofilaka, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, Sept 2012

¹³³ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, September 16, 2012.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

KKE would not break. But they thought that since we were younger they could get something out of us. They were wrong, of course.¹³⁵

The educated women were especially targeted and persecuted. Women such as Roza Invrioti were targeted throughout, reaching the ultimate persecution when taken to the notorious camp in Larissa, in Thessaly, in December 1949.

The Treaty of Varkiza, which was signed between the Greek government and the EAM on February 12, 1945, had promised a general amnesty, while ELAS surrendered its arms. Instead, however, the government and the paramilitary groups persecuted the antifascists, the members of the Resistance, making mass arrests in 1947 and early 1948. It is during this period where the women in this study were arrested and taken on the island “tour” of exile on the islands of Chios, Trikeri, and Makronisos, which will be explored in the following chapter.

¹³⁵ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 5, 2014

CHAPTER 4

LIFE IN EXILE

“So, what do you say?” Colonel T. Anagnostopoulos¹ asked the head of the concentration camp of Makronisos. “I give them ten days, the most,” Antonis Vassilopoulos, abruptly answered. “Oh, don't be fooled. These women are tough cookies,” replied Anagnostopoulos. It was January 27, 1950, when an estimated one thousand and two hundred women were transported to Makronisos; the island which Nitsa Gavriilidou has declared: “Even if you have endured life in the Makronisos camp, you still can't fully describe it.”²

The road leading to Makronisos was long and ghastly. As demonstrated in previous chapters, following World War II, thousands of Greek men and women who had fought in the Resistance were accused of treason. The state imprisoned or sent Resistance fighters to concentration camps within Greece. Since the *Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, KKE (Communist Party of Greece) maintained dominant control of the *Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*, EAM (National Liberation Front) the members of the Resistance were automatically assumed by the Greek government to be members of the Left and involved in the “plot” to overthrow the Greek government and set up a Soviet satellite state. Nitsa Gavriilidou, Pota Kakkava, Plousia Liakata, Ellie Nikolaou, Zozo Petropoulou and Eleni Savvatianou, the protagonists in this chapter, were all young women who were members of EAM and specifically, were members of the *Eniaia*

¹ Anagnostopoulos was the Colonel that transported the women from Trikeri to Makronisos.

² Nitsa Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 24, 2012.

Panelladiki Organosi Neon, EPON (United Panhellenic Youth Organization) EAM's youth wing. They were arrested and detained without trial, on islands throughout the Aegean. This detainment is referred to as "exile." Unlike in other cases, such as the Spanish Civil War, where Republicans were self-exiled in France and Mexico, or in Chile and Argentina, exile in Greece has another connotation-it is "endo-exile," or internal exile, a form of punishment used against political dissidents. Internal exile in Greece resembled the Italian case of *confino*.³ As in the Greek case, antifascist women within Mussolini's Italy were attacked as being sexually immoral.⁴

Internal exile in modern Greece has been utilized as a form of political persecution, and as a measure for the punishment of subversives since the late nineteenth century. It escalated under the Metaxas regime, however, the period of the civil war was the first time mass detainment occurred, particularly for women. In the late 1940s and with the culmination of the civil war, thousands of the members of the Resistance and fighters in the *Demokratikos Stratos Elladas*, DSE (Greek Democratic Army) were exiled. Others were executed, imprisoned or fled Greece in search of refuge in the countries of Eastern Europe or in the Soviet Union, such as in Uzbekistan.⁵ Those that went into self-exile abroad identified themselves as political refugees because they were persecuted by the Greek government for their convictions. On the other hand, the Greek government labeled them "subversives," and stripped them of their Greek identity. Most repatriated in the late 1970s and 1980s. The exiles, which are the focus of this

³ *Confino* means confinement in Italian, referring to the thousands of 'undesired' that were internally exiled to the Aeolian Islands during the Mussolini regime. *Confinato* is the term used for a detainee.

⁴ Michael Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 97.

⁵ In rare cases, such as Greek-American Kostas Lekkas, antifascists were able to return to the United States.

dissertation, were deemed “dangerous” for the state, but there was no penal crime against them. They were exiled for their anti-fascist activities in the period of the Resistance, not during the civil war. This chapter focuses on the women exiles’ life on women’s camps on the islands of Chios, Trikeri, and Makronisos from 1948-1954.

When sent into exile, the women whom I interviewed were all between the ages of fifteen and twenty-three. At the time of the interviews, many of the survivors were friends; some had close relationships, and the few that are still alive, still do. They held mutual respect for one another, even amongst those women who weren’t fond of each other, or shared different beliefs. Unlike the men who I have interviewed, the women were more inclusive, they did not seem to base their relationships on their political beliefs.⁶ As they have often said “we were like family...we were each other's family.” The *Panellinia Enosi Kratoumenon Agoniston Makronisou*, PEKAM (Panhellenic Association of Detained Fighters of Makronisos) and the *Silogos Politikon Exoriston Gynaikon* (Women’s Organization of Political Exiles), played key roles in their reunion later on in life. Both groups organized social events, yearly trips to exile sites, and supported any of the women in need. As indicated in the introduction of this thesis, I refer to the women in my case study with their first name and have had multiple informal interviews with them throughout the last ten years. This chapter focuses on how they organized their lives in exile, their methods of survival, their undefeated spirit, and their unwavering belief in humanity.

⁶ Alki Zei a writer and member of the Resistance, who was also exiled to Chios and Trikeri, and later became a political refugee in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, has said in interviews that when she and others were younger they were so dog minded that they befriended people based on their political convictions.

Road to Exile: Transport Prisons to Islands of Disciplined Living

Women, from all walks of life, and from all parts of Greece, found themselves interned on these three islands: Chios, Trikeri, and Makronisos. Chios is located in the North-East Aegean, right off the coast of Turkey; Trikeri, in the Pagasetic Gulf (central-eastern Greece), and Makronisos, which is twenty nautical miles from Attica proper. There were women “from as south as Crete, and as north as Evros,” Zozo Petropoulou, declared. There were educated women, professionals, artists, workers, farmers. There were single women, married women, mothers accompanied by their children, and older women. Ages ranged from fifteen to eighty years old. As Plousia Liakata asserts, “there were talented women; there were actresses such as Kaiti Diridaoua and Aleka Paizi⁷ Smart women, shrewd women; great characters and personalities.”⁸

“They grabbed us from wherever they could get us,” Nitsa Gavriilidou exclaimed. Arrests were made in offices, in schools, on farms, in homes. The prelude to exile was performed in detention centers throughout the country, where detainees were held before being transported to the assigned prison or exile destination; in other words, transport prisons. The Police Headquarters in Athens was located on Patission Street. This Security Police detention center that held many young and old antifascist women, was a room which was four square meters with a glass door on the terrace side. There was a dense wire netting with small holes outside of the glass door. The political detainees were held in the same cell with the sex workers. By placing the political detainees with sex workers

⁷ Kaiti Diridaoua was a popular movie actress during this period; her real surname was Economou, while Aleka Paizi was a well-known theater actress.

⁸Plousia Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 14, 2012.

the police forces sought to degrade the women, as being a sex worker was thought to be the most immoral way of life.⁹ Women from the countryside who were to be exiled passed through the Pireaus transport department, which was a three-story building at Pasalimani, at the port of Pireaus. The guards threw the women in the basement, in a room that was eighty-one square feet. The room had no window, was full of holes and mice. It was hard for the women to fall asleep under these circumstances. Even if they were able to surpass the difficulties and appalling conditions and fall asleep, they were often disturbed by a rodent.¹⁰

“Political prisoner? Or one of the others?” one of the fifty women in the Athens holding cell questioned Maria.¹¹ She was then told to step barefoot onto the blanket on the floor. “It was a long night; Dawn came slowly. Let us see the light! Our eyes have turned musty in here. Let us go to Chios a hundred times rather than be in this cell,”¹² Maria thought to herself. It was their last night in the Patission detention center. Most of the women detained were to be sent to Chios, while others were going to possibly be court-martialed:

A group of women, who were waiting each day to be court-martialed, crowded together and dispirited, shook their heads sadly. ‘Will we live to remember the

⁹ Regina Pagoulatou, *Exile: a Chronicle, 1948-1950*, trans. Theony Condos (New York: Pella Publishing, 1999), 24-26.

¹⁰ ¹⁰ Evangelia Fotaki, “Gia tis Gynaikes sta Kratitiria Metagogon,”[About the women in the holding cells of the transport prisons] in *Stratopeda Gynaikon: Ennea thammena tetradia me afigisis Kratoumenon Gynaikon sta Stratopeda Chiou, Trikeri, Makronisou, sta chronia tou Emfiliou Polemou 1947-1951*[*Women’s Camps: Nine buried notebooks with detained women’s narrations on the camps of Chios, Trikeri, Makronisos, in the years of the civil war*] (Athens, 1975), 28.

¹¹ “Maria” is an alias used by the author Regina Pagoulatou for herself.

¹² Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 33.

nightmarish hours we've spent together, girls? What did we do wrong? May they burn in hell.¹³

Not knowing whether one would live the next day was one of the most torturous aspects of being detained. The transport of the women was similar for each one. And some of the most inhumane acts were conducted in the transport prisons.

On the day that Pagoulatou was to be transported, the guard came at dawn, and opened the cell door. He held a list of names and said: “if you hear your names go out into the hallway and get into line. No comments and no side conversations, all right!”¹⁴ The women were escorted down the stairs to the street in single file. A guard was on each side of them as they walked. A large van with a wagon was parked outside. Relatives of the women gathered in front of the building’s entrance in small groups. The women were ordered to get into the van. “‘My child, my little girl,’ cried one mother, weeping, spreading her arms to say farewell” to her daughter.¹⁵ As the girl motioned goodbye with her hands to her mother, she threw the Order of Exile out the window and told her mother to find a lawyer for an appeal. The mother was then pushed by the policeman toward the wall, and the girl was pushed toward the wagon. After calling all the girls’ names the policeman bolted the back door of the wagon, which the relatives ran after, as they wept. Maria wrote on a piece of paper “APPEAL” along with her address and her name

¹³ Ibid., 32.

¹⁴ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵ Ibid.

implored whoever found it to give it to her mother, and threw the folded document out onto the street. Amazingly that piece of paper was given to her mother.¹⁶

The women in the van were taken to the port of Piraeus. Chios, which was the first island to accept large numbers of antifascist women, was their destination. The first group of ninety-four women and seventeen children arrived at the army barracks of Chios in March 1948. After being arrested on March 1, 1948, Zozo Petropoulou was among the first women sent to Chios. Plousia arrived from Ikaria, along with about fifty other women, around the same time. Soon, more and more women were sent. According to Pagoulatou, the SS Heliopolis steamship, one of the many to transfer the women to the island of Chios, departed from the port of Piraeus on Wednesday, April 28, 1948, at 11:30 AM. It was a dreadful journey. The women said very little to one another.

Pagoulatou recalls:

A cloud of death hovered over us in that dark transport. . . it was the darkest, blackest ride in my life. . .the farewell scenes we're heart-rending. . . The forces of Law and Order shoved the relatives of the detainees, who were bringing packages, blankets, cots, food. . . We were in line, awaiting the orders of the gendarme to go up the gangplank.¹⁷

As the ship slowly moved away from the pier the farewell cries were drowned by the harsh sound of the waves.

There were many detained women on that boat, as there were on many other such "missions." Most of the women were brought there from various security police stations and detention centers/transport prisons from throughout the country or from the island of

¹⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹⁷ Ibid., 35.

Ikaria, as was the case with Plousia Liakata.¹⁸ There were women from the security police and the Transport Center of Piraeus, which included Eleni Savvatianou. There were women from the prisons of Messolonghi, Patras, Kalamata, Zakynthos, Crete, and Cephalonia; from northern Greece, Thessaloniki and Epirus. Small groups walking around the deck, others huddled in a corner singing or joking amongst one another, while the gendarme, inspected them every few minutes, forbidding them to make any noise once the night fell.¹⁹ The treacherous journey for thousands of women had begun.

Chios

The SS Heliopolis steamship docked at the Port of Chios. Boats filled with detained women continued to dock at Chios for weeks. Up until the summer months, as Stella Koumoula remembers arriving on July 1, 1948.²⁰ Upon their initial arrival, the government detained the women in a camp in the town Partheni. The gendarme called to the women to gather their things quickly and that the disembarkment would be done by name. It was a tragicomic situation. There were three trucks waiting to transport the women to the barracks. The islanders were at the port selling the local products. Those that had money with them bought some sweets from the merchants. Upon the arrival of the women the warden informed them that they could write to their family in time before the departure of the boat. The letters of course were censored by the gendarmerie.

¹⁸ In 1947 a little less than 100 women and 17 children were brought to island of Ikaria. Plousia was one of them, along with a few other women from her hometown Messolonghi.

¹⁹ Eleni Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 19, 2014.

²⁰ Stella Koumoula, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

Sergeant Georgios Papanastasopoulos began to call out the names of the women and the barrack number where they were assigned.

The Barracks

“As we stood in the ‘courtyard’ of the barrack, a young woman was brought in; she was in her bathing suit and with a beach hat on her head! The police had arrested her while she was swimming at the beach,” Plousia exclaimed, in her attempt to demonstrate that the women were arrested everywhere and anywhere. The spontaneity of arrest was unnerving.

“We entered the building, with the naked, cold, wards, with the many windows, that were so high up, that all you could see was a sliver of sky and a warden in charge of each ward. Our new situation, ‘Camp of disciplined living.’ This was our exile. Which meant: Prison in exile.”²¹ Exile on the island of Chios was indeed a prison. The women were placed in old army barracks and life there didn’t differ from that of a prison.

The barracks consisted of three, large two-story buildings, washrooms, and stables. There were six tall acacia trees on each side of the yard of the barracks, while on the left of the entrance there were two terebinth trees. On the left side at the end of the row of buildings were the kitchens, the canteen and the storerooms. The whole complex was about a quarter of an acre. A barbed wire fence secured the area; against the wire there was a row of well-covered toilets and the reservoir. Around the barracks was an

²¹ Athena Konstantopoulou, “Stratopedo Chiou”[The Chios Camp] in *Statopeda Gynaikon*[Women’s Camps] ed. Victoria Theodorou (Athens: published by Victoria Theodorou, 1976), 40.

open space. Turkey seemed to be just a stone's throw in the distance. The warehouses were where the army had stored food, and the wards were built to house twenty soldiers. In the case of the women, however, forty women lived in each ward, with no doors. Each ward was separated by a half wall. George Papanastasopoulos, which the women nicknamed "Pantzaras", was the officer in charge of the wards and in charge of headcount. Each detainee was to be in her ward, lying in bed or cot before the 9:00 PM bed call.²² They used to "count us every night to see if we were the right number. We had some funny girls who used to hide during the count and show up at the end making them really angry,"²³ Nitsa recalls. Papanastasopoulos or "Pantzaras" (beet) was given the nickname because he was always furious about something. His face would turn as red as a beet when he got angry, which was very often. Each woman I interviewed spoke of him. The women called him Pantzaras so often that the newcomers thought that was his last name.²⁴ Although Pantzaras was infuriated by this, he proved that he was so used to this nickname that when the lieutenant of the gendarmerie called out to him with his real name he didn't respond, yet, when the lieutenant called out: "Hey, Pantzaras!" he immediately turned to his attention. This infuriated Papanastasopoulos even more.²⁵

The layout of the camp was Building Two, followed by Building Three, and then Building One. They were large spaces which the army used to store food. The buildings were all the same except for Building One, which housed the officers of the gendarmerie

²² Eleni Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 19, 2014.

²³ Nitsa Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 9, 2012.

²⁴ Ourania Staveri, *To Martiriko Trigono ton Exoriston Gynaikon: Chios-Trikeri-Makronisos* [The exiles women's torturous triangle] (Athens: Paraskinio, 2006), 55.

²⁵ Stella Koumoula, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, September 15, 2012, Staveri, *To Martiriko Trigono*, 56.

on its ground floor. Furthermore, it had a large hallway with two small rooms on the sides, and two large wards. At the end of the hall, on the left hand side there was a staircase, which led to the washroom and the bathrooms. On the right, there was a large staircase that led upstairs.²⁶ Building Two, room 2, which was where Plousia was assigned, was located on the second floor. It was a rectangular room separated by a concrete half- wall from room one and it was connected to the room by an opening. There were two windows on each side. It had a high ceiling; a whitewashed space about ten meters long, and five meters wide. Each room had a warden that assigned each woman's place in the building.²⁷

The bathroom was downstairs on a wide landing. The latrines smelled so awful, full of urine from the soldiers that lived in the wards before the women that no matter how much they washed them, and due to the scarce water they had at their disposal, they couldn't eliminate the stench. The toilets were what is referred to as Turkish-style, with no fixtures and were made of dark stone. Lines of women waiting for their turn to go to the bathroom went as far as the entrance of the building since they were given such little time to leave their room. There was a long rectangular sink made of concrete on the ground floor which was supposed to be the bath, however it had no water. The women were given one liter of water a day with which they were supposed to use to do their laundry, wash the dishes, bathe and drink.²⁸

²⁶ Nitsa Gavriilidou, "Gia to 'Parartima' me tis 'epikindines,'" [About the annex with the 'dangerous ones'] in *Stratopeda Gynaikon*, 81.

²⁷ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 10, 2012.

²⁸ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 44.

The women saw very little of Chios. They weren't given a chance to walk around the island; they were taken from the port straight to the camp, which was just outside of the city, to the north, on a small hill. Plousia, however, who loves mastic gum, one of Chios' prize exports, as they are infamous for their mastic trees, bought it from the street vendors through the bars of the camp, during the one hour they were given a day in the morning and one hour in evening. During that time they were to use the bathroom, wash their clothes, themselves, and if they had a few minutes, take a short "stroll" in the courtyard. All women were given chores, such as cleaning the barracks and distributing the food. As soon as the women finished their dinner one woman from each group gathered the dishes and was in charge of washing them.²⁹

Each building housed women according to their level of "subversiveness." One building had the educated women who were considered most "dangerous;" another had the younger women, and the third building had the older women from the countryside. Building Two housed the urban women, who were more educated and well off than the others. Pota Kakkava explains the purpose behind the separation:

There was a separate building for the intellectuals, for the younger women, and the elderly mothers of guerrilla fighters in the civil war. And once they saw us becoming acquainted with one another, they split us up. They separated mothers from children, sisters from each other, anyone that could give you a shoulder to lean on, and a shoulder to cry on, would be separated from you. They knew what they were doing. They wanted to make sure that we didn't mingle amongst each other and have solidarity.³⁰

"And they knew," Nitsa adds, "they knew with whom they were dealing with. With women who had ideals and who would not change them. The intellectual women paid a

²⁹ Liakata, interview.

³⁰ Nitsa Gavriilidou and Pota Kakkava, group interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 14, 2012.

higher price; they were sent to a different camp, outside of ours. It was called the Annex building.”³¹ Nitsa was one of the women sent to the Annex building, which was referred to as Agios Thomas. Despite the restrictions, however, the women formed friendships in whichever building they were sent to.

“The Dangerous Ones”

On July 2, 1948, a delegation of the International Red Cross visited the Women’s Camp of Chios. The women saw this as a perfect opportunity to speak of their hardships, of the censorship, and of the mistreatment that they had endured. The gendarmes went to extra lengths to keep the women away from the delegation. Nevertheless, the French speaking women managed to speak to the delegation. They relayed all the issues of the camp, and asked for any help they could possibly give them. Although not knowing a word the women said, the guards kept notes of each woman who spoke with the delegation. That same night, at 4:00 AM, the women were violently woken from their sleep, forced to gather their belongings, and were taken away. These women were considered “ultra” dangerous, meaning they had an influence over the other women and could “infect” them deeper with the disease of communism. They were sent to the elementary school, “Agios Thomas,” which was far from the barracks. Since it was summer, the school was vacant. About seventy women were deemed “dangerous.”³² Many of the women, who were sent to the school, were either close relatives of the

³¹Ibid.

³²Gavriilidou “Gia to ‘Parartima’ me tis ‘epikindines,’” 72-74.

leaders of EAM, such as Nitsa, or were leading members of leftist organizations, such
 Roza Imvrioti:

We stayed in the school for three months, with many women, such as George Siantos' wife, Maria Karagiorgis, and Roza. But because the school had to open for the fall, they then put us in storage rooms where you could smell gas, oil and whatever you could imagine. So, we started cleaning in order to be able to stay there. It was very hard in the beginning until we set up the place, so that it could be functional. Each new beginning was always very hard, everywhere we were sent. But we got through it because we had good organizational skills. Roza was very good at organizing us.³³

Within the barracks, the women had realized, very early, that they needed to collectively organize their lives, and it is this collective solidarity that enabled them to overcome all the hurdles of prison life in exile, as the buildings gradually the buildings filled up to capacity. The women packed like sardines, had no space to move or breathe. "Despite the hardships, however, we didn't sit there and accept our fate in misery. Rather, we sought to adjust to the difficult circumstances and make our lives as easy as possible," Plousia declared.

Water, Food, Chores and Letters

Indeed, the most torturous of all experiences was the lack of water, which was a treacherous part of their whole journey in exile. They waited for a bit of rainfall. They looked forward to it. If it rained they could fill their jugs and pots with water so that they could bathe, boil their food and wash their hair. They even had a song:

Water, water, little water

³³ Nitsa Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, Sept 15, 2012.

we patiently wait for you since the morning
 and as you roll down drop by drop
 Kalliope will not have time get washed.³⁴

The following quote from Pagoulatou's chronicle, encapsulates the women's desperate need for water:

Nothing else on Chios gave us greater joy than these drops of water. Have you ever thirsted for a drop of water? Has it ever happened to you? Do you know what it is to be parched with thirst? How your lips and your insides can feel fried? To hear nothing but running water rivers and creeks and oceans of water; to drink the ocean, furiously, and not to taste its saltiness; to be dried up inside and die for only one gulp of water.³⁵

Making matters worse, the women were given salted sardines for dinner in the summertime, and not one cup of water. While the cistern overflowed with water toward the creek end, toward the kitchen making the women dizzy at the sight of it. They were so desperate for water that there were cases where one woman knelt before a pail of water used to mop the floors and drank from it while another placed her lips on the mop to cool them. One of the most horrid stories was that of Alikí and Kypro who were so thirsty they got up in their nightgowns, put on their coats, and walked to the outer door of the building where they met the night guard. They implored him to fill their cups with water and he seemed to comply. He said that for the first and last time he would do them this favor but to not tell anyone. He disappeared with the cups. The women leaning their faces on the bars of the door as they shivered longed for him to return with the cups of water. It took him some time but he returned, and cursed them by sending them to hell for making

³⁴ Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exiled Women: Chios-Trikeri-Makronisos* (Athens: Synchroni Epochi, 1986), 34.

³⁵ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 58.

him go fetch some water and gave them the two cups. The women thanked him again and again “may God reward you,” they said to him. The cups seemed warm, but they assumed it was because they were so cold. They brought the cups to the room. As they brought the cup to their lips, they smelled something acidic and realized that the guard had not filled their cups with water but with his own urine. Seventeen year old Kypro was so thirsty that she said to Alik: “I wish you hadn't told me. . . I would have drunk it no matter what it was. I'm dying of thirst. . . and she started to cry.”³⁶

The government gave three and a half drachmas per capita for a day's ration. The women cooked the food themselves, rotating their position every two months. The food was poor, and portions were small. Beans comprised the main dish. Potatoes, pasta and vegetables were rarely included in the menu while meat was available once or twice per month. “We would close our nose and swallow the horrific food that they gave us, because we knew that we needed to, in order to survive,” Nitsa has declared.³⁷ Morning snacks were rarely given, leaving the women hungry and without anything to eat from the evening of one day to the lunch time of the next. The eighty dramia of bread, which is equivalent to 256 grams, were enough only for lunch; the children had to be fed as well, and they were not included in the number of detainees. Consequently, the two hundred and twenty four children were fed with the food that was given to their mother.

When the food wasn't enough for the children, all the women gave a portion of their food to “complete” their meal. Very early the women became a close-knit group who looked out for one another. For example, the women who were already familiar with

³⁶ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 60.

³⁷Nitsa Gavriilidou, in *Beneath the Olive Tree*, directed by Stavroula Toska, Orama Pictures, 2015.

the barracks helped the newcomers become acquainted with their surroundings. As each new group of women arrived they were silently greeted and welcomed by the other women. As Pagoulatou writes:

From the windows of the building women greeted us silently, waving their hands and nodding to us. A gendarme who was standing at the large iron door to the building took several huge keys from his belt and unlocked the door. Then he took out a small key, the padlock, pulling a thick chain toward one side of the door.³⁸

As he opened the door, there were women carrying two large buckets and moved toward the kitchen. These women were called for “mess” call. The women in charge of cleaning rotated and were referred to as “Maria’s.” Rationing the food was not an easy task for each “Maria” who was in charge of also dividing up the food equally amongst the women.³⁹ Each detainee waited for the distribution of the food. Pagoulatou recalls her first dinner being lima beans. She didn’t have a plate until one of the women, Ourania, from Messolonghi, gave her one, along with bedding and a blanket.⁴⁰ In order to eat, the women balanced their plates with food on their knees. With their dinner they were given two tablespoons of olive oil.⁴¹

With the cooperation of the gendarmes, a committee of women arranged for the meals. Accompanied by the gendarmes the committee travelled to the town center to purchase the ingredients needed for each meal. Funds were provided in the morning, and on Sundays they had the “luxury” of eating a half cup of yogurt. The committee helped in

³⁸ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 42

³⁹ Ourania Staveri, *To Martiriko Trigono ton Exoriston Gynaikon: Chios-Trikeri-Makronisos* (Athens: Paraskinio Publishers, 2006), 50.

⁴⁰ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 43

⁴¹ Ellie Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, June 15, 2014.

the preparation of the food by peeling potatoes, cleaning the salted cod or sorting the lentils or other legumes. Often the lentils were full of insects and gravel which the women jokingly referred to as lentils with meat. Dirty lentils, appears to have been a common item on the menu for detainees. As Tomasa Cuevas has stated in *Prison of Women*, one of the main menus consisted of “dirty lentils so full of sticks, bugs and stones that you got sick just looking at them.”⁴² For the Greek women foods included a traditional Greek bean soup, with tomato sauce, or chickpeas and lima beans and potatoes cooked in oil. At times, they took the pans of potatoes to ovens outside of the city, which was about a half an hour walk from the barracks, however, most of the time the potatoes were boiled. They were given a lot of pasta and a sliver of meat was given on Sunday for lunch, and salted sardines smoked herring we’re also popular on the menu. The rations were placed in a bucket for each room. Flies often got into the food, and they had to remove the “pests” before bringing the buckets to each room. Each post was filled by 6:00 each morning. In the wintertime the kitchen was a chore that even the upper-class women sought.⁴³

The canteen was located in the same building as the gendarmerie’s offices and was the distribution center for bread. Each woman was given half a loaf per day, according to Pagoulatou. The canteen sold citrus fruits, charcoal, and cigarettes, and in the summer, watermelon, grapes and cantaloupe. Sometimes the women in charge of the canteen were able to sneak in newspapers to the camp. If caught by the gendarmes the women could be court-martialed. When the women protested the bad quality of food they

⁴² Tomasa Cuevas, *Prison of Women: Testimonies of War and Resistance in Spain, 1939-1975*, trans. Mary E. Giles (SUNY Press, 1998), 26.

⁴³ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 50-51.

were given, or the lack of water, the guard in charge, a man with the surname Dimou, would send women, randomly, to the holding cell. He punished the women by withholding any correspondence, or food, or in some instances locked them up in solitary confinement.⁴⁴

Unlike prison, the detainees in the camps were not allowed visitors. Letters, checks, newspapers and a few packages arrived once per week by the camp's boat. The post office's packages and letters were delivered by the General at the morning call, where women stood in a line. If one didn't quickly pick up her letter when she was called, the General kept it and delivered it days later. The exiled women used to write one letter per week. However many times the commanders used to collect them and burn them in order for them to never reach their destination. Everything was strictly censored and thoroughly inspected before the items were delivered to the exiled women. The guards delayed the little money the women received from the checks. They also erased or cut part of the letters. It was very common practice for them to withhold the letters in order to punish some of the exiled women who were slow during the transportation of the supplies or in order to keep the women in a state of anxiety. Not giving the letters and the messages to the exiles was a rough punishment. When the letters contained an announcement of the death of a guerilla, the General kept them for the end and read them out loud in front of the mother, wife, or sister. As if the woman's pain wasn't enough, she was teased as the General insisted that she sign the DOR. He sarcastically said: "Now you can sign the DOR. You no longer have a reason to be here."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid., 51-52.

⁴⁵ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 20, 2014.

Beginning of Lessons: “Make the most of our time”

From the beginning, even from their first days of exile at the Chios camp, the women realized they needed to organize their daily lives. They needed to protect themselves from insanity and depression. They sought to continue their lives as normal as possible, finding a myriad of ways to endure life in the camps.⁴⁶ One of the most significant activities they undertook was the commencement of lessons. Many of the educated women taught the illiterate women how to read and write; women such as Liza Kottou, Eleni Garidi, Eleni Iatropoulou, Anna Nikolakopoulou, Katina Mamei, and the most prominent teacher of all, Roza Imvrioti. Furthermore, the lessons also enabled the younger women and girls to maintain their studies so that they could continue them when discharged. Others taught languages, mainly French, while others gave lectures on physics and chemistry. “Popi, whom we called Archimedes because she was so smart and into science, talked to us about astrophysics, about nature, the sun, earthquakes, and such. As we sat under the olive trees. She had such a way of making you understand,”⁴⁷ Eleni Savvatianou has expressed. There were also gym classes that the women attended, which were led by Argyro Koutifari. It was easy at first, as Koutifari has candidly argued: “How could I discipline so many women! It was the first time I felt such disappointment. I lost trust in my capabilities. Either my teaching method is problematic or these women are incorrigible.”⁴⁸ The women, young and old, however, laughed with Argyro’s distress.

⁴⁶ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 19, 2014

⁴⁷ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 7, 2014.

⁴⁸ Argyro Koutifari, *Mia Alithini Istoría* [A true story] (Athens, 1977), 66.

Others taught the women song and dance. Ellie Nikolaidou,⁴⁹ an older, educated, woman and profoundly respected by the exiles, formed a chorus.

Education-whether it was reading, writing, arithmetic or languages-was the glue that kept the women's lives organized in exile. For instance, if they were university students at time of arrest, they would continue their studies in their tent and finish their studies when discharged. Such as “Archimedes” who had two degrees. Popi studied all day, save for the time allotted to her chores. In almost all interviews, there has been a reference to “Archimedes.” In one infamous anecdote she had broken her comb in two to brush her hair using two hands, and hence, “save” time for her studies. As Pota noted, “no time was wasted.”⁵⁰

Learning to read and write was especially significant for the illiterate women. Without this knowledge they couldn't write to their loved ones, nor could they read their mail, which helped them keep a connection with the outside world. Elderly women who couldn't read a single word, relied on the younger women to read their letters, to read to them of what their loved ones were doing, could now read on their own. It was a profound accomplishment. Pota's words demonstrate this significance: “At first they would say to you ‘Can you read this letter for me?’ And then they would say: ‘Now I know what the letter says, I don't need you anymore.’ There were women who learned geography, math, and physics. We even had political lectures. We knew why we were there and who we were.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ellie Nikolaidou was the music teacher that formed the women's choir in exile.

⁵⁰ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, June 14, 2014.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Liza Kottou, one of the teachers and Roza Invrioti's collaborator in setting up the "Education Program," had great compassion for the working class women. Once she realized that they were in dire need of assistance, since most of them were illiterate or had very little schooling, she was adamant about elevating their level of education. Ex-exile Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva recalls: "She [Kottou] gave us lessons every day, and we slowly began to understand that we needed to study, and every month we passed a grade."⁵² Roza, according to Plousia was very kind and her lessons were well structured. Her questions were philosophic. Roza, she says, "wanted you to understand so that you learn."⁵³ Being around women such as Invrioti was according to Plousia "like being at a university. There was no one greater in knowledge than Invrioti."⁵⁴ Once, when her teacher, Natalia Apostolopoulou informed Invrioti that Plousia was skipping lessons, Invrioti advised Plousia: "Plousaki⁵⁵, we don't do such things. We have to attend our classes. We go to execution with a book in our hand." And then gave her a piece of candy, "as if she was little Myrto, Loudemis' daughter."⁵⁶

Many of the women from the countryside were exposed to certain behaviors for the first time. In some ways, their "eyes were opened" to behaviors of the "city women." For example, many of the farmer women had never seen facial cream before seeing some of the Athenian women using it. Some of the Athenian women who had the privilege of their family's ability to send them packages with such items. Marigoula vividly

⁵² Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exiled Women*, 17.

⁵³ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, February 22, 2021.

⁵⁴ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 9, 2021.

⁵⁵ "Plousaki" is the diminutive of Plousia.

⁵⁶ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 9, 2021.

demonstrates this phenomenon in her narration of a woman from the countryside who thought toothpaste was used as facial moisturizer:

The poor woman put toothpaste on her face. She saw the girls putting some Nivea now and then, because it was scarce, and she wanted to put some on her face too. . . I told one of the other girls, who at first laughed, but right away said, 'that's what comes with living in a village. She lives in ignorance. She came in contact with civilization and was shocked. She has the same rights as we do. But she does a lot harder work than we do. In the heat and in the cold. That's why we're fighting Marigoula. Because we want all people to live well, and to equally enjoy the best life has to offer.' Although we were roughly the same age as her, she looked much older. She once expressed, 'You all have a good life in the city. I can see from observing you. We live far from God.'⁵⁷

The woman, a teacher, Katina Mameli, whom Marigoula recounts her story to, expresses one of the purposes of their struggle during the Occupation, which was to fight against suppression on all levels, for all women, urban and rural, for a better life.

Spiritual “Rehabilitation”

By the end of 1948, there were more than thirteen hundred women on the island of Chios. In the beginning, the conditions in Chios were somewhat elastic, somewhat “lighter,” as Pota expresses.⁵⁸ Soon, anti-communist propaganda began, in addition to systematic brainwashing with Greek nationalistic ideology. The themes of the lectures included: Christianity and women, the results of Communism in Russia, the threat of the Slavs, Byzantium and its traditions, etc. To these “enlightening” lectures, Pota argues,

⁵⁷ Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exiled Women*, 37.

⁵⁸ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 16, 2012.

“we collectively responded with an ‘Mmmmm,’ that would enrage the commanders. In some cases, we achieved our goal in getting the lecturer to stop.”⁵⁹The lectures were mandatory for all women. The guards responded to this resistance and other protests for better living conditions with solitary confinement, forbiddance of mail and correspondence, or withholding of food and water, which only worsened the women's health.

One July morning the women were taken to a monastery in Chios for a mandatory church service. At the end of the service the bishop of Chios began to preach:

My beloved children in Christ! It is with great joy that I find myself among you on this day. As a deacon of Christ, I am obliged to say a few words to you, in order to assist you and bring you to the right path- the path of God our Father; the path of Virtue. Because this beast, communism, is like a cursed serpent. And I wonder how you, being sweet mothers and dear sisters, could allow- could suffer- to hide that serpent in your sweet and tender bosoms! I wonder, I say, or all of you are products of Greek Christian homes. And it is not right, nay it is a great sin, for you to allow harmful thoughts and theories to be nurtured in your heads. It is blasphemy! Which of you can tell me what results from the cross breeding of an ass and a horse?’ One of the women answered, ‘a mule, your Eminence!’ ‘Yes, my child! Exactly! A mule! And you may rightly ask: what do we have to do, eminence, with horses and mules? Here is the meaning of the analogy, my beloved children, namely, that given the shameful and unpatriotic path you have followed and given the mixture of these political beliefs of yours, the beliefs of your future children will be like the mules!’ ‘Communism is the most terrible beast in the world. Repent and return to your homes. It is a simple matter, my children. Do not taint your innocent souls, while there is time. May you be blessed and may my words bear positive fruit in your souls. Amen!’⁶⁰

The proselytizing didn't end there. The Camp Administration had Bishop of Chios visit the women at the camp every Friday afternoon and lecture them in what “appeared to be

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 70.

religious but was full of anticommunist sentiment.”⁶¹ During one of the lectures the women began their grunting sounds- “mmmmm.” The Bishop was so embarrassed that he got down quickly from the podium, rushed to the car, and left. There were no lectures for two weeks.⁶²

Festivities and Holidays

While on the island prisons, women were permitted to celebrate holidays. Easter was a special affair, not only because of tradition but it was a day in which the women thought of their family even more, yearned to be with them. Moreover, since it was a special occasion the “menu” was also “grand” as it comprised of the traditional red egg, sweet cake and roasted lamb with potatoes. During Holy Week the women, in the one hour they had when allowed outside in the afternoon, gathered wildflowers to decorate the Epitaphio.⁶³ Even at the camps, on Good Friday, as is customary, there was no cleaning or washing. The women went to the courtyard for the Service for Epiphany. A priest was present and the Lamentation service began. Some of the women with good voices sung along: “‘Oh, my sweet springtime, my most sweet child, where has your beauty gone. . .’ The melody of this verse was heartrending, the choir reserved for it all of its collective artistry coloration of voice and intensity. So much so, that each of us

⁶¹ Staveri, *Martiriko Trigono*, 58.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ The Epitaphio, meaning “over the tomb” in Greek Orthodox faith, is an icon that is placed on a platform, topped with an elaborately carved wooden canopy, and adorned with fresh flowers; the decoration is done on the morning of Good Friday. The procession of the Epitaphio marks the peak of Passion Week on Good Friday; the clergy lead the procession on the night of Good Friday, while chanting hymns, such as the Virgin Mary’s lament, “Oh My Sweet Springtime,” followed by the crowd, who chants along, as they proceed with the Epitaphio, which is usually held by four men, around the vicinity of the parish.

wept in our hearts for a spring that each of us had lost.”⁶⁴ When the service was over, the women lined up to revere the Epitaphio, which was now stripped of its flowers with the same care taken in its declaration. Aunt Truman⁶⁵ or aunt Koula, an older woman from Messolonghi, was in charge of decorating the Epitaphio. While back at their wards, Plousia along with Elektra from the island of Ithaca read the Twelve Gospels while holding a candle and wearing a white caftan. They were interrupted by bed-call in which the guard Marketakis⁶⁶ entered the room to count heads a little before 9:00PM. The women quickly ran to their beds and as soon as he left they resumed. Plousia tended to use any opportunity she could to get a laugh. Eleni recalls, “Plousia was always full of life, I remember her energy, and her jokes, she made us laugh.”⁶⁷ “If we didn't have our sense of humor, our classes, our songs, and dances, we would have never survived,” Plousia has expressed during our numerous discussions. “It was the laughter foremost that saved us.” This survival mechanism, the use of laughter to “make it through,” was also used by Spanish imprisoned women and usually by the younger women.⁶⁸ The younger women “provided” the laughter and lifted everyone’s spirits, while the older women stood as a shield against the torture and beatings of the younger exiles.

⁶⁴ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 49.

⁶⁵ The women called her aunt Truman because Plousia had given her the nickname when they were exiled with other women from Messolonghi on the island of Ikaria.

⁶⁶ He was the Aide-de-Camp

⁶⁷ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 19, 2014.

⁶⁸ Cuevas, *Prison of Women*, 33-34.

They celebrated national holidays such as October 28 and March 25 and organized festivities such as the Carnival, Easter, and Christmas.⁶⁹ With each different holiday they made up words to mainstream songs, expressing their situation. Once such song was a Christmas Carol which they sung on Chios in December 1948:

Christmas on Chios' barracks
 vanguard women
 in their honorable struggles
 we stand unyielding
 side by side with the guerillas
 and whomever is in the right fights
 and never ever breaks
 Christmas this year in exile,
 next year we will celebrate with our freedom
 Good day friends
 I came to go caroling
 and may our old hate be forgotten.
 Christ is born today
 in the horses' manger
 and we find ourselves here
 with no reason whatsoever
 If Christ was born for justice
 that's what we struggled for
 and we with trust,
 made the children happy,
 we gave them our caress
 and lit the heroe's candle
 one night.
 In order to repay us
 they sent us in exile
 and this is how we will pass on in history. . .
 Merry Christmas!!!⁷⁰

Each holiday was adjusted to their life in exile. Keeping up with each festivity, with each holiday that they would have celebrated if they were free, they formed a quasi-normal

⁶⁹ October 28 is celebrated as the day that Greece entered World War Two. March 25 is celebrated as the day of Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire.

⁷⁰ Pota Kakkava's personal archive.

reality in exile. They didn't deprive themselves of any happy moments they could create for themselves and the children in the camps. Each event was planned ahead of time.

Often, their celebrations of national holidays demonstrate an underlying clash between the exiles and the state- a government that accused them of treason. At the same time, they believed that they had proven their love and loyalty to their country by participating in the Resistance, and therefore also laid claim to celebrating national holidays, which signify independence and national pride. For example, the women made it a point to celebrate the War of Independence on March 25. With the help of their teachers, such as Liza Kottou and Roza Invrioti, the women recited poems, sang revolutionary songs, the national anthem, and even acted out a short scene from the siege of Messolonghi, Plousia's hometown. The administration, which was present, was surprised by the women's national pride. They danced traditional folk dances, and were greatly impressed with the talent of actress Kaiti Diridaoua.⁷¹ With this celebration, the women "proved" to the administration that they were Greek and proud, and not Bulgarians as they were called.⁷²

As the Greek Civil War came to an end, however, the prohibitions only increased, and life became even more restricted. Despite the close surveillance, the women entertained themselves by singing, and even dancing traditional dances when the guards were absent. There were many actors and dancers, particularly when they went to Trikeri. Plousia was a choreographer of the women's informal dance group. She traipsed from one tent to another, imploring the other women to teach her their local traditional folk dances:

⁷¹ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, June 15, 2014.

⁷² Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exiled Women*, 21.

“I looked for women who knew regional dances from various parts of Greece and often used song and dance to cheer up the women. I tried to lighten things up for the older women,” she expressed. This would shape her path in teaching folk dance after exile. Plousia was obsessed with the dancers. She wanted to learn all the local and traditional dances: “I watched them; I had rhythm and was good at dancing. There we had girls from all over Greece. I wanted to learn the dance of each area. On Makronisos, however, all this stopped; there we did not dance.”⁷³

The women devised daily satirical rhymes of their day or of characteristics of each woman. This they called “tsibida” or pinch or bite, because they focused on life and personalities. It was satirical in many ways, critiquing the social reality that was their life. Regina Pagoulatou⁷⁴ is best known for writing “pinches” and Plousia for performing them. The words and performance of the “tsibida” were mostly spontaneous. The pinch was often accompanied by make shift musical instruments, as Plousia has stated: “Once I had used a pan as a tambourine.”⁷⁵ She audaciously played the tambourine in the halls, irritating Pantzaras, who threatened to put her in the detention room at the back side of the camp. And Plousia, asked: “Are there any mastic trees back there?” Pantzaras nearly exploded.⁷⁶

⁷³ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

⁷⁴ Regina Pagoulatou was a journalist that I knew in New York, whom was exiled with all the women I interviewed between 2011 and 2021.

⁷⁵ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 16, 2012

⁷⁶ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 10, 2021.

“Medicine Women”

Fortunately there were licensed physicians, dentists, and pharmacists amongst the women exiles. The pharmacists were dubbed “medicine women.” The barracks had a room that was used as a diagnostic clinic and a dental clinic which was also housed in the same room. It was equipped with a stethoscope which was the property of Katerina Kouskou, a detainee and doctor of the camp, a cot, and a small shelf that held the bottles of rubbing alcohol, iodine aspirin and sulfides. The cot was used during the day to clinically examine the patient and at night it was where Katerina slept. Due to lack of medicine, Katerina had no choice but to prescribe the same medicine, whatever the ailment, whether it was vertigo, tuberculosis or appendicitis. Her prescription was usually two aspirins every four hours. When the case was life threatening, such as advanced tuberculosis, Katerina demanded from the commander of the camp that the patient be transferred to a hospital.⁷⁷ Each woman was allowed only one hospital visit. In most cases the hospital doctors concluded that there was no evidence of disease, even in cases where symptoms of tuberculosis were obvious. In order to protect the others, the women that knew they were sick self-isolated.⁷⁸

A disease that was ubiquitous in Greece in the 1940s,⁷⁹ tuberculosis, spread rampant throughout the barracks because of the prisoners’ cramped cohabitation and

⁷⁷ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 53.

⁷⁸ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

⁷⁹ According to statistics from the Sotiria Hospital in Athens, in 1940 twenty-seven percent of the patients that had tuberculosis died, while one year later, the percentage increased to forty-nine percent.

<https://slpress.gr/koinonia/oi-arrosties-poy-therizan-san-polyvola-to-1940/> Accessed November 22, 2021.

limited medical attention. Consequently, many of the women became ill. This only added to their hardships, lack of nutrition, and poor hygiene, further compromising their immune system. Many of the women were in dire need of medical care and relied on their co-exiles who were doctors, nurses, pharmacists, or dentists. There were ten dentists and two general doctors amongst the exiles. These women professionals, in turn, wrote to their families, asking for medical supplies to care for many of the women in need. There were cases where women didn't receive the care needed and died from hepatitis. One woman died at the age of twenty-two on the island of Chios. According to ex-exile Stella Koumoula, she is buried there.⁸⁰

The doctors from the island that were supposedly in charge of taking care of the women showed little interest in the health of the exiles. Furthermore, the lack of medicine and materials needed for the care of the women worsened the situation. The women, however, found alternatives. For example, they lacked Chrysomycin, a medicine which was needed for the treatment of dysentery, a disease prevalent in the camp brought upon by the malnutrition, and the bug and worm infested food that they were given, as well as due to the water from the wells.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the women bought garlic as an antidote for both of the diseases. The merchants however, realizing the women's high demand of garlic, took advantage and increased the price of garlic.⁸²

If a woman was sick, the others saw to it that she received the best care possible; which often meant, they would nurse her with the little medication and supplies they had

⁸⁰ Stella Koumoula, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

⁸¹ Victoria Theodorou, "Trikeri," *Stratopeda Gynaikon* [Women's camps] (Athens, 1975), 136.

⁸² Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 51

available to them. The women found solutions and alternatives in other aspects such as in dental care. The exiled dentists of the camp, such as Stasa Kefalidou, from Thessaloniki, used their own tools such as pliers and tweezers to perform, for example, extractions. Unfortunately, those tools didn't suffice and the patient may have bled for hours from that extraction, such as in Regina's case. Stasa was so worried about her that she picked chamomile from the courtyard and brought it to her to boil and use as an antiseptic along with a rinse of salted water.⁸³

The women expressed such an extraordinary degree of solidarity in exile, seeking to alleviate each other's hardships as best they could. They acted as one body, as a collective, supporting one another. "The camp was the touch tone for the humanity in each one of us," said Plousia.⁸⁴ There were girls and women who were affluent and received many packages from their families, which they shared with the rest of the women in the camp. They sympathized with the many women who never received anything; they shared their packages with women "who had no place in the sun. They shared their packages with women who were never called during mail calls, women who never received a thing."⁸⁵ For example, when Regina received a package from her family she shared most of the items with her co-exiles. The guard summoned her to pick up her package: "You have a package over there. . . Here's the knife! Open the package for inspection; take your things and get the hell out. Get lost. 'I took things out one by one and placed them in a pile, right on the ground.'" The package had cookies biscuits coffee, pasta, cans of milk, candy, a carton of cigarettes. The milk and the candy were

⁸³ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 55-56.

⁸⁴ Liakata, Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

⁸⁵ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 61.

given to the children, while the rest was distributed fairly throughout the camp, except for the coffee, which she wanted to keep for herself and the girls in her ward, as her “stinginess” wouldn't let her give away the coffee.⁸⁶

The women offered anything they could to help their co-exiles in need. One very moving instance took place on Chios, when Yioryaki, Natalia's son, was sick with meningitis. The women implored Natalia to accept their offerings which she could sell for her child's medical costs: “Here, take my wedding band! We know you don't have anyone to help you, since your husband is in exile, too, on St. Efstratios,’ said one woman. ‘Here's my ring,’ the next one. ‘Take my watch. Sell it to pay the doctors to make your boy well.’ The women ran up one after another to bring her whatever gold and jewelry they had, to help save the boy.”⁸⁷ Yioryaki recuperated and he returned to the camp. He was separated from his mother later on when the gendarmes barged in the camp to instill pressure on the mothers to sign the DOR by taking away the children. Yioryaki and other children were taken from the camp to an orphanage in the capital of Chios. They were reunited with their mothers when they left for Trikeri. The most extreme and insufferable torture for the women, particularly for the mothers, on Chios was the removal of the children from the barracks.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 63-65.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 68.

The Children

In the summer of 1948, the Commander barged in the barracks. According to Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva, he called for the women with children to gather in the hallway of the second building. When they gathered, he lectured: “Mother Greece feels obligated to save the children that are in danger with their mothers who are not Greeks, and who poison them with communism, and this is why we have to save them.”⁸⁸ The older children understood what the Commander had said and began to cry. As the children cried, the guards grabbed them away from their mothers and put them in wagons. The mothers wailed inside the barracks, while the children cried on the other side of them. Eleni, Nitsa, Plousia, Ellie, Zozo and Pota, unanimously argue that these incidents, where children were involved, were unbearable and they vividly remember the horror.

The next episode of removal of children would take place on Makronisos. The women empathized with the mothers, especially Eleni, Ellie, and Nitsa who had children, but, even Plousia and Pota who never became mothers. It is a subject that comes up often in conversations about exile. For Pota, these scenes, of children violently grabbed from their mother’s embrace, along with the pain she saw her mother endured because her children were in the Resistance, played a significant role in her choosing to not have a family.⁸⁹ The women are adamant that the mothers who signed in order to return to their children were in the right, and should not be criticized; they were not weak or disloyal.

⁸⁸ Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exiles Women*, 13.

⁸⁹ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, Greece, August 30, 2014.

Eleni, in particular, has said on many occasions that had she been a mother when she was in exile, she is not certain if she would have resisted signing the DOR.

Unlike the exiled women, the guards had no sympathy or empathy for the children. They used them as leverage to force the mothers in signing. The children lived alongside the women, with the same restrictions and limitations. They were fed with rations from the women's food, and they endured the same fear as their mothers. So much so, that they never dared go anywhere without an adult. During their first Christmas in exile, on Chios, in 1948, one of the women dressed up as Santa. When she went to give the children whatever small gifts the women were able to gather, little Myrto, the daughter of the infamous writer Menelaos Loudemis, said: "Santa, watch out for the guard as you leave. If he sees you, he's going to take you to the holding cell."⁹⁰

The women did everything in their power to entertain the children; to make their life in exile as "normal" as possible. According to Nitsa the exact number was one hundred and eighty two.⁹¹ "We sought to play with the children, to keep them occupied, to keep them as happy as possible. . . In addition to keeping them entertained, we also sought to teach them how to read and write. When we were on Trikeri, we decided to create something like a day care center for the almost two hundred children we had with us."⁹² Zozo Petropoulou initiated the project. They dug a rectangular playground area, which the women built with their own hands: They carried sand, pebbles and water from the sea. The children were occupied there with gymnastics, storytelling, songs, and

⁹⁰Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 24, 2019.

⁹¹ Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, September 15, 2012

⁹²Zozo Petropoulou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, June 14, 2014.

dance, from eight in the morning until lunch time. Although the “playground” didn’t last more than four months, the teachers worked hard in trying to tame the children who were frustrated from the hardships of exile.⁹³

Trikeri: “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”⁹⁴

To another exile we go,
 we bid you farewell with good wishes and love.
 Our time here has ended; we stayed on your island for a while.
 We never saw you but we felt the beats of your heart, beautiful Chios
 farewell! We never saw your faces, for we were locked up in a wired cage.
 Over one and half thousand lived here in exile, women who fervently loved
 Greece, every corner of it. Farewell, beautiful Chios! ⁹⁵

The boat ride from Chios to Trikeri was dreadful. Many women were nauseous from the ride and from the boat’s filth. Furthermore, the journey was long and lasted for almost a day. Plousia describes:

Yes, the trip from Chios to Trikeri was horrible. There was a big storm and it was very cold. I remember that I lied down within the ropes, which were used to tie the ship at the port, to somehow protect myself against the cold. I stayed outside on the deck because inside it was very dirty and there were a lot of women and children sick with tuberculosis. It was better to be outside than inside. It was a very dramatic situation. The only “good” moment when we were leaving Chios to go to Trikeri was the incident with Marigoula Mastroleon and her brother’s

⁹³ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 8, 2015.

⁹⁴ Plousia Liakata made reference to Maya Angelou’s infamous work, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Random House, 1969), in one of our phone conversations, during the quarantine in 2020, when we were talking about exile; She expressed how she felt locked up again, as she was all those years in exile.

⁹⁵ A song the women sang as they left Chios. Group interview with Plousia, Eleni and Nitsa, Athens, September 4, 2014.

friend, who was a member of the ship's crew. He was told by her brother to look for her, but because we didn't know who he was, we didn't help him find her because we thought that he was from the Security Police! Meanwhile, Marigoula couldn't talk, because she had lost her dentures. She was young but had lost her teeth from the beatings during an interrogation. As her brother's friend was looking for her, she couldn't respond to his calling of her name because she didn't have her teeth. It was tragicomic! We found it quite funny.⁹⁶

It took three boat trips to complete the transfer of the women from Chios to Trikeri. As the boat neared Trikeri the women saw lavish greenery, a monastery, but nothing more. On the other side of the island, however, where they docked, they saw a small cafe, where they were able to have a cup of coffee before the dreadful transfer of their belongings to the camp site, which was far from the little port. Nevertheless, when they finally settled on the island, they enjoyed the degree of freedom they had to be in the open air, and be around the olive groves, however had to deal with different kinds of issues which the open air brought, such as living solely in tents on soil and mud.

“On the island of Trikeri, we saw the sun,” exclaimed Zozo Petropoulou on our bus ride to Trikeri, on one of the annual trips to the island.⁹⁷ “Trikeri was, what can I say! We had a better time there because we got out of the barracks, out of the storage rooms,” declared Nitsa as we sipped our coffee at a tavern on the island.⁹⁸ “Our lives were very organized on Trikeri,” said Plousia. “We had tailor shops, shoe repairs, cobblers. We had time and 'freedom' to have classes, theater, dance. That was up until the gendarme guarded us. . .In November 1949, when the National Army began to administer

⁹⁶ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, June 15, 2014.

⁹⁷ Petropoulou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

⁹⁸ Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012

the camps, our activities were halted.”⁹⁹ It is at this point that the Trikeri camp is taken over by the *Organismos Anamorfoseos Makronisou*, OAM (Organization of the Reformation of Makronisos) and the army. Those in charge of reforming the women (in addition to the men on Makronisos) were former leftists or repentees who had signed the DOR, in addition to members of the army, and the clergy, such as the Bishop of Larisa.

The anecdotes of the survivors give an impression that life in exile on the island of Trikeri was the most bearable. It is the island where they are proud of how they managed their daily life and of the activities that they were able to sneak by the guards. On Trikeri, the women found more room to breathe, with fewer guards hovering over them. Although they lived in tents, they were “free” amongst the olive groves and the sea. More than five thousand exiled women passed through the island of Trikeri, which was for all the women I interviewed a “breath of fresh air.”

Trikeri is a small island, which, even today, is scarcely populated. It has less than ten families currently living on the island and there are no cars. One can walk the whole island in about three hours or less. In the 1940s, few, if any, families lived on the island; it is full of olive groves, and most families only went to the island to gather their olives, while they resided on the mainland. Trikeri has a rainy period all year round. It is a lush island with olive groves that lead to a beautiful beach that the women used to bathe themselves, wash their clothes, and everything they needed water for, besides drinking. Out of the 5,000 women that were exiled on Trikeri, only 1,500 were politically involved. The rest of the women were what were categorized as “preemptive exiles.” These women had been taken from the villages due to the collective responsibility of the family. For

⁹⁹Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 16, 2012.

example, if a woman's child, husband, brother, or even cousin, was a guerrilla, she could have been a source of aid, so she was arrested as a prevention measure. There were many such cases, from Central Greece, Thessaly, from Evros, in Northern Greece. So, for precaution many women were exiled. Women from the islands of Samos and Mytilene were taken. One thing that is essential when discussing exile Plousia argues is that in the beginning men and women were exiled together. At some point they decided that they weren't going to make mere concentration camps, but rather, camps of disciplined living. For example, if you were in Ikaria, as Plousia was for one month before being taken to Chios, you had to present yourself to the guard three times a day and prove that you were there and hadn't fled. "Although, there was no way you could have escaped," she affirms. "We were greatly limited. Actually, we never even thought of escaping."¹⁰⁰

There was really no place to escape to. The islands were guarded and it was also difficult to swim to the mainland. Trikeri was used from early on as it was isolated and most didn't know of its existence until their exile. Until the summer of 1947, solely men were exiled on the island; up to 4,000. After the men left for Makronisos in March of 1949, the first group of women exiles arrived on the island in April 1949. The women initially set up camp near the monastery, and decided amongst themselves to place the sickly women in the cells of the monastery. The monastery was built in 1841, on the highest point of the island. The church of the monastery was the Dormition of the Mother of God.¹⁰¹ They settled in large tents, which were American made, or came from the

¹⁰⁰ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, June 14, 2014.

¹⁰¹ Interestingly, the winged altar piece was renovated by an exiled artist who later was sentenced to death and executed.

United States since they all refer to the tents as “big tents, American ones.” Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva gives a detailed account:

We ran like wild beasts in the hillside of the mountain to find a tent that was decent. We weren't used to low tents that were used only to sleep in. You would get in headfirst. You couldn't really place your stuff easily. The men had put grass on one side and on the other, making a shape of a mattress and entered only to sleep. The rest of the time they were afield, out in the open air. There were some tents where they had built a wall, about one meter high and had placed the tent on top, and this way they could put a cot and the rest of their belongings. We took a design from those and began working on our tents. Dirt, sea and rocks, and we built continuously. We placed the older women and the sickly in the first tents that we built.¹⁰²

Trikeri may have been as they have said, “a breath of fresh air,” but it doesn't minimize the fact that living in tents out in the open air exposed them to rain, snow, and wind. Rats were ubiquitous and a profound concern for the women as they woke up in the morning and realized that they had a part of their ear, nose, or even breast bitten. “As I was sitting in my tent with my group one night, I felt someone push me. I thought it was one of the girls. Then I realized it was a rat that was underneath the tent.”¹⁰³

By September 1949, there were up to 5,000 women exiled on Trikeri. Life on Trikeri continued to be restricted. The women continued to do forced chores, and water and food was still an issue. Water continued to be a problem throughout exile. On Trikeri, there were five wells, which were created by exiled men in 1947. Nevertheless, the water was not clear and it wasn't feasible to pump for it since there were no pumps. There was only one pump near the village from where women retrieved water. One more pump was located outside of the men's kitchen. Later on, the old pumps were fixed and could

¹⁰² Marigoula, *Exiled Women*, 44.

¹⁰³ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 16, 2012

supply two more wells, which were located close to St. George bay. Every day at nine, one soldier lined up the exiled women in order to fill their pitchers with water while two more soldiers supervised. The aridity, which tortured the exiled women, started around Easter time of that year. The entire crowd, approximately five thousand women, had to drink, cook and wash with the water that was pumped from the wells. They began early in the morning filling their food buckets or their pitchers. Initially, the pumps functioned well, however as time progressed they were overused. Thus, the pumps produced mud.¹⁰⁴ All these troubles the women turned into song. Singing was a significant outlet for them. One such song, “An unknown island” describes the lack of water, the chores, and the tribulations they endured, which they made into song and cheer:

We have here an abundance of wild olive trees
 but little food and plenty of chores.
 We set up tents that don't endure
 and the next day we start from scratch.

For hours we search for a drop of water
 while mice sweetly caress us.
 But our hardships that are so dire
 we make into song and cheer.

At work we are all sharp and in line
 unloading bread and wood.
 At dawn we to fetch some water
 and return by nightfall with an empty bucket.
 But our hardships that are so dire

¹⁰⁴Theodorou, “Trikeri,” 123.

we make into song and cheer.¹⁰⁵

In her chronicle Pagoulatou attests: “We would rise at dawn, take our water-jars and go to line up for the water. . . Many times we were there until noon, and in the end, most of us would return with empty jars, fainting from the heat and the anxiety of waiting.”¹⁰⁶ The scarcity of water worsened as the number of women continued to increase; in the spring of 1949 more and more women arrived. The Greek State continuously sent women from the countryside to Trikeri, whose only involvement in the Resistance or civil war was their close association with a guerilla fighter: wife, sister, or mother. The women formed a uniformly multifaceted collectiveness in the exiled community. Using song and dance, the women brought color to their otherwise dark life in exile. Often they would entertain each other using their horrid experiences. For example, they choreographed a pantomime of their boat trip from Chios to Trikeri, which was as described earlier, brutal.

The Choir

Nitsa Gavriilidou was an active member of the women's chorus on the island of Trikeri. Her memories from the chorus demonstrated how vital music was to her surviving life in exile. Like Plousia and other women I have interviewed, Nitsa expressed how their sense of satire and their love of music helped them survive the years of torture and being away from their families.

¹⁰⁵ Koutifari, *Mia Alithini Istoría*, 80.

¹⁰⁶ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 114.

Under the direction of the experienced and respected musician and member of the National Opera, Ellie Nikolaidou, the women formed a chorus of up to one hundred women. Practicing under a small hill, they were cautious of the repertoire that they chose to sing; they avoided any politically-charged songs, particularly Resistance songs. Like Nitsa and Pota, Plousia was a member of the women's choir. As she attests, “We didn’t want to provoke the guards in the event that we got caught. We wanted to maintain whatever freedom we possibly could.”¹⁰⁷ Nitsa states:

We had to keep our morale as high as possible. We would learn about the executions, even of our loved ones, and we would try to keep our spirit so that we wouldn't affect the others. When Pantzaras would come, we knew he was coming to take one of us for court-martial or execution. Well, that's when we could get a song ready. We did the same in Makronisos, as much as we could. With the songs, we tried to make the atmosphere as light as possible.¹⁰⁸

Pota adds: “It was a great thing to be able to create a somewhat organized life as a detainee, especially for those that didn’t, initially, have the stomach for exile or prison.”¹⁰⁹ According to Koutifari, “even professionals would be jealous of our cultural programs.”¹¹⁰ Nitsa, Eleni, and Plousia, often, in our meetings, expressed their enthusiasm about the women farmers from the countryside and how they learned to read, to write, and even sing classical songs. It amazed them to see illiterate farmers sing for example, Franz Schubert. They learned to sing Mozart, Schuman, Schubert, Chopin, and

¹⁰⁷ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 16, 2012

¹⁰⁸ Nitsa Gavriilidou, Plousia Liakata and Pota Kakkava, group interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, June 17, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Koutifari, *Mia Alithini Istoría*, 90.

Beethoven. Plousia loves lullabies. At ninety-six years old, she often starts singing one without any warning.¹¹¹

The dancing and singing came to a halt, as the women were told on January 25, 1950, to be ready by 4 pm to leave for the island of Makronisos.¹¹² The atmosphere had begun to change by early December 1949, as the women's nerves were tested, with being forced to stand out in the cold with no blankets or coats. The women were called to the monastery to witness the "change of the guard;" they were from that point on to be under the control of the General Military Headquarters. Again, they were called to sign the DOR. The General declared:

‘Sluts, you will sign the affidavit, whether you want to or not! You will formally and publicly renounce communism. I will throw you off the cliffs like horses, to be torn to shreds by vultures and crows. . . Today, the official war against you begins. Whoever does not surrender will suffer the consequences... His Grace the Metropolitan of Magnesia is with us as God's representative in order to bless this, our godly, patriotic undertaking!’¹¹³

It was clear that the Greek Church contributed to the government's program of spiritual rehabilitation of the women. The women were ordered to run in groups of six around the monastery. ‘Faster, whores, faster, around the church,’ the General shouted.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Plousia has often sung lullabies during our informal interviews.

¹¹² Eleni Lefka, *Gynaikes stin Exoria* [Women in Exile] (Athens: Politistikes kai Logotechnikes Ekdotis, 1964), 46. <https://www.makronissos.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/12341.pdf> Accessed March 18, 2021.

¹¹³ Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 123.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

Prior to their departure from Trikeri for Makronisos a group of officers from OAM arrived at Trikeri with the officer who was responsible to prepare the women for their trip, which Nitsa describes below:

This officer started to put us in the Makronisos setting. It included a different and strict discipline. We realized that something had changed. The officer wanted to show us that Makronisos was not a place for “vacation.” When the ship arrived to pick us up, we were ordered to literally take everything with us starting from the kitchen equipment to our tents. We took whatever was there. We went back and forth so many times that at the end we were dead. We were so tired. When we finished, we got into the ship and left for Makronisos. It was a difficult trip too. The restrooms were out of order. We were given halva and bread to eat which both full of dirt.¹¹⁵

Eleni Lefka in her chronicle *Women in Exile* also has a vivid description of their journey to Makronisos:

The rain and snow hasn't stopped. . . And the chores and hunger have exhausted us. And the dark question mark of Makronisos. . . But you don't see any sign of despair in any of the eyes of the exiled women. . . We mechanically begin to gather our belongings. A new order: 'The tents will be dismantled within a half hour.' And it's raining. . . We gather whatever we can and in a short while we see the black cloth of the tent fall and cover us. . . We just barely managed to get out before the huge pole fell. We place our things on the mud. Now we 'must' fold the large tent, to transport it to the boat, which has docked. . . quite a few kilometers from the camp. The tent, which is wet, weighs double. . . And after we carry all the camp's material we must quickly carry all of our belongings.¹¹⁶

It took the women up to six trips back and forth from the camp in order to get all their belongings and camps materials on the boat. They were very thirsty but weren't allowed to drink any water. At around midnight they left Trikeri for their third stop on the journey of exile-Makronisos. When they reached Lavrio they heard shouting:

¹¹⁵ Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 9, 2012.

¹¹⁶ Lefka, *Women in Exile*, 46-47.

‘This is Makronisos.’ We stood up to see the island. From a distance you could see the white painted stones which formed the words Long Live King Pavlos. One could also see his crown formed by the stones. . . When we arrived at Makronisos we had to be transferred in a smaller boat because the big one could not reach the port. I remember that we walked on a ladder made by ropes and you could see the waves below you. It was very windy. We were afraid that one of us would fall into the sea. We had also the women, who were sick with tuberculosis and couldn’t do it. They brought huge leather sheets and forced them to slide in order to go on the other side. We transferred everything from the ship to the boat through this ladder. Then the small boat docked at the port and we got out of it. As I told you the ship was full of equipment and the camp’s material, which we had to unload on Makronisos. At the end of the unloading, soldiers were asked to help us. Anagnostopoulos, the officer who brought us to Makronisos, told the soldiers that all this equipment was loaded on the ship by these women eating only one anchovy and a few olives. So, the soldiers started helping us.¹¹⁷

Makronisos

“We arrived on Makronisos on January 27, 1950. We were told, ‘Women return to the warmth of your homes. The chains of communism don’t benefit you.’ Meanwhile, they were the ones that had the chains on us.”¹¹⁸ Makronisos was a different situation altogether. There were forty women in each tent. There was no end to the proselytizing on the loudspeakers by the guards on Makronisos. “Those loudspeakers, those loudspeakers never stopped,” Nitsa and Plousia both expressed while holding their ears as if they were reliving the moment. Nitsa discusses the journey to Makronisos from Trikeri:

Out of the five thousand women that were sent to the island of Trikeri, about one thousand and two hundred women got into the loader. Among them were the one hundred guerrilla women who had signed in Larisa, but they were not given their

¹¹⁷Gavriilidou, Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 3, 2014.

¹¹⁸ Petropoulou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

discharge papers. They preferred to give it to them at Makronisos, so that the number of women that would be discharged from there would seem higher... We stayed in Lavrio¹¹⁹ on the loader for twenty four hours, amongst the vomit and the excrement, which over flowed from the toilets, struggling with the transport of the material from the loader, up until dawn, at which point a boat with soldiers came near us and helped us.¹²⁰

As the women placed their feet on the rocky soil of Makronisos, the Alfamites¹²¹ ordered them to get into lines of six to take them to the camp, which was called AETO-ESAG (First Special Battalion of Soldiers-Special School for Rehabilitation of Women). Their eyes had become strained from seeing all those soldiers dressed in khaki and their ears “felt like they were going to pop from the loudspeakers: Greek women, return to you homes. Ask you country for forgiveness.”¹²² “Women, return to the embrace of your families. The chains of communism do not suit you.”¹²³ This is what they constantly heard. Throughout the day the loudspeakers played traditional Greek music with continuous breaks for the loudspeakers to holler: “Your soul infected until now, needs a national baptism again.”¹²⁴

As soon as they arrived they saw “LONG LIVE THE KING” in large white letters.¹²⁵ Gavriilidou describes the first moments on the island:

¹¹⁹ Lavrio is a town right across from the island of Makronisos

¹²⁰ Gavriilidou, *Tonight They Beat the Women*, 32.

¹²¹ They were a special police unit force responsible for the security in Makronisos. This unit tortured and beat the exiles.

¹²² Gavriilidou, *Tonight They Beat the Women*, 36.

¹²³ Argyro Koutifari-Frantzeskou, *Mia Alithini Istoría* (A True Story) (Athens: 1973), 117.

¹²⁴ Gavriilidou, *Tonight They Beat the Women*, 32.

¹²⁵ Liakata and Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 8, 2015

Vassilopoulos came. And the soldiers began to chant: Vassilopoulos! And the women started saying ‘that’s my husband’ ‘that’s my son.’ Do you understand what happened to them? They realized their family members had signed the DOR.¹²⁶

Upon seeing their loved ones, particularly their husbands, sign the DOR, many of the women signed. It is estimated that more than one hundred signed. The women nevertheless gave courage to one another and in some instances “prevented” the other from signing. For example, Plousia recalls a woman almost “breaking” and signing. As she sat in the open air theater where the women were gathered, in an almost trancelike manner she kept on getting up saying “I’m going to go sign” under her breath, and then sitting right back down. One of the girls from her group grabbed her by her sweater and kept her down. The woman never signed the DOR.¹²⁷

Daily Life

“Those loudspeakers! They wouldn’t stop. It was unbelievable,” Plousia has expressed. One of the songs that were heard through the loudspeakers was the following:

Your soul infected until now
Needs a national baptism again, yes, national
Fear our race will have no more
From dishonest communism

This and other songs and slogans against communism were transmitted throughout the day. Vassilopoulos, who was a military commander screeched: “You will not stand tall -

¹²⁶ Savvastianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 22, 2017

¹²⁷ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 23, 2019.

you will die here.”¹²⁸ The women “were determined to prove to them that [they could] endure, [they] all had that in mind.”¹²⁹ In contrast to Trikeri, whatever recreational activities the women engaged in were done in secrecy. “Whatever we did on Makronisos, we did in our tents. And usually on the ground. Forty women to each tent. You had nowhere to put your feet.”¹³⁰ Others, such as Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva have written that there were twenty girls to each tent, although she mentions they were the “big” tents: “Twenty girls lived in big tents together. It was military life. . .cleaned toilets, or went for “lessons” in an open-air theater. At night, of course, they made sudden raids in tents. It seemed as if the guards were “given narcotics and they would pounce on us at night. They were like beasts.”¹³¹

The women woke up at 6:30 AM, had their tea around 7:15, morning call at 7:30, rehabilitation lessons between 10 and 11 AM, lunch around noon, and lessons again at 2:30 PM. They ate their dinner at 5:30 PM and by 8:30 they had to be in their tents.¹³² The only water the women had to wash themselves on Makronisos was the sea. Some women boiled the sea water, as an alternative. Life became even tougher. Their activities were greatly reduced. They were constantly on guard, and in fear of a possible beating. The alfamites were constantly suspicious of the women. Singing was off limits. During one of their chores, or removing the weeds from around their tents, the women began to sing a Greek song to a French melody. As they picked at the weeds, they sung “Cou-

¹²⁸ Liakata and Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 8, 2015.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012

¹³¹ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

¹³² Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 1, 2013.

Cou,” and were accused of conspiring against the camp. “Cou-Cou” to the alfamites was a “code.”¹³³

According to Ellie things weren't the same for all the women. Some had it a little rougher than others; depending on their families' economic situation. A tone of resentment in addition to guilt can be detected in her testimony:

Some women were better off than others. Some were lucky enough to have their family send them even beauty creams for their face. I would just keep the little oil they gave us for our dinner and put it on my face. . . My family, and many others used to send whatever they could, sacrificing things for themselves. For example, when I returned to Athens from my last stop of exile on the island of St. Efstratios, I was wearing closed shoes, while my younger sister was wearing sandals in the winter.¹³⁴

Ellie felt guilt and remorse for her sister's hardships. Since she was in exile she couldn't take care of her sister. Although in reality it wasn't her fault, she carried this guilt throughout her life.

Regardless of one's background, however, Makronisos was the most difficult part of exile for all. With her description Ellie summarizes the essence of Makronisos:

Look, on Makronisos psychological and physical violence were combined, they were both systematically organized. For instance, the psychological torture was never ending with the loudspeakers all the time, the various bullying and harassing, making us move around all the time, uprooting us from one place to another, having to take our tents apart and put them back together. . . For example, one night they barge in our tents and start cursing us ‘God damn you, get up!’ and we get up and then they come back in and again ‘God damn you, get down!’ Another time they made us bring our belongings from one tent to another and back again. Just because. There was no reason. We got through the three days of beatings, which was tough, of course, but the day to day psychological torture that we endured was even more difficult, I would say. I mean, we didn't have

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

water, for example, it was scarce, and we would finally get a chance to fetch some and on our way back they would break our jugs and we returned to our tents without water. Five to six days after the beatings they allowed us to have visitors. They had threatened many parents, siblings, spouses, to tell us to sign the DOR. . . On Makronisos, you thought that you would die any day. . . You couldn't even eat on Makronisos. The winds were so strong, and the pebbly thin soil would go all over the place. In your food, in your eyes . . .¹³⁵

Makronisos was closed in the summer of 1950, after public pressure and due to the election of a more liberal government under Nikolaos Plastiras. Those women who hadn't signed the DOR, who hadn't "repented" were taken again to Trikeri; the number of women is estimated to be around six hundred. The women left Makronisos on August 4, 1950 again for Trikeri.

Last Stop

The return to the island of Trikeri was once again a breath of fresh air for the women. Coming from the harshness of Makronisos, Trikeri was a haven even more so the second time around. The women set their tents near and around the monastery. They were able to better organize themselves and felt less restricted. With the aid of the International Red Cross (IRC) which visited them, they were able to enhance their activities. During the visit, one of the delegates, Mr. Colladon asked the women what they needed or wanted the IRC to send them. Eleni Savvatianou asked for a basket ball, Argyro Koutifari, the gymnastics teacher, asked for a volleyball and net. Plousia Liakata asked for clothing that she could use for traditional folk dance performances. And to their surprise, Mr. Colladon sent them everything they asked for. The women set up a

¹³⁵ Ibid.

volleyball court, and Plousia and other women used the clothing sent to perform the traditional dance from Corfu.¹³⁶

Their time in exile was nearing its end. In order to be released, each woman had to present herself before a committee, which determined whether the detainee was to return home or continue on to St. Efstratios. By the spring of 1953 it is estimated that a little less than twenty women were left, which were sent to island of St. Efstratios. Most of the women were released by 1954. All the women in this study, except for Ellie Nikolaou, were released from Trikeri and were able to return home. Ellie was released from the island of St. Efstratios, in 1956.

Conclusion

Amidst the five years in exile, the women formed a culture of exile, of freedom within suppression, of solidarity, and collectiveness while also demonstrating the importance of the intellectual personalities and what they contributed. “Amongst the horror that we endured in prisons and exile, there was also compassion,” says Pota. “There were women who truly created programs that gave our lives meaning; that we were alive and that one day we would be free again. And it was these women that did great things, and we learned from them; they gave us hope. Many of us left exile, knowing new dances, languages, even math.”¹³⁷ Art was a lifeline for the women. As

¹³⁶ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, June 15, 2014.

¹³⁷ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, June 14, 2014.

Plousia declares, “art was an oasis for us within the hell they wanted us to endure. Through art we survived.”¹³⁸

The time spent in exile, however, had forever changed all of them. “Home” was very different for each of them. They could not, and did not, return to the restricted and conventional life that society expected of them. As Pota declared, “When one survives such an ordeal, when one is tested to such a degree, and doesn’t waver, there is nothing and no one that can restrict them. We broke the mold.”

¹³⁸Liakata, interview.

CHAPTER 5

TORTURE IN EXILE

“God damn you bitches! Your time has come! Wake-up! Today we’re going to take your blood!” remembers Plousia Liakata. It was a cold winter day, on January 30, 1950, when the guards were shouting at her, and over one thousand women on the barren island of Makronisos.¹

An island merely three nautical miles from the port of Lavrio and close to the capital city of Athens, Makronisos served as a concentration camp that was opened in 1947 to hold “enemies” of the Greek state. Like thousands of other women, Liakata was arrested on the charges of “betraying” her country. At the age of sixteen, she, like many other women, fought in the *Ellinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos*, ELAS (Greek People’s Liberation Army), a guerrilla army under the leadership of the *Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*, EAM (National Liberation Front), and the largest Resistance group in Greece during World War II. EAM and its military wing, ELAS, had as its leading force the *Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, KKE (Communist Party of Greece), which in an anticommunist climate incriminated members of the Resistance as potential threats to the security of the Greek state.

During the war, EAM had close to two million members, alarming the Greek government. Fearing a communist “takeover” and aspiring to quell any such possibilities, it waged a rampant witch hunt and subsequent torture of EAM and ELAS members in the

¹Plousia Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 10, 2012.

post-World War II period with the aid and support of paramilitary groups. This chapter examines how the Greek state and its supporters systematically tortured prisoners in its attempt to break the legacy of the popular Resistance movement led by the Left in order for the state to re-establish and secure its power. To assert control the Greek government engaged in systematic torture on prisoners and exiles during the Greek Civil War.

The political violence against female detainees during the Greek Civil War took on a gendered form in the torture practices such as psychological terror, sexual abuse, including rape and fear of rape, but also in re-casting traditional female roles. The subject of this chapter is placed within a wider debate on political torture by using interviews, oral histories, archival materials and memoirs. Focusing on female detainees and their trajectory through the concentration camps on the islands of Chios, Trikeri, and Makronisos, it concentrates significantly on the physical and psychological torture they endured.

Since the discussion of sexual abuse is still a taboo for individuals who witnessed the horror of the Greek Civil War, the sources on the matter are scant. Yet, it is common knowledge. While minimal literature exists on the sexual abuse of female detainees, I have deduced, there existed a “code of silence” that the women seem to have kept throughout the years. During a group interview on the island of Trikeri, one woman appeared to have had something to say pertaining to rape; however, another woman “silenced” her with one look. Official and complete testimonies are scarce. Anthropologist Riki Van Boeschoten’s article on war rape still remains the only

published work which links sexual torture with the Greek Civil War.² Anthropologist Katerina Stefatos has furthered the research on rape through archival sources, yet she too has argued that she had little luck with oral testimonies.³

In terms of personal testimonies, Regina Pagoulatou's description of the attempted rape on the island of Trikeri appears to be the only personal account that exists. Evidence suggests that the Democratic Army provided a safe haven for many women who feared they would be sexually abused, attesting to the rampant sexual assaults during the period after Liberation (October 1944) and the culmination of the civil war. Specifically, in many oral testimonies former political exiles attest that the psychological violence and sexual terrorization was worse than actual beating. As argued by Stefatos, "through 'technologies of power,' including sexual abuse and humiliation, moral degradation, nakedness, solitary confinement, fear and despair, the unrepentant female political body is politically disciplined, transforming recalcitrant dissidents into docile and submissive detainees."⁴ Perceived as the "other," the torture of female subversives "served to guard nationalist ideas and mandatory hierarchical relations."⁵ Moreover, torture during the Greek Civil War was systematically employed to oblige the detainees to sign the infamous Declaration of Repentance (DOR). This chapter analyzes the way in which the torturers attempted to destroy the prisoner's world through physical and psychological torture.

²Riki Van Boeschoten, "The Trauma of War Rape: A Comparative View on the Bosnian Conflict and the Greek Civil War," *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 14 (2003).

³Katerina Stefatos, "The Victimization of the Body and the Body Politic during the Greek Civil War, R. Brancheeds, *Rape in Wartime* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 48.

⁴*Ibid.*, 24.

⁵*Ibid.*, 25.

“Subversive” Citizens

In the first half of the twentieth century European political opponents of the established social order were persecuted, imprisoned, and executed. Concentration camps were established for the “rehabilitation” and “punishment” of political opponents in various countries. The large number of arrests in Germany led to the establishment of concentration camps, starting with Dachau in March 1933. Nazi officials perceived forced labor to be a “form of retribution for the damage criminals had done to the national community.”⁶ In Benito Mussolini’s Italy, dissidents were regularly beat, kicked, slapped, clubbed, and killed by Fascists and the police.⁷ And as in Greece, the police operated between its “claimed” right to torture the enemies of the regime.⁸ In Francisco Franco’s Spain, upon the defeat of the Republicans in 1939, political prisoners were forced to work in public works. Since political prisoners had “damaged” the country, forced labor would help them redeem themselves and Spain would show them her mercy.⁹

During the period of the Greek Civil War, the re-construction of the nation sought to reverse the political, social and cultural changes that had taken place during the period of the Resistance. Political prosecution of the Left was integral to the formation of the post-war Greek state following years of occupation, and most importantly integral to the

⁶Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners during the Greek Civil War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 24.

⁷Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

⁸ Ebner, *Ordinary Violence*, 4.

⁹ Helen Graham, *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 131.

formation of the fervent anti-communist Greek state. And unlike the other cases of persecution in fascist Italy and Spain, and Nazi Germany, in Greece the sole group to be banished was the suspected communists. Many were persecuted for their ideas and intentions rather than their acts.¹⁰ As questioned by anthropologist Neni Panourgia, however, “what are the parameters within which a state categorizes a portion of its citizens ‘as dangerous and suspicious’?”¹¹

A special police unit was established in 1925, the precursor to the *Kentriki Ypiresia Pliroforion Ellados*, KYP, (Greek Intelligence Service), the Special Security Service’s aims included controlling the spread of communism. Successions of laws were implemented against the subversive behavior of citizens. The *Idionymon* Law of 1929 stated that whoever aimed ‘at the implementation of ideas whose manifest purpose is the overthrow of the established social order by violent means or the detachment of part from the whole of the country, or proselytizes in favor of these ideas’ could be exiled for one month to two years or imprisoned for six months. Emergency Law 117 was proclaimed on September 18, 1936 ‘on measures for the fight against communism and the consequences resulting thereof.’¹² Emergency Law 1075 complemented Emergency Law 117 introducing three significant measures: 1) the Declaration of Repentance (DOR) where one’s sentence would be reduced if signed 2) the establishment of concentration camps where banished subversives would lead disciplined lives and forced to labor 3) the loyalty certificate which concerned ones political and social convictions and which would

¹⁰Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 24.

¹¹Neni Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens: The Greek Left and the Terror of the State* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 10.

¹²Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 33-39.

be needed when seeking any government employment.¹³ The authorities became obsessed with the DORs. As former exile, Nitsa Gavriilidou, recalls, “the authorities constantly had one solution for everything: ‘Sign the declaration, so that you can return home. And you should do it here, before you see the worst of it.’ And we hadn’t seen the worst of it yet.”¹⁴ Those, however, that repented were expelled from the KKE. This only increased the authorities’ desire to obtain as many DOR’s as possible, while it heightened detainees’ resistance and ability to withstand the torture.

In the twentieth century torture was used by authorities to deconstruct prisoners’ “subjectivity and dissolve their collectivity.”¹⁵ Leftists and their families throughout the world were persecuted in countries where the fear of a communist take-over was present. As in General Suharto’s Indonesia after the 1965 coup, those associated with the Left in Greece were marginalized and stigmatized in the name of social inoculation. Although larger in scale, the persecution of communists in Indonesia resembles that of Greece in that violence against women was gendered. Furthermore, people thought to be communists were arrested, detained, tortured, and killed in the efforts of the regime to destroy the threat of communism, within a cold war backdrop. Similar to the Greek case, in Indonesia the majority of those that were tortured were either members of the Indonesian Communist Party, or associated with it or its members; as in Greece, the torture was meant to intimidate, terrorize and demoralize the detainees.¹⁶ This aim is

¹³Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 40.

¹⁴Nitsa Gavriilidou, *Apopse Chtipoun Tis Gynaikes* [Tonight they Beat the Women](Athens: Nitsa Gavriilidou, 2004), 30

¹⁵Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 130.

¹⁶Annie Pohlman, *Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965-66* (Routledge, 2015).

found in the cases of both the Argentinean and Chilean dictatorships of the 1970s- which used torture to break the psyche of the unrepentant dissident.

Demonization of the KKE

The conditions of wartime Greece radicalized a great part of the population under the leadership of EAM and the KKE. Greek citizens put their hopes in EAM as it “invested money and effort into alleviating the considerable hardships which ordinary Greeks had suffered since the German occupation.”¹⁷ Women were given freedoms they never had before such as actively engaging in the political realm through participation in political organizations “without violating the pre-existing gender hierarchies.”¹⁸ Prior to the Resistance movement (1941-1944) women held the roles of mother, wife and daughter; they were relegated to their kitchens and to the upkeep of the house and rearing of children. The Resistance gave women of all ages the opportunity to engage in active political participation, taking on roles of group leader, soldier, and in some cases rise to the rank of “captain.”

The main concern of the ruling elite and the Greek government after liberation was to regain the authority it had lost during the Italian, Bulgarian, and German Occupation during World War II. To do this it had to “destroy” the legacy of the Resistance, which had the support of the majority of the Greek people. In the areas that it had liberated amidst the troubles of war, the Resistance created a society where the

¹⁷Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 538.

¹⁸Stefatos, *The Victimization of the Body*, 51.

repressed such women and the working class had seen a future of emancipation. Mass support of EAM had to be eradicated. To do so, state propaganda equated communism to a contagious foreign disease which came from the East. The Greek government, along with the economic support of its allies, the British government and subsequent American government, moved forward in punishing participants of the Resistance, namely, members and sympathizers of EAM. Those that adhered to, or were perceived to adhere to communist ideology, were seen as “other,” as foreign, as non-Greek, and as an enemy of the Greek state. Viewing the communist as “other” justified any torture that was bestowed on him or her; they were targeting traitors or potential traitors, not their fellow countrymen.¹⁹

The government treated members of the KKE as foreign agents who conspired for the destruction of the Greek nation. In some cases, individuals connected to members of the KKE were also condemned by the state by mere association. Women were imprisoned or exiled for a myriad of reasons: as aiding and abetting communists, conspiring with them, of being members themselves, for kinship ties to the partisans, which was connected to the 1871 Law Concerning Brigands, with provision for the prosecution of the relatives of brigands and anyone who helped, supported, and abetted them. State propaganda labeled the KKE as a treacherous party, which misled unsuspecting citizens during the Resistance by using deceitful means—an argument that recurs in the DORs. One such declaration was written by a woman who declared that she was “carried away” in the Dekemvriana by EAM without knowing what their “real” intentions were. She alleged that the actions of EAM were catastrophic and treacherous to

¹⁹Ibid., 21.

her country.²⁰ She then vowed that she renounced EAM as being an enemy of her country and that she wished the fast extermination of the gangsters, meaning the Leftist.²¹

The KKE was presented as a party that planned on “destroying” the Greek nation, in cooperation with other Balkan communist countries. The subversive, within the nationalistic narrative and agenda, was demonized in official state propaganda. Female subversives were particularly treated as outcasts, called derogatory names and verbally abused. Called whores, traitors to the nation who were too incompetent to be mothers of Greek citizens and threats to the State, they were also accused of threatening social norms with their political activity. Within this framework of analysis, motherhood was considered essential to traditional Greek values, which entailed a great deal of religious piety. The traditional and religious values of Greek society constituted one of the three elements of the nationalist rhetoric of the importance of homeland, religion, and family. Because of its loyalty to the Soviet Union, the Greek Communist Party “was presented by governments and ecclesiastical authorities as a threat to Christian values.”²² During the civil war the Church developed into one of the main carriers of the second master ideology of the Greek state, that of anticommunism.²³ The Church proselytized, as demonstrated in chapter four, that a woman’s role was to be a good Christian, wife and mother.

²⁰“Dekemvriana” refers to the events of December 1944, just after Greece's liberation, where thousands protested in the streets of Athens and were attacked by the police.

²¹Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 74.

²² David Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1995), 98-99.

²³Evangelos Karagiannis, “Secularism in Context: The relation between the Greek state and the church of Greece in crisis,” *European Journal of Sociology*,(2008) 143.

Many of the female subversives were targeted because they had given their active role in the Resistance higher priority than their natural “calling” to become mothers. As in fascist Italy, where female anti-fascists were forced to tolerate slurs and accusations of “improper” behavior during their interrogations by police, the Greek antifascist women were degraded and attacked as having joined the Resistance to fulfill the sexual needs of the male guerrillas and resistance members, revealing, as in the Italian case “their particular contempt for women militants, for their anti-fascism and their activities as emancipated women.”²⁴ Moreover, children were often used as a mechanism of power and control “during interrogation to extract information and declarations of repentance from otherwise unrepentant political inmates.”²⁵ Alongside their mothers, children were truly tested; they endured the hardships of prison and exile. “They were the small but great heroes of exile.”²⁶

Islands of Rehabilitation: Islands of Torture

The road to exile began for the female detainees in late 1947 and beginning of 1948. The Greek government, determined to eliminate any communist threat, began a series of raids to chase and persecute suspected Leftists. Arresting people at all hours of the day, during their daily activities, was torturous. People were arrested at home, work, and school. Worse, the police arrested former members in the middle of the night, while they were asleep, a common tactic which was used in Argentina and Chile during the

²⁴Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, 58.

²⁵Stefatos, *The Victimization of the Body*, 23.

²⁶Gavrilidou, *Apopse Chtipoun tis Gynaikes*, 29.

arrests conducted during the military dictatorships. For example, agents of the *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional*, DINA (The Chilean Secret Police), formed in 1973, the year of the coup against the socialist government of Salvador Allende, kidnapped people from their homes, at their workplace, from public places, from the street, from wherever they could.²⁷ Violent and abrupt arrest of a dissident was also used by the Mussolini regime; people were removed in the midnight hours and confined in filthy, vermin infested detention centers or prisons, and as in all cases previously discussed, were not given explanations or a trial.²⁸

Many attest that the torture began at the moment of their arrest. The fear caused by the abruptness of an arrest endures as an everlasting and terrifying event. When brought to central booking for questioning, or sent to prison and concentration camps, these individuals endured food, water and sleep deprivation, sound torture, solitary confinement and foot whipping. They were consistently and constantly harassed into signing DOR's. These tactics were used also in order for the prisoner to give names of others. The police had lists of names of members from the Resistance which they used for their arrests; check points was another tactic used in their probe for subversives.

The exiled women grew disconnected from their normal lives because they never received a date of liberation. Internal exile was equivalent to imprisonment; it was imprisonment in another form. The prison was outdoors, and their "cells" were tents. It was a torturous situation to endure-physically, mentally, and emotionally. The camps on the islands of Chios, Trikeri and Makronisos, were gradually opened after 1947 due to the

²⁷ Macarena Gomez-Barris, *Where Memory Dwells: Culture and State Violence in Chile* (California University Press, 2009), 45.

²⁸ Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, 4.

lack of space in the prisons. Food and especially water was scarce. Unlike prison, the detainees in the camps were not allowed visitors. The exiled had no connection to the outside world other than letters from their families that were censored and inspected by the guards. Exile in and of itself is a violent act as it is a violent separation of a citizen from the body of the nation. Through torture and horrendous living conditions the Greek state anticipated that the women would succumb to signing the DOR, denouncing their socialist beliefs and hence break the solidarity and “power” of the KKE. These women, as well as the men, were used as pawns by the government to show their fellow Greeks that a life of torture was at stake and in store for them if they dared harbor socialist convictions. No group or social class was immune to this persecution. Every woman that was thought to be a subversive, and hence an enemy of the state, was arrested and sent into exile, with no trial. Women such as Roza Imvrioti and Liza Kottou organized the women from the very beginning, something the guards were not fond of. Imvrioti in particular was severely tortured because of her continuous stress on education and ability to influence the young women.

All women were given chores, forced to clean the barracks, and distribute the food. The most torturous of all was the lack of water, which was a treacherous part of their reality throughout their whole journey in exile. The lack of water seems to be a common tactic used against detainees, as it was a phenomenon for Spanish and Italian detainees as well. For example, for lack of water defined the Italian islands of confinement. Furthermore, as in the Greek case, the Italian islands were also defined by hunger and disease. Disease amongst the *confinatos* in Italy, the Spanish Republican women in Spain, and the antifascist women in Greek camps, was widespread.

Tuberculosis was rampant throughout the barracks on the island of Chios and there was a lack of medical attention. Many of the women, who were in dire need of medical attention, relied on some of their co-exiles who were doctors, nurses, or dentists.

In Chios, in the beginning, the conditions were somewhat elastic, somewhat “lighter,” as Pota Kakkava expresses. Soon, anticommunist propaganda began, in addition to systematic brainwashing of women with Greek nationalistic ideology. To these “enlightening” lectures, Pota maintains, the women collectively responded with an “mmmmm” that would enrage the commanders. In some cases the women would achieve their goal in disrupting the lecturer.²⁹

From Chios, the exiled women were taken to Trikeri. By September of the same year there were up to five thousand women exiled on Trikeri. Living in tents out in the open air, they were vulnerable to rain, snow, and wind. Rats were ubiquitous and a profound concern for the women as they would awaken in the morning realizing that they had a part of their ear, nose or even nipple chewed off. Sanitary conditions were just as horrific as in Chios. With no lavatories, women were obligated to relieve themselves in the sea, in addition to cleansing themselves, and washing their clothing and eating utensils. Little did they know that their lives were only to worsen in the bitter cold month of January 1950, when they were to be transported to Makronisos. From the five thousand women that were sent to the island of Trikeri, about one thousand and two hundred women got into the landing ship. The authorities had also taken one hundred guerrilla women who had already signed the DOR to accompany the women to

²⁹Pota Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, island of Makronisos, Greece, September 5, 2014.

Makronisos. They preferred to give them their discharge papers there so that the number of the women that would be discharged from Makronisos would seem higher.³⁰

Makronisos was opened on May 28, 1947, specifically for soldiers that were convicted of being Leftists or members of EAM. In spring 1949, however, more and more individuals who were arrested on pre-emptive grounds were sent to Makronisos. Between 1947 and 1949 about 50,000 people were interned in prisons and sent into exile with their final destination, the place which authorities were sure they would attain the most DOR's, Makronisos.³¹ Of all German concentration camps, Greeks were aware of Dachau the most. They had heard that like Dachau, at Makronisos one was sent to die.³²

The Greek government intended Makronisos for the “rehabilitation” of those that committed “treachery” against Greece. This so-called rehabilitation was composed of solitary confinement, re-education propaganda, hard labor, horrible living conditions, tortures and mass killings.³³ The methods employed on Makronisos were legalized on October 14, 1949, more than one month after the end of the civil war by Resolution 73, a Special Constitutional Resolution.

Life on Makronisos was worse than Trikeri. On Makronisos there was even less space as forty women had to live in each tent. The harsh winds on the island only made winter less bearable while they had no protection from the scorching sun as the island is barren. Makronisos had a Special School of Rehabilitation for Women, where they were

³⁰Gavriilidou, *Apopse Chtipoun Tis Gynaikes*, 29.

³¹Polymeris Voglis, “Political Prisoners in the Greek Civil War, 1945-50: Greece in Comparative Perspective” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37 (2002): 529.

³²Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, September 16, 2012.

³³Voglis, “Political Prisoners in the Greek Civil War,” 529.

obligated to listen to lectures on national pride in order to be rehabilitated from communism. There was no end to the proselytizing on the loudspeakers by the guards on Makronisos. “Those loudspeakers, those loudspeakers never stopped,” Nitsa and Plousia both expressed while holding their ears, as if they were reliving the moment. Pota Kakkava relives the journey to Makronisos from Trikeri:

We embarked on January 24th 1950. There was a storm-a lot of waves, my god a lot of waves. The women on the loader were falling left and right. Many threw up and most of us must have looked yellow or as white as snow, very sickly. At one point there was so much rocking that a bunch of women fell on a woman, I forgot her name, but she couldn't breathe since it took the women so long to get up! We finally arrived to Makronisos on January 27th. It was another world. There were the megaphones, the loudspeakers, the tortured men. A small piece of hell. A piece of hell.³⁴

On their first day on Makronisos, Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva remembers a guard telling them that they would probably be released and become torturers themselves. In three days, he said “you are going to leave, girls. You yourselves will become torturers and will be beating the others.”³⁵ Guards questioned their endurance and their ability to be mothers. If they wanted to continue being mothers, commander Vassilopoulos shouted “repent for the treason you have committed until now to our country and sign the repentance declaration. Or else the children don't belong to you. Mother Greece will take them, as they are Greek children, before you contaminate them with communism.”³⁶ For the Greek authorities the children of communists were Greeks as long as they weren't reared by parents who identified with communism.

³⁴ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, June 15, 2014.

³⁵ Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exiled Women: Chios, Trikeri, Makronisos* (Athens: Synchroni Epochi Publications, 1986), 80.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

According to official propaganda produced by the Greek state and newspapers that supported it, “the aim of the camps on Makronisos [was] to bring misguided Greeks back on the right path.”³⁷ The pamphlet stated:

Life on Makronisos is like that of an army base. The prisoners wake up in the morning, say their prayers, and sing the national anthem. Later they do chores, have a schedule of workouts that include their ‘ethical pedagogy.’ Their free time is limited. Those that sign declaration of repentance attend talks by scientists, actors, and other personalities that aim to politically alter the political shift of prisoners. Those that don’t sign remain in small cages with barbed wire.³⁸

According to a bi-weekly publication of Special Order of Officers, “Makronisos,” the camp on the island of Makronisos played a dual role. In addition to limiting potential man power for the *Demokratikos Stratos Elladas*, DSE (Greek Democratic Army), it performed a central role in state propaganda. The Greek King and Queen visited the island, as did ministers, senior military officers, clergy, professors, and intellectuals, foreign and Greek journalists, ambassadors, who expressed their enthusiasm for the “work” that was being done for the nation. Thus Makronisos was proclaimed a national model and symbol for the struggle against communism. Due to censorship, however, the true face of Makronisos and the torture that took place there, was kept from the people; domestically and internationally.

On March 24 1949, while the civil war was raging, the King of Greece Pavlos and the Queen Frederica visited the military camps on Makronisos. The couple was accompanied by Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, the Minister of the Military, the foreign press, UN’s administrators and the American General Van Fleet. The real purpose of this visit

³⁷ Archive of *Eniaia Dimokratiki Aristera*, EDA (United Democratic Left) Propaganda Pamphlet, Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI).

³⁸ Ibid.

was to demonstrate to the outside world that the Makronisos camp was literally a “school” of reformation. The work was emphasized with enthusiasm by foreign ambassadors and even professors from the Greek University. Kanellopoulos’ infamous phrase, “New Parthenon” was in reference to the one built on Makronisos, from the slave labor of the exiled men.

The ultimate goal of the Makronisos camp was the political extermination of the prisoners. The State sought to isolate the subversives from the wider leftist movement, to alter their political conviction under the burden and threat of torture and violence and for the prisoner to eventually renounce their actions in the Resistances and sign the DOR- which would be published in the local press, posted in cafes, and read out loud during Sunday mass in the local church. This process was formed to politically “cancel” the prisoner so that he or she could not continue their political activity upon their release. Detainees were obliged to sign their letter with declarations such as “Long Live Greece,” “Long Live the National Army,” “Long Live the King.” These tactics were quite efficient in breaking the Resistance movement. A significant percentage of the prisoners, about seventy percent signed, according to Voglis.³⁹

Torture Tactics

In the 1950s, studies performed by psychologist Donald Hebb and others, coined the term “white torture” for torture “based on the use of sensory deprivation

³⁹Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 45.

techniques.”⁴⁰ These techniques were used on detainees who were imprisoned or exiled during the Greek Civil War. Torture, whether it is physical or psychological is the brutal deconstruction of a prisoner’s subjectivity, the destruction of his or her world. Dissidents were tortured daily in detention centers, during interrogations, and on the island of Makronisos. In Greece, as in other cases, torture was a process in which the torturer sought to break the detainee. The authorities used different forms of torture in their attempts to achieve this. Aside from the physical pain, torture was also psychological. In fact, according to most detainees, the psychological torture is less bearable. Being beaten with their clothes on was one thing, being naked, was another. They were completely stripped of their dignity. Not knowing what one will do with you at any given moment, not knowing if you will die at any given moment, knowing that your life rests in another person’s hands, this constant fear is unbearable. As Mario Villani, an Argentinian physicist and activist kidnapped by the Federal Police in 1977, who was tortured and “disappeared” until 1981, declares in his memoir *Memories of Captivity*, ‘uncertainty itself was a torture method...Sometimes it is worse to imagine torture than to suffer it.’⁴¹

Argentina and Chile are two of the most extreme cases of inhumane torture tactics inflicted on dissidents in the twentieth century. In the case of Guerra Sucia, “the dirty war” in Argentina during the dictatorship between 1976 and 1983, those that were detained were subjected to mock executions, which was one of the worst forms of psychological torture. As in the case of Pablo Diaz, who was blindfolded, along with other detainees, and taken outside of the La Arana police station where a person, who

⁴⁰Pau Perez Sales, *Psychological Torture: Definition, Evolutions and Measurement* (London: Routledge, 2017), 11.

⁴¹Ibid., 23.

identified himself as a priest, approached him; as the firing squad was told to prepare, the supposed priest asked Pablo if he wanted to go to confession before the execution. The discharges were heard, but Pablo wasn't killed.⁴² It was clearly an attempt to instill extreme levels of stress and fear in the detainee.

Similarly, one of the few instances of torture on the island of Chios was the method of mock executions. In the summer of 1948, around 1:00 AM in the morning, the guards abruptly woke the women up and ordered them to follow them; they needn't take anything with them because where they were going they wouldn't need them, they were told, as described by Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva:

[The Commander] said to us with a sadistic expression 'Whoever hears her name is going to the execution squad.' And he begins: Vaggelia Siantou.' And passes by her and with the barrel of the gun pushed a bit. And they did that so that we could see that they were placing the guns on us. . .He took us out of the camp. . .It was dark. . .the flashlight that one of them was holding lit the way. We could hear the voices of the women calling out to us. 'Farewell, farewell.' After reaching far enough away from the camp they stopped us at a hill and began looking around for a suitable place to execute us. . .And after they stopped at a few places, supposedly in search of the most suitable, the sun came up. The villagers started coming out to go to their fields. At that point the Commander said: 'Take them to Agio Thoma.'⁴³

The Commander never had an intention to execute them. If he did, surely they would have been, as they had executed the two men the day before at 5 AM, which they brought to the camp and made known to the women that those two men were going to be executed.⁴⁴

⁴² Antonius C. G. M Robben, *Political Violence and Trauma in Argentina* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 218.

⁴³ Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exiled Women*, 25-26.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

Torture systems “create a situation in which each element is designed to create terror. That terror does not necessarily involve physical pain.”⁴⁵ Disruption of bodily functions such as sleep, consuming food and liquids, and sight, are meant to destroy the detainee. Torture entails a combination of assaults on the identity and dignity of the detainee, creating “feelings of helplessness and lack of control.”⁴⁶ As such, torture on Makronisos took place routinely at night. The darkness of night not only startles the detainee but it fosters a more profound feeling of fear and shock. His or her relaxed state, accompanied by exhaustion, enables the torturer to take greater advantage of the detainee, particularly through depriving them of sleep. Each cycle of torture ends when the detainee is “completely exhausted or unconscious.”⁴⁷ This cycle of torture lasted for days. Deprivation of sleep was conducted in hopes of irritating the detainee further by bringing him or her nearer to the brink of madness. Through lack of sleep, combined with fear, physical pain, lack of sanitary conditions, and nourishment, the torturer aspires to bring the detainee closer to signing the DOR. Other torture tactics included “panagitsa,” which was when a detainee stood for hours in front of a wall without being able to lean against it. When the detainee lost their balance the police officer would beat them; this lasted for hours on end with no food or water.⁴⁸

Routine labor was another form of soft torture. Detainees on Makronisos were forced to carry rocks up and down the hills for no reason. All day long, the detainees carried rocks back and forth, from one point to another. These rocks eventually would be

⁴⁵Sales, *Psychological Torture* 30-31.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁷Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 132.

⁴⁸Eleni Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 5, 2014.

used to build a theater resembling an ancient theater, which was built with the labor of the detainees. Like the carrying of rocks, Villani refers to soft torture, or routine labor, meant to break a detainees nerves and spirit:

In the fields, there wasn't something that could be called a 'normal day.' Every day could be the last. That's what made the system cruel: repeating a routine hundreds of times in which each 'normal' day is the same, but at the same time may be the final day, is a sophisticated system of torture. Such a system did not even need to lay a finger on the victim to cause him to despair.⁴⁹

For Nitsa the Greek authorities were “masterminds.” Everything was premeditated at Makronisos, and like Villani’s soft torture, the women were obligated to labor by removing their things from their tents at any given moment and relocate to wherever the soil was dampest, and reset their things again in their tents. This went on for days. They were forced to move from one tent to another, from the upper tent area to the lower and back again.⁵⁰

According to Villani, ‘torture was not an individual act: they sought to torture the entire society by torturing the victims. Rape, or turning an activist into a torturer, extends the suffering to their children and to the society around them.’⁵¹ Similar to the case in Argentina, Greek authorities forced leftists to become torturers. The Internal Security of Units (AM) or “Alfamites,” as the prisoners called them, were for the most part constructed of former Leftists, and they were the harshest torturers on Makronisos. They enforced torture of members of a group that they previously belonged to; this group agitated them to such a degree that they lashed out even harder on the detainees.

⁴⁹Sales, *Psychological Torture*, 24.

⁵⁰Gavrilidou, *Apopse Chtipoun Tis Gynaikes*, 38-40.

⁵¹Sales, *Psychological Torture*, 24.

Frequently they succumbed to the influence of drugs or alcohol to perform such acts. According to Pota, these men were so inhumane with the women due to their own frustration with signing the DOR. This frustration they lashed out on the women's bodies. One of the torturers was from Pota's hometown, Kalamata. She tended to wear a coat which she used as a shield to a possible beating, "and he demanded I take it off," she exclaimed. He hit her with such rage, but she didn't scream: "If I fell when he hit me, I would get right back up. I told him that there would come a time where we would run into each other in Kalamata, when I would be released. And when we do, I will take you care of you once and for all."⁵²

Roza Imvrioti was severely tortured in the Larissa Camp when she was taken there on December 15, 1949, along with a few other women. She was deprived of food, water, and isolated. Her only interaction with others was when she was beaten or during attempts by the authorities of obtaining a signed DOR from her. According to the authorities, it was vital that she signed, as she was poisoned "Greece for years with her voice." The General declared: "From today, you hyena, your mouth will be sealed shut forever. We have no mercy for you. You destroy the youth." He didn't let her respond, as he continued with his rant: "Shut up hyena. You shouldn't be talking. Your voice should not be heard."⁵³ Imvrioti was tied to a pole and hung for hours, touching the ground with the tips of her toes and beaten by a wire mesh. Her only anxiety was to resist and not sign. She was victorious, as she held on, and was sent to Makronisos in March 1950.

⁵² Kakkava, interview

⁵³ Roza Imvrioti, "Gia to Stratigio tis Larissas kai ta kratitiria tou Stratigiou Kentrikis Ellados"[The Larissa Camp], in *Stratopeda Gynaikon* [Women's Camps] ed. Victoria Theodorou (Athens: 1976), 214-215.

Signing the DOR was a constant form of torture. It was always the desired end result of the torture for the authorities. The beatings, the terror, the mental games and psychological torture, all concluded with the demand of the DOR. Ad hoc executions and burials were orchestrated, followed by a paper and pen given to the detainee to sign a DOR. The women were saved from this form of torture, but recall incidents where men were buried in the sand with a paper and pen right next to their head, which was the only body part that protruded.⁵⁴ Their purpose was to psychologically torture the detainee to such a degree that they would sign just so they could free themselves from the mock burial.⁵⁵

The severe beating of the women on January 30, 1950, demonstrates another example of how the Alfamites used different methods in attaining DORs from the newly arrived women. Nitsa Gavriilidou notes in her memoir that during the three day period where they were beaten by the guards on Makronisos, women were tormented into signing the declaration of repentance:

The loudspeakers called for all the barbers of the battalion to come forth. Then we heard that all the doctors of the battalion to come forth. Some women couldn't take it anymore, fear had taken over...they gave in and went to the main office to sign the declaration. The declaration that would denounce their beliefs. They grabbed one girl by her braids. She was so young...only seventeen years old. Exiled because her brother was a guerilla fighting in the mountains. When she was captured they forced her to sign the declaration of repentance. She refused. She would not denounce her brother. Now, again, she would not denounce her brother. Instead, she let the barbaric guards beat her until she was unconscious.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 6, 2014.

⁵⁵ Ellie Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, September 16, 2012.

⁵⁶ Gavriilidou, *Apopse Chtipoun tis Gynaikes*, 24.

Zozo Petropoulou recounts: “We heard various slogans from the loudspeakers daily on Makronisos. ‘Either you sign or you die.’ They called us whores, non-Greeks, shoved us in tents, ordered that we stand up all day, and the Alfamites came and butchered the women...the stretchers transported the women to the rehabilitation centers.”⁵⁷

In the days and months that followed, the women endured less physical torture, while psychological and “white” torture was heightened. The loudspeakers never ceased to call for their submission at times, while transmitting traditional folk songs subsequently. It was “pure madness” as Marigoula recalls.⁵⁸ Nitsa remembers their “ears felt like they were going to pop from the loudspeakers, which placed every twenty meters transmit slogans such as: ‘Greek women, your hands do not fit the chains of communism,’ ‘Greek women, return to your homes. Ask your country for forgiveness.’ Until we got to our tents, these slogans didn’t stop terribly irritating our ears. A short while later a song is heard: ‘Your soul infected until now, needs a national baptism again, yes, national fear our race will have no more from dishonest communism.’”⁵⁹

Some were able to avoid prison and exile after signing DORs.⁶⁰ Others, however, were still forced to complete their sentence. As Regina Pagoulatou states in her chronicle, one woman who had signed the affidavit was sent back to prison: “I signed the affidavit you know! They let me go. I went home and they came again and again. They want me to give them the names of acquaintances who are democrats. But I’ve reached my limit.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Zozo Petropoulou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

⁵⁸ Marigoula, *Exiled Women*, 94.

⁵⁹ Gavriilidou, *Apopse Chtipoun Tis Gynaikes*, 36.

⁶⁰ Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*, 112-13.

⁶¹ Regina Pagoulatou, *Exile: a Chronicle, 1948-1950* (New York: Pella Publishing, 1999), 24.

Signing the DOR was not enough to prove “allegiance” to the state. One was forced to give names of others who may have been in the Resistance. “Snitching” was in most cases worse for an antifascist than signing the DOR. It was undignified. It was immoral. As Carmen Rojas, a Chilean survivor of the torture at Villa Grimaldi during the Chilean dictatorship has argued: ““Not to speak! Not to speak was the objective. . . To speak was worse than to die.””⁶²

The entire system of repenting or public recantation dramatically affected the individual, his or her spouse, and children. Many families implored the detainees to “repent” and return home. In some cases mothers sacrificed their ideals in order to save their loved ones from pain.⁶³ Yet, there were others who to this day cannot forget their mothers’ attempts to persuade them to sign the affidavit, nor the guilt they feel from causing them such tremendous anguish. In some cases, such as in Victoria Theodorou’s, mothers died with the anguish of their children in exile or prison.⁶⁴

Daily life was made as unpleasant as possible. Rationing of food and water to the bare minimum was hard to handle. The prevention of nourishment of the body, of lack of drink and food intake, is part of the process of torture. It is not unique to the Greek case. Tomasa Cuevas’ seminal work, *Prison of Women*, discusses this very phenomenon through the testimonies of Spanish women incarcerated during Franco’s rule.⁶⁵ The

⁶² Gomez-Barris, *Where Memory Dwells*, 57.

⁶³Mando Dalianis and Mark Mazower, “Children in Turmoil during the Civil War: Today’s Adults” in *After the War was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960* ed. Mark Mazower (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 96.

⁶⁴ Eleni Fourtouni, *Greek Women in Resistance* (New Haven CT: Thelphini Press, 1985), 57.

⁶⁵Tomasa Cuevas, *Prison of Women: Testimonies of War and Resistance in Spain, 1939-1975*, trans. Mary E. Giles (SUNY Press, 1998).

distribution of herring with no water or any liquid to accompany the meal is typical of prison and camp life for subversives in both Spain and Greece.

The choice of foods and lack of care for the health of the detainees such as worms in lentil soup is also a common characteristic. In Greece, many former detainees have attested that they would be given a piece of bread and herring for dinner without water, which was particularly torturous in the summer months. “We were constantly thirsty” and “we could not cleanse ourselves sufficiently” are two phrases which have been expressed by all of the women I have interviewed. Many have attested to eating worms in lentil soup, of eating expired canned foods. Ellie has described how one had no choice but to eat whatever was given to them. “You won’t eat once, you won’t eat twice, but at some point you will eat. And you will eat the worms, as much as you try to put them aside. But how can you make spoiled cod fish not smell rotten?”⁶⁶ Nitsa further argues that they ate the spoiled food, although it tasted horrible and smelled horrendous because they knew that if they wanted to live they would have to eat so they “would close their nose so that they wouldn’t be able to taste it but at least sustain themselves.”⁶⁷

According to Giorgio Agamben, life in the Nazi concentration camps was “stripped of any value, any desire, any signification as life.” It was what he referred to as “bare life.” For Agamben “bare life” is a life deprived of any political meaning.⁶⁸ In Greece, the Greek state constituted the communist as “resolutely nonhuman,” stripping him or her of any political meaning. The body of the detainee was broken into pieces as

⁶⁶ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012

⁶⁷ Nitsa Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 9, 2012.

⁶⁸ Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens*, 104.

torture “is a study and a technique in the bodily geography of pain,” as argued by historian Polymeris Voglis. Each part of the detainee’s body produced an effect of its own. Pins inserted under finger and toe nails, joints of legs beaten with a stick or hammer, in what was known as *bastinado*, or breasts burned with cigarettes, genitals twisted and pubic hairs pulled from their roots. One girl was saved during a beating with a whip, while naked, after her bowels released on her torturer; the beating had activated her colon and the beating was “disrupted.” The tormented body was unrecognizable to its owner, to the detainee. A variety of methods were used, but all had a common aim—the breaking of the detainee. In some cases prisoners died during interrogation. It was not however the physical death that the torturers sought but rather the psyche, the soul, the identity that the flesh and bones embodied.

Sexual Torture

Guards constantly reminded women that if they didn’t sign DOR’s they could be sexually assaulted, beaten, harassed or have their children taken from them. Their worst nightmare was that a guard could enter their tent and sexually assault them in their sleep. One such dreadful account is found in Regina Pagoulatou’s chronicle where she recounts her own attempted rape:

The door suddenly opened. The beam of the flashlight revealed the presence of my body, like a sculpture in the dark, and a soldier fell on me with force, switching off the beam. In his face I recognized the night guard; the stench of wine filled the darkness. I was against the wall unmoving. ‘Order! Order that you not get away,’ he shouted and his hands gripped my body like pincers. My body became heavy, like wood, and I became one with the wall. ‘Don’t, don’t! For God’s sake! Don’t do it,’ I shouted and put my hands in front of my chest to keep

him off, while his hot breath, panting and heavy with wine warmed my nostrils and the smell made my insides roil. ‘Don’t do this to your sister!’ I was shouting and crying. And with one hand against his chest, I raised my other hand and gave him a vigorous slap on the face. His legs became tangled with mine. He tried to bend my legs and to throw me down. ‘I am your sister soldier, don’t you see me? Your sister.’ And my voice was pierced by the force of my own voice. I felt his hands loosen their grip, and a sob rose up in his chest...How could I be such a scoundrel? They got me drunk and ordered me to come here. Forgive me woman. Forgive the beast that was ordered to go astray. I felt like a living dead woman, frozen in my place. He got up with great effort and left.⁶⁹

There are other cases where soldiers behaved in a manner that they later regretted or had blocked out of memory. For example, one soldier beat his childhood friend, a young girl named Lemonia. When he saw her the following day, he became enraged telling her “who did this to you? Tell me and I will beat him!” He was oblivious to what he had done.⁷⁰

In contrast to beatings, rape is an invisible form of torture. It can mask its destructive power. The destruction is in the woman’s mind, soul, and body and in “the community to which she belonged.”⁷¹ It has been used as a form of torture in ethnic conflicts, in civil conflicts, predominantly by the winning forces as a method of exercising power over the defeated. During the Greek Civil War agents of the state used sexual terrorization as a means to control and humiliate, as well as punish the women detainees. Greek women, seen as the “reproducers” of the Greek race were regarded as unfit to bear Greek sons and daughters if they were “infested” with the communist disease. Hence, they were perceived as not worthy of respect and “timi” (honor) and

⁶⁹Pagoulatou, *Exile*, 133-134.

⁷⁰Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exiled Women*, 90.

⁷¹Boeschoten, “The Trauma of War Rape,” 51.

could be done whatever one pleased with. Faced with stigma in their closed societies, women who were raped or sexually assaulted were silenced.

Scholarly works on rape in Greece during civil war are scarce- almost non-existent. One of the few scholarly essays on this matter is an article by anthropologist Riki Van Boeschoten on the trauma of war rape, where she compares a case from the Greek Civil War with one during the Bosnian conflict in the 1990s. The victim, Maria, an alias name given to the interviewee, was raped by a Greek soldier in the summer of 1947. When she finally expressed what she endured to someone other than her mother, she was over seventy years old. At seventy one, Maria still carried the guilt of telling her mother and of bringing such sorrow to her:

He raped me. He took me, he pushed me in there, he raped me. He took my arms and I begged him, told him I had my period, it didn't help... When I returned home, I regret I told my mother, she died in sorrow. Why? Why? Why? Why? Why did I tell my mother? [crying] I shouldn't have told my mother, but I couldn't cope.⁷²

In the period that Maria was raped, the Geneva Convention recognized rape as a war crime, but it took decades before there were any prosecutions on war rape. Still, in the period that Maria was raped, as argued by Boeschoten, “war rape was considered to be a ‘normal’ by-product of war operations.” It wasn't until the public awareness of war rape during the civil wars in Rwanda in 1994, in the former Yugoslav wars between 1991 and 1995, and the conflicts in Kosovo and Sierra Leone in 1999 that brought attention to the phenomenon of war rape and actual justice was brought. This could have been one of the

⁷²Ibid., 41.

reasons Maria finally had the courage to speak about her case to someone other than her mother.

Boeschoten compares Maria's story to Sadeta's, a Muslim girl raped by Bosnian Serbs in the summer of 1992. Both women make the same reference to feeling like "stone" while they were being raped. Both women, attempting to preserve their dignity during such an atrocious act, mentally made themselves feel numb, like stone, in order to emotionally survive the ordeal. The difference between the two women was the choice they made after the act. Living in two different periods, Maria remained silent, while Sadeta sought justice.

As Boeschoten discovered from her research, "we will probably never know how many women were raped during the Greek Civil War. According to a Memorandum submitted to the United Nations in March 1947 by the Democratic Army there were about two hundred and eleven rape cases reported."⁷³ Right-wing paramilitaries were responsible for most of the rapes of Leftist women or EAM supporters during the Greek Civil War. On occasion, such as in Maria's case, soldiers of the Greek army were found to have been culprits. Gang rapes have also been reported. These rapes were intended to humiliate and intimidate the victims and their male close relatives and destroy the community's unity. They often took place in public settings and in the presence of relatives. Boeschoten's influential essay on this matter has given us insight on how ignoble these men were in that "on one occasion, the victim's father-in-law was forced to bring in a lamp to lighten the room during the rape."⁷⁴

⁷³Ibid., 44.

⁷⁴Ibid.

In addition to rapes, reports of other heinous crimes are reported such as being stripped naked and then beaten, or women's heads being shaven and then beaten. This torture and assault was directed for the most part toward supporters or members of the Left. As distressing as the rapes were, the woman unfortunately was at times considered "used" and not desirable for a wife.⁷⁵ Although the rape was a crime against her own body, a crime that she could not prevent, in some cases she was punished for it. In 1940s Greece, revenge by a victim's family never eradicated her dishonor. Revenge never restored her honor; something that was ever so precious for a female during this period. Rape as a word is often not even mentioned in the cases that are reported, or even in the oral histories. Words such as "atimazo" (dishonor) are the preferred choice of words to describe the act of rape.⁷⁶

The most atrocious type of torture for women was the fear of anyone dishonoring them sexually. It was female detainee's biggest fear in the camps and detention centers. Within the context of internment the methods of torture were materialized into a more organized, nearly scientific form of violence. Besides police and army officers, doctors also facilitated the torture of women.⁷⁷ Rape was feared more than death and was the ultimate humiliation for female detainees.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Savvatianou, interview in Athens, Greece, September 6, 2014.

⁷⁶ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 23, 2019.

⁷⁷ Stefatos, "The Victimisation of the Body," 55.

⁷⁸ Olympia Papadouka, *Gynaikies Filakes* [Women's Prisons] (Athens: Diogenis Publications, 2006), 181

Conclusion

During the civil war between 1946 and 1949, the Greek state conducted various forms of torture on women who were believed to have been enemies of the state. In these efforts, guards sought to break the women's morale, instill fear, and obtain information. To do this, they used various methods of torture to achieve the goals of the government. By draining the physical and mental resources that an individual may utilize to resist, the torturer hoped to break the detainee. Furthermore, the torturer sought to break the spirit of the popular Resistance Movement to which the detainee belonged, which sprung during World War II, was led by the KKE and was perceived as a threat to national security. Female detainees were physically and emotionally tortured both as leftists and as women. Their sexuality and gender were used as a means of torture whether they were raped or consistently frightened of being raped. Furthermore, their role of mother was questioned and used to break their morale.

According to the 1984 United Nations Convention against Torture, torture is defined as any act by which is:

(1)severe pain or suffering, 2) whether physical or mental, (3) is intentionally inflicted on a person, (4) for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, (5) when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.⁷⁹

Although the convention occurred almost forty years after the opening of the Makronisos camps, the definition given for torture resonates with what went on there.

⁷⁹Sales, *Psychological Torture*, 4.

Torture was conducted as a means of attaining DOR's in efforts to politically annihilate the Left. The number of those that signed remains a taboo. Many "broke" during the actual torture, while others from the fear of it. The state used the DOR to spur strife amongst those who signed and those that had not. Historian Tasoula Vervenioti has argued some repentees even today "are often still ashamed of signing and refuse to discuss it."⁸⁰ Being considered a traitor by the KKE was the worst torture for a loyal party member. Many women refused to sign-not because they were communists-"but because signing implied a betrayal of their own people."⁸¹ As one woman stated, "your submission symbolized the submission of the group you belonged to. It was matter of dignity for us. A matter of honor."⁸² To sign the DOR, meant to renounce your own self. By not signing people felt they kept their dignity and their beliefs intact and in a sense demonstrated loyalty to their beliefs. Not signing made them stronger. Yet, they feel compassion toward the women who "broke" and signed. Those that signed bore a profound weight on their soul and felt a great deal of embarrassment. Some suffered mentally throughout their lives, as in the case of Plousia's eldest brother, Yianni.⁸³ The women, however, do not "condemn" those who did sign. As Nitsa expressed: "I don't judge them. That was their intention; to humiliate you; to degrade you, to debase you."⁸⁴ For Eleni, signing the DOR was even more understandable for women who had children. She fully understands, accepts, and does not judge those women that signed:

⁸⁰Tasoula Vervenioti, *I Gynaika tis Antistasis* [Woman of the Resistance] (Athens: Odysseas Publications, 1994), 110

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 1, 2013.

⁸⁴ Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 23, 2017.

Not everyone had the same amount of strength. We all fought in the Resistance for the same ideals and beliefs. Signing the DOR doesn't make anyone less of a fighter or diminish their contribution to the Resistance. And it is a lot 'easier' to be strong when you don't have children. I understood that very well after I became a mother. I may have signed as well, if I had my children back then. I would have. We have no right to criticize anyone. We must understand them. It was very hard for those that signed. They felt shame. And they really should not have.⁸⁵

For Plousia, memory is very important. Her biggest fear is forgetting. But she also understands those that wanted to forget throughout the years. It is not easy to remember certain events: "There are people who do not want to remember, and I totally understand them. Just as I understand those that signed the DOR. Not everyone has the same strength, and don't forget, not everyone was in the same situation."⁸⁶ Indeed, exile was not the same for everyone. It was harder for those that had children or a spouse on the outside.

Through my research, I have concluded that the torturers aimed at breaking the female detainees in order to break their allegiance with the communists, while also seeking to make them take a public stance against communism through the signing of DOR's and public recantation of their political beliefs. They sought for them to sign declarations that stated that they had "fallen" from the right path and were tricked into believing in communism, and this declaration had to become public, for example, to be published in a local newspaper.

Rape is an issue in which the women are quite vague and careful with what they reveal on this matter. Many have said that it happened, it's mentioned in secondary

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Liakata, Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, September 1, 2013

literature, but none have ever publically attested to being raped themselves or someone they personally knew. Growing up in 1930s and 1940s conservative Greece, many didn't discuss the issue of rape out of fear of not getting married or being an embarrassment to their family.

Because the government of Greece was not a dictatorship, and the fight against communism was a general fight the West waged, the state sponsored persecution conducted was not considered illegal nor was anyone convicted. As opposed to Argentina and Chile where acts of torture and detention were deemed illegal in the post-dictatorship period, and where officials were given prison sentences.⁸⁷

The beatings and abuse sent some to mental institutions, such as Vagelio Skevofilaka who was beaten so hard that she didn't recall what had happened to her. She knows whatever the other women told her. She was institutionalized once more when she was released. In the last ten years of her life, she often used an oxygen mask in order to breathe properly. It is uncertain if this was due to the hardship in exile. Until her recent death, she had been hospitalized a few times due to breathing problems. Women such as Eleni Savvastianou take medication daily for her chronic pain due to the severe beatings of her legs and feet, from the torture tactic of falanga, or bastinado. Ellie Nikolaou lost part of her hearing as her right eardrum was destroyed after the torture in those three days of January, on Makronisos. Plousia Liakata has a chronic pain in the back of her neck from the beatings on Makronisos; she was hit by one of the Alfamites with a piece of iron. The pain is often debilitating. Zozo Petropoulou never forgot the beatings she endured herself

⁸⁷ Berber Bevernage, *History, Memory, and State Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice* (UK: Routledge, 2012), 27.

or witnessed. “So many years I carry it inside me, it never leaves,” she has said, “to see your friend being kicked around and stepped on.”⁸⁸ These images left lasting imprints on her mind and soul.

“How can one explain the torture we endured to the younger generations? How can one explain torture to someone who has never endured it or witnessed it?” Plousia Liakata asked me when I inquired about the horrendous torture on the island of Makronisos. “How can I possibly explain what it felt like to be whipped by a rope with blades, or bashed on the head by an iron glove? Or to have witnessed your comrade’s brains splattered on the ground from the stomp of the boot of a soldier? No one will ever really understand, as hard as I try to explain it.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Petropoulou, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, June 15, 2014.

⁸⁹ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, September 10, 2012.

CHAPTER 6

LIFE AFTER EXILE AND MEMORY

“Write, write, write. Our stories must be written or else a part of history will die with us,” Nitsa Gavriilidou exclaimed in one of our meetings at her home in Zografou, Athens. She was adamant that the history of the Greek antifascist women be known. Nitsa argued that women still do not have a strong presence in the historiography of the Resistance and exile. Moreover, an article published in 2003 prompted her to write a memoir of her own experience on Makronisos as an exile in 1950. The article claimed there were no women exiled on the island, leaving Nitsa dumbfounded:

Writing about Makronisos is somewhat difficult, especially when you are already seventy-eight years old. What made me decide to do so was an article I read in *Tachidromo* (184th issue, September 2003) in reference to Mikis Theodorakis’ concerts on Makronisos. It was an article by Zak Samuel entitled ‘Eyewitness’ and I was speechless with the caption of one of the photographs that said: ‘On Makronisos, the years that it functioned as an “ethnic detention camp,” there weren’t any women. The previous weekend, however, spouses, sisters, daughters of ex-prisoners, tried to fit ‘many years in a few hours’ on that island which was a place of exile from Roman times.’ Perhaps the astonishment that I endured reading the article was what triggered my desire to grab a pen and lay out on paper memories that still surge through my mind.¹

According to the author of the article women’s only connection to the island of Makronisos was their relationship with a male, in the capacity of wife, daughter, or sister. A woman’s presence on the island as a historical actor seems to be nonexistent to the general public or to the general historical narrative of Makronisos. Nitsa’s apprehension proved to be valid. Furthermore, while at a conference on “Woman and War” on the

¹ Nitsa Gavriilidou, *Apopse Chtipoun tis Gynaikes*[Tonight they Beat the Women](Athens: Nitsa Gavriilidou, 2004), 15.

island of Hydra in 2012, I was reading Nitsa's memoir on Makronisos, *Apopse Chtipoun tis Gynaikes* [Tonight They Beat the Women], which she had assigned to me to translate into English. When one of the attendees asked me what I was reading, he was surprised that women were exiled on Makronisos. I was reminded of Nitsa's words and her apprehension was once again proven valid.

As argued by historian Lynn Hunt, history matters, today more than ever.² Often used, and abused, for political purposes, it has also often been distorted to such a degree that the truth is blurred and questioned. After decades of historiographical works, there still isn't a national narrative in which both the Right and the Left can reach a consensus. Furthermore, the socio-political climate has traditionally dictated the historiographical manufacture of works; dictating the trend of what is published and accepted. Although Greece had such a strong Resistance movement, it is a country which celebrates the day of invasion from the Italians, rather than its liberation. It was the only postwar European country where antifascists were convicted rather than praised, and German collaborators given significant government posts. The polarization in Greece, which was caused by the Cold War, determined the fate of the partisan women for decades, until the restoration of democracy in 1974.

The "petrina chronia," (stone years) which are the years in which Greece was dominated by conservative politicians and the armed forces, officially commenced on February 9, 1950, when the government published a bulletin officiating the end of military law, which indicated the end of the civil war. In those years, as historian Mark

² Lynn Hunt, *History: Why it Matters* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2018).

Mazower states, “Greece was at peace, but it was a strained peace.”³ Official histories excluded the contributions of the *Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*, EAM (National Liberation Front), and the civil war was referred to as “simoritopolemos,” or bandit war, as the guerillas of the *Demokratikos Stratos Elladas*, DSE (Greek Democratic Army) were termed bandits. For over two decades there was systematic repression of the Left. As late as the 1960s the prisons of Greece were filled with thousands of members of the Resistance. The *Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, KKE (Communist Party of Greece) was outlawed; however, the *Eniaia Demokratiki Aristera*, EDA (United Democratic Left) was formed in 1951, thereby feeding the government’s fear of a Leftist takeover of the country, and this time through democratic elections. People who were thought to have Leftist beliefs were followed by agents of the government; they were followed everywhere they went.⁴ Moreover, during this period the term “ethnikofron” (nationalist) was synonymous with the “good” citizen, while “demokratis” (democratic) was synonymous with communism. This was reflected in the continuation of the women’s “term” in exile. The “subversive” women were called to denounce their beliefs and return to their families and follow the right path of the lord; they were to procreate for the Greek nation “good” boys and girls.

Throughout the 1950s, members of the establishment were nervously aware of the KKE’s appeal. Although in exile in Eastern Europe, the banned KKE spoke to poor workers, shopkeepers, farmers, and clerical workers, through its radio broadcasts and through the EDA, which was perceived as its front party within Greece. This panicked

³Mark Mazower, ed., “Introduction” in *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton University Press, 2000)7.

⁴ Stella Koumoula, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece September 15, 2012.

ruling groups, which reacted by “maintaining an apparatus of repression.”⁵ The Kentriki Ypiresia Pliroforion (Central Intelligence Agency) KYP was formed in 1953; a central intelligence agency along the lines of the American CIA. Under Karamanlis’ government there was a state service called the “Directorate of National Enlightenment” and one of its duties was to organize counter-demonstrations against the Left and to find ways to “disseminate false information against the Left and the Centre.”⁶

The 1960s “youth” became a battleground for the reconstruction of authority in Greek society.⁷ As with student activities of the 1960s in the United States, and much of Europe, the ideological orientation of the Greek student movement during this period was strongly toward the left of the political spectrum. The direction and nature of the student movement in Greece during this period had been a constant source of irritation and concern, for the government, which, save for the short-lived period of Georgios Papandreou’s government between 1964 and 1965, had been in the hands of the Right.⁸ Discourse about the youth became part of the political debate in regards to the future of Greek society. The youth were “seen as the unstable factor par excellence in the social and political planning of the post-Civil War period.”⁹ The ‘unruly youth’ preoccupied the Left as well as those in power. EDA focused on the youth throughout the 1950s, but more systematically during the 1960s, in its attempt to reconnect with the legacy of the

⁵ David Close, *Greece since 1945: Politics, Economy and Society* (UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), 83.

⁶ George Mylonas, *Escape from Amorgos* (Scribner, 1974), 95.

⁷ Efi Avdela “‘Corrupting and Uncontrollable Activities’: Moral Panic about Youth in Post-Civil-War Greece”, *Journal of Contemporary History* (2008), 29.

⁸ George Psacharopoulos and Andreas M. Kazamias, “Student Activism in Greece: A Historical and Empirical Analysis,” *Higher Education* (1980)129-130.

⁹ Avdela, “Corrupting and Uncontrollable Activities,” 28.

Resistance, a period in which EAM was able to mobilize a significant proportion of young people for a leftist designation of the nation.¹⁰ Student activism during this period was for the most part directed towards the inadequacies in their university education, reaching its apex with the Lambrakis affair and the ensuing formation of the Lambrakis Youth Movement.¹¹

In the elections of 1958, EDA gained 24 percent of the vote, obtaining seventy eight seats in Parliament. This, in a Cold War setting, terrified the government, the army and the royal family of Greece, enhancing anticommunist feelings and tactics. A committee was formed under Konstantinos Karamanlis' orders to preemptively prevent EDA from ever gaining power in the future. The Secretary of this committee was Georgios Papadopoulos, a careerist colonel and a staunch anticommunist. Ironically, Papadopoulos sent Karamanlis into exile less than a decade later. Furthermore, the panicked Centrist parties allied together and founded on September 19, 1961 the Union of the Center Party to rival the ascension of the Left. It sought to become the second party, if not the winner, of the subsequent elections. This initiative was supported by President John F. Kennedy.¹²

The elections of 1961 brought about a profound political crisis. In hopes of controlling the elections, the army intervened by use of force on citizens, especially in the

¹⁰ Avdela, "Corrupting and Uncontrollable Activities,"33.

¹¹ Grigoris Lambrakis was born in the village Kerasista in the Arcadia Region in central Peloponnesus. He was a Greek physician, athlete, anti-war activist, and politician. He was a member of the Resistance during World War II and elected within the United Democratic Left after the war. Lambrakis was attacked by far-right extremists, Emanuel Emanoulides and Spyro Gotzamanis at an anti-war gathering in Thessaloniki. He died on May 27, 1963, five days after the attack due to brain injuries. Lambrakis has remained in collective memory as symbol of peace and role model for the struggle against oppression.

¹²Fonda Ladis, *July Events 1965. 100 Days that Shocked Greece* (Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 1985), 78.

provinces, to vote for the *Ethniki Rizospastiki Enosi* (Conservative National Union) ERE; people were in many cases terrorized to do so. This is known as Operation Pericles.¹³ The royal family could not show any involvement, but needed to give a harsh message and warning to the Left, which it saw as a danger to its rule. According to John Varvitsiotis, a congressman with the ERE from 1961 to 1967, Karamanlis knew nothing of Operation Pericles. Nevertheless, Karamanlis won the elections for a third term. The day after the elections Georgios Papandreou was informed by the chief editor of the newspaper VIMA that there was substantial evidence that the elections were rigged. Papandreou informed the public and what is known as the “Movement 114” was born.

The Movement 114 came out of the people’s desire for the upholding of the Constitution. Article 114 was the last article of the then Greek constitution which stated that compliance of the constitution is dedicated to the patriotism of the Greek people. Suddenly, 114 became a mass movement, a slogan that was written everywhere. Students wrote it on the walls in the center of Athens and it immediately became a symbol of independence. Becoming a national democratic movement against the *Pistopiitiko Kinonikon Fronimaton* PKF (Certificate of Political Convictions)¹⁴ 114 became a movement shared by students and workers alike.¹⁵ Workers mobilized alongside students, protesting daily. Many were arrested.

¹³Ibid., 90.

¹⁴ The Declaration of Political Beliefs was a document that stated your political convictions and without it you could not obtain work or obtain a passport. This was quite troublesome for left leaning individuals.

¹⁵ Paul Makris, “The 114 Generation,” *Eleftherotypia* April 7, 1982 and Archive of D. Kousidou and S. Stavropoulou, box 3, ASKI Archives.

The Student Movement, Political Agitation and Road to Dictatorship

In addition to the 114 Movement, the “15% Dowry for Education” movement would follow. In 1962 Princess Sofia of Greece married King Juan Carlos of Spain. This would come at a great cost to the Greek state; it was expected of the Greek state to grant her a dowry at the phenomenal cost of nine million drachmas, the equivalence back then of \$300,000. To expect the Greek state, and hence the Greek people, to pay for the Princess’ wedding was seen as audacious at a time when thousands of Greeks were forced to emigrate. Meanwhile, in addition to the dowry, Queen Frederica persistently pressured the government to increase the Royal sponsorship.¹⁶ The slogan “15 % Dowry in Education” was ubiquitous. Thousands chanted “15% Dowry in Education and not for Sofia.”¹⁷ One million signatures were obtained in support of this movement.¹⁸

During this period Konstantinos Karamanlis and his conservative Right wing administration, ERE, were in power (1956-1963). His government brutally suppressed any student movements.¹⁹ Although it wasn’t “suggested that Karamanlis was directly implicated in the affair, opposition allegations of the existence of an illegal ‘para-state,’ prepared to engage in the violent suppression of any kind of left-wing dissent, acquired a new credence.”²⁰ According to George Mylonas, the Minister of Education under Papandreou’s government, “the assassination of the leftist Member of Parliament

¹⁶“With the Slogan Dowry in Education Students Surge into the Streets,” *Avgi* December 6, 1962 EDA Archive, ASKI.

¹⁷ In Greek this chant rhymes.

¹⁸ “With the Slogan Dowry”

¹⁹Kazamias, “Student Activism in Greece,”129.

²⁰ Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43.

Gregory Lambrakis, in May 1963, was the straw that broke the camel's back and the Karamanlis Government fell."²¹ After the assassination of Lambrakis, the atmosphere of political crisis came to a culminating point and Karamanlis's government was weakened. Karamanlis' government fell in June 1963 when he resigned.

Lambrakis' death affected a large portion of the Greek public. Teenagers and even young children yearned to become part of what was to become the Lambrakis Youth movement.²² The reaction toward the assassination of Lambrakis was a catalyst of the youth establishment and was initially organized as the "Democratic Youth Movement-Gregoris Lambrakis." It called for the loosening of control of political and social mobilizations by the police. It also attempted to provide an outlet to political, social and cultural claims of the younger generations, which could not find other vehicles and answers through official political, educational, and spiritual venues. Lambrakis became a national symbol of democracy.

The climate in which this movement formed corresponded to the Cold War backdrop and the first post-Greek Civil War decade.²³ The Lambrakis Youth Movement constituted-to a great extent- the Greek version of the analogous youth movement that arose in various parts of the world in the nineteen sixties. This particular movement, however, obtained a much narrower political context, since the general political agenda in Greece was more restrictive than elsewhere. In September 1964 the Democratic Youth

²¹ Mylonas, *Escape from Amorgos*, 85.

²² Dora Gotsis, interview by Helen Drivas, Queens, New York, USA, May 10, 2012. Dora was a young member of the Lambrakis Movement.

²³ Sotiris Rizas, *I Elliniki Politikimeta ton Emfilio Polemo: Koinovouleftismos kai Dictatoria* [Greek Politics after the Civil War: Parliamentarism and Dictatorship] (Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2008) 324.

Movement merged with the youth of EDA, forming the *Demokratiki Neolea Lambrakis*, DNL (Lambrakis Democratic Youth). It gained Panhellenic coverage and organizational foundation. It disposed a powerful core within the college student community but also enlisted workers and farmers in great numbers, as it had a solid presence not only within large civic areas, but also in agricultural areas, mainly in Northern Greece. Thousands of DNL clubs were formed throughout the country. Young people found an outlet where they could socialize, discuss political and social issues, play chess, have parties, listen to music, attend free educational seminars and organize their lives alongside their peers.²⁴

The organization, however, faced many problems; members could not obtain a PKF which was needed for everything—from obtaining a job, renting an apartment, to getting a passport. Many members of the DNL were unable to sustain employment. As one member argued “the police would come to where I worked and would tell my boss, ‘either you or him’ and I would lose my job.”²⁵ Another demand on their agenda was that innocent people imprisoned from the civil war should be freed. In the provinces the situation for Lambrakis members was significantly worse. The DNL clubs were attacked by right-wing groups and many members were very secretive of their involvement in the Movement.²⁶ Due to its Leftist tendency it was considered by the government as a subversive organization, and hence its members as subversives.

By 1965 the opponents of the DNL were vexed by the “raucous” that the organization had created and demanded that they be disbanded. A statement of the EDA

²⁴ Vasilis Kalamatianos, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 19, 2012. Kalamatianos was the secretary of the Lambrakis Youth Branch in Laconia, in the Southern Peloponnesus.

²⁵ Kostas V., interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 17, 2012.

²⁶ Kalamatianos, interview.

read: “Such an action would constitute a violation of the constitutional freedom of the people.”²⁷ The police nicknamed the “Lambrakides” (DNL’s members) ‘sidewalk guerillas,’ claiming that “the group’s members [were] being trained in ‘hit-and-run sidewalk guerilla war-fare’ and blamed them for the mob rule and rioting which took place during the summer’s political crisis.” Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, the leader of the ERE argued that ‘in most official departments and in the countryside organized teams of the Lambrakis youth [were] scaring and threatening the population.’²⁸

The Lambrakis Youth was viewed by the established conservative opposition, the ERE, to be an increasing communist danger for Greece. An important influence was noted among high-school students, an element which caused intense criticism from the conservatives toward the Papandreou administration. This criticism did not leave Georgios Papandreou (Prime Minister and Minister of Education) indifferent. He enforced an initiative, via one of his circulars, in March 1965 of taking administrative measures against the students who would participate in the Lambrakis Youth.

In April 1965, the United States Embassy in Athens remarked that-with the consent of the Greek Prime Minister-five students were expelled from their high school in Ioannina, northwestern Greece, due to their participation in the Lambrakis Youth. The organization continued to be attacked by the government. In the summer of 1966 one of the many premiers that followed Papandreou’s resignation, Stephanos Stephanopoulos, “presented a bill in Parliament designed to break up the Lambrakis organization.”²⁹ The

²⁷Ann Modiano, “‘Sidewalk Guerrillas’ Fan Greek Troubles,” New York Times October 2, 1965 p. A3.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Mario S. Modiano, “Greece: New Threat From Youth on Left,” New York Times August 7, 1966.

more than three and a half thousand Lambrakis clubs throughout Greece terribly worried the government, as it seemed that every home had a Lambrakis member.

There was such profound political instability that many waited for something to change, however, most were not prepared for what was in store for their country for the following seven years. The turning point for Greece many argue was what is now called the July Events of 1965. It all began with Georgios Papandreou's' fallout with the royal family and his subsequent resignation. Mass protests ensued; it is estimated that there were four hundred protests in forty days.³⁰ Over the following year and a half, the demonstrations subsided, but tension remained high, and several people were killed in clashes with the police, while hundreds were injured.³¹

Governments fell, one after another. Citizens took to the streets against each new government. The weakening of the state strengthened the para-state. In order to restore a stable parliamentary government Papandreou agreed with the King of Greece that a general election be held by the end of spring 1967. He promised to not seek any support for his government from the EDA. It was expected that Papandreou would win a large majority in the elections, which would be an embarrassment for the king as well as threatened the jobs of the military who aimed at conspiring against Papandreou. The elections however, that were to be scheduled for May 28, never took place. George Papadopoulos staged an incident, leading the political arena to believe that there were was a real communist threat of a takeover by soldiers in northern Greece. Ammunitions were planted in army trucks in the military base of Evros and Papadopoulos and his men

³⁰Ladis, *July Events 1965*, 113.

³¹ Close, *Greece since 1945*, 108.

forced a soldier to confess to the whole ordeal. The man had become delusional from being tortured for days by Papadopoulos himself without food or water.³² On April 21, 1967 Papadopoulos and his men conducted a military coup and took over the country. Once again the Left was persecuted, exiled and imprisoned.

For seven years Greece was as if it was in a standstill. The boisterous student movement was demolished. Many students were imprisoned or sent into exile, along with thousands of workers, members of EDA, and intellectuals. The press was censored. The arts were censored. Literature was censored. The work of infamous Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis was banned, along with the work of poets such as Yiannis Ritsos, and actresses such as Melina Merkouri. Artists and intellectuals who were able to avoid imprisonment or exile left the country. Political families such as the Papandreou or Mitsotakis' waded out the storm in the United States or in France, respectively. Konstantinos Karamanlis, the future premier of Greece after the restoration of democracy also lived in France during the horrific seven years of the dictatorship. The Greek people who stayed within the country underwent severe censorship, curfews, and fear, until the uprising of the Polytechnic University on November 17, 1973.

Greece's national nightmare of the Junta came to an end on July 24, 1974. A liberal democracy was instituted. Students played a vital role in the overthrow of the dictatorship, paving the way for democracy. Konstantinos Karamanlis became the first prime minister of the *metapolitefsi* (restoration of democracy). The KKE gained legality

³²“The Unknown Resistance Against the Dictatorship,” *Report Without Borders* July 11, 2012 National Television of Greece.

on September 23, 1974, under the law 59/1974, which declared the reinstatement of political parties. Furthermore, this same law cancelled the Emergency Law 509 of 1947.

The supposed reconciliation of the civil war between the Right and the Left came in 1982, under the government of *Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima*, PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) with Andreas Papandreou as prime minister. On August 23, 1982, the Resistance was recognized with Law 1285, which was voted in Parliament, under intense political confrontation. By bringing this law to Parliament, PASOK was recognizing the contributions of EAM and calling for members of the Resistance to obtain a pension for their services. The KKE voted in favor of the law. It is worth mentioning that the opposing party, the right-wing *Nea Demokratia* (New Democracy), which was founded by Konstantinos Karamanlis on October 4, 1974, and was now led by Evangelos Averoff, opposed Law 1285. Furthermore, *Nea Demokratia* called into question who the “true” members of the Resistance were. Averoff wanted to point out that EAM, which was the major Resistance organization and dominated by the KKE, was the culprit of the civil war. Papandreou argued that the Right gave the Resistance over to the KKE when it fled into exile.³³ One could argue that the civil rift between the Right and the Left, which was extended to the ordinary citizens, was still a reality. The legality of the KKE, however, was a catalyst in the plethora of autobiographies that were published from the late 1970s and onward. In 1989, two main events occurred in relation to the “national reconciliation,”- the recognition of Makronisos as a historical place and the coalition government of the KKE with *Nea Demokratia* which turned into a debacle.

³³ <https://www.ert.gr/ert-arxeio/i-anagnorisi-tis-ethnikis-antistasis-23-avgoustou-1982/> Accessed November 12, 2021.

The Women in the Post-Exile Period

The last exiles left Makronisos in the summer of 1950, with the men transferred to St. Efstratios and the women sent back to Trikeri; while the last soldiers guarding the island left in 1961. Once released from exile, individuals were forced to present themselves to the security police on a weekly or monthly basis. Eleni Savvatianou, for example, had to visit the police station of Kifissia, Athens, where she lived, once a month. This lasted well into the sixties, until she met a high ranking officer at the hospital where she took her daughter for dialysis every two weeks:

I would take my daughter, who has Mediterranean anemia, to the hospital twice a month for dialysis. At one of our appointments, one of the high ranking officers came in with his child who suffered from the same disease. He recognized me from the police station. He asked me what I was doing there, etc. After telling him about my daughter, he said that I shouldn't have to go through such an ordeal and saw to it that I didn't have to present myself at the police station again.³⁴

These kinds of acts, such as the empathy that the officer displayed in Eleni's case, helped some of the women overcome certain barriers that the Greek State imposed. For example, Plousia Liakata obtained her Identification Card³⁵ with the help of an officer who she had met at the clinic that she worked in, in Athens, after exile.

Life for the exiles wasn't easy upon release as the torturous signing of the DOR followed them; if they wanted to obtain an ID card, they had to sign; if they wanted a passport, they had to sign. Anything that entailed civil or governmental interference the

³⁴ Eleni Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, August 8, 2017.

³⁵ The local police stations issue the Identity Cards in Greece. In the pre-metapolitefsi period, one had to have the PKF in order to have one issued. If they didn't have a "clean" record they would not obtain one if they didn't sign the PKF.

threat of DOR accompanied. Those closely related or associated to a leftist were also burdened by the stigma. Children were harassed at school by teachers because of their parent's political convictions. There were families that lived in hiding for up to fifteen years or more under false identities. As Janet Hart has argued, the "mobilized women who had not fled or been sent to prison were left with the options of joining the women's organization of the EDA, the only authorized left-wing party; working in underground organizations; or bowing out of politics altogether."³⁶ Nevertheless, this was quite difficult for a woman who remained in her village. It was difficult because the woman was known for being involved in anti-fascist activities, and considered a Leftist, and hence a threat to the state. Such a woman would only "survive" in a big city. Consequently, many fled to urban centers in the late 1940s and 1950s in order to avoid a backlash from the local ultra right-wing groups in their village.

When Plousia was released from Trikeri, she returned to her hometown in Messolonghi. However, she didn't stay very long. Plousia decided to move to Athens, where she would enjoy a greater degree of anonymity and be able to find employment. She was hired by Dr. Prouskas in a psychiatric clinic as a head nurse:

I was hired by Dr. Prouskas. I told him right away that I was in exile and that I was just released. It was 1952. I did not want to create any problems for him. He was my father's friend. He replied that he trusted me even more now with this information; he respected and appreciated my candor and gave me the position of head nurse. He gave me the liberty to organize things as I pleased.³⁷

³⁶ Janet Hart, *New Voices of the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance 1941-1964* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 241.

³⁷ Plousia Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 24, 2019.

In addition to working in the medical field Plousia collaborated with the folk dance teacher Eleni Tsaouli, who was also an antifascist and was imprisoned during the Greek Civil War. They had the same code of understanding. Tsaouli had studied classical ballet, but through her experience in prison, she, like Plousia, came in close contact with the myriad of folk dances from throughout Greece. Plousia also collaborated with Dora Stratou, who is considered the most significant folk dance teacher in Greece. Although on opposite sides, in regards to ideology, Plousia and Stratou were very close and collaborated wonderfully together.

Established from the Metaxas period, the PKF³⁸ dictated the educational and professional career of the women in my case study. Without the PKF it was harder for one to obtain a university level education, or to be hired as a civil servant in the public sector. Moreover, it often extended to the private sector as well. As Ellie Nikolaou emphasizes:

I tried to get a job. I would find one, and then lose it because a month in, police would inform my employer about my history and my supposed crimes. In order to continue with the job, I had to sign. So I had to leave. And find another, and then again the same situation. And it wasn't the period after occupation. It was a period with supposedly democratic governments. We couldn't find a job anywhere. I remember that I got a job and after a month my employer came to me and told me to sign because he didn't want to fire me. It was hard to hold a job even as cleaning ladies. And of course, it wasn't because we didn't know how to use a mop or clean. I finally started my own small business; I opened a news stand; but since I loved books, I sold cigarettes, along with the books.³⁹

Nevertheless, the women in my case study found ways to overcome this barrier.

³⁸ It was abolished in 1981.

³⁹ Ellie Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

Eleni Savvatianou married and had children, and devoted her life to her family. She never worked outside of the home, but was very much in control and involved in the education of her children and in the division of labor within the home. Although she married into a well off family in Kifissia, she continued to live humbly and stand her ground on issues which she believed were important in instilling in her children social awareness. For example, Eleni resisted home schooling, which was customary of middle to upper class families at the time. Her mother-in-law believed it wasn't proper for her grandchildren to mingle with public school children. Eleni, however, enrolled her children in the local public school, arguing that the purpose of an education also entailed socialization. Moreover, throughout the years, Eleni sought to employ ex-exiles whenever anything needed to be attended to around the house. She didn't obtain a passport until the 1990s.

Nitsa faced similar issues. Shortly after her release from Trikeri, Nitsa went to France in 1956; however she needed help in obtaining a passport:

I met one of my father's friends and asked him if he could help me get a passport, which he did. Then we went to see Evangelos Kalatzis, the Minister of Public Safety. He told me that he would let me go only if I promised not to visit any countries behind the Iron Curtain. My father's friend told him that I would go to Paris to find my fiancé and that I was going to get married. So, I got permission to leave. I really did have the guy in Paris, who was studying there. We eventually got married and stayed in France until 1985.⁴⁰

Nitsa's husband, Georgios, was from her village. He was an engineer and worked for a company that sent him to various countries such as Congo for projects, and Nitsa accompanied him. In 1985, they returned to Greece permanently with their two children.

⁴⁰ Nitsa Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 9, 2012.

Living outside of Greece saved Nitsa from the seven year dictatorship and the fear of imprisonment.

Within the seven years of the dictatorship women were once again targeted. Pota Kakkava was arrested in Kalamata on the first day of the Junta took over, April 21, 1967. She was sent for a short time to island of Yiaros.⁴¹ Ellie Nikolaou was also arrested in the first days of the Junta, however, was spared exile:

I was arrested again during the dictatorship. This time, men in gray coats and hats came to my home at seven in the morning. They knocked on the door and when I opened they grabbed me. I told my daughter to tell my father to bring me some blankets; he would know where to bring them. I was released about a month later.⁴²

Plousia Liakata was also arrested. She was betrayed by a man who sought to “punish” her for refusing to date him. The phenomenon of the “hafie” continued to be prevalent.

Personal issues one may have had with someone could lead to betrayal and arrests without a foundation. As Plousia confirms:

I had been transferred to one of Dr. Prouskas’ offices on Patisision Street. A guy who used to come to the clinic went to the police station and alleged that I was a communist. I was arrested and sent to a prison in Glyfada, where I stayed until my court date; I was found innocent and released.⁴³

Life for Plousia, Pota, Ellie, and the other women, who remained in Greece, did not stabilize until the fall of the Junta and the restoration of democracy in 1974. This

⁴¹ Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Kalamata, September 5, 2015.

⁴² Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, June 25, 2014.

⁴³ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 24, 2019.

“stabilization” was contingent on three major events: the legalization of the KKE, the recognition of the Resistance, and the recognition of Makronisos as a historical space.

The restoration of democracy in 1974 enabled the women to travel freely. Plousia was able to obtain a passport and even travel to the United States on a folk dance tour in 1985. Her career as a folk dance teacher gave Plousia the opportunity to travel across the globe meeting people from different cultures, while promoting her own. On her trip to New York, she reunited with Regina Pagoulatou. As a journalist writing for a Greek-American newspaper, Regina covered the event which took place at Carnegie Hall. She asked to meet the leader of the dance group; when she saw Plousia, Regina exclaimed: “Well, of course! Where else would I find you? On a stage, of course!” The two women spent the last few days Plousia had in New York catching up on over thirty years.⁴⁴

Memory and the Women: Pilgrimages

Since its founding in 1988, the *Panellinia Enosi Kratoumenon Agoniston Makronisou*, PEKAM (Panhellenic Union of Detained Resistance Fighters of Makronisos) arranges an annual trip to the island of Makronisos, where ex-prisoners, families and friends, gather to commemorate those that were held on the island during the Greek Civil War. The actress Aleka Paizi spoke at the anniversary trip to Makronisos in 1998: “On Makronisos we lived through the foreign instigated endo-fascist regime. . . Makronisos is a holy place. A historical monument where the notion of humanity was

⁴⁴ Liakata, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 16, 2012.

tested.”⁴⁵ Paizi refers to exile as being imposed by foreign forces, however, one must not overlook the fact that it was the Greek governments that facilitated and conducted the atrocities. There is tendency to blame the “foreigners” while overlooking the Greeks’ responsibility. Nevertheless, in addition to friends and family, the ex-prisoners are often accompanied by researchers, journalists, friends and family, members of the KKE, of *Synaspismos Rizospastikis Aristeras*, SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), and other Leftist groups. This trip, however, is very different from the trip to Trikeri. It is a day trip, as opposed to a weekend stay, and of a somber nature and atmosphere. It is a tribute to the thousands of people who were tortured there and a memorial service for those that perished there. It is a day of remembrance at the site where many horrific events of the late 1940s occurred. Moving speeches are made, songs are sung, and wreaths are placed. The atmosphere is solemn. Whereas, the annual trip to the island of Trikeri, is cheerful and lighter in atmosphere.

The women see their visit as something more than a pilgrimage to an island they were exiled; they actually enjoy their time there. They like to spend time with each other, reminiscing, catching up, and telling stories that they have probably retold at every annual trip. They retell the stories again and again, not only for themselves, but also for the numerous visitors that accompany them on these annual trips. Especially in the last ten years, there has been a great deal of interest from researchers, history buffs, and family and friends in attending the annual trips to Trikeri. There are also annual trips to other sites of imprisonment and exile, such as: Ikaria, Corfu, and St. Efstratios. But none

⁴⁵Plousia’s personal library. Also see Άνθρωποι. Μακρόνησος. EPT 1997.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVwDwue_WIE

are like that of Trikeri's. There is no annual trip to Chios. "I visited Chios once. I tried to go find the barracks where they held us. Chios is a rich island. The people, however, are not very hospitable,"⁴⁶ Ellie has expressed.⁴⁷

In May 1989, under the government of PASOK and Melina Merkouri as Minister of Culture, the entire island of Makronisos was declared a historical place, and all the remnants of the buildings declared to be historically persevered. Yet, according to the women, the island today doesn't resemble the island of torture that they remember, as Ellie expresses, "If you see Makronisos now, you won't recognize it. You won't see what I'm telling you. It has no resemblance, nor in its roughness."⁴⁸

Ellie argues, "There, on Makronisos, the land speaks for itself. And don't look at it now. There may be some shrubs that have grown; it looks nothing like it did back then. They have demolished everything. . . Everything had a purpose. . . To get you to sign the DOR. They've demolished everything to erase memory. . . To erase the horror of life there. . ."⁴⁹ However, there are still some remnants of the buildings from back then.

When I visited Makronisos in 2014, Nitsa expressed how she could still "hear the loudspeakers. . . they shouted from the microphones, they called us Bulgarians, bastards, scum. . . I am still startled when I hear an unexpected knock at the door."⁵⁰ In my first meeting with Nitsa in her home in Zografou, Athens, I remember how stunned I was when she shared her fears that even today [2012] the fear of someone knocking on the

⁴⁶ Nikolaou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, September 18, 2012.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, July 9, 2012.

door and being arrested for her beliefs is still there. The imprints that her experiences have left on her psyche are indeed profound.

Although thirty years had lapsed since her release from exile, the memories of the Resistance and subsequent life in exile stayed with Nitsa until her death. She often expressed how she couldn't stop thinking about her past:

For my husband and myself coming to Greece was repatriation. For my children, it was a whole other life. A major change in their lives. I think that they resent me for it. I think I did the right thing. . .at least for myself. . .I couldn't bear to stay any longer in France. I loved it there, don't get me wrong, but I missed my homeland. The sun, the beauty of the landscape, everything. France has its beauty, but I couldn't take the sunless days. . .the cold. . .But, I'm afraid that they resent my choice to want to leave France. . .I've been told that I always talk about the past. But the past has affected my whole life. How can I forget it? I don't know anything beyond that. I can't get passed my past. It has defined me. Could you be continuously attacked, chased, and live as a prisoner for your whole young adult life and forget? Could you?! How do they expect me to? What do you think? I could just press a delete button like you do on a computer and forget?⁵¹

The women's conversations during their coffee or lunch gatherings almost always led to the period of the Resistance and exile. This period is their common ground. Although they led different lives from one another, they had a language of their own; one that only they could truly understand and they cherished their relationships.

Each event that was organized in their honor was the talk of the month. The women usually met at Eleni or Nitsa's home in order to discuss every detail. When Eleni Savvatiadou visited the Haidari camp seventy three years later, in 2017, it was all they could talk about. Eleni herself asked to visit it during a period when a group from the Open University of Berlin, in collaboration with the Hellenic Open University "was

⁵¹ Gavriilidou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, March 14, 2014.

doing a project on Haidari and Block 15, which was where prisoners were tortured and isolated. And they found [her] because [she] was one of the survivors that were still alive.” Eleni shared her experience with me in detail:

The General Commander of the army base was very kind. They had a tray full of sweets and they asked me how Haidari functioned. The Commander told me that the Germans had killed his father or his grandfather, I think his grandfather, in Crete, and he said to me, ‘this was your prison home, you lived here at some point when you were young, and you asked us to see it and visit it, and we had no reason to deny you that right.’ I said, ‘yes, and I thank you very much.’ And he continued ‘And whenever we have our commemoration for the mass execution of the two hundred men at Kaisariani, which of whom had no involvement in the Resistance, they were prisoners from Akronafplia and were brought to Haidari only because they were communists, you can come. You are more than welcome to attend.’ And I told him, that I will never forget those men, and each year on the commemoration of their execution, I go to the site, to Kaisariani, on my own, because I have promised them, to never forget them. ‘You knew them?’ he asked. Yes, I said. The day that they were going to be executed I lived the whole ordeal, the anxiety of them being taken, that morning where the cooks were getting our breakfast ready with the marmalade. He, I could tell, was shocked. ‘I can understand. You were also so young.’ Yes, I said. They took the girls that were beside me, with whom I had co-habited with for so long, and they executed them. And all this has remained within me, deep inside. He thanked me for answering all his questions about Haidari. And, he kept his word; I was invited to the commemoration, and I attended. There was a comrade sitting in front of me who was reading Rizospastis, and many others, the mayor of Kaisariani, the mayor of Haidari. The mayor of Kaisariani said, ‘We have the honor of having with us today a survivor from Haidari.’ I don’t like stuff like that. At all. Because, others gave their lives. So I said, ‘yes, but others gave their lives. I am alive. I didn’t do anything compared to what those that lost their life did.’ And I truly believe that.⁵²

There have been actions taken in making Haidari a place of historical memory.⁵³ I asked Eleni what she thought should be done with Haidari; how should it be remembered? She

⁵² Savvatianou, interview by Helen Drivas, Athens, Greece, December 18, 2019.

⁵³ Ibid.

was very clear that she would have wanted it to have been maintained the way it was. She would have wanted visitors to be able to understand the horror that it was; the horror of being at Block 15, where detainees were tortured by the Nazis:

As far as I am concerned, Haidari should have been kept the way it was back then. And there should have been a monument with all the names of the people who had been executed and detained there. Especially those of men and women who were executed. And there were many. And the first women to be executed were at Haidari. It was the women that I had left with from Hatzikosta. But, you know, with everything that came after, things weren't done the right way.⁵⁴

It has been debated how places of public historical memory should be remembered. There are numerous sites throughout Greece where the KKE has raised monuments and placed plaques in commemoration of antifascist men and women who have been executed, or municipalities in which antifascist heroes lived have commissioned statues of them in their squares. This year, 2022, marks the 80th anniversary of *Ellinikos Laikos Apelefterotikos Stratos*, ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army). There were celebrations in its honor in Lamia. Unfortunately, due to medical reasons Plousia couldn't attend.

Places of Memory: Memorials and Commemorations

When one visits the island of Makronisos, on the yearly commemorations that are conducted by PEKAM the feelings born are solemn and the idea of ever having to live and survive there, inconceivable. Moreover, visiting the island with the actual historical

⁵⁴ Ibid.

actors that were forced to live there under torturous conditions creates an almost virtual presentation of what until then were oral testimonies. Such an experience makes the need for the perseveration of sites of historical memory all the more evident.

One could say that the coalition government between the Right and Left, which took place on July 2, 1989, was a step toward national reconciliation, and restoration of historical memory. However, in hindsight this proved to be a weak reconciliation. The government destroyed a significant number of police files of leftist citizens who were persecuted from the post-World War II period up until the restoration of democracy. The logic behind this decision was the “protection” of Leftists from any continuation of persecution by the state and the police. This however, from a historical standpoint, has deprived historians and researchers of a rich historical archive in the full understanding of the persecution of the Left and the period of post-World War II Greece. Similar to the Spanish General Amnesty Law of 1977, history was not only buried but a large part was destroyed. Moreover, it was an attempt at an amnesty of “amnesia.”

The forty year delay in the recognition of the Greek National Resistance, delayed the construction of monuments of historical memory and the preservation of historical places, therefore delaying the construction of a collective memory of the period of the Resistance. The purpose of strengthening the narration of collective memory succeeds through the construction of monuments, places of memory, museums, and public facilities.

Monuments serve a purpose in maintaining and retaining memory; they build bridges and roads in ways to remember. They talk to the present; they declare that “I was here;” “Remember me.” Furthermore, they are live structures which enable us to explain

and interpret the past and what they resemble and stand for; they are an imprint of memory; a testimony of his, her, their, our story. In the end, it is a presentation of our story; of each nation; of each historical actor within time. Political monuments evoke the memory of political and historical events for each nation, often stirring conflict of what is “true” history and what isn’t. A political monument can have a different meaning, depending on the perception of history through the prism of our own convictions. Historical monuments can also have an expiration date, as they mirror the importance of the event or individual in the present. Yet, they can also provide a public demonstration of historical apologies for particular war crimes and violation of human rights throughout the world.

In regards to the history of the Left in Greece, or the Spanish Republicans in Spain, or in the various Latin American countries where military dictatorships persecuted leftists, the political climate needed to be open to acceptance of that part of history and give its “permission” to the erection of monuments and preservation of historical places where persecution took place. In countries such as Argentina and Chile there had been a tendency by the governments to deny the people of historical memory of the dictatorship and in the destruction of evidence that spoke of the violence conducted.

General Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship overthrew Salvador Allende’s democratic elected socialist government by assassinating him on September 11, 1973. This dictatorship lasted up to 1990 when Pinochet gave the government over to the politicians after securing his amnesty. During the dictatorship, there were many sites used for the torture of dissidents. For example, the Villa Grimaldi, the most significant complex of DINA, Direccion de Inteligencia Nacional (the Chilean Secret Police) where

most of the women subversives were sent to, during the Pinochet dictatorship, and Venda Sexy, which was located in Santiago. Women were tortured inhumanely in both Villa Grimaldi and Venda Sexy; rape being the worst form of all the torture inflicted on the women. The humiliation of a woman's body was one of their main targets; even using dogs in the rape of the women. In addition to rape, women were forced into abortions, while some gave birth to the children of their rapist. Other forms of torture included electrocution, sleep deprivation and beatings. In both cases the governments wanted to erase this memory from the public by demolishing both places.

After years of struggle, and with the election of governments open to the preservation of historical memory, Venda Sexy was declared as a historical monument/place in 2016. There were hopes of preventing it from being sold by the owner to an investor, which would lead to its demolition. By this declaration the government would be the first buyer whenever the owner decided to sell it. Unfortunately, however, the building was sold to an investor despite the government offering a higher bid; the building was demolished. Fortunately, Villa Grimaldi was declared by the Ministry of Education as a historical site and national monument on December 11, 2004. Although the dictatorship had managed to destroy the evidence of the torture which was inflicted on so many, the local community occupied Villa Grimaldi and slowly created a space, the Villa Grimaldi Peace Park, where one can visit and learn about the history of the period, on the actual site where the events took place. In 2015, Claudio Orrego, the mayor of Penalolen, the neighborhood in Santiago where Villa Grimaldi is located, argued: 'The younger generations should know the truth,' of what happened to the thousands of Chilean people who were tortured, killed or "disappeared"

during the Pinochet regime.’ The initiative was inspired by similar historical museums, such as the Museum of Resistance and Deportation in Lyon, France, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, Netherlands, the House of the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, Germany, and the Museum of Memory in Rosario, Argentina.⁵⁵

In addition to the Museum of Memory in Rosario, the Museo de la Memoria in Cordoba, the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos (The Space of Memory and Human Rights) was founded. Argentina has been one of the most productive countries in preserving historical memory. March 24 has been officially designated as the Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice.

The Parque de Memoria, a public space, created under Law 46 on July 21, 1998, by the Legislature of the city of Buenos Aires, dedicated to the victims of state terrorism, is located along the coastline of Buenos Aires. A large and long monument of names of the murdered and disappeared during the dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla from 1976 to 1983 is erected within the fourteen acre park.⁵⁶ Interestingly, there are also Greek names on the memorial.⁵⁷ According to the monument’s website, “this place of memory does not pretend to heal wounds or replace truth and justice, but rather to become a place of remembrance, homage, testimony, and reflection. Its objective is for current and future

⁵⁵ Carolina Avendano, Inter Press Service, News Agency, August 30, 2015. www.ipsnews.net/2005/08/chile-human-rights-museum-to-preserve-memories-of-torture-centres-hell/ Accessed November 14, 2021.

⁵⁶ <https://parquedelamemoria.org.ar/parque/> Accessed November 17, 2021.

⁵⁷ I visited the park in January 2015.

generations that visit the site to become aware of the horror perpetrated by the State and the need to ensure that similar acts will never again occur.”⁵⁸

Memory or Amnesia?

Greece does not have something similar to Argentina’s or Chile’s government’s contribution to the preservation of historical memory. Although PASOK made attempts in national reconciliation in the early years of its governmental rule, the similar persecution of dissidents in Greece to that of Argentinean and Chilean citizens has been overshadowed and locked within the polarization of the Cold War, of Right against Left.

The most significant sites of historical memory for the women in this dissertation are Makronisos and the island of Trikeri. The former’s legal status is ambiguous, while the latter’s has not been treated by the government in any sense; any commemoration to the five thousand women that were detained on the island of Trikeri has been through the actions of the Exiled Women’s Association and by the KKE. It wasn’t until the late 1990s with Pota’s initiative that a plaque was placed on the site of the monastery on the island of Trikeri, commemorating the women. Years later in 2016, the KKE placed two more monuments.

Spaces of historical memory in Greece haven’t been treated by the State in the way the survivors believe is deserved. The state has not recognized that certain spaces deserve a commemoration. Melina Merkouri went to great lengths for Makronisos to be declared as a historical place. Her struggles initially materialized, yet still the Greek State

⁵⁸ <https://parquedelamemoria.org.ar/parque/>

hasn't given the respect it deserves, as there have been complaints of the island being privately used, disregarding the memory of the exiles.

In 1990, a year after Makronisos was declared a historical monument, a team was formed between the Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, having the authority of the formation of a program to act for the protection and exposure of the historical preservation of Makronisos and its historical buildings and camps.⁵⁹ Three years later a conference was held, with the focus of the protection and exposure of the historical place of Makronisos. This panel was co-organized by the National Technical University of Athens, the Technical Chamber of Greece, PEKAM, the Pan-Hellenic Union of Architects, and the Greek Department of ICOMOS.⁶⁰ The notes that came out this conference were as follows:

1) Makronisos is a national monument of exceptional interest for the maintenance of the people's historical memory 2) after the abandonment in 1961, it suffers damages due to apathy, 3) the declaration of Makronisos as a historical place is a justification of history 4) the arbitrary reuse of some spaces contribute to the corrosion and the deterioration of the building's character 5) it is a challenge for more violations as the last undeveloped space near Attica.⁶¹

The conference concluded that there was a need of a Presidential Decree, which would protect Makronisos by indicating zones of use and protection characterize and declare

⁵⁹ Giorgos Petropoulos, "I Makronisos Kindinevi"[Makronisos is in danger] *Rizospastis*, July 6, 2008. <https://www.rizospastis.gr/story.do?id=4627322>

⁶⁰ <https://www.icomoshellenic.gr/> The Greek Department of ICOMOS was founded in 1972, initially as Science Committee of Technical Chamber of Greece.

⁶¹ <https://akea2011.com/2018/02/28/mnimestisasinehias/>

archeological spaces, and Makronisos' induction in the catalog of protected camps against violence according to the recent decision of the European Parliament.⁶²

On November 1, 1995, a Presidential Decree was published in the Government Gazette⁶³ that indicated the use of Makronisos and the restricted ability of construction.

According to this Presidential Decree the following were forbidden:

1) any partition of the land 2) the quarrying and extraction (mining), allowed only for the need of material to rebuild the island's monuments 3) fish farming, livestock farming, and hunting, 4) the construction of infrastructures such as wastewater treatment plan, ports, airports, allowing only infrastructures that serve the needs of this Decree 5) the installation of any advertisements and billboards 6) traffic, allowing only two taxis for the need of the visitors. The only business that is allowed on the island by this Presidential Decree is beekeeping without any facilities and placing only beehives.⁶⁴

Today, after twenty seven years, few restoration works have been done, such as a small theater and a small dock for the visitors, while livestock farming continues without any deterrence; while the animals litter the monuments. The municipality of Keas, which Makronisos belongs to, doesn't stop this violation; on the contrary it issues permits for this purpose arguing that livestock farming is included in the island's nature.⁶⁵ One can see buildings, which are arbitrary and also have been constructed on the ruins.

In 2018, a group visited Makronisos to collect information about the violations.

The group included a representative from the Hellenic Ministry for the Environment and

⁶²Petropoulos, "I Makronisos Kindinevi."

⁶³The Government Gazette is the official journal of the Government of Greece which lists all laws passed in a set time period ratified by Cabinet and President
<https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=2840>

⁶⁴Petropoulos, "I Makronisos Kindinevi."

⁶⁵Ibid.

Energy, the State Secretary and general secretary of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, Mr. Kostas Stratis and Mrs. Maria Adreadaki-Vlazaki, respectively, and the workers who performed the investigation. According to the investigation, over twenty new buildings were found and some were constructed on the camps' monuments.⁶⁶ The question was how these buildings were constructed and why they were not demolished. According to a reporter that contacted the commander of the police station of Lavrio on October 26, 2006, who investigated the island due to complaints that he received, the Commander admitted that Makronisos was a place of illegal hunting and somehow a junkyard of old cars.⁶⁷ According to Giorgos Petropoulos in 2008, reporter of the newspaper Rizospastis, the Mayor of Keas Municipality admitted without any hesitation that he has tried to change the Presidential Decree of 1995 in order to have the right to use part of the island for energy plans. Specifically, he said that he had offers to install wind turbines since Makronisos is very close to Lavrio, Attica.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Makronisos is a great example of historical memory that is being erased. It is historical place that could be added on the list of the horrific concentration camps of the twentieth century. Under the government of SYRIZA there was an attempt to add Makronisos to the UNESCO World Heritage Center, but yet to no avail. Greece hasn't

⁶⁶ Petropoulos, "I Makronisos Kindinevi," <https://www.iefimerida.gr/news/439576/ki-omos-yparhoyn-aythaireta-kai-sti-makroniso-pos-htizoyn-eikones-vinteo>

⁶⁷Petropoulos, "I Makronisos Kindinevi."

⁶⁸Ibid.

dealt with historical memory in the manner in which Argentina and Chile have. In order for Greece to have a real national reconciliation, sincere actions need to be taken.

For the women in this dissertation Makronisos will always be a historical place. Although they endured such torture, they do not feel hate. This was hard to understand at first. After hearing their stories and getting to know them, I was able to see their standpoint. They are truly one of a kind. Plousia's response is a perfect example:

I don't feel hate. I have tried to understand what happened and why the Alfamites did what they did. Not everyone was the same. There were also good cases. Many were former members of EAM. There were many savages. But hating them only burdens me. It doesn't serve any purpose. I fought for what I believed, and I would do it again. Whatever they did to try to break me, didn't work. So, they didn't really accomplish anything for me to hate them. I went on with my life, and it was a pretty good one, all things considered. I made sure to live a life in which I would never feel locked up again. That's why I never married or had any children. I didn't want to answer to anyone, or to be tied down. And I love children. My career as a dance instructor and later head of the folk dance group of Eleni Tsaouli gave me the opportunity to be around young people and influence their lives in a positive way. I gave and received so much love. So I never felt regret for not having a family.

Plousia, Nitsa, Pota, Eleni, Ellie, and Zozo, never wavered. It is evident from their life trajectories. They endured their life in exile through solidarity and with compassion. Throughout the numerous hours of discussions, and interviews, in the end it all came down to one phrase: "We had to endure. Because we were in the right." Their only hope is that the generations that follow don't forget that they "struggled so that [we] could build on what [they] achieved and continue the fight for a better society."⁶⁹ They began their struggle as teenage girls to liberate their country, as Zozo Petropoulou said in her speech to the organizers at the dinner in the women's honor on Trikeri Island. Their only

⁶⁹ Pota Kakkava, interview by Helen Drivas, Trikeri Island, Greece, September 15, 2012.

grievance is that the Greek State never acknowledged their contribution: “We felt at the time as if we were Bouboulines; we wanted to rid our country of the oppressor. We thank you, we feel very tied to your island and I want to assure you that in our thoughts you are not merely our friends, not just our family, you are something more. . . We have found a warm embrace here in the years that we have been visiting the island, and we have appreciated your appreciation, because the state never gave us anything, and we never asked for anything of material value, just recognition.”⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Zozo Petropoulos’ speech at the dinner the mayor of Trikeri gave in honor of the women on September 14, 2012.

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