

**BETWEEN ITALY AND GREECE: RESISTANCE, DICTATORSHIP  
AND THE *UNFREEZING COLD WAR* (1967-1974)**

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## *Introduction*

In this presentation I will be discussing the nexus between *national* and *international* factors in historical perspective by comparing the cases of Greece and Italy in the period of *détente*. I will be arguing that a fruitful comparison between the two national realities is possible under precise prerequisites. It is then possible to draw some conclusion about the nature and limits of the impact that foreign factors have been playing during such a crucial period. The research is divided into two main parts. In the first part I discuss the historical national heritage of Greece and Italy since the end of the respective civil wars until the late Sixties. The second part is subdivided into two sections: in the first an overall picture of presence and activity of Greek resistance in Italy will be drawn. In the second I intend to describe the political *rendezvous* between PAK (*Panellinio Apeleftherotiko Kinima*) one of the most influent group of Greek resistance, led by Andreas Papandreou and PSI (Italian Socialist Party) in historical perspective.

### *1. A Greek-Italian joint effort against dictatorship*

The first archival nucleus at the base of my research consisted of the complete collection of the review “Grecia” kept at the National Central Library “Vittorio Emanuele II” in Rome. “Grecia” was published in Italy in Italian language by Greek members of PAK in close collaboration with Italian socialists. On the whole, this review is organized in fifty-five irregularly monthly issues consisting in seventeen double issues and one triple issue and it covers the period December 1969-July 1974. “Grecia” is composed of sixty-six regular features, many of which were suppressed in the course of the publication while several others were born *in itinere*.

Most of the articles of “Grecia” are anonymous in order to protect the security of both senders and receivers but it has been possible to assess

their political belonging through the Italian signatures of the few signed articles as well as from the names of the two directors plainly reported on each issue. Furthermore, articles origin was confirmed to be PAK by several interviews I conducted with those directors as well as with previous journalists of “Avanti!” (PSI newspaper) – in charge of the collection and translation of the Greek original articles – and at the same time they gave more insight about the joint political effort between PAK and PSI members. Last but not least, the sole work written by a PAK member regarding resistance activity in Italy reports the following: «GRECIA (ΕΛΛΑΔΑ), monthly review, legally published in Italy [...] It reflects PAK thesis»<sup>1</sup>.

## *2. Greece and Italy from civil wars to late Sixties*

On the political level, the evolution of alliances inside both countries shows common traits as well as peculiarities during the period 1950-1967. Alexandros Papagos (1952-55) and Kostantinos Karamanlis (1955-63) conservative governments in Greece and Christian-democrat *Centrism* in Italy led their countries during the period of reconstruction and economic “miracles”<sup>2</sup>. The parties of the left were one-sidedly excluded from any governmental coalition in both countries. This one-sidedness was undisputable in Greece while it was not in Italy. This discrepancy was due to the different outcome and heritage of the respective civil wars.

In Italy the Left was politically represented by PCI and PSI and was defeated in the pivotal election of April, 18<sup>th</sup> 1948 but it played a substantive role in the national political system nonetheless. The confirmation of this can be found in the birth of the organic Centre-left with PSI entry into the cabinet (1963-68) and in the second Centre-left (1969-74) in which both Aldo Moro’s DC and Francesco De Martino’s PSI opened up

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<sup>1</sup> Nikos Kleitsikas, *To elliniko foititiko kinima kai o antidiktatorikos agonas stin Italia*, Anghelos Sideratos, Athens, 2000, p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> For a description of Italian centrism see Mario Del Pero, *L’alleato scomodo*, Carocci, Rome, 2001.

to at least consider involvement of Enrico Berlinguer's PCI into the action of the government.

In Greece the legacy of the civil war induced a radical polarization into the political system. On December, 27<sup>th</sup> 1947 the special law n. 509 banned any communist form of association and propaganda (ban that lasted until 1974). The most handicapping effect of this exclusion was that of depriving Greece of any chance of starting a positive dialogue between a conservative front and a liberal one, dialogue that most of Western Europe (Italy as well) was experiencing<sup>3</sup>. Moreover Greek Right shared the ideology of *ethnikofrosini*, a national mind marked by ultra-patriotism and anti-communism. This ideology drove the civil war victors to distinguish two categories in the nation: the first included anti-communist conservatives and populists stirred by this national mind while the second comprised communists, socialists and liberals in a broad sense<sup>4</sup>.

The years spanning from the late Fifties to the early Sixties were characterized both in Italy and Greece by a strong social thrust towards the modernization of political and economical institutions, thrust that no governing coalition was able to realize and bring about. This inertia opened new political grounds that had to be filled by subjects able to accommodate these instances of modernization. In Italy it was the Centre-left to emerge

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<sup>3</sup> John Koliopoulos, Thanos Veremis, *Greece. The modern sequel. From 1831 to the present*, Hurst & Co., London, 2002, p. 99 and Giulio Sapelli, *L'Europa del sud dopo il 1945. Tradizione e modernità in Portogallo, Spagna, Italia, Grecia e Turchia*, Rubettino Editore, Soveria Mannelli (Catanzaro) e Messina, 1996, p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> Koliopoulos, Veremis, *Greece. The modern sequel*, quot., p. 139. The concept of *ethnikofrosini* is very wide and it is not limited to the political sphere but extends to the social one, to family and individual. Polymeris Voglis explains this concept as follows: «The political crime was transformed as a crime against the nation, and, therefore, the division was no longer between the Left and the Right, but between the “traitors” or “EAM-Bulgarians” and the *ethnikofrones* (national-minded). Just as *ethnikofrosini* (national conviction) became the principal element of the post-Civil War dominant ideology, communists were depicted as completely alien to the nation». Cfr. Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a subject: political prisoner during the Greek civil war*, Berghan Books, New York, 2002, p. 66.

while in Greece EDA (with 25% of votes in the election of 1958) but above all EK rose to stand up to this challenge<sup>5</sup>.

I suggest here the possibility to consider EK as a “Greek Centre-left” since both its composition in terms of political personal (notables of the traditional *politikos kosmos* as well as the group around Andreas Papandreou) and its reformist programme resemble the situation of “Italian Centre-left”. However, in both countries several social, economic and political sectors opposed such changes that would have altered balances entrenched since the end of the respective civil wars.

One common feature to Italy and Greece appeared when their social tissues showed a growing and spontaneous mobilization and suggested the possibility to give birth to new government opened up to the Left. In Greece it is the case of the period between July, 15<sup>th</sup> 1965 and April, 21<sup>st</sup> 1967 that is to say from the “resignation” of the prime minister George Papandreou until the outbreak of the dictatorship. In fact the murder of EDA member Grigoris Lambrakis in Thessalonica (May 1963) may be included in such developments<sup>6</sup>. At the wake of the election on May, 28<sup>th</sup> 1967 (never happened for the colonels’ intervention) in the Centre Union, the role and importance of Andreas Papandreou was stronger and stronger and this was considered a menace and threat for the group of the putschist colonels<sup>7</sup>. Instead in Italy it is the case of the aforementioned second Centre-left coalition with Aldo Moro’s “strategy of attention” towards PCI.

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<sup>5</sup> For a historical picture of European political dynamics between the Fifties and the Sixties see Charles Maier, “I fondamenti politici del dopoguerra”, in Perry Anderson, Maurice Aymard, Paul Bairoch, Walter Barberis, Carlo Ginzburg, (eds.), *Storia d’Europa. I. L’Europa oggi*, Einaudi, Turin, 1993, pp. 333-339. It must be noticed that the few attention paid to Greece is not even completely correct, to the point of describing the old Papandreou «socialist» and assessing that «The Greek generals left ingloriously powers on 1973 following the failure of conquering Cyprus».

<sup>6</sup> Christos Sartzetakis, magistrate in charge on the murder of Lambrakis, shed light after long and troubled investigations on the responsibility of the Palace as instigator and the execution of members of extreme right groups. See Antonio Solaro, “Gli ammutinati del Velos”, *Diario*, 13 giugno 2003, p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Directorate of Intelligence (DOI), Intelligence memorandum (IM), “Military takeover in Greece”, Situation report n. 2, 21 April 1967 and CIA, DOI, IM, “The situation in Greece”, 6 July 1967.

The important feature shared by the two countries consisted in the emergence of a season of high social unrest due to indiscriminate terrorist actions against civilians as well as acts of military sabotages: it is the phenomenon of the “strategy of tension”. Beyond this common trait, the outcome of the season of the strategy of tension is dramatically different since in Greece it brought to military intervention in politics while in Italy it continued with killings and suspicions and attempts of military interventions.

### 3. 1967-1974: crucial years

In this section I briefly discuss the political developments in Italy and Greece during *détente* and colonel’s dictatorship stressing the similarities and connections between parties and groups either in favour or against the colonels’ regime.

The *strategy of tension* becomes subject of scholarly research and of historical interpretation only recently in Italy suffering nonetheless the unavailability and – at best – the incomplete declassification of institutional sources such as intelligence reports. Moreover it is not easy to reconstruct and give an interpretation to the events of such a long and troubled period because of the variety of subjects involved in this phenomenon (National and foreign Services of intelligence, State sectors, extreme right) and above all their recourse to secrecy and sidetracking.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of these difficulties, this phenomenon has been recently placed in the international context of *détente* and in the American reassessment – in the first half of 1970 – of its foreign policy in the Mediterranean basin with

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<sup>8</sup> Franco Ferraresi, *Minacce alla democrazia. La destra radicale e la strategia della tensione in Italia nel dopoguerra*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1995. Giovanni Fasanella, Claudio Sestieri, with Giovanni Pellegrino, *Segreto di Stato. La verità da Gladio al caso Moro*, Einaudi, Turin, 2000. Paolo Cucchiarelli, Aldo Giannuli, (eds.), *Lo Stato parallelo. L'Italia “oscura” nei documenti e nelle relazioni della Commissione Stragi*, Rome, Gamberetti, 1997.

particular regard to Italy and Greece. Indeed, on June 1970 a National Security Council (NSC) meeting resolved to resume heavy military aids to Greece and most likely it extended this «interventionist» option to Italy in order to get the Christian-democrats to abandon the Centre-left cabinet and to get back to Centrism according to Kissinger's desire. More precisely, it seems likely that among the initiatives pursued to this goal there were also an *at least indirect* economic and political support to men and forces involved in the strategy of tension and in the aborted *coup d'état* in December 1970<sup>9</sup>.

The politics of Centre-left in this period were characterized by new lines both on the internal level – the so-called “strategy of attention” conceived by Aldo Moro, supported by Francesco De Martino's PSI and addressed to Enrico Berlinguer's PCI – and on the foreign side with a more independent stance from US guidelines in the Mediterranean area and more concerned with Italian national interests<sup>10</sup>.

It is in this context that the political vicissitudes of a variety of Italian and Greek subjects significantly overlapped: the Greek resistance found ideological and material support – the relations between PAK and PSI show it clearly – and at the same time the Greek regime established a widespread network of surveillance and repression of Greek resistance activity in Italy. More precisely, in those towns that were seats of the principal universities of the country, local branches of ESESI (*Ethnikos Syndesmos Ellinon Spoudaston Italias*) are set up officially to help first-year Greek students to solve problems related to accommodation and settling but are in fact a front for the exertion of violent repression and menacing of students of the resistance, in joint effort with radical and neo-fascist groups of the Italian

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<sup>9</sup> Roberto Gualtieri, “The Italian political system and *détente* (1963-1981)”, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 9(4), 2004, pp. 428-449.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

right such as Ordine Nuovo, organization connected with the neo-fascist party MSI<sup>11</sup>.

A dramatic proof of this repressive activity is the death of Kostas Georgakis, 22 year old student at the university of Genoa and member of EDIN (EK Youth Organization) who committed suicide setting himself on fire on September, 19<sup>th</sup> 1970 in a central square of the town after suffering severe aggression and menaces by members of ESESI, menaces that were also addressed to his family living in Kerkira<sup>12</sup>.

Andreas Papandreou established PAK on March 1968 and his movement found in Italy political and economic support by PSI. At that time the Italian socialist party was marked by inner divisions into factions but in spite of this all the principal socialist leaders – Pietro Nenni, Francesco De Martino, Riccardo Lombardi and Sandro Pertini – supported PAK as it clearly appears from the several public statements, from the columns of "Avanti!" and "Grecia".

PAK experienced a turning point in its political tasks and personnel between the end of 1969 and the first half of 1970 together with the new awareness that for the toppling of colonels' regime it was not sufficient international pressures of both European democratic governments and collective institutions such as ECC and the Council of Europe. This new phase is characterized by a dual course of radicalization of political aims and of expulsion from PAK ranks of the more moderate elements – substantially previous Centre Union members – replaced with radical intellectuals and students<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno, Dipartimento di Pubblica Sicurezza, G10/27/2, box 378 and G100/6, box 141.

<sup>12</sup> Constantinos Papoutsis, *To megalo nai*, Kastaniotis, Athens, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Michalis Spourdalakis, *The Greek socialist party*, Routledge, London, 1988, pp. 52-53.

Andreas Papandreou's leadership in the political discourse of PAK is undisputable as well as it is in the PASOK during the *metapolitefsi*<sup>14</sup>. In the same period (mid 70's) PSI is subject to an epoch-making shift in its leadership with the victory of the generation of the "forty-year-old men" at the XL National Congress on March 1976. These young cadres superseded the old notables who had been keen advocates of socialist support to the Greek resistance. It is the beginning for the Italian socialist party of the so-called "Craxi era", Bettino Craxi being the leader who will rule the party until 1992<sup>15</sup>.

This part of the research is open to possible developments through a comparison between two personalistic and socialist paths towards government: the Greek one with Papandreou and PASOK and the Italian one with Craxi and PSI.

#### *Conclusion and developments of the research*

The basic assumption for a meaningful comparison between the Italian and Greek political developments both in internal and in foreign policy lies in the clear comprehension of similarities as well as peculiarities of their own relevant social, economic and political tissues. This is the prerequisite to move then to the second step of the research, consisting in focusing on American foreign policy towards Italy and Greece, two allies in a similar geopolitical context and during the phase of *détente* of the relations between East and West, a phase marked by the relaxation of ideological and military tensions typical of the first period of the Cold war.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* and Nicos Mouzelis, "Continuities and discontinuities in Greek politics. From Eleftherios Venizelos to Andreas Papandreou", in Kevin Featherstone, Dimitrios Katsoudas (eds.), *Political change in Greece. Before and after the colonels*, St. Martin's press, New York, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Maurizio Degl'Innocenti, *Storia del PSI. III. Dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, Laterza, Bari, 1993, pp. 418-420.

The common membership of Italy and Greece to the Western block and to NATO has had some aspects that still need to be defined such as for instance the exact rationale of the use of NATO plans worked out for defensive purposes and nonetheless applied with internal aims.

In the Greek case there are two emblematic events in this sense: the use of the so-called “Pericles” plan to influence the outcome of the election on October 1961, publicly revealed by George Papandreou on February 1965 and above all the application of the plan “Ierax II” by the colonels on 21 April 1967. In the Italian case the menace of military intervention in politics happened on June 1964 with the so-called “Solo” plan managed by general Giovanni De Lorenzo and on December 1970 with the so-called Borghese *coup d’etat* (from the name of its organizer Junio Valerio Borghese). This initiative was suspended when one among the groups involved in the action had already reached the inside armoury of the minister of Interior<sup>16</sup>. Nonetheless, in Italy it was more than rumours especially in military and rightist circles the resort to a possible *lisi a la ellinika* to the political crisis between late ‘60s and beginning of 70s.

Scholars usually deal with these problems in the general context of the *military intervention in politics* and the points I want to develop in the research are the following:

- 1) to explain the reasons at the base of the fact that while in Greece the military interventions into politics turned into reality twice (1961, 1967) in Italy neither the menace of intervention (1964) nor its harbingers (1970) ever brought to an actual change to authoritarianism.
- 2) to assess the weight of the international factors (Atlantic loyalty, ECC membership) on these developments<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> The Greek military interventions in politics are well described by Nikolaos Stavrou, *Allied politics and military intervention: the political role of the Greek military*, Papazissis, Athens, 1976. For the Italian case see Fasanella, Sestieri, with Pellegrino, *Segreto di Stato*, quot.

<sup>17</sup> Historian Mario Del Pero recently upheld that the ECC members promoted an «integrative» solution to manage the mid 70’s political crisis in Italy. This solution was

Another aim of this research is to assess the impact of the *international* factors on the *national* dynamics in the broad topic of the *transition to democracy*. It regards Greek transition to democratic rule and its rationale lies in the central role of the Cyprus question on July '74 in the collapse of the Ioannidis regime.

The American policy for Cyprus and the Middle East in general seemed to have played a decisive role in the developments after the coup against Makarios and the Turkish military invasion of the island. The events of summer '74 brought indeed to the solution for the Cyprus question in line with the so-called *double enosis* or *taksim*. The collapse of Ioannidis regime is followed by a solution in Cyprus which resembles the American settlement proposed in 1964 with the Acheson plan, solution which was covertly pursued at the same time by the Papadopoulos regime in spite of his public statements to the contrary<sup>18</sup>. Moreover a comparison between Greek resistance expectations and goals for the *metapolitefsi* and its actual outcome is one topic of this PhD proposal.

Finally, the part of the research devoted to the description of Greek resistance ideology and initiatives in Italy aims to explore the following themes:

- 1) how the Greek groups presented themselves (self-representation)
- 2) how their Italian supporters – primary the socialists – perceived them
- 3) which relations (if ever) the Greeks perceived between their resistance and that during Nazi-fascist occupation

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pursued through the EC institutional means and according to Del Pero was significant in curbing the American tendencies (and Henry Kissinger's ones in particular) to resort to the "Chilean way" for Italy. See Mario Del Pero, "Distensione, bipolarismo e violenza: la politica estera americana nel Mediterraneo durante gli anni Settanta. Il caso portoghese e le sue implicazioni per l'Italia", in Agostino Giovagnoli, Silvio Pons, (eds.), *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta. Tra guerra fredda e distensione*, Rubettino, Soveria Mannelli, pp. 142-143.

<sup>18</sup> Theodoros Couloumbis, *United States, Greece and Turkey. A troubled triangle*, Praeger, New York, 1982 and Constantine P. Danopoulos, "The Greek military regime (1967-1974) and the Cyprus question. Origins and goals", *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 1982, n. 10, pp. 257-273.

4) what was the weight (if any) it had on the Italians the fact of being partisans and exiles in the Italian civil war

This part of the research takes advantage of the oral sources, interviews conducted with members of resistance and political leaders. Oral sources need to be managed by the methodologies worked out by “oral historians” for preparing, executing, collecting and interpreting them.