

# Fighting Fascism in Greece

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“One day at noon in a busy street of Athens, a refrigerator crate was unloaded to the pavement and soon the thing began talking. ‘Patriots,’ it boomed, ‘listen and do not interrupt me. Anybody who touches me will be blown up.’

“A long speech from the Greek Patriotic Front followed, interrupted at intervals by the warning: Do not touch! Danger of explosion!’ When, in spite of this, a policeman touched the crate, sparks flashed out from it. He jumped back and the speech continued.

“Then the voice announced: ‘Patriots, move back. Take shelter. I will blow up in ten seconds!’ The crate and the tape recorder inside it then exploded—shades of Mission Impossible.”

—from *Stern* magazine (W. Germany)

The sudden emergence of dictatorship in Greece on April 21, 1967, shocked the self-righteous around the world. But this dictatorship did not spring full-blown from nothing; it was the logical culmination of Greece’s political history. Democracy in modern Greece has consisted of the shifting faces of rightist oligarchy.

When the Nazis arrived, they found Greece controlled by the Fascist Axis regime of Metaxas. It is well-known that the regular army and officer corps had no intention of stopping the German invasion—it was the volunteers and the reserve officers who tied down and eventually defeated the Nazis.

The final victory of the patriots was accomplished with no logistic support from their own government, for it was a government totally incapable of rallying the resources of the country.

While the Resistance was fighting the invaders, the Metaxas regime and King George were still busy arresting progressive elements all across the country. When, after months of bitter fighting, the Nazis finally occupied Greece, they conveniently found the jails already full of anti-Nazi patriots ready for shipment to extermination camps.

However, a large group of anti-fascists escaped from the Nafplion Prison to become the nucleus and organizing force of the Resistance. Two weeks after the complete occupation of Greece by the Nazis, the Resistance began its first acts of sabotage and harassment.

The Resistance in Greece today reflects the pattern of the 1940s. Long before the fascist “invasion” of April 1967 (by American and Greek forces rather than German ones), left-wing elements throughout the nation had found themselves under continual harassment by a rightist government.

Many of today’s fighters are Resistance veterans or their children—risking and sacrificing their lives so that Greece may exist as a true democracy.

The most glaring example of this suppression of the left was the murder of Gregory Lambrakis in May 1963. Lambrakis, an independent member of Parliament, was killed after speaking at an indoor peace rally in Salonika. He was run down by two thugs on a motorcycle in full view of the chief of police of Salonika and the Inspector of the Gendarmerie of Northern Greece. Lambrakis became a martyr, and his murderer was never found.

The radical youth of Greece rallied around the banner of a Lambrakis Youth Movement. It was founded by Mikis Theodorakis, composer of music from *Zorba the Greek* and a close friend of the dead hero, as well as others. This Lambrakis Youth Movement is now underground and is one of the groups in the new Resistance.

There are many Resistance organizations operating in Greece in 1968. Three groups are often considered to be in the vanguard of the struggle: the Democratic Defense, the Patriotic Front, and the Front's student Resistance arm, Rigas Pherraios.

Rigas is a very active group whose members have had more than their share of violent oppression from the government police.

The Democratic Front, which is reportedly the largest Resistance group of all, includes a broad political spectrum, from liberals to Communists. The Patriotic Front has its own regular newspaper to inform the Greek people about the work of the Resistance and about the latest outrages of the junta.

The Front has sent representatives out of Greece via its underground railroad to inform the world of events inside Greece' and to organize Greeks living abroad.

One of the Resistance names that can be safely mentioned is Tassos Demou, a member of the National Council of the Patriotic Front. He is known by name to the government police, but he is in hiding. Recently Demou granted an interview to reporters inside Greece.

"The decision has been made," he said, "to summon the people to an armed uprising. The time has not yet been set, but preparations are underway. We are determined to take up arms; we have no other choice!"

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