

Spyros Tsoutsoumpis

Governance and Violence during the Axis Occupation of Greece: A New Approach

The present article will focus on one of the least explored aspects of life inside “Hitler’s Greece;” the formation, development and role of the “counter-states” created by the Resistance forces between 1942 and 1944. Nazi-occupied Europe has been often presented as a monolithic entity that was ruled efficiently and tyrannically by the Wehrmacht and its assorted agencies.¹ However, “fortress Europe” was much more penetrable and fragmented than suggested. The Wehrmacht had to rely on a series of often undependable allies that included fascist parties such as the Croatian Ustasha,² hyper-conservative clerics such as Cardinal Tiso,³ ultra-right aristocrats like Admiral Horthy⁴ and semi-criminal militias such as the French Milice⁵ and the Greek Special Security Service of Colonel Lambou.⁶ Accordingly, the most distant and impenetrable areas of Europe; forests, swamps, mountains and working class slums, remained consistently outside the control of the Wehrmacht. These areas provided ideal hiding places for resisters in the early period of the occupation and served as the basis for the development of a number of shadow-states that ranged from the Byelorussian forest fief of Bielski⁷ to the Maquis redoubts in the wastes of Vercors⁸ and from the partisan

1. M. R. D Foot, *Resistance: European Resistance to Nazism* (London: Biteback, 2016); Werner Ring, *Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler’s Europe* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982).

2. Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New War Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst, 2008).

3. James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Josef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 2013).

4. Mario Fenyó, *Hitler, Horthy and Hungary: German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

5. Krisztián Bene, *La Collaboration Militaire Française dans la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: Codex, 2012).

6. Menelaos Haralabidis, *Η Εμπειρία της Κατοχής και της Αντίστασης στην Αθήνα* (The Experience of Resistance and Occupation in Athens) (Athens: Alexandria, 2012).

7. Tec Nechama, *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

8. H. R. Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

republics set up by Tito's guerillas⁹ to the Resistance's outposts in the Cretan White Mountains, where British Liaison Officers moved about in full uniform in broad daylight.¹⁰

As the Axis grew weak these shadow-states developed into fully fledged parallel governments that controlled vast areas. For peasants in the Auvergne, the Pindus Mountains or the Ukrainian steppe, the real government was neither the Wehrmacht nor its local puppets, but the partisans who exacted taxes, punished collaborators and miscreants, provided health care for the ailing people and drafted their sons and daughters into their armies. However, the study of these practices and institutions has been neglected in favor of high politics and the more salacious aspect of the Resistance, such as collaboration and violence. As a result, we know very little about the institutions set up by the guerilla organizations, their governance practices or about civilian responses to these ventures. Nevertheless, the decision to support the Resistance or join a collaborationist militia was not taken in a void. Such choices were shaped by the civilians' relations and encounters with the Resistance organizations. Studying these phenomena outside the context of rebel governance leaves us with a partial and often distorted understanding of Resistance policies and civilian choices, as Ana Arjona argued "whether a social contract exists between a community and a group, and what specific behaviors the group adopts, should be taken into account when trying to understand why civilians behave in the way they do in war zones."¹¹

The lack of research is even more impressive, if we consider the extent to which these governance structures shaped the life of civilians and the course of the war, as David Kilcullen noted "rebels play a central role in defining how civilians live their lives during wartime not only through violence, but equally through the development of structures and practices of rule."¹² In fact, governance took precedence over military activities from early on and eventually became the main task of the Resistance forces. The Resistance organizations were aware of

9. Milovan Djilas, *Wartime* (London and New York: Harcourt, 1977).

10. Xan Fielding, *Hide and Seek: The Story of a Wartime Agent* (London: The Folio Society, 2013).

11. Ana Arjona, "Wartime Institutions: A Research Agenda," *HiCN Working Paper 169*, (2014): 37.

12. David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (London: Hurst, 2010), 2.

their weakness vis-à-vis the Wehrmacht and knew that any head-on collision would result in a catastrophe. Their ultimate purpose was not to oust the Axis troops by force of arms, but to set up a “competitive system of control over the population” that would allow them to mobilize the population and set the foundations for a future takeover. In short, the guerillas aim was not to “outfight” but to “outgovern” the Axis and its allies. If they managed to do this, they had a good shot at surviving the occupation and at seizing the reigns once the war was over. Effective governance was, therefore, the key to the victory, as David Galula argued “If the insurgent manages to dissociate the population from the counterinsurgency, to control it physically, to get its active support, he will win the war because, in the final analysis, the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population or, at worst, on its submissiveness.”¹³ Yet, winning the allegiance of the civilian population was seldom easy since “persuading local inhabitants to give support voluntarily guerrillas must either adapt their message to local beliefs, or educate civilians to change their preferences.”¹⁴

However, as several recent studies showed not all armed actors choose to engage with the civilian population and those who do often adopt strikingly different methods and policies. Some organizations such as the Colombian FARC¹⁵ or the Maoist rebels in India provided their constituents with services such as healthcare, education and disputed resolution.¹⁶ Other groups like *The Shining Path*¹⁷ adopted a predatory form of government and steered clear of providing such collective goods. Scholars have attributed these differences to a series of different factors. Jeremy Weinstein argued that governance strategies are shaped by resource endowment availability. According to Weinstein resource,

13. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Praeger, 1964), 6.

14. Nelson Kasfir, “Guerrillas and Civilian Participation: The National Resistance Army in Uganda, 1981-86,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 43 (2005), 281-282.

15. Gary Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency* (New York: Zed Books, 2012).

16. Bert Suykens, “Comparing Rebel Rule through Revolution and Naturalization: Ideologies of Governance in Naxalite and Naga India,” in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir and Zachariah Mampilly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 138-158.

17. Gustavo Goritti, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Lewis Taylor, *Guerrilla War in Peru's Northern Highlands, 1980-1997* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

poor groups are depended on civilian consent to acquire provisions, material and recruits. Such groups, therefore, adopt pro-civilian policies to placate their constituents and earn their support. At the same time, such groups tend to abstain from acts of violence against the civilian population. Accordingly, resource rich groups tend to adopt predatory forms of governance and engage in large scale violence against their constituents.¹⁸ Other scholars stressed factors such as territorial control, the form and quality or pre-war governance institutions¹⁹ and political ideology.²⁰ The latter was also underlined by Resistance scholars like Mark Mazower, who attributed the success of Left-Wing Resistance movements like EAM to their “stress on social reform and ideological propaganda among the rank and file...self-identification as an ‘organization’ based upon social rather than kinship roles... [and]... deliberately low-profile leadership.”²¹

The present article will contribute the understanding of this phenomenon and shed new light on these controversial issues by providing a comparative study of rebel governance in Axis occupied Greece. The study will build on a series of new and unexplored sources; British SOE and Resistance archives, oral testimonies, memoirs, diaries and the Resistance press to address three questions: What was the role and function of the guerilla counter-state? How did group ideology impact governance strategies? How and in what extent civilians endorsed or resisted such strategies and what was their contribution to making of these institutions? The article will track the origins and development of the rebel “counter-states” in free Greece, discuss the tactics pursued EAM in its effort to win over the civilian population and explore civilian responses to their efforts. This approach will not only shed light on this little-known aspect of the Resistance but will also provide new insights on contested issues such as violence and collaboration.

18. Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

19. Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011).

20. Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Ideology in civil war: instrumental adoption and beyond,” *Journal of Peace Research* 51 (2014): 213-226.

21. Mark Mazower, “Structures of Authority in the Greek Resistance, 1941-1944,” in *Community, Authority and Resistance to Fascism*, ed. Tim Kirk and Anthony McEligott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 122.

Bandits to Liberators: The Making of Free Greece

The emergence of the Greek Resistance movement has been usually presented as a response to social and political grievances that arose during the occupation. A recent study encapsulates this narrative as follows, “the partisans came out of hiding and entered the villages, where they promoted national liberation and the need for struggle against the enemy – an initiative that impressed the villagers and resulted in many of them joining the partisans.”²² However, the appearance of the Resistance and the establishment of “Free Greece” was a much more gradual and tortuous process. The two largest Resistance organizations EAM, a loose coalition of various radical parties that was dominated by the Greek Communist Party (KKE), and the republican EDES (Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Syndesmos – National Republican League of Greece) were formed in late 1941. Yet, the first guerilla bands did not appear until a year later. In fact, some areas were completely devoid of guerilla activity until the spring of 1943. Moreover, such bands were hardly representative of the rural population. Most guerillas were highly educated urbanites, professional officers and KKE members.²³

Fielding the bands was not a simple process since both organizations had to solve a series of crucial issues from procuring weapons and equipment to finding suitable recruits. More importantly, they had to determine the most effective tactics to gain the trust and support of the peasantry. David Galula noted that “Revolutionary warfare is first and foremost a political contest since in this type of warfare the objective is the population itself, the operations, designed to win it over (for the insurgent) or to keep it at least submissive (for the counterinsurgency), are essential of a political nature.”²⁴

Victory was, thus, depended on the ability of the insurgents to mobilize civilian support. However, such support was not a given. Rural

22. Yannis Skalidakis, “From Resistance to Counterstate: The Making of a Revolutionary Power in the Liberated Zones of Occupied Greece, 1943-1944,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 33 (2015): 162.

23. Giannis Katsantonis, *Πολεμώντας τους κατακτητές* (Fighting the occupiers) (Athens: Sinhrono Epoxe, 1979), 18; Giorgos Houliaras (Pericles), *Ο Δρόμος είναι άσωτος* (The long and winding road) (Athens: Oionos, 2006), 8; Giannis Privovolos, *Μόνιμοι αξιωματικοί στον ΕΛΑΣ οικειοθελώς ή εξ ανάγκης* (Regular officers in ELAS, volunteers or coerced) (Athens: Alfeios, 2009), 348.

24. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 7.

Greece was a land of conservative, small proprietors who viewed both the left and the anti-monarchist republicans of EDES with suspicion. Deciding which course to follow was therefore of pivotal importance and debates over the appropriate tactics were particularly fierce. For instance, a series of meetings between EAM political cadres, prospective military leaders and KKE politicians in the Peloponnesian city of Patras in late 1942 ended up in a shouting match between the military cadres, who insisted that the “peasants only respected force,” and the political cadres, who insisted that they should provide a modicum of social services and try to recruit the brightest and bravest peasants in the EAM before they resort to violence.²⁵

Guerrilla bands might have lacked a road map for success, however, most of them counted on the peasants’ patriotism and the more optimistic expected to be greeted as liberators. Yet, during this period villagers were much more likely to flee before them or betray them to the Axis rather than to join them in the spot. An ELAS officer from the area of Thessaly noted that the first time his band ventured into a habituated area “the peasants locked themselves in, we tried to raise their spirits with our singing, however, they refused to show up, we ultimately had to drag them out by force.”²⁶ EDES cadres also complained often that the peasants were “bereft of patriotism” and were “in no mood for Resistance.”²⁷

How can we explain such reactions? The peasants were certainly patriotic, and it is quite probable that the nationalistic proclamations of the guerrilla bands did not lack a certain appeal among veterans of the recent Greco-Italian War. However, as a recent study of civilian attitudes in occupied Eastern Europe noted, “in the eyes of the occupied population, the partisans’ practical impact on everyday life was more directly important than the partisans’ long-term aims.”²⁸ Indeed, while peasants were not entirely without sympathy, they were first and foremost concerned about the wellbeing of their families. This led many of them to steer clear from the guerrilla bands, since their presence put

25. Privovolos, *Αξιωματικοί στον ΕΛΑΣ* (Officers in ELAS), 119.

26. Giannis K. Douatzis, *Ημερολόγιο Καπετάν Όθρυ* (The diary of Kapetan Othri) (Athens: Aixmi, 1983), 230.

27. Iosif Papadakis, *Το ημερολόγιο ενός αγωνιστή* (The diary of a fighter) (Chania: Self-Published, 2009), 26-27.

28. Ben Shepherd and Juliette Pattinson (ed.), *War in a Twilight World: Partisan and Anti-Partisan Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1939-45* (London: Palgrave, 2010), 3.

their families and communities in dire danger of reprisals and placed an overwhelming strain on their resources.

The ragtag appearance of many guerrillas who were dressed in a motley assortment of uniforms and equipped with antique weapons as well as their constant demands for food and provisions, also, did little to help their cause, as it led many peasants to dismiss them as “loafers, vagabonds and thieves” who only took up arms “to live at the expense of the peasants.”²⁹ Such accusations were not altogether inaccurate. An ELAS guerilla from the Olympus area noted in his memoir, “provisioning was done during the night when we requisitioned sheep from the shepherds. The shepherds took us for bandits and after all that’s how we acted to take what we wanted.”³⁰ Many of the first bands actually survived in the raid and extortion, while others acted as henchmen to local notables. The first ELAS bands in northern Peloponnesus survived by leasing their services to affluent farmers. The guerillas protected their estates from raiders and bandits, helped them “deal” with their personal rivals and on occasion performed contract killings. In return they received money, provision and hide-outs.³¹

These alliances might have seemed at odds with the radical proclamations of the Resistance, however, guerilla leaders knew that “guerilla warfare is like the elections, you first have to attract the support of the power-brokers before you attempt to do anything.”³² Indeed, what often determined the success or failure of a band during this early period was neither strength of arguments nor the rhetorical prowess of the guerilla leaders, but their ties to local communities and ability to mobilize local support networks. Armed groups do not operate in a void, as Paul Staniland noted, “insurgent groups are built by mobilizing prewar politicized social networks. These preexisting social bases provide information, trust, and share political meanings that organizers can use to

29. Elias Reggas, *Autobiography* (Unpublished, Personal Archive), 143.

30. Αρχείο Σύγχρονης Κοινωνικής Ιστορίας (Hereafter ASKI), Archive KKE, Box 429, File-26/4/13.

31. G. Bouratzis, «Το αντάρτικο κίνημα στην Ηλεία 1943-1944» (The guerrilla movement in Ilea Peloponnesus), *Ιστορικό Αρχείο Εθνικής Αντίστασης* 13 (1959): 71; Pantelis Moutoulas, «Το ΕΑΜ στην Ηλεία. Η συγκρότηση της λαϊκής ηγεμονίας 1941-1944» (EAM in Ilea, the construction of popular hegemony) (PhD diss., Pantheon University, 2012), 181.

32. Napoleon Zervas, *Απομνημονεύματα* (Recollections) (Athens: Metron, 2002), 151.

create new armed groups.”³³ Lack of access to such ties could have dire consequences. ELAS successive failures to establish a foothold in eastern Macedonia and Peloponnesus were to a great extent to the lack of local cadres. Accordingly, ELAS was able to establish a foothold in the ragged uplands of Tzoumerka, a region which according to a local cadre “thoroughly lacked revolutionary traditions” thanks to the support of extended pastoral clans like the Tsakas and Tsoumanis families.³⁴

However, such alliances operated on a *quid pro quo* basis. Local communities and notables expected to receive a series of “services” from the guerillas. Protection from rivals and predators was the most important among them. Stathis Kalyvas has argued that the foremost mechanism for allowing rebels to gain support is “shielding” – i.e. protecting the civilians from threats of violence by a rival violent actor.³⁵ The breakdown of social order and the outbreak of a dire financial crisis made such services particularly sought-after by peasant communities and notables. The division of the countryside into separate Italian, German and Bulgarian zones of occupation, the looting of the country’s wealth and resources and the allied blockade imposed from late 1941 onwards suffocated the economy and led to the prolonged financial crisis and eventually to a famine that claimed tens of thousands of lives in Athens, Thessaloniki and many Aegean islands.³⁶ Rural areas managed to weather this storm thanks to the intensification of farming and the emergence of a parallel underground market that facilitated the transfer of produce and material from the countryside to the cities.³⁷

In some cases, such transactions led to a profound reversal of social and financial relations. Farming communities in the plains of Macedonia and Thessaly and pastoral villagers were able to make a killing by

33. Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 7.

34. Διεύθυνση Ιστορίας Στρατού (Hereafter DIS), Archive Georgiou Agorou, File 12, Έκθεση δράσης του 3/40 συντάγματος, 5.

35. Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 124.

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

37. Kostantinos Diamantis, *Μνήμες, πόλεμος και Κατοχή: Πάπιγκο 1940-1944* (Memories, resistance and civil war: Papigo) (Ioannina: self-published, 2006), 47; Harilaos Vagias, *Η Αρτα της Κατοχής* (Arta during the occupation) (Arta: n.p., 2004), 137.

trading in the black market. A contemporary report from Central Macedonia noted that the bourgeoisie and the poorer classes were suffering “however, for the peasants this is the best period in living memory.”³⁸ However, this newly found source wealth was constantly threatened by Axis troops, corrupt officials and bandits.³⁹ The collapse of the state and the withdrawal of the gendarmes allowed marauders and predatory mountain clans, such as the Zikos in Epirus and the Bakogiannis in Thessaly, to rob and extort protection money from peddlers, farmers and simple villagers alike. This situation had a debilitating effect on the underground economy, as it eventually deprived farmers of the incentive to produce a surplus and rendered peddlers increasingly unwilling to take risks. This situation, also, led to a further increase of the already inflated prices.⁴⁰

The inability of the state to deal with this situation led many notables and peasant communities to turn for protection to the guerrillas, “several murders took place after the gendarmes moved out from our village in early May,” noted a magistrate from a Maniate village in mid-1943; “the situation had become really dangerous, the villagers conferred and the majority decided to ask ELAS to take over the village, they proceeded to do so and the local authorities were abolished.”⁴¹ However, the guerrillas were certainly not Robin Hoods. In most cases, the guerrillas asked and obtained a portion of black-market profits and imposed a tax in kind to all peasants. Ultimately, their foremost aim was not to liberate the peasants from the scourge of banditry, but rather to gain control of the black-market routes. The guerrillas hoped that the income from racketeering would allow them to solidify their presence, expand their activities and recruit more men. In short, the guerrillas aimed to reorganize the local rackets and replace an erratic and inefficient form of

38. Ελληνικό Λογοτεχνικό και Ιστορικό Αρχείο (Hereafter ELIA), Archive of the Bulgarian Occupation, September-December 1942, Απόσπασμα Δελτίου Πληροφοριών μηνός Αυγούστου 1942.

39. Dimos Votsikas, *Στη Θύελλα: Αναμνήσεις από την Εθνική Αντίσταση και την δράση του Δημοκρατικού Στρατού Ελλάδας στην Ήπειρο και στη Δ. Μακεδονία* (Into the Storm: Recollections from the Resistance and the Civil War) (Athens: Self-Published, 1985), 41.

40. Vagias, *Η Άρτα της Κατοχής* (Arta during the occupation), 138.

41. Γενικά Αρχεία του Κράτους (Hereafter GAK), Archive Emmanuel Tsouderos (Hereafter AET), Αποστολή Α/File/2/Δελτίο Πληροφοριών υπ’ αριθμόν 1/12.

extortion with a methodic and efficient one. Early guerilla bands operated in a manner that closely approximated “the activities of blue-collar criminals.” The growing availability of resources allowed them to move from “once-for-all, predatory operations to parasitical ones that yield a steadier, more dependable flow of income” i.e. taxation, a tactic that approximated those of organized crime groups.⁴²

This change had significant repercussions for the function and form of the rebel-state. The establishment of a monopoly of violence and the formation of extensive zones of control allowed the guerrillas to start providing a series of state-like functions; education, health care and infrastructure maintenance. The provision of these social services had a twofold rationale. To stem defection and legitimize their presence to local societies. Memoirs abound with images of enthusiastic peasants. However, even after the successful anti-bandit drives, recruits were scarce. Moreover, the existence of multiple guerrilla organizations often led the peasants to “shop around” for the best deal. Many peasants casually defected from one organization to the other in the hope to gain material rewards, exact revenge or simply placate the strongman of the day. An EAM report noted that peasants in the uplands of western Roumeli “would declare for EAM whenever one of our bands appeared and when EDES guerilla showed up they would defect and join them.”⁴³ A cadre from Epirus similarly complained that “the locals are willing to sell themselves for a few breadcrumbs... neither we nor our rivals [EDES] can claim that they prevail in this, as the side that is willing to give the most to the locals will be the one to finally prevail in this area.”⁴⁴ At the same time the guerillas were aware that “taxation and extortion are two sides of the same coin,”⁴⁵ and many peasants believed that by accepting the guerrillas rule, they simply replaced a mercurial and somewhat irrational set of predators with a much more organized and ruthless one. The guerillas, thus, hoped that by diverting funds to such activities they would be able to show that “that at least part of the

42. R.T. Taylor, “The insurgent economy: Black market operations of guerrilla organizations,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 20, (1993): 13.

43. ASKI Digital Archives/<http://62.103.28.111/neolaia/rec.asp?id=53147&nofoto=0>.

44. *Ibid* (accessed 10 January 2015).

45. Kasfir, “Guerrillas and Civilian Participation,” 286.

funds directly benefited local residents,” and thus to endow their presence with a veneer of normalcy and respectability.⁴⁶

The increased attention to hearts and minds, also, coincided with an effort to tone down violence and centralize administration. Bandits and collaborationists weren't the only victim of the guerrillas. Indeed, the arrival of the guerrillas provided thousands of peasants with a perfect pretext to settle accounts that lingered for years. The ferocity of denunciations and the ruthlessness of many guerrillas terrified even seasoned cadres such as G. Douatzis, an ELAS kapetanios in Euboea who noted to an audience of EAM cadres “the people were terrified... I have already made myself clear in the meeting we held two nights ago, when I said that we are people's fighters and not murderers... as I understand, both our people and the peasants have misunderstood badly our mission and aims since they are bent on killing anyone who has even exchanged a few words with an Italian.”⁴⁷ This was not an isolated incident. In fact, some cadres went even further by forming “red republics” in small towns such as Kalabaka, Almyros and Dimitsana.⁴⁸ In these towns the arrival of ELAS was accompanied by executions, large scale looting and destruction of property. EAM tried to nip in the bud such attitudes, since they undermined its effort to build support across the political spectrum under the umbrella of the Popular Liberation Front. Radical cadres were thus denounced as leftist deviation and were quietly moved to different areas. During the same time EAM, also, made efforts to include a number of “reactionaries” in its administration hoping that this would sooth the worries of the more conservative segment of the peasantry.⁴⁹

This shift is encapsulated in a small how-to guide that was distributed to new officers from mid-1943. The small booklet covered a series of topics from military tactics to social etiquette when dealing with the peasants. The anonymous author warned guerrilla officers that bravery and smarts were not enough to attract peasant support. In fact, their first duty should be to win hearts and minds by protecting the peasant's

46. Suykens, *Comparing Rebel Rule*, 150.

47. Douatzis, *Ημερολόγιο*, 290-291.

48. Giorgos Papadopoulos, *Η Αντίσταση στη Θεσσαλία* (Thessaly during the Resistance) (Athens: Papazisis, 2015), 125-130; Pantelis Moutoulas, *Πελοπόννησος 1940-1945* (Peloponnesus 1940-1945) (Athens: Vivliorama, 2004), 523.

49. ASKI, Archive KKE, Box 418, File 24/2/91.

property and setting up institutions that would help to disseminate EAM agenda. According to the pamphlet, the guerrilla ought to be “a leader, a missionary... the guides of the peasantry.” The pamphlet underlined that the guerrillas must appear as the “guardian angels of their properties and the sweat of their brow” and assist the peasantry in their everyday toils: “the purposes of guerrilla warfare are not limited in this [warfare], but are extended into the field of the urgent practical needs of our people... and follow faithfully the activities of EAM in the cities. [ELAS] does not only fight for freedom, but also for the bread and the livelihood of the rural masses... thus the guerrillas of ELAS protect the people from brigandage, re-establish the law, restore justice.”

However, despite the increase in remittances and rapid territorial expansion, this emphasis on hearts and minds would have remained a dead letter without the ample help of a third party; the British Special Operations Executive. The British Secret Services had established a presence in the country since before the war. Their presence increased during the North-Africa campaign and accelerated even further in the eve of the Sicily landings, when several SOE missions were established across the country. The purpose of these missions was to augment the guerillas military and operational capabilities by providing money, equipment and know-how. The presence of the British was a major boost to the guerilla organizations, since it provided them with much needed financial help, EAM received a little over 100.000 golden sovereigns in the spring of 1943 and helped them to legitimize their presence to the eyes of the more affluent peasants and the small town bourgeoisie, who viewed the guerillas as little better than bandits. British financial help allowed the guerillas to provide an even greater range of social amenities and led to a rapid improvement of living conditions in Free Mountain Greece,⁵⁰ a British officer noted that the food available on some guerilla strongholds “was better... than most people in Britain would have at the time.”⁵¹

While these changes led to a considerable improvement in peasant-guerrilla relations, the threat of violence was never far off. Indeed,

50. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives [Hereafter LHCMA], The Papers of Brigadier Edmund Charles Wolf Myers /1/3/Greece–Sidelights of Activities in the Mountains During the War, 2.

51. Imperial War Museum/12578/H. W Hainsworth, *Special Missions* (1989), 110.

many peasants felt that they had no choice, but to comply with the guerrillas demands. A peasant who was approached by ELAS guerrilla to provide his mules noted that “the guerrillas gave me a receipt, they told me “here take this and when we’ll take over the state we’ll pay you back,” I honestly didn’t expect to get paid, but they had guns and I didn’t, what could I have done?”⁵² While he was not threatened, he certainly felt that he had no choice, but to do what was asked of him. Another peasant noted that “the guerrillas had guns, we had no choice but to support them, thus, many of us enlisted in ELAS, others joined EAM and many applied for a KKE membership.”⁵³

However, peasants were not completely helpless. Indeed, many used the weapons of the weak; humor, cunning, ridicule and minor sabotage to resist the guerrillas demands and assert their rights. Many peasants recalled with a great sense of pride how they managed to outsmart the guerrillas by feigning support or by providing them with useless advice. A Thessalian peasant recalled that “we had to become good actors” to cope with the situation and adopt “a theatrical attitude.”⁵⁴ One shepherd from the area of Tzoumerka recalled that he had learned by heart many ELAS songs and the names of local big-wigs, which he used whenever he came into trouble with the EAM authorities. In one occasion, he resorted to a guerilla band that tried to requisition a part of his flock by stating “I have contributed for the struggle much more than any of you” and dared them to contact a local EAM bigshot whom he claimed as a personal friend. The guerrillas were unable to call off his bluff, so he was able to keep his flock intact.⁵⁵ Similar methods were used to protest against the overthrowing of respected community leaders. One of the first acts of ELAS, after entering a village, was to ask for the replacement of local leaders and the creation of an EAM committee in their stead. Peasants were rarely able to reject such demands; however, they often managed to resist and subvert them by staffing such committees with underage children or even individuals with mental disabilities. In

52. P. T., Oral Testimony, Igoumenitsa 2008.

53. Mihalis Kosviras, *Από το βουνό στον Αμβώνα* (From the mountain to the pulpit) (Athens: Taxideftis, 2009), 110.

54. Kosviras, *op. cit.*, 114.

55. Kostas Stasinou, *Το Αθαμάνιο των Τζουμέρκων* (Athamania in Tzoumerka) (Athens: Self-Published, 2000), 73.

one case an 8-year old girl was elected as village *ipefthinos* (“responsible one”) by her compatriots.⁵⁶ When such tricks did not pay off, the peasants could always retort to bribery or ask the help of a relative who served in the Resistance organizations.⁵⁷ However, there were limits to the guerillas’ tolerance. While they allowed individuals “to voice disagreements with the specifics of rebel governance,” any efforts to challenge the resistance project in its entirety were punished with outmost brutality.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, guerilla cadres didn’t see such acts of Resistance as a form of political reaction or an outcome of their short comings. Instead, most of them appointed it to the peasants’ innate conservatism and backwardness. Most mid-ranking and senior cadres were urbanite intellectuals and laborers, who saw the peasants as the proverbial sack of potatoes. Yet, the same cadres, also, believed that the peasants were malleable and prone to change after all such attitudes were, but a by-product of Capitalism, a social system that was in acute crisis and bound to disappear after the end of the war.⁵⁹ The task of EAM was to hasten this collapse and the inevitable transformation of society by re-educating the peasantry and enfranchising a range of social groups; youths, women and minorities that had been marginalized by the pre-war regime. EAM appointed women to village councils and in the spring of 1944 accelerated the transformation of gender roles in rural Greece, by giving women the right to vote and join the armed forces for the first time in the country’s history.⁶⁰ EAM brought equally radical changes to the lives of youths. The first step taken by EAM was the creation of a youth section, EPON, in the summer of 1943. EPON was divided into a military branch that was soon absorbed by ELAS and a civilian branch

56. Lazaros Arseniou, *Η Θεσσαλία στην Αντίσταση* (Thessaly during the Resistance), Vol. 1 (Larisa: Ella, 1999), 279.

57. ASKI, KKE Archive, Box 415, File-23/8/46.8.5.44.

58. Ana Arjona, “Civilian Resistance to Rebel Governance,” in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir and Zachariah Mampilly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 186.

59. GAK, Βασιλικά ανάκτορα, File 369/165, Έκθεσις 1944.

60. For the changes brought in women’s lives see: Tasoula Vervenioti, “Αντάρτισσες του ΕΛΑΣ και Μαχήτριες του ΔΣΕ” (Women fighters in ELAS and in the DSE), *Kleio* 3 (2006), 163-187; The PEEA was a provisional government established by EAM in April 1944. Its main role was to act as a counterweight to the government in exile. However, it remained a figurehead, as true power rested with the KKE.

whose task was to “organize culture in every village” and, thus, prepare the new generation to become the “builders of the new Greece.”⁶¹

EPON had a twofold purpose; to serve as a breeding ground for future cadres and provide much needed social services to the peasantry. EPON cadres cultivated the fields of guerillas and war invalids, repaired roads, tended to refugees and displaced persons, while many volunteered as nurses and teachers. Moreover, EPON cadres were responsible for the steady diet of propaganda fed to the peasants. They wrote slogans and scribbled graffiti on the walls of public buildings that were known as “Efimerides Toihou,” the wall newspapers, edited newspapers and periodicals and delivered fiery speeches to the peasantry during national holidays.⁶² However, while EAM had the monopoly of propaganda in its territory, and censored news and information carefully⁶³ this propaganda had a very moderate effect, in fact, “most of it went over the villagers’ heads... especially the older ones, they really did not understand what was going on, and they were only interested where the next bit of food was coming from it seems to me, for themselves and for their children.”⁶⁴

Moreover, not all cadres were supportive of such radical changes. Indeed, in many areas the social *status quo* persisted with EAM’s blessing. In many cases EAM cadres refused to allow their female relatives to take part in the organization. Such attitudes were not confined to “reactionary” mountain villages but were quite widespread in the “red” villages of the Thessaly plain, where many cadres vetoed the refusal of women in the village administration. In one case, an EAM council leader threatened to defect to the Germans along with all his fellow villagers unless EAM sanctioned the dissolution of the local village women’s committee. The prefectural EAM commission obliged and the women’s organization was promptly disbanded.⁶⁵

61. ASKI Digital Archive, <http://62.103.28.111/neolaia/rec.asp?id=50953&nofoto=0> (accessed 10 August 2017).

62. ELIA Press Archive, Δράση, 25-08-1944; John Ponder, *Patriots and Scoundrels: Behind Enemy Lines in Occupied Greece 1943-1944* (Melbourne: Hyland House Publishing, 1997), 167.

63. National Archives, HS5/5/695/Capt. J. H. Childs, Report on my stay in Greece-May 1943-April 1944.

64. Imperial War Museum, Thomas Raymond Mason, Oral Interview.

65. ELIA, Archive EAM Παλαμά-Καρδίτσας, Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο (EAM), Πανθεσσαλική επιτροπή, 24-4-1944.

The same problems were evident from one of the more lauded institutions of EAM: The “Peoples Courts.” EAM strove to impose a monopoly of violence and create an alternative judicial system from early on. The creation and success of such a system was of pivotal importance, as Zachariah Mampilly noted “the establishment of a force capable of policing the population, followed by a broader judicial mechanism to regulate disputes... is the key determinant as to whether the rebel group is able to make the transition from a roving insurgency to a stationary one.”⁶⁶ The guerillas attacked gendarmerie stations and encouraged the peasants to stop using the services of local courts and village councils that were replaced with their own committees run by an *ipefthinos* or “responsible one” who substituted for all intents and purposes the pre-war village mayor. The *ipefthinos* often doubled as the president of the “Peoples Courts” that were set up by EAM in most towns and large villages. Such courts, that were in theory comprised by the most respected and educated citizens, tried a wide array of cases that ranged from domestic violence to arson and petty theft. More serious infractions such as treason and murder were tried by military courts. The decisions of the courts were enforced by ELAS and the *Ethniki Politofilaki* (National Guard).

Post-war memoirs lauded the *ipefthinos* and the Peoples Courts as instruments of impartial administration and swift justice. Yet, archival material and personal testimonies present a very different picture. Corruption and maladministration were the rule in many parts of free Greece. Often the *ipefthinos* used their positions to extort money for favors, persecute their enemies and enrich themselves and their families by appropriating EAM funds. A senior EAM member who travelled from Athens to Thessaly noted in his report: “We always thought that the *ipefthinos* would be those forced to endure the greatest sacrifices, deprivations and hardship, yet in the countryside they have a very different idea of their position. In fact, the *ipefthinos* and their relatives are those who endure the least hardship ... we can certainly claim that those who occupied such positions were not the appropriate persons, but rather self-seeking crooks and you can certainly appreciate how much harm this does to our cause.”⁶⁷

66. Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 63-64.

67. ASKI, Archive KKE, Box 418, File-24/2/91.

In more than one occasions the *ipeftinos* dissolved the people's courts and replaced their members with their own relatives and friends. People's judges were also far from incorruptible. Many of them showed preferential treatment to their relatives, friends and anyone who could afford to pay them off. Others tried cases while heavily inebriated. It was no wonder therefore, that these institutions in many cases created far more problems than they set out to address.⁶⁸

EAM cadres' familiarity with such narratives led them to turn with a profound fury against "deviants" such as prostitutes, many of whom were brutally murdered, homosexuals, whom like their Yugoslav counterparts they viewed as "freaks" and believed that "no perverts could hold positions or be party members,"⁶⁹ drunks and drug addicts. Moreover, EAM put a strict prohibition on the fraternization between male and female cadres.⁷⁰

ELAS officials marketed their organizations as the heralds of radical change. Yet, while leading cadres might have embraced such ideas, their foremost concern was to prevail over their rivals and outlive the Axis. If they managed to achieve this, they had a good shot at seizing power in the aftermath of the war. However, in order to achieve this, they had to gain the support of the peasantry. Resistance cadres were pragmatists, they knew that those who joined them took considerable risks and therefore expected considerable returns both in the short term and the long term. The Resistance therefore had to provide its faithful with a series of perks; privileged access to resources and positions of powers and immunity from prosecution, were the most important. At the same time, both organizations were ready and willing to sacrifice their principals when occasion called for it. Thus, influential men were allowed to stop their wives from joining EAM, brutalize civilians and toe the line of EAM whenever it didn't suit their personal interests. Corruption and favoritism allowed the Resistance organizations to keep their clientele, however, they also undermined the organizations legitimacy and effectiveness. A blowback was not far behind.

68. ELIA, Archive EAM Παλαμά-Καρδίτσας, Προς το Θεσσαλικό γραφείο του ΚΚΕ, 3-2-1944.

69. Djillas, *Wartime*, 127; Georgoulas Beikos, *Η λαϊκή εξουσία στην ελεύθερη Ελλάδα* (The people power in Free Greece), Vol.2 (Athens: Themelio, 2005), 225-226.

70. Moutoulas, *Πελοπόννησος*, 526-527.

Crisis and transformation

The summer of 1943 was the high point of the Resistance. The Italian capitulation allowed the two organizations to expand rapidly towards the lowlands and acquire a huge amount of weapons and materiel. The growing availability of weapons and the almost unlimited supply of British funds led to a massive increase of the guerrilla forces. Within a few weeks EDES expanded from a mere 1500 to over 8000, while ELAS forces almost tripled.⁷¹ Yet, this expansion had an important side-effect; it diluted the nucleus of the guerilla bands and with it their discipline and ideological character. Most early resisters were hard, determined and highly ideological men, who were willing to put their lives on the line for their cause. Moreover, in the early days of the Resistance most recruits were carefully vetted since the partisans were wary of traitors and infiltrators. Finally, the majority of recruits received careful and consistent indoctrination.⁷² Such precautions were hereafter neglected by the guerrilla organizations that started to use recruitment tactics they had previously shunned. For instance, in Epirus EAM and EDES cadres gave new recruits a cash payment, that ranged between three to five sovereigns and promised continuation of payment for at least two more months. This situation was not confined to Epirus and it persisted well into the autumn of 1943, despite the repeated instruction of the BMM that it was “not allowed or possible to offer or promise money ... in order to move ‘Andartes’ to their org” and the strict prohibition against guerrillas remaining “in or near their place of residence.”⁷³

As news of the Resistance organizations largesse spread in the countryside scores of déclassé peasants and criminals; petty thieves, thugs, rapists, rustlers and even former collaborators rushed to enlist. Vasilis Papapanos, a law student and communist youth member described his new fellow-fighters as “derelict men...the most rotten and useless elements of our society, dregs... who only joined us so as to get a plate of

71. Lars Baerentzen (ed.), *British Reports on Greece* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1982), 78.

72. ASKI, Archive KKE, Box 429, File-26/4/13.

73. LHCMA, Myers 1/4 in 1/4-6, National Band of Rebels, JGHQ, Instruction No. 7, 18 August 1943.

food.”⁷⁴ The presence of these men had a catastrophic impact on the bands discipline, combat worthiness and relations with the civilian population. Many of the new recruits engaged in criminal activities such as racketeering, pimping, drug dealing and murder for hire.⁷⁵ An ELAS guerilla from the area of Boeotia recalled that several guerillas dubbed in black market and protection rackets, “when [ELAS] broadened the recruit basis... many of those who joined, did it to satisfy their personal interests.” ELAS guerillas in Attica and Boeotia requisitioned oil and sheep from peasants and sold them in the bustling Athenian black market.⁷⁶ Soon, even Resistance newspapers started to complain of the guerillas attitudes and warned the leadership that unless they curtailed such behaviors the peasants would turn against them. An article in *Smolikas*, the official newspaper of the western Macedonian ELAS, noted that “our relations with the people are going from bad to worse ... the people see us as tyrants, as an occupation army... instead of the protectors of their honor and property; this is because of our unscrupulous behavior and the violence that has been so often used.”⁷⁷

The situation reached breaking point in the winter of 1943-1944. ELAS and EDES had clashed repeatedly with the Axis forces. However, this time the situation was different since Wehrmacht unleashed some of the deadliest counter-guerrilla operations of the occupation; Operation Panther began on 18 October and had as its main goal the opening of the Ioannina–Kalabaka motorway; it was followed by operations Tiger, Puma, Adler and Hubertus. The aim of these operations was two-fold: to re-open specific strategic routes that were held by the guerrillas,

74. Vasilis Papananos, *Το αντι-ηρωικό ημερολόγιο του ανταρτοεπονίτη Βασίλη Παπαπάνου* (The anti-heroic diary of the antarto-eponite Vasilis Papananos) (Athens: Oddyseas, 2006), 86.

75. ELIA Press Archive, Μηνιαίο Δελτίο, 1-2-1943; ELIA, The Archive of the 12th ELAS Regiment, File ΙΕ, Η Ταξιαρχία, 12ο σύνταγμα, αριθ. πρωτ. 694/16/3/44/EAM and ΚΚΕ.

76. Dimitrios Vlahos Grivas, *Το Χρονικό ενός αγωνιστή, μνήμες και γεγονότα από τον Β΄ Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο στην Αττικο-Βοιωτία* (The chronicle of a fighter, memories and events from the Second World War in Attiko-Beotea) (Acharnes: Self-Published, 1996), 48-49.

77. ELIA Press Archive, *Smolikas*, Issue 1, 18-7-1943.

and to destroy the material and social basis of the Resistance by carrying out a scorched-earth policy.⁷⁸

The guerrilla armies were unable to resist the onslaught of the Wehrmacht. Within a matter of days both ELAS and EDES were chased out of their mountain strongholds, while entire units disintegrated before firing a single shot against the advancing troops. During the same period ELAS attacked EDES strongholds in Epirus. The fight between ELAS and EDES soon degenerated into an all-out civil war, during which neither side gave nor expected quarter. Prisoners were often murdered and tortured, while peasants were looted with abandon by all sides.⁷⁹ The guerrilla armies soon came to resemble the Landsknecht columns that terrorized the central European peasantries during the Thirty Years War. Dressed in a combination of peasant rags, stolen clothes and Axis uniforms and armed with a motley assortment of weapons the guerrillas stole from friend and foe alike and savaged those, who attempted to resist. Peasants were murdered and tortured for failing to provide a few kilos of grain or a pack animal, an EDES cadre noted, “the destruction they have perpetrated is often far worse than what the German did... many houses were completely looted and many people have been left without clothes on their backs... protests, curses, threats are all that we hear every single day.”⁸⁰ The incompetence and cowardice of the neophyte guerillas was finally admitted by the upper echelons of ELAS authorities who noted that “the rapid expansion of ELAS had landed in the ranks... a number of men who are completely foreign to the character and the goals of ELAS... they use the guns that were given them to protect the honor, the property and the freedom of the people... to satisfy their own personal interest.”⁸¹

78. Dimitris Kostantinides, *Επιχείρηση Πάνθηρας* (Operation Panther) (Trikala: self-published, 2009); Stratos Dordanas, *Το αίμα των αθώων: αντίποινα των γερμανικών αρχών κατοχής στη Μακεδονία 1941-1944* (The blood of the innocent: reprisals of the occupation authorities in Macedonia 1941-1944) (Athens: Estia, 2007); Hermann Frank Meyer, *Blutiges Edelweiß. Die 1. Gebirgs-Division im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Ch. Links-Verlag, 2007).

79. National Archive, HS5/697/Personal Report, L, Sjt. Smith, K., H.q. Force 133, M.E.F, 10 Jan 44.P.

80. Georgios Romanos, *Μια αθηναϊκή βεγγέρα του 1944* (A gala in Athens in 1944) (Athens: Potamos, 2008), 201.

81. ELIA Press Archive, *Flabouro*, 6 January 1944.

Guerilla infighting and Axis raids had a catastrophic impact on the rural population and the Resistance organizations. EDES lost to EAM over half of its territory, however, EAM fared little better. The violence and venality of the ELAS troops and EAM administrators led to a thorough counter-revolution in northern Greece where local peasants, many of them of Pontic Greek origin, formed militias under the auspices of the German forces.⁸² Blowback was equally fierce in Peloponnesus where ordinary peasants, die-hard royalists and disenchanted former EAM members, joined the government sponsored “Security Battalions” militias.⁸³ These militias were formed in low-land affluent areas that had suffered from EAM’s exactions, such as the plain of Imathia and Pieria, the fertile Messenian lowlands and the olive and grain producing areas in the islands of Euboea and Lefkada. However, presenting the militiamen as outraged peasants does not capture their full range of motivations. Many of them came from the rural demimonde and were galvanized by the prospect of loot and violence, while others came from ethnic minorities and sided with the Axis to address grievances and settle scores, that dated from the time of the Balkan Wars.⁸⁴

Many of these organizations, also, set out to form their own parallel states. Security Battalion officers in Euboea and Messenia exacted taxes, tried peasant disputes and offered a number of services that were previously provided by EAM.⁸⁵ However, such efforts were seldom successful. Collaborationist militias lacked a coherent ideology. Many of these militias were home-guard units that were formed to protect a specific village or area from the exactions of EAM. Infighting between different militias was, also, far from uncommon, as was violence and

82. Nikos Marantzidis (ed.), *Οι άλλοι καπετάνιοι: αντικομμουνιστές ένοπλοι στα χρόνια της Κατοχής και του Εμφυλίου* (The other kapetanioi, anti-communist fighters during the occupation) (Athens: Estia, 2006).

83. Stathis Kalyvas, “Leftist violence during the Occupation,” in *After the War was Over: Reconstructing Family, State, and Nation in Greece, 1944-1960*, ed. Mark Mazower (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 142-183.

84. DIS, File 956/A, Αγγλική υπηρεσία πληροφοριών, Αναφορά για τα τάγματα ασφαλείας, 5-6.

85. ELIA, Douatzis Archive, File 1.2, Διεύθυνσις ευζωνικών ταγμάτων Εύβοιας, Αριθ. πρωτοκόλλου 6418, Πρόσκλησις, Ο στρατιωτικός διευθυντής των ταγμάτων ασφαλείας Εύβοιας, 13-9-1944; ELIA, Douatzis Archive, File 1.2, Ελληνική πολιτεία, Νομαρχία Εύβοιας, Αριθ. πρωτ. 5315 προς τον δήμο Χαλκηδέων.

corruption. Units like the Poulos Battalion in Central Macedonia essentially operated as an organized crime group.⁸⁶ The members of this group blackmailed peasants, extracted protection payments and engaged in robbery, theft and rape. Some militia leaders like major S. Stoupas tried to curtail such attitudes.⁸⁷ However, their efforts came to naught. Some ethnic militias, like those raised by Cham Albanians in north-western Greece, were slightly more successful in this respect, however, most of the militia leaders were essentially little different than warlords, whose only concern was their personal prestige and the protection of their own small kingdoms.⁸⁸

Yet, the presence of the militias threatened the very existence of ELAS since collaborationist formations controlled some of the more productive areas and many important mountain passes. Furthermore, despite their lack of governance skills, militia leaders were fierce and capable warriors and such militias bested ELAS in more than one occasions. Military setbacks and loss of territory undercut ELAS' financial basis, dealt a crippling blow to the underground barter economy and weakened the political grip of ELAS, as many cadres either opted for neutrality or defected to the other side. In the areas of Karditsa and Trikala, local EAM cadres repeatedly vetoed ELAS operations against local collaborationist militias and some even brokered agreements with militia leaders, who agreed to protect them in exchange for their support in case ELAS emerged victorious.⁸⁹

However, these were not the only problems faced by the Resistance groups. Anti-guerilla operations had led to the thorough destruction of many prosperous communities. A Red Cross representative, who travelled to Thessaly and Epirus in late-1943, noted the “flourishing communities of Pindus lay in ruins, their population, dishevelled and devastated, has taken refuge in the mountains... all their property has been

86. Stratos Dordanas, *Έλληνες εναντίον Ελλήνων: ο κόσμος των ταγμάτων ασφαλείας στην κατοχική Θεσσαλονίκη 1941-1944* (Greek against Greek: the world of the security battalions in occupied Thessaloniki) (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2006).

87. Ioannes Bougas, *Ματωμένες μνήμες 1940-1945* (Bloodstained memories 1940-1945) (Athens: Pelasgos, 2009), 211.

88. ELIA, Archive of the Bulgarian Occupation, File 2/2.3, 22-1-1944.

89. ELIA, ΑΕΡΚ, Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο (ΕΑΜ) Πανθεσσαλική επιτροπή, 24-4-1944.

destroyed.”⁹⁰ This crisis, also, had serious social repercussions, since poverty and hardship had reduced many areas to an anarchic state. A Red Cross official noted “there is no safety neither in the forest nor in the mountains...hunger has brutalized the people and narrowed their consciousness; banditry offers relief from hunger and looting is used to quell their needs.”⁹¹

Guerilla rule was often harsh and exacting; however, peasants knew that if they followed a certain set of rules they would be protected and allowed to carry on with their lives. Ultimately, the guerillas won the completion for government because they were able to provide the peasantry with the rarest and dearest collective good; safety. However, the inability of the guerillas to face up to the Wehrmacht and the lawlessness of the guerilla bands eventually broke the covenant between the organizations and the civilians and legitimized the mobilization against the guerrilla bands.

EAM, therefore, had to start its state-building efforts from scratch in the midst of a profound political and humanitarian crisis. ELAS responded by militarizing its administrative apparatus and unleashing a fresh wave of violence, that was aimed against defectors and collaborators of every hue. At the same time, EAM in an effort to raise its prestige, set up a rival administration to the internationally recognized government in exile. This “government” was known as PEEA (Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Apeleftherosis – Political Commission for National Liberation). EAM officials hoped that this move would serve to legitimize their “state” and undermine the efforts of their rivals, who presented them as mere bandits and usurpers. The militarization of administration had a significant impact on the policies of EAM and its relations with the civilian population. EAM increased taxes, imposed stricter restrictions on the movement of people and goods and diverted funds and personnel from civilian institutions and organizations such as EPON to the guerilla bands.⁹²

These changes helped ELAS deal with his rivals, however, they had a detrimental effect on civilian administration. A senior cadre from the

90. ELIA, AVZ, Comite central du Dist. De Trikala, Trikala le 9/11/43/commission de gestion pour les secours en greece. D.3/Div.

91. GAK, Archive Emmanuel Tsouderos, Αποστολή Α, File 2, Έκθεση επί της καταστάσεως των πυρόπαθων περιοχών Ηπείρου και Αιτωλοακαρνανίας, 2.

92. GAK, Archive Βασιλικών Ανακτόρων, 369/165, Έκθεση 1944.

area of Fthiotida described in early 1944 the state of self-government in his region as “deplorable.” He noted that village committees were non-existent, people’s courts had stopped working and schools were shut, as a result EAM enjoyed “no authority or prestige” in much of the region.⁹³ The situation was similar in the nearby area of Fokida, where guerrilla involvement in civilian affairs had become “a usual phenomenon, since those who hold the weapons often feel that they are strong enough to ignore the will of those who support them.”⁹⁴ Tensions between ELAS and the peasantry were not helped by the persistence of anomic behavior among ELAS troops who sought rents, terrorized the civilians and shunned peasant mores and sensitivities.⁹⁵

EAM was aware of peasant disenchantment, however, it had no way to alleviate such pressures since the British had cut them off financially. The SOE dispensed humanitarian help to peasants in EAM’s area but refused to divert money to EAM as they were wary, they would be used for military purposes.⁹⁶ The organization had to rely on alternative methods to finance its struggle and keep the civilian population sated. Since EAM lacked the funds to keep its administration running it allowed some communities and band leaders to operate as privateers and use the proceedings to cover their needs. For instance, in the Preveza area of Epirus pro-EAM communities engaged in regular raids against lowland villages, which as a rule were either neutral or leaned towards EDES. The reserve ELAS forces of large villages taxed rival communities, confiscated the livestock of alleged reactionaries and requisitioned food, which was brought to the community and divided among EAM supporters.⁹⁷

As time went on these tactics became increasingly common. Many military units relied on plundering raids for their survival. The 50th regiment of ELAS presents a characteristic case. This unit operated in the ragged Pieria region. The regiment was almost destroyed in the winter

93. ASKI Digital Archive, <http://62.103.28.111/neolaia/rec.asp?id=53092&nofoto=0> (accessed 10 August 2017).

94. Georgios Lefkaditis, *Αναδρομές: ένας πρώην Επονίτης θυμάται* (Throwbacks: an ex-member of EPON remembers) (Lamia: Self-Published, 1998).

95. ELIA, Archive Gianni Douatzi, File 16, Διάφορες διαταγές, έκθεση του Υψηλάντη; ASKI, Archive KKE, Box 410, File-23/2/27.

96. Richard Clogg, *Greece 1940-1949: Occupation, Resistance, Civil War* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2002), 136.

97. DIS, Archive Georgiou Agorou, Diary, 80-8.

of 1943-1944 when it lost almost half its strength. The unit was restructured in February 1944 and survived hereafter by attacking and looting the rich villages that laid in the foothills of the two mountain ranges. A leading cadre recalled that between July and August the regiment requisitioned over 141.000 okas of wheat and several thousand heads of sheep and cattle.⁹⁸ These raiders were often accompanied by throngs of civilians; most of whom were EAM members and black-market peddlers, who looked to make a killing by buying and selling loot on site. However, the efficacy of such tactics was mixed. Requisitioning expeditions often resulted in scuffles among guerillas, while much booty was privately commandeered by senior cadres and ELAS officers.⁹⁹ Moreover, the majority of loot and requisitioned food was diverted to the guerillas, while civilians were left to fend for themselves. A British officer stationed in Thessaly was impressed by the disparity in the lifestyles of the guerrillas and the peasantry: “where the village stocks have not been seriously depleted by the Germans in their various drives, they are depleted by the andartes ... I have not yet seen an ELAS outpost where the andartes were not eating wheat bread and having a meat meal at least once every three days.”¹⁰⁰

Violence was combined with a relentless propaganda effort. Despite its dire financial problems, EAM and ELAS continued to publish a huge number of newspapers and periodicals that reminded the “faithful” about the efforts of infiltrators, traitors and enemy agents, who constantly undermined EAM’s efforts. An EAM newspaper warned its readers that “the enemy lurks everywhere, he hides within our ranks and in the home front; he must be crushed without mercy.”¹⁰¹ This mantra was repeated ad nauseam in newspapers, speeches and became the main theme of numerous theatrical plays staged by EPON members. EAM newspapers constantly reminded their readers of the perils of careless talk and their duty to report subversion: “our gravest duty... is vigilance... even the most insignificant words uttered by the lips of the en-

98. ASKI, Archive KKE, Box 413, File/23/6/98.

99. ASKI, Archive Nikolaou Moirou, Box 1, File 7, Επαρχία Γόρτυνος, Επαρχιακό συμβούλιο αυτοδιοίκησης, εγκύκλιος για το κοινοτικό συμβούλιο, 9-8-1944.

100. IWM, The Private Papers of Major M Ward, 13345, Report on visit to Greece – 21 Oct to 25 Dec 1943 by Capt. M. Ward, 5.

101. ELIA Press Archive, *Λαϊκός Αγωνιστής*, 9/18-8-1944.

emies of the people and the fatherland,” and reminded them that “sentimentalism and gullibility are two psychological attitudes that hurt vigilance.”¹⁰²

The fixation with treason and spies created a morbid climate of fear and suspicion. The slightest pretext was enough to lead someone to a firing squad or one of the numerous ELAS prison camps that were springing up in “free Greece.” A protest over the lack of food and the continuous requisitions in the village of Valtetsiniko in Peloponnesus resulted in the execution of 14 locals, who were falsely accused of being the leaders of a German spy ring, that extended from Athens to Tainaron.¹⁰³ Scores of civilians lost their lives in the numerous prison camps. A post-war EAM report estimated that over 1000 persons were executed in the Feneos prison camp alone. The situation was even worse in the prison camp of Koumani in Achaëa, that was run by Vrasidas Makris, a pathological sadist and sexual deviant, who was denounced and probably murdered by his comrades after the war.¹⁰⁴

However, men like Makris were not renegades. Makris was a dedicated party member, who followed the line laid down by the Peloponnesus bureau of the KKE that decreed in the spring of 1944 “the measures... against the reaction had been relaxed,” and consequently decided that “we should make carefully planned disappearances of reactionaries and traitors.”¹⁰⁵ Local cadres were encouraged to bring “knife blade to the reaction,”¹⁰⁶ while newspapers urged civilians to bring “fire and axe to those who had bent the head, wipe them out, do not spare even their youngest, hot lead to these families of snakes.”¹⁰⁷ This was no mere rhetoric, indeed by labelling entire villages as “fascists” or “traitors” the EAM essentially gave the guerillas license to kill any and all of their residents. Sometimes entire families including children, young than ten years of age were murdered by guerrillas often after gruesome torture.¹⁰⁸ Partisans believed that such brutalities would deter further defection, however, they only led violence to spiral further

102. ELIA Press Archive, *Μηνιαίτικος αντάρτης*, Issue 6, June 1944.

103. Grigoris Kribas, *Γενική εικόνα, γεγονότα από το Μοριά*, Vol. 1 (Athens: Self-Published, 2012), 115.

104. ASKI, AKKE, Box 418, File-24/2/90.

105. ASKI, AKKE, Box 418, File-24/2/102.

106. Ibid.

107. ASKI, Archive Nikou Moiroupolou, προκήρυξη στον λαό της Αρκαδίας.

108. Anastasis Krespis, *Το Χρέος* (The Debt) (Athens: Pelasgos, 2014).

and led to a plummeting of morale and eroded the moral standards to the degree that it became difficult to keep violence focused against collaborators.

Communal justice in rural Greece emphasized conciliation between the rival parties in a conflict. The ideology of EAM and its rivals “emphasized eradicating the enemy.” Such views helped to obliterate the “‘gray zone’ of communal jurisprudence... in favor of a reading in black and white” that led communities and parties to embrace increasingly radical ways of conflict resolution. Yet, civilians were not just victims, they were often enthusiastic participants who took advantage of the guerilla struggle to settle their own scores. Merchants got rid of unwanted business partners, whom they presented as agents of the reaction, farmers wreaked revenge on neighbors who had been trespassing on their land, and neighboring communities settled their differences over water access and land rights through deadly raids. This radicalization of violence was, also, augmented by the replacement of the old elites with young militants. Both EAM and its rivals put a premium on youth and in many cases replaced experienced and respected notables with militant youths, whose claim to authority rested on their ability to enact violence and their blind devotion to their organization’s goals. Expectedly such men had no time or respect for traditional forms of conflict resolution or compromise.

The acceleration of civil conflicts, the drop-in living standards and the continued anomie of ELAS guerillas had a detrimental effect even among the staunchest supporters of the Left. The “Indian summer” of free Greece was over. A British officer, who toured Thessaly and Epirus in the spring of 1944, wrote in a dispatch: “the peasants... are opposed to the organization and I think would back anything, which offered freedom from such interference.”¹⁰⁹ The situation was little better further north in Macedonia where “on the quiet locals tend to speak against EAM and ELAS quite harshly, complaining of requisitioning and shooting of non-party people... many would welcome a British occupation until an honest plebiscite was held.”¹¹⁰ Indeed, by mid-1944 the “Indian summer” of the Resistance was truly gone, as the bands had outlived their purpose and had become an unbearable burden to the citizenry whose only wish was to be left alone by all warring parties.

109. IWM, Ward, Report on visit to Greece, 4.

110. TNA, HS/5/701 Report on Kaimaxala area by T. J. Johnson, 48.

Conclusion

In the autumn of 1943, an ELAS squad visited the farm of Mitsos Tratsas near the small Thessalian village of Rodia. The guerillas asked for several kilos of wheat, fresh meat and a pack animal. Tratsas protested and told the guerillas that he had already contributed his fair share for the struggle. However, the guerillas had none of it. He was finally forced to back down, but not before telling the squad leader, “I’ll do what you want because you have those damned guns in your hands, I was in the army once and I know how it feels to have a gun in your hand....so I have to back down.” The case of Tratsas was far from unique. In fact, it encapsulates the dilemmas faced by the guerrillas and civilians during this turbulent period.¹¹¹

David Galula wrote that revolutionary warfare “is 20 per cent military action and 80 per cent political.”¹¹² The Resistance organizations were aware of this axiom and the need to mobilize popular support. However, this was seldom easy since their actions put in harm’s way the very same people whom they claimed to protect. Peasants were caught in the middle of a ruthless struggle between two opponents, who demanded unquestionable obedience. Refusing material assistance and intelligence to either had dire repercussions. If and when they helped the guerillas, they would be targeted by the Axis troops as pro-Resistance. At the same time, if they refused help or if they tried to protect their properties and tried to mediate with the Axis troops, they would be arrested and manhandled by the guerrillas who accused everyone, who did not provide them with unquestionable support, of being Germanophile.

However, civilians were not entirely helpless and small acts of Resistance were common and widespread. Peasants used cunning, deception and sabotage to resist the impositions of the Resistance bands. Such acts were often successful and forced the guerillas to change their policies *vis-à-vis* the civilian population. Yet, the guerillas’ tolerance had a limit and while many guerilla leaders were happy to remove a crooked official, lessen the tax burden or provide some small perks to the peasants, whole-sale criticism of their policies was not tolerated. The limits

111. Vasiliki Papagianni, *Κραυγές της Μνήμης, Κατοχή-Αντίσταση-Εμφύλιος* (Screams of Memory-Occupation-Resistance-Civil War) (Athens: Sokolis, 2005), 491.

112. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 65.

of tolerance were further narrowed after the disastrous winter of 1943-44. Very few believed that the guerillas were able to take on the Axis troops on, however, most assumed that they would be able put up a staunch fight. Such hopes went up in flames along with scores of villages in “free Greece.” The catastrophic defeat in the hands of the German troops coincided with the outbreak of a ruthless civil war and the defection of tens of thousands of civilians who formed pro-Axis militias.

These events finally broke the covenant between the guerillas and the civilians and led to a radical re-alignment of Resistance policies. EAM proceeded to grant almost unlimited powers to ELAS commanders and diverted funds and resources from civilian administration and social services to its armed forces. The militarization of the Resistance was also accompanied by an acceleration of violence. EAM and ELAS were desperate to deflect the accusations of incompetence and cowardice. The recent setbacks were, thus, appointed to the pernicious influence of subversives and traitors of all hues. Accordingly, civilians who expressed even the slightest objection to EAM’s tactics and policies were persecuted as traitors and scores of them were led to the numerous makeshift prison camps set up by ELAS. Unavoidably, this policy stemmed all kinds of criticism since the slightest protest was punished with the outmost severity.

The increasing severity and paranoia of civilian and military leaders led many communities to react by defecting to the Axis and receiving arms to set up home-guard militias. Very few of those who accepted arms had any illusions about the outcome of the war or the eventuality of an Allied victory. However, like most civilians in occupied territories, “they formed their attitude towards partisans by assessing the balance between the privations inflicted by irregular warfare and the benefits of eventual victory.”¹¹³ The civilians initially sided with the guerilla movement because of the partisans’ ability to guarantee their property and safety. The successive defeats of the guerillas, the profound lack of concern for civilian safety and their constant impositions amply demonstrated that they weren’t able to do either, civilians, thus, defected in the hope that a temporary alignment with the Axis troops was their best chance to survive the privations of the war.

113. Alexander Statiev, “Soviet Partisan Violence against Soviet Civilians: Targeting Their Own,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 66, 9 (October 2014): 1528.

Yet, despite these setbacks ELAS was able to prevail over its adversaries. This victory has been attributed to ELAS' superior military capabilities, and the power of ideology. However, such explanations are patently inadequate to explain the resilience of the Left-Wing guerillas. Kilcullen noted in his pivotal study of counter-insurgency that insurgents do not have to be particularly good rulers, they just have to be better than their adversaries, rebel governance "is a competition: you don't have to be perfect, but you do have to do better than the other side."¹¹⁴ EAM prevailed because it managed to out govern its rivals for the duration of the Occupation. This was made possible because of their extreme adaptability and profound ruthlessness. EAM leaders were ardent ideologues, however, they were also aware that they had to adopt to the circumstances of the war, indeed, ideology might have provided a roadmap, however, its imperative was "modified as guerrillas learn[ed] how to stay alive and how to use their immediate environment."¹¹⁵ EAM's rivals were often hardy and pugnacious, however, they were unwilling and unable to step into EAM's shoes and govern the civilian realm. As a result, these organizations were unable to coordinate their military actions and mobilize the majority of the population against ELAS. Isolated, disorganized and hopelessly divided, they were, thus, picked one by one and destroyed by the ELAS bands.

114. Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 159.

115. Kasfir, "Guerrillas and Civilian Participation," 274.