

# *From Collective Memory to Frontline Reality: The Greek State and Society Confronted with Migrant and Refugee Question(s), 1980-2016*

By TASOS KOSTOPOULOS

Why the arrival of more than 1 million of Middle Eastern refugees in Greece during 2015 and 2016 did not provoke an open racist backlash, just as it happened in other European countries during the same period? A number of factors, both circumstantial and/or historical, may explain this development. The transitional nature of the refugee border crossing, judicial suppression of local Nazis but also the recent discredit of private TV Channels and the availability of volunteer activists generated by the recent capitulation of the SYRIZA government to the troika, are the main circumstantial reasons that have contributed to the massive show of solidarity that did not allow xenophobic reactions to take the upper hand. As for the historical reasons, they can be traced back to the fact that up to one fifth of today's Greek population is itself of refugee descent –and the subsequent collective memories arising from that.

## I

If during the last decade, the political and social evolution of Greece has been full of contradictions, one of its most contradictory aspects was the lack of any significant racist upsurge during the mass influx of Middle Eastern refugees to the Aegean Islands throughout 2015 and the first months of 2016.

Four years after the entry of an openly Nazi party (Golden Dawn) in the Greek Parliament, which had been preceded and followed by a number of violent attacks against Third World immigrants, the arrival of 856,723 refugees in 2015 and another 157,988 during the first six months of 2016<sup>1</sup> was not greeted by massive xenophobic reactions, like in other nations in Eastern and Central Europe. On the contrary, there was a wave of solidarity mobilization by segments of civil society who rushed to compensate for the deficiencies of a state apparatus not only totally unprepared for such an event, but also decimated by five years of catastrophic bailout memoranda. It was this mobilization of a protective civil society that prevented the emergence of a racist counter-current against the refugee “invasion”, denounced as such not only by the Far Right (Golden Dawn continues to hold approximately 7 percent of the electorate, at least), but also by the conservative mainstream opposition (New Democracy party), whose propaganda tried initially to speculate on the issue and arouse xenophobic sentiments against immigrants and the left-wing government

---

<sup>1</sup> Numbers provided by the UNHCR webpage. According to the Greek MFA, there have been 851.319 refugee and immigrant arrivals in 2015, compared to only 41.074 in 2014 – an increase of 1972 percent within a single year; Γραφείο Αναπληρωτή ΥΠΕΞ, *Προσφυγική*, p.3.

that allegedly “protected” (or even “brought”) them into the country. Even in the biggest islands of the East Aegean, where the number of incoming refugees was two, three or even six times their total population<sup>2</sup>, such racist reactions during the fall of 2015 proved to be half-hearted and short-lived.

There is no doubt that this initial absence of mass displays of anti-refugee racism by the Greek public must be first and foremost attributed to the fact that many of the Middle Eastern refugees who landed in Greece during 2015 were passers-by, whose goal was not to install themselves in a country suffering from a severe social crisis (with an official unemployment rate of 26.5 percent),<sup>3</sup> but to continue their way northward, within the Schengen zone, to integrate into an economically more accommodating environment. Active solidarity toward the incoming refugees was therefore tantamount to an act of human care for people in urgent need, not necessarily amounting to unequivocal support for their more or less permanent settlement in Greece. Its anti-fascist component, i.e., the open rejection of the Islamophobic rhetoric forwarded by the Far Right, was nevertheless equally present on the field.

To fully understand this development, we also must take into consideration a number of complementary factors that either facilitated this solidarity activism or inhibited the development of an opposing mobilization against the refugee “invasion”. Some of these factors can be described as circumstantial, while others came out of a historical background that needs to be thoroughly explained.

## II

The circumstantial factors, arising from recent developments in the previous years or months, include:

(a) The legal prosecution of Golden Dawn since the fall of 2013, with many of its members and leaders still on trial for a variety of offenses, ranging from criminal conspiracy to moral instigation of (or physical implication in) several racist and/or politically motivated murders or attempted murders. The end of the New Democracy government’s blind eye toward the criminal activities of the Nazis (or even the conscious harboring of them by the ND right wing) not only destroyed once and for all the myth of an autonomous semi-military organization dedicated to fighting to the finish “against all”, according to their own slogans, but also exposed -- albeit only partially -- Golden Dawn’s nature as a tool of the Greek “deep state” within the military and police forces<sup>4</sup>. The passive stance adopted ever since by its leadership and rank and file, itself a form of indirect declaration of loyalty to the authorities and the established order, did not leave them with any breathing room to organise anti-immigrant actions, at least for the time being.

(b) The prosecution of racist hate speech through Law 2485, adopted by the Parliament in

---

<sup>2</sup> 85 percent in the case of Lesbos (500.018 refugees, compared with a local population of 85.412), 411 percent in Leros (31.929 to 7.755), 245 percent in Samos (73.732 to 30.102), 235 percent in Chios (120.804 to 51.339) and 231 percent in Kos (58.420 to 25.280). On the small island of Agathonissi, inhabited by 316 Greeks, but with 31.089 refugee arrivals during 2015, this analogy reached 9.838 percent; Γραφείο Αναπληρωτή ΥΠΕΞ, *Προσφυγική*, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Hellenic Statistical Authority, *The Greek*, p.7 (data for the end of 2014). The level of unemployment remained more or less stable during 2015 and early 2016.

<sup>4</sup> For a very good detailed account of Golden Dawn activities and their prosecution, the reader may refer to the bilingual (Greek-English) website [www.goldendawnwatch.org](http://www.goldendawnwatch.org). Unfortunately, the English version of its day-to-day monitoring of the main trial stops at the end of 2015. See also: Psarras, *Golden Dawn*.

## FROM COLLECTIVE MEMORY TO FRONTLINE REALITY

September 2014. Although it has never been applied up to this day<sup>5</sup>, its existence not only hindered anti-refugee activism, but it also prevented several private TV channels from playing the xenophobic card to attract broader audiences. We must stress here that, according to the founding rules of Greek Private Radio and TV stations, set by their West European and U.S. counterparts during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the conscious cultivation of a climate of tension and urgency, even about nonsense issues that are completely forgotten the next day, is inherently perceived as a *conditio sine qua non* for a successful electronic media business<sup>6</sup>.

(c) The total loss of credibility in the private TV channels during the referendum campaign of July 2015, when most of them threw away any pretense of objectivity or even professionalism, engaging themselves in an overt black propaganda campaign in favor of the “yes” vote, a breach of respectability that alienated most spectators, at least temporarily<sup>7</sup>. These private channels have played a crucial role in promoting racist agendas among the population in the past. In the 1990s, they constantly overplayed incidents of criminality by young male Albanian immigrants, eliciting a societal demand for tough law-and-order policies and de-legitimising the democratic imperatives that had dominated Greek public discourse since the military junta’s downfall two decades earlier<sup>8</sup>. In 2009, they created a wave of Islamophobia against incoming Afghan and Pakistani immigrants, elevating the far-right LAOS Party -- until then a more or less marginalised entity -- into a “respectable” political force that was incorporated into the short-lived neo-liberal “Government of National Salvation” created by banker Lukas Papadimos in 2011<sup>9</sup>. During the spring of 2012, they finally contributed to an openly racist campaign by this same government, consciously promoting Golden Dawn as a “lesser evil” against the ascending Left and contributing to its electoral success<sup>10</sup>. When some of these TV channels tried to instigate anti-refugee feelings in September 2015, it was too soon for them to recover their lost credibility and repeat their earlier exploits as incubators of Greek racism.

(d) Last but not least, the SYRIZA government’s recent capitulation to the troika and the mass disengagement produced in the party’s ranks by this development, together with the general feeling of an onerous defeat suffered by most of the Greek Left forces, diverted the energies of those still active into the field of solidarity toward the destitute refugees -- as both a form of political engagement with an immediate practical outcome and an active anti-fascist mobilization that allowed no space for xenophobic feelings to develop. It must be pointed out that even before SYRIZA’s inception as an umbrella of various left-wing groups in 2003, most of its components had been more or less deeply engaged in the local anti-fascist movement. The annual “Anti-Racist Festivals” organised each summer since 1996 by a network of immigrant and solidarity associations provided the first meeting

---

<sup>5</sup> With the notable exception of the law’s most problematic aspect -- the penalization of genocide and war crimes denial. This clause has been used against the German revisionist historian Heinz Richter for his characterization of Wehrmacht war crimes in Crete as lawful reprisals against the “brutal” and “illegal” armed resistance that some of the island’s inhabitants launched against the 1941 Nazi invaders. After a mobilization of professional Greek historians, who were seriously concerned about the law’s long-term impact on scientific research in Greece, a Rethymnon Court declared last February that this specific clause was unconstitutional and therefore invalid, clearing Heinz Richter of any charges.

<sup>6</sup> For such a directive: Γραμμή. *Η τεχνική*.

<sup>7</sup> Ο Ιός, «Η χειραφέτηση».17-9.

<sup>8</sup> Ο Ιός, «Οι νονοί.» 45-8.

<sup>9</sup> On this spectacular transformation of LAOS from a marginal group to a “respectable” partner of the mainstream pro-bailout parties, see Dimitris Psarras, *The Rise*.10-4.

<sup>10</sup> Ψαράς, *Η Μαύρη*, p.377-82; Κωστόπουλος, «Οι ναζί », p.42-57.

ground for the later party's founders<sup>11</sup>. Most of the local solidarity networks that emerged last autumn to provide relief and protection to the refugees were thus staffed either by SYRIZA rank-and-file or by fellow travelers from the anarchist movement. In the first case, the matrix of mobilization was provided by pre-existing social solidarity networks set up in recent years to counter the worst side effects from bailout policies, while the anarchists were inspired mostly by direct-action schemes.

### III

All of these circumstantial factors could not possibly amalgamate into a positive (or at least neutral) attitude toward the new refugees had there not been a historical background that played into the hearts and minds of the mainstream Greek population. Solidarity activists managed to repel racist propaganda by recalling the collective memories of the sufferings by numerous Greeks of earlier generations, who also had experienced forced expatriation due to national or political persecution – just like today's Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan refugees. At least one-fourth of the current Greek population is related partly or totally from people who either immigrated to or left Greece during the 20th century as war or political refugees. Although the construction of their collective memory has followed various trajectories and was often imbued with contradictory ideological content, the common denominator of that refugee experience continues to function as a very strong identity marker for all subgroups.

From the point of view of their origin and the political context of their (permanent or temporary) expatriation, these earlier Greek refugee currents can be classified according to four main categories:

1. The biggest group consists of the Greek-Orthodox refugees who left Turkey during or immediately after the catastrophic outcome of the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922, either fleeing slaughter at the hands of victorious Kemalist forces or as a result of the compulsory exchange of populations agreed upon between the two countries in 1923 at Lauzanne<sup>12</sup>. According to the 1928 census, 1,104,216 out of a total of 6,204,684 Greek citizens, or 17,8 percent of the country's population at that time, were refugees of Asia Minor, Pontus, or Eastern Thrace origin<sup>13</sup>. A meticulous study of the official numbers reveals, however, that this number is clearly an underestimation, as many villages exclusively inhabited by refugees are not registered as such<sup>14</sup>. Even today, the offspring of those people are described (and self-described) in everyday talk as people “of refugee origins (προσφυγικής καταγωγής) or even “refugees” (πρόσφυγες); their clubs often bear a “refugee” designation. The term “refugee” has acquired a rather positive connotation, defining a group that suffered because of its national identity and managed to survive (and sometimes prosper) in spite of the difficulties it confronted since its expatriation. This was not at all the case in the days just after their ancestors' arrival in Greece, when both their Greekness and the compatibility of their manners with those of the indigenous population were fiercely contested by local nativists<sup>15</sup>. Although rejected from the sanitised official discourse about

<sup>11</sup> For a self-presentation of those activities by the group that has been at their core: *Ελευθερίες*.

<sup>12</sup> For the 1919-1922 Greek-Turkish War, known in Greece as “the Asia Minor Campaign” and in Turkey as “the War of Independence”: Smith, *Ionian Vision*. For the compulsory Population Exchange ordered by the Lauzanne Treaty: Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan*, p.64-71.

<sup>13</sup> Ministère de l'Économie Nationale, *Résultats*, Vol.I.

<sup>14</sup> Κωστόπουλος, *Πόλεμος*, 264-5.

<sup>15</sup> Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan*, p.209-12; Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, p.191-8.

## FROM COLLECTIVE MEMORY TO FRONTLINE REALITY

the “reception” of the 1922 refugees by the Greek motherland, this memory of alienation (or even humiliation) has nevertheless survived at the level of informal family history, producing an ambivalent stance toward nativist policies but also eliciting feelings of solidarity toward any segment of the population who is expatriated for its identity or beliefs. The final outcomes of these contradictory tendencies are at stake amid the ongoing political confrontations inside these communities.

What must be taken into account are the different paths through which the first two generations of those Greek refugees have been fully integrated into Greek society (and accepted by it) during the 1940s. A considerable number of former refugees from Turkey actively participated in the Communist-led resistance movement, while others collaborated with the Quisling governments and fought in paramilitary Nazi units under the leadership of high-rank SS officers, only to transform themselves into “nationalist” anti-Communist fighters during the subsequent Civil War of the late 1940s<sup>16</sup>. Individual descent from people or communities distinguished for their participation in WWII Resistance does not, of course, automatically pre-ordain an equally anti-fascist stance today. Nevertheless, as today’s crisis in the relations between Greece and the German-led European Union has led to a resurrection of collective memories from the Nazi Occupation of Greece and imbued it with new meanings, it is increasingly difficult for people to overcome those earlier schisms that defined social life in Greece for decades. One of the main problems met by Golden Dawn in its efforts to extend its influence beyond the traditional far-right audience has been the open identification of its leaders with German Nazis, who perpetrated the harshest foreign occupation ever suffered by the country’s inhabitants.

2. Smaller groups of ethnic Greek refugees, fleeing national oppression by other Balkan nationalisms, had been immigrating to Greece since 1906 and continued to do so. The first such wave came from Bulgaria, whose Greek minority also was subjected during the 1920s to a population-exchange scheme, formally voluntary, but more or less enforced<sup>17</sup>. Most of the earlier arrivals had been absorbed into the social fabric of metropolitan Athens, while the later wave more or less kept its collective identity. Less visible as a compact social body, the Greeks of Istanbul who left their homes after the anti-Christian pogrom of 1955 and a wave of expulsions in the mid-1960s, estimated at between 40,000 and 100,000<sup>18</sup>, also keep a strong form of collective identity through a multitude of “Constantinople” clubs<sup>19</sup>. The modalities surrounding their ethnic cleansing, together with their rather quick (though often equally traumatic) absorption into the rest of Greek society, make it less easy for them to identify with the current Middle East refugees. Nevertheless, certain aspects of a repressed “Oriental” collective identity, for the first time publicly expressed in 2003 by the tremendously popular film “A Touch of Spice”, expose enough open questions for a social anthropologist to explore in this direction. The same can be said about the former Greek colony of Egypt, the bulk of which (more than 10,000 people) expatriated between 1960 and 1964, after the passing of nationalist legislation affecting foreign workers there<sup>20</sup>.

---

<sup>16</sup> Refugee participation in the Resistance is amply documented in most of the historical literature on the 1940s. For this participation as a marker of total integration into Greek society: Θεοτοκάς, *Σελίδες ημερολογίου* 7, p.509-11 & 545-6. For the delicate question of armed collaboration with the occupiers by Turkish-speaking Pontic communities in Macedonia: Μαραντζίδης, *Γιασσίν μιλέτ*, p.109-207.

<sup>17</sup> Wurfbaïn, *L'échange*. The 1928 census registered a total of 49.027 refugees from Bulgaria (op.cit., fn.13).

<sup>18</sup> Alexandris, *The Greek*, 291 & 294..

<sup>19</sup> Αναστασιάδου, *Οι Ρωμηοί*, 76-84.

<sup>20</sup> Νταλαχάνης, *Ακυβέρνηση*, p.334-5 & 344. Some of these “repatriates” were immediately hired by foreign firms operating in Greece; they comprised, for example, an impressive 11 percent of all personnel employed during the 1960s in the aluminum industry run by Pechiney Co. (ib.id, p.342).

Without any effective social representation, these “Egyptians” (Αιγυπτιώτες) more or less were quickly integrated into the rest of Greek citizenry and are even less visible as such in the public life of modern Greece. Therefore, any estimation about their collective stance toward actual Middle Eastern refugees is a risky venture. Even less discernible is the stance of the former Greek minority population from Albania, self-designated as “North Epirotes (Βορειοηπειρώτες)”, numbering between 40,000 and 100,000 people, most of whom came to Greece after 1990 as economic immigrants rather than political refugees. The strong links between their associations and the “deep state” irredentist networks surviving from the Cold War years have functioned more or less as an impediment toward any progressive tendencies<sup>21</sup>.

3. A third wave of Greek refugees moved in the opposite direction during the late 1940s: some 75.000 left-wing guerillas, members of their families, or local supporters who left Greece in 1949 after their defeat in the Civil War, taking shelter in the East European “Popular Democracies” and distant Soviet Uzbekistan<sup>22</sup>. Their repatriation became an open issue during subsequent decades, claimed by families and fellow travelers as proof (or even a precondition) of national reconciliation, but steadily rejected by the post-Civil War conservative governments. Some of them were in fact repatriated little by little on an individual basis during the 1950s or immediately after the 1974 downfall of the military junta<sup>23</sup>, while most of the rest followed after the 1982 decision of Andreas Papandreou for an “unconditional repatriation” of all “ethnic Greek” refugees (exempting all of those among them who belonged to the Slav-Macedonian ethnic minority)<sup>24</sup>. Their experiences may have been radically different from that of ethnic Greeks persecuted by foreign nationalisms and sheltered by their “national centre”. Nevertheless, it produced an even more clear background of positive feelings toward persecuted people who look for shelter in foreign lands, far away from their homelands.

4. The last wave has been composed of political emigrants who fled to the West during the military junta that ruled Greece between 1967 and 1974. Some of them left the country after the military coup of 1967, while others already had been abroad as emigrants or students, engaging themselves in dissident activities, and did not take the risk of returning during the military regime. A total of 2,800 people, the most famous among them being the well-known actress Melina Merkouri, had their Greek citizenship revoked by the country’s military rulers, then reinstated immediately after the junta’s downfall<sup>25</sup>. Although few in number, enduring this form of exile only for a relatively brief time, this collective experience proved to be the most influential of all on an institutional level, leading to the categorical prohibition of any extradition “of foreigners persecuted for their activities in favor of liberty” incorporated in the new democratic Greek Constitution enacted in 1975<sup>26</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> Παύλου, «Οι Έλληνες ». The writer estimates the former members of Albania’s Greek minority living in Greece at around 75,000 (p.286).

<sup>22</sup> For their number: Constantine Karamanlis Archive (Athens), f.2A, p.303, ΚΥΠ/Β’ «Επαναπατρισμός των εις χώρας του σοβιετικού συνασπισμού ευρισκομένων», [Athens] 8.6.1956, 2.

<sup>23</sup> A total of 15,957 political refugees were repatriated between 1951 and 1970, while another 20,500 were estimated by Greek security services to have died in exile: Δρεμπέλας, *Το ελληνικόν*, 466. After the junta downfall, 22,273 more were repatriated on a selective basis before the 1982 final decision: Τσέκου, *Έλληνες*, 201).

<sup>24</sup> ΦΕΚ 1983/Β/1, Κ.Υ.Α. 106841/29.12.1982. Slav-Macedonian refugees were estimated in 1956 by the Greek CIA to be at least 45,203 (fn.21, p.3).

<sup>25</sup> Κωστόπουλος, «Αφαρέσεις », 65.

<sup>26</sup> Constitution of the Hellenic Republic, article 5.2§2. Although not always respected in practice, this paragraph remained intact during the constitutional revisions of 1986, 2001 and 2008.

## FROM COLLECTIVE MEMORY TO FRONTLINE REALITY

### IV

Due to this turbulent past, and the subsequent self-perception of the Greeks in those years as a “proletarian nation” allegedly closer to the Third World “periphery” than to the developed capitalist West<sup>27</sup>, the first decade of democratic rule after 1974 (better known as *Μεταπολίτευση*, i.e., “change of regime”) witnessed a widespread attitude of solidarity toward foreign liberation movements and/or political refugees. In this context, thousands of Turkish political refugees from various left-wing organizations were received with wholeheartedly friendly feelings by the mainstream Greek population after the military coup of 1980, while the sporadic extraditions of such fugitives by local security forces were harshly denounced as serious breaches of the democratic Constitution<sup>28</sup>. Only during the mid-1990s, after the reestablishment of parliamentary rule in Turkey and the emergence of a conservative nationalist mobilization in Greece, did this widespread moral support for the struggles of Turkish people who wanted democracy (and maybe socialism) give way to the nationalist fantasy of a Greek-Kurdish “cooperation against the common enemy” (i.e., Turkey) -- a development linked to the secret cooperation between certain factions of the Greek “deep state” and PKK, publicly revealed in 1999 during the infamous “Abdullah Öcalan affair”<sup>29</sup>.

Even more clear is the traditional solidarity shown by Greeks toward Palestinians. As a very popular (but highly inaccurate) left-wing slogan of those days declared, “*no American will stay in Greece, Cyprus, or Palestine!*”<sup>30</sup>. To a lesser degree, similar positive feelings were, for a shorter period of time, manifested toward other Arabs, with the numerous Lebanese Christians constituting a very special case, obliged as they were by the prevailing atmosphere to express their anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim feelings in a rather low voice or otherwise circumspect way.

Less sanguine in those days was the popular feeling toward East European fugitives. Although they were provided with political asylum, and with personal sympathy on an individual basis, they were at the same time mostly viewed as either “American stooges” or naive victims of imperialist propaganda -- a propaganda that they were often themselves eagerly reproducing anyway. A noticeable exception was made after 1981 for Polish political refugees due to the sympathies produced by the resistance provided by Solidarnosc against the martial-law regime and the widespread appraisal of the personal risks inherent in such a mobilization. It also must be pointed out that, in contrast to other East European dissident movements who were restricted to an anti-communist intellectual milieu, the working-class-based Solidarnosc enjoyed the support not only of conservative and liberal Greek circles, but also of radical-left groups, as well as the local “Eurocommunist” party.

The last instance of old solidarity habits appeared in the summer of 1990, when a shipload of 182 Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka landed at Pireus, eliciting widespread sympathy from the Athenian public, although the conservative government of Konstantinos Mitsotakis was not at all predisposed to being friendly toward them. In a short span of time, any political

---

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Andreas Papatreou’s emblematic declaration, in his foreword of Cambodia’s Norodom Sihanouk memoirs: “*The peoples of Indochina have born the main burden in the struggle for independence and self-determination. They showed the way. We [Greeks] shall follow!*”: Σιχανούκ, *Στα νύχια*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Ο Ιός, «Οι Τούρκοι», 15-17.

<sup>29</sup> As far as I know, there is not a comprehensive work on the Öcalan affair in Greek or any Western language. The account of the Greek CIA agent who accompanied him from Athens to Nairobi, where the PKK leader was “abducted” by the Turkish MIT, is naturally full of crucial gaps: Καλεντερίδης, *Παράδοση*. For the Öcalan version of his ordeal: Οτζαλάν, *Η συνωμοσία*.

<sup>30</sup> The slogan was inaccurate since, among the three countries mentioned above, only in Greece was there, in fact, a U.S. military presence.

tradition of hospitality subsided under the influence of more conservative trends that allowed for the emergence of openly racist preachings by a reinvigorated nativist right wing. The point of departure for such a restructuring of the public space was the mass influx of Eastern European economic immigrants, mostly but not exclusively Albanians, during the early 1990s. The 2001 population census registered 438,036 Albanian citizens and 114,101 other Eastern Europeans living in Greece, compared with a mere 20,556 and 29,275 10 years earlier<sup>31</sup>. This development coincided with the reappearance of an offensive version of Greek nationalism that had been dormant since 1974, with the cultivation of a nationalist hysteria around the Macedonian “name” question and, on a minor scale, the development of irredentist tendencies toward Southern Albania that survived until 1997. The main change inflicted by this sudden transformation of Greece, from a country of traditional emigration to one of mass immigration, was a radical change of self-perception. The widespread earlier “false conscience” of a supposedly “proletarian nation” gave way to the (politically much more problematic) self-portrait of a “petit bourgeois”-imagined community, envious of the authentic Big Power imperialists, but at the same time arrogant toward anyone considered to be holding an “inferior” position in the imperialist chain<sup>32</sup>.

Twenty years later, the sudden -- and totally unexpected -- downgrading of Greek society within the European Union, its painful (for the working class and a big part of the middle social strata) displacement from the middle core to the semi-colonial periphery of the former privileged nations’ club, produced a gradual (and equally painful) self-reappraisal that led to a decisive rearrangement of the notions of friend and foe in the collective national imagination. This rearrangement is best reflected in some popular afternoon TV soap operas, in which the earlier negative stereotype of a cunning, self-interested, and treacherous (but also ridiculous) Eastern European female immigrant has now been substituted by a German female figure with the same qualities<sup>33</sup>.

Of course, this general tendency was not the only rearrangement of collective identity that took place during the last decade. The crisis in political representation, provoked by the bailout memoranda that enforced a rapid dismantling of the post-war welfare state and an abrupt degradation in the living standards of the Greek population’s vast majority, led to centrifugal tendencies that not only destroyed the local Social Democracy (PASOK), but also “emancipated” the long-discredited extreme right-wing forces that for three decades had been either marginalised or had taken refuge in mainstream conservative parties. On the grass-roots level, the re-emergence of a militant right-wing radicalism, mobilised mostly (but not exclusively) against what it denounced as an “invasion” of Greece by Moslem immigrants<sup>34</sup>, was met by an equally radical response by the social forces -- mostly youths -- who mobilised on the Left. As the popular mobilization against the bailout agreements gained momentum, so did mass antifascist and antiracist activism as well.

In this context, there is much more than sheer coincidence between the emancipating grass-roots mobilization that accompanied last summer’s referendum against the troika

---

<sup>31</sup> Office National de Statistique de Grèce, *Résultat*, 261; National Statistical Service of Greece, *Population & Housing*, 306. In the case of Albanian citizens, it must be taken into account that tens of thousands among them belonged to the Greek minority of Southern Albania, whose members had difficulties naturalising themselves as Greek citizens, even after many years of permanent residency in Greek territories.

<sup>32</sup> For an early description of this transformation: Ο Ιός, «Ο αντιιμπεριαλισμός», 37-42.

<sup>33</sup> The most striking example of such a rearrangement was provided by the serial «Πίσω στο σπίτι» (Back to Home), projected by MEGA TV during 2011-2013.

<sup>34</sup> Or even the country’s “settlement” with a foreign population, planned in advance by obscure forces behind “Globalization” – a recurrent theme of modern anti-Semitism worldwide.

diktat, and the comparatively positive reception of 1 million Middle Eastern refugees during the following months. Of course, nobody can predict the final outcome of the ongoing internal struggle between rival social projects, as well as between the competing social forces behind them. As the SYRIZA government is gradually worn down by popular disapproval of its enforcement of the policies imposed by the country's creditors, and at the same time the opposition attempts to overthrow it through a neo-liberal remake of the earlier anti-bailout revolt are not attracting any considerable mass following, there is an obvious tendency of the mainstream opposition parties to either instigate or at least favour local reactions toward the permanent installation of refugees (or even to the introduction of their kids into local schools). The fact that New Democracy, the main conservative party, is now led by an alliance of its neo-liberal president Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the scion of an established (and very wealthy) political family, with a bunch of former leaders of far-right groups whose political profile has been built on an anti-immigration agenda, is also a factor that plays into that trend<sup>35</sup>. Although recent experience indicates that playing with such racist fire in the end tends to favour the real extremists to the detriment of the “moderate” ones, the temptation of populist mobilization is not an instrument to be easily dismissed.

#### Footnote References

- Alexandris, A. *The Greek minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish relations*, (Athens, 1992).  
 Mavrogordatos, G. *Stillborn Republic. Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*, (Berkeley, 1983)  
 Smith, M. *Ionian Vision. Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922*, (London, 1973).  
 Pentzopoulos, D. *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact on Greece*, (Paris, 1962).  
 Psarras, D. *Golden Dawn On Trial*, (Athens, 2015), [www.goo.gl/AmlhL6](http://www.goo.gl/AmlhL6).  
 Psarras, D. *The Rise of the NeoNazi Party “Golden Dawn” in Greece*, (Brussels, 2014).  
 Wurfbaun, A. *L'échange gréco-bulgare des minoritiés ethniques*, (Paris, 1930).
- Αναστασιάδου, Μ. & Ντυμόν, Π. *Οι Ρωμηοί της Πόλης*, (Athens, 2007).  
 Γραμμή Α.Ε., *On Air: Η τεχνική της ραδιοφωνικής επικοινωνίας*, (Pallini, 1988)  
 Δρεμπέλας, Α. *Το ελληνικόν αστρονομικόν πρόβλημα*, (Athens, 1977).  
*Ελευθερίες και ελευθερία. Ιστορικό του Δικτύου για τα Πολιτικά και Κοινωνικά Δικαιώματα*, (Athens, 2008).  
 Καλεντερίδης, Σ. *Παράδοση Οτζαλάν. Η ώρα της αλήθειας*, (Athens, 2007).  
 Κωστόπουλος, Τ. «Οι ναζί από την ανυποληψία στην κεντρική πολιτική σκηνή: πώς “δέθηκε” η υπόθεση», in Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα ΕΣΗΕΑ, *ΜΜΕ και το φαινόμενο του νεοναζισμού*, (Athens, 2013), 42-57.  
 Κωστόπουλος, Τ. *Πόλεμος και εθνοκάθαρση*, (Athens, 2007)  
 Κωστόπουλος, Τ. «Αφαιρέσεις ιθαγένειας. Η σκοτεινή πλευρά της νεοελληνικής ιστορίας (1926-2003)», *Σύγχρονα Θέματα*, 83 (2003).  
 Θεοτοκάς, Γ. *Σελίδες ημερολογίου 1939-1952*, (Athens, 1987).  
 Μαραντζίδης, Ν. *Γιασασίν μιλέτ. Εθνοτική ταυτότητα και πολιτική συμπεριφορά στους τουρκόφωνους Ορθόδοξους του Δυτικού Πόντου*, (Herakleio, 2001).  
 Νταλαχάνης, Α. *Ακυβέρνητη παροικία*, (Herakleio, 2015).  
 Ο Ιός, «Η χειραφέτηση του τηλεθεατή», *Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών*, 11-12 July 2015.  
 Ο Ιός, «Οι νομοί της αλβανικής μαφίας», *Έψιλον*, 13 June 1993.  
 Ο Ιός, «Οι Τούρκοι πολιτικοί πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα», *Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών*, 21-23 June 2013.  
 Ο Ιός, «Ο αντιμπεριαλισμός της δεξιάς. Φονιάδες των λαών αδέρφια μας!», *Έψιλον / Ελευθεροτυπία*, 7

<sup>35</sup> One of the two party's vice-presidents, Adonis Georgiadis, as well as its shadow minister of Law and Public Order, Makis Voridis, were first elected in 2007 as MPs of the far-right (and openly racist) Greek Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS). As a book publisher who pushed his products by the medium of a personal TV show, the first systematically advertised an openly anti-Semitic literature. The second had been the Youth Leader of the far-right National Political Union (EPEN), a marginal party created in the 1980s by the imprisoned military junta leader Papadopoulos. In 1994 he created his own group (Greek Front), under the auspices of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front; after an even more marginal existence, the Greek Front was in 2005 absorbed into LAOS.

## TASOS KOSTOPOULOS

- Feb.1993.  
Οτζαλάν, Α. *Η συνωμοσία της 15ης Φεβρουαρίου*, (Athens n.d. [2003]).  
Παύλου, Μ. «Οι Έλληνες της Αλβανίας στην Ελλάδα» in Κ. Τσιτσελίκης - Δ. Χριστόπουλος (eds), *Η ελληνική μειονότητα της Αλβανίας*, (Athens, 2003), 265-308.  
Ψαρράς, Δ. *Η Μαύρη Βίβλος της Χρυσής Αυγής*, (Athens, 2012).  
Σιχανούκ, Ν. *Στα νόγια της CIA*, (Athens, 1974).  
Τσέκου, Κ. *Έλληνες πολιτικοί πρόσφυγες στην Ανατολική Ευρώπη*, (Athens, 2013).

### Official Records & Statistics

- Office National de Statistique de Grèce, *Résultats du recensement de la population et des habitations effectué le 17 Mars 1991. Vol.II. Caractéristiques démographiques et sociales de la population*, Athens 1998, 261;  
National Statistical Service of Greece, *Population & Housing census, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2001*, Vol.II, Pireas 2007, 306.  
Γραφείο Αναπληρωτή ΥΠΕΞ, *Προσφυγική κρίση 2015*, Athens 2016, 3  
Hellenic Statistical Authority, *The Greek Economy*, Athens 30.10.2015  
Ministère de l'Économie Nationale, *Résultats statistiques du recensement de la population de la Grèce de 15-16 Mai 1928*, Vol.I, Athens 1933, p.v'.