

'In Greece we would shoot you!'

1610 May 5 1967 1s (US 25 cents)

THE GENTLE AFFRAY



Gwyn Weller, pregnant wife of Ken Weller (who was also arrested), is removed from the Greek embassy last Friday night after a group of demonstrators had taken over the building. The Save Greece Now! movement was acting "on behalf of the people of Greece" and "against tyranny." Forty-two people were arrested, though more than 50 took part - at least ten escaped from a police van. (Photo: Syndication International.)

Political prisoners back on death island

Bob Overy writes: "Everyone who got away is not living where he should be living," said Diana Pym, secretary of the League for Democracy in Greece, last Tuesday, describing the plight of left-wingers in Greece under the military regime. Letters have been arriving like the one I received yesterday: "I cannot write anything about the situation in Greece because it is forbidden. I have no idea about what is going to happen. Future is unknown. I do not want you to write to me anything concerning this matter because it will be dangerous, perhaps." Left-wingers are living in fear. It is a police state.

Betty Ambatielos, wife of Tony Ambatielos, who played so large a part in the protests against the detention of thousands of political prisoners after the civil war, was arrested in Greece last week. She is believed to

have been "on the run." It is thought that Tony Ambatielos is still free.

The League for Democracy in Greece is particularly anxious now because the island of "Gavdos," where the many detainees were said to have been taken, is in fact Yioura. Yioura is an island prison-camp about which the League organised an international campaign in the fifties. Eventually the Red Cross supported the League's complaints about conditions on the island and the camp was closed when the prison guards refused to serve there any longer. They said it was so bad they felt they were in prison themselves.

The ailing leader of the United Democratic Left party, 65-year-old Mr Iliou, is said to be on the island. He is a diabetic and there are no facilities for treating him on the island. The League says that his imprisonment there "will amount to a death sentence."

you!'

—SCREAMS EMBASSY MAN

"In Greece, we would shoot you!" shouted a violently excited Greek attaché at non-violent demonstrators in the Greek embassy in London last Friday night, as police came pouring in.

His words, more than anything else, explain and justify the audacity of more than 50 supporters of the "Save Greece Now!" movement in attempting to deprive the military regime in Greece of its diplomatic office in Britain. If left-wingers can be dealt with so severely over there, the penalties in Britain for such extreme action as a non-violent coup seem suddenly acceptable and relatively unimportant.

Thoughts of this kind must have been in the minds of the participants as they moved quickly into the embassy in Upper Brook Street at 8 pm last Friday. The doorman claims to have been knocked down by those who rang the doorbell but, according to accounts from those involved, his story (so well-publicised by the press) is untrue. No doorman when faced with inquisitive police, press and a furious ambassador would have the courage to admit that he was fooled by a Greek girl with flowers and therefore offered no resistance to an entry party of fifty. But that is what really happened.

Similarly, the charge against Terry Chandler, that he assaulted a police officer, is a cover-story for the fact that he was himself assaulted by more than one policeman, as well as by the Greek attaché who lost control of himself. It is clear that the police would like to separate a few individuals from the 42 so as to bring serious charges that might stand up in a court of law. Terry Chandler is being victimised because he resisted arrest by holding on to stair-rails and bannisters as he was beaten and dragged out of the building.

One of the demonstrators, Ken Weller, said to a policeman who was hitting a girl: "I have your number. Let her alone." The policeman replied, "Oh, you do, do you," and hit him twice in the stomach. As he was being taken downstairs, he commented to another policeman, "Don't you remember Challenger?" He was then grabbed, but said: "I've got your number too." For this he was kicked several times in the genitals: "Do you still remember my number?" said the second policeman. "I've forgotten," was the reply. The number is PC 455.

The two charges that have been brought so far by the police (see "Arrests and charges", p 12) are very serious, carrying likely prison sentences of years rather than months; and by their presentation of the case the police have sought to give the impression to the Marlborough Street magistrate, to the press and public, and to the demonstrators themselves that their offence is extremely grave. At present, the 42 defendants are still being led to believe that they will be jointly tried at the Old Bailey. What makes the use of these charges so suspicious is that they do not stand

up to serious examination. The demonstrators, to the best of our knowledge, used no violence whatsoever. What is more, the damage done to embassy property was done by the police as they broke into the building rather than by the demonstrators locking and barricading doors. In any case, the charges refer to what happened in the road, that is, in Upper Brook Street, rather than in the embassy, and the demonstrators were in the road only as they ran quickly into the embassy and as they were dragged, non-resisting, out again to police vans. (The Greek embassy is legally Greek soil and so the British police cannot bring charges for what happened on Greek territory.)

Thus one is forced to believe that the serious affray charge, which surely cannot be found proved in any British court of law, however biased is police evidence, was brought in either to intimidate the magistrate into refusing bail last weekend and frighten the defendants, or (assuming the charge isn't dropped in the meantime) to intimidate an Old Bailey jury into finding the defendants guilty on the lesser charge.

And what this means is that the police recognise this demonstration for what it was: a well-executed, audacious action carried out by a group of people who are serious in their ideas of resistance to injustice, even including an injustice as enormous and seemingly unchallengeable as the Greek military coup. George Brown (who had "recognised" the new Greek government on the day of the demonstration) was forced to apologise to the Greek ambassador for what had happened. He must be furious with the police for allowing it to happen. They must ensure that it doesn't happen again by getting savage sentences against the 42.

We don't know whether the "Save Greece Now!" movement and potential groups like it will be destroyed, as the Committee of 100 was demoralised by the Wethersfield trial. But at the moment, morale seems high. We needn't expect another embassy to be taken over. (The rumours that there were ever any plans to kidnap the Greek ambassador are totally false.) But, whatever happens in the future, one way forward has been shown. Audacity is the key.

Arrests and charges—page 12

INSIDE:

Exquisite barbarians

Evidence of discrimination

Drugs as symptoms