

# Peace News

# Dictatorship in Greece

1609 April 28 1967 1s (U S 25 cents)

PETER CADOGAN: I WAS THERE

## Athens April 21

In Greece, having slept in the afternoon, one stays up late. So, in the early hours of Friday morning, Howard Cheney and I were in a *taverna*, listening to the songs of Theodorakis. But there was something wrong. The *taverna* was three-quarters empty. The previous Sunday it had been packed.

At 1.30 am there was some kind of announcement. People began to go, and we went too. Outside, there were two fire engines mounting water cannon. We were only a stone's throw from the Palace. We got back to our hotel in Omonia Square without incident. Howard left for the airport to catch the early morning plane; I turned in for the night, after asking the reception desk to wake me at 7.30 am. For my last day in Athens I had decided to go to Marathon.

It was not the hotel that wakened me. At 6.45 am, Howard, who should by then have been flying over the Alps, was back in the room. "Wake up, Peter, wake up! It's started; there are troops in the Square outside." My befuddled brain struggled with this extraordinary piece of intelligence.

We had been expecting it, of course, but not yet. Some Greek optimism had brushed off on us; the *coup*, we were assured, would take place *after* the elections. Howard had got to the airport, only to find all planes grounded, the Army in charge, and

one prisoner being marched away. He had returned to the BEA terminal on Constitution Square (the Parliament Square of Athens) and started to walk back to Omonia Square.

There are about eight roads running into Omonia Square. All were heavily guarded by troops and armoured vehicles. At some of the corners, heavy machine guns, mounted on tripods, peered down the long approach roads. At one entrance, there was an anti-tank mortar, and troops overlooked the Square from the top of our hotel. Howard tried four of the approach roads and was turned back each time. He found himself beside a police station and went in; here, the first clue to the nature of the revolution appeared.

The police said that they did not know what was going on, and this was obviously true. A *coup* was on, with the police left out! (It is also true that they were not left out for long; but there can be no doubt that at the outset they were as much in the dark as the rest of the population. From the window I saw a mobile policeman on his motor bike actually stopped by troops and required to show his papers.)

After some discussion, it was agreed that one of the policemen would go with Howard Cheney to see the military; as luck would have it, they

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For the best part of two years, correspondents in *Peace News* have been predicting a military dictatorship in Greece. Now that the Greek army has seized power we take scant pleasure in the thought that our interpretation of events has been vindicated. Rather, we feel despair that as usual the concern of world opinion has been aroused in reaction, that is, after the event.

Whatever the fate of the coup, the lesson that any group which presumes to call itself a "peace movement" must learn is that the price of peace is eternal vigilance and consistent pressure. It is at least possible that the Greek army (anticipating, as it most certainly did, the support of the King) would not have been able to proceed with such contempt for democratic process, such ignorance of the human aspirations of the centre and left elements, whom they dismiss as "Communist trouble-makers," if we, supporters outside Greece of left-wing and peace movements, had shown ourselves more strongly concerned to see free elections in Greece by means of public education, demonstration and protest. The latest news leaves uncertain the numbers of "leftists" who have been detained by the so-called non-political regime. Estimates vary between 3,000 and 8,500. Nevertheless, among the new political prisoners, arrested without being charged and at this moment unlikely to be brought before even a military court, are many with whom the peace movement in Britain has shared friendship in recent years. It would be unwise to list their names. A report in the *New York Times* on Tuesday that the United States had been assured no harm would come to "political figures who have been jailed," suggests that there may have been a real danger of summary executions.

However, there is one name that we should look for with the utmost concern. There are rumours that Andreas Papandreou, son of the Centre Union leader, has been murdered or badly beaten up or jailed in solitary confinement on the island of Yioura. (Yioura, we are informed by the League for Democracy in Greece, is a waterless island used for political prisoners during the civil war with worse conditions than the notorious Makronisos; see *Peace News*, September 23, 1966.)

In *Peace News* last week, Stephen Rousseas described Andreas, a Centre MP, as a man who "has captured the imagination of the people... It is common in Greece to compare the younger Papandreou with the late President Kennedy, as a man possessed of style, intellect and a programme to get Greece moving..." Rousseas didn't describe Andreas as a radical; he said:

"Andreas' radicalism... is nothing more (in American terms) than a mixture of the New Deal, the New Frontier and the Great Society... But in semi-feudal Greece such attitudes are extreme." (Our italics.)

If Andreas is dead it will be as if Kennedy had been murdered by Lyndon Johnson and the whole of America knew it for a fact.

The position of King Constantine in relation to the coup is the issue which has exercised the British press. Many conflicting stories have appeared, from the immediate reaction of all

left-wingers (including ourselves) that Constantine was behind the coup to the angle presented by blinkered or dishonest apologists for the Greek monarchy that Constantine is a constitutional monarch, as impartial as our Queen, but fighting with true nobility of breeding against a military coup of which he was completely ignorant and which he rightly deplores.

Neither view, it seems, represents the truth: but where the first assumes, quite reasonably on his past actions, that Constantine was hand-in-glove with every plot advanced by right-wing officers in the Greek army, the latter leaves completely out of account the two most important factors which dominate Greek politics. These are the crucial fact that the King and not parliament selects the Minister of Defence and high-ranking officers in the services, thus enjoying their unswerving support; and that the Greek monarchy, the Greek right-wing and the Greek army rely on American support, be it from the State Department, the CIA or NATO.

In the *Guardian* last Tuesday, Terence Prittie explained King Constantine's manoeuvring of the elder Papandreou from power in 1965 in the following terms:

"In the first place the Prime Minister was seeking to secure the Ministry of Defence for himself and would have accumulated undue political power in his hands had he been successful.

"Mr Papandreou had also made no secret of his intention to 'purge' the army of what he considered to be right-wing elements, but what the King regarded as loyal and professional soldiers. The King considered that the assumption of total control of the army by a Head of Government who was his own Minister of Defence would have constituted a threat to parliamentary democracy."

Very responsible and patriotic of the King! Particularly, when he, as head of state and effective controller of the Ministry of Defence, has constituted a continuous threat to parliamentary democracy since his accession to the throne, evidenced most recently by a "misjudgment" in the selection of senior military personnel of such magnitude that it has led to the overthrow of parliamentary democracy by army officers *unquestionably* loyal to their King...

Constantine is like Charles I of England. If he loses control of the army, he has lost the main prop of his power. Papandreou's slogan ever since he was dismissed, quite reasonably, has been: "Who rules? The King or the people?" (or, in English terms: "The King or parliament?"). It is an unfortunate fact of all nation-states that he who controls the army rules.

The main factor which complicates this simple analysis is that the Greek King rules Greece, with the support of his army, only so long as he has the support of the United States. Churchill and Stalin did a deal at the end of the last war that the British would leave the USSR alone in Eastern Europe if we were allowed Greece within our "sphere of inter-

## 150 BURN DRAFT CARDS



A young man, one of 150, burns his draft card in New York on April 15. See Martin Jezer's report, with Dan Hemenway's photos, on pages 6 and 7. This photo is by Dave McReynolds.

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