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After the War Was Over

Mark Mazower

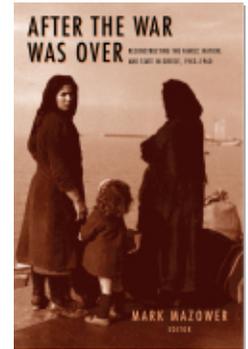
Published by Princeton University Press

Mazower, M..

After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960.

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

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Red Terror: Leftist Violence during the Occupation

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THIS CHAPTER AIMS to question, and help revise, one of the central, indeed hegemonic, assumptions in the study of the Greek civil war: that the Left (the National Liberation Front—EAM—and the Communist Party of Greece—KKE) has been the main (or even the only) victim of violence.

The emergence and domination of such a view should come as no surprise. On the one hand, defeat in a civil war tends to be total; hence supporters of the defeated side suffer disproportionately. Indeed, most descriptions of the violence suffered by the supporters of the Left usually focus either on the period immediately following the end of the occupation—often described as the period of the “white terror” (1945–1947), or on the final phase of the civil war (1947–1949) and its aftermath. On the other hand, references to left-wing terror, as plentiful as they were vague, became a key weapon in the ideological arsenal of the Greek Right. The collapse, in 1974, of the ideological hegemony of the Right erased all references to leftist terror. Indeed, recent scholarly historical research has tended to overlook,¹ minimize,² or whitewash³ leftist terror.⁴ Even serious scholarship has tended to minimize leftist terror in a variety of subtle and implicit ways—including the choice of a skewed vocabulary. For example, Riki van Boeschoten dubs the violence of EAM “revolutionary violence” and the violence of the Right “terrorism.”⁵ Moreover, the rare references to leftist terror are typically followed by explications that hasten to posit its limited, insignificant, or exceptional character. In short, the claim is that leftist violence was an “aberration.”⁶ Although this claim is based on partial and mostly biased accounts, it remains unchallenged to this day primarily because of the absence of systematic empirical research on violence during the Greek civil war. The only sources are anecdotal: either the openly biased memoirs of right-wing and left-wing veterans of the conflict, or the contemporary accounts of British Liaison Officers (BLOs), which also need to be used with care because of their anti-Left bias.⁷ Recently, a few single-village studies have provided useful insights, but remain of limited value

as they cannot be generalized beyond the confines of the villages they focus on.⁸

In contrast, my account of leftist (“red”) terror is based on the first (and to this date only) systematic and large-scale empirical investigation of violence during the Greek civil war. Based on extensive research carried out primarily in the region of the Argolid (but also in the adjoining areas of Korinthia and Arkadia), in the northeastern Peloponnese, this (ongoing) research is based on (1) close to 200 interviews with participants and ordinary people covering the counties of Argos and Nafplia in the prefecture (*nomos*) of the Argolid; (2) extensive archival evidence from the Court of Appeals of Nafplion, as well as British, German, and American archives; and (3) published and unpublished memoirs, autobiographies, and local histories.⁹ Thus, the empirical basis of this chapter is both comprehensive (since it includes an area populated by about 40,000 people living in close to sixty villages) and reliable (since it combines oral and written, contemporary and retrospective, right-wing and left-wing sources, and accounts of both active participants in the conflict and ordinary people). Based on this research I was able to compile, among others, the full list of civilian casualties in two out of three counties of the Argolid. Although violence can take many forms, violent murder is unquestionably one of its most extreme expressions.

My goal is not to contribute to a meaningless partisan debate on comparative cruelty: it is clear that all sides resorted to terror. Instead, the focus on the red terror is necessary for two reasons: first, to set the record straight, and second, because a full exploration of the nature of violence during the Greek civil war requires a comparative analysis of the uses of terror by all political actors. While our understanding of right-wing violence, especially during the occupation, has been furthered by recent research,¹⁰ the same cannot be said about left-wing violence.

First I show that in the Argolid, the red terror was a centrally planned process, key to EAM’s and the KKE’s strategic goals; I also discuss how my findings apply to the rest of the country. I then show how the red terror is intimately connected to the violence initiated first by the Germans and their local allies during the occupation period, and second by right-wing bands following the liberation of the country. I argue that a full understanding of the dynamics of violence during the civil war can only come from a comprehensive analysis that links the uses of terror by various political actors; the integration of single isolated events into the entire sequence to which they belong; and the combination of many different bodies of evidence. I illustrate these points by showing how seemingly straightforward instances of German terror and rightist “white” terror can prove misleading when not connected to the red

terror and placed into the full sequence of events to which they belong—something that can only result from the creative combination of many different bodies of evidence.

RED TERROR: STRUCTURE AND GOALS

The Argolid: Social, Economic, and Political Background

The Argolid is located in the northeast part of the Peloponnese.¹¹ Its two main towns are Nafplion, the administrative capital (and the first capital of Greece), and Argos, the market town. The Argolid lacks religious and ethnic cleavages, even though it is not culturally homogeneous; about half its population is of Albanian descent, known as Arvanites: Christian Orthodox people, bilingual in Greek and *Arvanitika*, conscious of their distinct cultural identity, but with a strong sense of Greek national identity. Indeed, this potential ethnic cleavage was not politicized during the civil war. Arvanite and non-Arvanite villages were equally likely to side with the Left or the Right and equally disposed in their propensity to exhibit violence.

Like most of rural Greece, the Argolid is overwhelmingly dominated by family farming. Big landed property disappeared through successive reforms in the course of the late nineteenth century. As a result, almost every peasant family owned the land it tilled. In the plain of the Argolid (where data for the 1940s are available), there were 5,090 farms for 5,360 families. During the late 1930s the last sizable land tracts, belonging to a few monasteries, were distributed to the peasants of the surrounding villages. The number of families with no land property did not exceed 5 percent. The great majority of the families owned farm property equal to what they could till without hiring extra labor; very few families owned more land than they could farm on their own. The situation was similar in the hills and the mountains. Hence, the class cleavage was not salient. Although the villages displayed a measure of internal social stratification reflecting differences in the sizes of family farms, this “class” structure was trumped by a high level of social mobility and the presence of fluid and changing vertical village factions that included members from all “strata” of the village—often, but not always, on the basis of lineage and kin.

Monarchist parties were dominant, as was generally the case in the Peloponnese; the Communist Party was very weak. This political profile was even more pronounced in the counties of Argos and Nafplia, where the combined score of three Monarchist parties in the 1936 elections (the last free elections before the advent of the Metaxas dictatorship) reached 71.3 percent; Venizelist parties won 27.1 percent and the Com-

munists less than 1 percent (0.75 percent).¹² These scores were distributed quite evenly across the region, suggesting the absence of internal regional cleavages. The Argolid lacked a tradition of rebellion or mass violence. Since the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, the main points of high conflict had been a successful military rebellion against King Othon in 1862 and the so-called national schism (1916), both of which produced no significant violence.¹³ Indeed, Panayiotis Lilis, a KKE district leader from the village of Gerbesi, begins his (unpublished) memoirs by underlining the absence of a tradition of social and political struggle in the Argolid.

The Emergence of EAM

The Argolid was occupied by Italian forces from 1941 to September 1943, and by German forces after the Italian capitulation until September 1944.¹⁴ In spite of their weakness, the few Communists of the Argolid benefited from the province's proximity to Athens and were able to quickly begin working toward the development of a mass-based movement, EAM. In contrast to the situation in the mountain regions of central Greece, EAM was organized as an effective political organization before the emergence of its army, ELAS (the National People's Liberation Army). Eventually, in the Argolid, EAM became far stronger than ELAS, which recruited relatively few men.¹⁵ The leading personalities of the resistance movement were political cadres rather than guerrilla chieftains.

The first meeting of EAM in the Argolid took place in December 1942, after the Communist Party sent a cadre in the region to coordinate EAM and KKE activities.¹⁶ In a January 1943 meeting, the decision was made to expand the still-clandestine EAM organization throughout the Argolid. Guerrilla activity in the northern Peloponnese took a serious turn in the summer of 1943, after a group of sixty ELAS guerrillas were dispatched by Aris Velouchiotis to the Peloponnese to spur the growth of ELAS. Their first action was to disband a number of small nationalist bands mainly composed of Greek Army officers and, thus, establish a monopoly over the resistance movement. The Italian capitulation in early September 1943 greatly boosted ELAS: it provided weapons and supplies, while creating a power vacuum in the area. ELAS took advantage of the situation and began attacking (the few) mountain outposts of the gendarmerie. By October 1943, most gendarmes had fled to Argos and Nafplion, where the Germans were garrisoned. With the exception of a few small village outposts in the coast and the plain, the Argolid came under full EAM control.

In short, the formerly conservative and monarchist Argolid had sud-

denly, but clearly, turned into EAM country. All my informants, regardless of their present political affiliation, pointed out to me that during this period support for EAM was close to unanimous.¹⁷ That an area with no tradition of social struggles and with almost no communist presence could be swayed in such a quick and overwhelming fashion points to the importance of occupation (and its effective collapse) as a central and independent factor in shaping political developments.

By November 1943, EAM openly governed the Argolid villages through local and regional organizations.¹⁸ By January 1944, Communist Party cells were in place in almost every village, and the Party was growing rapidly. EAM collected taxes, provided logistical support for the fighting units of ELAS located in the mountains, issued permits for village-to-village travels, mobilized the population into a variety of ancillary organizations, policed the area, and administered justice through a network of “People’s Courts.” In other words, EAM had evolved into a state structure. Many authors have quoted Woodhouse’s statement about the benefits that the rise of EAM brought to mountain Greece: “The benefits of civilisation and culture trickled into the mountains for the first time. Schools, local government, law-courts and public utilities, which the war had ended, worked again. Theatres, factories, parliamentary assemblies began for the first time. . . . EAM/ELAS set the pace in the creation of something that Governments of Greece had neglected: an organised state in the Greek mountains.”¹⁹ However, these authors fail to note that state-building does not only bring benefits; it also brings state-like levels of repression.

In my estimation, close to 90 percent of all violent civilian deaths in the Argolid that occurred in the context of civil strife, from the beginning of the occupation (1941) to the end of the civil war (1949), occurred between September 1943 and September 1944.²⁰ Four distinct periods of violent conflict in the Argolid can be distinguished during this time: winter 1943–1944; spring 1944; June–July 1944; and August 1944.

WINTER 1943–1944

Up to the winter of 1943 there was a lack of open polarization or widespread violence in the Argolid. Few people lost their lives, mostly cattle thieves executed either by the occupation authorities or by the first ELAS bands. (One of the most important consequences of occupation and the decline of state authority had been the increase in criminal activity in the countryside.) In addition, EAM killed some of the most hated collaborators of the Italians. These collaborators, mostly criminal types, were universally despised because they systematically blackmailed and robbed peasants: their motivation was clearly material rather than

ideological. The liquidation of collaborators and cattle thieves, as well as the establishment of effective policing, met with almost universal approval and led to a substantial increase in safety — and this was the case across Greece.²¹ An EAM cadre in Epiros captures this feeling: “Even if ELAS had had no other objective, its effective policing [which] led to the emergence of full-fledged order and security in the areas under its control [was sufficient as an achievement].”²²

This is not to say, however, that the seeds of polarization had not already been sown. Below the appearance of universal support for EAM, many local conflicts were played out, especially concerning the staffing of the EAM village committees. As Lilis points out in his memoirs, the initial recruitment efforts in his village were marred by assertions such as: “I am not joining the organization, because so-and-so is already a member.” Moreover, some people were punished by EAM for minor offenses, real or not; punishments included fines and beatings but no killings. These developments generated resentment, especially when the victims were influential men in the village and the victimizers young village toughs of lower status.

The first systematic campaign of civilian assassinations in the Argolid began in November 1943 and was organized by EAM — *not the occupation authorities*. The first wholesale destruction of a village in the Argolid by the German occupation troops also took place in the first days of November 1943, following the (accidental) killing of three German soldiers by ELAS *andartes* (as the guerrillas were known). As a reprisal, the village of Berbati was burned down, and four villagers were killed while trying to flee. However, no mass reprisals took place.

The EAM terror campaign of winter 1943–1944 was hardly peculiar to the Argolid. A similar wave of killings swept the entire Peloponnese during the same time,²³ and most probably the whole country as well.²⁴ This campaign of assassinations was carried out by EAM’s newly formed OPLA squads—a combination of secret police and death squads. (OPLA is the Greek acronym for Organization for the Protection of the People’s Struggle; the acronym also means “weapons.”) These groups established very rapidly a reputation for ruthless violence that is still alive in the memories of many among my informants. In an interview he gave me, a former OPLA member described his job starkly: “I was not a regular guerrilla; I was a devil’s guerrilla.”

Charles Tilly has pointed out that “violence is rarely a solo performance; it usually grows out of an interaction of opponents.”²⁵ It would be unsatisfactory to just say that EAM initiated this wave of violence without accounting for its origins. This wave of violence can be understood as the local reflection of two significant national developments: first, the decision in the summer of 1943 by the Athens collaborationist

government to raise Greek auxiliary units, generically known the Security Battalions (SB)—a decision that resulted from the realization that most of the countryside had come under EAM control and that German forces could no longer police the Greek territory effectively; second, the subsequent decision by the KKE leadership to preempt this development, which they viewed as a major threat.

In the Argolid, the Security Battalions did not appear until May 1944—although they came to neighboring Korinthos in January 1944. However, EAM's winter 1943–1944 assassination campaign produced twenty-nine victims. In addition, a significant number was abducted from the two towns and killed in the surrounding mountains. At the same time, two isolated monasteries (near the villages of Borsa and Heli) were transformed into concentration camps to handle the prisoners and their interrogation, torture, and eventual execution. Likewise, the isolated hill village of Limnes was used as a detention and execution ground. The geographical distribution of these camps was strategic: they spanned the Argolid from west (Borsa) to East (Heli); Limnes was located at the center, forming an arc that surrounded the plain.

Although some of the victims, particularly in the towns, had been working for the German occupation authorities, the great majority had not. Indeed, they were described by EAM cadres as “reactionaries” rather than “traitors.” They were typically notables: mayors, doctors, merchants, petty officers, that is, individuals who were seen as both potentially disloyal to the EAM cause and able to influence many villagers. Their potential disloyalty was connected to what were rather trivial issues: traveling to a (German-occupied) town too often, hiding or refusing to hand in a gun, refusing to pay a tax or perform some duty requested by EAM, criticizing EAM or even poking fun at a local EAM member in the coffee shop, and so on.

These were trivial issues insofar as criticizing EAM did not spring, in the great majority of cases I examined, from narrowly political considerations, such as a preference for monarchy. Almost every villager at this point shared EAM's proclaimed goal of national liberation, while at the same time not suspecting the KKE's behind-the-scenes powerful role. Still, many villagers resented the daily demands for food and labor that the building of an army entails; many fragile local balances were upset by the composition of local EAM committees; and many newly empowered local EAM village leaders (known as *ipefthinoi*, “the responsible ones”) began to use their positions to settle scores and humiliate personal enemies. After the killings, any villager hostile to the local EAM leadership realized that the stakes were high and shut his mouth.

In this sense, EAM's terror campaign was successful: it generated widespread fear, mutual suspicion, and the collapse of trust within communities. In doing so, it cut short any challenge to EAM's monopoly,

and deterred people from engaging in actions against EAM. The purposeful creation of fear is a feature that consistently came up in interviews with both right-wing *and* left-wing villagers.²⁶ “You wouldn’t talk here,” a (left-wing) woman told me, “because you didn’t know what could happen to you. There was fear. Fear and terror.” A leftist man from the mountain village of Frousiouna expressed this point:

We, the village boys, we hadn’t really understood what was going on here. We hadn’t understood what “revolution” really meant. And Doctor Michalopoulos [a moderate local EAM leading figure], who was my uncle, gave me the following advice. He told me: “Listen, with this established situation, you won’t say no. You will execute [whatever] orders [you receive] without objecting. They want the mule, you’ll give them the mule. This is a revolution,” he told me. “They can kill both you and the mule, and they will be accountable to no one. You won’t talk. You’ll listen.”

Two elements struck the villagers as particularly shocking. First was the arbitrary character of the terror, conveyed in the recollection above—strongly resembling both Jacobin and Soviet terror.²⁷ Often there was no apparent reason for an arrest. “We never learned why so-and-so was killed” is a statement that comes up again and again in my interviews. In many instances, my informants could not even speculate on why a certain individual had been killed. The second shocking element was its novel character. Nothing like this had ever befallen these people—or their parents. Never had the Greek state authorities resorted to such a practice. Neither personal disputes nor political conflicts had ever given rise to such violence. As the American ambassador to Greece wrote in one of his dispatches: “People familiar with the relatively bloodless ‘Greek revolutions’ of the past may well have been astonished as well as horrified by what has occurred in this one.”²⁸ This point was also emphasized by a British journalist:

Here in Greece there used to be furious feeling between Venizelists and Monarchists and coup upon coup d’état, but never any corpses piled up. . . . Greeks never before shed Greek blood as they have done this autumn [1944] in the Peloponnese and Macedonia. The factious spirit is that of the old Venizelist-Monarchist squabbles, but its expression has a new ferocity, so that Athenians, horrified at the tales that come in, plead with the stranger to believe that such things—the mutilation and murder of prisoners, the taking of hostages, the massacres in EES villages [i.e., villages that collaborated with the Germans in Macedonia]—are the doing not of Greeks but of Bulgars and Germans infiltrated into the ELAS ranks.²⁹

What is more, while the violence exercised by the occupying authorities could be comprehended as part of foreign occupation, the violence exercised by EAM, involving neighbors and meted out by Greeks in the

name of the liberation of the country, must have initially appeared incomprehensible. I stress this point, because I think it is fundamental in understanding the intensity of the reaction against EAM that was to follow.

Successful terror is intended to achieve a maximum amount of compliance with a minimum amount of violence. Yet, terror also produces resentment. As a British Liaison Officer active in Korinthia and Achaia put it: "Above all [the villager] hates having his only mule 'borrowed' by people for whom he has no respect. He has talked it all out in some dark corner with his brother villagers, he has plotted against and schemed to rid himself of at least the EAM in his village, but he has no gun; so he sits there quietly biting his first finger in that significant way which means 'All right, you are on top for now, but you wait.'"³⁰ As long as the balance of power remained unchanged and control was in EAM's hands, this kind of resentment was contained and violence remained limited and circumscribed. However, when and where the balance of power was upset, things went awry. This is precisely what happened in the Argolid in the spring and summer of 1944.

SPRING 1944

The situation began to change in late April 1944, as a result of the escalation of the conflict in neighboring Arkadia and Korinthia. This escalation was triggered by the arrival of Security Battalion troops in Korinthos in January 1944, and in Tripolis in March 1944. The core of these Battalions, made of mostly marginal elements recruited in Athens, was under the command of junior officers from the region who had fled to Athens after the winter wave of assassinations. Upon their arrival in the two provincial capitals, the Security Battalions proceeded to recruit locally, mostly among three categories: thuggish elements from the towns; demoralized gendarmes who had been idle in the towns after being chased from the countryside (and being consistently the target of assassination by OPLA teams); and the kin of those previously killed by EAM, together with young villagers who had been harassed by village EAM committees, often on the basis of personal grudges — both groups having fled their villages for the towns. The arrival of the Security Battalions set off a process of escalation of violence, aptly described by a British Liaison Officer: "ELAS' attitude to them was one of extreme hostility; and many of the worst ELAS atrocities were carried out against SB prisoners and against their families, who were normally removed to concentration camps. ELAS' fury against the Security Battalions grew with what it fed on, and the Battalions themselves proved no less masters of the arts of intimidation and terrorisation."³¹

At the same time, the German occupation authorities escalated their

reprisals in the region. On 22 April, as a reprisal for an ELAS action, they shot eleven hostages from Nafplion.³² In May, a small SB detachment (about twenty men) finally arrived in Argos and quickly dispatched a unit in Nafplion. This detachment was led by three captains of the Greek Army (Dimitrios Moustakopoulos, Spiros Robotis, and Panayotis Christopoulos). Eventually the Argolid unit reached a size of about 150–250 and was able to seal off effectively both Argos and Nafplion from EAM, stop most of the kidnappings and assassinations, and destroy the underground EAM organizations. Some EAM members were shot, and most fled. Likewise, most EAM organizations in the villages located near the two towns were forced to go underground, and their most visible cadres had to flee. Overall, the Security Battalions dealt a devastating blow to EAM in the towns and the villages of the plain. “Some people there,” recalls Lilis, “came to believe that if the *andartes* came down to the plain they would kill them, and this is why they saw their salvation in the continuation of the German occupation. The blow we suffered within a few months because of the terrorism and the propaganda [of the Security Battalions] was devastating. They were able to shift the people’s spirits; whereas a sizable part was at least neutral toward us, they now turned against EAM’s struggle.”

The role of the kin of EAM’s victims is central in understanding the wave of terror launched by the Security Battalions. As soon as they realized that the Security Battalions were willing to help them overthrow EAM in their villages, the victims’ kin lobbied the SB to organize raids and supplied the Battalions with crucial information about the EAM organization of their villages. More than sixty years later, many among these people have no qualms about their actions, which they view as either just retribution for the distress suffered under EAM rule or as the inevitable result of the only defense that was available to them. For instance, a man whose parents had both been killed by EAM before he joined the Security Battalions, told me: “I went to the Germans. What should I have done since there was no one else to turn to?”

Raids began to be carried out against villages of the plain in May 1944. They took the following form: a combined force of Germans and Battalionists surrounded the village and forced all village men to gather in the central square. There, one or two villagers following the raiding party would single out key EAM cadres. These would then be sent to the German concentration camp of Korinthos, to be either shot in some reprisal measure or placed in the grisly cages that had been attached to the trains’ front ends in order to deter sabotage; if they were lucky or wealthy enough to bribe their way out of the camp (but not so wealthy as to buy their freedom), they would be shipped to Germany to be used as slave labor. To an outside observer, these raids would appear as in-

stances of indiscriminate violence exercised by the occupiers against innocent civilians. It is clear, however, that they were *also* selective acts of retaliation in the context of an escalating local conflict. Close to forty people, in my estimation, were killed in these raids during May 1944.

In response to this attack, EAM stepped up its campaign of terror in the areas under its control. The launching of the first major mopping-up operation by German and Security Battalion troops deep into EAM territory during late May, June, and July 1944 proved to be another critical step in the process of escalation.

JUNE–JULY 1944

Mopping-up operations, the goal of which was to annihilate the *andartes* by cordoning off an entire area and then proceeding to thoroughly “comb” through it, produced a high level of primarily indiscriminate violence and triggered a new sequence of violence and counterviolence. The first raid began on 17–18 May and lasted until 1 June; it involved about five thousand men and targeted the eastern Argolid. The aim was not to occupy territory on a permanent basis but to encircle and destroy the *andartes*. A large number of civilians, 134 in my estimation, mostly elderly people, women, and children, were shot and killed in the fields while attempting to flee from their villages. Most had few active ties to EAM.³³ The main cause of the indiscriminate character of this violence was the absence of local informers (such as existed in the plain villages), primarily because there had been little or no EAM violence in these villages during the previous months.

An important development that took place in the course of this operation was the collective defection of a number of villages to the German side. After the Germans and the Security Battalions moved into a village that was strategically located (close to a railroad line or to an important mountain passage), they would gather all the villagers in the central square and would offer them a choice: take up arms and join them in the fight against the *andartes* or suffer collective punishment. The village mayor, in consultation with the most prominent villagers, would typically accept the deal. Interestingly, many among the people active in such deals had been among the most prominent EAM supporters in their villages. To induce commitment, the Germans would then request that the villagers deliver some EAM sympathizers to them. Usually these hapless sympathizers would be shot on the spot. The decision of villages to enter into these deals hinged greatly on expectations. This was the first time villagers were witnessing such extensive military operations, and they believed that the *andartes* (who had fled) had been totally defeated. This was a crucial factor (together with the threat of collective punishment) that led them to defect. A typical sentence from my inter-

views goes like this: “The [villagers] thought that because such a big operation was going on, because the mountains were laden with Germans, that the guerrillas had been destroyed. ‘Well,’ they said, ‘then let’s join the Germans.’”³⁴

The rampage going on in the eastern Argolid was carefully observed by villagers and EAM cadres in the western Argolid. Both groups were frightened by the unprecedented amount of violence used by the occupation troops. Some villagers, including EAM sympathizers, began fleeing to the towns so as to avoid being killed in what they anticipated would be the next target of German raids. At the same time, EAM leaders were worried by the collective defections in the eastern Argolid, and their worries increased when villagers began to flee to the towns. To stop this trend, a new wave of terror was launched, as a result of which many people were arrested and interrogated. Fifty-six (including women) were shipped to a concentration camp in the St. George Monastery in Korinthia and were executed by having their throats slit. These killings produced a commotion in Argos, home to many of their relatives, and led to new retaliations. Andreas Christopoulos, a writer and resident of Argos who recorded his impressions from the occupation in a book published in 1946, recalls the situation in June 1944: “One person goes to the Gestapo offices to tell them that the *andartes* arrested his family tonight, another person tells them that they burnt down his house, and yet another one that they exterminated his family because he was a reactionary.”³⁵

After having “pacified” the eastern Argolid, the occupation troops turned their attention to the west. On 17 July, they launched a big operation to destroy ELAS bases in the mountains further west. The villagers fled upward and were generally lucky; they were able to escape and suffered relatively few casualties. However, a few days before this second mopping-up operation, an additional fifty villagers had been arrested and put to death by EAM in a series of preemptive actions intended to both punish suspected “reactionaries” and thwart additional ones by spreading terror. The arrests this time were even more arbitrary. For example, some people were killed just for spreading rumors, as indicated by the following excerpt from an interview:

Diamandis Kostakis was tilling his field of maize. The adjacent field was tilled by a man named Vourdoulas. They were watering the fields when he told Vourdoulas, “You know, Vazeos [the ELAS commander] defected to the Security Battalions.” This was German propaganda. Vourdoulas reported this [exchange] to Barba-Sotiros Sotiropoulos. Barba-Sotiros told it to Yannis Papadopoulos, who reported it to the teacher Liberopoulos, the village *ipefthimos*. The teacher, fearing [the consequences of not reporting this], told it to Stef-

anakis, another teacher who was a member of the regional committee. Stefanakis came in and interrogated Papadopoulos: “Who told you?” [Papadopoulos] replied: “Sotiros [told me].” “Come here Barba-Sotiros,” [the teacher said], “who told you?” “Vourdoulas,” [Barba-Sotiros replied]. “Vourdoulas, who told you?” “Kostakis,” [Vourdoulas responded]. Kostakis was brought in: “Did you say this thing?” “Yes,” he replied. Stefanakis hit him very hard, he beat the hell out of him, then they took him and killed him.

No collective defections took place in the mountain villages since there was no one to defect: everyone had fled. However, the inhabitants of the villages located in the hills of the Argolid had been encircled and were forced to return to their villages: it was impossible to hide in caves for more than a few days. Upon their return to their homes, those who had fled were contacted by Security Battalionists and relatives from Argos, who urged them to join them. Having undergone the terror of EAM during June and July, a terror amplified by rumors that new blacklists with up to fifty names per village had been drawn by EAM members, these villagers were willing to defect. They rounded up a few EAM cadres and sympathizers unlucky enough to have remained behind and delivered them to the Germans. Often they took the initiative: having rounded up the few members of EAM they could find, they marched them to Argos in order to exchange them with German weapons.³⁶ The prisoners were a proof of commitment and an indicator that the villagers could be trusted by the Germans — who, however, failed to arm these villagers (they, probably, did not consider their villages to be of strategic interest). What is particularly ironic about these developments is that when the word “revolution” came up during my interviews, it was mostly used by the people from these villages describing their uprising against EAM: “Our villages revolted,” they told me; or, “This was the time of the revolution.”

AUGUST 1944

The balance of power shifted once more in late July and August. Once the German army decided to leave Greece, the “pacified” hills were evacuated and, by mid-August, the *andartes* began returning — literally, with a vengeance. They took a tremendous toll in the “traitorous” villages of the eastern Argolid, killing 119 people. Like the Germans, they burned some villages down to the ground. In one village (Heli), they took between sixty and eighty hostages, mostly elderly people (including women), slaughtered them, and threw their bodies into a well, in what was probably one of the most grisly acts of mass violence in the area.³⁷ In other villages, entire families were rounded up, taken to the mountains, and slaughtered. For example, in one massacre that took

place on 15 August 1944 in the village of Gerbesi, the *andartes* arrested twenty-three people, most of them members of five families—including five children, aged sixteen, fifteen, fourteen, five, three, and a baby of just eighteen months.³⁸ The tragic feature of these massacres was that some of the victims had already lost close family members during the German operations of June. The selection of the victims was heavily informed by personal grudges and exacerbated by the violence of the past months.

Fortunately, this rampage was not repeated in the western Argolid, where most people fled to Argos and Nafplion before the arrival of the *andartes*. These villages were deserted, and the *andartes* burned them down. As the Germans were leaving the Peloponnese, the *andartes* gradually reasserted their control over the entire Argolid. The Germans evacuated Argos on 19 September, and the Security Battalions surrendered their weapons in Nafplion on 5 October, and left for the island of Spetses under British supervision. Contrary to what one might have expected, little violence took place during this period. (The only exception was a massacre in the village of Achladokambos following a deadly battle between the victorious *andartes* and the resisting village Battalionists, on 18 September 1944.) While the spirit of revenge ran high, EAM managed to police the villages with great effectiveness and prevent acts of retaliation. Many arrests took place,³⁹ and EAM promised that those responsible for crimes committed during the occupation would stand trial after the country's liberation. Most of these people were freed after the Varkiza Agreement.

All in all, I estimate the number of *civilians* killed between September 1943 and September 1944 in the area I investigated to be around 670—close to 2 percent of this area's total population. EAM was responsible for roughly 55 percent of these killings, and the Germans and their collaborators were responsible for about 45 percent.

The Structure of Red Terror

When not overlooked or dismissed as right-wing propaganda, EAM terror is typically presented as the result of isolated actions of a few uncontrolled guerrilla chieftains or fanatic communist cadres.⁴⁰ However, there is substantial evidence strongly suggesting that terror was a centrally planned (though regionally implemented) policy pursued consistently by the KKE and EAM throughout Greece. In fact, we can safely talk of a *system of terror*. Its goal was to ensure civilian compliance and maximize control over the population.

This does not imply that terror was the only instrument used by EAM to generate compliance. In fact, terror can (and did) coexist with ideo-

logical appeals and the provision of material benefits. Nor does this imply that every member of EAM or ELAS was involved in terroristic activities. As it turns out, the system of terror was mostly administered by specialized quasi-professional teams rather than ELAS—although it required the active collaboration of hundreds of village EAM committees. Furthermore, a distinction should be made between terror and violence. Terror is a *method* of rule, whereas violence is an *outcome* of terror. The use of terror does not necessarily imply mass violence. In fact, successful terror produces low levels of violence, because its objective is intimidation, not extermination: “Kill one and scare one thousand,” goes a Chinese saying. In a different formulation, high levels of violence are indicative of a breakdown of terror. For example, although EAM killed less than thirty people in the villages of the Argolid during the winter of 1943, it was able to deter all opposition. This point is important because it allows us to explain both interregional and intraregional variations of violence. Within the Argolid, the further a village was located from German control, the less severe was the violence used by EAM. In the mountains of the Argolid, for example, only a few beatings took place during the same period. This appears to have been true for the mountain villages of central and northern Greece, which were not threatened by German incursions. When, however, the mountain villages of the Argolid came under German attack, EAM resorted to higher levels of violence to deter civilians from defecting to the Security Battalions. Likewise, the mountain villages of central Greece, which suffered little EAM violence during the occupation, underwent left-wing violence during the last phase of the civil war, when they came under attack by the Greek National Army: the experience, in 1947–1949, of the mountain villages of Evrytania or Thessalia, which had been relatively free of violence in 1944, resembles strikingly that of the mountain villages of the Argolid in 1944.

How was the system of terror implemented? Although the first Security Battalions were only formed in Athens in 1943 (and did not begin operating in the countryside until January 1944), the leadership of the Communist Party decided to take preemptive action against them. OPLA was formed in the summer of 1943.⁴¹ Immediately after (25 August 1943), the leadership of ELAS in the Peloponnese requested that regional EAM branches form “a special organ” in order to “isolate at the right moment” the “leaders of the reaction.”⁴² The central committee of ELAS issued an announcement on 7 December, warning anyone planning to join the Battalions that they would be punished with death, that their families would be arrested, and that their property in “Free Greece” would be confiscated.⁴³ This announcement was echoed by a similar one issued by the Political Bureau of KKE on 21 December.⁴⁴

These decisions were quickly transmitted to the communist leadership in the Peloponnese, operating under the acronym KEPP (Central Committee for the Peloponnese Region). The program of “elimination of the reactionaries” was further communicated to the Peloponnesian district KKE representatives at a meeting in the Arcadian village of Strezova held on 26 November 1943.⁴⁵ The EAM newspaper of Achaia captured the spirit of this meeting, attended by about 250 representatives from the entire Peloponnese: “Gestapo Men and Traitors, the People Will Hang You in the Central Square.”⁴⁶ The British Liaison Officer George Tavernarakis referred to this meeting in his report: “At the last general conference of ELAS Peloponnesian representatives, principles of dealing with ‘reactionaries’ were laid down. Reaction was distinguished as either Active or Passive. Those who indulged in the former were to be shot, while Passive reactionaries (defined as persons known to disagree with it without taking any definite action) must be sent to concentration camps, of which a good many now exist.”⁴⁷

In December 1943, the EAM and KKE press in the Peloponnese was reproducing warnings and threats against potential Security Battalions recruits—worded in a surprisingly similar fashion. For example, the KKE newspaper of Achaia ran a central article entitled “The Greeks with Greece, the Traitors with the Gestapo,” which contained the following telling passage: “This is why we warn them for the last time to leave [the SB]. Otherwise we will exterminate them, we will burn their houses and we will destroy all their kin.”⁴⁸ These were not empty threats. They were acted upon across the entire Peloponnese: violence was carried out against the relatives of men who joined the Battalions, fled to the towns, or were just suspected of being disloyal to the EAM cause. At the same time, EAM began to systematically threaten the Greek army officers to join it so as to undermine their availability for the Security Battalions.⁴⁹

The KKE’s ability to implement a system of terror was made possible by its centralized structure and its domination over EAM. Two features are worth underlining. First, the smallest village was connected to the KKE’s regional committee through ascending organizational links, thus making possible the local implementation of national directives. Second, the KKE was organized at a higher level than EAM: whereas there was a KKE regional committee (*periferiaki epitropi*) covering the entire Argolid & Korinthia prefecture, the highest EAM authority in the region was the provincial committee (*eparchiaki epitropi*), covering only the Argolid (a second EAM provincial committee covered Korinthia). In addition, the regional secretaries were directly appointed by the KKE’s Peloponnesian bureau (to which they were accountable) and often carried the title “representatives of the Peloponnesian bureau.”⁵⁰ Finally,

whereas the KKE committee was composed of seasoned communist cadres, the EAM committee was composed of mainly urban, middle-class, middle-aged, higher-profile but powerless noncommunists—though headed by a dedicated communist from the town of Nemea (Andreas Froussios, alias Gravias). The terror system was implemented and monitored directly by the KKE organization. There was nothing flashy about the KKE cadres: even their aliases were bland and distinctly unheroic (in contrast to the ELAS chieftains’ flamboyant heroic aliases): Stathis, Gavos, Gravias, etc.

How were regional directives conveyed at the village level? My interviews with a number of surviving EAM *ipefthinoi* (village leaders), members of EAM village committees, and KKE cadres (most of them still supporters of leftist parties), as well as the analysis of court documents, make it possible to reconstruct accurately the organizational ties that connected the villages with the regional leadership.

In the fall of 1944, a series of meetings took place at the village level. These meetings brought the local EAM committee (typically composed of six to eight members) together with district or regional cadres. In the villages of Argos county, the second secretary of the regional KKE committee, Dimitris A. Andreadakis (alias Mitsos Gavos) attended these meetings. Gavos asked the local committee to identify the village “reactionaries” and consent to their elimination. As one participant told me: “In September or October 1943, the [village] committee held a meeting with [the regional committee representative] in order to arrest three men, to clean up the reactionary elements.” A number of names would come up and be discussed; sometimes the discussion would include anonymous denunciations of specific individuals. Often a vote would take place, but sometimes the decision was reached through deliberation of the KKE members in a closed meeting.⁵¹ Gavos would then ask the committee members to sign a document pertaining to the decision. The local committee might also gather signatures from the villagers regarding a specific case.

A few nights later, an OPLA squad composed of men unknown to the villagers descended on the village, met a local guide (who was, in some cases, hooded), knocked on the victims’ doors, arrested them, and delivered them to the KKE authorities located in the mountain villages. These arrests went smoothly; the victims were told not to worry, because they would be taken just for a “little interrogation” (the standard expression used comes up in many interviews and written sources: *mia anakrisoula*) and would quickly return to their village. Typically, the victims did not worry too much because nobody had been killed up to that moment. Upon arrival in some EAM facility in the mountains, these persons were interrogated and often tortured (typical tortures in-

cluded beating, *falanga*, and flogging). A few were let go (largely depending on whether they knew some high-level cadre who could intervene on their behalf), but most were executed a few days later, usually by having their throat slit. Their bodies were dumped and often remained unburied for a long time. Relatives were often reassured by the village committee members that the victims were alive and well taken care of. In some cases, relatives were asked to provide food and clothes for them (which were then appropriated by EAM cadres). Many relatives of victims told me that even more than the deaths of their loved ones, it was the uncertainty and lies that followed that really distressed them.

The collaboration between the EAM village committee members and the regional KKE leadership affected not just *how* the victims were selected but also *who* was selected. On the one hand, the KKE cadres sought to eliminate influential people who could turn a village (or a substantial portion thereof) against EAM: village mayors, village doctors, petty officers, etc. On the other hand, many committee members used their power to settle personal accounts. For example, a village mayor who was abducted and killed in the fashion described above was both suspected of harboring anti-EAM feelings and happened to be involved in a bitter personal dispute with a committee member for having reneged on his promise to marry the committee member's sister. This process echoes Jan Gross's remark about Soviet terror in West Poland as being "characterized by *privatization* of the instruments of coercion."⁵² It is important to emphasize here that no one was killed in the winter of 1943–1944 unless consent from the village organization was secured in the way I described above.⁵³

During the spring, regional party meetings were held to discuss these issues anew and set general guidelines. A key meeting in this respect was the Peloponnesian meeting of the KKE, which took place in a small hamlet near the Arkadian village of Strezova, on 19 April 1944. Initially set for 26 March, this meeting had to be postponed because of a combination of bad weather and German operations. Panayotis Lilis, a district secretary from the village of Gerbesi in the Argolid, attended this meeting together with seven other representatives from the Argolid and Korinthia and describes it in detail in his memoirs.⁵⁴ The meeting was addressed by the secretary of the KKE's Peloponnesian bureau, Achilleas Blanas, who analyzed in detail the decisions of the Tenth Plenum of the KKE's Central Committee (held in January 1944).⁵⁵ Party leaders pointed out that in the period between the Tenth Plenum and the Peloponnesian meeting, "the measures concerning the attack against the reaction had been relaxed" and more decisive measures were needed, such as "disappearances of traitors and reactionaries" that would be

carefully planned and carried out — as opposed to the prevalent practice of careless assassinations following which corpses were left unburied and were used as reactionary propaganda against the party.⁵⁶ KKE representatives were briefed about the role of OPLA, whose squads were to be composed of two to three members directly accountable to each regional committee secretary.⁵⁷ OPLA men were supposed to shoot to kill in only two cases: when operating in German-occupied territory (as assassination squads), or when the suspect resisted arrest. Otherwise, their main function was to carry out arrests. At this point during the meeting, Lilis recalls, a man got up in the room and asked the speaker: “Hence OPLA will be the future *Gepeou*?”⁵⁸ Blanas replied that “such things are told by those who are opposed to EAM’s struggle, those who confuse EAM’s liberation struggle with the party’s goals and struggles.”⁵⁹ The man who had raised the point about OPLA was then asked to leave the room. The meeting closed with the appointments of the regional secretaries. Theodoros Zengos (alias Stathis or Triandafyllos) was appointed first secretary for the Argolid and Korinthia regional committee.

Once more, the decisions taken in this meeting reached the local level with remarkable speed. KEPP issued a set of directives regarding the creation and staffing of interrogation units and the guidelines for discreet arrests, interrogations, and “disappearances” of traitors and reactionaries; these directives advised the regional committees to “exterminate the reaction.”⁶⁰ In May 1944, the EAM newspaper *Lefteros Morias* published an inflammatory central article with the telling title “Knife-blade for the Reaction” (*Lepidi-Lepidi stin Antidراسi*). A KKE cadre from Korinthia recalls: “This is how the party line reached [us]: ‘We must eliminate the reaction. No one who can sway the people must survive. We must even do away with reactionaries who can influence five people and push them against us.’”⁶¹ By May 1944, new concentration camps housed in isolated mountain monasteries were created to handle the fledging numbers of prisoners, while the campaign of terror was stepped up decisively.⁶²

An additional indication of the impressive ability of the Party and EAM to coordinate activities throughout the Peloponnese peninsula is provided by the staging of “spontaneous” demonstrations in villages of the EAM-controlled areas.⁶³ These demonstrations unfolded following a similar script: the inhabitants of many villages would converge in a bigger village, where they would listen to speeches by regional EAM leaders and would then approve a petition demanding relief from the Red Cross, weapons from the British mission, and the punishment of the “traitors”; these petitions were worded in remarkably similar terms across the peninsula. In one case (Ano Belesi, in the Argolid), such a

demonstration also included the execution of a “traitor.” EAM’s ability to mobilize thousands of villagers in a time of war both across and within regions points to its remarkable organizational strength. An additional testimony of EAM’s impressive ability to control violence at the local level is its prevention of violence following the defeat of the Security Battalions in September and October 1944.⁶⁴

Two elements strike me as central to the red terror. The first is the convergence of the local logic of village organizations and the supra-local strategic concerns of the regional (and national) organizations. This point is missed by both “top-down” historians, who lack information about local developments and tend to interpret terror as an indiscriminate process implemented from above against unsuspecting civilians, and anthropologists, who view terror as a process primarily informed by “local vendettas” — in the words of Stanley Aschenbrenner, “a sequence of action and reaction that needed no outside energy to continue, though it was of course exploited by outside agents.”⁶⁵ The second element is the highly bureaucratic character of the red terror — an element that sets it apart from the intensely localist violence meted out by right-wing bands during 1945–1947.⁶⁶ This bureaucratic character is manifest in the way the system of terror was implemented: countless reports on specific individuals and their activities were drafted, discussed by committees, submitted to hierarchically superior committees, appealed, or acted upon. Countless meetings were held, thousands of signatures were collected, and hundreds of petitions circulated. Violence was professional and impersonal, characterized by a startling division of labor: an execution would be decided by one group, confirmed by another group, and implemented by yet another group, or set of groups.

Let me provide just two illustrations — both from left-wing sources. Stratis Papastratis, an EAM activist, recounts the story of Yannis Satiris, the mayor of the village of Avlonari in South Evia. Upon learning that he had been included in an EAM blacklist, Satiris traveled to (German-occupied) Halkida, the capital of Evia, to plead his case with higher EAM authorities; when this proved insufficient, he even went to Athens to see leading EAM cadres!⁶⁷ Ilias Yannakos, a mid-level EAM cadre in Epiros (and a faithful communist until his death), describes in his memoirs how he himself became the target of an EAM assassination attempt.⁶⁸ Apparently because he had voiced a critique of an EAM action, he was blacklisted by the EAM organization in Konitsa and slated for execution. Unsuspecting about this fate, he was taken by a local guide to the village of Vassiliko, where the local *ipefthinos* had been told to arrange his execution (this was before the formation of the OPLA squads). The guide handed him to the *ipefthinos*, asking him, as Yannakos recalls, for “a delivery receipt, as if I were some piece of mer-

chandise!” The *ipefthinos* took extreme precautions in feeding and caring for him, fearing to be later denounced as having been too friendly with a blacklisted man. Eventually the *ipefthinos* called the execution off, but what is interesting is the bureaucratic nature of his justification for doing so: he claimed that his village, Vassiliko, was under the jurisdiction of the Pogoni EAM organization rather than the Konitsa organization, which had requested the execution!⁶⁹

The bureaucratic character of the red terror becomes even more striking (I would even say eerie) when one takes into account the social and historical environment in which it unfolded: poor, mostly illiterate villages, in a time of occupation and war.⁷⁰ It is particularly ironic, of course, that all this violence was part and parcel of a struggle for the “national and social liberation” of Greece.

The Causes of Red Terror

EAM violence was not restricted to the Argolid; the entire Peloponnese was affected as well.⁷¹ Although we lack systematic evidence, it seems that many other regions were also particularly affected, especially central and western Macedonia.⁷² Conversely, some regions seem to have avoided the worst excesses of EAM violence. Understanding the causes of the red terror requires an explanation of this variation. Although this task cannot possibly be undertaken in the absence of systematic data on violence from all over Greece, it is possible at this point to disqualify some established arguments.

Most EAM apologists, be they veterans of the resistance and the civil war or historians, tend to account for EAM violence (implicitly rather than explicitly) by pointing to the personal characteristics of regional KKE and EAM leaders: intolerant and paranoid because of the persecution they had suffered before the occupation, they easily resorted to ruthless violence. Such an interpretation seems to fit the case of the Argolid. Both Theodoros Zengos (the first secretary of the KKE regional Argolid & Korinthia committee) and Dimitris A. Andreadakis (the second secretary) proved overly zealous in implementing the Party directives on spreading terror. Indeed, the Communist Party condemned Zengos’s actions and dismissed him from the Party after the liberation of the Peloponnese in October 1944. The regional KKE newspaper *Lefteros Morias* published, in its issue of 14 October 1944, the dismissal decision: “KOPP is dismissing from the party Triandafyllos or Stathis because [he was found guilty of] criminal distortion of the party line in the organization he led. . . . He used against citizens methods which have no relation to the party morale and behavior and damaged the party’s authority.”⁷³

Very little is known about Zengos.⁷⁴ A native of the Volos area and a prewar communist, Zengos is described as a wiry and intense man. An employee of the state telecommunication service (TTT), he was working in the Peloponnese when the war began. He is described as extremely fanatical by Communist Party cadres who knew him, able to terrorize into silence his subordinates.⁷⁵ When the commander of the ELAS Sixth Regiment, Major Vazeos, criticized him for having ordered some executions, he was told by Zengos to “watch out.”⁷⁶ It even appears that Zengos demanded that a fixed quota of “reactionaries” be liquidated in every village under his jurisdiction.⁷⁷ In short, there is no doubt that the presence of Zengos at the head of the Communist Party in the Argolid and Korinthia explains part of the violence exercised by EAM during 1944.

However, an interpretation that lays all (or even most) of the blame on particular persons would be both unsatisfactory and misleading. First, personalistic accounts fit with the view of the red terror as an aberration. Yet there is something preposterous about branding as “deviant” a behavior that appears to have been a widespread pattern as opposed to an exceptional occurrence. Blaming Zengos (and a few other cadres) tells more about how the Communist Party tried, at a crucial juncture, to evade its responsibility for the atrocities than it does about what caused these atrocities in the first place. Second, such an account fails to explain why there was such a concentration of extremist communists in certain areas, such as the Peloponnese.⁷⁸ Third, it also fails to explain the variations of violence within regions: why did some villages in the Argolid suffer disproportionately from the red terror? Fourth, while Zengos was overzealous, he still followed the party directives for the elimination of the “reaction” — as I showed above. Moreover, Zengos was never really punished. The actual accusations that led to his dismissal from the Party were trivial compared to his actions.⁷⁹ What is more, Zengos was quickly rehabilitated. He was given a new position in central Greece, on Aris Velouchiotis’s recommendation, before being transferred to the infamous KKE Bulkes camp; he ended up in Poland, where he died a natural death years later.⁸⁰

A better way to explore the causes of the red terror is the following hypothesis: the use of terror by EAM was a function of the severity of the challenge faced by EAM.⁸¹ Moreover, the likelihood of widespread violence depended on this challenge being (repeatedly) acted upon. According to this hypothesis, local factors, such as social conflicts and the personalities of local cadres, should only account for residual differences. In other words, the best predictor of the number of EAM victims should be the strength and activity of organizations, such as the Security Battalions, that challenged EAM’s authority; such organizations were

stronger in the Peloponnese and western Macedonia, precisely the areas where EAM resorted to widespread violence.⁸² In turn, the growth of the Security Battalions can be accounted for by a combination of factors: the prewar politics of the region, the military importance of the area for the Germans, and the available resources.⁸³

As I pointed out above, mountain villages far removed from the threats posed by the Security Battalions were less likely to be targeted by EAM, as opposed to hill villages, where the probability of a villager coming into contact with the Security Battalions was higher. For example, the mountain village of Frousiouna in the Argolid, which suffered little EAM violence, had never been visited by the occupation troops until it was attacked by them in July 1944. In a letter they sent to the Red Cross authorities, the inhabitants of the village pointed out that “never had the occupation army and the SB come to our area and never did the population imagine that such a raid would take place given that our region is mountainous and deprived of any roads. As a result of this psychological state, the people failed to take any preventive measures.”⁸⁴ The confirmation of this hypothesis demands sustained empirical investigation.

VIOLENCE: INTRODUCING SEQUENCE

Malandreni and German Terror

The village of Malandreni, located in the western part of the Argolid, affords an edifying example of the problems of an exclusive reliance on archival material when studying violence, namely the tendency to generalize from only one aspect of a complex set of events.⁸⁵ This relatively prosperous hill village (population in 1940: 883) appears in the German archives under the name of Melandrina; a report mentions that the village suffered indiscriminate looting by a group of sixteen German soldiers, who also beat up a woman who protested. The German territorial commander in nearby Korinthos was so appalled by what he saw as “gangster methods” comparable to behavior in the “Wild West” and indicating a wholesale deterioration in military discipline that he wrote a scathing report to his superiors. Mark Mazower uses this case as one example of the German army’s brutal behavior and of its imposition upon the Greek population of a “daily threat of an apparently random and indiscriminating violence [that] became central to their experience of the occupation.”⁸⁶ This is a valid point and, indeed, the brutality of the German army in occupied Greece (and elsewhere) has been amply documented. However, the image of the Greek experience of the occupation conveyed by this example is incomplete. Placing German terror

in the context of a sequence of local developments reveals a complex and nuanced picture of this experience.

EAM came to Malandreni in August 1943, when a communist from the nearby town of Nemea secretly visited the village and founded a local committee of EAM composed of two teachers, a doctor, a student, and a farmer, none of whom was a communist. However, all were equally excited about the prospect of contributing to the resistance movement, the echoes of which could be heard from central Greece. The main activity of EAM in Malandreni became the collection of food for the supply of an ELAS unit stationed in the nearby mountains. EAM also focused on fighting petty crime. For example, the mayor of the nearby village of Sterna who had received Italian monies for his village's contribution to the construction of a road but refused to pay the village workers was threatened by a group of EAM members and forced to pay the villagers. When three boys stole money from a shepherd, EAM played an active role in retrieving it. As Yannis Nassis, a leading member of the Malandreni EAM explains in his memoirs, "It would have been a success for the organization if we could find the thieves."⁸⁷ Indeed, he succeeded in finding the culprits and had them return the money. However, this case provides an early example of how things began to unravel with potentially catastrophic consequences. When an ELAS unit visited Malandreni for the first time, its commander asked the villagers if they had "traitors or thieves" among them. Without a second thought, the shepherd's wife named the three boys. The ELAS commander demanded that the boys be delivered to him for punishment, but Nassis managed to save them and the matter stopped there. In many instances, the first people to have later joined the Security Battalions were precisely young men who had been publicly humiliated by EAM.

The EAM organization suffered a relative decline during the last months of 1943 as the two teachers left for other villages. A reorganization took place in January 1944; at the same time, a secret five-member KKE cell was formed. The key KKE and EAM members overlapped. The village notables refused to participate in the EAM committee for fear of possible reprisals by the Germans who were in nearby Argos and paid frequent visits to Malandreni. Nassis points out that he warned them: "The organization will have to be formed, willingly or not. If you participate you will guarantee your own security. If you don't, you will be the first to be in danger."⁸⁸ Though these men did not join, they supported EAM like everyone else in the village. Participation was then universal, Nassis recalls: "The village was like a bee-hive. Everyone was a member of the organization, some in Popular Justice, some in security (observation posts, outposts, transportation, supply)."⁸⁹ However, the

seeds of discord were being sown. Small disputes connected to compulsory labor and requisitions would be blown out of proportion in a matter of few months.

The rise of EAM provided incentives for many people to settle past grudges. Personal disputes began to blend with politics from the very beginning. For example, one of the first men to be arrested by EAM had been accused of having denounced to the Italians a number of his co-villagers who were hiding weapons; as it turned out, however, this man had been falsely accused by his sharecropping associate, who wanted to keep the farm's crops to himself.⁹⁰ A few people who had been beaten up by the Italians because they had refused to surrender their weapons began to agitate against the village mayor, whom they accused of being an associate of the Italians—and whom they also disliked for a variety of personal reasons. The village *ipefthinos* consulted with the ELAS commander about his case and was told that only traitors were to be liquidated, not mayors. However, the mayor's enemies kept conspiring against him and, during April 1944, bypassed the local EAM committee and sent an anonymous denunciation to the regional committee. They fingered a number of people, including the mayor, whom they accused of collaboration with the Germans. The regional committee carried out interrogations that showed that the accusations were really, as Nassis points out, about “oil, lambs, etc., the usual stupid stuff.”⁹¹ Nobody was arrested.

The relative proximity of the Germans and the threat of reprisals proved an important inhibiting factor for the inhabitants of Malandreni, who had to tread very carefully. In October 1943, the British Liaison Officers active in the area (Major James and Captain Fraser) decided to sabotage the Argos airport, built and used by the Germans. Their attempt failed, partly because, as the BLO Captain Fraser pointed out, “the inhabitants of Malandreni did not wish to be involved with the Germans, who, in Argos, were only 20 minutes away.”⁹² In mid-April 1944, a Greek-speaking member of the German occupation forces, who went by the Greek name of Anestis, began to pay regular visits to Malandreni as part of an effort to lure the village to his side. The EAM village committee handled these contacts very carefully, to avoid exposing the village. During one such visit, EAM members from a neighboring village asked the Malandreni EAM members to ambush the Germans. The latter refused to do so, fearing German reprisals. As a result, the Malandreni EAM members were reprimanded by these (safely) radical EAM members. In the meantime, “Anestis” announced that he would pay a visit to Malandreni during the local festival of St. Athanassios, on 2 May. Again, radical EAM members from neighboring villages began lobbying in favor of attacking the Germans. Nassis went

to see Zengos (alias Stathis), the regional committee secretary, in order to lobby against the ambush. Zengos's reception was very cold: "Who do you think you are, comrade?" he asked Nassis, "A representative of the Germans?" Nassis replied: "No, comrade, I just came to compare the benefit [of ambushing the Germans] with its cost, this is why I came." "The Germans burned many other villages," Zengos replied, "but these villages joined the *andartes*."⁹³ Following this exchange, Nassis met with other cadres ("the big guys") and eventually got the second secretary of the regional committee to vouch that no ambush would take place: "The village knew about these developments and when it learned how the matter was decided there was great joy," Nassis recalls.⁹⁴

However, on the day of the festival, armed *andartes* came to Malandreni. They told the local EAM members that Zengos had overruled the second secretary and green-lighted the ambush. Using the extensive telephone network set up by EAM, the Malandreni EAM members called Zengos, who confirmed this decision. The Malandreni committee relented: "Since Stathis gave orders," Nassis points out, "who were we to refuse?"⁹⁵ The villagers heard of these developments and immediately deserted the festival in anticipation of the German reprisals; they quickly gathered as many of their possessions they could carry with them and fled the village. "Anestis," who in the meantime had arrived with a couple of soldiers, saw the villagers fleeing, got suspicious, and left quickly; the ambush failed. After two weeks (21 May 1944), the Germans returned to Malandreni. Their intentions were now different. They killed a man in a neighboring village and arrested a teacher who, under pressure, informed them about EAM (around this time two young men from Malandreni also joined the Security Battalions in Argos). They looted a few houses, but did not destroy Malandreni. This is the event that appears in the German archives, an altogether rather minor event in the tragedy of Malandreni.

At around the same time, the German troops and the Security Battalions launched their deadly mopping-up operation against the villages of the eastern Argolid. Both individual villagers and EAM cadres in the western Argolid, including Malandreni, became frightened by the unprecedented amount of violence. As I pointed out in the first section, the mopping-up operations in the eastern Argolid led many villages to defect to the Germans. Entire villages accepted weapons from the Germans and joined them in the fight against ELAS. EAM leaders became extremely worried about this development. Their worries increased when scores of villagers, including EAM sympathizers, began to flee to Argos in order to avoid being killed in an area that they anticipated would be the next German target. Among them was Nassis's brother

Spiros, a student, who was so thoroughly scared that he decided to flee to Argos in spite of his brother's warnings. He knew a doctor who admitted him in a clinic—a safe place to hide. The party leaders decided that this had to be stopped. On 6 or 7 June, the EAM provincial committee met and asked the Malandreni organization to force all the villagers who had fled to Argos to return to the village, and threatened sanctions. Back in Malandreni, this decision gave rise to rumors that those who had fled would be executed. Instead of causing those who had fled to return, these rumors caused a new wave of fleeing. Fearing for their lives, close relatives of those who had previously fled left for Argos. As soon as they arrived there, they cautioned their relatives against returning to Malandreni.

On the afternoon of 9 June, a group of German soldiers and Security Battalionists raided Malandreni.⁹⁶ Some of them, dressed as peasants and guided by one of the men who had fled during the previous days, entered the village and caught everyone by surprise. Nassis was shot in the leg but managed to escape. Others fled to the nearby village of Douka, where the KKE regional organization was holding a meeting. According to Nassis:

Stathis told them to go back to the village. Then, Christos [Dassaklis] without thinking about the consequences told him: “Where will we go comrade? They almost killed one of us. Don’t you see, we have traitors.” Christos said this and then he couldn’t stop and he began to name names, any name that came to his mouth. “Let’s go,” Stathis told him, and ordered [an OPLA] group to go to the village and arrest the traitors.⁹⁷

Thirteen people, mostly relatives of those who had fled to Argos, were arrested in the night of 13–14 June 1944. Their houses were burned down and thoroughly looted. The prisoners had their hands tied with barbed wire and were taken to Douka, and from there to the concentration camp located in the St. George Monastery in the Feneos Mountain, where six were released and the remaining seven were killed by having their throats slit.⁹⁸ The most tragic individual story is probably that of Yannis Nassis’s brother, Spiros, and his fiancée, Kiki Kalantzi.⁹⁹ Her mother and brothers had been arrested by the Italians because they had sheltered British soldiers, left behind in the British retreat from Greece. After being freed, her two brothers joined ELAS as guerrillas. Her sister, Mina, who worked for the BLO team, had just been executed by EAM in its campaign against villagers who were seen as too close to the British—and after being denounced by her fiancé, who had heard that she was carrying an affair with a British Liaison Officer. Kiki was arrested to exert pressure on Spiros Nassis to return from Argos, where he had fled. A few days after the killings took place

(Kiki was among the victims), relatives of the victims who found Nassis's whereabouts in Argos denounced him to the Germans in an act of revenge. He was arrested, sent to a concentration camp, and shot in August, in a reprisal execution. An observer unaware of these complex dynamics could interpret these two killings as that of a “left-wing resistant” killed by the Germans¹⁰⁰ and of a “collaborator” killed by EAM. It is obvious how erroneous such an interpretation would be.

Nassis claims that he attempted to intervene and save his co-villagers—and I found his claim plausible. His efforts were hampered by his wounded leg. In spite of this wound, he went to the mountain village of Douka to argue his case. He saw Zengos, Gravias, and Gavos. He attempted to get the local KKE organization to act: “Whatever these people have done,” he told them, “they are not traitors.”¹⁰¹ A report was drafted and sent to the regional committee—but to no avail. Unfortunately, Nassis had been badly discredited by the previous developments and had lost his control over the younger members of EAM in Malandreni.

One day after the arrests, a team of Germans led by the Malandreni men who had fled to Argos came to the village in the hope of saving their kin. Most villagers had fled, so the main thing they could do was loot a few houses belonging to EAM men and burn them down—in the process killing a thirteen-year-old girl who was hiding in one of these houses. They caught a villager whose brother was an EAM cadre; they took him to the church and beat him to death. They finally found four young men from the nearby village of Borsa who were guarding an outpost and killed them.

Unfortunately, this story does not end here. During June and July many more arrests took place. Seventeen more villagers were executed in the killing grounds of the Feneos Mountain by having their throats slit.¹⁰² They were mostly men, including brothers, and fathers and sons. Most were closely related to EAM men—many were first cousins. Many more houses were burnt down and looted by the EAM members.¹⁰³ The choice of the victims was haphazard, as every member of the local organization was trying to save his skin by fingering as traitors an increasing number of their co-villagers. Likewise, some villagers were saved for purely coincidental reasons. For example, shortly after Vangelis Kyriakopoulos fled to Argos, his two daughters were arrested by EAM. Kyriakopoulos decided to hand himself over in order to save his daughters. He had been taken to the St. George Monastery, where he was slated for execution, when he met one of the executioners, named Kostas Serbetis, whom he had sheltered in his house for some time. Serbetis managed to free him, and this is how he escaped death. Indicative of the absurd arbitrariness of the whole process is the case of a young

man named Liakos Dassaklis. His father Christos, a drunk, had accused him in April 1944 of being a German collaborator. Nassis had Liakos brought to him and interrogated him about the accusation. Liakos was stunned and denied any collaboration: “Me, Barba-Yanni?” he told Nassis, “Me, with the Germans?” Nassis called his father in:

“Sit down, I told him. Barba-Christo, what is your problem with Liakos?” “What is my problem? He doesn’t listen to me, he doesn’t respect me.” “But you don’t say that in your accusation, you say that he is collaborating with the Germans.” He began to lose it and [to say] that they must take him “up” [in the EAM-held mountains], they must teach him how to behave. “You should be ashamed Barba-Christo. Get out of here!” I turned to Liakos: “Listen to me: you listen to your father, otherwise I will keep the denunciation, I will send it up and they will teach you a lesson.” He left. It must have been March or April. In July they took Liakos up and he never returned.¹⁰⁴

After the second wave of executions in July, the Malandreni villagers who were in Argos lobbied the Germans to go to Malandreni and evacuate the villagers—which they did. They also burned fourteen more houses belonging to EAM families. To many villagers, the Germans were the liberators who freed them from the regime of terror under which they had been forced to live!¹⁰⁵ Altogether, twenty-four villagers had been victims of the red terror. Following the collapse of EAM in February 1944, the victims’ relatives began to retaliate. Surprisingly, only one killing took place in the village—but it was a grueling one. The widows of EAM victims attacked the mother of an ELAS guerrilla; they beat her to death and mutilated her. As a right-wing villager told me:

The mother of an *andartis* had gone to Nemea, and the widows learned about it and ambushed her outside our village; and they attacked her, they did many bad things to her, and they killed her there. The widows, whose husbands had been killed [by EAM]. Yes. Revenge. But what had this woman done to them? For example, my son is twenty-five or thirty years old, he might have been a guerrilla, and they come and kill his mother? Why? Was this woman guilty? She wasn’t. But such things happened then.

Many EAM members were arrested. Eight were tried and condemned to death, but no one was executed: they served from eight to nineteen years in prison. As a right-wing villager told me in an interview: “They went to prison and returned to the village. But what about those who were killed? Did they come back?” Some EAM members went into hiding and took part in the last phase of the civil war in 1947–1949. Finally, some others managed to switch allegiances. Nassis bitterly notes that the some of the same people who under EAM were denouncing

their co-villagers to EAM as collaborators of the Germans, were now denouncing them to the right-wingers as communists.¹⁰⁶

Many EAM members justified the crimes committed in the context of the red terror by putting forth a political argument. The appeal of Konstantinos G. Katsaros from Korinthos, accused of crimes committed by EAM during the occupation, is representative of this mode of thinking:

If patriotic organizations committed harmful patriotic acts, these acts can be considered only patriotic wrongful acts, fully necessary for, and inevitable in the successful completion of, the patriotic struggle, which was successful, justified, and nationally recognized; it is impossible to separate and prosecute them as self-contained wrongful acts since they are linked to the patriotic struggle; they cannot be considered punishable.¹⁰⁷

Nassis shuns this kind of whitewashing. He concludes his remarkable account by connecting the local developments to the decisions taken by the KKE leadership:

Beginning of May, end of April, a KKE meeting took place in Arkadia. All the secretaries of the regional committees took part [he refers to the meeting near Strezova recounted above]. I know this from second-hand accounts. All the cadres of the movement said that an organized reaction existed. This remark was generally correct. The decision was taken to strike at the reaction. This is easier said than done because, to a large extent, action and reaction mingle together and you can't separate them even when you want to, even if you are experienced. You'll either take innocent lives or you'll leave out guilty lives. . . . So what was Stathis [Zengos] supposed to do? It is obvious. He had been told what to do in the Arkadia meeting. He had to act, but he picked the wrong target. The target was in Argos and Nafplio, not in Malandreni. Instead of striking at the head, he struck at the feet. . . . This was wrong. The decision was to strike at the reaction, not to strike at everyone. It wasn't right because when we clear the field from weeds we will take out wheat as well. But humans are neither wheat nor weeds.¹⁰⁸

Douka and White Terror

On the evening of 22 May 1946, four men broke into a house in Nafplion, where they machine-gunned and killed Giorgos Kostakis, his three-year-old daughter, and a sixteen-year-old boy named Stavros Papadimitriou; Kostakis's one-year-old daughter escaped miraculously. The victims were killed while sleeping on the floor of the basement room they rented.

This grisly crime carried a clear political connotation. Both the perpetrators, led by Vassilis F. Doris and his brother-in-law Ilias K. Rotzokos, and the victims came from the same village: Douka, a mountain

village of the western Argolid (population in 1940: 182). On the one hand, the adult victim, Giorgos Kostakis, had been an EAM sympathizer, while Stavros Papadimitriou's family were the main supporters of EAM in Douka (moreover, the two families were related). On the other hand, the perpetrators had formed a right-wing terrorist band. This was an instance of the "white terror," the violence unleashed by the right-wingers against the leftists after EAM's defeat. To an outside observer, this was clearly an instance of right-wing violence against left-wingers. However, a careful examination of this case unearths a far more complex reality.¹⁰⁹

The judges who were assigned this case in 1946 noted that the Doris and Papadimitriou families were locked in an "enraged criminal struggle whose planned and implemented goal is the annihilation of the biggest number of each family's members."¹¹⁰ The story goes back to 1942 (and maybe even deeper in the past). Vassilis Doris, a young shepherd, had a crush on a village girl, Vassiliki Papadimitriou. Vassiliki rejected Vassilis's advances in favor of his brother Sotiris. In normal times the story would have probably ended here, but this was the time of the Italian occupation. When Italian troops came to Douka to collect the villagers' hunting weapons, Vassilis Doris told the Italians that Vassiliki was hiding weapons. As a result, the Italians beat her up badly. In 1943, EAM came to Douka, and the members of the Papadimitriou family became the main EAM supporters; one brother even joined the ELAS guerrillas. They immediately began drafting reports demanding Doris's arrest for collaboration. However, their reports¹¹¹ went unheard: Doris might have been a scoundrel, but he was no traitor, and EAM saw no reason to believe the allegations against him. However, things changed in the course of the summer of 1944. The third report was sent directly to the provincial EAM committee in the beginning of July. This time around it was also signed by the *ipefthinos* of the neighboring hamlet Tsiristra as well as many Douka villagers. Most importantly, this was also when the KKE regional committee had reached the decision to weed out the "reactionaries" in the area; as a result, this report was welcomed and acted upon immediately.

On 8 July 1944, at around 10 a.m., Sotiris F. Doris and his brother-in-law Giorgos K. Diamandis were arrested in their village. The arrests were carried out by two OPLA men unknown to the victims. The next morning, at around 8.00 a.m., OPLA men arrested Sotiris's brother, Vassilis F. Doris. They told him that they were taking him to an interrogation at the provincial committee, in the mountain village of Tatsi, where the headquarters of the Argolid EAM and KKE regional committees were located. On 10 July, they were taken together with eight more prisoners to the monastery of St. George in Feneos. Doris's depo-

sition to the court of Nafplion provides a rare glimpse into the bureaucratic process through which EAM ran its terror system.¹¹²

The concentration camp at the St. George Monastery was full of prisoners, including close to fifty villagers from Valtetsi, mostly old people, women, and children in rags.¹¹³ Doris was asked to hand over his personal belongings and was told that they would be returned to him upon release. He was then taken for an interrogation, which he describes as painless, smooth, and quick.¹¹⁴ No torture or beating took place. Most prisoners were poorly dressed farmers, but some were well dressed and seemed “educated.” Among them was the lawyer Vassilis Tsorvas, a regional EAM cadre who told him that he had been arrested because of something improper he had said during a speech he had given in a village.¹¹⁵ No one in the monastery knew the fate of the people who were taken from there.

In the early hours of 18 July (around 3.00 a.m.), a guerrilla came in the cells and called up twenty names: nineteen men and one woman. The prisoners were told that they would be taken to the headquarters of the ELAS brigade; they were immediately taken to the courtyard and tied with ropes in sets of two. They were marched up in the mountain by six men for some time, until the sun had come out. After four short resting stops, they stopped. Unknown to them, they were only 200 meters away from the site of their execution, where a deep cave was being used as a convenient burial ground. The procedure followed was impersonal and routinized: the prisoners were not insulted, abused, or mistreated during the march. They were told to sit down and wait. At this point, Doris’s bland description turns dramatic: “At this moment, crows were flying above us cawing ghastly, while at the same time, yellow corpse flies struck our faces, forcing us to shake up our heads like horses, since our hands were tied.” Two men, the executioners as it turned out, left for the execution site while the prisoners were guarded by the remaining four. After a few minutes, two of the four remaining men began to shuttle to the execution site, take two prisoners at a time. The execution consisted of slitting the victims’ throats and push their bodies down the cave. It took about twenty minutes to expedite each set of two. During this time the remaining prisoners began to worry about their fate. Sotiris Doris told the guerrilla guarding him: “Comrade (*sin-agonisti*), our faces have lost their color; is a knife awaiting us?” — at which, the guerrilla replied with sympathy: “Who told you this? Don’t be scared, the brigade is down there, it is a big camp, a whole army is there, but there are operations going on in the village of Kionia and this is why we brought you here.” After about ten people had been killed, the Doris brothers’ turn came. As soon as they arrived to the execution site, they saw the two executioners smiling at them, each smoking a

cigarette and holding a knife.¹¹⁶ In the meantime, Doris had managed to untie his hands; he hit the man who guarded him, ran away, and escaped in spite of the shots fired at him. After a few days he made it to Argos, where he was hiding until the Germans evacuated the area. A day after his escape, in an act of retribution for his escape, EAM arrested and executed his other brother, Nikos F. Doris.

Doris managed to hide until February 1945. In March he joined the newly formed National Guard in Athens, but he immediately deserted with his weapon and returned to the Argolid to exact revenge. He formed a band composed of friends and relatives “whose objective,” according to the judge’s report, “was the criminal annihilation of the Papadimitriou family.” Indeed, this was the *main* objective of Doris’s band, as it did not seem to have participated in many other attacks. In this, this band did not differ much from most right-wing bands that only operated within a village or cluster of villages.

Doris soon caught Vassiliki Papadimitriou, beat her up, shaved her head, and probably raped her—although, interestingly, he refrained from killing her. On 12 April 1945, he killed Panayotis Kostakis, a relative of the Papadimitriou family, whom he accused of having been involved in the denunciation of his family. The next round came when two Papadimitriou brothers, Nikos and Ilias, attacked Dimitrios Koukoulis, a brother-in-law of Doris, and killed him, together with Anastasios A. Kostakis, in June 1945. On 13 February 1946, Doris and his band attacked the Papadimitriou house in Douka and killed Vassiliki Papadimitriou’s mother and her young son Yorgos. Only her younger son, a fifteen-year-old named Stavros, was able to escape from the slaughter by hiding inside the house. Doris’s band then proceeded to loot the house. Following this attack, Vassiliki Papadimitriou fled to Nafplion, together with her brother Stavros, her brother-in-law Giorgos Kostakis, and his two children, age one and three. In Nafplion they rented a basement, where they lived under constant fear. Kostakis went to see the president of the Court of Appeals, I. Galanos, and begged him for an escort of gendarmes so that he could go to Douka and harvest his wheat.

Unfortunately, Doris learned about their whereabouts and attacked them on 22 May 1946. Vassiliki Papadimitriou had left the basement to visit a neighbor, but her brother, Kostakis, and Kostakis’s children were sleeping on the floor. After breaking in, Doris and his men systematically machine-gunned them, killing Stavros Papadimitriou, Giorgos Kostakis, and his three-year old-daughter Panayota. The gendarmerie counted twenty-one bullets. Fortunately, one-year-old Efstathia was saved, as she had slipped during her sleep toward her father’s legs.

In his 1945 deposition to the court of Nafplion, Doris painted himself

as an anticommunist who was singled out by EAM because of his ideas. Justifying a criminal act with a reference to political conflict was a certain way to avoid punishment. In this way, his thinking mirrored the argument of many leftists (although the outcome of the trials differed widely). Indeed, Doris and his associates were tried in July 1947, but the jury of the Korinthos court acquitted them. They also evaded additional charges by taking advantage of the Sophoulis amnesty law. After a few years, Doris emigrated to the United States, where he died many years later. Nikos and Ilias Papadimitriou served prison sentences and went to live in Athens. One-year-old Efstathia Kostaki was adopted by a family in Australia. Vassiliki Papadimitriou was rumored to have joined the Communist Democratic Army in the central Peloponnese. She survived, but the people I interviewed in Douka did not know of her whereabouts. As a Douka villager told me, “Vassilis [Doris] and Vasso [Papadimitriou] began the whole affair; they survived, but everyone else around them was killed.”

CONCLUSION: THE NATURE OF CIVIL WAR VIOLENCE

What are we to make of the events in Malandreni and Douka, and the hundreds of similar events that took place in the context of the Greek civil war? A straightforward point is that the red terror is intimately connected to the violence initiated first by the Germans and their local allies during the occupation period (the “black terror”), and second by right-wing bands following the liberation of the country (the “white terror”).

Disaggregating the nature of the violence during the civil war is a trickier issue. Consider the example of Douka. Were these events an instance of political violence or a case of a private vendetta? For the judges of the Nafplion court as well as for the villagers of Douka (then and now), these events constituted a clear instance of a private feud. “As is well known to everyone,” a 1945 affidavit points out, “the Doris family was engaged in a conflict with the Papadimitriou family for years. . . . And it is well known that the former resorted to the Italians and the latter to the *andartes* in order to exact revenge, but the hatred grew on probably because they were not satisfied [with the intensity of the revenge].” This statement is revealing and points to what I deem to be the core of civil war violence: neither just private feud nor just political violence, but both simultaneously.

This case was not just a private feud. To begin with, unlike other areas in the Peloponnese, such as the Mani, the Argolid lacked a tradition of blood feuds. Moreover, unlike blood feuds, the competing factions of Douka began fighting against each other only when outside

actors made it possible for them to do so, either by soliciting their denunciation (the Italians and EAM) or by providing impunity for their actions (the postwar Greek state). While blood feuds are a carefully scripted and regulated localized mechanism of social control (typically excluding women, children, and the elderly from the roster of possible targets), the violence of Douka degenerated into a process akin to social anomie, where no holds were barred. In accounting for the violence that struck his village, a Douka villager resorted to the same metaphor used by the German commander about Malandreni—that of the Wild West: “During these years,” he told me, “our village was like Texas.” This violence was clearly not just another iteration of a process taking place from time immemorial, as is the case with blood feuds; it was totally new and bewildering. Nothing like that had befallen Douka before. The political aspect of the violence is also indicated by the fact that people identified themselves with opposite political parties, and that killings typically affected only individuals whose political identities differed from that of the local “ruling party” (in other words, retaliation was impossible when the opposite side was in control).

Nor was this case just one of political terrorism. Individual motivations were mostly nonideological: no one got killed because of their political preferences in favor, for example, of a communist regime or the king—at least *not just* for them. The main individual actors were local people involved in personal and local conflicts. In most of my interviews, in most of the trial cases I have read, in most of the participants’ memoirs, references to personal and local conflicts come up again and again. In fact, it is difficult to find cases in which personal or local conflicts were *not* an issue! This, it should be pointed out, is hardly an idiosyncratic characteristic of the Greek civil war. It is a staple of civil wars, both ethnic and nonethnic. Consider the following statement by Jan Gross about the violence in western Poland during the Soviet occupation: “Yet, much as the violence represented an explosion of combined ethnic, religious, and nationalist conflict, I am nevertheless struck by its intimacy. More often than not, victims and executioners knew each other personally. Even after several years, survivors could still name names. Definitely, people took this opportunity to get even for *personal* injuries of the past” (emphasis mine).¹¹⁷ Gross quotes from survivor accounts that could have been taken directly from the Greek case: “Soviet authorities conducted searches and arrests . . . directly in response to denunciations by neighbors who had personal accounts to square”; “Accusations, denunciations, and personal animosities could lead to arrest at any moment. People were officially encouraged to bring accusations and denunciations”; “Whoever had a grudge against somebody else, an old feud, who had another as a grain of salt in the eye—

he had a stage to show his skills, there was a cocked ear, willing to listen.”¹¹⁸

Hence the key issue: while the script of civil war violence is often that of a blood feud with its escalating rounds of individualized retaliation and counterretaliation, it is also a violence that would never have taken place without the constant prodding, encouragement, assistance, and support of political organizations.¹¹⁹ The case of Douka was neither a case of a personal vendetta nor an instance of political terrorism; it was *both*. The Italians who were searching for hidden weapons and sheltered British soldiers, the Germans who were looking for ELAS guerrillas, the communists who were looking for reactionaries, and the post-war Greek Right, which was looking for communists, all *had* to rely on local people to carry out their plans. At the same time, local people were not just innocent bystanders being tramped upon by elephants. They were willing to manipulate these political organizations in order to settle their own accounts with a ferocity that was as novel (and probably as bewildering) to them as the situation in which they found themselves, where the wish to see a neighbor beaten up or humiliated triggered processes of (initially) unanticipated mayhem. How could young Vassilis Doris, who used the Italians to take revenge on the woman who had shunned him, possibly have imagined in 1942 that, largely as a result of his action, both his own family and the woman’s would be utterly destroyed six years later?

It is this *convergence* between local concerns and supra-local imperatives, nonideological motivations and strategic goals, that lies at the heart of civil war violence and endows it with its intrinsically distinct character. The mix of identity and strategy, the personal and the political—in other words, the destruction of the boundaries between the two—emerges with clarity in Dimitrios Pirgakis’s apology in the court of Korinthos. Pirgakis, a KKE member from the village of Ellinohori of Korinthia, was tried for the murder of twelve villagers by EAM in July 1944:

I believe that personal hatred probably played the leading role in the decision to kill them, because the village *ipeftinos* D. Trimis disliked the Tsoungos family with whom he was competing in the olive-press market. The village party leaders argued that these people had to be slaughtered because they were the “black reaction,” which if not attacked, would attack them.¹²⁰

The recognition of the distinct character of civil war violence is just the beginning of serious research on the issue. Any attempt to understand violence in civil war will require both innovative theoretical analysis, and systematic and creative empirical research.

NOTES

1. C. Tsoukalas, *The Greek Tragedy* (Harmondsworth, 1969); N. Svoronos, *Episkopisi tis neoellinikis istorias* (Athens, 1982); A. Collard "Investigating Social Memory in a Greek Context," in E. Tonkin et al., eds., *History and Ethnicity* (London, 1989), 89–103; J. Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance: The Greek Agony, 1941–1944* (New York, 1983); J. Hart, *New Voices in the Nation* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996).

2. E.g., O. Smith, "The Memoirs and Reports of the British Liaison Officers in Greece, 1932–1944: Problems of Source Value," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 11.3 (Fall, 1984): 9–32; H. Fleischer, "The National Liberation Front (EAM), 1941–1947: A Reassessment," in J. Iatrides and L. Wrigley, eds., *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and Its Legacy* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 49–89.

3. E.g., A. Elefantis, "Mas piran tin Athina . . . Apo tin ideologia tou konservokoutiou stin ideologia tou prodomenou ellinismou," *Dokimes* 6 (1997): 19–50; K. Broussalis, *I Peloponnisos sto proto andartiko, 1941–1945: Apeleftherotikos agonas kai emfilia diamachi* (Athens, 1997).

4. The few (partial) exceptions include M. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–1944* (New Haven and London, 1993); and D. Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (London, 1995).

5. R. van Boeschoten, *Anapoda chronia: Syllogiki mmimi kai istoria sto Ziaka Grevenon (1900–1950)* (Athens, 1997).

6. Fleischer, "The National Liberation Front," 58.

7. Smith, "Memoirs and Reports." British Liaison Officers were generally hostile to EAM.

8. S. Aschenbrenner, "The Civil War from the Point of View of a Messenian Village," in L. Baerentzen et al., eds., *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War* (Copenhagen, 1987), 105–25; van Boeschoten, *Anapoda chronia*.

9. The results presented here are preliminary as I am still processing this material.

10. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*.

11. The discussion is based mostly on E. Karouzou, "Cultures Maraicheres dans la Mediterranee: Les Transformations de la Plaine et al Societe Argolique, 1860–1910," Ph.D. thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 1995; and N. N. Anagnostopoulos and G. Gagalis, *I Argoliki Pedia* (Athens, 1938).

12. The national score was as follows. Monarchist parties, 47.59%; Venizelist, 44.17%; Communist Party: 5.76%

13. I. Zenginisis, *To Argos yia mesou ton aionon* (Athens, 1996), 399–404.

14. I use the term "German" generically. In the Argolid there were many Poles and French soldiers serving in German units.

15. There are no data on the composition of ELAS's Sixth Regiment, which operated mostly in Korinthia and the Argolid. However, the military commander of the Sixth Regiment, Major Emmanouil Vazeos, provides in his memoirs a full list of the regiment's 147 men killed in action. Of these, only 14.9% were from the Argolid. E. Vazeos, "Ta agnosta paraskinia tis Ethnikis Antistaseos eis tin Peloponnison," unpublished ms., 1961.

16. This section is based mostly on the unpublished memoirs of Panayotis Lilis and the account of the local historian Kostas Danousis, “Anagennisi,” *Opuscula Argiva XIII* (1994), 321: 4–13.

17. This is also supported by British Liaison Officers reports. See, for instance, Public Records Office, London (PRO), HS 5/699, “Report by Lt. Col. R. P. McMullen on Present Conditions in the Peloponnese.”

18. EAM government is often described as “self-government.” However autonomous it might appear on the surface, the local government was created and remained closely controlled by EAM and the KKE; regional government was openly in the hands of these two organizations.

19. C. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord: A Survey of Recent Greek Politics in their International Setting* (London, 1948), 147.

20. Numerical estimates refer to homicides—both an unambiguous and an extreme form of violence.

21. Close, *Origins*; G. Margaritis, *Apo tin itta stin exegersi* (Athens, 1993).

22. I. Yannakos, *Selides mias mikris istorias yia ena megalo skopo* (Athens, 1986), 156.

23. PRO HS 5/698 “Report by Capt. P. M. Fraser on Some Aspects of the Peloponnese, July 1943–April 1944.”

24. National Archives and Record Service (NARS), Record Group (RG) 59/868.00, Dispatch by Lincoln MacVeagh, 16 March 1945.

25. C. Tilly, “Revolutions and Collective Violence,” in F. I. Greenstein and N. W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science: Macropolitical Theory* (New York, 1975), 512.

26. The creation of an atmosphere is confirmed by accounts from other regions, such as Ilia in the Peloponnese: see P. D. Skaltsas, *Stis ochthes tou Kladeou* (Athens, 1994), 131–32.

27. C. Lucas, “Themes in Southern Violence after 9 Thermidor,” in G. Lewis and C. Lucas, eds., *Beyond the Terror: Essays in French Regional and Social History, 1749–1815* (Cambridge, 1983), 152–94; J. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland’s Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton, 1988).

28. NARS RG 59/868.00, 16 March 1945.

29. R. Capell, *Simiomata, A Greek Notebook, 1944–1945* (London, 1946), 127.

30. PRO HS 5/699, “Report by Lt. Col. R. P. McMullen on Present Conditions in the Peloponnese.”

31. PRO HS 5/698 “General Report by Major Andrewes, Area Commander.”

32. Municipal Archives, Nafplion (MAN), E 32/1945.

33. As a right-wing villager told me: “Most of the people who were killed then were right-wing people, good people.”

34. The same logic about defection comes up in accounts of similar developments in other areas, such as Evia: see K. Skarlis, *Me to 7o Syntagma tou ELAS sta Vouma tis Evias* (Athens, 1986). For a description of similar developments in western Macedonia (though complicated by ethnic politics), see PRO HS 5/234, “Report by a Supporter of EAM on the Development of the Situation in Western Macedonia.”

35. A. Christopoulos, *Oi Italogermainoi stin Argolida* (Nafplion, 1946), 116.

36. The Macedonian villages that accepted German weapons to fight against EAM often acted on their own initiative as well. See Margaritis, *Apo tin itta stin exegersi*, 509.

37. G. Papalilis, *I Ethniki Antistasi stin Argolida* (Argos, 1980), 31, provides the only written account of this massacre that I know of—and a highly biased one.

38. This massacre, like most, remains unrecorded. I traced it through interviews. This information was then corroborated by detailed references in the court archives.

39. Arrests took place all over EAM-controlled territory during this time, especially the formerly occupied towns. For example, when ELAS left Korinthos in the wake of its defeat in Athens (11 January 1945), it took with it 115 hostages: Historical Archive of Argos (HAA), Archives of the Nafplion Court of Appeal, ABE 175/207.

40. Van Boeschoten, *Anapoda chronia*, 129.

41. NARS, RG 59/868.00.

42. Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI): (KKE archives), 418/F30/4/142.

43. *Kimena tis Ethnikis Antistasis*, vol. 1, (Athens, 1981), 283.

44. *Deka Hronia Agones, 1935–1945* (Athens, 1977), 180–83.

45. ASKI 418/F24/2/114.

46. *Leftheria*, 15 Dec. 1943.

47. PRO HS 5/232 “Tavernarakis Report” (which confuses EAM with ELAS).

48. *Odigitis*, 8 Feb. 1944.

49. PRO HS 5/232, “Tavernarakis Report.”

50. ASKI 418/F24/2/102.

51. This was the case, for instance, in the village of Ellinochori in Korinthia (HAA ABE 176/228).

52. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 117.

53. At later stages, the regional committee ordered many executions that bypassed the majority of reluctant local committees. In one exceptional instance, the EAM leader of a Korinthia village was executed for resisting executions and claiming there were no reactionaries in his village (ASKI 418/F24/2/114, as well as my interviews). In many cases, EAM members were arrested and threatened with execution for intervening in favor of “reactionaries.”

54. The detailed description of the meeting matches the references about this conference that I found in the KKE archives and confirms the reliability of Lilis’ memoirs.

55. Blanas was a longtime party cadre from Messenia, closely attached to Siantos: K. Karalis, *I istoria ton dramatikon gegonoton Peloponnisou, 1943–1949*, 2 vols. (Athens, 1958), 1: 80. He was later criticized in an internal KKE report drafted by Polyvios Issariotis as sectarian and short-sighted (ASKI 418/F24/2/90).

56. ASKI 418/F24/2/102.

57. More specifically, the OPLA teams were supervised by so-called second bureaux, which were under the direct control of the first secretary of each regional KKE committee: Karalis, *Istoria*, 1:215; I. Nassis, unpublished memoir, Malandreni, Argolis, 1995.

58. GPU referred to the Bolshevik secret police.

59. Lilis adds that this man was not a party representative. He was in the village to carry out another EAM-related mission and somehow infiltrated the meeting.

60. ASKI 418/F24/2/102.

61. V. Kladouchos, *Apomimonevmata, 1920–: I psichri kai dikaia katagrafi Mias Zois* (Argos, 1995), 69.

62. Karalis, *Istoria*, 1:216.

63. In an interview he gave me, the EAM leader of the village of Kaparelli in the Argolid described in detail how he was requested by the regional leadership to bring his fellow villagers to the demonstration.

64. See Edict 546/15 (8 Sept. 1944) of the Secretary of the Interior of PEEA, signed by Georgos Siantos, which laid down a code of conduct for the newly formed EAM police (Politofylaki): MAN E 27/1944. Even though many villages were full of people willing to take revenge and settle accounts with their neighbors who had collaborated with the Germans, EAM was able to impose the law and prevent violence from erupting. This also bears out the allegation that the many mass massacres of Security Battalionists in September 1944 (e.g., at Meligalas in Messenia, where between 800 and 1,000 were executed) were planned, not spontaneous.

65. Aschenbrenner, “Civil War from the Point of View of a Messenian Village,” 116. This otherwise excellent account contains no information about the regional and local institutions that made possible the escalation of the violence the author describes in the village of Karpofora.

66. Whereas the Left combined a local selection of targets with a supra-local implementation of the violence, right-wing bands typically fused selection and implementation at the local level.

67. S. Papastratis, *Sta chronia tis fotias* (Athens, 1992), 36–39. Papastratis adds that the appeals did not succeed. Although Sotiris received guarantees for his life, when he returned to his village in October 1943, he was arrested and executed.

68. Yannakos, *Selides*, 167–68, 203.

69. Yannakos was doubly lucky because he escaped from death immediately after, when the killer (apparently an amateur) hesitated to kill him in the ambush he had prepared.

70. Mazower (*Inside Hitler’s Greece*, 265–66) notes that EAM was hardly a monolithic organization and that it operated within a world of “rumours, confusion, fear and ignorance, in which the state and society had disintegrated at the national level and opinions and stories circulated locally.” This assessment is correct at the national level; at the regional level, however, especially in the mountain areas it tightly controlled, EAM was, if not monolithic, certainly bureaucratic.

71. An internal KKE report (ASKI 418/F24/2/90) sketches a pattern of atrocities that took place across Peloponnese, and provides a scathing indictment of Achilles Blanas, the head of the central committee of the region.

72. Evidence is provided in Kalyvas, “Uses and Forms of Terror in the Greek Civil War: Argolis and Beyond,” paper presented at the conference on “Domestic and International Aspects of the Greek Civil War,” King’s College, London, 18–20 April 1999.

73. KOPP is the acronym for Communist Organization of Peloponnese Area.

74. The main sources are Vazeos, *Agnosta paraskinia*, 78–88; Karalis, *Istoria*, 1:234–35; Kladouchos, *Apomnimonevmata*, 68–70; Lilis, n.d.

75. Lilis, n.d.; Kladouchos, *Apomnimonevmata*.

76. Vazeos, *Agnosta paraskinia*, 79.

77. According to Vazeos (*ibid.*, 79), the quota was 5% to 10%; 12% according to Kladouchos (*Apomnimonevmata*, 70); 15% from every village plus 3% for EAM members, according to a deposition by an EAM member in Korinthia (HAA ABE 176/228).

78. See the extensive comments in PRO HS 5/699: “Second Report of Col. J. M. Stevens on Present Conditions in the Peloponnese, 22 June 1944.” Stevens was in the north in a period of little violence, and in the south in a period of great violence.

79. Zengos was directly accused only of the execution of about ten villagers in a village lying outside his area of jurisdiction (Strezova in Arkadia), and of not following the standard procedure for death sentences. He was not accused of the mass slaughters of the Argolid and Arkadia: ASKI 418/F24/2/102).

80. Kladouchos, *Apomnimonevmata*, 69–71; Karalis, *Istoria*, 235.

81. Mazower, (*Inside Hitler’s Greece*, 291) points out this logic as well.

82. According to a Special Operations Executive (SOE) report (PRO HS 5/232, “March 31st, 1944—Greece: Political. Internal Situation. Situation of the Greek People in March 1944”): “During January and February 1944 the most frightful reports have been received from Macedonia and Peloponnesus.”

83. The Peloponnese had a strongly monarchist tradition, but it was also seen by the Germans as a front-line area vulnerable to Allied operations. Its network of communications was relatively extensive, making guerrilla activity easier to combat: C. M. Woodhouse, *The Struggle for Greece, 1941–1949* (London, 1976).

84. Quoted in K. Papakongos, *Archeio Persson: Katochika Documenta tou DES Peloponnissou* (Athens, 1977), 241.

85. The main source for events in Malandreni in 1943–1944 is the memoir of Yannis Nassis, a local EAM leader and KKE cadre. His memoir gains credibility from the fact that the author, who spent years in prison because of his active participation in EAM, and who remains a faithful communist, displays an unusually open and broad mind, shown in his willingness to criticize the actions of his own camp. I also conducted interviews with villagers from Malandreni and surrounding settlements, and extensively with Nassis himself. I also used the materials from the trial that took place after the war over the crimes committed in Malandreni.

86. Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece*, 217–218.

87. Y. Nassis, unpublished memoir (Malandreni, 1995), p. 4.
88. *Ibid.*, 7.
89. *Ibid.*, 8.
90. *Ibid.*, 4.
91. *Ibid.*, 15.
92. PRO HS 5/698 “Narrative of Capt. P. M. Fraser;” I. Kordomenos, *Protoporos kai nikitria I Argolida stin Ethniki Antistasi, 1941–1944* (Argos, 1994). In fact, Malandreni was more distant from Argos than Fraser acknowledged.
93. Nassis, memoir, 11.
94. *Ibid.*, 13.
95. *Ibid.*
96. I failed to find the rationale behind this raid.
97. Nassis, memoir, 23.
98. HAA ABE 176/238.
99. I have changed her name, as this remains a sensitive story in the village.
100. Spiros Nassis’s name is included in the memorial of resistance victims in Korinth.
101. Nassis, memoir, 25.
102. HAA ABE 176/238.
103. Nassis, memoir, 31.
104. *Ibid.*, 16.
105. Similar reactions are reported in T. Valtinos, *Orthokosta* (Athens, 1994); and Ch. Zalokostas, *To Chroniko tis Sklavias* (Athens, 1997).
106. Nassis, memoir, 15.
107. HAA ABE 175/207.
108. Nassis, memoir, 42–44.
109. This account is based on interviews and archival records of the Nafplion court of appeals: HAA ABE 175/207.
110. HAA ABE 175/207.
111. The second report was drafted in mid-March 1944.
112. I cross-checked Doris’s description with KKE cadres and an OPLA man from the Argolid whom I interviewed: they confirmed its reliability.
113. Valtetsi, a village in Arkadia, had joined the Security Battalions. ELAS troops attacked it in the summer of 1944 and killed many of its inhabitants.
114. The interrogator asked him: “What are you accused of, my son?” Following his denial, the interrogator told him: “Well, my son, go out. Bring in the next one.”
115. Tsorvas was eventually freed and testified in the trial. He was drafted in the Greek National Army and killed in the last phase of the civil war.
116. Doris claims that he saw two severed heads as well, but this sounds like an exaggeration.
117. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 42.
118. *Ibid.*, 119–20.
119. S. Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict and Banditry in Nineteenth-Century Corsica* (Cambridge, 1988).
120. HAA ABE 176/228.