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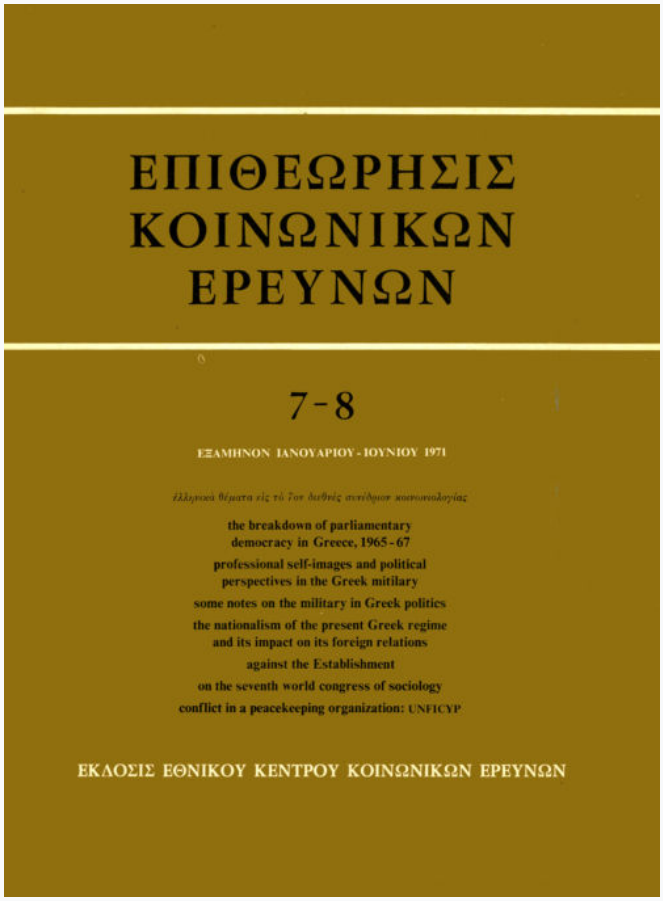

Some notes on the military in Greek politics

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some notes on the military in Greek politics

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The article discusses the present day activism of the Greek armed forces (from an admittedly partisan point of view) in terms of the social class and ideological nature of the armed forces, the past relationships between the Greek ruling class and the military, and the importance of Greece's role within the NATO alliance. Arguing that the present «dictatorship» represents a qualitatively different type of activism for the Greek military, the author reaches some tentative conclusions as to how and why the military government maintains itself in power. [J. Chernoff]

A

Political activism of the Greek armed forces dates back to the first decade of our century. The forms of and motivations for this political activism have varied greatly but, in spite of the often decisive effect of their interventions in Greek political affairs, the Greek military have not yet become the object of any serious scientific scrutiny. The reasons for this situation are numerous, but they all fall under the following headings:
a) the underdevelopment of the Social Sciences in Greece, even before April, 1967 (and their total suppression today);
b) the tradition of partisan political analysis which characterised the pre-scientific study of Greek politics;
c) the fears and inhibitions plaguing those rare students of Greek politics who, at times, were indeed tempted to analyse the action of the military in our national political life.

However, some notable exception to this pattern may be found in the recent writings by Greek scholars in exile, such as George Catephores and Phedon Vegleris,[1] as well as in the earlier works of Jean Meynaud.[2] The situation in Greece since April 1967 which has given rise to an urgent need to explain *how* and *why* the military coup d'état took place and, even more so, *how* and *why* the Junta maintains itself in power renders such studies necessary than ever. Although the role of the military in Greek poltics should be considered by social scientists as an object of scientific inquiry, this writer cannot claim a dispassioned view of Greek political reality. Such an attitude is shared by most, if not all of our Greek colleagues. The fate of democracy is too important a stake to leave Greek social scientists indifferent; but hasn't this always been the case under totalitarian regimes? All we can say is that in the very interest of the cause of democracy we strive towards as much scientific rigour as possible. As Gunnar Myrdal has written «scientific truth is wholesome» and, we would

1. See in particular: G. Catephores, «L'organisation institutionnelle d'une 'société défensive' en Grèce», in *Temps Modernes*, No. 276bis, 1969 and P. Vegleris, «La dictature grecque et sa conception de la défense nationale», in *Revue du Droit public et de la Science politique en France et à l'étranger*, mai-juin, 1970.

2. J. Meynaud, *Les Forces Politiques en Grèce*, Etudes de Science Politique, No. 10, Montréal and *Rapport sur l'abolition de la Démocratie en Grèce*, Etudes de Science Politique, Montréal, octobre 1967.

add, it serves the interests of a cause such as the restauration of democracy in Greece.

B

In analysing the present day activism of the Greek armed forces, we must avoid a common error, or deliberate misrepresentation of history, which we find in many official or quasi-official pronouncements concerning the Greek dictatorship. Those who want to «explain» the present situation by simply «reminding» their audiences, who very often know little about Greek history, that «military dictatorships have been a recurrent phenomenon in Greek politics since the beginning of the twentieth century» neglect to point out the very important fact that the present dictatorship represents a qualitatively different type of military activism. In the course of our discussion of the role of the military, since 1967, these differences will become apparent. At this stage, however, we shall simply point out the salient characteristics of past interventions of the military in Greek politics.

1. During the twentieth century, the armed forces, or a seizable section thereof, intervened in Greek politics on five occasions: in 1909, 1917, 1922, 1935 and 1943-1944. They were successful the first three times but they failed in 1935 and in 1943-1944.[3] In 1909, the «Military League» was basically an expression of republican and nationalist bourgeois forces which brought to power Eleftherios Venizelos. The same was largely true in 1917, although we should not neglect the role played by the Allies, and particularly by the French, in bringing about the success of the «National Defence» government. In 1922, the overthrow of the royalist government and the exile of King Constantine by the armed forces, led by the republican officers around colonels Plastiras and Gonatas was in many respects an attempt to carry out the pledges of the 1909 rebels which had been set aside by Venizelos' conciliatory policies towards the Monarchy. By 1935, many of the young officers of 1909, and particularly of 1922, had reached the senior ranks and they led once again a rebellion against those in government who were proposing the return of the King. Although the leaders of the 1935 rebellion were in close touch with Venizelos, his advice was not heeded and they failed. The monarchy was restored a few months later but, during the Second World War, in 1943-1944, a majority of the free Greek armed forces fighting with the Allies in the Near East rallied once again in order to prevent the return of the King to Greece after its liberation. This last rebellion differed from the previous ones to the extent that it had been initiated by communist led soldiers' and non-commissioned officers' organizations, although several senior officers followed their troops and shared the consequences of their defeat in the prison camps of Egypt.

2. These five military rebellions have in common the pursuit of republican and anti-monarchist political objectives, and the first three, at least, were an expression of strong nationalist convictions within the officers' corps which resented the «national humiliations» to which Greece had been subjected by «a foreign inspired Monarchy». However, in 1935 and in 1943-1944 the rebellions were more directly «political» in their objectives and we could agree with the Greek historian Daphnis when he states the defeat of the 1935 movement is the turning point in the political evolution of contemporary Greece.[4]

For more than a generation, the Greek armed forces were important political actors, in pursuit of two major objectives. The expansion of Greece's frontiers to include all territories inhabited by Greek populations and the instauration or preservation of a republican form of government, (or at least the curtailment of the Monarchy's political powers). Given the alignement of Greek political forces, such initiatives on the part of the military had in the past the active or tacit support of either a majority or a very large minority of the people. The military, who led these rebellions, on the other hand, were convinced that they were the guardians of Greece's national interests and of Greek democracy. They were not seeking any personal benefits and most of them went into retirement considerably poorer than when they first became involved in political activities. They were often romantic and almost always impetuous; but they were brave soldiers who fought all of Greece's wars from 1912 to 1922 and those who were able to do so came out of retirement in 1939-1940 to fight once again either on the side of the Allies or in the resistance. They could not visualize the need for «apolitical» armed forces because they were convinced that they represented the last rampart of democracy in Greece.

3. Following the defeat of the 1935 rebellion, that of the 1943-1944 insurrectionary movements and, above all, the civil war of 1946-1949, the Greek armed forces were progressively purged of all their republican or even moderately liberal elements. Their political complexion in 1950 was almost diametrically opposed to that of fifteen years earlier. The primacy of the

3. In the 1920's and 1930's, Greece witnessed several attempts—successful and unsuccessful—by small groups of officers to take over power. These were, at times, military putsch led by «caudillos», but without the support of any significant sector of the armed forces, while on other occasions small groups of officers allied themselves with certain politicians in short-lived attempts to exert a decisive influence on the course of political events. To that extent they differed from the other military interventions which, whether successful or not, did have a more lasting impact on Greek politics.

4. Daphnis, Gregorios, *I Hellas metaxi dyo Polemôn*, Vol. II, Athens, Ikaros, 1955, p. 280.

Monarchy was reestablished and even those officers who in their youth may have had anti-royalist leanings found that they had to proclaim loudly their allegiance to the King in order to retain their posts. Shortly before his death in 1964, King Paul, when addressing the officers of the Salonica garrison, told them: «I belong to you and you belong to me.» This almost mystical identification of the King with the armed forces reflected a much more real control exercised by those who were commonly included under the heading of «Royal Court», while the civilian parliamentary governments—whether those of Mr. Karamanlis or Mr. Papandreou—were only formally responsible for the conduct of Greek military policy.[5]

At the same time, the Greek military entered a new era, when Greece joined NATO. We shall be discussing this question in greater detail below but, for the time being, we should simply stress the importance for the Greek armed forces' political role of their participation in the NATO structure, which coincided with their «cleansing» of all republican and liberal elements. As a consequence, the armed forces which were faced on April 21, 1967 with the coup perpetrated by a small group of middle level officers felt a triple loyalty to NATO, to the King and to the Nation, in precisely that hierarchic order.

4. In concluding this brief historical reminder, we should stress once again that at the time of the 1967 coup d'état the Greek armed forces had indeed undergone a profound transformation. On the one hand, they had become part of the largest alliance system in history and of its military establishment; and, on the other, they had been purged of all those elements which could have considered the violation of constitutional order by a small clique of officers as an intolerable intervention of the military in Greece's politics.

C

In the absence of any empirical studies on this subject, it is not easy to discuss the evolution of the social and political composition of the Greek officers' corps. We have to rely essentially on our knowledge of history, on biographical data for some of the more prominent officers and on a first hand acquaintance with officers belonging to three different generations.

Contemporary Greek society may be roughly divided into three social classes: The small peasants (large land-owners were rare even before the land-reform in the 1920's); the urban workers (manual and white-collar) and the urban bourgeoisie. The wealthier elements in the small towns and villages may be considered as a distinct social group but, generally speaking, their aspirations and loyalties tend to be identified with those of the bourgeoisie. Even though attempts have been made in the past to create—altogether artificially—an image of a Greek «aristocracy», no such social group has ever existed in Greece; to the great distress of former Queen Frederica and others belonging to the «Royal Court» coterie. As for the large land-owners, they never did constitute a distinct social class because even before the land-reform they were generally resident in the cities—particularly in Athens—and they tended to identify with the urban bourgeoisie.

To this extent, the social origin of the Greek officers' corps differed substantially from those of other European countries—including the Balkans. They were neither the children of the rural or urban aristocracies—as in France or Germany—nor of the landowners, as in many central European or Balkan countries. Up to the second world war, they were largely the children of the upper social strata in the provinces or of the urban bourgeoisie. Very often, the same family included professionals or businessmen and officers. Before the first world war, many of the most competent officers were sent to training courses in Germany—and more rarely to France—while after 1919—and specially during the republican period of 1924-1935—they were sent to France. Naval and Air Force officers were also trained in the United Kingdom. At the risk of oversimplifying the situation, we could say that those who had close relations with Germany—General Metaxas for instance—were generally monarchist and reactionary. While those who studied in France, or were connected with the Allied military missions during and after the first world war, were generally republican and liberal. In both cases, however, the officers were socially part of the bourgeoisie which ruled the country and, from a political point of view, they sided with one or the other of the two major competing political forces. Thus their participation in the social and political life of the country was a «natural» consequence of their status as members of the establishment.[6]

5. After 1960, we can observe a slight revival of liberal attitudes among officers of all ranks and in the three services. This trend, however, didn't assume any organised form and, in the face of the organised extreme right within the services, its role was negligeable. Most of these officers have naturally been eliminated since 1967.

6. Such a statement may be questioned because we can offer no empirical data to support it. Is it possible to generalise and state that «the officers» belonged to the establishment? Even in the absence of such data, however, we can simply say that certainly those of senior rank either belonged to the establishment or became part of it, or at least identified with its interests and aspirations as soon as they reached the senior levels of the military hierarchy. As for the junior officers, we can say that no matter what their class origins and their ideology, they certainly never represented a force opposed to the political establishment as a whole and, at no time, did they take any action running contrary to the position adopted by their superiors. Considering the importance of hierarchic relationships in the armed forces, our proposition concerning the officers' corps within the establishment seems justified. We can only hope that such propositions, as well as many others in this paper, will become hypotheses in order to verify them empirically.

To the extent that the military were, in the past, largely members of the establishment, their political activism never endangered the foundations of the country's political power structure. Even when the interventions of the military resulted in considerable violence, as in 1922, such actions had no significant long term political consequences. Those who led the various Greek political forces, as well as those who were in charge of the administration, were part of the establishment and their succession in government, with or without the assistance of the military, did not affect the political structure of Greek society. In this context, the military were political but not social actors. They aligned themselves with one of the other of the two major competing political forces, or they took independent initiatives, but these actions were always contained within the limits of «politics» (in the narrow sense of the term) leaving the political as well as the socio-economic structure of the country basically unchanged. In this respect, up to the second world war, the military, whether or not they participated in political interventions, may be considered as servants and guardians of the establishment to which most of them belonged.

Writing in 1964, during the period when Greece was governed by the Center Union Party led by George Papandreou, Jean Meynaud explained that «en définitive, l'armée est aujourd'hui la garantie de l'ordre social et il est probable qu'elle interviendrait très vite en accord avec l'OTAN, si cet ordre lui semblait réellement menacé».[7] In our view, this statement must be questioned, at least with the benefit of hindsight.

If any threat to the established order existed during the years 1963-1967, it certainly was not against its social or economic components. As Mr. Catephores so aptly stated in 1969[8] the motivations of those who took over power in April, 1967 were much more directly «political» and they were not the result of any fear that the social order was in danger. However, before we have a glance at the «ideology» of the Colonels, which will give us some insight as to their motivations, we should ask ourselves who they are socially and politically; as compared to the «traditional» leadership of the Greek Armed Forces.

If we consider the small group of officers who actually engineered and carried out the coup—and their number does not exceed forty—we see that none of them belonged, even in the remotest way, to the Greek establishment. In a much wider sense, however, we would suggest that since the second world war, the social composition of the Greek officers' corps had been very largely modified to include an ever increasing number of recruits of peasant or small bourgeois origins (mainly from small towns). During the civil war, 1946-1949, the officers' training schools put on «crash courses» and several classes were commissioned after only a few months' training. Earlier, many of the most qualified elements in all three services had either been killed during the various phases of the second world war or had been eliminated through several purges of democratic officers between 1943 and 1946. Finally, the rate of voluntary early retirement, particularly in the Navy and Air Force, was very high immediately following the end of the war. The reasons for such retirements are varied but one of the most important ones is that the economy was in need of qualified administrators and of men with technological skills, many of whom were serving in the Armed Forces.

The consequences of these changes may be summarized as follows:

a) The numbers of officers who were commissioned in the 1946-1950 period were so high that the whole hierarchic pyramid was distorted. By 1965, these officers had reached, given «normal» promotion conditions, the rank of major but further promotion became a real problem because of the limited number of more senior posts. We would therefore suggest that the desire for social advancement through career promotion, and the anxiety lest they may not achieve it, must be taken into consideration when we discuss the social structure of the officers' corps.

b) This anxiety was all the more real and justified as the only perspective open to them was promotion or stagnation. Their social origins did not offer them any possibility to return to civilian life and enjoy a family income, as did very often their predecessors when they had to leave or were excluded temporarily from the armed forces. In addition, if the skills of an officer could be used in various walks of life in an underdeveloped country—as was Greece during the first half of the twentieth century—this was no longer true after the end of the civil war, in view of the growth of the economy and the transformation of the country into a semi-developed one.

c) For many different reasons, the children of the bourgeoisie no longer joined the armed forces. This has been less true for the Navy and Air Force than for the Army, but even these two services have lost much of their glamour and attraction for the children of the establishment. Those officers who belonged to the establishment were definitely a minority at the time of the coup and even the generals who led the armed forces were not, in reality, members of the Greek ruling class. Many of the general officers had personal relations with the King but these were more

7. Meynaud, Jean, *Les forces politiques en Grèce*, *op. cit.*, p.350.

8. Catephores, George, *Greece and the Institutionalization of a Defence society*, (additional note to this Report), p. 25 ff. [Ed.: Mr. Catephores' article is not published here as he was not present at the Congress to give or deny his permission.]

of a «professional» nature and they did not «open the doors» of the establishment.

d) Most of the generals, in 1967, had fought in the civil war but very few had taken part in the struggle against the Axis either within the Resistance or in North Africa. Among the colonels, lieutenant-colonels and majors very few had taken part in the Resistance, on the North African and Italian campaigns, while the captains had never fought. All of them, however, had in common the civil war experience—either because they fought in it or because they had been nurtured with the militant anti-communism which was the center-piece of the post-civil war «ideology» with which the Greek armed forces were imbued. The majority of officers, who refused to adopt a critical attitude towards this primitive «Weltanschauung»—even if many of them understood that the time had come to abandon the pursuit of the communist «bogeyman»—, sooner or later mistook for reality the wild ramblings of the psychological warfare specialists.

e) In spite of their social origins, the bulk of the Greek officers' corps do not entertain any revolutionary or even reformist aspirations comparable to those of the nationalist groups who have taken over power in the past in Egypt, Syria, Libya or Peru. Their visceral anti-communism prevents them from adopting such positions, and they are prepared not only to maintain but to reinforce the outdated social and economic structure of the country, provided that those who control the economy are prepared to support them in the pursuit of their political objectives. Similarly, their total identification with the world's anti-communist crusaders prevents them from taking any measures which can be termed as nationalist, in the way this term is applied to the military rulers of some of the underdeveloped countries.

f) Finally, we should stress the importance of the ties established between the Greek officers and the U.S. military establishment. Their advanced training took place, since 1949-1950, almost solely in U.S. or NATO military schools and their identification with the values shared by the military in the U.S. has been an increasingly important factor in determining their behaviour.

We can therefore conclude that although the social origins of the Greek officers' corps, as it has developed since the second world war, are such that one could possibly expect on their part a «radical» outlook on economic and social issues, their political indoctrination and their professional aspirations have led them to use all possible means to destroy the political component of the establishment, while leaving intact and even reinforcing the country's socio-economic structure.

D

The Colonels' attempts to develop an «ideological» foundation for the militarist regime which they have established, have often led the Greeks and many foreigners to an attitude of incredulity and, unfortunately much too often, to a refusal to take seriously the inept declarations of the semi-literate leaders of present day Greece. We would suggest, however, that these «ideological» postures, taken together with the progressive institutionalisation of a totalitarian-militarist regime, deserve more attention. Their incoherent ramblings are now part of the school curricula and hundreds of thousands of volumes are being printed and distributed freely to the population. In the long run this indoctrination will start producing some effects, in spite of the Greek people's aversion for such propaganda and its deeply rooted scepticism towards any pronouncements of the Junta.

The inner core of this militarist «ideology» is represented by the concept of «Nation» as distinct from, if not opposed to, the «People». According to the pronouncements and writings of the present rulers of Greece, the «Nation» is not to be identified with the «People»; the will of the people is one thing, the will of those who are entrusted with the defence of «national interests» is another. The latter, that is the military, cannot be subject to the same legal order as the ordinary people. Their mission is such that they must be in a position to act «in the Nation's interests», without being hampered by civilians who have to take into account the will of the people.[9]

Greece and the Greeks possess some superior quality, as compared to other nations and peoples, for reasons which are largely biological. It is therefore the duty of Greece to transmit «its message» to all other countries of the world. On April 9, 1969, Colonel Pattakos spoke as follows to a group of U.S. officials and journalists: «A new star shines in the Western skies. The American star. Europe should accept its bright light, without any jealousy or reservations... American wisdom may be identified with the modest wisdom of Eurypides. The United States is part of Europe; while Europe and the United States are part of Greece. The western star may change its position in the horizon of civilisation, but it is always the same one. The source of its light is in Greece. Because of our civilisation we are all Greeks. And as Greeks,[10] if you feel a summer breeze which inspired your mind and your soul while you were among us, you should take to your noble country the message of the New Greek Spring. This message will be a contribution to the unity of the West, for Freedom and World Peace, as these are expressed by the Idea (Spirit) of Greece.»

9. The length of this paper does not allow any substantial quotation of texts. In addition, the Greek language used by the Colonels is often incomprehensible, even to the Greek reader. Our brief analysis of their «ideology» is however based on a careful reading of their pronouncements and legal texts published since April, 1967.

10. He was addressing U.S. citizens.

This meshing of Greek «nationalism» and an unconditional attachment to the «Western World» is one of the principal characteristics of the regime's «ideology» and one which was not invented after April 21, 1967. For almost two decades, the Greek Armed Forces have been nurtured with the idea that any struggle in the Greek «national interest» is at the same time a struggle «for the West» against the common, identifiable enemy. Its corollary was also considered to be an absolute truth; and, in the late fifties, the Armed Forces Radio network proclaimed that «Greece's frontiers are in the Caucasus». In other words, the borders of Greece extended to those of the members of NATO. This statement was made at a time of serious tension between Turkey and Greece. One could therefore doubt the value of the «nationalism» which the Greek military proclaim. It is certainly not the nationalism of the people, because according to the Junta the people are in no position to act on their own in defence of Greece's national interests. It is rather an attempt to appeal to some of the more backward sectors of Greek society by arousing primitive feelings of «national pride», while at the same time proclaiming that Greece's national aspirations are totally identifiable to those of the Alliance.[11] The very fact of this identification makes any contradiction between Greece's national interest and the interest of NATO as a whole unthinkable, at least in the Junta's frame of reasoning. If any such contradiction were to arise in the course of events, the Junta's ideologists would eliminate it by simply stating that it cannot possibly exist, and then proceed to follow the injunctions that may come from abroad.

The «theory of the State» and the place of dissent and civil liberties in relation to «State power» proclaimed by the Colonels were well summarized in a statement by Prime Minister Papadopoulos on 25 April, 1968: «The State is an organised body and I would like to suggest that within an organised body only expressions of support and understanding can be authorised.» The totalitarian character of the State which the colonels would like to establish—and are already in the process of doing so—is reflected not only in their statements but, particularly so, in the 1968 «Constitution» and subsequent «Laws» they have adopted in order to implement it. It is impossible in the space of this paper to enumerate all the legal texts which are, in our view, expressions of a totalitarian «ideology». We would like, however, to refer to the next section and to Mr. Catephores' additional note in order to illustrate just one point: to the Colonels who rule Greece today it is clear that they are endowed with a mission to «save» the Greek nation—even from the Greek people—similar to the one which was shared by Salazar during the better part of his thirty-eight years in power. They are not as literate as the Portuguese dictator was and their pronouncements have something which is more ridiculous than frightful about them—but a careful reading of their texts (specially of their legal texts) reflects a truly totalitarian way of thinking.

The last important pillar of their «ideology» is to be found in their references to the role of religion. On March 29, 1968, Prime Minister Papadopoulos proclaimed urbi et orbi that «Greece belongs to the Greek Christians». This slogan was proclaimed as a national motto, which has since then been inscribed on stamps, city walls, bus windows, public parks, etc. In using the name of Christianity in such a way, the Junta was helped by the official Greek Church; and particularly by its head, Archbishop Ieronymos. With the help of the Church leadership, this slogan was interpreted to mean that all that is Greek is Christian, ignoring the fact that about 100,000 Greek citizens are not Christian and that the majority of the population, even though born Christian, maintain very loose relations with the Church.

In short, the portrait of the ideal Greek mind, in the eyes of those who rule the country in 1970, is the following:

a) He believes in the sanctity of the «Nation», but he does not claim for himself the right to decide when it is in danger and more generally the right to pass judgement on its state.

b) He is convinced that the world is divided into «forces of good» (NATO and the «Western World») and «forces of evil» (the Communist countries, all communist or leftist movements, the socialists, the left-wing Christian-Democrats, etc.). He does not claim for himself the right to decide which country or group belongs to one or the other.

c) Those who are in charge of Greece's destiny today have all the answers to questions which may arise under a) and b).

d) He supports and understands the efforts of those who act on behalf of the State, because otherwise he would be contributing to its dissolution.

e) He is a good Christian and no matter what the

11. The contradiction between this attachment to the «West» and the denigration of «corrupt western Europeans»—parliamentarians, the people, the governments or the press—does not seem to worry the Colonels. To them the «West» with a capital «W» exists in abstracto while those who inhabit the countries, for whose defence NATO was established, can be ignored if they don't appreciate fully the greatness of the Greek regime. We have in this case a reasoning which is similar to that which they apply when they establish a distinction between the Nation, with a capital «N» and the people. The «Nation» and the «West» are undefined «ideas» which may or may not find their concrete expression in the will of the people. It is therefore indispensable for the armed forces to be entrusted with the defence of the «Nation's interests» as well as of those of the «Western World».

holy texts, canon law or his local priest may say, the Archbishop of Athens is always right.

When beginning to draft this section of the paper, we had not intended to use our sense of humour, because this author at least is convinced that no matter how ridiculous and inept the Colonels' «ideological» pronouncements may sound to a non-mentally retarded individual, they are expressions of a potential danger not only to Greece but to many countries which may still enjoy a democratic form of government. Thus, if some of the above paragraphs appear to be sarcastic, this is not because we take the matter lightly.

This manichean view of society and the return to the old established social values, such as religion, are not uncommon to wide sections of the military, even in the West's most democratic societies. Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, have all witnessed such trends within their armed forces and, more particularly, among officers who deal with psychological warfare questions. In this connection, we should not forget that before the April 1967 coup, Colonel Papadopoulos served for a long time in the psychological warfare office of the General Staff. Should we, however, be surprised to read and listen to these «ideological» pronouncements? In our view, certainly not. This kind of «thinking» prevailed in the Greek armed forces for a long time. Even under democratic governments, the military carried out such propaganda whenever they were in control of the means of communication. If these means allowed them to carry their «message» beyond the limits of their barracks—as they did through the Armed Forces Radio network—they never hesitated to do so. Their pronouncements have not really changed; they simply make them today as «statesmen» and no longer as sergeants or colonels. In the same way, many a statesman in our democratic societies would be well advised to look into the barracks and listen to what is being said; lest he finds himself replaced by officers whose sophistication and literacy would be no greater than those of Greece's present rulers.

E

In our attempt to understand the exact nature of the Colonels' political design, we must now examine briefly some of the institutions which they have established since 1967 and which have transformed Greece—at least from a formal point of view—into one of the world's most completely militarised states. This has been done through the promulgation, during the past three and a half years, of a series of «legal» texts which deserve careful analysis because of the complex institutional structure to which they have given rise. The fear of a return to a democratic system of government has led the Colonels to introduce, as often as possible, «legal» provisions which make of the military the arbiters of public life. In a complementary, but not unimportant manner considerable material advantages accrue to the military as a result of this institutionalisation of what George Catephores has called a «defence society».

The most important of these texts are the Constitution of September 1968, and the December 14, 1968, Decree regulating the structure and powers of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces. The careful analysis of these texts should normally be part of a paper such as ours. We have, however, been spared this task because of two recent publications on this subject[12] and the fact that we have obtained permission to reproduce an unpublished text by Mr. Catephores.

As for the more peripheral aspects of this militarization process, another recent short study by C. Vassiliou[13] contains much useful documentary material. In summary, we should however stress the following:

1) Since April, 1967, a systematic attempt is being made to place members of the officers' corps—retired or not—in as many positions of responsibility as possible. Most often this is done by the simple appointment of officers to governmental or paragovernmental posts. Thus, most of the Public Corporations, Social Welfare institutions, Cultural and Scientific institutions and, more particularly, the Universities have been or are being placed under the direct control of the military. Naturally, all sections of the Administration have also been placed under their control through the appointment of Permanent Secretaries and Directors General. The limits of such appointments are determined by the Junta's natural desire to place in these positions only men whom it can trust, as well as the need to satisfy the ambitions of its rare civilian supporters.

2) These discretionary appointments are important because of their cumulative effects; but what is by far more important is the legislation making it mandatory to appoint officers of senior rank to an ever increasing number of boards, councils and positions of administrative responsibility. In several cases, the appointment of a member of the armed services to a given position is made *possible* though not *mandatory*. The Colonels' practice has been, however, consistent in always choosing an officer even when the law makes such a choice only optional. A typical example is to be found in the implementation of Decree No. ND/180 (April 30, 1969) «concerning Government Commissioners in Higher Education Institutions»

12. Catephores, George, *op. cit.* and Vegleris Phedon, *op. cit.*
13. Vassiliou, Constantine, in *Eleftheri Patrida*, No. 131, Rome, (reprinted in English in *Greek Report*, No. 16, May 1970, London).

which provides for the possibility to appoint «a military official» to such a post. According to C. Vassiliou, and to our knowledge, all appointees have been generals or officers of senior rank. As for the cases where the appointment is *mandatory*, we can cite the examples of the boards of the Atomic Energy Commission, the Telecommunications Corporation, several bodies in the field of sports, etc.

3) The distinction between the armed forces on the one hand and other uniformed services, such as the security forces and the fire service on the other, has been practically abolished by the progressive assimilation and control of the latter by the former. The Supreme Council of National Defence appoints the heads of these various services (Decree ND /58 /1968), while their respective Supreme Councils are composed of a majority of Army Officers of General rank (Decree ND /139, April 3, 1969). In other terms, all these branches of public administration have become totally subordinate to and are under the complete control of the Armed Forces and, more particularly, of the Army.

4) The creation of a post of «Archpriest of the Armed Forces», with the rank of Major General has extended and reinforced the military grip on the Church. His principal function is to advise the Chief of the Armed Forces on religious matters and on «the Greek-Christian enlightenment of Armed Forces» (Royal Decree BD 217, April 7, 1969), but his religious position as a metropolitan and *ex officio* member of the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church places a General in the very ranks of the governing body of the Church.

This progressive «institutionalisation of a defence society» follows two parallel paths. The first leads to the air-tight separation between two sectors of Government. On the one hand, National Defence, in the way the term is being used in Greece today and, on the other, all the rest.[14] The second one consists of the steady increase of the numbers of officers occupying key positions in the «other» sector of government. The meaning of the Junta's pronouncements that the Armed Forces must remain «free of political influences» and their «independence» established and guaranteed in the future becomes apparent when we compare them to the practice of ever increasing military control and domination over all walks of public life. When the military become involved—by the very fact that they occupy positions of responsibility in all civilian sectors—in controversies and conflicts relating to football teams, the Church or the casting of actors in the National Theatre is it possible to expect the civilians to remain indifferent about what is going on inside the Armed Forces? There is, however, a more serious side to this situation. As S. E. Finer has so aptly stated, the military are neither technically nor morally equipped to govern and administer.[15] The examples he cites from the experience of the Allied Government in Germany where the degree of sophistication, education and intelligence of the military personnel had nothing in common with the primitive thinking which guides the military who rule Greece today are particularly probing in this respect.

Obviously, any democratic government which will one day succeed the Colonels will have the right and duty to abolish this legislation and lead the military back to where they belong: their barracks. However, the complexity of the institutional structure established since 1967 and the web of petty and vital interests which are now at stake is such that this task will be particularly arduous. The obsession with «law-making» which characterises the Junta's government of the country is not fortuitous; they know from Greek history how difficult it is for a democratic government to rid itself of the undemocratic legal straightjackets which it has inherited.

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At the end of what was intended to be a series of notes on the military in contemporary Greek politics, it is almost impossible to draw any conclusions.

We have seen that, from several points of view, the present dictatorship and the April, 1967 coup differ qualitatively from previous involvements of the military in Greece's politics. Nonetheless, many features of the pre-1967 Greek state and governments were conducive to the establishment of this type of dictatorship, because of the deliberate maintenance of practices dating back to the civil war. From a social point of view, the officers who carried out the 1967 coup were not part of the establishment but their militant anti-communism and other aspects of this «ideology», as well as their close ties with the U.S. military establishment prevent them from adopting «Nasserite» or simply Nationalist positions. Institutionally, the Junta's «legislators» have worked hard in the past and are continuing to work towards the establishment of a totalitarian militaristic and militarised state.

We have not, however, even attempted to answer one major question: Whom is this dictatorship serving and in whose interests did the Colonels act when moving to take over power? Is it possible to point to a given social class or group in answering this question? A serious discussion of these questions is warranted, both from a scientific and from a policy oriented point of view, but, within the limits of this paper, we can only suggest possible answers.

From a scientific point of view, this discussion is important because through an analysis of the role of

14. See Vegleris, Phedon, *op. cit.*, pp. 583-589.

15. Finer, S. E., *op. cit.*, pp. 14-17.

functionally specific, though very often socially heterogenous groups, such as the military, we can have a fresh look at some of the «traditional» outlooks and theories on social stratification and class structure. The comparative study of the role of the military in contemporary societies is of value to the extent that it sheds some light on the new social relationships developing in different societies, under the impact of apparently comparable or similar transformations of the function and role of certain social groups.[16]

From a more practical point of view, it is important to determine the position of the Colonels who control Greece today in the overall structure of Greek society. It is obvious that no political action is possible unless the relationships between the military in power and other social groups and classes are determined with some certainty.

One simple answer is to point to the capitalists in Greece, or to the Greek bourgeoisie and claim that the Colonels acted on their behalf and that the dictatorship is serving their interests. Such attempts at establishing the «class nature» of the Junta have been made, although, in this writer's view, they are little more than crude pseudo-marxist improvisations. There is no doubt, however, that because the road leading to April 21, 1967 was largely paved by the various «ancien régime» governments and administrations which were effectively controlled by the bourgeoisie, these theses do carry some credibility in the eyes of those who have forgotten the legend of the sorcerer's apprentice.

A variant of this view tends to place more emphasis on the role of «foreign capitalism» in bringing about and maintaining the dictatorship in power. It is the «imperialists» — without specifying what this term means — who are the firm supporters of the Greek Junta and the best way to oppose it is through an «active struggle against imperialism».

These and many other explanations of the Greek dictatorship do not take, however, into account the changing role of the military and their new relationships with other social groups. The traditional radical view of the military acting as agents of the capitalists who want to produce and sell weapons and who follow expansionist foreign policies is still shared by many Greeks. Consequently, they see the Junta as an outgrowth of the capitalist system, with all its indigenous and foreign spider webs.

John Galbraith, writing on the relationship between the Pentagon and U.S. industries, replied indirectly to many such explanations: «That we should pretend that the big specialized military contractors, those that do all or the bulk of their business with the Pentagon, much of it as the only source of supply, are really private firms—a stalwart manifestation of private enterprise—seems to me a unique bit of nonsense. There would be many advantages in recognizing the reality, which is that they are public extensions of the Pentagon... In my view the Services, not their industrial suppliers, are the prime wielders of power. Only a ubiquitous and often unconscious Marxism causes us to assume that if there is a capitalist in the background he must be more powerful.»[17]

By analogy, we would be tempted to say that in Greece, today, *some* capitalists—particularly the shipowners—and some other elements of the bourgeoisie have become «extensions» of the Junta but, by no means, are they the Junta's masters, in any sense whatsoever.

Another American writer, Seymour Melman, has had to face the same question in his analysis of the Pentagon's relationship to U.S. capitalism.[18] After rejecting the establishment view that this relationship is a perfectly normal one between private suppliers and public purchasers, as well as the pseudo or neo-Marxist view that the capitalists call the tune and the military act as their faithful agents, he suggests that these outlooks have in common the hypothesis that civilian interests are predominant over the military. Robert Heilbronner, in reviewing Melman's book summarises a third possibility as follows: «It is that the military establishment has constituted itself as a self-contained entity, capable of impressing its views and imposing its will not only on the civil establishment to which it pays a ritual obeisance, but over a section of the economy in which the language of private enterprise, is merely a fiction to hide its absolute authority.»[19] The consequence of this state of affairs according to Melman, is that a «para-state» has come into being in the United States which is leading the country to the point when it will become a «garrison-state».

Melman's «garrison-state» and Marcuse's «defence-society» are qualifications which apply very aptly to the kind of socio-political structure which the Colonels are in the process of establishing in Greece; but this conclusion still does not answer the question we posed at the beginning of this section. We would suggest that the answer may be given only by setting aside the explanations which derive from models of civil-military relations which are no longer applicable. With the exception of the ship-owners, some bankers

16. In this connection, we should also note that, in our view, such comparisons are possible only if we take account of the type of society as well as the functional position of the military. The participation in an alliance system is certainly as important a variable as the levels of socio-economic development.

17. Galbraith, John K., *How to Control the Military*, New York, Signet Books, 1969, pp. 9-10.

18. Melman, Seymour, *Pentagon Capitalism. The Political Economy of War*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1970.

19. Heilbronner, Robert, «Military America», in *New York Review of Books*, Vol. XV, No. 2, July, 23, 1970, p. 6.

and very few industrialists, Greek capitalists did not benefit from the coup d'état. On the contrary, the threats to Greece's economy, stemming from European hostility to the dictatorship—which has not been replaced by any significant enthusiasm for investments in Greece by U.S. financial circles—are serious enough to make Greek industrialists and exporters think twice about the virtues of the Junta. At the same time, the political and social expressions of the Greek establishment—political parties and professional organisations of all sorts—have been suppressed mercilessly by the Colonels and, three and half years after the coup, the rulers of Greece fear even the slightest sign of a renewal of their activities. Even the military establishment, traditionally linked to the King and to the royal coterie, has been destroyed and most of its leading members have either been retired, are in exile or in prison.

Immediately following the military take-over, many of those who have become since then objects of the Junta's vindictiveness as well as of those who have freely chosen to oppose it were favourably inclined towards *temporary* military rule. As long as this initial mutual tolerance lasted, one could have mistaken it for actual collusion between the Greek ruling class and the Colonels. After the first few months, however, and particularly after December 1967, it became clear that even if some «marriages of reason» did take place, the Greek establishment and the Colonels remained very far apart.

But then, whose interests did the coup and the dictatorship serve? First of all, those of the Colonels themselves and those of their immediate military and civilian acolytes. They succeeded in April 1967, not because they were acting on behalf, or with the assistance of any notable section of the Greek ruling class, but because they controlled the military technology with which the Greek armed forces had been endowed by its allies and which enabled them to place the whole country under their control. They have, since then, drawn tremendous personal benefits from the new status quo and their attempts at using the patronage system are yielding their fruit in the armed forces and, to a much lesser extent, among certain sectors of the civilian population.

Their real strength lies, however, in the fact that they have inherited a situation in which the Greek establishment had—at least since the civil war—always subordinated its own actions to the «mood» of the armed forces. It was not the establishment—capitalists or politicians—who were ordering the military but rather the military and their constant ally (or patron), the King, who were indicating the limits within which the establishment could act. This state of affairs was a consequence of the civil war and of the militant anti-communist crusading spirit which was its legacy—the military being its keepers—and the Colonels' intention to build up a fully fledged «garrison-state» is only the logical conclusion of a process dating back to the post-world war period.

Nonetheless, in spite of these internal conditions, the dictatorship, in its present form, would not have been possible if the Greek military were not part of a much larger military establishment, that of the NATO alliance. Without suggesting that NATO as an organisation, or for that matter that the political decision-makers of any member country, have at any stage deliberately encouraged the establishment or maintenance in power of the military dictatorship, the conviction of the Greek military that they belong to an alliance which will never disavow the Colonels is probably the most important factor in any attempt to explain the Greek dictatorship. Although we have no serious reason to believe that the Junta benefits from the active support of the civilian sectors of government in the member countries, there is no doubt that such support has been offered unhesitatingly since the first days of May 1967, by the U.S. military and intelligence establishments and, to a much lesser extent, by some sections of the military establishments of other member countries.

This reality, in as much as it relates to the situation inside Greece as well as to its external aspects, is much more complex and difficult to face than a simple causal relationship between the «capitalist forces» and their military agents. Both from a theoretical and from a practical point of view, its implications are likely to disturb many preconceived patterns of thinking. It is, nevertheless, preferable to face it and draw the conclusions which it calls for.

In summary then, we can answer our question by saying that the dictatorship did *not* serve the interests of a social group other than of the military themselves. Their strength, which has enabled them to remain in power, lies in the fact that past relationships between the Greek ruling class and the military were such that the latter found it easy to exploit the inhibitions of the former. It is also, however, the consequence of the functional role of the military, of the high technological sophistication of some of them and of the means at their disposal. Finally, their insertion into a larger alliance system, whose military establishment is basically favourable to their political aims and views, gives them a feeling of security which the politically isolated, if not ostracized rulers of a small country like Greece would otherwise be lacking.

Geneva, July, 1970