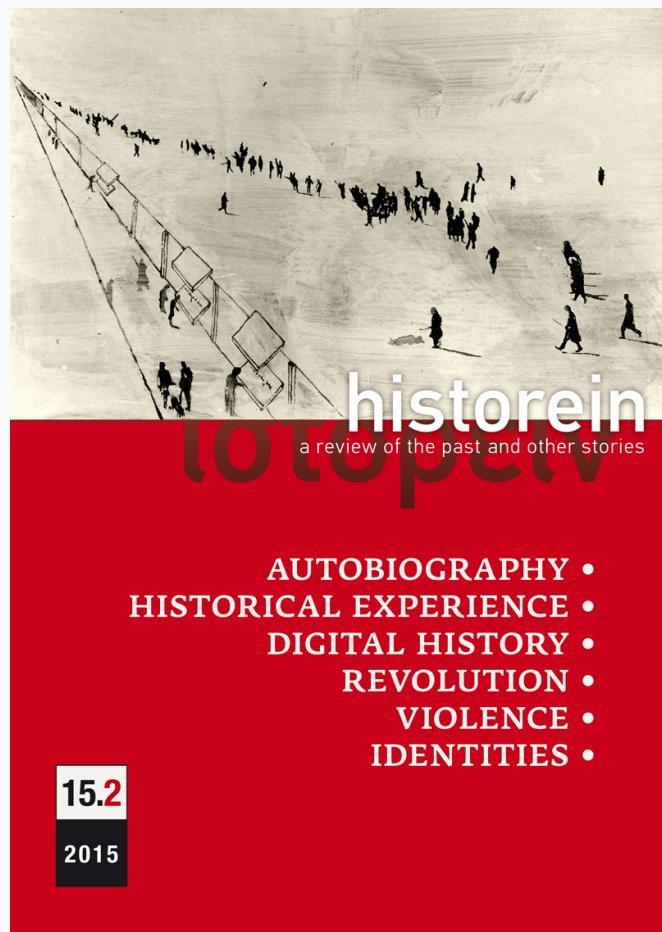


Historein

Vol 15, No 2 (2015)

Historein 15/2 (2015)



Review of Rika Benveniste's, Αυτοί που επέζησαν; Dimitris Kousouris', Δίκες των δοσίλογων, 1944-1949; Menelaos Haralabidis', Δεκεμβριανά 1944; Polymeris Voglis', Η αδύνατη επανάσταση

Kostis Karpozilos

doi: [10.12681/historein.8753](https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.8753)

Copyright © 2015, Kostis Karpozilos



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Karpozilos, K. (2016). Review of Rika Benveniste's, Αυτοί που επέζησαν; Dimitris Kousouris', Δίκες των δοσίλογων, 1944-1949; Menelaos Haralabidis', Δεκεμβριανά 1944; Polymeris Voglis', Η αδύνατη επανάσταση. *Historein*, 15(2), 68-77. <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.8753>

Rika Benveniste

Αυτοί που επέζηοαν: Αντίσταση, εκτόπιση, επιστροφή. Θεσσαλονικείς Εβραίοι στη δεκαετία του 1940

[Those who survived: Resistance, deportation, return. Thessaloniki Jews in the 1940s]

Athens: Polis, 2014. 444 pp.

Dimitris Kousouris

Δίκες των δοσίδογων 1944-1949: Δικαιοσύνη, οννέχεια του κράτους και εθνική μνήμη

[Trials of the collaborators, 1944-49: justice, state continuity and national memory]

Athens: Polis, 2014. 688 pp.

Menelaos Haralabidis

Δεκεμβριανά 1944: Η μάχη της Αθήνας

[December events, 1944: The battle of Athens]

Athens: Alexandria, 2014. 374 pp.

Polymeris Voglis

Η αδύνατη επανάσταση: Η κοινωνική δυναμική των εμφυλίων πολέμων

[The impossible revolution: the social dynamics of the civil war]

Athens: Alexandria, 2014. 424 pp.

Kostis Karpozilos

Oxford University

In 2004 the Greek success story was at its highest peak. A member of the prestigious eurozone family, the country hosted the Olympic games in Athens and celebrated the spectacular success of its national football squad in the European Championship. It was in that particular joyous setting that public intellectuals, historians and political scientists engaged in a heated debate on the history and legacies of the 1940s.¹ Academics belonging to a self-proclaimed “new wave” argued for the revision of the prevailing periodisation that distinguished the wartime occupation years (1941–44) from the ensuing Greek Civil War (1946–49). This proposal ascribed to a historically suppressed interpretation that portrayed the communist movement as a force that aimed, and failed, to take power in successive moments throughout the decade. The implication was evident: the communist left was responsible for the traumatic events of the era and had it succeeded Greece would have followed the rest of the Balkan states down a spiral of political repression and social backwardness. The response was immediate. Academics not neces-

sarily sharing a common ideological umbrella underlined that, despite its self-proclaimed innovative characteristics, the revisionist approach retreated to conservative schemes and outdated methodological choices – as in the case of the positivistic and quantitative interpretations of violence. Frequent exchanges in newspapers, anecdotal disputes at conferences and an atmosphere of excitement galvanised interest in the decade that shaped contemporary Greece.

In hindsight this debate, despite its hyperbole, had an invigorating effect on Greek historiography: it illustrated the boundaries of interpretations across the spectrum, it encouraged involvement with understudied topics and, more importantly, it highlighted the multiple ways historiographical concerns interrelate with contemporary political and conceptual commitments. Now, a decade later, that debate is history, having created a legacy of its own, of which the four works discussed here are living proof. Rika Benveniste's history of Jewish survival reflects the recent dynamics of Holocaust studies in Greece and the quest for an integrated story of Jewish communities that will include the perpetrators' policies, the behaviour of onlookers and the diverse worlds of victims and survivors alike. Dimitris Kousouris tackles the thorny question of the persecution of collaborationists amid the postwar transition as a way to illustrate the continuities of anticommunism. Menelaos Haralambidis addresses the well-discussed December 1944 events, offering a novel perspective that illustrates the social dynamics that transformed the Greek capital and Greek history alike. Finally, Polymeris Voglis offers a synthetic account of the civil war, shifting the emphasis from a top-down approach to an intriguing narrative that highlights the war not as a predefined event, but as a process in the making.

In most cases the questions propelling these studies have their origins in the intellectual atmosphere of the earlier historiographical debate. At the same time, though, the authors are primarily concerned, and for good reason, with linking their works with contemporary realities, as defined by the end of the Greek success story and the resurgence of popular interpretations of the 1940s. Since the onset of the economic crisis, the language of the past has saturated expressions of social dissatisfaction and political debate, generating historical analogies on all fronts: the troika was depicted as a renewed version of the occupation forces, the old political order was accused of acting like collaborators, social unrest was accredited to the conspicuous planning of the left to take power and the rise of Golden Dawn was portrayed as a revival of eternal fascism. A flourishing field of cultural practices, distorted historical comparisons and stereotypical depictions emerged. Their accuracy was minimal, but they reflect the multiple ways a society in crisis turns to history to extract an interpretation of the present.

The works discussed here share the scepticism about the spreading of historical analogies and the flourishing simplistic interpretations of the past. Therefore, they abandon a burdensome tradition of Greek historiography where the imagined reader was the academic peer, adopting instead a refreshing writing style that addresses the general public. This choice does not imply a vulgar didacticism but, on the contrary, a belief that the only way to disentangle the present from the spectre of the 1940s is to emphasise the complexities of the period, the limitations of clear-cut dichotomies and the necessity of problematising their ensuing legacies. What is more, these four books do not accept predefined models of interpretation, but try to construct novel ones. Therefore, they discuss modern Greek history not as

a peripheral or exceptional case study, but as an integral part of the great transformations that defined our multifaceted postwar world. This is quite different from the prevailing tone of historiography ten years ago. To put it simply: if in 2004 the Greek success story seemed to generate clear answers about the past and present, the recent turbulent crisis suggests a shift from stories of whodunit to histories that reveal nuances, grey zones and the clashes that shaped and reshaped the 1940s.

Benveniste sets the paradigm of this shift. In the case of Thessaloniki's Jews, there is one major answer to whodunit: the Nazi authorities orchestrated the destruction of the city's Jewish community and the deportation of its nearly 50,000 members to death camps in central and eastern Europe. It is impossible to address any aspect of Jewish history without acknowledging this overpowering reality. She illustrates this point further by focusing on the antipodes of death. Three intertwined microstories arise. Benveniste first follows the itinerary of 20 youngsters who joined the leftist partisans in the Greek mountains in order to highlight the circumstances that made an exodus from Thessaloniki possible and how this decisive moment defined their wartime and postwar experiences. She then traces a community of death camp survivors who lived classified as displaced persons in the all-Jewish camp of Feldafing under US protection and opted not to repatriate to Greece, but to seek postwar resettlement in the US and the newly founded state of Israel. The emphasis on their transitional status highlights the binding factors that arose from their common experiences from their arrival in Auschwitz-Birkenau and the novel challenges they faced after their liberation. Finally, the author focuses on five members of a single family who were sent to Bergen-Belsen in August 1943 alongside a number of prominent individuals and Spanish

passport holders from Thessaloniki. Here the narrative keeps in pace with the gradual disintegration of prewar realities and highlights how the community's leadership interpreted and responded to the rising challenges until the terminal point of deportation.

The common thread of all three stories is the history of survival. But this one history operates as a Russian doll, revealing multiple microhistories defined by the strife between human agency, social relations, coincidental events and historical circumstances. The successful dialogue between microhistories and the panorama of the epoch evokes similarities to Carlo Ginzburg's approach (and the fact that Benveniste is a scholar of medieval Europe attests to this parallel), while Lawrence Langer's scheme of "choiceless choices" frames the question of personal decisions within the dystopic and totalitarian world of death camps and systematic persecution. This insistence on human agency is one of the most powerful aspects of the book, as the author examines the multiplicity of responses to shifting realities. Benveniste is not interested in discussing whether these choices were futile or not, but mainly in how historical experiences, social and cultural networks, preexisting orders of power and conceptual horizons defined what appeared to be a choice at any given historical circumstance.

The main aim of the author is to contribute, through a paradigmatic study, to a new history of the Jewish extermination in Greece. Seemingly her focus does not serve this purpose, as she studies the exception (survival) to the canon (death). But this is exactly the point. By offering a detailed account of stories of survival, the author sparks free associations as to the multiplicity of microhistories surrounding the thousands of Jews that did not survive. The narrative underpins this aim. Benveniste

frames each case of survival within a broader historiographical setting: the role of Jewish resistance, the question of displaced persons and the charged discussion on the Jewish councils' deliberations with the Nazi authorities appear in respective chapters. The narrative is organised thematically and chronologically, creating a spiral that has Thessaloniki at its epicentre and expands in diverse geographies of survival in northern Greece, Feldafing and Tröbitz. At the same time though, these *topoi* are not safe havens: resistance fighters get killed, displaced persons suffer from disease and hardship, the father in the third chapter dies from typhus and is buried on 7 May 1945 (the day of the German final surrender in Reims). The fuzzy borders between survival and death illustrate the contingencies of the moment.

At the same time, this fuzziness transcends the chronological axis of the narrative. Benveniste argues, and proves, the importance of prewar realities in the mechanisms of deportation or survival. This becomes evident in the case of interwar leftist activities and the readiness of a number of young Jews to join the resistance or in the role of the Jewish community organisations both in the handling of the escalating crisis in Thessaloniki and the reorganisation of life in postwar conditions. The moment one story ends, the reader returns, in a Sisyphean manner, to the early stages of the occupation, being therefore constantly reminded of how different responses were shaped within the same world of "choiceless choices". In a similar manner, the author demonstrates that the end of the war generated a novel set of questions for those who had survived. Of course the difference from the concentration camp experiences is tremendous, but the predicament of those who either returned to Thessaloniki or decided to seek refuge elsewhere is striking. "What is there for us to do in Greece? Who will

be waiting for us there?" is the title of the second chapter, implying the links between the destruction of the community and the common void, a void defined by absence and silence, that awaited those who had survived.

Benveniste's book is a significant contribution to Greek historiography. Underpinned by a constant interplay between different types of sources and a narrative style that conveys empathy devoid of sentimentalism, the book offers a prototype of a dialogue between the micro- and macrolevel and the way histories of individuals and groups can revitalise the grand schemes of historical writing. More importantly, though, Benveniste goes against a common perception in Greek historiography that entailed the adaptation of grand historiographical schemes in the local setting – lengthy bibliographical introductions with no direct relevance to the main narrative was a common indication of this tendency. Her work illustrates the potentialities of integrating Greek history – in this case Jewish Greek history – within a broader, international debate and, at the same time, the necessity of works that can engage with and transform this debate by offering innovative aspects and methodologies.

Dimitris Kousouris addresses a major gap of Greek historiography in his study of the post-war handling of collaboration and the trials of collaborators between 1944 and 1949. Until very recently this story, with noticeable exceptions, remained in the dark amid half-truths and overwhelming silence. The main reason for this was a predominant narrative that minimised the question of collaboration in favour of a self-conforming portrayal of the nation resisting the occupation forces. From the start the author argues that this is not an exceptionally Greek story: societies across Europe treated the issue of collaboration as peripheral to their wartime experiences in an effort

to facilitate postwar transition. His main interest, though, lies elsewhere. The collaborators' trials have been portrayed as a farce: a small number faced trial and in most cases the accused were either acquitted or condemned to short-term imprisonment. Kousouris is the first to provide a detailed account of this story by examining and processing the archives of the Special Collaborators' Court that was set up in Athens. The data is revealing: the defendants in 60 percent of the 2,200 cases were acquitted while a significant number of cases never reached trial. When this figure is compared to the parallel mass persecution of supporters of the left, then it becomes evident that the Greek postwar state prioritised the suppression of political dissent over the retrospective punishment of collaborators. Moreover, the analysis proves a significant distinction within the world of collaboration since members of the financial and political elite were usually absolved or received short-term sentences. But as the author states, there is more to this story.

Here lies the major argument and contribution of the book. Kousouris argues that instead of understanding the trials as examples of an orchestrated farce, we should focus on them as a seminal event in a successful transition from the occupation to the novel realities of the Cold War. In order to do so, he traces the transformations of the rhetoric and practices surrounding the question of collaboration from the occupation until the end of the civil war. Throughout this periodisation he interrelates the wartime demand to cleanse the nation of traitors with the broader envisioning of the postwar transition. The dynamics of this interrelation are reflected in the first months of the liberation when the national unity government set up special courts and the leftist organisations pursued the immediate retaliation of those accused of collaboration. This difficult coexistence revealed a conflict over the

monopoly of power and was shattered in the December 1944 events that operated as a catalyst for the prioritisation of anticomunism over antifascism. From that point, the question of collaboration is interwoven with the novel, and deep, division between the state and the left. In this context, Kousouris demonstrates that the priorities had changed and the trials of collaborators reflected and ratified this shift.

The persecution and trial of the members of the wartime collaborationist governments is pivotal to the narrative. Kousouris follows closely, almost on a day-to-day basis, the proceedings of a trial that began in the immediate aftermath of the December 1944 battle. His aim is to illustrate how the trial became instrumental in the legitimisation of anticomunism and the effort of the accused to portray their wartime actions within this framework. The novel dichotomy of communism/anticommunism allowed the retrospective reframing of actions, as in the case of the Security Battalions, a paramilitary militia created in 1943 to target leftist resistance organisations. During the trial the borderlines between wartime resistance and collaboration were distorted in favour of a re-generated narrative that emphasised the continuities of the anticomunist struggle. Here Kousouris makes a significant argument: the common anticomunist ground, shared by liberals and conservatives alike, operated as a meeting point for the mainstream political factions, creating a novel state ideology. This convergence – the author calls it a "historical compromise" – reflected common fears, but also the transformation of the political and intellectual liberalism that had sided with the left during the occupation. Kousouris accurately positions this crisis in the disillusionment following the December events and, therefore, at the same time provides a fascinating account of how the ongoing trials contributed to the dismantling of the wartime liberal-left alliance.

This crisis ascribes to a global trend and, therefore, again Greece is not an exception. The Greek exception lies elsewhere: in the swift reincorporation in the national narrative of individuals, groups and social forces that had opposed communism under the auspices of or in close cooperation with the German and Italian authorities. This exceptional status of Greece, however, did not result in the expulsion of Greece from the forefront of the free world. On the contrary, the country acquired a prominent position in the global anticommunist alliance and the memories of collaboration were soon to be totally suppressed. This not only demonstrates how the priorities of the Cold War trumped all other considerations, but also illustrates why the question of collaboration remained a long-standing taboo. The Greek left alluded to the inconsistencies of the trials, but within its narrative of a homogenous national resistance there was no room for questions about the magnitude, extent and nature of the collaborationist phenomenon. For the Greek right, the notion of a "handful of collaborationists" had an additional advantage: it legitimised its rhetoric of portraying the left as the sole threat to the nation's integrity.

This is an extremely rich book that addresses multiple themes and topics while continuously positioning the Greek case within an international context and drawing parallels between the questions of postwar transition with the construction of legislative mechanisms. Kousouris addresses a difficult topic, avoiding the temptation to offer a patchwork of scandalous cases and simplistic explanations. His efforts are concentrated on illuminating the specific historical conditions that allowed the core of elite collaborators to present their actions as legitimate responses to the red peril and how this conceptualisation was in harmony with postwar reconstruction in Greece. In this effort

he challenges the very basis of the national narrative – across the political spectrum – that underestimated the impact of collaborators or (in leftist rhetoric) accredited the phenomenon only to the world of elites. Therefore the author moves beyond the 2004 debate and emphasises the necessity of a reckoning with the social divisions and the grey areas that defined the intensity of the postwar transition.

The December 1944 events were pivotal in illustrating the challenges of the Greek postwar transition and proved to be seminal in creating the deep dichotomy between the communist left and the restored old political order. The fully fledged armed confrontation between the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) and the combined forces of the transitional government and the British military has acquired a paradoxical position in modern Greek studies: despite being one of the most discussed episodes, the vast majority of recent works remain within the framework set forth by John Latrides' groundbreaking 1972 book. Therefore, Menelaos Haralambidis was confronted with the difficult task of offering a novel perspective on a story that has been primarily discussed as a prototype of the Cold War dichotomy. Without dismissing the importance of diplomatic and geostrategic priorities in the unfolding of events, the author shifts his focus to everyday developments on the streets of Athens. The result is a balanced, easy-to-follow narrative organised in strict chronological order, from 18 October 1944, the Stunde Null of Athens' liberation, to the immediate aftermath of the Varkiza agreement in February 1945. The author illustrates that as Athens was the meeting point of social and political divisions of an occupied country, the challenges to the role of national liberation movements in postwar reconstruction and the rising tensions within the Allies as the prospect of the war's end became more eminent.

Haralambidis offers no surprises when discussing the international context or the immediate challenges of postwar transition that appeared right after the formation of the national unity government. He discerns that the major factor that determined the final outcome was the growing commitment of British foreign policy in the battle of Athens and the arrival of British reinforcements on the ground by 16 December. This arrival signified the intensification of urban warfare and the gradual transformation of the urban landscape, with ELAS retreating to its working-class strongholds. The power of the book lies in its bottom-up approach, which brings into dialogue the traumatic experiences of civilians, the futile efforts of ELAS fighters and the startled reactions of British soldiers amid the escalation of the violent clash. The emphasis on the spatial dimensions of the clash (depicted in a number of accompanying maps) interrelates with local histories of resistance, the organisation of life behind the frontlines and the transformation of the urban infrastructure into a military landscape. This is not (and could not be, given the texture of the clash) military history in its classic sense; it is a story of urban warfare intertwined with the unleashing of social dynamics that transformed large parts of Athens into a shambles and opened a deep rift with long-lasting consequences.

These consequences are discussed in the last two chapters of the book, where the author gives a detailed and balanced account of the extremely contested topic of executions, exhumations and the logistics of violence. He highlights the inconsistencies of the state-organised propaganda on “communist atrocities” and, at the same time, acknowledges that the battle of Athens inspired a wave of killings by the communist militia targeting old adversaries (as in the case of Trotskyites), collaborators and affluent civilians labelled as “re-

actionaries”. The importance of this account, though, lies primarily in how Haralambidis demonstrates the highly selective process of the statistics of violence. In this context the significant numbers of those killed by the British airstrikes in the working-class areas of Athens were not at any point acknowledged as a separate category – in contrast to the highly publicised mass graves of communist victims. This imbalance highlights one of the book’s main arguments: that the December 1944 events signified not only the military defeat of the left but also its ostracisation from state-national memory.

Who could have been prepared for such a development? Here Haralambidis makes an important argument when answering “no one”. Up to this point, the prevailing interpretations of the December 1944 events fell into two polarised narratives, both of which shared a core belief in a preconceived plan – either by the communist left to take power or the government-in-exile to tackle the inevitable rise of the left to power. Haralambidis is not the first to suggest that we should move away from such teleological readings, but he does provide concrete arguments for doing so. His main hypothesis is based on the thin British military presence and the respective inactivity of ELAS from October to December. However, one could only wish that the author would expand on this argument, which, as he rightly states, goes against dominant stereotype. To play the devil’s advocate: why, given the unwillingness of both sides, didn’t the battle stop in its early stages? The end came only after 33 days of bitter fighting and considerable human losses and when it was evident that the ELAS forces were on the verge of collapse.

Haralambidis offers a convincing answer when following the microlevel of the armed clash and the chaotic conditions that emerged in dif-

ferent neighbourhoods of Athens. For the left and the working and lower classes, this was a revolutionary moment: the class divisions are depicted in the geography of the events, with the British armed forces initially retaining control of a small part of Athens and the practice of ELAS of taking hostages from the middle and upper-class neighbourhoods outside British control. Haralambidis implies this in different instances of the book, where he deals with issues ranging from recounting the accusations among the communist leadership that they were misled by the “enraged masses” to discussing the “revolutionary experience” in the neighbourhoods controlled by ELAS and the National Liberation Front (EAM). Nonetheless, the theme in itself does not acquire an autonomous position and possibly this is what prevents the author from addressing the prevailing tension within the international communist movement at the moment of the post-war transition on whether it should adhere to the interwar and wartime popular frontline or whether conditions were ripe for a renewed version of revolutionary politics.

Revolution is the main theme of Polymeris Voglis’ synthetic account of the civil war. Surprisingly enough, the flourishing field of studies on this central episode of modern Greek history has not yet paid particular attention to the revolutionary dimensions of the armed struggle. This underestimation is reflected in the overwhelming interest in the diplomatic aspects of the civil war, but also the reluctance of post-1974 historiography to address the question of the strategic aims and visions of the Communist Party (KKE). Voglis positions the notion of revolution at the epicentre of his analysis, proposing a social history of the armed conflict. His argumentation is based on indisputable facts: as the military confrontation escalated, the KKE did in fact revert to a language echoing revolutionary tones (“The Dem-

ocratic Army,” asserted the party’s general secretary Nikos Zachariadis, “is fighting a revolutionary, popular-liberation war”), while the envisioned Greek people’s republic signified a radical breach with the past. Voglis, though, is not primarily interested in the revolutionary overtones of the KKE leadership, but rather in the transformative powers of the occupation experience which resulted in a revolutionary postwar setting.

In this context, one of the main arguments of the book is that it is impossible to understand the intensity of the civil war without taking into account the collapse of order and the rise of novel social dynamics during the occupation. Therefore, the narrative starts with Greece entering the Second World War in 1940, while special attention is given to the revolutionising dimensions of the national resistance movement. Here Voglis is not primarily interested in the political platform of EAM, but mainly in the multiple ways its aims and practices reflected a rupture with longstanding notions, traditions and, needless to say, the old political and social order, which collapsed alongside the failed Greek state. The return of the government-in-exile and the resurrection of the state following the December 1944 events crystallised in a social and political landscape of dual power. In this context the reader advances through the chronologically organised chapters discerning that the unleashed dynamics of the national resistance movement requested a response and the response of the resurrected state was confrontation. This outlook has little in common with the traditional readings of the civil war, where the primary question related to which side made the decisive first step in the arena of armed struggle. Voglis questions the validity of this traditionalist quest for the instigator and portrays the civil war as a war in the making, where both participants influence and reshape the other.

But at the same time, this process, argues the author, entails a transformation of the participants themselves. This is especially true for the KKE. Here lies another important contribution of the book as it demonstrates how the occupation experience, the December 1944 events and the escalation of violence transformed the policies and practices of the communist movement. The main shift entailed the abandonment of the quest for a political solution to the escalation of the confrontation, with the ultimate aim the establishment of a Greek people's republic in northern Greece. Voglis uses the transitional "Grammos state" to take a closer look at the policies and strategies of the KKE and the efforts to transform agrarian populations into a revolutionary vanguard. The embryonic features of the short-lived people's republic allow Voglis to demonstrate that the civil war entailed a contestation over territorial control that in turn implied the control and regulation of everyday life. In this context Voglis juxtaposes the state of Grammos with the forced evacuation of populations from agrarian communities by the Greek state in order to illustrate the totality of the civil war experience. The map of Greece after the civil war remained unchanged as far as the northern borders were concerned, but as Voglis proves this result coincided with a significant and radical redrawing of population density.

The author's interest in this domain informs another intriguing spatial antithesis with significant repercussions: that of the urban centres with rural Greece. Voglis offers a compelling argument when discussing the entry of Greece in a state of exception and the impact of this transition in the cities that had been strongholds of the leftist resistance during the occupation. In this context he underlines the repression of any form of social protest. These state-orchestrated measures coincided with the gradual disenchantment of mid-

dle-class professionals with the communist movement, which resulted in a reversal of the dynamics of the occupation era. In contrast, the story of the agrarian populations was different. Following the Varkiza agreement, the imposition of state order intertwined with the activities of rightwing paramilitary groups, which resulted in deep divisions and the escalation of violent clashes. The civil war was not an agrarian revolution, as in other cases across the world, but it was staged and involved the agrarian world.

Finally, Voglis is confident in asserting that it was a revolution that was doomed to fail. The approach here is similar to the one demonstrated by Haralambidis regarding the December 1944 events. The disproportionality of the armed forces involved, especially following the involvement of the US, diminished the prospects of a military success for the Democratic Army. But here again, Voglis goes beyond the obvious. He provides a fascinating account of the contingencies of the armed confrontation and the diverse worlds of combatants who shared the hardships of everyday conditions amid an unorthodox war that raged for three years. Voglis' book possibly could not have been written back in 2004. At that time the historiographical debate was specifically interested in the periodisation of the decade and the role of violence. In both cases, the author demonstrates an approach that bypasses these dilemmas, aiming for a fruitful synthesis. Therefore he avoids a fixed periodisation (it is interesting that there are no dates in the table of contents) in favour of discussing the civil war as a war in the making – the civil war was not declared, was not prepared and was not planned. It happened. And in this process violence was seminal. Recounting it is not Voglis' main goal, but his study provides some insight into how to understand violence as the byproduct of accumulated tensions amid the collapse

of the traditional regulations of political and social divisions.

Voglis' book demonstrates the advances of Greek historiography in the last ten years. His book illustrates an impressive command of diverse primary sources and, more importantly, a synthetic approach that is emancipated from long-lasting inertias. The major one relates to the ambivalence of the left to address the civil war as a social conflict with revolutionary aims. Voglis does not hesitate to address this question, demonstrating that acknowledging the revolutionary potentials of the civil war does not imply either a nostalgia for a magical past or a polemical narrative, as in the case of the revisionist "new wave" historians. This is a welcome addition to Greek historiography and one can only hope that the author will consider producing an English translation that will allow for the integration of the Greek Civil War in the debate on the long civil war that divided the European continent.

NOTE

- 1 For an overview, see Thanasis D. Sfikas and Anna Mahera, "Does the Iliad need an Agamemnon version? History, politics and the Greek 1940s," *Historein* 11 (2011): 80–98.

Anna Maria Droumpouki

*Μνημεία της ήδηθης: Ιχνη των Β'
Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου στην Ελλάδα
και στην Ευρώπη*

[Monuments to oblivion: traces of the Second World War in Greece and Europe]

Athens: Polis, 2014. 512 pp.

Phaedra Koutsoukou

Historian

Tracing the sites of memory linked to the wartime occupation primarily in Greece, but not only, and from a comparative perspective with those in Germany, Anna Maria Droumpouki in this book explores the phenomenon of the "second life" of the events of the Second World War or, to put it in other words, the successive survival of the past in the present. The starting point for her study is that sites of memory reflect the historical and political peculiarities of each era, sometimes functioning to support state or regime ideology. In this sense, sites of memory can be treated as social texts that can have more than one reading. The book aims not to provide an exhaustive list of sites of memory related to the occupation in Greece but rather to demonstrate how selected sites of memory of the period can function in multidimensional ways to produce a dense network of multiple meanings. Sites of memory are understood not only as monuments but also concentration camps, execution sites, burial grounds and museums. Indeed, as Pierre Nora, to whom the study refers extensively, has pointed out, even historical dialogue is a "site of memory". Not only is the materiality but also the spatiality of the past treated in the study.