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The Editorial Committee

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STUDYING THE GREEK MILITARY DICTATORSHIP OF 1967-1974

Preface

The study of contemporary history has always been controversial within the historical discipline, with the frequent claim that the passing of a long period of time is necessary in order to secure the critical distance between the subject and the object of study, to minimize partisanship, to allow for the opening of archives and such related matters. Although this “chronological conservatism” has been widely challenged nowadays, it is still very strong in Greece, where most professional historians remain reluctant to deal with the recent past, thus leaving the field largely to journalists, politicians and activists. Such a situation is prevalent in the case of the 1967-1974 military dictatorship, 40 years after its collapse.

This state of affairs contributes to the spread of numerous apocryphal stories and populist banalities, lending credence to many anachronisms and inaccuracies, and producing a shortsighted, denunciatory and sensationalist rather than sober, reflective and comprehensive picture of the period in question, thereby preserving a distorted collective consciousness. Furthermore, it is widely accepted by most political and social scientists that the “period of the colonels” has had a decisive bearing on the evolution of Greek society, an impact that must be investigated more deeply and rigorously in order to comprehend fully contemporary Greece.

It is true that, more recently, scholars have shown a growing interest in the 1967-1974 dictatorship, a phenomenon manifest also in the organization of several academic conferences, workshops and seminars, as well as in the rising number of Master’s and Ph.D. theses dealing with that period. Also notable is the recent opening of important public and private archives, in Greece and abroad.

The Editorial Committee of *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* aims to explore all these developments in order to fill the existing gaps and to professionalize the study of that dramatic era, by publishing a series of scholarly articles, starting this year with four essays focusing on various aspects of the period

under investigation. Sotiris Rizas examines the process of the transformation of Greek conservatism during the dictatorship, evolving from a current identified with the restrictive practices of the post-Civil War political system to a tenet of the democratic regime established in 1974. Stan Draenos focuses on the evolution of Andreas Papandreou's views on the "Greek Question" in exile, bringing to light the underlying dynamics responsible for radicalizing his politics in that matter. Alexandros Nafpliotis analyses the junta's relations with the British governments from 1967 to 1974, arguing that the Greek military regime cultivated relations with Britain in order to gain legitimacy internationally and domestically, whereas Whitehall pursued a policy of "good working relations" in order to promote British interests *vis-à-vis* NATO, Cyprus and trade. Finally, Leonidas Kallivretakis suggests that there is no hard evidence supporting the theory that Georgios Papadopoulos' dictatorial regime was overthrown by the United States in 1973, because of the Greek junta leader's attitude during the Yom Kippur War.

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