The Greek Military Golpe into the Italian Communist Newspaper “L’Unita” Reportages

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The Greek Military Golpe into the Italian Communist Newspaper “L’Unità” Reportages

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Abstract

The outbreak of the Greek military coup d’Etat recounted through the original pages of the newspaper "L'Unità", founded by Antonio Gramsci in 1924. This paper aims at describing both the news arriving in Italy through the newspaper reportages written by the correspondent Aldo De Jaco, and the internal reactions of the Italian Government; in more details:

1. The seizure of power by the military in Greece, on April 21st 1967: the tanks in the streets of Athens and Thessaloniki;
2. The arrests of communists, already identified in accordance with the plan Prometheus (Ierax II), a first investigations on the role played by C.I.A. in the coup d' Etat, exiles on the Aegean islands, murders, banishments and tortures on opponents, presence of some Italians among the deportees;
3. Calls of Greek Communist Party and the clandestine radio "Φονή τῆς Αλήθειας" to the struggle against the dictatorship;
4. Martial Courts against the opposition, approved by King Constantine;
5. Demonstrations of solidarity with Greece resistance in Italy and demonstrations of Greek immigrants who lived in Italy;
6. The Council of Europe calls for an investigation into the destiny of the Greek parliamentarians;
7. Letter sent by the U.S.S.R Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gromyko, asking for the grace to Manolis Glezos; 8. Italian Communist Party and Greek resistance;

This work especially studies the relation between the P.C.I. (Italian Communist Party) and the K.K.E., E.D.A., and P.A.M., in order to focalize how precious it has been this time to the future arrangements of some Communist Parties.

The official reactions of the Italian government involved by the scandal of secret files of S.I.F.A.R. (Italian Military Intelligence Service), it seems to merge the destinies of the two countries, both into the “N.A.T.O. Plan for the Europeans”: being alerted to the fight against the danger of a victory of any Communist organization within the continent.

Keywords:
The teardrops which you will see flowing from our eyes you should never believe signs of despair. They are only promise promise for Fight1.

This work aims at studying, through the original pages of the Italian newspaper "L’Unità", the seizure of power by the military junta in Greece on April 21st 1967: how the news were reported in Italy, the frequency and the accuracy of the information.

The choice of reading the Greek military coup with the words written on this newspaper becomes more clear recalling its particular history: it has been the official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party (P.C.I.), founded by Antonio Gramsci in 1924, and the best way to understand how the relations between some of the Communists parties were going to change; these parties were obviously admitted into the Third International network, and this is a fast enough time of new dynamics into that: both "interior" (K.K.E. and E.D.A.) and "exterior" (Greek Communist Parties and P.C.I.).

"L’Unità" writes on its front page, on April 22nd 1967: "Military Coup d'Etat in Greece", the title is in bold, capital letters and underlined: "On the eve of the elections the Court and the reactionary armed forces backed by the U.S. attempt to strangle democracy". The description given by the journalist, Aldo De Jaco, who was the newspaper reporter from Greece, immediately portraits the situation, focusing on the central elements of the Coup d'Etat: the presence of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the port of Piraeus, the complicity of the King and the suspension of constitutional rights in order to guarantee the security with extraordinary "measures" and with the declaration of the martial law.

1Panagoulis A., Promise, written in Military Prisons of Bogiati February, 1972
As soon as the coup d'Etat takes place, the news Agency T.a.n.jug.\(^1\) immediately informs that the resistance in Athens is struggling against the military forces: the images of tanks in the streets of the two major Greek cities will soon be reported by the international press.

The picture of a student’s demonstration in Athens and Thessaloniki appears on “L'Unità”, just published by the newspaper “Avghi”: the slogan screamed by the protesters was “ο φασισμός δεν θα περασει”\(^2\).

How could the military junta, in few hours, put down the opposition? The declaration of Kolias, the new Prime Minister, seems to pass over on the ongoing repression and justify the seizure of power as a necessary act to save the fate of the country by the anarchist threads and, of course, his words are colored with the usual paternalistic rhetoric of “the revolution to save the Nation”(*Ethnosotiros Epanastasi*): "The coup was made for the good of the nation and the new government is on the side of workers”\(^3\).

Greece in the 1967 has not yet passed the fractures of the long civil war, fought after the war until 1949, and is still living as the daughter of the Truman

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\(^1\)T.a.n.jug. (Telegrafska Agencija Nove Jugoslavije) was the Yugoslavian news Agency, founded on November 5 1943.

\(^2\)L'Unità, *I carri armati a Atene e Salonicco*, anno XLIV, n. 110, Sabato 22 aprile 1967, p. 3

\(^3\)L'Unità, “La VI Flotta USA nel Porto del Pireo”, anno XLIV, n. 110, Sabato 22 aprile 1967, p. 3
Doctrine\(^1\) and Prometheus Plan\(^2\), who is just a piece of the vast project called "Stay Behind" (better known as "Gladio\(^3\)).

This organisation created a network of espionage and sabotage structures, made of its own independent sections in the single State, on the occupied territories of Italy, Greece and Turkey. It was thought to prevent the victory of any Communist Party in these countries, and to make their transition into the sphere of influence of the USSR difficult.

1967 is a crucial year in Italy, since then the first of innumerable of investigations on the works of the S.I.F.A.R. (Italian Military Secret Service) takes place.

Inside the S.I.F.A.R.'s structure there was the so called Office "R", “Section Special Studies and Training of Personnel”, responsible for the general coordination of Gladio operation.

In order to understand the historical value of the presence of the U.S.A. Navy moored in the Pireaus Port we need not to underestimate the fact that the Greek generals, as any military forces of every countries participating in the NATO, were, somehow, dependent on this Organization, therefore, someway, of the U.S.A..

Some historians claim that, though most Greeks did not believe that the U.S.A. Secret Service played a role in the coup d'Etat, there was a closer relation between the C.I.A. and the K.Y.P. (Κεντρική Υπηρεσία Πληροφοριών) of which Papadopoulos had been a member and that is considered responsible for the facts of Greece 1967\(^4\).

The first two documents issued by the military junta, published promptly by "L'Unità", targeted the suspension of civil rights and freedom:

1 "By virtue of Article n. 91 of the Constitution, me, King of the Hellenes, I decide the suspension of Articles 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 29, 95 and 97 of the Constitution in force, in the whole territory of the

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\(^1\)Harry S. Truman, *President Harry S. Truman’s address before a joint session of Congress, march 12nd 1947*, so called Truman Doctrine: “The Greek Government has also asked for the assistance of experienced American administrators, economists and technicians to insure that the financial and other aid given to Greece shall be used effectively in creating a stable and self-sustaining economy and in improving its public administration [...] The very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the government's authority at a number of points, particularly along the northern boundaries.[...] Meanwhile, the Greek Government is unable to cope with the situation. The Greek army is small and poorly equipped. It needs supplies and equipment if it is to restore the authority of the government throughout Greek territory. Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy. The United States must supply that assistance. We have already extended to Greece certain types of relief and economic aid but these are inadequate. The Greek Government has been operating in an atmosphere of chaos and extremism. It has made mistakes.”, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, 20\(^{th}\) Century Documents, New Haven

\(^2\)C. L. Sulzberger, *Foreign Affairs: Prometheus Unbound; to prevent a Coup rumors of plots chief of Staff's orders*, New York Times, May 3\(^{rd}\) 1967, p. 43.


country, because of the dangers that threaten public order and security of the country";

2 "On the basis of some regulations of 1912, concerning the conditions of a state of siege, announces the following:
   a. It is allowed the arrest and detention of any person regardless of the legal provisions currently in force. The detention is not subject to any limit of time;
   b. Whether the arrest is made for political reasons, any previous measure of bail is canceled and arrests are not subject to any restriction".

Which "dangers" is the junta talking about?

We claim that they certainly were concerned about the elections that were meant to be carried out on May 28th in Greece: the predictions bet on the victory of Georgios Papandreou (EK, Ενωση Κέντρου) and EDA (Ευναία Δημοκρατική Αριστερά) supported by the banned Greek Communist Party (ΚΚΕ, Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας) from abroad.

The persecution of the Greek Communists, which could be avoided upon rejection of the communism with a formal declaration, was regulated in accordance with Law 504, under which many members of the Party were arrested, killed or preferred exile: in 1955 there were 4,498 political prisoners and 898 exiles, and the numbers will grow over time. It would be correct to emphasize that almost two thousand Greek communists were imprisoned under the dictatorship of Metaxas in 1940.
After the end of the Greek Civil War, on March 30 1952, Nikos Beloyannis was taken from the prison of Kallithea and executed to carry out the death penalty for ideological offenses, sentenced by the Court Martial. Georgios Papadopoulos was a member, among others, of that Court: a member who had voted against death sentence, but as we all know, after the failed attack on Dec. 13th became the Prime Minister of the military junta. And moreover, we need to remember that on April 23rd, the Sunday after the coup, Georgios Papandreou was going to inaugurate the political campaign in Thessaloniki.

As the historian Mathiopoulos writes, following the detailed laws against the communist in the whole country, and before of the junta coup d'Etat, almost the 90 percent of the population could be defined as “communist”, This a very important point as, thanks of those special regulations, anyone -in order to be hired and have a job- needed to get a certification of “political status” that proved to be not a “dangerous” individual.

As we know the Plan Prometheus' duty, Ierax II in Greece, is to make a list of people potentially “dangerous”, and in this matter “dangerous” stands for: suspected to be a communist or a left-wingers. S.I.F.A.R. is likely to be responsible of making this kind of list too.

The head of the Parliamentary group of the E.D.A., Iliou, gave an interview to “L’Unità” on April 19th 1967, in which he declared to feel not so sure the elections would be held; he was still afraid of the danger of a dictatorship which, however, he believed would be avoided because of the
interests of the U.S. and the royal court in Greece. Dictatorship would be prevented by rigged elections and a new "compromise with the EK, or with the people who were referable to it who were still talking with those forces".

What was the reaction, from the front page of "L'Unità" in the Italian Parliament?

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) without delay asked the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to discuss in order "to know the opinion of the Italian Government on the coup d'Etat carried out in Greece by the king and the military caste".

Communist deputies Longo, Amendola, Barca, Miceli, Laconi, Macaluso, D'Alessio, Tognoni, Busetto, Sandri lead the discussion "to unequivocally show Italy antifascist solidarity support to democratic forces in Greece". Sandri's speech urged the government to clarify its opinion: "The duty of the government to condemn the coup is not determined only by the fact that Italy is an anti-Fascist Republic, but also by the political weight importance that this intervention might have against of a country that, like Italy, joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization".

On the other hand what is "L'Unità" writing of those early hours of the state of siege in Greece?

The country is isolated, all the borders are closed, the port of Athens is "forbidden by all airlines," the maritime connections are interrupted. Five hundred Greek citizens leaving to Greece to celebrate Orthodox Easter and their plane get stuck in Rome. Six British journalists just landed in Athens – departed from the Rome Airport of Ciampino – are forced to return back to Italy.

The work of most recent historians shows that the first hours of the coup were crucial to its success: communists and left-wingers from the list mentioned earlier, who could be against the junta coup, were prosecuted.

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1 L'Unità, “Intervista con leader dell'EDA Iliou”, anno XLIL, n. 110, Sabato 22 aprile 1967, p. 3


3 L'Unità, “Sospesi i voli aerei dall'Italia per la Grecia”, Anno XLIV, n. 110, Sabato 22 aprile 1967, p. 3.
About 8.000 people were arrested and 6.844 people were exiled to the island of Yiaros. “L’Unità” wrote about the deportation of dissidents on Aegean Islands: Andreas Papandreou, Manolis Glezos, Kirkos and Theodorakis were deported or killed.

The censorship was practised by the junta to stop the diffusion of information from Greece.

On April 25th Italy celebrates the Liberation from Nazi-Fascism regime.

In that occasion, in 1967, the Secretary of P.C.I. Enrico Berlinguer wrote on “L’Unità”: “The tragedy that is occurring in these days in Greece recalls to all of us and to the other European countries that the Fascism could come back in its most brutal way”.

Berlinguer pressed the Italians institutions: solidarity is needed towards the Greece resistance. The words of the Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, were strongly criticised; he talked of “anxiety” for what was going on in Greece and forgot to condemn the fascist coup d’Etat in that country.

Pietro Nenni (the P.S.I. joint the government coalition with D.C. during Moro Premiership in the 1967), Italian deputy Prime Minister, spoken out very clearly against the communists: he judged them unable to give a strong help to the democratic progress. Berlinguer urges not to forget how Italy is not immune from the risk of corruption, from attempts to limit the constitutional

1K. Stefatos, Engendering the Nation: political persecution and terrorisation against women dissidents during the Greek military dictatorship (1967-1974), Politics Department, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2010, p. 141
2L’Unità, Corti marziali in tutta la Grecia per stroncare ogni opposizione, Centinaia di comunisti deportati nell’Egeo, Anno XLIV, n. 113, Martedì 25 aprile 1967, p. 1
3L’Unità, “La lotta per la libertà resta indivisibile”, E. Berlinguer, Anno XLIV, n. 114, Martedì 25 aprile 1967, p. 2; full articles in appendices of this work, n. 2
rights, from the danger coming by the scandal of S.I.F.A.R. and its secret plan: an ambush against the democracy.

Meanwhile, in Italy, there were everyday several demonstrations in solidarity with the Resistance in Greece, organized by political parties, trade unions, students, workers and by Greeks living in Italy.

Fanfani, the Italian Foreign Ministry, during the sharp debate in the Senate, criticized the Coup d'Etat, but asking not for an action against it. While the U.S.A. officially said the coup was a rape of democracy, the chief of C.I.A. in Greece, Jack Maury, was cynically asking “How could a whore be raped?”

The news that Manolis Glezos, deputy of E.D.A., was still alive but sentenced to death by a Military Court, persuaded the U.S.S.R. Foreign Ministry, Andrej Gromyko, to declare that any action that would put a risk on Glezos' life it would arise soviet and every democratic and peaceful people's indignation.

It is interesting to observe the deep relationship between the two countries, Italy and Greece, in order to understand the future assets of the P.C.I. and the Greek Communists Parties, inside the Third International fraternity.

K.K.E. has been banned from Greece and it supports the E.D.A. and the K.K.E. of interior that from 1967 will led up to the P.A.M. (Panhellinic Antidictatorial Front) and to the youth organisation Rigas Feraios, till the end of the junta in 1974.

P.C.I. and K.K.E. of interior slowly expressed more criticism of P.C.U.S. policy, and they gradually tried to depart from it.

K.K.E. of esterior, with all Greek communist who were forced to exile, remained very faithful executor of sovietic international policies.

As Rosario Bentivegna said: “Then the Greek communist movement was divided into two parts: to Florakis, that joined the countries of the Warsaw Pact (which joined the Greek Communists fled from their land after the Civil War) and the Greek Communist Party of interior, where the activists were old and new communists remained in Greece, led by Dracopoulos, former director of the Greek Resistance during World War II, who shared the policy of the P.C.I. condemning the occupation of Czechoslovakia.”

These few days will be a decisive moment to understand the way two important Communist Parties of the Mediterranean area will approach their future relationships with the theory of the Third International network and, basically, with the U.S.S.R..

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Appendices

N. 1: “The Declaration of Loyalty”¹

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| 10. | Have you ever been a member of a committee or other organization consisting of a statement of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE — Kommunistikoi Konstitutoi Ellados) or serving directly or indirectly in any organization, committee or body of the National Liberation Front (LW) — liberation movement, the United International Left (UIA), the Unity Movement of EUA, the Democratic Front of L. Kostopulos, the Military Committee for Peace, the Movement of Solidarity for Democracy and Peace, the Democratic Left Movement, the Committee of Action for the Scrapping of the Goulas and the Liberation of the KKE, the Committee of Unit Action of Europe (KAGME), the Committee of Workers for Peace (KBEKO), the Committee of the Greek People for International Solidarity (KKE) |
|     |                                                                                                                                 |

| 11. | On behalf of which of the above organizations and for what period of time have you been directly or indirectly active in any activity of the KKE or its committees, or in an organization or any organization other than the KKE or its committees, or in any organization or any organization other than the KKE or its committees, during which period and in which capacity have you committed any criminal act |
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| 13. | Do you promise that you will do nothing contrary to national obligations and your duties as they are defined by the law |
|     |                                                                                                                                 |

| 14. | Do you promise that you will not betray secrets or other information coming to your knowledge or in your work, and you will not appear in any way the work of the Constitutional? |
|     |                                                                                                                                 |

| 15. | Having read and carefully and in absolute confidence the above questionnaire, I declare that I am not a member or any organization or any organization other than the KKE or its committees, or in any organization or any organization other than the KKE or its committees, during which period and in which capacity have you committed any criminal act |
|     |                                                                                                                                 |

| 16. | (Signature) |
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¹See note n. 8 for any further information
La lotta per la libertà resta indivisibile

IL FASCISMO non è stato solo il periodo più oscuro della storia unitaria del nostro paese. Nella sua ultima fase essa ha incluso in pericolo la sopravvivenza stessa dell'Italia come nazione libera e indipendente. Per l'Europa e per il mondo il fascismo ed il nazismo hanno rappresentato la minaccia, del tutto esagerata e reale, dell'apice di una lunga e ferroscia barbarie. Qui si dichiara l'unico storicamente, per tutto il cammino del nostro unità, della vittoria mondiale sul fascismo e qui l'11 settembre per la vita e l'avvenire della nostra patria, della nostra vittoria assur-}

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Le seconda verità è che la democrazia è sicura solo se riesce a realizzarsi integralmente, fluidamente progressivamente ed integralmente alla propria organizzazione, impongendo di sé e impongendo fiscio in fondo tutti gli aspetti della vita sociale, dagli obblighi economici alla vita dello Stato e della cultura. La terza verità è che la lotta per la libertà non è solo necessaria per dare nuovo sviluppo al movimento per la libertà e la pace nel Vietnam, ma è anche una forma di lotta che tutti noi dobbiamo comprendere e che tutti noi dobbiamo sviluppare.

See note n. 16 for further information.
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