

Human Rights,
Trade and Diplomacy
in Greek-German Relations,
1967-1974

Chrysa Vachtsevanou, Stefan Zeppenfeld,
Vangelis Karamanolakis (Eds.)

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Trade and Diplomacy
in Greek-German Relations,
1967–1974**



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Preface

The Archive of Social Democracy (*Archiv der sozialen Demokratie* – AdsD) of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Bonn and the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI) in Athens are connected by a fruitful and long-standing cooperation. Both institutions conduct historical research and debates on left-wing social history and labour movements.

In recent years, AdsD and ASKI have successfully worked on a number of joint projects. In August 2017, AdsD and ASKI celebrated the opening of the touring exhibition titled “Solidarity and Resistance: German-Greek Relations during Greek Military Dictatorship 1967–1974” (*Solidarität und Widerstand. Deutsch-Griechische Beziehungen während der griechischen Militärdiktatur 1967–1974*) in Berlin. Then, in April 2018, the exhibition made its way to Greece and was opened in Athens. More than a dozen cities in both countries hosted the exhibition in the subsequent months. The project was funded by the German Federal Foreign Office within the context of the German-Greek future fund.

The exhibition project was initiated by Sigrid Skarpelis-Sperk, now honorary president of the Union of German-Greek Societies (*Vereinigung der Deutsch-Griechischen Gesellschaften e. V.* – VDGG). Her effort and dedication were crucial for the exhibition project. We would also like to thank Edelgard Buhlmann and Klaus Wettig whose support was vital, too.

Our partner ASKI deserves credit for a long-lasting and collegial cooperation. We would particularly like to thank Vangelis Karamano-

lakis who enriched our joint work with his foresight and background knowledge. The same holds true for his colleagues Kostis Karpozilos, Ioanna Vogli, Anda Kapola and Stathis Pavlopoulos. We would like to express our gratitude for their efforts.

Over time, a lot of people were involved in the German-Greek cooperation at the Archive of Social Democracy. Mike Woyke, Ursula Bitzegeio and Stefan Müller as heads of the Public History division of AdsD and Anja Kruke as head of AdsD carried responsibility in terms of project supervision. Stefan Müller was in charge of the realisation of the touring exhibition, supported by Mike Woyke. Jens Hettmann was entrusted with the tour planning, supported by Eva Váry. Ursula Bitzegeio and Joachim Schlütter organised the closing event of the touring exhibition in the form of an international academic workshop.

The present anthology is based on that workshop, entitled “Greek-German Relations During the Military Dictatorship in Greece (1967–1974)”, which took place digitally on 6–7 October, 2020. In a two-day program, scholars from both Germany and Greece discussed new approaches to an interwoven Greek-German contemporary history. AdsD and ASKI would like to thank all panellists for their valuable contributions to our ongoing academic discussions, especially those who turned their oral contributions into papers for this book project. Due to a variety of circumstances, most of the articles in this anthology happen to have been written by men. The editors are aware of and regret this imbalance in terms of gender. We would like to express our general encouragement for women pursuing academic careers. Having noticed, with great interest, that young female scholars have embarked on historical research in the field of German-Greek contemporary history, we look forward to giving their contributions an equal platform again in future projects.

Chrysa Vachtsevanou accepted the task of editorial work for this anthology and has to be given credit for the content-related supervision of the contributions. Her work and effort have been vital for

their publication. Stefan Zeppenfeld of AdsD managed the book project and communications with the parties involved in the publication process. Julia Dalhoff and Christine Brocks put finishing touches on the articles.

The foreign office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Athens covered all expenses of the anthology. We cordially thank our colleagues in Greece, Christos Katsioulis, Ulrich Stock, Arne Schildberg, Monika Berg, Angeliki Emmanouilidou and Stefanos Spiliotopoulos for their support, generosity and patience.

The articles by Chrysa Vachtsevanou, Hans Peter Schunk and Frank Bösch were published in the German journal *Zeitschrift für Politik*, issue 3/2022.¹

Stefan Zeppenfeld
Archiv der sozialen Demokratie
Bonn, July 2022

¹ Zeitschrift für Politik (ZfP), Heft 3/2022, Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Chrysa Vachtsevanou,
Vangelis Karamanolakis

Introduction

The period of the military dictatorship in Greece (1967–1974) is retrospectively considered to be one of the most important chapters for the relationship between Germany and Greece because of the movement that developed on West-German soil against the colonels – a movement based on the strong presence of Greek immigrants in the Federal Republic of Germany, the support of a large part of West-German public opinion and the active support of the first post-war SPD government, under Willy Brandt.

West Germany was the engine of Greek resistance in Europe: the country hosted the most numerous and largest Greek anti-dictatorship organisations across the political spectrum, with highly visible activities and a considerable impact on German and international public opinion. Dozens of magazines and newspapers published in Greek and German criticized the dictatorial Greek regime. German trade unions, clubs and Greek-German civic associations, student organisations protested against the Greek junta. The Federal Government supported the Greek struggle, worked for the release of resistance activists imprisoned in Greece and issued ‘alien’s passports’ to individuals whose Greek citizenship had been revoked by the regime in Athens.

During this period, personal networks and political connections between Germans and Greeks were established, many of which exist until today. Many of the Greeks who supported and were organised in the resistance against military rule in the Federal Republic re-

turned to Greece after the end of the dictatorship and later assumed important functions in politics and society – such as former President of Greece Karolos Papoulias, and former Prime Minister Konstantinos Simitis.

On the one hand, we cannot understand Greek-German relations without considering the internal developments in the two countries – the establishment of a dictatorial regime in Greece and the election of an SPD government in power in West Germany. On the other hand, this relationship forms part of a wider field of international relations in the framework of the Cold War. The two countries were part of the same Cold War camp: they were both members of NATO; West Germany was one of the founders of the European Economic Community (EEC) while Greece was trying to become a member. Moreover, international developments such as the oil crisis of 1973, influenced the political choices of the two countries. On a non-governmental level, there were networks of citizens between the two countries, connected with international social movements of the time. Events such as those of May '68 and the activities of the West German youth movement became catalysts for many European countries, while phenomena such as post-war economic and labour migration created strong networks of communication among the citizens of different states.

Indeed, we cannot understand the anti-dictatorial movement in West Germany unless we link it to Greek economic migration into the country. The economic growth of West Germany was a powerful incentive for attracting foreign workers to the country. Meanwhile, for economically devastated post-war Greece, emigration abroad was a crucial outlet, as it relieved the volatile situation of a large labour force, while at the same time providing valuable foreign exchange from abroad through remittances.

The 1960 bilateral recruitment agreement triggered a huge wave of migration from Greece to Germany: by 1967, approximately 350,000 Greek workers, men and women, were living in West Germany. They were young, poorly educated, and coming mostly from rural areas.

Soon, their communities set up important networks between themselves and German society: political, religious and trade-union associations.

Seven Years with the “Phoenix”: A short Chronicle of the Greek Junta

21st April 1967: at six o'clock in the morning, the Greek people were informed through a radio statement by an army spokesman that the military had taken power in the country and that certain articles of the constitution had been suspended. A few days after the coup, the new cabinet was formed by the three leading personalities of the Greek dictatorship: Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos took over the Ministry of State and the general coordination of government policy, Brigadier Stylianos Pattakos the Ministry of the Interior, and Colonel Nikolaos Makarezos the Ministry of Economy. The new government was thus largely comprised of generals who had been politically socialised within an anti-communist military system. Their goal was to 'return Greece to its former glory,' to rise like a phoenix from the ashes, and therefore they had prepared for long-term rule of their regime from the onset. Nevertheless, through various measures, such as the 1968 constitutional referendum, they tried to convince the public that their presence in the Greek political landscape was short-term and that democracy would return as soon as possible.

Among the first measures taken by the military government was the imprisonment of former politicians, communists and democrats. Prime Minister Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, leader of the conservative party, was the first to be arrested and placed under house arrest. Georgios Papandreou, head of the Center Union (Enosis Kentrou), was detained in a military hospital and his son, Andreas Papandreou, head of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK party) after 1974, was imprisoned. The leadership of the Left but also journalists, trade unionists, local government officials – a total of more than 6,000 mainly left-wing citizens were arrested. Most of them

were soon moved to exile camps on the island of Gyaros. In general, the repressive measures taken by the colonels during the period of the junta corresponded to the usual ones of contemporary military dictatorships: arrests, deportations, censorship, interrogations, torture and bans on assembly were part of everyday political life for the opposition. Decisive for the perpetuation of military dictatorship was the restriction of the freedom of the press.

During the first years of the Greek dictatorship, the regime's surveillance was established in almost all areas of public and private life. Attempts at pushback were isolated as most of the few resistance organisations within the country were dismantled by the security service. The regime's political opponents were arrested, tortured and then sentenced to long prison terms. This first period would end with Greece's withdrawal from the Council of Europe in 1969 due to the complaints against the country for human rights violations. The false image of 'liberalisation' that the regime attempted to project abroad, claiming that the situation in Greece had been normalised, led to a new anti-dictatorship movement: the student movement. After 1971, students initiated high-visibility strikes and protests, initially focusing on student demands. Soon, however, their struggle turned into a movement against the dictatorship, demanding the return of democracy. This movement peaked in the occupation of the Law school in February 1973, and the Athens Polytechnic uprising (14–17 November 1973), which cost the lives of dozens of citizens due to the violent intervention of the junta. The uprising of the Polytechnic University contributed to the replacement of Papadopoulos in an internal coup by Dimitrios Ioannidis, previously commander of the military police. Unlike Papadopoulos, Ioannidis wanted to remain largely invisible in public during his entire time in power, which is why he did not assume any official office in the military government.

Ioannidis' coup was intended to mark the beginning of the end of the dictatorship. After all, he broke with the legend that the junta was a united idealistic bloc with the goal of 'curing' Greece of corruption

and mismanagement. This weakened the junta, especially internally, as popular support dwindled and fewer and fewer parts of the military stood behind the government. From then on, the army was seen as fragmented and in disarray, even as it continued to present itself to the outside world as confident and expansionist. The real reason for the end of the military dictatorship was the role of the military leadership in organising the coup against the government of Cyprus and the subsequent occupation of the island's north by Turkish troops. Due to the junta government's obvious complicity in the destabilisation of Cyprus, and its inability to prevent the Turkish invasion of the island, the dictatorship lost its power. After the military leadership decided to dismiss the Ioannidis administration, they handed over the reins to an interim civilian government headed by the former Prime Minister, Konstantinos Karamanlis.

Students and workers in West Germany: Greek expats against colonels

In West Germany, as in the rest of Europe, a series of associations and movements were formed out of solidarity with the Greek people. These associations successfully contributed to informing and influencing public opinion, organising events and concerts, publishing anti-dictatorship material and financing resistance groups. Operating on different levels, these groups tried to establish a discourse to counter the colonels' propaganda by denouncing cases of torture in Greece, publishing lists with thousands of political prisoners, and providing information about resistance activity within Greece. All of this information was silenced by the junta within the country but publicised internationally thanks to the networks of Greeks around the world, with great impact on public opinion.

From the first moment after the coup d'état of 21 April 1967, networks of Greek workers in Germany organised themselves, playing a significant role in informing German public opinion about the situation in their country – as reflected in the massive protests imme-