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This is an **author produced version** of a paper published in:

Journal of Contemporary History 56.3 (2021): 639-664

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009420961455>

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Cultural Resistances in Post-Authoritarian Greece: Protesting the Turkish Invasion of Cyprus in 1974

I

Following a long anti-colonial struggle, Cyprus, with its majority ethnic Greek population and a historic Turkish minority, was granted independence from Britain in 1960. The newly established country, already ravaged by inter-communal conflict in the mid-1960s, turned into an ‘isle of discord’¹ for successive Greek governments, including the military Junta that was established in Athens on April 21, 1967. Initially, the military dictatorship under Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos had a negative predisposition towards Archbishop Makarios III but eventually came to tolerate him. Makarios was the leader *par excellence* of the Greek Cypriot majority of Cyprus’ population and its President, and ‘neutralist’ when it came to Cold War antagonisms in the Mediterranean.² The fact, however, that he had abandoned the goal of unification (“enosis”) with Greece, a decade-long ardent desire of both Greek and Cypriot nationalists became a divisive issue within the leadership of the Greek dictatorship. Hardliners, under Brigadier General Dimitrios Ioannidis, insisted that the Archbishop was an ambitious pro-Communist and a traitor of the “enosis” cause, who was thus hindering national fulfilment.³ When Ioannidis overthrew Papadopoulos, on November 25, 1973, he also adopted a harder stance towards Makarios. As the latter started to react against the growing interference of the Greek Junta in the island’s affairs, Ioannidis decided to have him eliminated for good.

¹ I. D. Stefanidis, *Isle of Discord: Nationalism, Imperialism and the Making of the Cyprus Problem* (New York 1999).

² E. Di Nolfo, ‘The Cold War and the transformation of the Mediterranean, 1960-1975’, in M. P. Leffler, .O A. Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge 2010), 238-257: 242.

³ S. Rizas, *The Rise of the Left in Southern Europe: Anglo-American Responses* (London: 2012), 57. According to historian Effie Pedaliu, Ioannidis had a ‘pathological dislike’ for Makarios. See Effie Pedaliu, “‘A Sea of Confusion. The Mediterranean and Détente, 1969-1974”, *Diplomatic History*, 33 (2009), 735-750: 747.

On July 15, 1974, Ioannidis must have had an ill thought coup in Cyprus against Makarios aiming at the unification of the island with Greece, whereby the Archbishop miraculously escaped an assassination attempt. The subsequent invasion of the island by Turkey in support of the Turkish-Cypriot minority five days later caught the Greek dictators entirely off guard. Ioannidis, who falsely believed that he would be backed by the US,⁴ initially ordered a general mobilisation on July 20 and prepared for war with Turkey. Soon, however, the Greek Chiefs of Staff came to realise that the demoralised, ill- trained and - equipped Greek Army was in no condition to wage war. In the end, the Greek dictators, with the exception of Ioannidis, decided to transfer power to the civilian politicians in an attempt to restore order and save the country from disaster. This regime change, also known as *Metapolitefsi*, came on July 23, 1974.⁵

This is the standard story of the transitional cycle as it developed ‘from above’. The formal closure of the Greek transition was marked by the first democratic elections, held on November 17, 1974. These were deliberately timed to coincide with the one-year anniversary since the Athens Polytechnic student uprising against the Colonels. As the major mass social movement against the dictatorship, the Polytechnic had resulted in a bloodbath and had become a national *lieu de mémoire* as soon as the regime collapsed.

Other than entirely sudden, in other words, as the official narrative maintains, the caesura

⁴ See in this respect A. Varsori, ‘L’Occidente e la Grecia: dal colpo di Stato militare alla transizione alla democrazia (1967-1976)’, in M. Del Pero, V. Gavín, F. Guirao and A. Varsori, *Democrazie. L’Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Milan 2010), 5-94.

⁵ See N. Diamandouros, ‘Regime Change and the Prospects of Democracy in Greece: 1974-1983’, in G. O’Donnell et al (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore 1986), 138-164; Y. Voulgaris, *Η Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης 1974-1990. Σταθερή δημοκρατία σηματοδωμένη από τη μεταπολεμική ιστορία* [Greece of the Metapolitefsi 1974-1990. Stable democracy, marked by postwar history] (Athens 2001); H. Fleischer, ‘Authoritarian rule in Greece (1936-1974) and its heritage’, 237-275 in J.W. Borejsza, K. Zimmer, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe: Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (Oxford 2006). Also see the archival documents in K. Svolopoulos, E. Hadjivasileiou (eds), *Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής: Αρχείο, γεγονότα και κείμενα. Η δύσκολη Μεταπολίτευση* [Konstantinos Karamanlis: Archive, facts and documents. The hard transition], vol. 8 (Athens 2005).

of the *Metapolitefsi* was also connected to social movements from below. This set the ground for the blossoming of grassroots mobilisations during the transition, alongside institutional changes: from the mid- to the late-1970s, Greece witnessed the emergence of post-authoritarian contentious politics, replete with desire to experiment with novel political forms and cultural practices. This article focuses on the combination of the anti-authoritarian peace movement of the first *Metapolitefsi* months (spearheaded by young people craving for radical change) with the burgeoning cultural scene.

Until recently, established historiography had almost entirely overlooked these movements of the mid-1970s, with the exception of only a handful of researchers.⁶ The literature had moreover underestimated the extent to which the Greek transition to democracy was a contentious, fragile, and uneven process. This article postulates instead that these grassroots movements triggered cultural resistances against the war in Cyprus, greatly resonating with the wider society and eventually reconfiguring Greek political culture. It addresses the ways in which the fall of the dictatorship, the rage and fear over the war with Turkey and an expanding anti-imperial attitude went hand-in-hand. It further argues that Anti-Americanism, centre-periphery theories and resistance against neo-colonialism, bred during the dictatorship years,⁷ found fertile ground in the post-invasion

⁶ See N. Papadogiannis *Militant Around the Clock? Left-Wing Youth Politics, Leisure, and Sexuality in Post-Dictatorship Greece, 1974–1981* (Oxford and New York 2015). V. Karamanolakis, I. Nikolakopoulos, T. Sakellaropoulos (eds), *Η Μεταπολίτευση 74-75. Στιγμές μιας μετάβασης* [Metapolitefsi 74-75. Moments of a transition] (Athens 2016); M. Avgeridis, E. Gazi, K. Kornetis (eds), *Μεταπολίτευση. Η Ελλάδα στο μεταίχμιο μεταξύ δυο αιώνων* [Metapolitefsi. Greece at the crossroads between two centuries] (Athens 2015). L. Kallivretakis, *Δικτατορία και Μεταπολίτευση* [Dictatorship and Metapolitefsi] (Athens 2017).

⁷ See K. Kornetis ‘Cuban Europe? Greek and Spanish *tiersmondisme* in the “long 1960s”’, *Journal of Contemporary European History*, 50 (2015), 486-515. For a comparative perspective on the global history of Anti-Americanism see P. K. Katzenstein and R. O. Keohane, *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Ithaca and London 2007).

environment: the culture of protest that proliferated in small circles between 1967 and 1974 *now* turned mainstream.⁸

The article draws on interviews⁹ with a selection of contemporary protagonists who had in different capacities participated in three landslide cultural events of the first months of the *Metapolitefsi* in the autumn of 1974: three major concerts with political music in the two biggest stadiums of Athens. It analyses the depiction of these concerts in press coverage as well as in Nikos Koundouros' documentary film *Songs of Fire*, zooming into the views of the performing artists, the audience, and the film-makers who documented these musical events. To unravel the interaction between cultural and political modes of resistance (in colour and sound), the article draws on the original film footage, containing contemporary testimonies of grassroots actors, of another two highly pertinent documentaries of 1974 and '75, respectively: Michael Cacoyannis documentary *Attila* '74, and to a lesser extent Nikos Kavoukidis' *Testimonials*.

Whereas film critic Giannis Soldatos argues that people did not care to see on the big screen what they had just experienced, *Attila* made 103,856 tickets in 1974-1975, almost double of the substantial number made by *The Songs of Fire* (63,987) in the same period,

⁸ For a long term perspective see A. Andronikidou, I. Kovras, "Cultures of Rioting and Anti-Systemic Politics in Southern Europe", *West European Politics*, 35 (2012), 707–725.

⁹ Most interviews were conducted by the author together with ethnomusicologist Eleni Kallimopoulou in Athens in the summer of 2013 as part of a common project that culminated in the joint article "'Magical Liturgy": A History of Sound at the Kyttaro Music Club, 1970–1974', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 35 (2017) 481–512. They include three interviewees (Lambria and Tsioulaki) who partook in the concerts in their capacity as spectators, one major performer (Marisa Koch), one music producer (Stelios Elliniadis) and a director/cinematographer (Kavoukidis) who filmed incessantly throughout the months of the *Metapolitefsi*.

while *Testimonials* made 43,577 in 1975-1976.¹⁰ All three films were praised at the time of their release as groundbreaking and game changing in terms of both their politics and their way of representing reality. In an article titled “The spotless work by Nikos Kavoukidis” in *To Vima* critic Kostas Parlas waxed lyrical for *Testimonials*: ‘From a crowd of political documentaries that sealed the Festival of Greek Cinema of Salonica the one that easily stood out was Nikos Kavoukidis’ “Testimonials”.’¹¹ Similar was the praise for *Songs of Fire*, albeit the specialised politicised cinema journal *Synchronos Kinimatografos* scolded it for being produced and promoted through the luxurious Finos Films production, thus turning very real issues like the torture experience, the issue of justice vis-à-vis the fallen regime, and especially the role of the US and CIA in Cyprus to a “commercialised” spectacle, tailored for a mass audience.¹²

As for *Attila*, the film was praised not just by film critics but also by political and cultural elites alike for its boldness and realism. Suffices to say that Georgios Mavros, leader of the Centre Union party, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in Karamanlis’ Government of National Unity, and hence a protagonist in the peace negotiating process, said that “everyone, child or adult, should watch that film.” And he added: “The film does not do politics. It informs people how low the international order has gone, so that after two bloody world wars, similar ‘orgies’ like the ones it depicts can take place on the most civilised island of the Mediterranean, an island with a 3000-year

¹⁰ See G. Soldatos, ‘Η διανομή των ελληνικών ταινιών’ [The distribution of Greek movies], *Film*, 3, 11 (autumn 1976), 477-493.

¹¹ *To Vima*, 1975.

¹² B. Kolonias, ‘Τέχνη, Ιστορία, Πολιτική και “Αντίσταση”’ [Arts, History, Politics and ‘Resistance’], *Synchronos Kinimatografos*, 4 (1975), 16-29.

history.”¹³ Similarly, Ioannis Lampsas, general secretary of the Ministry of Press and Media, called it “not a simple documentary [but] probably the most nuanced living document of the Cypriot tragedy.”¹⁴

This article comes to add up to a bulk of secondary literature on post-conflict cultures of protest and human rights, peace movements and their modes of cultural expression and representation. While the historiography on the Greek may be limited, the literature on other examples, such as the US and the Vietnam experience, or the connection between human rights and the post-68 protest culture in France, is quite established.¹⁵ The present article places itself within this series of works, cataloguing the ways in which cultural items activated post-authoritarian Greek civil society.¹⁶ It further demonstrates that these

¹³ ‘Τα τούρκικα όργια στο “Αττίλας 74”. Ο κ. Γ. Μαύρος για το φίλμ του Κακογιάννη’ [The Turkish orgies in ‘Attila 74’. Mr G. Mavros on Cacoyanni’s film] *To Vima* (20 April 1975).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The most famous documentary on Vietnam with a direct effect on American audience is Peter Davis’ *Hearts and Minds* (1974), a *cause célèbre* since it received an Academy Award for best documentary, contributing to a crisis of faith in the American political system in the mid-1970s. For a contemporary critique see Bernard Weiner, “Hearts and Minds.” *Film Quarterly* 28.2 (1974-75): 60-63. Also see Tony Shaw, *Hollywood’s Cold War* (Edinburgh, 2007), 236-249. On music resistances to the Vietnam War see David James, ‘The Vietnam War and American Music’, *Social Text*, No. 23 (Autumn - Winter, 1989), pp. 122-143. On music and protest in general see Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century*. For a social movement approach on culture see the classic text by Doug McAdam, ‘Culture and Social Movements’, 36-57, in Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield (eds), *New Social Movements. From Ideology to Identity* (Philadelphia 1994), 36-57. On the connection between cultures of protest and human rights, in the context of post-May ’68 in France, see Laurent Jalabert, ‘Aux origines de la génération 1968: les étudiants français et la guerre du Vietnam’, *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d’Histoire* 55 (1997): 69– 81 and Eleanor Davey, *Idealism Beyond Borders. The French Revolutionary Left and the Rise of Humanitarianism, 1954-1988* (Cambridge 2015). On Spain and Portugal see Pamela Beth Radcliff, *Making Democratic Citizens in Spain: Civil Society and the Popular Origins of the Transition, 1960-78* (Basingstoke 2011), Labrador Méndez, *Culpables por la literatura. Imaginación política y contracultura en la transición española (1968-1986)* (Madrid 2017), and Pedro Ramos Pinto, *Lisbon Rising: Urban Social Movements in the Portuguese Revolution, 1974-5* (Manchester 2013).

¹⁶ On similar developments in post-authoritarian Spain and Portugal, see Pablo La Parra-Pérez, ‘Displaced Cinema: Militant Film Culture and Political Dissidence in Spain (1966–1982)’, PhD thesis, New York University, 2018; Lidia Mateo Leivas, ‘Genealogía visual de los sucesos de Vitoria (1976). Fugas de archive e imágenes clandestinas del Colectivo de Cine de Madrid’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 18, 4 2017, 363-89. Érica Faleiro Rodrigues, ‘Representations of sexuality and gender in Portuguese cinema during the Late Estado Novo and the Carnation Revolution’, in K. Kornetis, E. Kotsovoli and N. Papadogiannis, *Consumption and Gender in Southern Europe since the “Long 1960s”* (London: 2016), 121-136.

items renegotiated the parameters of political participation fostering popular demand, which contributed to the radical resetting of the agenda of the country's foreign and security policy.

II

The conflict over Cyprus led to the immediate collapse of the Greek dictatorship. The transition to democracy seemed to be an abrupt and compact process, praised by historian Tony Judt as swift and easy.¹⁷ A government of national unity under conservative politician Constantine Karamanlis was sworn in on July 24, 1974. Even though Karamanlis moved swiftly to reinstate fundamental freedoms, including the almost immediate decriminalisation of the Greek Communist Party (outlawed since the civil war in 1947) in September of the same year,¹⁸ the transitional period was hardly peaceful. Residues of the dictatorial past still persisted, breeding concerns that nostalgia for the Colonels in the Army would eventually lead to yet another coup. Compared to the rest of Southern Europe and much of Latin America in later years, however, Greece was the only country where the ringleaders of the coup were tried and given death sentences (commuted to life imprisonment) shortly after the collapse of the dictatorship.¹⁹ Still, these developments could not be anticipated in the autumn of 1974, leaving many people with a sense of bitterness that justice had not been served.

¹⁷ T. Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London 2005), 509.

¹⁸ On the legalization of the Communist Party and its repercussions see K. Karpozilos, 'Transition to Stability: The Greek Left in 1974', in M. E. Cavallaro and K. Kornetis (eds.), *Rethinking Democratisation in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (Basingstoke 2019), 179-198.

¹⁹ N. C. Alivizatos, N. P. Diamandouros, 'Politics and the judiciary in the Greek transition to democracy', 27-60 in A. J. McAdams (ed.), *Transitional Justice and the Rule of Law in New Democracies* (Notre Dame 1997).

Against widespread expectations, Karamanlis refrained from entering into a direct military confrontation with Turkey: *strictu sensu* a war between the two countries never actually took place. By late August 1974, however, with the combined operations Attila I and II, Turkey came to control forty per cent of Cyprus. Greece remained technically in a state of military mobilisation for about four months, but the Greek military machine never responded to what was seen as a *casus belli*. By contrast, a full-fledged conflict did take place on Cyprus proper. The island was ravaged by both an on-going civil war (an inter-Greek Cypriot conflict between pro- and anti-Makarios forces) and the confrontation of the latter with the Turkish army. As thousands of young men on both sides went missing (and had in reality been killed and placed in mass graves), this came to be known as the conflict of the ‘missing’ ones: approximately 1,600 persons went ‘missing’ on both the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot communities, including civilians. Two hundred thousand people were forced to abandon their homes and belongings, leading to a humanitarian disaster.²⁰ The island was *de facto* separated into two ethnically cleansed zones: a Greek one in the south, and a Turkish one in the north.

Reactions to the war in Cyprus on the Greek home front varied. The nationalistic press was arguing in favour of tough measures and a full-fledged military confrontation with Turkey. These escalated from headlines such as ‘The Greek People united are courageously confronting the Turkish attack’²¹ to controversial punch lines such as ‘Cyprus conflict first – Democracy later’.²² Some titles reported that ‘The Alliance’s

²⁰ V. Roudometof and M. Christou, ‘To “1974” ως πολιτισμικό τραύμα’ [1974 as a cultural trauma], *Epistimi kai Koinonia: Epitheorisi Politikis kai Ithikis Theorias*, 28, 51-80, 2011.

²¹ *Kathimerini* (26 July 1974).

²² *Ibid.*

existence has no meaning any longer', since two of NATO's members were on the brink of war against each other. More importantly, other newspapers adopted an extreme anti-American stance, crying out that 'The US encourages the assassins and does not help Greece'.²³ Throughout the seven-year dictatorship "the Americans [had been] unequivocally identified with authoritarianism and political cynicism" by a substantial portion of the Greek public due to their lack of involvement or what was perceived as direct support of the Junta on their behalf, as historian Konstantina Botsiou has argued.²⁴ "Suspensions of American plans for a division of the island [had] increasingly shaped domestic politics" in Greece, already since the mid-1960s, Ennio di Nolfo further points out.²⁵ The trend of equating anti-Americanism with patriotism²⁶ escalated with the invasion of Cyprus in 1974; in fact, according to popular belief Henry Kissinger, then US National Security Advisor and Secretary of State to the Nixon administration, was directly responsible for the Turkish aggression. This conviction was widely shared by left-wing activists, who vehemently expressed anti-war sentiments, combined with indignation towards the former dictators. What is certain is that Kissinger did little to either prevent the Turkish invasion or keep it in check. Far from adopting a neutral stance, he appears to have condoned the Turkish invasion,²⁷ while he used the back

²³ Era Kavvadia-Lambria, *Μέρες του '74. Σελίδες της Μεταπολίτευσης* [Days of 74. Pages of Metapolitefsi] (Athens 2002).

²⁴ Konstantina Botsiou, 'Anti-Americanism in Greece' in O'Connor, Brennan (ed.), *Anti-Americanism: History, Causes, and Themes Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford, 2007), 213–234 (231). For the genealogy of Greek anti-Americanism since the onset of the Cold War also see I. D. Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and Anti-Americanism in Post-War Greece, 1945–1967* (Aldershot 2007).

²⁵ Di Nolfo, 242.

²⁶ Z. Lialiouti, 'Greek Cold War anti-Americanism in perspective, 1947–1989,' *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 13 (2015), 40–55 (47).

²⁷ William Mallinson, *Kissinger and the Invasion of Cyprus: Diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Newcastle on Tyne, 2016 and 2017). The author uses British documentary evidence to contradict perceptions of a supposed 'neutralist' stance by Kissinger on Cyprus.

channel to prevent a potential Soviet involvement.²⁸

Though military confrontation between Turkey and Greece never happened, on 14 August 1974 Karamanlis withdrew Greece from NATO's integrated military structure (to some extent following Charles De Gaulle's pattern)²⁹ and requested renegotiations on the future of US bases on Greek soil in protest to the second Turkish invasion.³⁰ This dramatic move testifies to the central role played by Cyprus in Greek politics³¹ and the impact of the invasion on the traditionally Atlanticist and US-friendly Greek Right. Based on the evidence provided by some of Karamanlis' close aides, historian Eirini Karamouzi concludes that the seasoned politician had to opt between war with Turkey over Cyprus and Greece's withdrawal from the military alliance. In fact she quotes Karamanlis himself saying, in later years, that 'the withdrawal from NATO was not only justified but necessary. The fury of the Greek and Cypriot people was so great at that time that the only alternative would have been war.'³²

Left-wing composer Mikis Theodorakis who had also just returned to Greece after a long exile in Paris that followed his imprisonment by the Colonels, wrote in August 1974:

²⁸ Pedaliu, 'Sea of Confusion', 747.

²⁹ A. Varsori, "Crisis and stabilization in Southern Europe during the 1970s: Western strategy, European instruments", *Journal of European Integration History*, 1, vol 15 (2019), 5-14 (9).

³⁰ E. Karamouzi and D. Chourchoulis, 'Troublemaker or peacemaker? Andreas Papandreou, the Euromissile Crisis, and the policy of peace, 1981–86,' *Cold War History*, 19 (2019), 39-61 (42).

³¹ In the words of political scientist Leonidas Karakatsanis "'the Cyprus issue" (*to Kypriako*) [...] was elevated to a matter of primary concern, preoccupying the totality of Greek society for years.' In L. Karakatsanis, *Turkish-Greek Relations. Rapprochement, Civil Society and the Politics of Friendship* (London 2014), 11.

³² Karamanlis's interview in the *New York Times*, 27 May 1978, quoted by E. Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War 1974-1979: The Second Enlargement*, 18.

All we need to do is look at today's reality: who was the first to raise the flag of National Independence? Who was the first to point out the cancer of Americanocracy? Who was the first to shout 'Americans out!?' And 'Out of NATO!?' The Greek communists, the Greek Left. And here we are, after all these struggles, sacrifices and blood that our policy becomes finally fully justified by life itself. Today the entire Greek people has appropriated our old slogans. And the Karamanlis government, pushed by the momentum of things, materialises them.³³

In other words, Theodorakis underlined how grassroots, anti-NATO demands, traditionally, went mainstream and were even adopted by the conservative government of the day, under the enormous weight of the Cyprus conflict.

III

The indignation expressed in the press coverage over Cyprus reflected an emerging tendency in Greek society to protest and resist, while at the same time rejoicing for the unexpected gift of democracy.³⁴ A most striking characteristic of this change of heart in the public sphere (asphyxiated so far from brutal repression) was the complete sensorial contrast with previous years: during the seven years of the dictatorship almost the entirety of the (propagandistic) newsreels was in black and white. The moment the *Metapolitefsi* took place, as if by magic, documentary films turned into Technicolor. In Nikos

³³ Mikis Theodorakis, *To Χρέος: Η Πολιτική Ανάλυση, 1970-1974* [The Debt: The political analysis 1970-1974] (Athens 1974), 538. Quotation translated into English from the original Greek by the author of this article, like henceforth all quotations taken from Greek sources.

³⁴ Political economist Panos Kazakos attributes that growing 'left-wing-oriented' rebellious attitude to a combination of a feeling of guilt that actual resistance against the dictatorship had been extremely minoritarian and a widespread rejection of the political side that had prevailed in the civil war in the late 1940s, namely the Right. See *Ανάμεσα σε Κράτος και Αγορά. Οικονομία και οικονομική πολιτική στη μεταπολεμική Ελλάδα 1944-2000* [Between the State and the Market. Economy and financial policy in postwar Greece] (Athens 2001), 286.

Kavoukidis' film *Testimonials* [*Μαρτυρίες*, 1975] the sensorial contrast between the Polytechnic events of November 1973 and the arrival of Karamanlis from Paris to Athens in the morning hours of July 24, is striking. It is a qualitative leap in the sensorial and a rupture in news reporting. Colour, which had until then existed only in commercial films, was now infiltrating the portrayal of politics and everyday life.³⁵

Nikos Koundouros' documentary, *The Songs of Fire* (*Τα τραγούδια της φωτιάς*, 1975), exemplifies the parallel passage of a young generation from colourlessness to colour and from silence to noise, as they were re-conquering public sphere with the transition to democracy.³⁶ The film starts with an impressive student demonstration on November 15, 1974, a warm and sunny winter day in Athens, only days before the first free elections in over a decade. The colour red was omnipresent, with many young people wearing red shirts, red scarves, red caps and holding red roses. A sensorial contrast with the Junta years was more than obvious, usually conveyed in memories and recollections of people who experienced them as obscure and dark. Then high school student Anastasia Lambria, daughter of the right-wing journalist and Minister in the recently sworn in Government of National Unity, Takis Lambrias, remembers:

[Everyday life during the Junta] was entirely black and white! . . . My recollection is indeed all black and white. There are no colours, whatsoever. Fully black and white and with a constant sense of being under surveillance, being accountable for everything, you know, a condition of a cramped stomach and fear. (Lambria, interview)

³⁵ An important but rare exception to this was the color documentary *Megara*, filmed by Sakis Maniatis and Giorgos Tsemberopoulos in 1973, documenting a peasant strike against the planned expropriation of their lands by a magnate.

³⁶ On the issue of the 'right to the city' see Henri Lefebvre, *Droit à la ville* (Paris 1968).

Astonishingly, this invasion of (red) colour was evident since the early hours after the regime's sudden collapse and the dramatic arrival of Karamanlis on a French presidential jet to Athens, accompanied by Lambria's father, his right-hand man.³⁷ The most important newsreel images of his comeback from his self-imposed exile in Paris, shown in *Testimonials*, mark the instantaneous passage from black and white to colour.

The country was coming out of seven years of dictatorial rule against which the majority of Greeks had remained silent, often in passive compliance. This silence had been broken only in very few instances, including two funerals of major national figures, and, above all, in the Athens Law School occupations in February and March of 1973 and in the aforementioned Polytechnic student uprising in November of the same year. The Polytechnic occupation itself, characterised by 'leftist' voluntarism,³⁸ provided the very 'grammar' and repertoire of protest for the entire post-dictatorship era. Parallel to democratic transition, sensorial transition was ubiquitous, as the sloganeering, the shouting in the streets, and the boisterous demonstrations led to a state of continuous noise and rubble that replaced the silence of the Junta years. These first post-Junta months signified a 'capture of speech', to use Michel de Certeau's celebrated term regarding the May '68 movement.³⁹ Its potential in terms of communicative production was liberating, as it freed the hitherto 'imprisoned speech' - even if this sudden explosion could end up in *logorrhea*. Sloganeering, shouting in the streets or in stadiums, demonstrating (for years banned due to the restrictive policies of the Colonels'

³⁷ For Takis Lambrias' own recollections of these dense moments see his *Καραμανλής. Ο φίλος* [Karamanlis. The Friend] (Athens 1998).

³⁸ See K. Kornetis, *Children of the Dictatorship. Student Resistance, Cultural Politics and the 'Long 1960s' in Greece* (New York and Oxford 2013).

³⁹ M. De Certeau, *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings* (Minnesota 1997), 11. Also Roland Barthes famously compared the French university revolt's "taking of speech" to the 1789 "taking of the Bastille". See R. Barthes, "Writing the Event", in *The Rustle of Language* (Oxford 1986), 150.

dictatorship) gave way to continuous noise.

The great anti-war concerts that took place in the immediate post-Junta months were exemplary of this shift. In the words of the liberal daily *Ta Nea* ‘after seven years of hush, the people of Athens and Piraeus sang freely yesterday in the Karaiskaki stadium where Theodorakis gave his first concert in support of Cypriots.’⁴⁰ Anastasia Lambria was there. But her feelings that Greek society was ‘bursting’ after years of silence and repression is tempered by her bitter realisation in hindsight that most of the people attending had condoned the regime until a few months earlier:

I went to the Karaiskakis stadium . . . This thing was overwhelming. I don’t know how many people there were. Incredible crowds! . . . This concert was breath-taking, it made your hair stand on end. You would see all this enthusiasm, you know, and with my naiveté of that time I thought that this whole thing was bursting... While of course there were all these people too who had previously accepted [the Junta]. (Lambria, interview)

At any rate, apart from capturing the passage from silence to sound and color, *The Songs of Fire* documents how these people re-conquered a public sphere that had been devoid of meaningful socio-political interaction under the dictatorship. In Koundouros’ own words:

We quickly partook in the shaping of a society, which was promising a new Greece. The streets and the big stadiums echoed the songs of Theodorakis and cheered for the new Democracy. The deprived people demanded Democracy and Freedom. The big stadiums were not spacious enough to accommodate the enthusiasm of the people who longed to see those Greeks who had held the distant image of Greece on their shoulders from close up. We were also lost amongst the crowd. I slowly gathered around me the best directors of photography, there were seven of us, and we burst into the crowd, *capturing with the cameras*

⁴⁰ ‘Λευτεριά και Δημοκρατία τραγούδησε χθες ο λαός’ [The people sang yesterday in favor of Freedom and Democracy], *Ta Nea* (10 October 1974).

*the splendid image of the rebelling people.*⁴¹

The Songs of Fire, produced in 1974 and screened in 1975, is an important analytical tool of the *Metapolitefsi* concerts as major anti-war events, documenting this transition from silence to commotion. It shows three gigantic concerts that took place in two football stadiums packed with people: one at Panathinaikos' stadium (dubbed 'Leoforos Alexandras') organised by actress Melina Mercouri and featuring among others composer Yannis Markopoulos,⁴² and a further two at Olympiakos' stadium (dubbed 'Karaiskaki'), headed by composer Mikis Theodorakis, in September and October 1974, respectively. Newspaper reports estimated some 35,000 to 60,000 spectators of every age. Demand was so great that the tickets' price went up three times in the black market, according to some sources.⁴³ Liana Tsioulaki, student and young Communist cadre at the time, remembers:

Everyone expected these concerts to be packed with people but not *that* many... Maybe it came as a surprise. Meaning that people could not even get in. The stadiums were full, and there were as many people in the audience as there were waiting outside. And they listened to the songs from the loudspeakers and they were singing and dancing. (Tsioulaki, interview)

The concerts were marked by the energy of the performers, many of whom, like composer Mikis Theodorakis and actress Melina Mercouri, household names both in Greece and internationally, had just returned home after years residing abroad due to the

⁴¹ N. Koundouros, *Μνήμη απειθάρχητη. Ημερολόγιο* [Unruly memory. Diary] (Athens 2006), 166. Added emphasis.

⁴² See 'Η Μελίνα για την Κύπρο' [Melina for Cyprus], *To Vima* (24 September 1974).

⁴³ Among the people who participated in the Mercouri/Markopoulos concert were actors Melina Mercouri, Manos Katrakis, Stavros Paravas, Kostas Kazakos, Jenny Karezi and Kiti Arseni, and singers Antonis Kalogiannis, Nikos Xylouris, Giorgos Dalaras, and others. Among the major participants in the Theodorakis one were singers Giorgos Dalaras, Antonis Kalogiannis, Giorgos Mitsias and Maria Farandouri.

dictatorship. Others performers had been exiled, imprisoned or tortured in the previous seven years in Greece. The concerts' song selection put the emphasis on the more epic and overtly political songs by Theodorakis and Markopoulos, which were performed by student idols of the time, including lyra-player Nikos Xylouris and singer Maria Farandouri. Taking place only one and a half months after the Cyprus invasion and the fall of the dictatorship, the concerts conveyed the incredible presence of a flaming audience, breaking up steam after years of gasping for niches of freedom of expression. These concerts, therefore (just like the parallel student demonstrations and the plethora of strikes) act to a large extent as a metonym for the entire post-Junta era, encompassing a moment of extreme emotion and expectation, in which everything seemed possible; but also a moment decisively marked by the Cypriot tragedy.

All three concerts were organised as a way to show solidarity to Greek Cypriots. Conservative daily *Kathimerini* reports that the stadiums were filled with leaflets by Eurocommunist youth organisation *Rigas Feraios*, demanding a 'Free, United and Independent Cyprus'.⁴⁴ Cyprus was thus the overarching political theme in the concerts, echoing to some extent George Harrison's Concert for Bangladesh at Madison Square Garden in New York in 1971. At the beginning of the first concert, formerly interned actor Stavros Paravas read texts that referred to the demand of punishing the guilty parties for the Junta and Cyprus, followed by a recorded message by Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus. Both caused a popular stir. Theodorakis's concerts too, on 9 and 10 October 1974, were organised to support the Cypriot people. Artists partook in a trend of changing the lyrics of the songs to make direct references to Cyprus. Mariza Koch, for

⁴⁴ 'Σ'ενα γήπεδο που κυμάτιζε ρυθμικά ο Μίκης με μουσική και συνθήματα' [Mikis at a stadium that was waving rhythmically to music and slogans], *Kathimerini* (10 October 1974).

instance, a well-known singer drawn to rock and psychedelic renderings of traditional folk songs, sang a distorted version of a popular traditional song called *Armenaki*. She crucially added the verse ‘and take me to the port of Cyprus’ [και στης Κύπρου το λιμάνι πάρε με], which was absent in the original ‘take me to an island’s port’ [σε νησιώτικο λιμάνι πάρε με]. Koch remembers the elation of the concerts and alludes to 5th century B.C., when according to philosopher and soldier Xenophon, 10,000 Athenian soldiers enthusiastically screamed the moment they glanced at the (Black) Sea:

We all seemed to be shouting together ‘*Thálatta! Thálatta!*’ [The Sea! The Sea!] [laughter] Meaning, what we deeply desired had happened. To shout as loud as we could, to say whatever we wanted... We were conscious of the fact that we were living historical moments. We were fully conscious of that. (Koch, interview)

A year and a half later, in April 1976, she would perform a song at the Eurovision Song Contest in the Netherlands, firmly condemning the Turkish invasion – with plentiful references to the Cypriot tragedy. Greece had in fact not participated in the 1975 Eurovision in protest against the continuous occupation of the island. As Koch’s song was an outcry against Turkish foreign policy, it was censored on-air by Turkish television. She remembers graphic details of the reactions that the song provoked:

In 1976 I sang in *Eurovision* the song ‘My Lady, My Lady’ [Παναγιά μου, Παναγιά μου], requested by Hadjidakis. He called me during the night and told me ‘tomorrow morning I want to have a song, a lament for Cyprus, bring it to me by all means’. We sat at night and wrote it. . . and it reached Eurovision. But then there was a demonstration with 60,000 Turks from all the neighbouring countries of Europe, they gathered to demonstrate against the broadcasting of the song, as soon as the trailer that we had prepared was aired. Even a sniper was arrested and I went on stage on my own responsibility. These were the first years of the

Turkish invasion of Cyprus. And this happened especially for Cyprus. (Koch, interview)

The somehow controversial nature of Mariza Koch's performance at Eurovision bears the strong imprint of 1970s counterculture and its iconic mixture between pop culture and political engagement. Similarly, in *The Songs of Fire*, footage of the concerts is intermingled with highly poignant black and white images from the funeral of a Greek-Cypriot socialist, Doros Loizou, who had been recently assassinated by extreme right-wing supporters of paramilitary organisation of EOKA B in Cyprus in late August 1974. The latter's widow appears on screen directly accusing the CIA of being involved in her husband's murder.

At the same time, the incredible countercultural energy of the concerts is reminiscent of similar anti-Vietnam music events in the US. In fact, both the concerts and especially the way they were filmed and depicted by Koundouros are reminiscent of *rockumentaries*, such as *Gimme Shelter* (Albert and David Maysles, 1970), *Monterey Pop* (D.A. Pennebaker, 1968), and, above all, *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, 1970). A standard characteristic shared between these films and *Songs of Fire* is the roughness of filming: one can spot the cameramen in action, which creates a *cinéma vérité* flair of direct participation, interaction and reflexivity towards the film-making process. Kavoukidis remembers that, after all, 'the power of the image in a musical piece lays not with the singers':

I used to move freely. It was not just the hand-held camera. I knew the subject well. But the vibe of the audience was very important to me. Because you had seen these singers perform in the past. But for me, thematically, at that moment, the most important issue was to show how the audiences operated. (Kavoukidis, interview)

The Songs of Fire, thus, does not only focus on the performers but also on the audience, powerfully commenting on their interaction, based on the US model. In terms of this transnational dimension and connection with US counterculture, the paradoxical situation exemplified here was precisely the use of Anglo-American mass culture practices in a context of intense and at times extreme anti-Americanism,⁴⁵ within a very highly charged vernacular construction of Greek music and identity as resistance to authoritarianism, imperialism and foreign occupation. In this context, Cyprus ignited a plethora of feelings and was projected as a polysemic master frame by protesters. At the same time, politically active individuals across a wide range of formations were mingled with hitherto uninvolved people politically who experienced the concerts as a direct political statement – both vis-à-vis the collapsed regime, the still-not-robust democracy, and above all the war in Cyprus.

IV

One of the most striking elements in the concerts was hence the fiery presence of the people. According to the conservative daily *Kathimerini*, that had just started to appear again after seven years of closure in protest to the dictatorship's strict censorship laws: 'The real protagonist of yesterday's concert was a sea of people, waving their scarves, their cardigans, their hands up in the air, clapping their hands, and singing or shouting

⁴⁵ For the burgeoning Greek anti-Americanism, even months prior to the coup in Cyprus, see the comments by British Ambassador in Athens R. W. J. Hooper in January 1974: 'But the unfortunate fact is that even intelligent and otherwise quite reasonable Greeks believe that the US is responsible for everything that happens here. Unreasonable and ill-founded though it may be, there is in consequence more anti-American feeling in Greece than there has been for years.' YMA FCO9/1998 'Annual review for 1973' no. 56/74, Hooper to Douglas-Home, 7 January 1974. Quoted in A. Nafpliotis, *Britain and the Greek Colonels. Accommodating the Junta in the Cold War* (London 2013), 208. This tendency was greatly reinforced after the July events.

slogans which echoed through waves in the enormous stadium.’⁴⁶ The multiplicity of sensorial flows as described here, in other words the combined experiences of hearing, seeing and applauding, the ‘hear-by-feeling’⁴⁷ sensation, is essentially kinaesthetic and deeply intoxicating.⁴⁸ Furthermore, ‘the high degree of informal audience participation, from raucous clapping to communal singing, eliminated the distance between auditors and performers and reinforced the sensorial and corporeal flows through shared feelings of group identity [...]’.⁴⁹

Apart from Cyprus, another central political issue in the concerts was that of the all too recently collapsed Junta and its practices. In the opening scene of *The Songs of Fire* and the aforementioned demonstration from mid-November steeped in red colour (this was, after all, a venue in which the plethora of communist party organisations dominated), Maria Damanaki, Communist militant and the ‘voice’ of the Polytechnic occupation’s pirate radio station back in 1973, is heard saying from a loudspeaker:

People of Athens, we have been fighting and we are still struggling for an independent motherland. For a Greece of peaceful and creative work, with its people as its only master and sovereign!

Similarly, in the midst of the concerts shown in the film, a peace demonstration, from November 24, 1974, is suddenly interjected, in which activists carry oversized red peace signs. The banners that are seen carry anti-NATO slogans, while from the loudspeaker

⁴⁶ ‘Σ’ενα γήπεδο που κυμάτιζε ρυθμικά ο Μίκης με μουσική και συνθήματα’ [Mikis at a stadium that was waving rhythmically to music and slogans], *Kathimerini* (10 October 1974).

⁴⁷ M. Friedner and S. Helmreich, “Sound Studies Meets Deaf Studies.” *Senses and Society* 7 (1) (2012): 72–86.

⁴⁸ For the concepts of sensorial flaws and kinaesthesia see E. Kallimopoulou and K. Kornetis, “‘Magical Liturgy’: A History of Sound at the *Kyttaro* Music Club, 1970–1974”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 35 (2017) 481–512: 484. Also see Y. Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses: Human Experience, Memory, and Affect* (Cambridge and New York: 2013).

⁴⁹ Kallimopoulou and Kornetis, ‘Magical Liturgy’, 501.

we can hear the most famous catchphrase of the 1973 slogan, ‘Bread-Education-Freedom. National independence. Popular Sovereignty’. Activism is represented as part and parcel of a renewed democratic practice⁵⁰ and a culture of participatory democracy, especially given the dramatically swift change of guard from military dictatorship to a new parliamentary democracy.

In the concerts themselves, among the standard slogans shouted by the audience was ‘ESA, SS, Torturers’ – a reference to the notorious military police ESA [Greek Military Police] that operated throughout the dictatorship, institutionalising the act of torture. Similarly, the audience would repeatedly and rhythmically shout ‘Give the Junta to the People’, as a reference to the popular demand for justice. Another popular slogan was ‘Poison to the Dog of ESA’, targeting dictator Ioannidis, who, apart from his direct involvement in the Cypriot imbroglio, had also served for years as the ruthless head of the notorious military police. Well-known left-wing actor Alekos Alexandrakis addressed the audiences saying that ‘tanks may rot but songs prevail.’⁵¹

One of the most emotional moments during the concerts was when hitherto exiled in Paris singer Antonis Kalogiannis sang Theodorakis’ signature *Slaughterhouse* [Σφαγείο], a song about the ruthless torture of left-wing activist Andreas Lentakis during the dictatorship.⁵²

Μύρισε το σφαγείο μας θυμάρι

⁵⁰ On the concept of democratic practice following authoritarianism, see Robert M. Fishman, *Democratic Practice Origins of the Iberian Divide in Political Inclusion* (Oxford 2019).

⁵¹ ‘50,000 λαός διατρανώνει την αλληλεγγύη του στους Κυπρίους’ [50,000, people affirm their solidarity to the Cypriots], *Rizospastis*, 11 October 1974. *Rizospastis* (11 October 1974).

⁵² N. Papadogiannis, *Militant Around the Clock? Youth Politics, Leisure and Sexuality in Post-dictatorship Greece, 1974–1981* (New York-Oxford 2015).

και το κελί μας κόκκινο ουρανό
Χτυπούν το βράδυ στην τσάτσα τον Ανδρέα
Μετρώ τους χτύπους το αίμα μετρώ

[Our slaughterhouse began to smell like thyme
And our cell like a red sky
In the evening they beat Andreas on the terrace
I count the hits, I count the blood]

While Kalogiannis was performing the song, ‘the skies were suddenly painted in red’, according to *Rizospastis*, the recently legalised Greek Communist Party’s newspaper, banned from 1947 until the summer of 1974.⁵³ The intensity of the audience singing along is striking – precisely because this was one of the most direct references to the seven years of brutality. Here, ‘the music served as a catharsis’, according to theorist Gail Holst-Warhaft.⁵⁴ Torture becomes a crucial theme in the film since Koundouros interjects the documentary with the testimony of activist Christos Rekleitis and a parallel re-enactment on a dummy of his ruthless torture by the military police during his interrogation in the Junta years. The jump cut back to the bouncing audience in the stadium documents a passage from the disciplined ‘bodies in pain’⁵⁵ to liberated bodies in exaltation.

The act of listening and participating in these concerts was similar to the one in the massive anti-war music concerts in the United States in the late 1960s: it was listening as

⁵³ ‘50,000, people demonstrate their solidarity to the Cypriots’, *Rizospastis* (11 October 1974).

⁵⁴ Holst-Warhaft, *Theodorakis*, 206.

⁵⁵ See E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain. The Making and the Unmaking of the World* (Oxford 1987).

a political act; concert-going as a political engagement; singing as a tangible, bodily, almost organic way of resisting war. The constant cuts that switched between demonstrations during day time and concerts at night are based on a dynamic montage, exemplifying the direct connection between music, politics, and everyday life. The demonstration in the opening scene of *The Songs of Fire*, for instance, is superimposed with music from the concerts. Suddenly, the picture freezes and a jump cut brings us to the terrain of the stadium where left-wing singer Lakis Halkias keeps on singing, this way linking the people demonstrating in the streets with those singing and shouting at the stadium. ‘It was cold. And we were working’ went the song’s lyrics, dedicated to Southern European immigrant workers in Western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, while the camera zooms into the details of the performers’ attire (including their bellbottoms and large shirt necks). A loud applause then comes to remind us of the impressive presence of the audience.

Rizospastis vividly described the emotion of this audience:

How long has it been since people last came together like this? How can a hundred thousand hands find a common rhythm in their fiesta? By applauding is a rhythmic march, a camaraderie, a salute that goes around the stadium.⁵⁶

The right-wing newspaper *Kathimerini* also referred to an audience so passionate that it metaphorically ‘was set on fire’. Similar references were made to the ‘fiery’ Maria Damanaki, the defining person in the ‘capture of speech’ that followed the collapse of the

⁵⁶ ‘50,000, people demonstrate their solidarity to the Cypriots’, *Rizospastis* (11 October 1974).

dictatorship: ‘Maria Damanaki, the unforgettable voice of the Polytechnic radio station enters the stadium smiling, bringing back memories that are still burning.’⁵⁷ Nevertheless, this passion was not always spontaneous. Liana Tsioulaki, a Communist cadre at the time, remembers that the recently legalised KNE (Communist Youth of Greece) of which Damanaki was a leading member, framed the participation in the concerts as a ‘party duty’, bringing people with buses from the outskirts of Athens to the venue, even though she quickly adds that ‘this doesn’t mean we didn’t want to go!’. She still describes the emotion of the concerts, especially vis-à-vis the revered figure of Mikis Theodorakis:

Emotion was great, indeed. And there were old people and youngsters together, fraternised, you know, whereas usually in music events one expects to see a special kind of audience. Older people would usually go to a specific kind of concert, young ones to a different one. But there were all kinds of people there, from elderly ones, around 60, to 15-16 year old ones. Everyone was there: parents with their kids, dragging their little ones along. Yes, this was a breathtaking event, indeed. Do you know what it means to have the songs of your favorite composer, who also carries a special symbolism, banned? And he was a symbol both as a person and as an artist. Imagine not being allowed to sing his songs for seven years and then to suddenly be able to go to a concert and to hear, shout, and sing those very songs, it was incredible. We didn’t want this to end, I remember all too well, the cheering, the encores and more. The artists had already left the stage but the audience kept on singing and would not leave the stadium. It was beautiful. (Liana Tsioulaki, interview)

Historian Nikolaos Papadogiannis quotes H.Z., a male university student at the time and cadre of the Communist Youth KNE as well saying: ‘We were not passive in these concerts; all of us participated. We sang most songs from beginning to end.’⁵⁸ It is

⁵⁸ Papadogiannis, *Militants around the Clock?*, 87.

striking that the buying, selling and reproduction of Theodorakis' music mostly sang by those youths had been still a court-martial offence as dangerous dissident art only a few weeks earlier.⁵⁹ Now he was back, centre stage. *Rizospastis* reports:

And down below, at centre stage in the stadium, bathed in light from the spotlights, amongst his collaborators, Mikis Theodorakis, tall as ever, bows, thrusts himself, kneels down and stands up again, ready to go and liberate himself, alongside his songs.⁶⁰

At one moment, a technical problem with the stadium's electrical supply led to a halt of the concert while Theodorakis' lead singer, Maria Farandouri, was singing. The rumour that her wire had been cut off immediately spread to the entire stadium and people started shouting "Down with the traitors! Down with the fascists!". Theodorakis himself accused junta supporters of being behind this 'act of sabotage', declaring characteristically that 'they cut our wires' and that 'now they are using scissors'.⁶¹ Director of photography in *The Songs of Fire* Nikos Kavoukidis is unsure of whether that was indeed the case of a sabotage:

I remember that incident – precisely because there was a mass of people who had suddenly gathered around and there were many wires connected to the loudspeakers. Perhaps some of those people were indeed Junta men who had pulled the jacks out of the loudspeakers. Perhaps. But some speakers served the singers on stage, so that they could have a full sense of what was happening. Maybe people pulled those off as there was a sudden bang from the audience, which was getting closer and closer to the stage. (Kavoukidis, interview)

⁵⁹ K. Kornetis, *Children of the Dictatorship. Student Resistance, Cultural Politics and the 'Long 1960s' in Greece* (New York and Oxford 2013), 191.

⁶⁰ '50,000, people demonstrate their solidarity to the Cypriots', *Rizospastis* (11 October 1974).

⁶¹ 'Απ'την πρώτη συναυλία του Θεοδωράκη' [From the first concert of Theodorakis], *To Vima* (10 October 1974).

At the end of the last concert, actor Alekos Alexandrakis recited Pablo Neruda's *Canto General*, trying to draw links between the Chilean tragedy and the bloody events in Cyprus. As he powerfully commented: 'As long as foreign troops are on the island of Cyprus, Greekness (*Romiosyni*) will be moaning.' And he dramatically concluded: 'This soil belongs to them and to us. No one can take it away from us!' When people left the stadium they poured into the streets in spontaneous demonstrations.⁶²

A recurrent phrase in several testimonies gathered, is that these concerts constituted indeed 'the first outbreak' after years of stagnation. As Holst notes '[people] sang what they had been forbidden to sing and shouted "Freedom", "Democracy!" and "Death to Fascism!" until they lost their voices.'⁶³ Papadogiannis argues that 'these concerts were a rite of passage: by depicting suffering and struggle under the militaristic regime, they vindicated the trope of "universal popular resistance against the dictatorship", . . . galvanis[ing] militancy in the post-dictatorship years as well.'⁶⁴ The concerts as filmed by Koundouros showcase how discourses, visual representations, and political practices were entangled and intermingled. Music producer and critic of the time Stelios Elliniadis stresses the fact that these concerts and the tendency they exemplified "swept away" the Greek music industry for several years to come, a fact that he dubs as "not normal":

'As soon as the Junta collapsed there was a boom of the so-called 'forbidden' art-house songs. Meaning Theodorakis, mainly Theodorakis and Markopoulos and the rest, with the concerts in the stadiums, in

⁶² '50,000 λαού κατέκλυσαν το στάδιο Καραϊσκάκη και διαδήλωσαν την πίστη τους προς τη δημοκρατία' [50,000 of people poured into Karaiskaki stadium and demonstrated their faith to democracy], *Thessaloniki* (10 October 1974).

⁶³ Holst-Warhaft, *Theodorakis*, 206.

⁶⁴ Papadogiannis, *Militants around the Clock?*, 87.

Karaiskaki, in Leoforos, etc – and this completely swept away the music business, it absolutely dominated it. [...] This thing was an outbreak after prohibition. Which wasn't normal, it was because of the songs' 'added value'. It was a residue of the Junta years, of the dejuntification. (Elliniadis)

The synergy between grassroots movements and music repertoire acted as a cultural laboratory involved in the formation of new collective identities, to paraphrase Alberto Melucci.⁶⁵ This was a rite of passage that was all about the construction of a people, a new political community situated in a concrete space: connecting the streets and piazzas and the music, within a new body politic, emerging out of a collapsed regime and an ongoing conflict overseas.

V

More important in terms of condemning the war while constructing a visual argument was the documentary by Greek-Cypriot director Michael Cacoyannis, who had made a name for himself with *Zorba the Greek* (1964), one of the founding films that established Greece as an exotic vacation destination. Though *Zorba* was filled with ambiguity regarding the archaic elements and survivals in Cretan society, it did establish Crete as a fascinating *lieu*, vacillating between the pre-modern and the modern. It is ironic that exactly ten years later, in 1974, Cacoyannis made a film on the dramatic circumstances of the Turkish invasion of another island, his native Cyprus. *Attila 1974: The Rape of Cyprus* was not fiction, but a documentary that addressed the all-too-real, on-going conflict between Turks and Greeks, or rather Turks and Greek-Cypriots. The title itself

⁶⁵ A. Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (Philadelphia 1989), 60. On the forms of cultural change that flow from social movements see Doug McAdam, 'Culture and Social Movements'.

adopted the codename of the operation that led to the Turkish landing on the island in July 1974 on the pretext of safeguarding ‘peace’. Turkey arguably made use of its rights as a ‘guarantor power’ according to the Zurich-London Agreements of 1959, which had allowed for the creation and existence of an independent Cypriot state.

Cacoyannis interviewed exclusively actors on the Greek side: politicians and militaries including President Makarios and arch-putschist Nikos Sampson, directly involved in the July 15 coup, as well as ordinary men and women, most of whom were gravely affected by the invasion. Just like in *The Songs of Fire*, Vietnam looms heavily as a direct counterpart to the Cypriot imbroglio. At a key point in *Attila*, a Greek orthodox priest says on camera, referring to the dead and especially the missing ones, that ‘the horror of the recent funerals is just like the Vietnam War we see on TV’. This is a clear invocation not only of the Cold War context, and of the US involvement in it, but also of the ways in which war had been turned into a spectacle through direct broadcasting in the 1960s and 1970s and the accompanying display of victims of napalm air raids and their ethical critique.⁶⁶

The film concludes with the director posing a rhetorical question: ‘I, Michael Cacoyannis, director of *Attila 1974*, am asking this question: WHERE?’ – meaning where are all these missing ones, the vast majority of who were in fact executed on the spot and

⁶⁶ See on this Marita Sturken, "The Camera as Witness: Documentaries on the Vietnam War." *Film Library Quarterly* 13.4 (1980): 15-20.; Jeffrey Walsh, and James Aulich (eds), *Vietnam Images: War and Representation* (London 1989). Also see K. Kornetis, "Cinema and Anti-Imperialist Resistance", in Immanuel Ness & Zak Cope (eds.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* Vol. I (London: Palgrave Macmillan): 472-477; Michael Anderegg, *Inventing Vietnam. The War in Film and Television* (Philadelphia: 1991).

ended up in mass graves scattered throughout the island.⁶⁷ The intense physicality of the images used in *Attila 74*, particularly manifested through people's expressions in close-ups, is striking. The camera moves from young boys showing their bruises, to bullet holes in the walls, men with crutches, and rivers of tears and howls by the people affected by loss and eradication. Finally, the film's proximity to the events it depicts, as Cacoyannis had filmed *à chaud* while the conflict was still unfolding, heightens the emotional involvement of the audience who cannot help but identify with the tragedy stricken people. As historian Jan Eckel has argued 'undoubtedly, image politics were an integral part of human rights campaigns in the 1970s', providing victims with a human face and personalising processes of political oppression and conflict.⁶⁸ 'Empathy was key to the Western human rights movement', Eckel concludes, as being shocked and moved by what he calls 'distant suffering' 'made helping others a moral imperative.'⁶⁹

The entire documentary is filled with slogans, banners and graffiti against Henry Kissinger, who also appears in the form of stereotyped caricatures. Both the film's director and its Greek-Cypriot protagonists seem to be convinced that the US government and the CIA were the culprits behind the tragedy. One can spot numerous graffiti and banners saying: NATO- CIA - betrayal. Cacoyannis is adamant that what was happening in Cyprus was in many ways similar to the September 1973 *coup d'état* against Salvador Allende in Chile. As in Chile, this too was a coup against the elected president,

⁶⁷ On a comparative perspective of the mass graves issue see I. Kovras, "Unearthing the Truth: The Politics of Exhumations in Cyprus and Spain", *History and Anthropology* 19 (2008), 371-390, 374, and *Grassroots Activism and the Evolution of Transitional Justice. The Families of the Disappeared* (Cambridge 2017).

⁶⁸ J. Eckel, "The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s", in J. Eckel and S. Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, pp. 226-259 (245). Also see Jan Eckel, *Die Ambivalenz des Guten: Menschenrechte in der internationalen Politik seit den 1940ern* (Göttingen 2014).

⁶⁹ Eckel, "The Rebirth of Politics", p. 247.

masterminded by the US, and executed by their local lackeys and the militaries. The only difference was that unlike Allende who had died fighting in the Moneda Palace while it was bombarded just like the presidential palace in Nicosia, Makarios was still alive. In fact, the film's opening scenes show Makarios walking alone in the ravaged presidential palace.⁷⁰ When asked by Cacoyannis whether the US is indeed involved in his overthrow, he retorts: 'The US should comment on this, not me'. As historian Mario Del Pero has contended 'for the New Left, in Vietnam the U.S. foreign policy was revealing its true face: it was just an updated form of imperialism';⁷¹ Cyprus here stands as a direct parallel. The documentary, thus, captures a slice of life from the time, part of which was intense anti-Americanism and third-worldism, tightly linked to the conviction that Cyprus, just like Greece in 1967-74, or Vietnam and Chile on a more global scale, had been under a neo-colonial attack and occupation.⁷²

Alongside the vivid depiction of widespread anti-Americanism, another remarkable aspect of the film is its intense physicality and sensoriality, as it intends to convey the feeling of war and its impact on people's lives and bodies. Cacoyannis goes as far as to interview kids in refugee camps, with close-ups on their eyes. The violence inflicted on these victims is shown in graphic detail, while the overt sentimentality is excruciating, almost demanding an emotional response by the audience. When at a certain scene in the film two orphans, Petrakis and Kostakis, are smiling when they talk about their parents

⁷⁰ At the same time that *Attila* was screened in Greek theatres, another film on the coup was also attracting audiences, the docudrama "Assassinate Makarios!" [Δολοφονήστε τον Μακάριο!] by Pavlos Filippou and Kostas Dimitriou (1975), spectacularly starring Archbishop Makarios as himself.

⁷¹ M. del Pero, *The Eccentric Realist: Henry Kissinger and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, 2006), 40.

⁷² See K. Kornetis, "Cuban Europe?."

and three siblings who have just been killed, it is obvious that interview ethics are strongly compromised, to say the least. Unlike *The Songs of Fire* where the passage from silence to sound was liberating, in *Attila* the continuous rubble of war is almost hellish. In her film *Promised Lands* on the 1973 Yom Kippur war, a conflict chronologically and geographically very close to the Cypriot one, Susan Sontag has famously stated that war *is* noise.⁷³ Apart from sound, however, images too can be haunting – a fact on which Sontag elaborates in her later book, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003): ‘Let the atrocious images haunt us. The images say: This is what human beings are capable of doing – may volunteer to do, enthusiastically, self-righteously. *Don’t forget.*’⁷⁴ Interestingly, the slogan of Greek Cypriots after 1974 was identical. The much-publicised logo designed by Greek writer and adman Nikos Dimou, used in the campaign of the Republic of Cyprus against the continuous presence of Turkish troops, read ‘Lest I forget’.⁷⁵ The unresolved nature of that conflict resulted in a lingering trauma for Greek society in the decades that followed.

Finally, *Testimonials* converses with the other two films and shares their grassroots outlook, featuring the same directors of photography (Sakis Maniatis and Nikos Kavoukidis) and the same editor (Aristeidis Karydis Fuchs). However, it is the only one of the three films that goes back to the actual Junta years to show uncut images of the Polytechnic events of 1973, all shot in black and white. It then depicts Karamanlis’ return

⁷³ On this film see Carl E. Rollyson, *Understanding Susan Sontag* (South Carolina 2016), .

⁷⁴ S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York 2003), 115. Added emphasis.

⁷⁵ The campaign and sticker was conceived by Dimou and produced by the advertising company Delta-Delta Dimou. See on this F. Papapolizos and K. Martzoukos, *Hellads: H Ελλάδα μέσα από τη διαφήμιση* [Greece through advertisements] (Athens: 1997), 172. See also L. Karakatsanis, *Turkish-Greek Relations. Rapprochement, Civil Society and the Politics of Friendship* (London: 2014), 11-12. For the evolution of the narrative see C. Yakinthou, ‘The Quiet Deflation of Den Xechno? Changes in the Greek-Cypriot Communal Narrative on the Missing Persons in Cyprus’, *Cyprus Review*, 20 (1), 2008, 15-33.

and contains some moving images of the return of political prisoners from remote islands such as Yaros as soon as the regime collapsed. It then reaches well beyond the 1974 elections (having documented the entire pre-electoral process) to depict a large crowd in Syntagma Square in Athens waiting to hear Makarios talk from the balcony of Grande Bretagne hotel on 29 November, 1974. The dominant slogans shouted by the crowd outside the hotel are ‘Makarios, go ahead!’, and ‘Hand the Junta over to the People!’.

The pinnacle of *Testimonials* is the black anniversary since the military coup in April 21, 1975. Here, Kavoukidis documents a notorious *Metapolitefsi* moment in which demonstrators tried to storm the US Embassy, headed by leftists, and especially EKKE [Revolutionary Communist Movement of Greece], a thirdworldist Stalinist-Maoist organisation. The tension of the moment, the clashes with the police and the extreme violence are implicitly compared by the director to the times of dictatorship. It is noteworthy that the slogans remained almost identical with the ones of previous years: anti-Americanism (‘Take your Embassy and get lost, the People doesn’t want you here’), references to the Polytechnic (‘People, remember November!’), and above all to Cyprus (‘they betrayed our Cyprus’), reigned supreme.

VI

This article analysed the ways in which the 1974 Cyprus conflict was registered in cultural representations in Greece at the time, in a watershed year which Theodore A. Couloumbis has dubbed a ‘gate connecting two different eras in the history of twentieth-

century Greece'.⁷⁶ It analysed the gigantic demonstrations and concerts that took place in the biggest stadiums of Athens to protest the war and the invasion, somehow re-enacting facets of the US anti-Vietnam War movement and of the 1969 legendary Woodstock festival. As Cyprus was the catalyst for the collapse of the Greek Junta, such forms of protest and resistance, that went hand-in-hand with cultural expressions and participation, entailed a rare combination of anger and elation, utopia and disillusionment. Energies that were unknown until then were released and captured by a series of films, primarily *The Songs of Fire*, and to some extent *Testimonials*. The same applies to *Attila 74*, a polemic film that captivated the intense physicality of war. This was an era of political movie-making, and these movies can be rightly placed along some important exponents of that genre, but also of the *vérité* kind as they captured powerfully the moment of the time and the anti-war sentiment.

More importantly, the three films revolutionised the way in which concerts, political demonstrations but also war victims were portrayed. This powerful precedent shaped the way of filming every single big concert or political rally since then in Greece. Even more influential was the trope of documenting refugees, including lamenting mothers and orphan children in a wartime situation, which took on a life of its own, still haunting much of the representation of pain, loss and tragedy by photojournalism until today.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ T. A. Couloumbis, 'Greek Foreign Policy: Debates and Priorities', 31-41 in *Greece in the Twentieth Century* edited by T. A. Couloumbis, T. Kariotis and F. Bellou (London and New York 2003), 32.

⁷⁷ Film historian Vrasidas Karalis catalogues *Attila* as one of the best and most influential documentaries on such a contested issue. See his *History of Greek Cinema* (London 2012), 172.

All three films are documents of their time and in this sense they provide us with a sharp lens in order to observe the crisis that was triggered by the Cyprus war, despite the fact that the latter never involved Greece proper *per se*. They also, however, depict a sense of utopia, intensified by the revolutionary potential of that moment in time of landslide changes in Greek society,⁷⁸ a momentum that was subsequently lost. Activism is represented as part and parcel of a renewed democratic practice and a culture of participatory democracy, especially given the dramatically swift change of guard from military dictatorship to a new parliamentary democracy. Finally – and despite their setbacks, flaws and outdated elements, these films render masterfully the historical and the political complexity of very turbulent times and modes of resistance approximating courageously everyday life and its intricacies in intense historical conjunctures.

Interviews

Stelios Elliniadis, Athens, June 2013 (with Eleni Kallimopoulou)

Nikos Kavoukidis, Athens, June 2013 (with Eleni Kallimopoulou)

Mariza Koch, Athens, June 2013 (with Eleni Kallimopoulou)

Anastasia Lambria, Athens, January 2018

Nikos Tsioulakis and Liana Tsioulaki, Athens, June 2013 (with Eleni Kallimopoulou)

⁷⁸ See J. Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments In The Twentieth Century* (New Haven: 2008).