

Communist Party of Greece
N. Zachariadis
General Secretary ,Central Committee,
The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Greece

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November 1948 marked the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of Greece. At that decisive turning point in the history of mankind, brought about by the Great October Socialist Revolution, the working class of our country founded the General Confederation of Greek Workers (October-November 1918) and its political party, the Socialist Workers' Party of Greece.

The birth of this party was a historical necessity for our internal development, an expression of the will of the advanced workers of Greece for struggle and social emancipation. Until then the working class of our country had no party of its own. The example of the Russian Bolsheviks and the October Revolution inspired the Socialist Workers' Party and illuminated its path; the party drew support from the revolutionary struggle of the advanced workers.

In 1920, the Socialist Workers' Party joined the Communist International. In 1924, it was renamed the Communist Party of Greece (the Greek section of the Communist International). For more than ten years the Communists of Greece fought to advance surely along the path of Marxism-Leninism.

From 1918-1924, Right opportunist elements dominated the leadership of the Communist Party. They tried to harness our party and the working class movement to the chariot of the local plutocracy and its foreign masters.

During the period of the “partial stabilisation of capitalism” the party was faced with a crisis engineered by the Trotskyites and liquidators who were out to destroy the Greek Communist Party. At the time of the new revolutionary upsurge in 1929, the party leadership proved incapable of analysing the new situation. It became involved in an unprincipled factional struggle which lasted for two years, fanned and encouraged by the class enemy. Here it

should be stressed, however, that throughout this long crisis, the backbone of the party always maintained a revolutionary stand and remained loyal to the ideas of the October Socialist Revolution and the Communist International.

Although the party leadership changed six times between 1918-1931, the Communist Party of Greece was never split. On November 1, 1931, the central organ of the party, "Rizospastis" carried an appeal from the Executive Committee of the Communist International to all members of the Communist Party of Greece.

This appeal put an end to the factional struggle and the protracted internal crisis in the party. The Communist Party of Greece, being a revolutionary body with a healthy proletarian basis, grew stronger, acquired experience and with the help of the Communist International overcame the crisis.

A characteristic feature of the Communist Party since then has been its consistent day-to-day work among the masses. At the same time the Party itself has matured ideologically and theoretically. It courageously stood up to its first great test in the years of the monarcho-fascist Metaxas dictatorship. From the very outset of the Hitler occupation it headed the struggle of the masses, was the initiator in forming EAM (National Liberation Front) and organising ELAS (People's Liberation Army). It was the leader of the national liberation struggle of the Greek people.

Why then is it that in spite of this, Greece did not win her independence, freedom and democracy after World War two?

In the autumn of 1944, after three years of armed struggle in the mountains and pitched battles in towns, especially in Athens, the armed forces of the National-Liberation movement of the Greek people (ELAS) freed the country of the Hitler invaders. The sweeping offensive of the Soviet Army in south eastern Europe and in the Balkans, together with the active operations by ELAS inside the country, compelled the Germans to beat a hasty retreat from Greece. Thus the British troops did not have to fight the Germans when they entered our country. In fact the British were least of all concerned with the Nazis. They were preoccupied with other matters in Greece; they set about to disarm and disband ELAS, to bring the people's liberation movement under their control; to make Greece once again economically and politically dependent on foreign imperialism, above all, on the American and British imperialists who held the key positions in the economic and political life of the country. The British and American imperialists tried to turn Greece into a base for struggle against the countries of the people's democracy.

Our Mistakes During the Occupation and in December 1944

The strength of the national liberation movement in Greece lay in the fact that, parallel with the struggle to drive out the Nazi invaders and restore the national honour and independence of the country, it raised the cardinal problems of a people's democracy and, above all, the agrarian problem. The national liberation movement being of such a nature made it possible for EAM (National Liberation Front), to rally the overwhelming majority of the Greek People and draw them into the struggle for their freedom and independence. However, it must be acknowledged that the national liberation movement had its weaknesses. And these weaknesses came to the fore in the autumn of 1944. When the British again landed on Greek territory both EAM (National Liberation Front) and the Communist Party, the leading

elements in the National Liberation Front, displayed indecision, lacked a clear perspective and harboured illusions regarding the object of Anglo-Saxon imperialism in Greece and the role it intended playing in the country.

During those decisive days for Greece, when the people's democratic revolution, covering the overwhelming majority of the population, was advancing victoriously, the Party leadership became dizzy with success. Satisfied with the achievements scored, the Party allowed its revolutionary class vigilance to grow blunt and committed mistakes which had serious consequences, which made it impossible to complete the people's democratic revolution. This explains why ELAS was subordinate to the British command in the Middle East, why pro-British elements were appointed to decisive posts in PEEA (the government of national resistance), which was absolutely contrary to the real relation of forces in the people's liberation camp. Most characteristic too, in this respect are the unjustified concessions made by us during the Lebanon conference when the national government headed by Papandreou was formed. The Communist Party leadership made a mistake when we accepted the Kazerta agreement which conferred full powers on General Scobie, the British commander in Greece.

The leadership of the Greek Communist Party did not have a firm and clear line when estimating the role of British imperialism in Greece. EAM and ELAS should not have allowed the British to land troops in Greece, for there was nothing for them to do in our country which had already been cleared of the German invaders. The sole aim of the British was the suppression of the people's liberation movement.

It was clear from the very outset that the people's liberation movement would sooner or later, be threatened by British imperialism. It should have vigorously prepared to combat the danger. The more active and widespread these preparations, the greater would have been the chances of success and the less the chances of the British to suppress the popular movement while the war against Hitler was still in progress.

Instead of being thus fully prepared, we voluntarily conceded our positions to the British and their local agents – monarcho-fascist reaction – with the result that when in December 1944 an armed clash broke out, we found ourselves at a disadvantage in the military and political field.

But even in December we did not wage a sufficiently resolute struggle. With the exception of the Athens-Piraeus sector the British lived peacefully in Greece. Only an inconsiderable part of the ELAS forces were in action, even in the Athens area. Without doubt had we concentrated our forces, we would have achieved speedy success, liberated Athens and Piraeus and forced the British troops back to sea. But this was not done. The heroic struggle of the people and ELAS units in Athens and Piraeus ended in a military defeat, which compelled us to retreat. This was reflected in the Varkiz agreement, signed on February 12, 1945 between EAM and the British puppet government in Athens. The British acted as the "guarantors" of the agreement.

The Varkiz agreement was the outcome of the military defeat suffered by us as a result of armed intervention by British forces.

For us the Varkiz agreement represented a retreat. But it gave us the chance to reorganise our forces and launch a new offensive after the policy and practice of monarcho-fascism and the British occupation had been exposed without active assistance, and after the vacillating

sections had learned for themselves that EAM path – the path of national independence and popular democracy, was the only correct way to save the people from hunger and slavery.

For Democracy and Peace

EAM elaborated and proclaimed its programme for a people's democracy in Greece. The programme calls for the liberation of the country from foreign economic dependence (expropriation of the foreign colonial concessions), the introduction of an agrarian reform, nationalisation of large scale industry, democratic solution of the national question (Macedonia). EAM raised high the banner of struggle for national independence and state sovereignty, for a lasting peace in the Balkans, for fraternal democratic agreement and cooperation with the neighbouring Balkan Peoples.

EAM systematically led the struggle to consolidate and unite the working people, striving, above all, to strengthen the alliance of workers with the artisans and small tradesmen in the towns and with the peasants in the countryside, directed the full weight of the people's struggle against the exploiters. The democratic front grew stronger and extended its base, as reflected in the establishment of the Greek Federation of Democratic Leagues, which centres its activities around the struggle for democracy and the independence of the country. The Federation is a mass organisation and is headed by General Alexander Ophoneos, former prime Minister and Commander-in-chief of the Greek Army.

The Communist Party decided to dissolve all its rural organisations in order to further the consolidation and organisation of the democratic forces in the countryside. In agreement with the Peasant Party, the Communists in the rural areas joined this party.

The Peasant Party unites all the progressive democratic elements in the countryside. It is fighting for consistent people's democratic reforms in the countryside, stands firmly for a close alliance with the working class which it regards as the basis for the victory of people's democracy in Greece.

The Peasant Party, the biggest mass party in the country today, carries on its activities in close cooperation with the Communist Party.

With the aim of strengthening the Greek Union of the Youth (EPON), to consolidate its bonds with the broad sections of the working-class youth, the Communist Party has relieved its members of this organisation of their routine Party duties to enable them to work in EPON. This measure has favourably influenced the further development of EPON as a genuine people's democratic organisation of the youth.

EAM and all the democratic forces opposed the policy of the British invaders aided by the monarcho-fascists of fomenting internecine war inside the country and preparation for war in the Balkans, with the slogan of national reconciliation, based on the defence of the common interests of the working people and the struggle against the exploitation of the capitalists and the landlords, the struggle for democracy and national independence against Anglo-American imperialism and monarcho-fascism. Considerable sections of the people responded to the call for national reconciliation, and under their pressure, even certain elements in the monarchist, anti-democratic camp.

This call yielded, and continues to yield, positive results, even though in some places, as for instance in Crete, it was interpreted and partly carried out not as a call to unity and struggle for the partial and common demands of the people, but as a form of capitulation to reaction.

Exposing the provocations of the monarcho-fascists and their Anglo-American patrons in the Balkans, EAM launched a widespread campaign in favour of agreement with and cooperation on the part of all the Balkan nations.

The Communist Party, as the leading force in the EAM, fought for the consolidation and development of the forces of democracy. Native reaction and Anglo-Saxon spies, resorting to deception, bribery and violence, tried by every means to undermine the unity in the ranks of EAM and the democratic camp. But without success. The Communist Party succeeded in preserving this unity intact, without making any concessions in its programme and consistent struggle against foreign occupation.

Camp of Reaction and Our Tactics

When analysing the alignment of political forces in Greece, note should be taken of the so-called Republicans, or more correctly speaking, the pseudo-democratic centre, the main force of which is the liberal party headed by Sophoulis.

In September 1947, Sophoulis agreed to collaborate with Tsaldaris, thereby helping the Americans out of the tight corner in which they found themselves as a result of political, military and economic failures of the monarcho-fascists. Sophoulis directed his so-called appeasement policy against the people's democratic movement in general, and against the democratic army in particular, hoping through a pseudo amnesty either to liquidate them or at least, to weaken them considerably.

While struggling against foreign occupation and its main support inside the country – monarcho-fascism – the people's democratic movement at the same time exposed these pseudo-democrats who, by seeking a compromise with the foreign invaders, were helping them to destroy democracy and the national independence of Greece. We succeeded in isolating this pseudo-democratic party from the middle classes.

By carrying out a consistent policy for securing the normal democratic development of the country on the basis of democratic national reconciliation and the establishment of a lasting peace in the Balkans – a policy which has the full confidence of the people – the national democratic movement strengthened its positions. The object of this policy was to expose the foreign occupation forces and monarcho-fascism, which obstructed the carrying out of a democratic home and foreign policy in Greece.

The Communist Party and EAM placed the monarcho-fascists and the foreign occupation forces in a difficult position and exposed them. For instance, in the autumn of 1946 we accepted the conclusions of a British Parliamentary delegation, headed by Cox, as a basis for solving the internal political problems of Greece. The delegation, representing the three main parties in Britain, came to Greece at the official invitation of the Greek Government. The delegation's conclusion, especially in the political sphere, confirmed the views of EAM. Thus, the British occupation forces and monarcho-fascists were exposed and compelled to disown the delegation which they themselves had invited to Greece in the hope that it would whitewash them. The same thing happened to the proposals on the trade union question,

submitted by the representative of the British Ministry of Labour. When the anti-fascist trade unions of Greece accepted these proposals the British immediately rejected them.

It became all the more clear to the broad masses on the basis of concrete examples and facts that the British occupation forces and monarcho-fascists were aiming to establish a fascist regime in the country, were resorting to open terror and assassinations on an ever bigger scale because their policy was not meeting with the support of the people.

Against Anglo-American Invaders and Monarcho-Fascism

The Varkiz agreement was torn to shreds by reaction. Tens of thousands were thrown into prison, hundreds of democrats murdered.

Popular resistance grew. Out of the mass economic and political battles for bread and democratic liberties, out of the armed struggle of individuals, fighters and groups, defending their lives, honour, family and property, was born the Democratic Army, which holds high the banner of struggle for democracy and the independence of Greece. The schemes of the Anglo American imperialists came to nought. They signed the agreement in Varkiz in order to mislead the people's democratic movement. Later, with the help of terror they tried to intimidate us. Their calculations failed because they encountered popular resistance.

The Anglo-Saxons in Greece prepared their crafty schemes; they reckoned that by signing the Varkiz agreement they would curb the popular movement, set up a fascist state apparatus, supported by the foreign bayonets of the new occupation and afterwards, at their discretion and with the approval of "foreign observers", would stage elections and a plebiscite. And so they would emerge clean from the dirty water of the tiresome "Greek question". Simultaneously with this, the British hoped to carry out their imperialist plans aimed at undermining peace on the Balkan peninsula.

The Greek people frustrated these plans. They prevented the Anglo-Americans from solving the Greek question as they wanted to, that is, by forcing falsified elections and afterwards legalising their policy. The election held on March 31, 1946, and described by Prime Minister Sophoulis himself as a faked election, was boycotted not only by the Left parties, but also by the Republican centre. The political meaning of the boycott was that it frustrated the manoeuvre of the Anglo-Saxons and the monarcho-fascists who wanted a "Parliamentary solution" of the Greek question so that later they could place responsibility on the popular democratic camp for the scandals and incompetence of the present Parliament.

The plebiscite followed the elections, and this despite Bevin's categorical declarations that there would be no plebiscite until 1948. The plebiscite was accompanied by a growing terror, especially in the countryside. But the threats and repressions were of no avail. The people refused to be intimidated. A majority of the urban population voted against the monarchy. The foreign invaders and the "foreign observers" once more faked the results of the voting, and the former Glucksburg king, after three expulsions from the country, returned to Greece. The plebiscite was held under conditions when a new armed resistance movement – the partisan movement – was spreading rapidly in the mountains. On October 28, 1946, which was the 6th anniversary of Mussolini's attack on our country, a General Staff of the Greek Democratic Army headed by General Markos, the ELAS leader, was set up in the mountains of Greece. Since then the armed struggle of the Democratic Army for democracy and independence has been the focal point of the Greek political life.

The beginning of 1947, British policy in Greece experienced a serious crisis. As is known, British imperialism came out of World War Two considerably weakened. Britain had to relinquish a number of her positions to American imperialism and because of certain internal weaknesses and contradictions became economically dependent on the USA. At the same time, the resolute resistance of the Greek people against the British invaders and their hirelings inside the country made it impossible for Britain to maintain her domination in the country.

The offensive launched by the Tsaldaris government against the Greek Democratic Army failed. President Truman considered the time was ripe for open interference in the internal affairs of our country.

Intervention by the U.S. undoubtedly encouraged the monarcho-fascists and made certain middle class sections of the population adopt a wait-and-see position. But life dashed the new hopes and upset the new plans of the monarcho-fascists. Their spring and summer offensive in 1947 against the Greek Democratic Army ended in failure.

The Democratic Army reduced to nought the initial successes of the monarcho-fascists and emerged from the struggle stronger than before. Failure led to a new crisis in Athens, and this time the Americans turned to Sophoulis who came forward with an appeasement programme though at the same time he used force. Sophoulis failed in both.

The Greek Democratic Army has successfully extended its operations. It is setting up local organs of state power based on popular councils, is carrying out an agrarian reform and a number of other democratic measures and is leading Greece along the path of a popular democratic regeneration. On December 23, 1947, a provisional democratic government was formed on the liberated territory of Greece.

Military Operations in 1948

At the beginning of 1948 the Americans and the monarcho-fascists began operations to “completely eliminate” the Democratic Army. They started their offensive in Murgan, Central Macedonia and Rumelia. In June 1948 they concentrated their main forces in the Northern Pindus (Smolika-Grammos) to deliver the “final” blow to the Democratic Army.

This operation was personally directed by the American General van Fleet and his staff. The relation of forces favoured the monarcho-fascists, for they had ten times as many men and fifty times as much equipment as the Democratic Army which had neither a single plane nor tank. After a seventy day battle, brigades of the Democratic Army broke the enemy encirclement and seized the mountain of Vitsi, where after two months they repulsed each enemy offensive and eventually forced them to retreat. This was the end of the 1948 campaign of the Americans and monarcho-fascists against the Democratic Army.

The enemies of the people had failed again. The consequences of this failure are now far more serious for the monarcho-fascists than in the past. For it has smashed the legend that with the hope of the Americans, the monarcho-fascists would be able to defeat the Democratic Army and strangle the democratic struggle of the Greek people. For some time this legend coloured the hopes of reaction but such illusions have been scattered by reality.

Never was the crisis in the ranks of Greek reaction so serious as it is today. In spite of all the American dollars, the monarcho-fascist economic basis has been shattered. The poverty of the mass of the people is growing; strikes are developing in the towns; a new mass movement is beginning. The monarcho-fascist troops do not want to fight; mutinies are becoming frequent. Many army officers have been shot during the past few weeks and numerous officers of the navy and air force court-martialled: a group of senior air-force officers was also brought to trial. In the course of the year the high command of the monarcho-fascist army has changed three times.

Neither American threats nor Marshall's visit to Athens have been able to solve the dissension in the enemy camp. The American imperialists are seeing for themselves that they cannot defeat the Democratic Army with the help of the monarcho-fascist rabble. That is why they are now trying openly to interfere in Greece with armed force. For this end they are trying to use the pseudo Balkan Committee, at the same time taking cover behind the United Nations. The chief aim of the American imperialists in Greece is to build airfields, naval bases and military roads for a strategic bridgehead and to use the Greek people as cannon fodder in the new war they are preparing.

At the same time, the Democratic Army has come through the battles of 1948 stronger in every way and still more confident of victory. While it was diverting and pinning down the main enemy forces at Grammos and Vitsi, a wide popular-democratic movement was gaining momentum in other parts of the country. This is especially important in the Peloponnese, in the extreme South of the country, which has now the largest liberated area with a strong army of high fighting capacity. At Grammos the flag of freedom is once again flying.

Never before was the position of the monarcho-fascists so unstable and the Democratic Army so strong. The policy of American domination will meet with fiasco. Monarcho-fascism is being more and more isolated. The Democratic Army calls for genuine democratic agreement favoured by the people.

The slogan "Only the pen (that is, agreement) can solve the problem" which was put forward from the ranks is now steadily taking root among the monarcho-fascist troops. It is also winning increasing support among various sections of the people.

To maintain their positions, the American invaders and the monarcho-fascists are resorting to the most vicious terror. Thousands of people's fighters have been shot. Tens of thousands more are in prison, concentration camps, or in exile. This unprecedented terror has evoked indignation throughout the world, and international opinion, led by the Soviet Union, has come out against this monarcho-fascist brutality.

But neither violence nor terror can bring the Greek people to their knees.

Communist Party Heads the Struggle for Independence and Freedom.

The Communist Party is the chief organizing and political force in the popular democratic movement in Greece. During the Hitler occupation the Greek Communist Party was the first to raise the banner of struggle for independence and for a people's republic.

The Communist Party organised EAM and ELAS, and was the driving force in these organisations. During the most difficult periods Communists were always in the vanguard.

Throughout the anti-Hitler struggle and today, in the struggle against American imperialism, against the British occupation and the monarcho-fascists, the Communists suffered and are suffering heavy losses, losing their best comrades, resolute fighters for the people's cause.

After December 1944, the Communist Party, developing its activities under the difficult conditions of the reactionary offensive, shed its weaknesses and its shortcomings. It has eliminated the mistakes committed in the period of the German occupation, has clearly defined its line, preserved its unity and is consolidating its ranks and strengthening its bonds with the masses. Its principal task now is to further develop and consolidate the national, anti-imperialist democratic front. It must spare no efforts to raise EAM to the level of the united popular political organization in Greece and to strengthen its main body – the politically and organizationally united workers' and peasant front, represented by the Communist and the Peasant Parties. Such a consolidation of the forces of the people's democracy will enable the Democratic Army successfully to solve its tasks.

The Democratic Army has become a regular army. It is waging large scale battles and is resolutely defending the liberated areas. The Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece held in Grammos on July 28 and 29 examined the experience of the struggle, delivered a blow at the opportunist vacillations and took a number of measures to strengthen further the Democratic Army and to raise the struggle to a higher stage.

True, the difficulties are enormous. In their efforts to isolate the Democratic Army from the population, the Americans and the monarcho-fascists have concentrated over 700,000 peasants in the towns. The Democratic Army is short of arms, ammunition, food, equipment and foot wear. However, the strength of the Greek Democratic Army lies in its bonds with the people. At the same time, the morale of the Anglo-American Army fighting against the people, is low. This army has numerical superiority. It is abundantly supplied with foreign arms. And yet the Anglo-American army suffered fiasco in all previous campaigns and will meet with more in the future. The Democratic Army with the Communist Party in its vanguard, is heroically overcoming the difficulties and unswervingly advancing towards the victory of its just cause. The Communist Party is the leading force in the country, it is the brain, honour and conscience of the new Greece.

The present internal and international situation differs greatly from that of December 1944. Then British imperialism, taking advantage of our mistake and our relative isolation, compelled us to retreat temporarily. Since that time the situation in Greece, both economically and politically has been steadily deteriorating. Today a regime of Anglo-American occupation and of monarcho-fascist terror rules the country. The country is experiencing a profound revolutionary crisis.

The popular democratic revolution in Greece has entered into a new phase. This phase dates from the moment when the popular resistance developed into armed struggle and the Greek Democratic Army became the vanguard of this resistance.

Notwithstanding the fact that some people in the West have characterized the struggle of our people as “lacking perspective” the Greek people have seen for themselves of the armed struggle and are firmly confident of their victory. They see the shining example of the victorious popular democratic construction in the people's democracies and they have again taken to arms. They regard this path as the only correct path, which makes it possible to save the country from American imperialist bondage.

The Slogan “All to arms! Everything for victory!” resounds throughout the country. The monarcho-fascist and imperialists’ plans will meet with defeat. Greece will never be a hotbed of fascism nor jumping off ground for imperialist expansion. The people of Greece will never go against the new democracies. This is guaranteed by the struggle and by the blood that is being shed in Greece for the sake of democracy and Independence and peace.

Enjoying the support of the international democratic movement, our people, despite of all hardships, are marching forward, towards the victory of the people's democracy in Greece, towards peace and the fraternal cooperation of the Balkan peoples.