

# 21 April 1967: Military Coup in Greece

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*Proletarians of all countries, unite!*

## 21 April 1967: Military Coup in Greece

April 21 marked the 54th anniversary of the military coup of the Junta of the Obriste in Greece, promoted and supported by the CIA as part of the hegemonist and counter-revolutionary plan of US imperialism put in place by the Kennedy administration since the beginning of the 1960s, which staged the fascist military junta, as a consequence of the development of the class struggle in the country. The proletariat and the masses fought in great storms against the attempt to make Greece an “experimental camp” for imperialism and made important achievements in the process.

## HEGEMONIST AND COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY WORLD PLAN

The victory of the anti-fascist world front in the Second World War led by Stalin, carried out by the Red Army, the partisans and the peoples of the world, brought about profound upheavals and changes on the other hill because of the double character of this war, on the one hand, a world war for the new division of the world and, on the other hand, a war for the defence of the socialist fatherland, the Soviet Union, and for the development of the world revolution. 1949, the triumph of the Chinese Revolution and the transition from the

strategic defensive to the strategic equilibrium of the world proletarian revolution.

Of the imperialist powers, which started the Second World War as a war of new division, many emerged strongly weakened after the war (mainly Germany, but also Britain and France). In this favourable situation, US imperialism became the hegemonic superpower in collusion and struggle with the other imperialist powers to divide up in that part of the world, the legacy of British imperialism, which was economically, politically and militarily very depressed and could no longer keep its colonies and semi-colonies under control and was losing even more influence. The new imperialist superpower – the main thief, US imperialism, follows in the footsteps of its predecessors as a hegemonic superpower and makes use of the most aggressive forms of bourgeois rule. **“Since the victory of World War II, U.S. imperialism and its running dogs in various countries have taken the place of fascist Germany, Italy and Japan and are frantically preparing a new world war and menacing the whole world; this reflects the utter decay of the capitalist world and its fear of imminent doom.”**<sup>i</sup> How correct this assessment of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung was in 1963 was confirmed even more clearly in the 1967 military coup in Greece. Driven by the growing inter-imperialist contradiction, the rise of the national liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonies with the internationalist support of socialist China under the leadership of Chairman Mao, as well as the mass movements and rebellions in the imperialist countries, US imperialism adapted its worldwide counter-revolutionary offensive started in the late 1940s of the previous century to the new circumstances. The basis of this counter-revolutionary offensive is expressed, politically, in the so-called “Truman Doctrine”, economically in the Marshall Plan and militarily in the foundation of NATO in 1949. *“At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. (...) If we falter in our leadership, we*

*may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this Nation.*“<sup>ii</sup> Truman, the head of US imperialism at the time, expresses the role of the United States as the imperialist superpower. And, of course, this “choice between alternative ways of life” is not “free”, but is determined by the class struggle and its internal laws.

The necessity of adjusting the hegemonist and counter-revolutionary world plan of US imperialism has arisen, on the one hand, because of the development of the inter-imperialist contradiction, since not only the other imperialist powers mentioned above, barely recovered from the consequences of the war, have come to question their hegemony, but also a new superpower has appeared to dispute the world hegemony on all continents and seas, on the other hand, the world revolution is developing in the stage of strategic equilibrium and within it, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976), led personally by Chairman Mao, has begun and in the course of which Maoism emerged as the highest peak of the ideology of the proletariat, as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, mainly Maoism, which at that time was called Mao-Tsetung-Thought. As the third, new and higher stage of the ideology of the proletariat.

Regarding the international situation and the development of the fundamental contradictions at that time, what Chairman Mao said ten years earlier in a similar case applies, because it was not an indirect imperialist intervention as in the case of the Obrists Coup, but a direct aggression, when the Chairman said the following:

**“Third, the international situation. In the Middle East, there was that Suez Canal incident. A man called Nasser nationalized the canal, another called Eden sent in an invading army, and close on his heels came a third called Eisenhower who decided to drive the British out and have the place all to himself. The British bourgeoisie, past masters of machination and**

manoeuvre, are a class which knows best when to compromise. But this time they bungled and let the Middle East fall into the hands of the Americans. What a colossal mistake! Can one find many such mistakes in the history of the British bourgeoisie? How come that this time they lost their heads and made such a mistake? Because the pressure exerted by the United States was too much and they lost control of themselves in their anxiety to regain the Middle East and block the United States. Did Britain direct the spearhead chiefly at Egypt? No. Britain's moves were against the United States, much as the moves of the United States were against Britain.

From this incident we can pin-point the focus of struggle in the world today. The contradiction between the imperialist countries and the socialist countries is certainly most acute. But the imperialist countries are now contending with each other for the control of different areas in the name of opposing communism. What areas are they contending for? Areas in Asia and Africa inhabited by 1,000 million people. At present their contention converges on the Middle East, an area of great strategic significance, and particularly on Egypt's Suez Canal Zone. In the Middle East, two kinds of contradictions and three kinds of forces are in conflict. The two kinds of contradictions are: first, those between different imperialist powers, that is, between the United States and Britain and between the United States and France and, second, those between the imperialist powers and the oppressed nations. The three kinds of forces are: one, the United States, the biggest imperialist power, two, Britain and France, second-rate imperialist powers, and three, the oppressed nations. Asia and Africa are today the main areas of imperialist contention. National independence movements have emerged in these regions. The methods the United States employs are now violent, now non-violent, and this is the game it is playing in the Middle East. (...) We certainly will support the anti-imperialist struggles of the people in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the revolutionary struggles of

**the people of all countries.**

**(...) In short, our assessment of the international situation is still that the embroilment of the imperialist countries contending for colonies is the greater contradiction. They try to cover up the contradictions between themselves by playing up their contradictions with us. We can make use of their contradictions, a lot can be done in this connection.”<sup>iii</sup>**

Moreover, in 1967, the US's struggle with Soviet social-imperialism became increasingly acute, a factor which must be taken into account when dealing with the Middle East or the Mediterranean region, defined by Chairman Mao as being of great strategic importance.

## **Background**

In 1944 the guerrilla war in Greece won victory against the beast of the German occupiers with the help of the Allies.<sup>iv</sup> Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Greece (CPG), the guerrilla movement achieved such strength that it was able to seize power in a large part of the country (including the capital Athens) and to initiate the first steps towards the implementation of its popular anti-fascist programme. Battered British imperialism, preoccupied with the struggle for its own survival, continued to lose its economic, political and military power in order to keep Greece under control and to contain the anti-fascist popular front. In these conditions, the development of the national bourgeoisie also experienced a temporary upsurge, which further increased the pressure on Britain. This was followed by a four-year civil war between the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist forces led by the Communist Party and the mercenaries of British imperialism, who turned to the United States for help. After years of self-sacrificing struggle against the cruel terror of the Nazi beast, the Greek people were even more convinced to follow the path of the completion of the democratic revolution and its

uninterrupted passage to socialism, fighting heroically to defend the victories they had won. The fact that the communist and revolutionary forces in the country suffered a defeat in the civil war and that a period of more acute persecution and repression could follow was not a direct result of the class struggle on the international level but of the class struggle in the country itself, since the external factor acts as a conditioner and the internal factor as a determinant. One of the facts that deepened the problems in the hill of the people, we think, mainly of the leadership, was that the revisionist Tito clique cut off one of the main ways of supplying arms to the Communist Party of Greece, which pushed more and more the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) to adopt a military defensive (attitude) and finally led to the military defeat, consequence of not relying mainly on own forces by applying independence, self-decision and self-support understanding the strategic character of the guerrilla warfare. Which clearly shows errors in the military line by not retaining the initiative. The Greek civil war is thus an important and bloody example of the international significance of the teachings of comrade Stalin and Chairman Mao Tsetung on the counter-revolutionary role of Tito revisionism, the first revisionism in power. How profound the significance of the development of the struggle against Tito revisionism and, therefore, the uncompromising struggle against the first revisionism in power, as developed by ComInform, was amply confirmed a little later when revisionism usurped the Party and the state in the Soviet Union. Much of the leadership of the Communist Party of Greece followed the revisionist and counter-revolutionary path of Khrushchev, and "new" theses such as "peaceful coexistence", "peaceful emulation" with imperialism and "peaceful parliamentary transition" to socialism. The three peaceful and the two all Khrushchev revisionism, which became instruments of the struggle to prevent revolution. US imperialism, in particular, knew the contribution of revisionism as an "internal weapon" against socialism and the world revolution: **"Nikita Khrushchev has**

**destroyed, irrevocably, the uni-fied bloc of Stalin's day. That is perhaps Khrushchev's greatest service – not to Communism, but to the Western world.”<sup>v</sup>**

Under pressure from the strong drive of important sections of the Greek masses for national independence and socialism, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie was forced to abandon the monarchical form of government and replace the representatives of the conservative government with the social democrat Georgis Papandreou in order to appease the masses with national and social phrases. In the two years before the military coup, six changes of government expressed the deep political crisis that was beginning to unfold, one of the two necessary conditions that indicate a developing revolutionary situation. That is to say, the enormous instability of the political representatives reflected a weak bureaucratic capitalism based on a weak economic structure.

### **Military coup of the Obrists Junta**

In the plans of US imperialism to prepare for a new imperialist world war, Greece played a decisive strategic role in Europe, at the same time as the bureaucratic bourgeoisie was too weak to enforce this role. A clique of CIA-linked big bourgeoisie, fascist mercenaries and former high-ranking Nazis around the fascist and CIA agent Georgios Papadopoulos should fulfil this task, with the support of parts of the Greek army that are particularly loyal to NATO. After months of sharp class struggle and broad popular movements, the Junta of the Obrists within the framework of the NATO plan “Prometheus” on April 21, took over the reins of the state by a coup and established a fascist military junta. The “Prometheus Plan” had three main aims as a necessity of the US imperialism: 1) Militarily, it was supposed to transform Greece into a base for the USA in Europe during the “Cold War”. In relation to the role of the US and Britain in the Middle East, the timing

of the coup was no coincidence, and the Six-Day War broke out less than two months later. 2) Politically, it should control class and popular struggles and make Greece a “bulwark of anti-communism”, so the crushing, persecution, arrest and demoralisation of the Communist Party and the masses led by it was the supreme state principle. 3) Economically, Greece was to be integrated more firmly into the capitalist world economy under American hegemony under the Marshall Plan. Within this framework, the Junta of the Obrists and the coup d'état had three aims as a necessity of imperialism and reaction: 1) the fascist restructuring of the Greek state. 2) the development of bureaucratic capitalism and 3) the suppression of the revolution. The main instrument used to suppress the development of the national bourgeoisie and to promote the development of bureaucratic capitalism was the export of US capital to Greece. For example, Coca-Cola invested in the military dictatorship and created a subsidiary there, which remained the company with the highest sales in Greece until the economic crisis of 2008. But also the deindustrialisation of Greece (mainly in the shipping industry) was promoted by the junta, while sectors such as tourism became one of the most important economic sectors in Greece. Given these framework conditions, it should come as no surprise that labour migration from Greece to the imperialist countries under the junta developed even more extensively than before, as it was one of the main reasons why many European imperialists not only accepted the military dictatorship, but by far more widely supported it. For example, the FRG concluded a “conscription agreement” with Greece in 1960, whereby the biggest wave of emigration of migrant workers and political refugees was recorded in the junta years (which is why, at the same time, international solidarity against the military junta in Greece developed particularly in Germany).<sup>vi</sup> In order to counteract the labour shortage that was greatly aggravated by mass migration, the Junta of the Obrists relied on a mode of “international migratory movement” that is all

too common today: 300,000 cheap workers were recruited from Africa alone.

The social base of the Junta of the Obrists in Greece was relatively narrow and weak from the beginning. The clique of leaders around Papadopoulos came largely from that part of the Greek army that had been commanded and financed by NATO since 1952.<sup>vii</sup> With the help of its instrument NATO, US imperialism was able to circumvent a complex, costly and politically unfavourable occupation by having the NATO parts of the Greek army fulfil this role, i.e. it resorted to indirect intervention using internal contradictions. The royal house under Constantine II represented Britain as a puppet of declining British imperialism, which initially had to come to terms with the junta, but fled abroad after a failed counter-coup attempt. With the Orthodox Church and the Vatican, the obrists found important allies in the ideological suppression of the mainly rural population. Especially at the beginning, the junta was still able to rely on parts of the middle and rich peasantry, of which, however, in the course of development, the middle peasantry increasingly came into conflict with the military junta. In short, the military junta was able to briefly fulfil the goal of forced "political stabilisation" of bureaucratic capitalism, but at the same time it brought about an even deeper aggravation of the contradictions within itself.

### **Anti-fascist and anti-imperialist resistance against fascist military junta**

Class struggles in Greece had erupted since the 1960s, deepening the acute political crisis in the country. The workers' and peasants' movement, the struggle of the students and the intellectuals were put down with brutal repression by the government headed by the representatives of one of the factions of the big bourgeoisie, even in the years before the

junta, the assassinations of representatives of the popular movement were a common means of deterrence. The political system of alternating "two parties" (conservatives and social democrats), as it was generally established in the frontline NATO states and also used in Greece for "political stabilisation" in the early 1960s, was less and less able to fulfil its function as conciliator and became itself an expression of the political crisis. The "quick solution" of the political crisis by the fascist military junta increased all these struggles in new conditions.

While the mass movement became more and more radicalised and directed the main axis of its struggle against US imperialism and the fascist government which is mainly a servant of this imperialism, the revisionists, opportunists and social-democrats tried to orient the masses towards the possibility of a "soft democratic conversion of the dictatorship". "but leaving intact the rule of US imperialism". The slogans that were taken up on a large scale by the Greek people ("Yankees go home!" "NATO out!") were fought against by the forces of the revisionists. On the contrary, confusion was created and applied: in fact, on the day of the coup, the reformist and revisionist FDFA published a leaflet entitled "The reasons why there will be no coup". The Organisation of Marxist-Leninists of Greece (OMLE), founded in opposition to the revisionist and counter-revolutionary GCP of 1964, which represents the proletarian red line that oriented the masses towards the revolutionary overthrow of US imperialism and fascism:

*"The first is that parallel to the denunciation of the present fascist regime, every other possible solution against the people, in every form and with every person that appears, must be denounced. The second is that the more the manoeuvres of American fascism are restricted, the more the anti-fascist anti-imperialist movement breaks out, the more the fascist regime will resort to violence, terrorism and repression, which will be the dominant side of political power, whether it*

*will keep its current character or bring Karamanlis or get a pseudo-parliamentary mask. This means that the periodic changes were and will be only apparent, and the climate of legitimacy they can produce, a climate that systematically promotes and cultivates bourgeois opposition and revisionism, must not deceive the consistent anti-fascist-anti-imperialists, who must continue the struggle unabated, with the prospect of a long-term conflict with the forces of fascist violence, exploitation and oppression, until their radical and final overthrow."*

Chairman Gonzalo masterfully taught on this issue that communists must be clear about the character of the old state in order to be able to reject and combat opportunism in its various manifestations. **"To not see the old State in this way [as a class state; clarifying note] is to fall into the trap of identifying a dictatorship with a military regime and to think that a civilian government is not a dictatorship, thus tailing behind one of the factions in the big bourgeoisie behind the tale of "defending democracy" or "avoiding military coups," positions that instead of destroying the old State support it and defend it. Such is the case in Peru with the revisionists and opportunists of the United Left."** [viii](#)

One of the most decisive ideological and political achievements of OMLE in the midst of the struggle against imperialism and revisionism was the broad implementation of the orientation of the masses in the struggle against "American fascism". Because the fascist military regime was promoted and supported by the US imperialism, the main imperialism exercising the imperialist domination over Greece (semi-colony), that the US imperialism continued in the advance of the decadence of the British imperialism, even if the obrists swore a thousand times on the "sanctity of Greece". It was not "Greek capitalism" that experienced a temporary boom under the fascist military junta, but bureaucratic capitalism that developed mainly through the

export of American finance capital, with the continuation of the great influence of British imperialist finance capital. The national bourgeoisie, on the other hand, was further constrained, a development that deepened with every new imperialist campaign against Greece (nowadays, especially since the world economic crisis of 2008/09). Chairman Gonzalo teaches in relation to this, for the world proletarian revolution the crucial question, Why capitalism in a nation dominated by imperialism is inevitably a bureaucratic capitalism: **“Because the capitalism that develops is a delayed process that only allows an economy to serve imperialist interests. It is a capitalism that represents the big bourgeoisie, the landowners and the rich peasants of the old type, the classes that constitute a minority but which exploit and oppress the large majority, the masses.”**<sup>ix</sup> —

## **Conclusions**

The lessons of the struggle against the Greek military fascist regime in 1967 can only be properly taken up today with Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and correctly applied in the service of the sweeping away of the imperialist world system. Maoism has developed the scientific theory of bureaucratic capitalism and new democratic revolution of great importance for the world proletarian revolution. Under this prerequisite, the lessons of the anti-revisionist struggle of the Marxist-Leninist organisation of Greece, which correctly developed the struggle against opportunism on this issue in the first steps, must be firmly taken into account.

The new democratic revolution is in the present epoch the main force within the world proletarian revolution and is indispensable for sweeping imperialism out of the oppressed countries. The resistance to the military coup in Greece was an example of the fact that the oppressed peoples and nations (and with it the question of the new democratic revolution) also encompass significant parts of Europe and that

opportunism on this question is intended to lead to the limitation and moderation of the main force and basis of the world revolution. Communists, especially those in Europe, should pay close attention to this and develop it as part of proletarian internationalism and the solid unity between socialist and new democratic revolution under the leadership of the proletariat represented by the Communist Party. The importance of the struggle against opportunism was also characterised by the Austrian communists in the first essential aspects. *"The opportunists want to have "capitalist countries", since thus – against the background of a very dogmatic conception – the socialist, not the democratic revolution is "indisputably" in the offing. They can thus orient themselves towards that type of revolution which at present does not form the main current of the world proletarian revolution, but its secondary side. If opportunism orients itself towards this "side" and makes a virtue of its limitations and shortcomings, socialism as the next stage becomes a residual place. Opportunism here takes refuge from the irresistible current of New Democracy, takes refuge from the difficult task of completing the democratic revolution and sweeping imperialism out of the countries. It is a capitulation before the democratic revolution under socialist phrase."*<sup>x</sup>

The lessons of the struggle against the fascist military junta are proving to be very topical, especially under the impression of the renewed and extensive looting campaign of US imperialism and the EU imperialists in Greece since the world economic crisis of 2008/09. In the course of the 2008/09 crisis and the explosion of the class struggle in Greece, the most aggressive bourgeois newspapers raised the mood for foreign military intervention, which shows how quickly "options" similar to that of 1967 are re-entering the bourgeois debate. The Greek proletariat and people show today, as then, their deep hatred of the imperialist robbers and plunderers and, in their untiring fighting activity, are an

important point of reference for the revolutionary and popular movements in other countries. Firmly gathering the lessons of the struggle against the fascist military regime of 1976 on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism means sharpening the weapons with which imperialism will be wiped off the face of the earth!

iMao Tse-Tung: "REVOLUTIONARY FORCES OF THE WORLD UNITE, FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALIST AGGRESSION!"; *November 1948*

iiHarry S. Truman: Speech on 12 March 1947; Truman Doctrine

iiiMAO TSE-TUNG: "TALKS AT A CONFERENCE OF SECRETARIES OF PROVINCIAL, MUNICIPAL AND AUTONOMOUS REGION PARTY COMMITTEES, II. THE TALK OF JANUARY 27"; January 1957

ivThe significance of the victory in the guerrilla war in Greece is even more important through the fact that Nazi-fascism wiped out more than 7% of the population.

v"Moscow and Peking: How Wide the Split?", Newsweek, March 26, 1962. Quoted from THE POLEMIC ON THE GENERAL LINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

viIn 1967 there were still 200,961 Greeks living and working in Germany, which doubled in the years of the fascist military junta to 407,614 in 1973.

viiOnly 3 out of 16 Divisions of the Greek army were under direct command of the Greek government, the remaining 13 largest being integrated into NATO forces. US military aid averaged 100 million dollars a year.

viiiGeneral Political Line of the Communist Party of Peru, Line of the Democratic Revolution; 1988

ixibid.

[x](#)“Opportunism and Bureaucratic Capitalism in the Balkans and Eastern Europe”; Committees for the Foundation of the (Maoist) Communist Party of Austria, 2018

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