

# 'The two faces of modern Greece' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (31 October 1947)

**Caption:** On 31 October 1947, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung gives an account of the Greek civil war.

**Source:** Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. FRIEDMANN, Werner; GOLDSCHAGG, Edmund; SCHÖNINGH, Dr. Franz Joseph; SCHWINGENSTEIN, August. 31.10.1947, n° 92; 3. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Die zwei Gesichter des heutigen Griechenlands", auteur:Michelat, Jean , p. 3.

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### The two faces of modern Greece

*A special report for the 'Süddeutsche Zeitung' by Jean Michelat*

Greece has not yet found peace after the war. Guerrilla warfare against the German occupation was succeeded by a bloody internecine conflict between the extreme right-wing government and the Left, which prevented any peaceful development. The capital city, Athens, is but a gleaming facade, giving off an aura of luxury and lively cheerfulness in the midst of a country which is degenerating in misery. A nightspot on the beach near Athens, where I was dining, would have made the most beautiful backdrop for a love scene in Hollywood with a swing orchestra, dimmed lights, Corinthian stucco columns and young girls with charming smiles whose legs have become legendary. In these parts, black marketeers spend 100 000 drachmas for their evening's entertainment. Elsewhere in the country, refugees have no bread, while the children go barefoot and are dying from rickets.

The persistent conflict in almost every corner of Greece between government troops and the guerrillas is much more like the fight against German occupation than like an ordinary civil war, such as the one that affected Spain. The towns are in the hands of the government groups, while the rebels, called *Andartes*, are holed in the 'maquis' in the mountains and have also got their secret organisations in the cities.

Measures to put a 'definitive' end to the rebels' activities have been repeatedly proclaimed by the Greek Government, and Mount Olympus is actually being systematically cleared. During the night, however, the *Andartes* have repeatedly managed to leave the threatened areas and regroup elsewhere. At present, the army is limiting itself to retaining a number of towns with strategic key positions so that it can provide necessary protection for the convoys of lorries, the only means of transport, other than aircraft, which can provide a link with the north of the country. In practice, one-sixth of the country is under rebel control. General Markos, the 'supreme commander' of the guerrillas, has set up his own courts, field hospital, newspapers and headquarters in the mountains. All these establishments are inaccessible to the government troops and make it unnecessary for the guerrilla to occupy any towns. The fight against the rebels is becoming visibly more difficult.

The interference in the internal conflict of countries adjacent to Greece has led, as we all know, to heated international discussions before the United Nations. However, we must not imagine that this interference would take the same form as that in the Spanish civil war. There is much talk of an international brigade fighting on the side of the rebels. So far, however, *not one single foreigner* has been confirmed as fighting in the Greek maquis; only Slav-speaking volunteers have joined the rebels, members of Greek minorities who speak a dialect resembling Bulgarian. Even so, the Yugoslav Government has appealed to the whole of Europe's Communist Youth to form an international work brigade to construct a road from Bosnia. There is, of course, the possibility that this brigade will one day be armed and will come to the aid of the Greek *Andartes*. It is true that arms and equipment for the rebels are being supplied by Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria. It is difficult, however, to determine to what extent this is happening; after all, the Balkans is strewn with discarded German and Italian arms. The truth of the matter is that the guerrillas now possess much more heavy artillery than at the start of the uprising. Also, it cannot be denied that guerrillas are being trained in Yugoslavia. In December 1945, many Communist guerrillas who, after the disbandment of 'ELAS' fighting units, had refused to surrender to the extreme right-wing government, went to Yugoslavia and assembled north of Belgrade at the Boulkes Camp. Although interned there by the Yugoslavs, their military training soon became the main concern of their guards. In 1946, the old members of 'ELAS' were then transported back to the Greek border, which they crossed, and formed a new maquis in the mountains.

The victims of this situation are the Greek civilians, who are still being disconcerted in many ways by the political actions of the government. There are currently about 70 000 people imprisoned in Greece, and 30 000 people deemed politically unreliable have been deported to the islands. The living conditions of the deportees are fairly tolerable, although widespread famine prevails because of serious overpopulation on the small islands. In the prisons and concentration camps, however, the conditions are simply deplorable.

Hygiene is particularly atrocious and is only slightly improved by extensive use of the disinfectant DDT. Country dwellers are being terrorised by the guerrillas who rape, steal and kill to an unimaginable extent, and even the government troops are often anything but the people's friends. Country dwellers are fleeing in great numbers from the villages: some are going to the towns, where they live as refugees in very poor conditions, others go over to the guerrillas where they will at least sell their lives dearly. Crops are no longer being harvested, cattle are being slaughtered, villages deserted — Greece has 200 000 refugees out of a population of seven million. An atmosphere of fear and terror fills the flat country, because civilians' lives are at the mercy of the next armed gang or troop of soldiers.