

perhaps, but certainly with the emotions; something will get positively pulled into shape, patched together, to hold on to against time and death." In her own Mammoth Cave, Eudora Welty has been lighting candles against time and death all these years.

Reviewed by LEWIS A. LAWSON

Each Alike Was Greek . . .

By Fire and Axe: The Communist Party and the Civil War in Greece, 1944-1949, by Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza, translated by Sarah A. Rigos, *New York: Caratzas Brothers, Publishers, 1978. xxi + 438 pp. \$15.00.*

CONTEMPORARY HISTORIANS in Greece have been extremely hesitant about dealing with the civil war which bitterly divided the country in the 1940's. Until recent years it was unacceptable—and it is still unfashionable—even to admit that there was a civil war: the "anti-bandit struggle" is the conventional name for it. It has been left to honorable politicians like Panaghiotis Kanellopoulos to give expression to the unpopular truth, and to foreign historians (including a number of American scholars of Greek descent) to write the history of those unhappy years. Now their number is joined by a Greek who is both an honorable politician and a scholarly historian.

I must, to adopt a parliamentary convention, begin by declaring an interest. Mr. Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza is an old friend of mine. When we were much younger, we were both associated with General Napoleon Zervas in the resistance to the German occupation. He discussed his intention of writing this book with me before he started it. We were also associated at that time in the struggle against the military dictatorship of the notorious Colonels. So I am not entirely disinterested as a critic.

I have read *By Fire and Axe* both in Greek and in French before approaching the present admirable translation, which benefits from some significant additions since the original publication in 1974. It still seems to me a remarkable fact that there is hardly a single statement in it with which I would disagree.

The author is sound not only in matters of detail but also architectonically, to use a Greek expression, in his presentation of the wider structure of events. The civil war was a continuous affair from the early days of the German occupation in 1941 to the Communist collapse in 1949. The Communists used to talk of "three rounds," of which the first took place during the German occupation (1941-1944), the second in December 1944, the third from 1946 to 1949. Although the Communists no longer adhere to this pattern of historiography, it serves a useful purpose, and Averoff-Tossizza rightly retains it.

He starts, then, with a full account of the first round, when the Communists tried to secure a predominant position in Greece, much as Tito did in Yugoslavia, before the Germans left. It is certainly impossible to understand the events of 1946-1949 without first grasping the events of 1941-1944. And it is nearly impossible in any case to understand the Communists' aberration in launching the second round—the rising in Athens in December 1944—in any remotely plausible way, though the author does his best with it.

There is a sense in which the whole story seems to have the inevitability characteristic of a Greek tragedy. The latent conflicts which emerged into violent confrontation simply could not be exorcised, any more than could those which led to the English and American civil wars, the French and Russian revolutions, or even the more recent struggles in Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and Rhodesia. In such cases the only alternative to conflict is surrender by one side or the other.

But the Greek conflict was made particularly cruel by the involvement of Hitler and Stalin. The many follies of other participants pale into insignificance beside the cynical villainy of those two men. Without Hitler there would have been no occupation and no divided

resistance. Without Stalin there would have been no onslaught "by fire and axe." Nor would tens of thousands of Greeks, innocent or misled, have died to gratify their ambitions.

The recognition of the rôle of these evil men makes it possible for Averoff-Tossizza to adopt a fair-minded stance towards those whom he necessarily regards as enemies in the civil war. He treats leading Greek communists like Aris Veloukhiotis and Markos Vaphiadis with a respect and even sympathy which will seem striking to anyone familiar with Greek habits of controversy. He is equally fair in the opposite sense towards his own former leader, Zervas, for whom his admiration stops well short of adulation. The description of him as "fearless but not flawless" illuminates not only Zervas' character but also the author's judgment and his translator's skill.

His account of the leading figures on the government side is also judicious: not only the Generals at the top, such as Papagos and Tsakalotos, but others of all ranks. A notable officer who fully deserves the author's high opinion is Major (now Major-General) Koumanakos, who played an equally distinguished part in the war against the Axis, the Greek civil war, and the later struggle against the military dictatorship (1967-74). It is a remarkable irony of history that while heroes of the earlier struggles like Koumanakos were exiled and imprisoned under the notorious Colonels, a number of the Communists who fought against them were among the Colonels' most fervent supporters. The rôle of Averoff-Tossizza under the military dictatorship was also one which evoked admiration.

As my examples will have shown, his book benefits from personal experience, which is never obtrusive but often sheds new light on complex episodes. A notable case is the story of the attempt to blow up the Grande Bretagne Hotel in Athens during the rising of December 1944. The hotel housed many British officers and was a natural target for attack, but the attempt failed. The author adds a new and convincing paragraph to the story based on information which was not available to him when the Greek and French editions were published. There are other examples as well, in-

cluding an account of his conversations with a leading Communist of the 1920's about the attitude of the KKE to the Macedonian question, and of a debate in Parliament in 1960 during which he himself challenged the Communists to explain why they refused to support their country's war against Mussolini in Albania.

A few small errors call for remedy, as well as one or two matters of judgment which may be questioned. It is not correct to say that in 1943 both ELAS and Zervas refused a British request to attack the Asopos railway bridge. ELAS indeed refused, but no request was put to Zervas because he would have had to enter territory controlled by ELAS, which would have provoked a clash between them. (This was at a date when ELAS was engaged in systematically destroying all nationalist forces which would not accept their control.) It is also not correct to say that Siantos, the Secretary-General of the KKE, accompanied the delegation of the resistance to the Middle East in August 1943. He did not go, though he certainly dictated the policy of the Communist delegates from afar.

Among the points that may perhaps be questioned is the assumption that Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania were "on excellent terms with each other" in 1946, and were therefore acting in concert. The first two had already quarrelled in private over the control of Macedonia, and the Albanians had many reasons to distrust the Yugoslavs. Their conflicts did not come out into the open until Tito's expulsion from the Cominform, but they were already there under the surface.

Finally, it still remains uncertain when the KKE decided to launch a full-scale "third round." The date conventionally assumed has long been February 12, 1946, at a meeting of the party's Central Committee. Averoff-Tossizza carries the decision further back to December 15, 1945, when a meeting of leading Greek Communists with Yugoslav and Bulgarian officers took place at Petrich. The difficulty about both these dates is that such a long time elapsed before serious operations began. Apart from a bloody incident at Litokhoros, beneath Mount Olympus, at the end of March,

very little happened until the late autumn of 1946. I am inclined to think that the outbreak of the civil war was a more haphazard and less carefully planned process than it was later made to appear. This accords with the reminiscence of Vlandas, a leading Communist who was present at the meeting on February 12th. He recorded that the discussion of military action was very cursory and revealed only an almost total lack of preparation.

There can be no argument, however, with the author's analysis of the circumstances in which the rebellion was defeated. He gives first place to the determination of the general mass of the Greek people not to succumb. In contrast with that was the decline of the will to win on the part of the rebels, especially as they became increasingly dependent on the Slavo-Macedonian minority for manpower, and were consequently forced once more to concede the principle of Macedonian autonomy. Among the secondary factors were the quarrel between Tito and Stalin, which led to the closure of the frontier between Greece and Yugoslavia; the incompatibility of the two leading Communists, Zakhariadis and Markos Vaphiadis, which was tactical and political as well as personal; and the scale of American support after the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947. That foreign aid without an indigenuous will to win would have been insufficient is well illustrated by the contrasting experience of Vietnam twenty years later.

The Greek civil war was indeed a paradigm of the early years of the international conflict known as the Cold War. It is therefore necessary to see it in its international setting, which Averoff-Tossizza is eminently qualified to do. As foreign minister, he participated in the negotiations which led to the independence of Cyprus in 1960; as minister of defense he had had to handle both the aftermath of the military dictatorship and the renewed quarrel with Turkey. He is a familiar figure in the corridors of power in foreign capitals as well as in Athens. Only a Greek of international stature could have written this book. That he has also gifts of style and imagination makes it a pleasure to read.

Reviewed by C. M. WOODHOUSE