

Greece: the verdict

From CAMPBELL PAGE: Strasbourg, April 15

As Greece remains a signatory of the Human Rights Convention until the middle of this year, and technically remains a member of the Council of Europe until January 1, 1971, the Committee urged Greece to abolish torture and maltreatment of prisoners, and to restore human rights and fundamental freedom without delay.

But because Greece—when it voluntarily withdrew from the Council of Europe at the Committee of Ministers meeting in December, and at other times—has denounced the basis of the Council, the contents of the report, and the soundness of the Human Rights Commission, the committee also saw no point in prescribing a period within which the guilty country should take remedial measures.

Unjustified

Greece was declared to be unjustified under article 15 of the convention—which allows members to suspend certain provisions of the convention "in time of war or other public emergency threatening the life of the nation."

France abstained from voting on the resolution because, not having ratified the Human Rights Convention itself, it felt unable to vote on a report by the Commission. The French delegate later explained that France condemned violation of human rights in Greece and hoped for the return of the rule of law.

Cyprus, which traditionally does not wish to appear to be meddling in Greek affairs, provided the only other abstention at the meeting, where 17 countries were represented. Turkey was not deterred by any similar reason of discretion from voting for the resolution.

M. Jean - Jacques Servan-Schreiber, leader of the French Radical Party, arriving for his own press conference, swept through the sunny hall of the Maison de l'Europe like a confident Pied Piper, as well he might after returning from Greece on Monday with the composer Mikis Theodorakis.

He welcomed the Committee's resolution as "sensible and positive," but developed his own line less by attacking the US

than by enthusiastically praising the moral power of Europe: the resolution was a manifestation of the European conscience, but the Council of Europe should grasp the fact that American influence in Greece, the US's principal Mediterranean base, and elsewhere was a threat to Europe and the whole world, and should act on it.

M. Servan-Schreiber said the timetable for his next visit to Athens was fixed, but he could not yet divulge it.

Violations

The Committee of Ministers found Greece had violated articles of the Human Rights Convention that prohibited torture and inhuman or degrading treatment and discrimination and that guaranteed the right to liberty and security, to a fair trial, to privacy, family life, home and correspondence, freedom of thought, opinion, and expression, freedom of assembly and association, the right to an effective remedy, and the right to free elections.

Greece had not violated articles guaranteeing the right to property and prohibiting the retroactive use of the criminal law.

The Committee, attended by Mr George Thompson for Britain, urged the Greek Government to restore human rights, to abolish torture and ill-treatment immediately, and to release prisoners detained under administrative order—these are the thousands of people unaffected by Mr Papadopoulos's recently announced amnesty.

It also endorsed a schedule of proposals from the Human Rights Commission calling for an independent judiciary, limitations of courts-martial, closer control of the police, and free elections as soon as possible.

M. Gaston Thorn, the Luxembourg Foreign Minister, who is president of the Committee of Ministers, said afterwards that the committee had taken recent measures in Greece into account. The present resolution was "a sanction," and Greece could return to the Council of Europe. "If all we ask is done, Greece's return will be very quick."

Damning indictment of 'torture reign'

The report of the European Human Rights Commission on torture and the general situation in Greece is impressive in its thoroughness and damning in its conclusions.

In its four volumes, reaching 1,100 pages of text and 37 pages of evocative pictures of the notorious fourth floor of the headquarters of the Security Police in Bouboulinas Street and of the police centre in Piraeus, the report embodies an investigation started 2½ years ago by complaints against Greece from the Scandinavian and Dutch Governments.

Two conclusions, which enabled the committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to act so firmly against Greece today, are: "The Commission has found it established beyond doubt that torture or ill-treatment contrary to Article 3 had been inflicted in a number of cases." And later: "The respondent Government has not satisfied the commission by the evidence submitted that there was a public emergency threatening the life of the Greek nation."

The first of these conclusions enabled the Ministers to confirm what has been widely believed in Western Europe. The second enabled the committee to sweep aside the Greek defence under Article 15 of the Human Rights Convention enabling member states to suspend certain provisions guaranteeing human rights.

The commission records 213 claims of torture. It examined 30 cases in detail, found 11 of these proved, and noted another 17 needing further investigation.

In its report it records obstruction by the Greek Government, the Government's failure to remedy present conditions, and official tolerance of police methods. Falanga—the beating of the sole of the feet—

and severe beatings of all parts of the body—are the commonest forms of torture described in evidence to the commission.

But other forms also appeared. "For example, the application of electric shocks, squeezing of the head in a vice, pulling out the hair from the head or pubic region, of kicking of the male genital organs, putting water on the head, and intense noises to prevent sleep."

Prejudice claim

Greece now denounces the Council of Europe and the European Human Rights Commission for partiality and prejudice. Nevertheless it thought differently when it submitted a stream of letters making 38 pages of evidence, to persuade the Council of Europe that the invoking of Article 15 was justified.

It is interesting to see the regime calling on its historical argument—that the coup had to happen in order to save the body politic. The Greeks claimed that "it was natural that the necessity—a most vital necessity—should arise for a radical cure, and this necessity was met at the most critical moment by the resolution of April 21, 1967."

In its examination of the fourth floor of headquarters of the Security Police in Athens,

frequently named as a scene of torture by detainees, the commission said that it was told that the revving of a motorcycle engine was often heard at the same time as the cries of

The commission, in one typical case as bearing prima facie evidence of ill-treatment, cites the evidence of Yannis Pappadopoulos. He is reported to have had his feet crushed with bats and hob-nailed boots. He was beaten and whipped, hung head downwards, and a fire was lit under his head. For four days he was manacled with his hands behind his back and in that time given nothing to eat or drink.

He gives his own description of his experience at a military camp: "There they shaved my head and made me eat my hair. For many hours in a large room 10 men were beating me all over the body and especially on the head and in the stomach... because of the beatings on the soles of my feet I could not walk for ten days. They took off four of my toe nails. They burnt my finger nails with cigarettes. They staged a mock execution. They tortured me by letting water drip on my brow. After this I was kept for a week in a place next to the torture place where I could hear the screaming of those being tortured all through the night."

Suicide attempt

Athens, April 15

ALEXANDROUS PANAGOLIS, the soldier who is under sentence of death for plotting to assassinate the Greek Prime Minister, tried to kill himself yesterday.

Panagoulis, the only Greek to be sentenced to death since the army seized power

three years ago, was taken to hospital in Athens suffering from burns. Apparently he set fire to his mattress and blankets in an attempt at suicide.

Panagoulis was sentenced to death in November, 1968. He was also charged with desertion from the Greek army in 1967.

Radical under attack

From NESTA ROBERTS

Paris, April 15

The Association of Greek Students in Paris has accused the French Radical Party, of seeking to whitewash the Greek colonels.

It was at the request of the students that Servan-Schreiber made the visit to Athens from which he returned with the composer Mikis Theodorakis. In today's statement, the association said that it was delighted that its approach to "various organisations and personalities in France, among them M. Servan-Schreiber," to save the life of Professor Karayorgas had succeeded.

Profound joy

The unexpected arrival of Theodorakis in Servan-Schreiber's aircraft had given profound joy to all members of the association and to the anti-Fascist Greek community in Paris.

But the association considered that the statement on Greece's place in Europe, and on his own political position, which Servan-Schreiber had attributed to the composer were "incompatible" with the political attitude of Theodorakis "which is well known and which he will soon express himself."

Also the association believed that, by his recent statement, Servan-Schreiber had tried to "whitewash" the colonels on the eve of the meeting of the Council of Europe. It denounced the attempt to distinguish the regime of the colonels from its natural ally which was American imperialism. The struggle of the Greek people against dictatorship found expression in the double combat against the Greek Government and against its international supporters.