

Rethinking the Nation: The Greek Resistance 1941–44

4.1 Introduction

The time has come for woman
 To plunge into battle
 To fight bravely
 To think of nothing else.
 Not mother, or house—nor husband and children
 The cause is but one: liberty or death.¹

1

The lyrics above reflect the vast socio-political transformations in Greece precipitated by the Second World War. The Axis occupation of Greece (1941–44) gave rise to EAM, the largest resistance movement of the period, in which thousands of men and women across Greece actively participated in a multitude of capacities against an array of German, Italian, Bulgarian, and, then later, British armies.² As such, it constituted a turning point in the history of Greek nation-building, in conceptions of national citizenship, and in the trajectory of gender politics in Greece. Similar to the 1821 Revolution, the Resistance was indelibly marked by the legacy of active female participation, including battlefield activities. Indeed, as the country slid into Civil War, shortly after liberation in 1944, the ratio of women fighters in the partisan forces rose to an unprecedented level by the standards of the Second World War.

The EAM/Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo (National Liberation Front) and its military wing ELAS/Ethnikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos (National Liberation Army), while communist-led, succeeded in cutting across class and gender barriers to build a stupendous coalition. Detractors of EAM-ELAS emphasised its subservience to the Greek Communist Party (KKE), claiming that the national liberation struggle acted as a pretext for seizing power in Greece.³ But the great majority of Resistance participants were moved by the twofold objective of (1) national liberation—expelling the occupying forces and all traces of local fascism from the body of the Greek nation, and (2) social justice—(re)building an inclusive national political culture.

2

The leadership, comprised of both communists and liberals, recognized the opportunity for social and political renewal occasioned by the upheaval of war and, at least until 1943, shared a vision as to how the new society would be brought into existence. The new Greek state and society would be constructed on the basis of a substantive rather than formal application of Enlightenment ideals—liberty, equality, and fraternity ushered in with the foundation of the modern nation. The formal equality offered by the liberal state of pre-war Greece effectively preserved the rights and privileges of the propertied classes and effectively entrenched a clientelistic structure of power from which the great majority of men, and women, were excluded. The newly mobilised and radicalised masses would be given the resources and conditions necessary to enact their rights and form the critical basis for the new society. EAM

3

was conceived as, or at least adhered to, a norm for populist movements which, according to Mouzelis's (in Hart, 1996: 344) definition, 'partly involves drawing into the political arena people hitherto excluded from it or admitted to it only marginally'; a philosophy that was moulded by EAM leaders to fit the specific contours of the Greek setting.

Emergent mobilisational narratives addressed the disenfranchised, including thousands of young rural and working-class girls and boys, women and the peasantry, members of ethnic minorities and other groups hitherto situated outside the system of 'political clientelism', which governed Greek war politics since Independence. EAM's blend of defensive patriotism and political nationalism⁴ created a mass following, which numbered at least 1.5 million by 1944, and which led to the formation of a quasi-governmental regime, the PEEA/Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Adistasis (Political Committee for National Resistance), also known as the 'Mountain Government', with a remarkably broad agenda for social and political reform. From 1943 until the Civil War, which began to unfold as early as December 1944,⁵ the institutions set up by EAM's architects were functional in much of Greece and the political example embodied in 'Liberated Greece' was dominant.⁶

By 1944 a considerable number of women had participated in some kind of Resistance activity. The call to extend national citizenship to include women, located safely within a broader political discourse of national emancipation and social renewal, was brought to the attention of the masses for the first time. Against the background of very narrowly defined pre-war gender roles, the mobilisation of women across the entire social spectrum into all facets of the resistance movement was conceived as their 'political baptism'. The grass-roots challenge that women's mass participation in political life posed to the traditional gender division of labour, rights, and duties in Greece was, arguably, the most powerful example of the movements modernising ambitions.

While numerous key figures of the Resistance leadership proclaimed that the incorporation of women into EAM-ELAS was one of the most important achievements of the movement,⁷ until recently it has received scant attention, both within scholarship and within the Resistance literature, which flourished after 1981.⁸ In the latter, however, there are many passing references to women's great 'patriotic contributions', but they are oblique, subsumed into a 'general' discussion of the movement. Particularly obscured is the experience of the relatively few women who entered the military wing ELAS, a number which rose substantially when the partisans regrouped to form the Dimokratikos Stratos Elladas (Democratic Army of Greece) during the Civil War. Photographs of weapon-clad partisan women generously adorn Resistance literature, but the actual experiences of women partisans remain nebulous.

The works of two historians, Janet Hart and Tasoula Vervenioti, have challenged this vacuum, with their respective feminist histories of the Resistance, and their particular attention to the perspective of female partisans. In her ground-breaking study of the historical memory of social transformation, based on oral histories, Janet Hart (1996: 97) refers to the Greek Resistance as a 'socialising movement'; a site where citizenship norms developed, albeit under the

pedagogical guidance of the movements 'organic intellectuals', akin to the site of the family or the school. She raises critical questions about the reasons and means by which EAM mobilised girls and women into all facets of the movement, as well as women's own motivations—questions which are pertinent given the pre-war status of Greek women which was '... highly restricted and governed by values and rules of conduct which cut across class and regional barriers'.

In the same vein, Vervenioti (1994) locates women's participation in the Resistance as a focal point for the trajectory of Greek women's political subjectivity and the impact of these events on the symbolic order of the Greek left. Vervenioti also traces the steps taken by EAM to carve out a political role for women against women's sense of their own historical agency. Her attention extends to the specific group of women who 'undertook masculine duties' (302–30) as ELAS fighters and underscores the special significance of this domain for women and for feminist historians, given the historic association of national defence with citizenship rights and women's traditional exclusion from war and thus from citizenship. Was there a heightened sense of gender consciousness among female combatants? Was the battlefield a place where male perceptions of female ability and agency were most confronted and challenged, and thus where gender norms, which weighed so heavily on women, could be reinscribed? The acceptance of women into platoons also draws attention to the ways in which the so-called new boundaries of female citizenship were envisaged and articulated by Resistance discourse, or was the induction of women into ELAS of symbolic importance only?

8

Carol Pateman (1989) reminds us that, in Western bourgeois states, national citizenship is constructed in the male image and exudes literally the 'rights of man'. To borrow Valentine Moghadam's (qtd. in Yuval-Davis, 1997: 103) models of revolutionary movements, the Greek Resistance represented the type that surely used women as a symbol of liberation and modernisation, and was one in which women were encouraged to participate in the military. But to what extent? Who were these women and why did they choose military roles? Given the historical association of the raising of arms with national citizenship rights, can their experiences illuminate the extent to which the parameters of women's citizenship had been retheorised beyond pre-war maternalist conceptions? How was the potent symbolism of armed women utilised in Resistance narratives? In this chapter, I will refer to Resistance literature of the period, partisan memoirs, the work of feminist historians, as well as my own interviews and data, to shed some more light on the *adartissa* of the Resistance, a figure who inspired not only her contemporaries but the next generation of Greek feminists.

9

4.2 EAM, Revolutionary Nationalism, and the 'Woman Question'

The Greek Resistance, led by EAM, was a direct response to the military encroachments of European fascism. In October of 1940, Mussolini's army, having taken Albania, invaded Greece. The Metaxas regime was thrown into disarray and disrepute as a consequence, even amongst its most avid supporters. Meanwhile, the Greek army responded enthusiastically to

10

the challenge of repelling the Italian invaders, which they did with success against great odds, in spite of being ill-equipped. In response to Mussolini's military failure, the German army unleashed a lightning invasion of Greece through Yugoslavia. With the speed and efficiency that was typical of the Wehrmacht's operations prior to Stalingrad, Greece was occupied within days (in April 1941). The Germans, wary of over-committing troops in Greece, shared the 'spoils' with their Italian allies and, in fact, left Thrace and parts of Greek-Macedonia to their Bulgarian allies. In a short space of time, the Greek state was occupied and divided between three related yet different forms of fascism, two of which (Italian and Bulgarian) sprang out of a nationalism that partly defined itself in terms of traditional claims to Greek territory.⁹

During the first year of the tripartite Nazi occupation, the conditions were particularly harsh. The country's resources were entirely at the disposal of the occupying forces and were confiscated mercilessly, and almost totally. Hart (1996: 29) states that '... during the winter of 1941–42 an estimated 300,000 Greek citizens starved to death due to food shortages'. At this early stage of occupation, there was little organised response as individuals focused on basic survival. Yet, as the catastrophic consequences of the occupation were deeply felt by a wide spectrum of the population, the conditions were ripe for the emergence of a diverse resistance movement.

11

EAM emerged soon after the German onslaught as a coalition of communists, socialists, bourgeois-liberal (Venizelist) democrats,¹⁰ and other hitherto apolitical persons who were moved into action by patriotic fervour and severe hardship. The first pockets of spontaneous popular resistance occurred amongst isolated individuals and groups in rural areas, said to have descended from the Klephts, whose ancestry dated back to the Ottoman occupation.¹¹ The traditional political parties had no experience of underground resistance and organisation, and they disbanded soon after the occupation forces arrived. The Greek Communist Party (KKE), in contrast, had ample experience in clandestine operations as a persecuted party and was able to organise swiftly, fill the political vacuum, and harness anti-Axis sentiment effectively. The formation of EAM in September 1941 marked KKE's decision to adopt a popular-front strategy whose rhetoric was couched in patriotic and national rather than class-based terms. It was in this manner that it harnessed broad popular support from the (mostly non-politicised) masses, as well as support from bourgeois-liberals and nationalists for whom the occupation was the utmost expression of evil.¹² All were welcome so long as they adhered to two basic EAM aims: (1) anti-fascism—resistance to the Axis occupation, and (2) republicanism—the creation of a post-war regime based on the people's will, as expressed in free elections. The formation of ELAS, the armed wing of EAM, occurred much later in 1942 after a prolonged emphasis on the proper development of the political wing of the organisation.

12

By the time of liberation in 1944, EAM had become a coalition comprising KKE, the Union of Popular Democracy, the Greek Socialist Party, and the Agrarian Party (Stavrianos, 1952: 44). The superior organisational capacity especially in adverse conditions of the KKE underpinned its prominence within EAM. This raised little concern at the time amongst bourgeois-liberal 'comrades' who were focused on the liberation of Greece from the armies of occupation.¹³

13

Other resistance groups during the occupation, often antagonistic to EAM-ELAS, were EDES/ Ellinikos Dimokratikos Syndesmos (Greek National Republican League) and EKKA/Ethniki kai Koinoniki Apeleftherosis (National and Social Liberation). This chapter does not discuss the activities of these groups as they were much smaller than EAM-ELAS, they had a primarily military character, and they relied heavily on the personalities of their leaders. Also, unlike EAM, these groups operated on a regional scale and seemed uninterested in social reform. They did not establish a range of subsidiary organisations nor did they facilitate the induction of broad sections of the population. They neither sought nor encouraged the mobilisation of women into their ranks. 14

Far from seeking to restore the nation to its pre-war status, EAM's principle objective was to rebuild the Greek state, after the defeat of fascism, around the modernist notions of national self-determination and popular sovereignty. In the case of Greece, this primarily pertained to what Woodhouse (1976: 5–6) refers to as '... the destruction of the tradition of patronage and the substitution of a modern habit in social relations'. Thus the liberation of the nation and the establishment of its total independence stood in contrast to the 'old' political world's traditional acceptance of the future of Greece as one determined by external forces.¹⁴ 15

While the Cold War created a polarisation of opinion on the subject of the true objectives of EAM's political vision of a new and more just Greece as being vague, there is little doubt that its objectives involved genuine national and social reform.¹⁵ The issues of unity (both within the nation and the movement) and inclusiveness recurred constantly in the same programmatic pamphlets, as mobilisational narratives attempted to reach 'all social strata, from the worker to the aristocrat and from the poorest farmer to the landowner . . . boys and girls, women in the factories and in the public offices, and banks and housewives in the suburbs and apartment blocks' (Glinos, 1944: 51). 16

It was inside 'Free Greece'—the regions held by EAM-ELAS and areas vacated by occupying forces which were under provisional partisan control—that it became clear that the Resistance managed to reach beyond masterful rhetoric. Indeed, EAM succeeded in establishing a form of local and regional administration that startled most locals in its determination for openness and inclusiveness. For instance, it initiated a more rational organisation of economic activity (e.g., herding, farming), implemented the restructuring and opening up of the judicial and educational systems, and initiated social, political, and legal reforms that benefited women. All reforms were introduced and supervised by the 'Mountain Government' (Politiki Epitropi Ethnikis Adistasis/ PEEA), which had been founded in March 1944. 17

As the area of Free Greece grew inexorably—following the military successes of ELAS as well as the surrender of Italian troops in September 1943—roads were built, hospitals founded, school teachers were trained, local self-government was institutionalised (with villages running themselves through popularly elected representatives), and some form of justice was being administered in people's courts.¹⁶ Villagers, who until then saw the state as a remote and oppressive institution and politics as something best left to those who could afford it, suddenly 18

realised that the state could be *them*, or at least bear some relation to them. Mazower (1993: 6, 7, 22) makes the point that while the concepts of social justice, self-government, and popular democracy (*laiki dimokratia* or *laokratia*) were nebulous and that a clear definition of ideological boundaries was absent, it did not deter '... ordinary people who were not interested in theory, or in political programmes, from feeling that EAM, and even the KKE, were theirs ... close to them ... speaking their language' (268–69). On the question of *laokratia*, the novelist Theotokas wrote in his diary '... that no one can explain what *laiki dimokratia* means, nor does anyone care. People don't feel the need for an explanation. They like the sound of this word and the idea of establishing "a People's State"' (in Mazower, 1993: 6). Even conservative commentators, such as Woodhouse (1985: 5, 6), observed the efficiency with which '... benefits of civilisation and culture trickled into the mountains for the first time. Schools, local governments, law courts and public utilities ... Theatres, factories, parliamentary assemblies [were introduced]', all of which made PEEA an expression and a persuasive source of EAM's legitimacy.

EAM encountered a significant challenge in the effort to establish gender equality even at a basic level, in the context of a society that continued to treat women according to pre-modern conventions. Mazower (1993: 227) notes the case of the island of Evvoia, where the exclusion of women from public affairs was so entrenched that they rarely, if ever, appeared in the people's courts (*laika dikastiria*). The result was that male kin, who would be prosecuted for failing to appear, would represent them in these courts. But even when they did appear for themselves (as in most other parts of Free Greece), they were bound by incredibly rigid 'moral' codes. People's courts, by definition, were run on the basis of prevailing 'conventional wisdom', which itself imposed the rigid boundaries of Greek women's lives. In spite of the inherent conundrum, EAM made vast improvements regarding popular access to the law and justice through (1) the replacement of *katharevousa* with *demotiki* as the official language of instruction and of the state, (2) the removal of costly mediation (e.g., lawyers), and (3) the local availability of all necessary legal services rendering the customary long-distance and expensive travel to the capital unnecessary.

19

The general predicament of most Greek women during the 1940s was marked by illiteracy, exclusion from political life, and restricted physical movement, each in the service of custom, social equilibrium, and the safeguarding of family honour. This social order posed serious obstacles to the successful integration of women into the Resistance project. But Resistance propaganda persevered with its message to women, disseminating pamphlets such as *The Girl and her Demands* and *How Should Woman Work within EAM*. These pamphlets addressed the Greek girl who was fighting to be liberated from '... the foreign yoke and from the bias and superstition of our country' (Couvaras, 1976: 54). The mobilisation of women and their absorption into the various wings of the Resistance as political subjects was given an institutional legitimacy with the approval of the first Equal Rights clause, under PEEA. According to Article 5 of the PEEA constitution, 'All Greeks, men and women, have equal political and civil rights' (1944). This allowed women to vote at a national level and to stand as

20

candidates for the first time in Greek history. Other PEEA legislation of direct benefit to women was the adoption of *demotiki* (the demotic language) as the official language of Free Greece, in the place of *katharevousa*, which was incomprehensible to the peasantry and therefore the vast majority of Greek people. In addition, the introduction of literacy programs and the setting of a gender-neutral minimum wage scale, which stipulated 'equal pay for equal work', were other important milestones. In May 1944, PEEA supervised the election of 250 members to the National Council (Ethniko Symvoulío),¹⁷ with representatives from regions of both liberated and occupied Greece, many of whom were women. The traditional stranglehold of male lawyers and doctors had been broken, at least symbolically.

The early stages of the anti-fascist struggle had familiar beginnings. Both rural and urban women were initiated and organised into the Resistance primarily through the underground relief organisation, Ethniki Allilegii/EA (National Solidarity). EA was founded in May 1941, setting up branches in all major towns and cities and in every village of Free Greece, as did all the subsidiary organisations, which formed the base of EAM's structure.¹⁸ The establishment of soup kitchens, clothing pools, child recreation centres, nursing and communal washing, and providing shelter for renegade British soldiers were activities that constituted the work of women in EA. Moreover, the rural EA contingent also had the critical task of providing the material infrastructure for the ELAS fighters, whose bases were scattered throughout rural, mostly mountainous, Greece. One of Hart's (1996: 171) respondents, Anthoula, shares her memories of the EA thus:

Of the large EAM organisations, the one that owes most to women is the relief organisation, the EA. They were the ones who would gather up the dead and treat the wounded from the demonstrations. They were the ones who would scout around for food to feed those who had been forced to live underground. They found houses where such people could sleep. My friend's mother, today she's about eighty years old, was in the EA. And my sister who died was also in the EA. They were the invisible heroines. They did wonderful, important work without carrying weapons and without making a big fuss. They were the ones who, silently, would be on the front lines during the street battles in Athens; secretly taking the wounded to hospitals and retrieving the dead for burial. And they would give first aid, bring food to the fighters; their work was extremely heroic and they did it without asking for credit and without a lot of fanfare.

The contributions of women in EA were congruent with the responsibilities associated with the struggle for 'national survival', duties which were traditionally identified as women's work. Even the much celebrated women of the Pindos mountain ranges, who 'transported supplies to the Albanian front on their mules and on their backs and returned carrying the wounded [during 1940 when the Greek army fought against the invading army of Mussolini], were carrying out tasks which were part of the circumscribed role of women in that region during peacetime' (Fortouni, 1986: 8). The predominance of women in support services, demonstrates, according to Vervenioti, that the work of the *adartissa* (partisan woman) was an extension of women's duties traditionally carried out in the private sphere. However, during the Resistance, as both Hart and Vervenioti argue, the familiar role acquired a new meaning in the

radically different context of collective action and purpose. In sum, the movement which sought to educate, extend rights to, and empower women who had limited political experience did so without interfering profoundly with established gender norms and structures. This tension plagued the fragile equilibrium achieved by EAM as it sought to transform entrenched social and political traditions. Even though public/private divisions had been blurred and the circumstances of occupation rendered the 'front' pervasive, women's participation still conformed to recognisable traditional norms. This applied equally well to the women of ELAS, who rallied to the battle cry *Sta Armata!* (To Arms!), expecting to bear those arms literally, not metaphorically.

4.3 Women in ELAS

From the earliest days of the armed resistance and well before the formation of women's platoons in 1944, women took 'to the mountains', where the bulk of ELAS forces were stationed. In chronological terms, the first Resistance units were formed in the mountains of Roumeli in the fall of 1941, the partisan heartland, and are regarded in both Resistance historiography and popular culture as traceable to the 'legacy of the old Klephtic tradition of resistance dating back to the Ottoman occupation'. The women observed amongst these groups of 'bandits' are said to have been the 'wives of bandits, who accompanied even in the hour of battle' (Vervenioti, 1994: 305). 23

Former partisan Grigoriadis (1973, 1: 57) refers to Theocharis, one of the first Resistance fighters and later captain of the First Battalion of ELAS in Attica, who had '... brought with him his fiancé, Assimo', while Nitsa Koliou (1985, 1: 787) refers to the case of 16-year-old Maria Kalaboka who, in Thessaly in 1942, fought alongside ELAS partisans but under an assumed male identity of Yannakis.¹⁹ By late 1943, the increasing presence of individual women within ELAS coincided with the growing exodus of women from cities, villages, and towns as a result of increasing persecution by the forces of occupation. In the words of one woman, the reason for joining ELAS was simple: 'What else could I do? My father was in jail, my brother in the mountains, my uncles were hostages in Italy, and my village totally uprooted by the occupiers. I thought about it thoroughly. Who would avenge the calamities inflicted upon my family?' (Vervenioti, 1994: 305). 24

Many women fled from their homes and sought refuge in the safety of ELAS-controlled territory, carrying out duties in EAM, or providing auxiliary assistance to ELAS troops. Grigoriadis (1973, vol. 1) comments that many women who escaped to Free Greece and found it difficult to obtain work in the local political branch of the EAM at first, offered their services to ELAS and were used in various capacities, usually as nurses. Some were excited by the prospect of becoming soldiers. In May 1943, the Resistance newspaper *Nea Genia* (*New Generation*) published a letter by a schoolgirl named Castella, of Roumeli, who had left for the 'mountains' and beckoned her female peers to join her: 25

What is my being a woman supposed to mean? Am I not the child of the fatherland (patrida)? The nation today needs the help of all its children. I know I won't be alone. Today it was my calling, tomorrow it shall be yours, girls. Happy reunion. (3 May 1943)

One well-known figure amongst this generally anonymous group of warriors was named 'Thiella', a nom de guerre meaning 'Tempest'. According to the war diary of a Greek-American OSS officer Costas Couvaras (1976: 195), Thiella, originally Melpomeni Papailiou, was motivated to join the Resistance by an awakening patriotic sentiment, combined with a radicalisation through exposure to class politics. Thiella demonstrated a '... fanatical commitment' to her ideas, writes Couvaras. 'The Marxist teachings which she had been exposed to [within EAM] had brought a new religion into her heart. She had developed an extreme moralism and desire to fight for what she believed was right and just'. 26

Married to a lieutenant sergeant of the gendarmerie with three children in Athens, Thiella's increasing involvement in the leftist resistance quickly became a bone of contention in her marriage, culminating in her move to the mountains of Roumeli where she eventually joined a combat unit, the Death Battalion of the ELAS's 26th Regiment, after first serving as a nurse at the convalescent homes of Hosepsi. Thiella occupies an important place in surviving partisan women's Resistance myths and memories. Papadaki (1982: 131) writes that Thiella '... quickly placed her faith and all her energy into the holy struggle ... her bravery in battle, her death in the bloody battle of December [1944], in Omonia [Omonia Square is *the* Athens city centre] has placed her among the great heroines of the national liberation struggle. She became a legend'. The memoirs of former partisan Kallinou (1982: 134) also recall the '... unrivalled heroism and bravery of Thiella, and of Koula Danou, in the face of danger, deprivation and hardship'. 27

One of Hart's (1996: 179) interviewees, and former Platoon recruit, 'Maria', mentions Thiella as an impressive woman who joined the new female recruits with the air of a true veteran: 28

[She] ... continued wearing her clothes, which were spoils of war, that is, they came from dead German or Italian soldiers ... She was a special case because she had left her three children back in Athens. She was one of the few real heroes, male or female.²⁰ Another case was Koula Danou who had a child. She had fought with her husband, and was separated from him. She left her child with an aunt and came up to the mountains to fight with ELAS. And for all that time she couldn't see her child. After liberation, during the Civil War, she was forced to flee, like a lot of us, to avoid arrest here. And she joined the partisan army, was wounded and then captured. They executed her in 1949. She was sentenced to death and they killed her. She was one of the last to be executed.²¹

While the activities of these women represented the most radical break with gender norms, the resilience of tradition revealed itself in the 'double burden' foisted on them. In the words of one partisan woman,

... the partisans (i.e. the men) fought on one front. [Georgia] always fought on two. ... Armed with weapons and ammunition, she was constantly engaged in

warfare, when her company clashed with the enemy. . . . She had to fight and simultaneously rush to the aid of wounded comrades unshielded. But in our endless treks, Georgia's burden was always multi-layered in contrast with her male comrades. She always had someone to take care of or to transport the wounded and the ill. (Dimitriou, 1982: 201)

Thiella also juggled her battle duties with the responsibility of transporting the wounded to safety. Nafsika Papadaki (1982) confirms this in her dedication to Sophia Vlachou, a Resistance cadre. She recounts the bloody battle of Makrakomi, where Sophia encountered Thiella, who divided her time between 'manning' the machinegun and transporting the wounded on her back: 'Thiella had carried 24 casualties to the rear that day'. One known and interesting exception was the case of Maria Kalaboka who, having assumed a male identity, was relieved of 'feminine duties'.

This informal phase of women's involvement in ELAS was unpopular amongst ELAS men, with the odd exceptions of exceptional military competence, such as in the cases of Thiella and Koula Danou. Vervenioti (1994: 307) describes the experience of an *adartissa* she interviewed who had been in the ELAS Reserves:

29

She had taken part in the Vounesi battle uninvited, as her attempts over a long period to be enlisted were in vain. They did not accept her as they did not accept many other women . . . in order to realise their desires, [these women] they approached their male comrades and offered to help in any way i.e. to fetch water, food, bullets, in the hope that they would be permitted to hold the ribbon of the light machine guns if not the gun itself. As they knew that their performance in battle was constantly scrutinised, they displayed an admirable bravery. They were then permitted to stay.

This dynamic later gave way to the formation of special women's platoons (*gynaikeies dimoiries*) within ELAS. Below, I shall explore the possible rationale for this development given the adverse attitudes of the great majority of ELAS men to the presence of women in their ranks.

4.4 The Women's Platoons

The partisan heartland had shifted from Roumeli to Macedonia when women's involvement in ELAS was formalised in 1944. Women's platoons operated in the Ninth Division (western Macedonia), Tenth Division (central Macedonia), Thirteenth Division (Roumeli), Second Division (Atticoboetia), First Division (Thessaly), and the Eighth Division (Ipiros) (see Vervenioti, 1994). Most of these young women were members of EPON, fugitives from the cities, or local women from the liberated areas. As the women's platoons were formed towards the end of the Axis occupation, they were used in operations to cut off German escape routes, as well as in the liberation of villages and towns. Women's involvement occurred, therefore, within a climate of increasing optimism as (partisan) victory beckoned.

30

While recruitment procedures were selective, the move inspired 'a storm of enthusiasm' amongst young women in the partisan territories of rural Greece. Amid the excitement generated by the platoons, the partisan press, especially the women's press, invoked the legendary women of Souli and other heroines of 1821 in articles which called Greek women to arms. In March 1943, the Thessaly-based partisan periodical *Gynaikia Drasi* (*Women's Action*) wrote:

The women in the villages and the towns where the partisan war is blooming must pour all their might into that front. They must be organised into the local organisations of ELAS, EAM and the Thessalian Ieros Lochos [a military formation literally translated as 'Holy Company']. They must become actively involved in every department. They must organise fighting units for the young women who can and want to carry a weapon. Their role is important in a popular uprising, as they will inspire a delirium of enthusiasm, striking the most sensitive chord of any Greek: his honour. (19 March 1943)

The issue of women's participation in battle was urged on by tales of women's military heroism outside Greece, particularly in Yugoslavia and in the Soviet Union. In February 1943, *Women's Action* dedicated an article to the '... legendary heroines of Belgrade, Varia Dravas and Vera, a military commander, who, at twenty, had fallen heroically during a defence operation'. The article also emphasised that women comprised 40 percent of the guerrilla forces of Montenegro. In July 1943, at the Pan-Thessalian Conference of EPON, the presentation by a young female fighter from Yugoslavia got a strong response and received wide coverage in the partisan press. *Floga tis Neolaias* (*Flame of Youth*, 31 August 1943) and *Foni tou EAM* (*Voice of EAM*, 21 July 1943) called on all women of the Karditsa region to find inspiration in and follow the example of like-minded people all over the liberated world. A journalist from another partisan newspaper, *Andartis* (7 January 1944), who had covered the visit of the Greek partisans to Tito's headquarters, referred enthusiastically to the Yugoslavian fighter Zina (pseudonym) who, '... no older than 32 years of age, in her soldier's tunic and breeches', was a hand-grenade expert and specialised in railway sabotage. He added that '... we were dumbfounded' when she said that one-quarter of the partisan fighters were women. News continued to reach Greece about the achievements of the women fighters of both Yugoslavia and Albania. In May 1943, Sophia Mavroeiidi Papadakis (1946) dedicated her poem 'Young Women Warriors' to the women fighters.²²

In contrast to a broad range of battlefield experiences in the early stages of the occupation, the formalisation of women's role within ELAS coincided with a diminishing scope of activities. Couvaras (1976: 193), a former OSS officer who was sent to Greece to obtain information about the Resistance movement in 1944–45, noted an obvious distinction between the seasoned women fighters of the previous order and the 'new comrades', most of whom escaped the turmoil of the Resistance and the subsequent Civil War relatively unscathed:

We first laid eyes on women soldiers in Karpenisi, a month after our arrival in Greece. Dressed like male warriors, with serious faces, these girls shared the hardships of partisan life equally. The men respected them because some of

them had already shown their capabilities at war In May 1944, a special Women's Unit was being formed as part of the Third Regiment. Most of these girls were new in the struggle, but amongst them were also some who had been in partisan units for quite a long time. You didn't need to know them, to distinguish the new girls from the veterans. Their appearance and behaviour was vastly different. . . . They were confident. They acted as mature fighters in the full sense. One of them stood out and I asked our partisan escort about her. Her name was Thiella.

The excitement generated by the Platoons was offset by the effort made by the leadership to obstruct any real involvement in battle, in spite of the training programs the new recruits had undertaken for this specific purpose. Second-lieutenant Liza Kallinou (as reported in the Resistance journal, *Smolikas*) said that when her platoon wanted to participate in the Athens/Piraeus operations during the December Events, they were blankly stopped without explanation. The newspaper *Thiella* (31 August 1944 issue) described the frustration of the new recruits in the ELAS Reserves of Thessaly, 'who are waiting impatiently to become fighters. They are burning with the passion for battle . . . and the desire to give their lives for the freedom of their country'. There followed a stream of similar complaints by ELAS women in the pages of *Thiella* thereafter: 34

Haven't they shown their defiance of danger, confronted the enemy head-on, taken apart his stripes, disarmed him, stolen his cow, cursed him and beaten him? . . . We might be illiterate, and uneducated, but we know how to fight and die for the freedom of our country and the rights of the people. . . . Two poor mothers left their newly born babies behind and enlisted in the Reserves to be trained in weaponry, only to be told by their male counterparts that they are too weak. I only have one thing to say—whoever has a stable soul can carry a weapon very well. (31 August 1944)

ELAS cadre Kostas Karagiorgis offered his own reflections on the significance and purpose of the women's platoons some years later in the *Democratic Army Journal* (March 1949): 35

Women's contribution to ELAS was insignificant. And this was not their fault. We kept them out. ELAS was extremely well resourced by EAM so that it could function very well without women. In Thessalia, with 15,000 male volunteers, we were turning away many men who were pleading for acceptance into the ranks. All the same, women made up 10% of the ELAS Reserves, which was to be instrumental in bringing the most advanced women's segment of the movement into contact with weapons and military work. Furthermore, 'exemplary women's sections' were formed within the fighting divisions, which played a significant part with regards to propaganda.

Karagiorgis' remark on the usefulness of such symbolism for propaganda purposes has various dimensions. According to Vervenioti (1994: 316), the presence of women catered to internal propaganda requirements as it prodded male honour: 36

The motivational effects on men of women soldiers created a 'rivalry' in all the departments. Surprisingly this rivalry may have been intentional as it focussed on

filotimo [loosely translated as the love of personal honour] in order to instil a spirit of healthy competition which would make men and women enhance and improve their commitment to the struggle.

The presence of women thus contributed significantly to the general maintenance of order, discipline, and cleanliness. Vervenioti's evaluation of the platoon women invokes Mary Nash's (1989: 6) analysis of the 'miliciana' symbolism during the Spanish Civil War: 37

In the early stages of the war, the image of the miliciana was innovative and a break from the traditional behaviour and conventional social roles of women. Nevertheless a close analysis of this highly visible figure in the first weeks of the war demonstrates that in fact this new model of woman soldier was scarcely representative and does not appear to represent a new and genuine image of the feminine prototype, but rather a symbol of war and revolution. As such, it was not necessarily designed to become a real model for the collectivity of women . . . the belligerent image of the miliciana was not directed to a feminine public, but instead served as a vehicle for a message directed toward men, to stimulate them to comply with their duty as soldiers in the anti-fascist struggle.

But the allegorical use of the female soldier/warrior had a multiple significance, not least the power of this image to project the modernity of the movement to the outside world. This purpose contrasted starkly with the reality in which systematic efforts were made to stop the women from actually participating as soldiers. The most extensively used image of an *adartissa* for propaganda purposes was the image of Titika Panayiotidou brandishing her gun, which, according to her own testimony, she had never really used. Moreover, she had been promoted to deputy lieutenant of her platoon with very minor battlefield experience, a fact that only reinforces the view that the purposes of the platoons were non-military. This image of the female warrior (taken by Resistance photographer Spiros Meletzis), however, was one of the most prominent symbols of the Resistance and was circulated widely throughout Europe, the Middle East, and within the underground Greek press during the final stages of the occupation.

The choice of the woman freedom fighter as the international face of the Greek Resistance to fascism, brandishing her rifle as she gazes into the horizon from a mountaintop, was an effective way of signifying the impending triumph of the Greek nation over the political and cultural legacy of four hundred years of Ottoman rule. That is, at one level, Titika's picture signalled a fundamental break with the pre-modern Ottoman past, sending an important message to the outside world that Greece desired and was ready to be counted amongst the civilised nations of Europe. At another level, what I argue is that an inherently ambiguous image (of the *adartissa*) also served important purposes for the internal politics of the Resistance movement, as Titika symbolised equally well the Resistance's appeal to the modern West as well as the political and social Utopia promised by the communist East, two different models of the ideal society which enjoyed broad support in the Resistance movement. 38

Thus, in accordance with Nash's perspective, the *adartissa* of the Greek Resistance had a symbolic rather than instructive purpose—a message to outside observers rather than to women, used as a vehicle of high politics.

4.5 Revolution and Tradition: EAM's Conundrum

EAM's proposed challenge to the traditional gender order, executed through a clever balance of tradition and innovation, defined the movement but also constituted one of its most complex dimensions. The potential explosiveness of this social experiment often led to policies which were contradictory in the effort to institute the new but preserve critical elements of the old. 39

The 'socialising program' of EAM was youth-centred, as it was thought that youth were naturally more amenable to radical social reorientation and more easily moved by idealism. Indeed, it was from within EAM's youth wing, EPON (founded in 1943), and to a lesser extent PEAN (Panellinia Enosi Agonizomenis Neolaias/Panhellenic Union of Fighting Youth), that many girls entered into activities that departed from convention—for example, carrying out sabotage work; transporting guns and missives across regions; announcing forthcoming demonstrations and meetings through bullhorns and graffiti; organising recruitment sessions; delivering propaganda broadcasts and news bulletins transmitted by underground radio and eventually training as potential military combatants. Nevertheless, strategists built EPON on a foundation of some very traditional social values and conventions. 40

The memoirs of former EPON cadre Petros Andaios (1979) illuminate some of these aspects. As a leading figure in the organisation of fighting units within EPON,²³ he conveys the anxiety generated by the move to allow women into battle against the weight of traditional perceptions of gender roles. The fighting units in EPON were formed on the belief that armed participation in the struggle was essential to indoctrination—that the nation's youth could not properly claim the struggle for themselves unless they raised arms for it. In Andaios's view, the internalisation of Resistance values was vital because the future of the new society rested in the hands of the young. And yet, Andaios outlined the 'natural' exclusion of girls from this aspect of the struggle. Andaios's (1979: 27) memoirs contain extracts from EPON teaching documents which state that: 41

The team must therefore be unified. In every village and suburb, in every co-educational school, factory and cultural organization, the youth of both sexes will be organised together. Not all workshops will, however, be mixed. Boys and girls will have *separate* workshops. This is not for moral reasons. It must be imposed because in practice the duties of girls and boys are *different*. (227) (Emphasis my own.)

Andaios recalls that 'boys were to devote themselves to their military duties, some belonging to the ELAS Reserves, others fulfilling liaison duties, or assisting in the establishment of the institutions of self-government in the villages (*laiki aftodioikisi*)'. The girls, on the other hand,

'... undertook the responsibility of partisan cleanliness and hygiene, collectively washing the brave young men's clothes in the river, helping the partisan fighters' commissariat by baking bread, knitting woollens, organising the transport of firearms and food supplies. Their contributions to the transportation of the wounded, and as nurses, were invaluable'.

According to Valentine Moghadam (in Yuval-Davis, 1997: 103), there are two kinds of revolutionary movements: one that uses women as a symbol of liberation and modernisation, in which case women are encouraged to participate actively in the military; and one that uses women as symbols of the national culture and tradition which are to be reclaimed, in which case women are virtually excluded from formal participation and the nature of their supportive roles is highly controlled. The diverse experiences of women in the Resistance and the eventual formation of women's platoons in 1944 seem to indicate that EAM-ELAS was located somewhere in between. 42

C.M. Woodhouse has also argued that the treatment of women was an outstanding example of how '... the ethos of the new state was at once puritanical and modernising' (1976: 62). Resistance doctrine insisted on the equality of the sexes, granted them voting rights, and encouraged them to some degree to become involved in ELAS. However, the organisation and management of women in ELAS echoed tradition and established social norms, which echoed the traditional family power structure. The gendered honour/shame-based moral code continued as an effective mechanism of social control within the 'mixed' ranks of EPON (and EAM-ELAS). This system imposed a disproportionate burden for girls and women. 43

Aris Velouchiotis, the most celebrated and mythologised of the partisan leaders, had theorised the family as an '... economic unit whose purpose was to propagate overall prosperity and which provides the best possible basis for the organisation of society' (in Woodhouse, 1976: 63). For Velouchiotis, the family was a victim of capitalism, and the Resistance sought the improvement of living standards so as 'to stop the family from dissolving'. 44

Hart (1996: 136) concurs that traditional and legal sanctions against women's activities in the public sphere, combined with women's lack of political rights, meant that the Resistance movement's chances of mobilising any substantial number of young women depended on its ability to cast its challenge to the political status quo in terms deemed legitimate by the wider Greek society. Thus EAM placed great emphasis on chastity and parental consent for girls, honesty and respect for boys, liberal education for both, and non-exploitative relations between the sexes (ibid., 136–37). 45

In this regard, Vervenioti sees ELAS as having undertaken the responsibility of guarding or restoring national honour, and thus having adopted the symbolic role of a surrogate patriarchal father keeping the men and women in its ranks in order. This ethos often translated into harsh 46

measures. Romantic sentiments between recruits, or even a misplaced word, were punished austere. A young woman partisan who did not 'guard herself' adequately or whose appearance was 'provocative' was dismissed as if she had committed an immoral act.

Interestingly, partisan women found guilty of conducting illicit affairs were dealt the penalty of disarmament! According to Vervenioti (1994: 313), a female recruit would have committed suicide by her own gun rather than suffer the indignity of having it confiscated for a misdemeanour. On the other end of this moral framework, a popular piece of Resistance folklore tells of the summary execution of a young male partisan by Aris Velouchiotis's hand after he was found molesting a female comrade. 47

Thus EAM's radical social experiment, and its vision of popular democracy, paradoxically (but also inevitably) incorporated and indeed relied upon traditional gendered systems of social control. Vervenioti (1994: 314) asserts that EAM '... was very well aware of the problems of the patriarchal family' and did not support it. However, it could not reject it wholesale either. Instead, it chose a 'middle-of-the-road' strategy in which 'another' family, in 'another' society, was imagined. The espousal of traditional codes of morality and honour forbade male–female relations on the basis that sexual 'misbehaviour' could destabilise and give a 'bad' name to the struggle and thus jeopardise the whole enterprise. Aware of important cultural taboos, EAM had to carefully navigate and manage the 'moral' minefield that could inflame its opponents²⁴ who traded on popular fears of moral degeneration and social breakdown, heralded by the entrance of women into the public sphere. 48

EAM was often referred to by its opponents as 'EAM-Bulgarians' (*Eamovoulgaroi*), who sought to hand over to the Slavs (e.g., Stalin, Dimitrov) not only the nation but also the nation's women. According to artist and former EAM activist Yiorgios Kotsioulas (1965: 65), the constant need to rebut this accusation made it critical for EAM to be seen as reinforcing the crucial institutions of family and the church. In this light, the reluctance of EAM and PEEA (the 'Mountain Government') to tamper with family law, while ushering in otherwise extensive social reforms, is not surprising.²⁵ 49

4.6 The 'Others' Story

What of the *adartisses'* own perspectives? As Hart (1996: 137) notes, Greek women's primary allegiance was to the family, which was embedded in a more extensive system of social control that cut across class and regional barriers. It is therefore plausible that girls and women saw the possibility of becoming involved in the Resistance as an escape route from, at the very least, a mundane existence. Couvaras (1976: 193) was also of the impression that it was the possibility of escape from a rigidly defined existence that drew women of the urban working class, like Thiella, to patriotism and the Resistance movement. The lot of women under the patriarchal *ancien régime* was often likened to slavery in Resistance verse: 50

Women! Erase the name of the slave they have given you
Arms were not made for manly hands alone. (*Cretan Girl*, November 1943)

Famine and brutality perpetrated by the occupation, wounded national pride and indignation over the short-lived victory of their men in Albania against Mussolini's troops, and the force of EAM's mobilisational narratives provided fertile terrain for the successful mobilisation of great numbers of women across the social spectrum into the Resistance. But as in the 1821 Revolution, the struggle was shouldered, in large part, by the peasantry. Likewise, a significant number of the girls and women who joined the armed Resistance were from peasant communities, and most were illiterate. Illiteracy was not confined to rural populations but was most prevalent amongst rural and working-class women. Many women from the urban working classes were drawn into the political wing of the Resistance, into either EPON or EAM, depending on age. Relatively few entered ELAS, but the 'professionalisation' of women's role in ELAS gave it a veneer of added legitimacy, which attracted middle-class girls like Titika Panayiotidou, second-lieutenant of the 13th Regiment of ELAS. In the excerpts of her wartime diary which she included in her published memoirs, Titika revealed the acute class-consciousness and prejudice of the day and the heightened regionalism of Greek society, both features of Greek society which EAM sought to change. After receiving a promotion in ELAS, she wrote: 'At last, for I had coped with being treated like the other girls for two months. I considered myself to be above them because I was a high school student, born and bred in the city, from a bourgeois family . . . I was also the niece of a prominent political cadre' (Panayiotidou-Geldi, 1983: 104).

ELAS was not a platform for feminists, although it was the site at which there occurred a shift in consciousness, inspired by 'the boots and the gun'. As one respondent wrote, 'We cannot describe the joy we felt when we first laid hands on the guns and our great curiosity to examine them' (qtd. in Vervenioti, 1994: 327). In her recollections of the Resistance, then adolescent Eleni Fortouni (1989: 8) recalls how fascinated and overawed she was by the figure of Argiro, an *adartissa* also known as the Amazon Queen, when the latter entered the village:

I remember praying that she would look at me, that her gaze would find me where I stood. She was the *Amazon Queen* and I was thrilled and terrified by the encounter. Her voice was unlike any I had ever heard. I had seen Argiro before when she looked like other women I knew. 'No one can rape her again', I thought. 'No one can rape a woman with a rifle slung over her shoulder and bullets strung across her breasts, a woman towering over everything and everybody the way she does'.

For many Resistance women, particularly the younger ones, the figure of the armed woman was the greatest expression of political empowerment. It was within the youth movement EPON particularly that there emerged a narrative of simultaneous personal and national liberation:

We will never forget our beloved organisation EPON, where we first recognised that we also had rights in life, and we understood that in order to gain them we

had to fight beside our brothers. . . . Honourable Greek women . . . take your guns and come to the blessed mountains, to fight for life and freedom. (*Thiella*, 31 August 1944)

In partisan narratives, women had to forge their freedom like all other citizens ' . . . with their own spears, sweat and blood' (Resistance newspaper *Free Macedonia*, 19 May 1944). *Floga* (*Flame*), an EPON newspaper from the northern region of Drama, drew connections between gender equality, wartime participation, and national liberation: 54

. . . all is conquered through struggle, just as all peoples win their freedom through struggle and each individual alone creates their independence and their individuality . . . we women must now reclaim our lost freedom and create a new identity. . . . Our new society will no longer accept woman as man's servant, or as man's lover, or as mother of his children, but a partner in his creative work, a true comrade in life. (31 September 1944)

As the limits of the nation were being redrawn, some women became captive to the idea that armed participation in this nation-building process posed the greatest challenge to the social contract, giving women equal access to the rights and resources of the new nation-state. With the completion of military training for induction into the women's platoons, and as the time approached for participation in actual battle, Titika Panayiotidou-Geldi (1991: 43) recalls that the struggle that lay ahead was also 'a fight for equal rights'. 55

Women drawn to ELAS shared in the idea that the 'front line' was the closest point to the nation and that, as patriots and nation-building partners equal to men, their duty and right was to be there alongside them. An article in *Flame* (31 September 1944) spoke in glowing terms, of the *adartissa* who abandoned her village and family not only to be beside her husband but also beside her nation, which was in danger. Titika Panayiotidou-Geldi (1991: 17) writes that as a soldier in ELAS, fighting for national liberation, she felt like she was ' . . . the total embodiment of the people and the nation with its rich patriotic heritage'. 56

The privileged status of ELAS fighters was conveyed through various metaphors all alluding to the high order of bravery and purpose of the *adartis*. The favoured mountain-top location of partisan bands was amenable to this mythologisation of the *adarti* who 'towered above' everybody else, perched on the mountain tops, looking down upon the rest. In this discursive scheme, the movement of women to the mountains was often expressed as an ascendancy, which bore both literal and moral dimensions. Sanoudakis (1992: 23), in his brief biography of Hariklia Dramoundani Stefanogianni, expressed it as the ' . . . ascendance of women to the mountains, as equals beside men'. 57

An anonymous passage cited in Vervenioti (1994: 330) repeats the pattern: 58

Day by day woman climbs the staircase which, step by step, leads her higher and closer to man. It is not only national liberation, but also her own social liberation, that sounds today's revolutionary revival And she does not want her freedom

to be handed to her, by men, as she knows that freedom granted is not freedom at all. She has felt her power now. After she recognised that all the jobs we thought were clearly male, were not unconquerable bastions, she then put her hand to the ultimate one, the most severe, the most daring: the *weapon* Woman has come *up* to the Mountain.

Panayiotidou-Geldi (1991: 34) summarises her feelings as an ELAS soldier by drawing parallels with the heroes of an earlier revolution: 59

A new page in my life and in history was opening before me. I felt disturbed, full of emotion I could not contain. I recalled the history that I'd been taught, the names of the immortal heroines of 1821, and I felt something overtake me, as if I was discovering my true self.

Another of Vervenioti's (1994: 313) interviewees, 'Lisika', emphasised the need to recognise the autonomous patriotic agency of women and the need for people to understand that ' . . . women were not taken by ELAS, they went because they wanted to [ELAS] would not have been able to reject them because women had the fire burning inside them. This was how I felt too'. When the women of the Tenth Division appeared in the territory of the 13th Regiment, 'their presence caused the EPON girls of the village to revolt and the Regiment was bombarded with applications, entreaties and rallies demanding enlistment' (Mitsopoulos, 1980: 144–45). In Corinth, 150 women representatives gathered on 15 August 1944 to declare that the searing passion of all the women of Corinth was to enlist in the armed women's units of ELAS (Papastergiopoulos, 1975: 62). Mitsopoulos (1980) recalls that ' . . . when ELAS entered the town and cities, the women's units forged ahead on the heels of the other segments . . . the elders stared at them curiously but the EPON units, especially the girls, watched them with admiration and envy, they were truly a sight to behold' (145). 60

Finally, Titika Panayiotidou-Geldi explained her view that the shared experience of slavery (under Metaxas and then the Axis occupation) was so powerful that the spirit of equality which characterised the Resistance seemed natural: 'It created a feeling of equality as if it was always there. Women felt trusted and respected by men'. Even so, the experiences of women and men 'in the trenches' provided a testament not only to the modernity of the Resistance movement but also to the resilience of tradition. 61

4.7 Conclusion: Gender Equality and National Identity on the Eve of the Cold War

While EAM did not evade the 'woman question' or dismiss the specific cause of women's rights and needs (as selfish, divisive, or treasonous),²⁶ it was suspicious of feminism and feminists. The EAM leadership regarded the women of Greece as a group betrayed by the pre-war political system, just as Greece itself had been. In the same way the 'mother country' had been denied a genuine independence by the Great Powers (following the Revolution), so too had the women of Greece been denied the right to decide their own fates. So, on the one hand, the 62

primary objective was to restructure or modernise national political culture according to or inspired by the standards of female political participation in the feminist-influenced West. The dynamic march of feminism on the world stage made a clear impact upon the Resistance movement. Dimitris Glinos's interventions were crucial to EAM's conceptions of liberty and progress. An eager participant in the discourse around the 'woman question', Glinos brought a variety of external European influences to the feminist debates of the interwar period, which incorporated ideas from Clara Zetkin, August Bebel, Friedrich Engels, and also Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor, and John Stuart Mill. The enfranchisement of women in the West was regarded by Glinos as one of the positive aspects of capitalist development.

On the other hand, feminism was frowned upon within EAM as too intimately connected with a social class that was uninterested in mass political and economic integration. The dominance of the communist faction within the Resistance coalition was instrumental to a consensus which judged that feminism was ultimately a bourgeois theoretical preoccupation, and, in practice, was divisive and incompatible with the ethos of popular democracy. It was too closely associated with English and French bourgeois women whose critique of capitalist society was limited to their own personal exclusion from its central mechanisms, with little or no concern for the plight of other excluded social groups. The alternative was to situate the discourse of women's emancipation within an over-arching, society-wide liberation movement. Thus to this extent, EAM, like other anti-imperialist national liberation movements, adopted a discourse on women's role and freedom that emphasised the concepts of national unity, solidarity, justice, and patriotism.

63

Overall, the negative attitude towards Western feminism within an essentially modernist movement highlighted the movement's fundamental tensions and contradictions between tradition and modernity, between East and West, and between communist and bourgeois conceptions of liberty and justice. It also underscores the fact that the Resistance movement embodied a third, albeit incoherent, way.

64

By the Second World War, prominent 'non-aligned' feminists of the interwar period, like Maria Svolou and Rosa Imvrioti, had shifted analytical weight to class as the chief determinant of social power. Svolou became disillusioned with bourgeois feminist politics as early as 1933 for its inability to address issues of systemic power distribution, specific to class-based societies, in which women and men were equally implicated (see Moschou-Sakorrafou, 1990: 188). Imvrioti, an educationalist and Glinos's colleague, contributed to the drafting of EPON's *Dodecalogo* (similar in concept to the Ten Commandments), demonstrating a significant shift in her views on the causes and solutions to the predicament of women:

65

We young women, liberated from deceptive and morally lapsed feminism, want to break the chains of our polymorphous slavery and to fight alongside our male comrades with all our spirit, and in so doing to gain economic, social and political equality. Only in this manner will our true selves shine and we shall rise to the true humanity of women. (Andaios, 1979: 276)

In practical terms, EAM's emphasis on national liberation—rather than on feminism or Marxism—enabled the movement to cut across class and gender barriers and thus begin the process of altering communal beliefs regarding women's participation in the public sphere. Conservative peasants could be more easily asked to accept the mobilisation of girls and women, as part of a greater project to strike at German troops who planned to steal or burn their crops, than be expected to fathom northern European feminist discourse. The nationalist framework of EAM's mobilisational narratives was crucial to this task—the image of armed and uniformed peasant women marching into their village; the ceremonial burial of fallen women fighters; the invocation of reluctant belligerence in the service of defending land and freedom—these narratives allowed EAM's project to envelop hitherto atomistic and highly conservative peasants into a social reformist movement at odds with traditional, rural attitudes towards women. 66

This nationalist framework, which was crucial in mobilising and politicising disparate social groups across Greek society, was assisted by a vigorous invocation of a familiar and popular national mythology—that of 1821. The Resistance was constructed as the reincarnation of the spirit of 1821, the mythology of which had a very broad appeal—to peasants, teachers, factory workers, urban intellectuals, and civil servants. The imposition of class-based, Marxist narratives could not deliver the fervour and commitment inspired by 1821. EAM created parallels between the anti-fascist resistance and the older struggle against the Ottomans, especially as it began to spread its influence across the countryside. It also referred to itself as the Filiki Etairia (Society of Friends), or the EAM of 1821,²⁷ after the revolutionaries who began the War of Independence. A widely circulated EAM pamphlet entitled *How Women Should Function in EAM*²⁸—designed primarily for the recruitment of peasant women, teachers, and students—was replete with such references and images. Women were reminded of the '... long tradition of individual heroism and national pride, which has not been extinguished in the course of 400 years of slavery', and a list of the heroines of 1821 was provided for good measure, followed by the claim that '... [they] stand as symbols which still invite young women to imitate them even today'. The Just Warrior Women of 1821 are 'brought in line with the events of the present by virtue of a well-considered linkage: '... [women] always played a vital role in national liberation struggles from 1821 and the Cretan and Macedonian wars to the recent epic of Pindus and Crete'.²⁹ This is why, the pamphlet concludes, 'there has to be an organised revolutionary uprising in the village which embraces the women there, who retain the heroic traditions intact and whose eyes sparkle with bravery'. 67

EAM's rationale for this strategy is better understood in the context of a strong collective memory amongst Greeks of the reviled Ottoman occupation, which, rather than deliver independence, ushered in new administrative controls by the Great Powers. By extension, Greeks shared a suspicion or even contempt for the Greek ruling class, which was widely perceived as 'incompetent' and 'unworthy' for its complacency in the exchange of one servitude for another. In particular, the Greek bourgeoisie was thought of as 'contraband', as agents of foreign (authentic) bourgeoisies. In fact, most Greeks suspected that their 'class superiors' were ashamed of their 'Greekness'.³⁰ EAM mobilisational narratives were crafted against this 68

rich reservoir of shared cultural sentiment, rather than drawing on socialist or feminist polemics. Hart (1996: 84) argues that '... notions of national self-determination and irredentism were more appealing to potential adherents than dialectical materialist (or feminist) proposals formulated elsewhere'. Mazower (1995: 313) adds that, for virtually all partisans, the 'People' (*Laos*) referred to were Greeks. Internationalist sentiment was very weak, and ELAS was little drawn to ideals of Balkan 'brotherhood'.

The induction of the masses into national politics, especially Greek women, without prior histories or consciousness of revolt from which to draw, would have been harder to imagine. Just as partisan men borrowed their pseudonyms from the revolutionary period, women also adopted the names of inspiring national icons. Lela Karagianni named her underground organisation after Bouboulina. Titika, former ELAS second-lieutenant, also thought of Bouboulina as her chief role model. This reservoir of images proved significant also to the formation of the women's platoons. Panayiotidou-Geldi (1983: 34) recalls the prominence of Bouboulina in her imaginings of the Resistance:

With their active participation in the liberation of the nation, the young Greek girls revived the spirit of 1821. Like new Bouboulinas they hurled themselves into the fire and gunpowder, ignoring the danger that lurked. . . . They also participated in EPON's cultural activities, which included staging plays which re-enacted 1821 . . . and actively promoted the beautiful idea of social equality, the uprising of women against the Germans, for the liberation of the nation, just like Bouboulina and Mado Mavroyeni had done before them.

The association with heroines of 1821 also encouraged a more sympathetic attitude towards women recruits on the part of otherwise sceptical, if not hostile, male comrades. But its greatest benefit was to the girls and women who found in them the necessary role models in the absence of closer examples, as they forged a new role in the nation.

My imagination inspired in me the hope that my photograph, along with the other heroic sisters and brothers of the Resistance, would appear beside the images of the heroes of 1821 in the popular imagination. In my youthful exuberance and naiveté I felt that we would enjoy indescribable glory, and that the nation would be proud of us. I felt it, I believed it and I expected it.³¹

While the momentous involvement of women in the Resistance was facilitated largely by powerful mobilisational narratives devised by male propagandists, it would be wrong to regard the Resistance woman as a male construct, or that women's militancy, to use McClintock's (1996: 269) phrase, was a '... passive offspring of male agency and the structural necessity of the war'. This assessment not only undermines Greek women's historical agency but also offers no explanation as to why some women were compelled to make unconventional choices by the standards of the movement and of the era. Greek women were offered the opportunity to

recast their identities and they seized that opportunity, shaping its outcome according to their own aspirations. In an EAM journal from the region of Magnesia (see Vervenioti, 1994: 326), a woman fighter wrote on 21 August 1943:

I used to be the woman who cared for you, served you and feared for your lives from the margins. Today I have woken Men, I am beside you now, very close by, ready to take the same bullets as you Today I woke up as a Souliotissa Give me your hand I march beside you on the road that leads to Victory or to Zaloggo.³²

In conclusion, the history of the 1940s serves as a poignant example of both the emancipatory potential and inherent limitations of nationalist movements. During the Resistance era (1941–44), the discourse of women's emancipation and women's multifarious contributions to the movement was at once facilitated by and subordinated to a nationalist logic. However, the onset of the Civil War (1946–49) and the return to dominance of a conservative political order, as the next chapter seeks to demonstrate, saw a dramatic discursive shift in conceptions of the 'national good'. In this political climate, the national interest was partly expressed in the reinstatement of the traditional pre-war gender order—defined by the return of women to the private sphere and out of public life. In this phase of the conflict, partisan women and men who had been national heroes during the Resistance became targets of the Civil War state, which branded them as national traitors. The partisan defeat of 1949 cleared the way for a comprehensive reinstatement of elitist pre-war power structures and cultural values—the latter which were infamously encapsulated in the triptych of Fatherland-Religion-Family. These values, it was argued, were threatened and indeed debased by the communist partisan movement. The legacy of the *adartissa* faded into total historical obscurity for decades and re-emerged as an important symbolism only after the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1974, when a new era of progressive politics had dawned.

72

Notes

Note 1: From the collection of partisan songs entitled *To Adartiko kai Epanastatiko Tragoudi* (Partisan and revolutionary songs).

Note 2: For a comprehensive analysis of the political scene between 1941–44, see Fleischer (1995), Mazower (1993), Hondros (1983), Eudes (1972), Papastratis (1987), and Iatrides (1981).

Note 3: For instance, Woodhouse (1976), breaks up the 'Greek Communist Party's bid for power' into three phases: (1) 1943–44 during the period under German occupation; (2) the December Events of 1944, interpreted as an attempt to seize control of Athens as well as the rest of Greece after liberation from the Germans, and (3) the Civil War (1946–49). For the majority of its opponents, EAM's objectives, once in power, would be to dismember and destroy the Greek state (over the Macedonian issue, for example) and to subject Greece to the tyranny of the Soviet Union. Woodhouse, who had been sent to Greece by British intelligence as part of a military mission to 'contain' the Resistance, rejects this view as simplistic, pointing out the overwhelming support of the EAM and KKE by thousands of Greeks who were doubtless hostile to such an objective. By 1946, Woodhouse contends, the political objectives of all factions were clear to all, and there was no basis on which to argue that EAM's supporters were 'hoodwinked'.

Note 4: Defensive nationalism involved 'the defence of national borders and took as its primary objective the expulsion of Axis invaders' (Hart, 1990: 56). Political nationalism in this definition, involved the extension of (direct) citizenship rights to marginalised groups.

Note 5: The December Events of 1944 continue to arouse controversy in Greece, especially amongst surviving participants and their families. The tensions between the British-led contingent (that had arrived in Piraeus after the departure of the German troops in April) and EAM-ELAS had been on the ascendancy for some months. The British mission was to curb the influence of EAM-ELAS and install their own government. EAM-ELAS were frustrated by the presence of collaborators among the police and paramilitary forces utilised by British forces and their Greek allies. Following an attack on EAM demonstrators in the centre of Athens, fighting erupted; after amassing considerable casualties on both sides after some weeks, the British army and EAM-ELAS withdrew from Athens. In retrospect, this episode was the first chapter in the Civil War (1946–49).

Note 6: 'Liberated Greece' (*Eleftheri Ellada*) was the term used for the substantial tracts of land that were controlled by EAM-ELAS during the German occupation. It was in Liberated Greece that PEEA established its authority and its new 'state' institutions.

Note 7: For example, General Stefanos Sarafis (1990), ELAS commander-in-chief, and Petros Andaios (1979), former leader of EPON-ELAS (the youth wing of ELAS).

Note 8: Following the electoral victory of the Greek Socialist Party (PASOK) and the formal recognition of the EAM-ELAS Resistance movement.

Note 9: Italy already occupied the Dodecanese, and had designs on the predominantly Greek-populated southern Albania/northern Epirus region since the Great War. Bulgaria, on the other hand, had been determining its entire foreign policy, since its formation as a nation-state, through the ambition of gaining access to the Aegean Sea.

Note 10: This group had been let down by the manner in which the Greek Army crumbled under the German invasion. Indeed, a high-ranking General of the Greek army, Tsolakoglou, had accepted the post of 'prime minister' in the quisling government established by the Germans in Athens.

Note 11: The Klephts were bandits who lived in the countryside during the Ottoman era. They were generally men who were fleeing vendettas, Ottoman taxes, or debts. They raided other travellers and isolated settlements, and lived in the rugged mountains and backcountry. Most participated in some form in the War of Independence.

Note 12: The most enthusiastic response to the EAM came from the poorer sections of the population but this was by no means exclusive. For a breakdown of the cross-section of groups which constituted EAM's support base, see Stavrianos (1952: 44–46). Hondros (1983) contends that, despite appearances and communist rhetoric, EAM-ELAS was in reality a bourgeois movement that eventually brought to the Greeks a series of reforms which, in other countries, had already been implemented by bourgeois-liberal forces.

Note 13: General Stefanos Sarafis, commander-in-chief of ELAS, was a regular officer of the Greek Army prior to occupation. He had been dispatched to Greece by the English in an operation whose purpose was to contain EAM. Instead, controversially, Sarafis joined it. Years later, he recalled the absence of patriotism (or national consciousness) which characterised the Greek bourgeoisie, contrasting it with the high patriotism of the English bourgeoisie, as he experienced it. Marion Sarafis, his wife, recalls in her diaries his own recollections as a young frontline sergeant in the Balkan Wars, where he witnessed gross class-based injustices: 'The soldiers he had under his command, who were the most likely to be killed, were all sons of the peasantry or the working classes, absolutely no children from the bourgeoisie. The children of merchants and professionals had secured positions in the rear. . . . The British ruling classes are more clever and worthy of their position, for at least, when there is war they send their children off to be killed with the rest of the nation's children' (Sarafis, 1990: 72).

Note 14: Prominent educationalist and demoticist, and one of EAM's intellectual architects, Dimitris Glinos, spoke of ' . . . the formation of a provisional government after liberation, which would provide for the election of a constitutional assembly based on popular sovereignty; and the affirmation of the right of the nation to decide its form of government; of EAM to halt any reactionary attempt to impose a government contrary to the will of the people' (Glinos, 1944).

Note 15: Rightist narratives invariably depicted EAM as 'forcing Marx on the peasant.' By contrast, the left eulogised EAM's 'daring efforts to provide a democratic solution to the country's social and economic ills.' Both schools of thought tended to see EAM as a monolithic organisation, overlooking the nuances and contradictions that emerged, as the movement negotiated its way through a very complex social and political environment.

Note 16: One of the more prominent achievements of the EAM administration was the establishment of the People's Courts, which were particularly successful in settling many long-standing local disputes; even in eliminating animal theft, a long-standing menace afflicting rural Greece. Many conservative villagers remained loyal to the leftist Resistance during the Civil War due to this experience.

Note 17: Article 3 of the PEEA Constitution declared that, 'the National Council was the supreme instrument of the people's sovereignty'. It controlled the work of PEEA, ratified its acts, proposed measures, or made decisions contributing to the success of the national struggle. Mazower (1993) questions the true function of the National Council, given the circumstances of its demise, while maintaining that it served as a symbolic reminder of EAM's overriding emphasis on social inclusiveness, rather than functioning as a powerhouse of 'bourgeois democracy' (294).

Note 18: For example, EPON, EAM's youth organisation.

Note 19: Little Yannis, where Yannis is a common male first name.

Note 20: She is referring to the battle for Athens, also known as the December Events, in December 1944. Those battles took place after the retreat of the Germans, when the British army in conjunction with the local opposition began their campaign of demobilising and neutralising EAM-ELAS.

Note 21: Thiella was killed in the December battles of 1944.

Note 22: She had previously written the hymn of ELAS.

Note 23: Andaios founded and led EPON's armed units, referred to as EPON-ELAS.

Note 24: These opponents viewed and identified themselves as *ethnikofrones* (nationally minded). After liberation the whole anti-EAM coalition became identified as the *ethnikofrones* to distinguish themselves from the communists who, by implication, were far from 'nationally minded', but instead whose primary allegiance was to Moscow.

Note 25: See Tsouparopoulos (1989).

Note 26: See the introduction in Higgonet et al. (1987).

Note 27: The *Filiki Etairia* was a secret organisation established and comprised of an assortment of merchants, intellectuals and ethnic Greeks serving in the Russian army, who planned the Revolution of 1821. For EAM's allusions to the *Etairia*, see Hondros (1983).

Note 28: The pamphlet was disseminated by EAM's Central Committee in February 1943.

Note 29: 'Pindos', here, refers to the mountain range at which the Greek-Albanian war took place (between October 1940 and April 1941), and in which local women provided vital logistical support to the Greek troops. Crete refers to the Battle of Crete following the invasion of the German Parachute Regiments.

Note 30: In addition, the ruling class (e.g., the royalist landed aristocracy) also lost credibility through their long-standing allegiance to the Bavarian monarchy imposed by the Great Powers as a condition of independence in the 1820s. The monarchy is widely held responsible for both the 1897 and 1922 'national disasters'.

Note 31: Titika Panayiotidou-Geldi, interview with author, Athens, 1995.

Note 32: Zaloggo refers to a cliff top from which the Souliotisses (women from Souli), a few years before the Greek Revolutions of 1821, plunged to their deaths rather than surrender to the Ali Pasha's Turkish-Albanian troops. The Souliotisses had a long tradition of dissidence and resistance, so Zaloggo became a euphemism for Greek defiance, pride, and love of freedom. It has also been used as a metaphor for the preservation of national honour, and, by implication, is bound up with the preservation of female virtue at all costs.