



# Zorba Abandoned, Theodorakis Plays On

Stephen Rousseas

The colonels' coup in Greece on April 21, 1967, caught everyone by surprise—the Right, the Center and the Left. Mikis Theodorakis, Greece's most gifted popular composer and maverick political "revolutionary," was tipped off by a right-wing journalist who telephoned him in the early morning hours of the coup. He went immediately into hiding and started organizing the Patriotic Front, a left-wing resistance movement based on the Lambrakis Youth Movement, of which he was the founder and president. In a frenzy of clandestine meetings, manifestos, plots and plans, he found the time to write his first post-coup song, a call to arms: *To métopo / Tous Éllines / Kallí ksaná sti máhi / Eléfhtheria oi thánatos / To lávaro mas yráfi* (The Patriotic Front / Calls all Greeks / Again to battle / Freedom or death / Our banner writes).

It was quickly smuggled out of Greece on a bad quality tape with Theodorakis himself singing it in a hushed, barely audible voice. The BBC beamed it into Greece. Several weeks later in an apartment in New York Melina Mercouri sat on the floor, virtually in tears, her arms wrapped tenderly around the tape recorder, overlaying her voice on Mikis's for transmission over WBAI.

The Greeks did not rise to battle, and the colonels are now going into their seventh, though somewhat troubled, year of power. The resistance movement is largely impotent and fractured into several quarreling groups. The Communist Left is split bitterly between the Moscow-dominated Koliyiannis group, which had earlier supported the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia and now soft-pedals the resistance (on the ground that this is not the historically appropriate time), and the independent, nationally

oriented "interior" politburo that wants to do battle as the Left had done during the German occupation under the KKE-led EAM/ELAS resistance movement.

What went wrong? Why didn't the Greek people pour out into the streets as they did by the hundreds of thousands on July 15, 1965, when the young King Constantine engineered his constitutional coup d'état by unceremoniously throwing out the Center Union government of George Papandreou, thus setting the stage for what was to come? One reason, perhaps, is that tanks and machine guns manned the streets in April, 1967. Another was the element of total surprise no crisis, no forewarning, just tanks in the streets while arrest units of the military moved with lightning speed and surprised virtually all of the political leaders and deputies asleep in their beds. The sweep was breathtaking, the prisons were full. It was a brilliant adaptation and execution of the NATO-designed Prometheus contingency plan by the lower echelons of the Greek military.

One of the few to escape the initial roundup was Theodorakis, a longtime member of the outlawed Greek Communist party (KKE) and a United Democratic Left (EDA) deputy in parliament at the time of the coup. Two recent books tell part of this sorry story from his point of view. One is Theodorakis's *Journal of Resistance*, first published in French in 1971 and now brought out in English translation (Coward, McCann & Geoghegan; 334 pp.; \$8.95); the other is an hagiography written by George Gianaris entitled *Mikis Theodorakis: Music and Social Change*, with a foreword written by Theodorakis (Praeger; 320 pp.; \$8.95).

The key to Theodorakis as a "politician" lies in his philosophy, if so it can be called, of music. To him music cannot be abstract; art for art's sake is anathema. It must be wedded to reality and political activism. It must satisfy the revolutionary function

---

STEPHEN ROUSSEAS, chairman of the department of economics at Vassar College, is author of *Death of a Democracy: Greece and the American Conscience*.

of raising the consciousness of the masses by carrying the words of the great revolutionary poets to the people. There is a *déjà vu* quality here that reminds one of the great socialist realism debates of the Soviet Union. If you can't whistle it, it can't be music. And one thing that can be said about the songs of Mikis Theodorakis is that they are eminently whistleable. Indeed, in the 1960's (up to the coup) they were not only being whistled, an entire nation was singing them, words and all. This proved to be so unsettling to the right-wing governments of the time that his concerts were broken up by club-swinging thugs and his music banned on the state-owned radio.

The genius of Theodorakis is not only his extraordinary melodic talent but the harnessing of this gift to the words of such poets as Yiannis Ritsos, Angelos Sikelianos, Notis Regalis, Manos Eleftheriou, Garcia Lorca and the less radical, Nobel-prize winning poet, George Seferis, whose words served via Theodorakis's music to take the Greek people back to their "roots"—an important word in Theodorakis's lexicon. "I consider," writes Theodorakis, "my most important work is setting to music the poetry of the greatest contemporary poets, whose work thereby has become known and loved by the popular masses." In his foreword to Giannaris's book Theodorakis writes that his purpose is to "write music for the people"; that "Art must at every moment communicate with the masses"; that there is a direct "relationship between music and politics, which is to say, art and politics"; that the "politicization of my art is exclusively the result of . . . the forthrightness and . . . my personal commitment." Above all, "composers of pop music . . . should collaborate with the great modern poets . . . of their countries, so that they [can] marry their musical sensibility, which is full of life, with the poetic visions and the messages of the living poetry of our era." In short, "art for the masses" because "the masses thirst and continue to wait for the thinkers and creators, not only to express them and liberate them intellectually, but also to lead and show them the *way out* of this horrible human crisis into which they have been driven by technocracy, lust for power and intoxication with authority." Man, in Theodorakis's view, cannot wait for the politicians to show him the *way out*. He is to take destiny in his own hands, guided by his "faultless instinct of creativity." Slowly but steadily he is to "turn his face toward the creators [artists] and wait for *their* voice, in order to be armed, to survive, and to win" (italics supplied).

Views such as these eventually led him into conflict with the leaders and hard-core rank and file of the Greek Communist party and forced his break with the KKE. Professional revolutionaries are not about to surrender their historical mission or their leadership to artists and

writers of high-grade pop music. Rather, well-known artists and musicians are to serve as window-dressing for the revolutionary cause—a subservient role suited neither to Theodorakis's protean force nor to his unbridled ego.

The *way out*, according to Theodorakis, was to be found in "Militant Culture"—a "living culture" rooted in the common arteries of the people. Popular music coupled with the popular singer's voice (Bithikotsis) and popular instruments (the bouzouki) would make "a kind of aerial chain" that would link the masses with their past (roots). The masses are "the living part of a great body," a vanguard that will open the way through an "aesthetic joy . . . transformed drop by drop into moral strength, and then into ideological weight and political action." This, to Theodorakis, is "the ineluctable march of militant culture," leading "*of itself* to politicization (because in the final analysis what ideal can militant culture give birth to in us? An ideal of liberty and humanity!)" (italics supplied).

Theodorakis's views, to a professional revolutionist, were naively romantic and very, very un-Marxian. He was to be tolerated and used, but to contain him was another matter. After the murder of the left-wing deputy, Gregoris Lambrakis (brilliantly memorialized in Costas Gavras's film, *Z*), Theodorakis organized and headed the Lambrakis Youth Movement in 1964 as a cultural renaissance movement consisting of 50,000 members in 300 branches all over Greece. It sponsored libraries, village road-building, choirs, amateur theatrical groups and poetry readings in the working-class districts of Piraeus and Athens and in the villages. The movement was constantly attacked by right-wing goon squads, its buildings were bombed and its members were persecuted by the security police of the "apostate" government.

At first the Lambrakis Youth Movement appealed to all youth (though it was controlled by the Communists) and was about to be banned by the government when it finally was adopted by the United Democratic Left (EDA) party and officially made its youth division, thus extending to it the protection and legality of the Greek constitution. Immediately after the 1967 coup it formed the cadres of the Patriotic Front resistance movement, again under Theodorakis's leadership, and collided head on with the Moscow wing of the KKE.

In 1958-59 Theodorakis put his views on music to the test with his song cycle *Epitáphios*, a moving, haunting and beautiful set of eight songs set to the words of the radical Greek poet, Yiannis Ritsos. Theodorakis regarded this his "first work, the foundation stone of militant culture." *Epitáphios* is a threnody based on the 1936 strike of tobacco workers in Salonika when the Greek Royal Gendarmerie opened fire, killing thirty persons and

wounding hundreds more. It is a mother's lament to her fallen son:

A day in May you left me  
 A day in May I lost you.  
 It was Spring when you so loved  
 To climb the sun deck  
 And tell me of the good things  
 That one day would be ours.  
 But now you are no more  
 No more our light  
 No more our fire.

The words were sung by the Piraeen dock singer, Grigoris Bithikotsis, with the great Manolis Chiotis on the bouzouki. *Epitáphios* catapulted Theodorakis to instant fame and recognition. At the same time, it set off a bitter controversy. A more genteel version had been recorded by the composer Manos Hadjidakis (of *Never on Sunday* fame), with the dulcet-voiced Nana Mouskouri singing the words to an orchestral string accompaniment without the raucous voice of the bouzouki to jar the refined sensibilities of the educated élite. It was a battle between the great-unwashed version of Theodorakis, with its heavy rebetic beat, and the more refined version of Hadjidakis, meant for the cultured aristocracy of Greece living in the exclusive Kolonaki section of Athens. Much to Theodorakis's annoyance, Vassilis Arkadinos, the music critic of the left-wing newspaper *Avghí*, sided with Hadjidakis.

Theodorakis, however, leaped to fame on the twang of the bouzouki and the hashish voice of a proletarian singer. His success was assured two years later with a set of twelve popular and non-controversial songs, set partly to his own poetry, under the title of *Archipelagos*. Athens, and thus all of Greece, was swept up by this extraordinary talent.

It did not take long, however, for Theodorakis to become once again the center of a bitter controversy. The following year he composed a new song cycle consisting of eight songs. It was a musical tragedy in the form of epic theatre called *The Ballad of a Dead Brother* (*To Tragóúdi tou Nekroú Adelphoú*), with the book, lyrics and music by Theodorakis himself. The *Ballad* is the story of two brothers fighting on opposite sides of the Greek civil war (1947-49). The tragedy centers on the anguish of the mother (an eternal and ever recurring theme among Greek poets and song writers) who tries to reconcile her two sons. Andreas, the rightist, is killed in battle with the partisans. Ismene, the girl friend of the leftist, Pavlos, saves her rightist father by betraying her lover to a certain death (a real melodrama worthy of afternoon TV; but then things should be kept as simple as possible for the masses). The mother in the *Ballad* symbolizes a polarized Greece torn apart by the hatred and

divisions of the Left and the Right. Its first major performance was in October, 1962. The final song was a plea to "unite." According to Giannaris's description, "All those who have been killed in the civil war—rightists, leftists, policemen, revolutionaries—march forward toward the audience, as in the parabasis of ancient drama, holding hands." They have been transformed by their sacrifice and have achieved "a new, permanent unity [which] is projected into the future as a result of the past." In the words of Theodorakis:

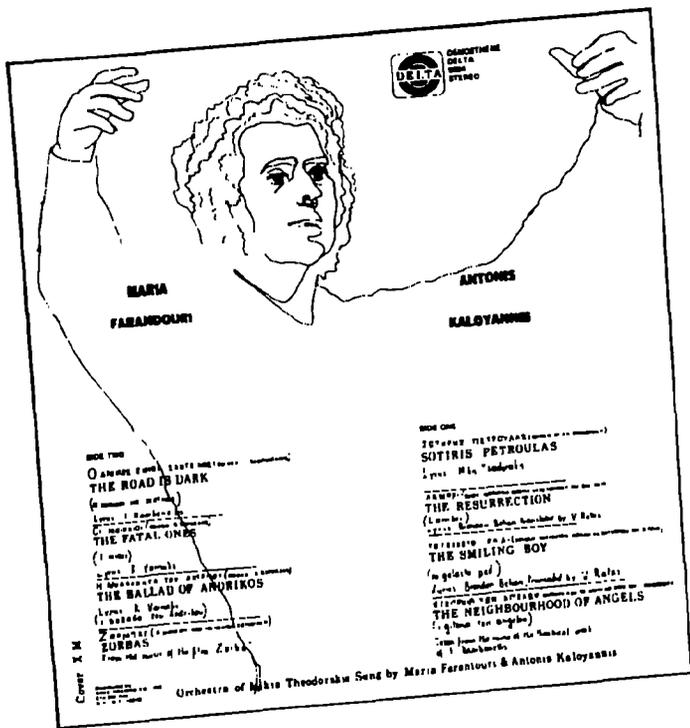
One tree, with one root, one well, one spring;  
 Today we marry the Sun.

As Giannaris points out: "The evil one—the collaborator, the coward—was not punished, and the good one—the one who resisted and gave up his life—was not rewarded."

The *Ballad of a Dead Brother* caused an uproar. Theodorakis was denounced by the Left as well as the Right. The passions of the Greek civil war were not to be overcome quite that easily—a civil war notorious for its beastiality on both sides, where entire families were wiped out, and individuals, still alive, their skin slit from ear to ear, would have their faces peeled up over their heads (*Ton ksedárgané*, as the Greeks would say). The *Ballad*, however, is of particular interest in explaining much of Theodorakis's post-coup activities, both in attempting to unite the warring resistance groups and in his reluctance to engage in armed struggle against the colonels.

Despite the revolutionary rhetoric of his party, Theodorakis is a nonviolent man unable to face up to the moral dilemma of dirty hands. Unlike Camus's *Just Assassins* or Sartre's *Hoerderer*, he is not willing to dip his hands in blood, no matter how deeply held his convictions. His tolerance for violence against his own person, however, is very great. He endured physical torture and threats of death many times during the civil war (once from his own party) when he was held political prisoner on the island of Makronissos, one of the more notorious island concentration camps for which Greece is famous. But his abhorrence of physical violence against others is one of the constants in Theodorakis's character.

At the age of fourteen, in 1939, he joined the fascist anti-Communist youth movement (EON) of the Metaxas dictatorship, a superpatriotic, paramilitary organization known for its blind obedience to Church and State. He organized a group within EON called *Friends of the Mountain*, which gave nationalist poetry readings in the square of Tripolis (a main town in the Peloponnesus) and scoured the mountains, armed, looking for local bands of brigands. When they finally encountered some, they ran all the way back to the village and never went out again.



Record jacket for "Zorbas Theodorakis"

It was not, however, so much the fascist dogma that attracted him as the nationalist overtones of EON.

It was only with the German occupation of Greece that Theodorakis's radicalization got started, when he saw how easily the fascist groups slipped into collaboration. By the middle of 1942 the Communist-dominated National Liberation Front (EAM) and its military arm, the People's Army of Liberation (ELAS), were formed. Theodorakis, his biographer argues, was not asked to join the youth arm of ELAS, the National Panhellenic Youth Organization (EPON) because of "the jealousy and hostility that he incurred because of his father's position as a civil servant." This is arrant nonsense. The more likely answer is Theodorakis's prominent leadership role in EON only a very short time before. He proved himself, however, by taking part in demonstrations and by being arrested and beaten by the Italians. In 1943, for his own safety, the sixteen-year-old Theodorakis was shipped off to Athens, where he got deeply involved in resistance work and joined the EPON reserves of the Nea Smyrne sector of Athens. He participated in the liberation of Athens and the civil war. By now he was avidly reading Marx and Lenin in between his music lessons at the Athens conservatory. Imprisonment, torture and exile quickly followed, and Theodorakis joined the Greek Communist party in 1944.

Theodorakis's troubles with the KKE had an early start. In 1945, before the Panhellenic Conference of the All-Greek Youth Organization, he denounced the Left's cultural program on the grounds that it was tied to foreign elements and "accused ELAS of taking Russian songs to create Greek resistance

songs and even taking a tune from Texas for the EPON anthem." "The meeting," writes Giannaris, "soon developed into a riot."

In the most profound sense the violence and the treatment of captives by both sides—the dismembered bodies and the row upon row of heads—horrified him, and he was quick to retreat into his art. He developed "a theory of metaphysical escape which would deliver man from violence and turmoil." Music was to be the substitute for religion, and Man was to be "isolated from material needs and daily happenings." His sensibility had been violated and he sought solace and escape in his music.

But the world of action and politics could not be totally suppressed. In the relatively free elections of 1964 he ran for the parliamentary seat of the murdered Lambrakis and was elected as a United Democratic Left Party deputy with his constituency in the port city of Piraeus. In the days immediately after the 1967 coup he was obsessed with the need to unify all resistance groups. But he went about it in a quixotic way. Haunted by the knowledge that all the political leaders had failed to anticipate a coup everyone had expected, he began by dismissing the leaders of all political factions and assessing blame for the coup Right and Left. In a bitter "Analysis of the Situation," which he wrote from hiding four days after the coup and circulated among the budding resistance movements, he declared:

When an army suffers a reverse, the soldiers and the officers remove the generals. I propose we do the same. . . . It is we who are taking this initiative today. Those leaders who have been arrested have had it. . . . I am your President, a deputy and a member of the Executive Committee of EDA—it is my job to replace them. . . . As regards the Politburo of the Greek Communist Party, which is abroad—in my opinion, they bear the greatest responsibility of all. . . . However. . . we must maintain the best fraternal relations with the Politburo and demand its constant collaboration, while at the same time making it quite clear that here it is we who are responsible! But let there be no split!

Four months to the day after the coup, on August 21, 1967, Theodorakis was in jail, captured by his own bravura and carelessness. And the split between Theodorakis and the KKE was well on its way. It was hardly likely that the Politburo would be so easily deposed. Driven by his blind desire for unity and his aversion to violence, he still struggled to bring the unity about—*under his leadership*. Even in the Oropos concentration camp he tried to unite the two contending factions of the KKE. Both rejected him. On April 13, 1970, because of a recurrence of tuberculosis and through the intervention

of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, Theodorakis was released and allowed to leave for Paris. Within a short time he was once again calling for unity, only now among the exiled politicians. Once again he failed.

He failed on both occasions because he would not resort to violence and because he espoused, surprisingly, the "Second Solution." As early as July, 1969, in a smuggled question-and-answer interview with the Italian journalist Nerio Minuzzo (reproduced by Theodorakis in his *Journal*), he was asked if there were, in his opinion, any genuine opportunities for opposition. His reply was that there were *two* solutions. The first, an all-out struggle against the dictatorship based on the union of *all* democratic forces. The second, "the formation of a national front, consisting in the main of those representatives of the Center and the Right. . . . [T]he main objective of this would be to lead the country back to parliamentary democracy." But, wrote Theodorakis, "*I do not consider it possible to contemplate the first solution before we have exhausted all the possibilities for overthrowing the dictatorship without bloodshed on the basis of the second solution.*" Later, in September, 1969, while in exile in the mountain village of Zatouna, he wrote an "Open Letter to My Comrades" entitled "The Historic Tasks of the Greek Left." His Second Solution became more explicit:

There is still the possibility of overthrowing the dictatorship from within and forming a government of pro-American politicians (Karamanlis, Mavros, Mitsotakis, etc.) . . . . By accepting such a solution . . . [the Americans] would . . . permit only a very slender measure of liberty. . . . *This solution would nonetheless in my view be an important step forward* (italics supplied).

In this version not only had the Left been excluded, but so was Andreas Papandreou, the leader of the Center Union Party and head of the Pan-Hellenic Liberation Movement (PAK). Included were George Mavros, representing the right wing of the Center Union Party, and Mitsotakis, the notorious betrayer of the Center Union and a minister in the King's 1965 puppet government. Karamanlis, of course, is the former prime minister and leader of the right-wing National Radical Union (ERE) party, living in self-imposed exile in Paris since 1963. Strangely, no mention is made of Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, the ERE prime minister at the time of the coup.

On this basis not much can be said for Theodorakis's political sense, not to mention his notion of unity. Still later, in 1970, at the Oropos concentration camp, the Second Solution becomes the "Flexible Solution," or the "Karamanlis Solution." All other names have dropped out. Theodorakis even went so far as to smuggle a letter out to Karamanlis, his former arch enemy. "By taking on the leadership of

this struggle," wrote Theodorakis to Karamanlis, "you will have deserved well of the Nation. . . . I am at your service." Small wonder the KKE was not exactly enthusiastic at the antics of its former show-piece.

Theodorakis's *Journal* ends with his liberation in 1970, as does the Giannaris hagiography. But he has careened onward. In 1970, on a visit to Denmark, Theodorakis was elected artist of the year by the students of the University of Aarhus. In a radio interview with one of the most noted scholars of modern Greek history and politics, Ole Wahl Olsen (who, incidentally, has appended to Theodorakis's *Journal* an excellent and very useful "Chronology of Events" dating from 1925 to 1970), Theodorakis stated that he was through with politics and political parties. He would create a great cultural movement to unite all the best aspects of mankind in a new cultural revolution. (Theodorakis was clearly falling back on his old concept of Militant Culture.) He, Theodorakis, moreover, would be the artist to create and lead this new revolution. He then stated that he was finished with the KKE; that he had been badly treated and abused by them and that they had misused his good name. Theodorakis then denounced the KKE and said flatly that they were not a solution to Greece's problems. At the end of the interview he asked Ole Olsen to send copies of the tape to the German radio for transmission to the people of Greece.

The Danes were very troubled by this, thinking that perhaps Theodorakis had been carried away in a fit of anger. They later telephoned him in Paris to double check. He told them to go ahead and send the tape. This, in effect, constitutes his public break, after twenty-six years of membership, with the Greek Communist party—and not in 1972 while he was on tour in Australia, as Giannaris relates in a last-minute addendum to his book. It remains to be seen whether this second act of privatization by Theodorakis will hold for the future.

In a peripheral way, while in exile in Paris, Theodorakis was involved in one more attempt at unity. In the winter and spring of 1970 the Norwegian Committee for Democracy in Greece approached Einer Gerhardsen, a revered Norwegian politician with more than forty years in public life, over fifteen of them as Labor prime minister. The idea was to adapt a 1944 Norwegian plan for unity to the Greek cause. During the German occupation all parties were united under one program with one objective—to rid Norway of the Germans. All differences had been set aside and all efforts united behind this one goal.

Gerhardsen agreed, and talks were started with Karamanlis in Paris and with Kanellopoulos and George Mavros in Greece. Theodorakis was also approached, as was George Mylonas, former Center

Union Minister of Education, and even the Moscow-oriented Koliyiannis of the Greek Communist party. Contact was also made with the "apostate" Mitsotakis and with a Greek colonel and a Greek bishop. Finally, Andreas Papandreou, leader of the left wing of the Center Union Party and head of PAK, now teaching economics at York University in Toronto, was brought in. King Constantine in Rome was also contacted and said he would go along with the plan, though he did not come out publicly in favor of it. He also indicated that a Karamanlis/Papandreou/EDA coalition would be acceptable to him. The group, excluding the King, was to meet in London or Oslo to map out a unified program for liberation and *perhaps* set up a government-in-exile.

Everyone was in tentative agreement. The only holdout was Papandreou. He did not reject the plan; he wanted to know more about it before he committed himself to it. The Danish deputy, Mogens Camre, long involved in the anti-Junta movement and a friend of Andreas Papandreou, was asked to pressure Papandreou to go along with the plan. Camre outlined the full plan to Papandreou in a letter. A union of all Greek parties and personalities was considered necessary if the Scandinavian countries were to be effective in their opposition to the Junta within NATO. Papandreou, however, was for armed resistance via PAK, against the Karamanlis solution and against cooperation with right-wing conservatives. Nevertheless, Papandreou did not reject the plan outright. Instead, he circulated a mimeographed reply to Camre setting out a number of conditions and a question: Would either Denmark or Norway withdraw from NATO if NATO did not accept the Norwegian plan?

To the embarrassment of Scandinavians supporting the plan, it was learned that a copy of Papandreou's letter had fallen into the hands of the Greek ambassador to London. The suspicion was that Papandreou had publicized the plan in order to kill it. Indeed, his letter repeated unnecessarily much of the content of Camre's original letter, and Papandreou's secretary in Stockholm, Angela Kokola, unwittingly revealed that over two hundred copies of Papandreou's reply had been circulated—hardly a way to keep a secret concerning a delicate negotiation.

At Papandreou's request a meeting with the then Danish prime minister, Helmar Baumsgaard, was arranged. The prime minister agreed, though he was no doubt aware that Papandreou might go against the plan. Papandreou's position was that the major members of the proposed coalition group could not be trusted, that in large measure they had brought on the coup and that he, Papandreou, would find it difficult to cooperate with them.

In fairness to Papandreou, much was being asked of him. Just before the coup Kanellopoulos had been

trying to strip Papandreou of his parliamentary immunity and to send him to jail on the trumped-up charges of conspiracy over the celebrated Aspida Plan. Mitsotakis, furthermore, was a traitor to his party and a key participant in the successful conspiracy by the King to bring down the Center Union of Papandreou's father. The 1944 Norwegian coalition was not, therefore, a very good model for the Greek case. Also, the probability is very high that a Karamanlis solution might very well banish Papandreou from active participation in post-coup political life. Papandreou was therefore being asked to commit possible suicide in the name of unity.

At the airport, on leaving Denmark, Papandreou proposed an alternate plan to Camre. Papandreou did not believe that Karamanlis and Kanellopoulos, both of the ERE party, could be in the same room, let alone cooperate with members of the Communist-dominated EDA party. He was therefore proposing two groups: a Center-Left and a Center-Right group, with Papandreou serving as the link between them. Camre did not think this would work, but he sent Papandreou's counterproposal to the Norwegian Committee.

A group of Scandinavians, including Gerhardsen and Einar Forde, the Norwegian M.P. and chairman of the Norwegian Committee for Democracy in Greece, went to Greece and met with Kanellopoulos and Mavros. Both said that if Papandreou were not in the plan they could not expose themselves. The three Scandinavians returned home, and Gerhardsen was moved to observe that democracy would not be restored in Greece until someone did away not only with the colonels but with all the old Greek politicians as well. They were disgusted with the Greek politicians, who, they felt, were out of touch with reality and more concerned with their own personal ideas than with the fate of their people. Gerhardsen refused to participate any further in Greek affairs.

With the Scandinavian countries sadly disillusioned, the initiative was picked up by the London-based European Atlantic Committee on Greece. This committee, headed by Sir Hugh Green, former director of the BBC, deals only with NATO countries on governmental and parliamentary levels. Its primary objective is to put the Greek cause on the NATO agenda (to which, of course, the United States strongly objects) and have a special NATO committee investigate the Greek case as a first step in deposing the Junta.

The foreign secretary of the Netherlands, Max van der Stohl, was approached by the Committee and promised to cooperate. At the June 13-15 meetings of NATO in Copenhagen the Dutch foreign minister, without mentioning Greece by name, said that he regretted the lack of democracy in certain member countries (i.e., Turkey, Portugal and Greece) and that if the reliability of NATO were to be maintained this state of affairs would have to change.

Where has Mikis Theodorakis stood in all this, and where does he stand now? Theodorakis is a man of strong passions, a man of total commitment, who seeks and thrives on controversy. He is an emotional rather than a reflective man, absolutely sure of himself and his genius. He is arrogant to a fault. Physically he is a big man, a bit clumsy, lacking in grace. His hair is curly and unbecomingly long. He looks somewhat like a proletarian wearing a Louis XIV perrique.

As a politician he was never taken seriously. He was, and is, a very minor player, much loved for his music by all sides but dismissed as a naive bumbler in politics. Theodorakis is a great one for the dramatic pose, capable of dashing off instant manifestos to the world to fit each and every crisis, and invariably disappointed in the responses to his obiter dicta. He is an extremely talented man consumed by a monumental ego. A man with intellectual pretensions but lacking the equipment for their realization.

Yet he is a good man, a man of decent instincts and sensitive to the sufferings of his fellowman—which is more than can be said for a great many intellectuals. Above all, his melodic genius is something extraordinary to behold. Unfortunately, he is known outside of Greece as the composer of *Zorbá* and little else. But to know Theodorakis is to know *Epitáphios*; *Axion Estí*, his great oratorical work; the beautiful songs of *Archipelagos*; the haunting melody dedicated to the murdered Lambrakis, *To Yelasto Paidi* (The Laughing Boy); and many, many others.

Theodorakis is also a man of contradictions, and when caught in one he tends to become arrogant. His great contribution to Greek music is his insistence on using music as a vessel to be filled with the words of the great poets and carried to the people as an offering and as a libation for their suffering and their sorrows. Before Theodorakis the words of rebetic songs were often "cheap, banal, and repetitious to the point of absurdity." Theodorakis changed all that, and he stated his credo clearly:

In the beginning was the Word! This truth is applied faultlessly in all my works. Hence, *one has but to take into consideration the poetic text each time in order to interpret my music*. . . . I place my pride in serving faithfully (primarily) modern Greek poetry. . . . [W]hen one listens to a song, *one cannot imagine the music with another text, nor the poem with different music* (italics supplied).

Yet the primacy of words is sometimes forgotten by Theodorakis; hence the contradiction. On October 24, 1972, he gave a concert in Paris at La Mutualité, the famous concert hall and meeting place of radicals in the Latin Quarter. It was called "Theodorakis *Dirige* Theodorakis," about as accurate as a title can be. On stage were four bouzouki players, two guitarists, two drummers and *twenty* loudspeakers arranged in banks on each side of the stage. There were two male singers and the remarkable Maria Farantouri, her deep dark-colored voice ideally suited to the music of Theodorakis. In front was conductor Theodorakis himself (by comparison, Leonard Bernstein is a model of decorum on the podium) in his traditional black Mao-like suit. La Mutualité was packed to the rafters.

The concert began. Maria Farantouri sang. The words of Yiannis Ritsos and Garcia Lorca were lost in the din of the *twenty haut-parleurs*—about two times that of an American rock concert. In one of those few moments between songs, a solitary voice called out: "*Miki, Miki, on n'entend rien. On n'entend pas les mots.*" Theodorakis, pulling himself up to his full height, approached the apron of the stage in calculated steps, looked severely at the audience and then announced: "This is a concert of music with words, not words with music." (*In the beginning was the word!*) He then proceeded to drown out Maria Farantouri in the next song cycle, as well as himself when he sang some of his own songs—badly. A man of contradictions, indeed. But a great one at that.