

FREEMASONRY IN GREECE

Introduction



Ancient Greece is considered to be the foundational culture of Western Civilization. Ancient Greek civilization has been immensely influential on the language, politics, educational systems, philosophy, art and architecture of the modern world, particularly during the Renaissance in Western Europe and again during various neo-Classical revivals in 18th and 19th century Europe and the Americas¹.

Its history is of a country which has had to fight many wars of independence against the Persians, Romans, Ottoman Empire and the Germans. Freemasons have been in the forefront of these struggles in modern times. In recent times Greece has been beset by unstable Government and financial crises.

History

776 BC, the date of the first Olympic Games in 776 BC is traditionally the beginning of the Ancient Greek period which ended with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC. The structure was that each City in Greece was independent although some were subordinate to others. The Persian Wars² (500–448 BC) started when the Ionian Greek cities revolted from the Persian Empire and were supported by some of the mainland Cities, eventually led by Athens. The more famous battles of this war include Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea.

The period that follows is normally classed as Hellenistic which ended when Rome annexed the Greek peninsular in 146 BC. Greek culture was a powerful influence in the Roman Empire, which carried a version of it to many parts of Europe.

The division of the Roman Empire into East and West and the subsequent collapse of the Western Empire strengthened the position of the Greeks. When Constantine the Great turned Byzantium into the new capital to be known as Constantinople, the city became the center of Greek Orthodox culture. From the late 8th century, the Byzantine Empire began to recover from the devastating impact of successive invasions, mainly from Persians and Slavs. By the middle of the 9th century the cities enjoyed improved security and effective central control.

The 11th and 12th centuries are said to be the Golden Age of Byzantine art in Greece. Many of the most important Byzantine churches in and around Athens, for example, were built during these two centuries, and this reflects the growth of urbanization in Greece during this period.

¹ Wikipedia

² Herodotus's "*Histories*"

The Ottoman Empire brought about the fall of the Greek Byzantine Empire in 1453, and the Ottomans ruled Greece until the early 19th century. In the early months of 1821, the Greeks declared their independence but did not achieve it until 1829. The Great Powers first tried to preserve the *status quo* of the Ottoman Empire, but soon changed their stance and scores of non-Greeks volunteered to fight for the cause. On 20 October 1827, a combined British, French and Russian naval force destroyed the Ottoman and Egyptian armada. The Russian minister of foreign affairs, **Ioannis Kapodistrias**, himself a Greek, returned home as President of the new Republic. After his assassination the European powers helped turn Greece into a monarchy and the first King, Otto, came from Bavaria and the second, George I, from Denmark.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries Greece enlarged its boundaries to include the ethnic Greek population of the Ottoman Empire. The Ionian Islands were returned by Britain in 1863 and Thessaly was ceded by the Ottomans. As a result of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 Epirus, southern Macedonia, Crete and the Aegean Islands were annexed into the Kingdom of Greece. Another enlargement followed in 1947, when Greece annexed the Dodecanese Islands from Italy.

In World War I, Greece sided with the Allied powers against Ottoman Empire and Germany. In the war's aftermath, the Great Powers awarded parts of Asia Minor to Greece, including the city of İzmir, which had a large Greek population. However, the Turkish nationalists, led by **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**, overthrew the Ottoman government, organized a military assault on the Greek troops and defeated them. Immediately afterwards, over one million native Greeks of Turkey had to leave for Greece as a population exchange between Greece and Turkey. Despite the country's numerically small and ill-equipped armed forces, Greece made a decisive contribution to the Allied efforts in World War II. At the start of the war Italy invaded Greece in 1940, but Greek troops repelled the invaders after a bitter struggle. This was the first Allied victory in the war.

Soon after, troops from Germany, Bulgaria, and Italy successfully invaded Greece, through Yugoslavia, overcoming Greek, British, Australian, and New Zealand units. In 1941, the Germans attempted to seize Crete with a large attack by paratroops but faced heavy resistance. The Greeks delayed German military plans against the Soviet Union. The heavy losses of German paratroopers led the Germans to launch no further large-scale air-invasions.

During the years of Occupation of Greece by Nazi Germany, thousands of Greeks died in direct combat, in concentration camps, or of starvation. The occupiers murdered the greater part of the Jewish community despite efforts by the Greek Orthodox Church and many other Christian Greeks to shelter the Jews. The economy of Greece was devastated.

In August 1944, the German Army in Greece began withdrawing northwestward from Greece into Yugoslavia and Albania to avoid being cut off in Greece by Russian forces and the German occupation of Greece ended. The Resistance ELAS seized control of Athens on 12 October 1944.

British troops had already landed on 4 October in Patras, and entered Athens at 14 October 1944^[16]. The returning Greek government in exile had been formed under Western Allied auspices in Cairo and included six KKE-affiliated ministers.

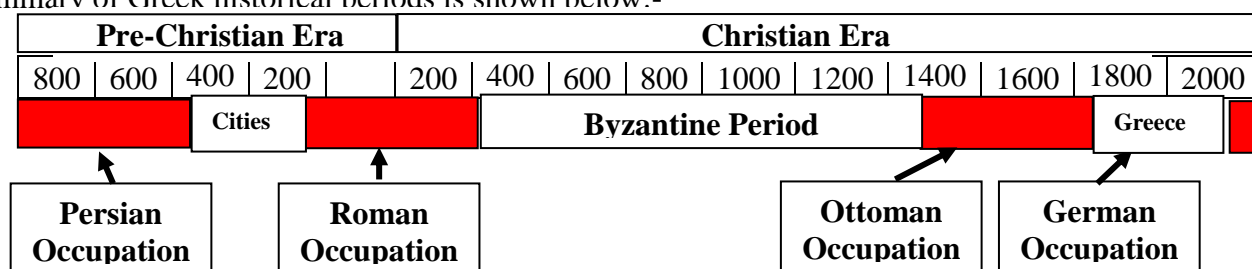
The Greek Civil War was fought between 1944 and 1949 in Greece between the Governmental forces of Greece supported by the United Kingdom at first, and later by the USA, and the communist-led forces, mainly the former resistance organization (ELAS) controlled by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE).. The victory of the Government forces led to Greece's membership in NATO, while relationships with its Communist northern neighbors, both pro-Soviet and neutral, became strained.

In 1967, the Greek military seized power in a coup d'état, overthrew the centre right government of Panagiotis Kanellopoulos and established the Greek military junta of 1967-1974. In 1973, the régime abolished the Greek monarchy.

In 1975, following a referendum to confirm the deposition of King Constantine II, a democratic republican constitution came into force. Since the restoration of democracy, the stability and economic prosperity of Greece have grown. Greece joined the European Union in 1981 and adopted the euro as its currency in 2001.

From late 2009, fears of a sovereign debt crisis developed among investors concerning Greece's ability to meet its debt obligations due to strong increase in government debt levels. In 2010, the Eurozone countries and the International Monetary Fund agreed on a €110 billion loan for Greece, conditional on the implementation of harsh austerity measures. In 2011, Eurozone leaders also agreed on a proposal to write off 50% of Greek debt owed to private creditors. These austerity measures have proved extremely unpopular with the Greek public, precipitating demonstrations and civil unrest. There are widespread fears that a Greek default on its debt would have global repercussions, endangering the economies of many other countries in the European Union, threatening the stability of the European currency, the euro, and possibly plunging the world into another recession. It has been speculated that the crisis will force Greece to abandon the euro and bring back its former currency, the drachma.

A summary of Greek historical periods is shown below:-



History of Freemasonry in Greece

The history of Freemasonry in Greece³ begins in 1782 with the first Lodge to have been erected on Greek soil, which was Lodge Benevolence established in Corfu, on the Ionian Islands under the Grand Mother Lodge of Verona of the French Scottish Reformed Rite. This lodge became very soon dormant when the Venetian Republic started persecuting Freemasonry. It was revived in 1797 when the French occupied the Ionians for a brief period and became again dormant when the islands were under Russian occupation, until 1806 when the French came to the Islands for the second time. Then it was revived and was united with lodge Filogenia, which was working in Corfu, under the new name "Friendship of the nation".

Then in 1811 **Count Dionyssios de Roma** applied to the Grand Orient of France to place this lodge under its aegis and it became a 'Provincial Mother Lodge' with the authority to create new lodges in the area. Eventually, after the beginning of the British Protection in 1815, **Roma** and the other Freemasons of the time, decided to declare the lodge as the Serene Grand Orient of Greece. That was a very bold move as, at the time, there was no country existing under the name of 'Greece'. **Roma** invited the **Duke of Sussex**, Grand Master UGLE, to be Grand Master of the new Grand Orient. **Roma** was trying to obtain legitimacy of the new body and serving a political purpose as the Revolution was already in people's minds and the Ionian Islands were the only part of Greece that was beyond the reach of the Ottomans.

³ 'Freemasonry in Greece (1782-2003) and the Greek War of Independence (1821-1828)' Andreas C. Rizopoulos

As an aside, the Maltese Cross in the Queensland flag commemorated the wife of a former Governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, who had served as the chief secretary of government in the Ionian Islands and Malta and whose first wife, Countess Diamantina di Roma was of Ionian and Maltese descent⁴. The local Government for the Birdsville area is named Diamantina Shire in her honour.

While the mainland of Greece was still under the Ottoman yoke there were a number of lodges erected in Corfu, Zante, Cephalonie, Lefkas (Santa Maura) and Patras. However, during the years of the War of Independence (1821-1828) it seems that there was no Masonic activity as such in mainland Greece.

Freemasonry and the Greek War of Independence

Politics has been a taboo subject in Freemasonry since the publication of Anderson's "*Constitutions*". The involvement of Freemasonry in revolutionary events has always been a very contentious subject.

Certainly Freemasons were involved in the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, and various revolutions in Latin America and in Italy in the 19th century. The tenets of Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood and Justice are nurtured within Masonic lodges and are inherent to Freemasonry, but it is wrong to assume that Freemasonry, as an entity, has been directly involved in any of these events.

In an official UGLE publication of 1967 it states⁵: '*In the following century we know that the first seeds of Greek Liberation were sown in Masonic Lodges in the Ionian Islands.*' This relates to it an article entitled "*masonry as shield for politics*'.

The Greek War of Independence was launched during the first quarter of 1821 and in 1828 the State of Greece was officially acknowledged.

Since 1453 the Ottomans had controlled most of the areas of the present Greece with the exception of the Ionian Islands and parts of the Peloponnese. The former were initially under the control of the Venetians and afterwards of the French, the Russians and finally were placed under British protection between 1815 and 1864. The Peloponnese was partly occupied by the Franks.



During the four hundred year period there have been a number of unsuccessful uprisings. Then in the early part of 1814 the 'seeds' of the War of Independence were indeed 'sown' in a Masonic lodge.

One of the founders of 'Philiki Hetairia', or 'Friendly Society', **Emmanuel Xanthos** was initiated in a French lodge working in Santa Maura. Following his initiation he thought that he could adapt the secrecy of Freemasonry in order to establish a revolutionary society, which would work towards the independence of his country.

While Philiki Hetairia started 'initiating' its adepts, **Roma** and several other Freemasons in the Ionian Islands felt that they should be involved in the cause of liberation and that Freemasonry could be 'used' in order to protect the conspiracy activities.

When the War was launched **Roma** and two other leading Freemasons set up a body, which coordinated the collection of funds and ammunition that they sent from the Ionians to the mainland. Most of the Freemasons in the Ionians became members of the Hetairia and normal Masonic activity was replaced with the War effort.

⁴ Maltagenealogy.com

⁵ UGLE Bulletin 1967- p. 214

The same elementary patriotic and freedom loving spirit was felt by European Freemasons who rushed to the support of the cause of the Greeks in many ways. A large number of Europeans who came to fight were Freemasons.

It is reported by French diplomat and historian Pouqueville that many Ottomans were brandishing various medals and 'Masonic jewels' which they have found on the dead following the battle at Peta in 1822.

In February 1822 the German General **Count Karl von Norman** arrived in Greece leading some forty officers, including Germans, Swiss, Italians, French and one Dutch. Initially they were stationed at Navarino and then moved to Corinth. There **Norman** established a Lodge named "*Brothers of Apollo*". This is reported by the Prussian **Captain Karl Schrebian** who claims that '*the masonic connection created a rapport between the Germans and the French who until then were in constant conflict due to various national prejudices*'. The Prussian cavalry captain **Eugen von Byern** mentions in his memoirs that this lodge was meeting at the house of **Norman** who was elected Master, and it was registered under the Grand Orient of France.

In addition to the individuals who were either Freemasons before deciding to join the War, or were initiated before departing for the Greek shores.

A Unique French Expeditionary Lodge

There is a unique case of Freemasons constituting a military expeditionary lodge to travel to Greece and fight for the independence of the country. While there is nothing uncommon about military lodges, that one was founded explicitly to participate in a war is unique. This was the French lodge '*Les Enfants Adoptifs de Sparte et d'Athènes*' under the Grand Orient of Greece and consisting of members of many countries.

The first recorded meeting of the Lodge on Greek soil was held in 1826 at Methana when a mourning battery was given to the memory of those who had died in previous battles. The Senior Warden **Gaston Rivel** was killed at Syros in September, the Sword Bearer **Pierre Rousset** also died at Syros in October and the Junior Deacon **Louis Florence** died at Oropos in September. At the same meeting there were fifteen applications to join the lodge.

Members of the lodge led by French Colonel **Fabvier**, together with other volunteers, helped to break the siege of the Acropolis and provide the besieged with food and ammunition. On top of the Acropolis there were some 1,630 persons. There were about 1150 regular and irregular soldiers and about 500 women and children. Food was becoming scarce and ammunition was almost finished. It was deemed that the Acropolis should not fall to the Ottomans mainly due to the psychological impact that it would have not only to the morale of the people but also to the attitude of foreign powers on the Greek struggle.

Post-liberation



Following the liberation of Greece the Ionian Islands remained under British protection and Freemasons continued with their normal activities. At the same time in the mainland the first Governor **Ioannis Capodistria**, although a Freemason himself, proscribed all secret societies, including Freemasonry, in 1828 and it was not until the 1850s that Freemasonry was revived.

Count **Ioannis Antonios Kapodistrias** (1776–1831) was a Greek diplomat of the Russian Empire and later the first head of state of independent Greece.

Establishment of the Grand Lodge of Greece

By 1855 seven lodges were working in mainland Greece under the Grand Orient of Italy, formed by Freemasons who have been initiated in Corfu, France and Italy. In 1867 the lodges that were working in Athens, Piraeus, Chalkis, Patras, Syros, Lamia and Argos, demanded their independence from the Grand Orient of Italy and formed the Grand Orient of Greece.

The leading personalities could not agree on the nomination of the first Grand Master. The founders of the new Grand Orient could only agree to appoint a Deputy Grand Master Pro tempore until they could find someone acceptable by all for this position.

Among the founders was **Mikes Rhodocanakis** who, in 1868, mentioned that a cousin of his was a very prominent Prince living in England named **Prince Demetrius Rhodocanakis**. So they decided to contact him and offer him the position of Grand Master. All of them were assuming that a Prince would definitely be a Freemason. They were surprised to find out that **Rhodocanakis** was not a Mason and initially was not interested in their proposal but changed his mind and decided to accept the offer.

Rhodocanakis approached the Grand Lodge of Scotland and in 1869 where he was Initiated, Passed and Raised at St. Andrew Lodge No. 48 in Edinburgh. The next day he was exalted to the Royal Arch and then was installed to the Order of the Temple. Then he was advanced to the Royal Order of Scotland by the Grand Chapter of H.R.D.M.

Rhodocanakis traveled throughout Greece visiting the various Lodges in order to smooth out all friction and to invite delegates to form a Convention for the election of a Council. In 1872 he was elected Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Greece and established a Supreme Grand Council 33° for Greece, with himself as Sovereign Grand Commander. Most of the members of the Council of the Grand Orient were also members of the Supreme Council.

The two bodies worked independently and they thrived. There were no other Orders in Greece and most of the members of Craft lodges felt that to join the Scottish Rite was a natural and expected step. The two bodies were jointly publishing a monthly Masonic magazine and they were sharing the same building. As the numbers grew it was decided to obtain a permanent building and a property was jointly bought. The Grand Orient holding 80 per cent and the Supreme Council 20 per cent of the property.

Persecution during World War II

The Axis occupation of Greece lasted until the German withdrawal from the mainland in October 1944. In some cases however, such as in Crete and other islands, German garrisons remained in control until May and June 1945⁶. Greece was occupied by the German Nazis who administered the most important regions themselves, including Athens and Thessaloniki. Other regions of the country were given to Italy and Bulgaria. A collaborationist Greek government was established immediately after the country fell. When liberation came in October 1944 the outbreak of civil war between the communists and democrats gave the opportunity to many prominent Nazi collaborators to escape punishment.

The occupation brought about terrible hardships for the Greek civilian population. Over 300,000 civilians died in Athens alone from starvation, tens of thousands more through reprisals by Nazis and collaborators, and the country's economy was ruined.

⁶ Wikipedia

During the WWII occupation most of the Greek Masonic archives were destroyed by the Germans. The lodges stopped operating during this turbulent period⁷.

The Nazis gradually imposed a series of anti-Jewish measures. Jewish newspapers were closed down, Bulgarian zones were forced to wear the Star of David and Jewish families were kicked out of their homes. The Germans began mass deportations in March 1943, sending the Jews to the Auschwitz and Treblinka death camps. By the summer of 1943, the Jews of the German and Bulgarian zones were gone and only those in the Italian zone remained.

The Archbishop of Athens **Damaskinos** ordered his priests to ask their congregations to help the Jews and sent a strong-worded letter of protest to the collaborationist authorities and the Germans. Many Orthodox Christians risked their lives hiding Jews in their apartments and homes, despite threat of imprisonment. Even the Greek police ignored instructions to turn over Jews to the Germans. In total, at least 60,000 of Greece's total pre-war Jewish population perished.

Post-war Freemasonry in Greece

After WWII the Grand Orient of Greece was re-named the Grand Lodge of Greece and gradually restored operations.

In 1976 the York Rite was brought to Greece. Problems arose when the York Rite body requested recognition from the Grand Lodge. It is assumed that the Grand Lodge of Greece must have felt that they could not control it and the Supreme Council must have felt the danger of losing the monopoly of the progression beyond the Craft. Both bodies proscribed the newcomer and threatened with expulsion their members who remained members of the York Rite.

This led to the establishment of the National Grand Lodge of Greece in 1986 mainly consisting of members of the York Rite Chapters. The National Grand Lodge decided to follow strictly the British practice in their rituals and operation. So they abandoned the York Rite and adopted the British Holy Royal Arch and the other degrees (Mark, Royal Ark Mariner, Cryptic Degrees etc.) as practiced in England. They also embarked on a concerted effort to obtain recognition initially from the UGLE and then from other foreign Grand Lodges.

In 1993 the UGLE threatened the Grand Lodge of Greece with withdrawal of recognition mainly with three charges:-

- that the Grand Lodge was involved in politics, by discussing of the issue of Macedonia in Masonic meetings;
- that it had removed the necessity of the Oath from the Obligations; and
- It was subservient to the Supreme Council.

The Grand Lodge of Greece in order to nullify the third accusation concerning the Supreme Council amended its Constitution by removing all mentions of the Scottish Rite and the Constitutions of 1762 and 1786 changing its title to 'Grand Lodge of Greece A.F.& A.M.' Second it introduced the Holy Royal Arch into Greek Craft Freemasonry using the terminology of the United Grand Lodge of England, that is '*Craft Freemasonry in Greece consists of the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason including the order of Royal Arch*'.

⁷ *Ioannis Michaletos* - Op Cit

Nevertheless UGLE withdrew the recognition of the Grand Lodge of Greece and gave it to the National Grand Lodge. Then recognition was withdrawn from the National Grand Lodge in 1999 in an effort of the UGLE to push the two Grand Lodges towards mutual recognition, stating that UGLE now considered them both to be regular. This approach did not work and in 2000 the recognition was restored to the Grand Lodge of Greece. Throughout this period most of the Grand Lodges of other countries, including Australia, never withdrew their recognition of the Grand Lodge of Greece.

At present there is the Grand Lodge of Greece, the Supreme Council 33°, and the Supreme Grand Chapter which are recognized by practically all Grand Lodges, Supreme Councils and Supreme Grand Chapters of the World, and the National Grand Lodge of Greece which at present is considered regular, but not recognized by the UGLE, and recognized by the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland and a couple of other countries.

More Politics and Freemasonry

During the military dictatorship in Greece of 1967-1974, officers involved in the Junta were accused of being Freemasons, which was bad public relations for the Grand Lodge of Greece. Later, in 1980, a Greek journalist revealed the names and ranks of numerous Greek Freemasons. This revelation created havoc in the Athenian world, because a large number of politicians, judges, academics and other were said to be involved, precisely at a time when political passions in the country were running high, one year before the first socialist government of Andreas Papandreou took power.

When, in 1993, the Grand Lodge of Greece was accused by the UGLE of engaging in political activity, once again the image of the Grand Lodge of Greece was tarnished, and as a result a schism began that brought about the creation of several unrecognized Masonic Lodges in Greece. In Greece there has been a proliferation of esoteric societies and other forms of more or less secret fraternities. This proliferation of groups has weakened the traditional supremacy of the Freemasons in Greece but the Greek Masonic movement has most historical significance in that it was the main procreator of the revolutionary organizations of the early 19th century⁸

Greek Resistance leaders who were Freemasons⁹

Georgios Siantos (1890-1947) was a prominent figure of the Greek Communist party who served as acting general secretary of the party and as a leader of the EAM/ELAS Resistance movement during the German occupation of Greece in World War II.



George Psychoundakis (1920–2006) was a Greek Resistance fighter on Crete during the Second World War. He was a shepherd, a war hero and an author. He served as dispatch runner between Petro Petrakas and Papadakis behind the German lines for the Cretan resistance Movement and later, from 1941 to 1945, for the Special Operations Executive (SOE). During the post-war years he was at first mistakenly imprisoned as a deserter.

Elias Degiannis (1912–1943) was a Greek navy officer and second in command of the resistance group Prometheus. He was arrested, tortured and executed by the Germans in 1943. He was promoted posthumously to Naval Commander. In 1980 the Hellenic Navy commissioned a Fast Attack Craft in his honour.

⁸ “Freemasonry in Greece: Secret History Revealed” - Ioannis Michaletos

⁹ Grand Lodge of Greece website

Manolis Glezos is a Greek left wing politician and writer, worldwide known especially for his participation in the World War II resistance. During the Axis occupation of Greece, he worked for the Hellenic Red Cross, while actively involved in the resistance. In 1941, he and **Apostolos Santas** climbed on the Acropolis and tore down the swastika. That was the first resistance act that took place in Greece. It inspired not only the Greeks, but all subjected people, to resist against the occupation. He was arrested and tortured but **Apostolos Santas** escaped to Italy and then to Canada.



Aris Velouchiotis (1905–1945), was the most prominent leader and chief instigator of the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS), the military branch of the National Liberation Front (EAM), which was the major resistance organization in occupied Greece from 1942 to 1945. He was appointed military leader of ELAS at the beginning of the Resistance Movement, by the EAM leadership, being at the same time a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece.

Napoleon Zervas (1891–1957) was a Greek general and resistance leader during World War II. He organized and led the National Republican Greek League (EDES), the second most significant (after EAM), in terms of size and activity, resistance organization against the Axis Occupation of Greece. After World War II, **Zervas** founded the National Party and at the 1946 elections he was elected as representative of the Ionian district in the Hellenic Parliament



Dimitrios Psarros (1893–1944) was a Greek army officer and resistance leader. He was the founder and leader of the resistance group National and Social Liberation (EKKA), the third-most significant organization of the Greek Resistance movement after the National Liberation Front (EAM) and the National Republican Greek League (EDES).

Markos Vafiadis (1906–1992) was a leading figure of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) during the Greek Civil War. At the beginning of **Ioannis Metaxas'** dictatorship he was exiled. Subsequently he worked in the party's underground organization and was one of the leaders of the 1938 uprising. He was arrested after the suppression of the uprising and was exiled again. At the beginning of the Nazi German occupation of Greece he was named supervisor of the Macedonia wing of the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS).

Evrpidis Bakirtzis (1895-1947) was a Hellenic Army officer and politician. He was dismissed from the army twice due to his participation in pro-republican coup attempts. During the Axis Occupation of Greece in World War II he co-founded the EKKA resistance group and later joined the Greek People's Liberation Army and served as head of the Political Committee of National Liberation, a government of Greek Resistance-held territories.

Komninos Pyromaglou (1899–1980), was a Greek teacher and politician, and one of the driving forces behind the foundation of the National Republican Greek League (EDES), the second-largest Resistance organization in Axis-occupied Greece during World War II.

Georgios Kartalis (1908–1957) was a Greek politician, who, with **Evrpidis Bakirtzis** formed a republican-oriented resistance group during WW II called the National and Social Liberation (EKKA) movement was founded in 1942.

EKKA aspired to a purely republican regime after the war, including vaguely socialist ideas such as a "socialization" of industry and became the third major resistance group after the communist-led Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) and the republican National Republican Greek League (EDES), with its own armed force.

General Stefanos Sarafis (1890-1957) was an officer of the Hellenic Army who played an important role during the Greek Resistance and became the military commander of ELAS

Some Other Famous Greek Freemasons¹⁰



His All-Holiness **Patriarch Meletius IV** was the 261st successor to the Apostle Andrew and Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople from 1921 to 1923. Afterward, as **Meletius II**, he also served as Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa from 1926 to 1935. Before he became Ecumenical Patriarch, he was Archbishop of Athens from 1918 to 1920 as **Meletius III**. He served until his death on July 28, 1935, and was buried in Cairo, Egypt. According to a listing of famous Greek Freemasons on the official website of the Grand Lodge of Greece **Meletius Metaxakis** is listed as a Freemason in the Lodge Harmony **Metaxakis** was one of the most fascinating characters in Orthodox Church history. He was the only man successively to lead three independent Orthodox Churches: those of Greece, Constantinople, and Alexandria; and to rule a diocese in another, that of Cyprus.

Patriarch Bartholomew (Archondonis) has been Patriarch since 1972 and, in an ecumenical role, visited the Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope John-Paul II. He attended the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Canberra in 1991.

Angelos Evert (1894–1970) was a Greek police officer, most notable for serving as head of the Athens branch of the Cities Police during the Axis Occupation of Greece during World War II. He supported the Resistance and maintaining contacts with the Greek government in exile at Cairo, all the while cooperating with the German occupation authorities. He also participated in the rescue of several Jewish families from Athens, for which he was later honored.

Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou (1891–1949) was the archbishop of Athens and All Greece from 1941 until his death. He was also the regent of Greece between the pull-out of the German occupation force in 1944 and the return of King Georgios II to Greece in 1946. His rule was between the liberation of Greece from the German occupation during World War II and the Greek Civil War.



Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark (1882- 1944) of the House of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, was the seventh child and fourth son of King George I of Greece and Olga Constantinovna of Russia. He was a grandson of Christian IX of Denmark. As an officer in the Greek army he saw service in the Balkan Wars and in the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922), but the war went badly for Greece, and Andrew was blamed, in part, for the loss of Greek territory. He was exiled for a second time in 1922, and spent most of the rest of his life in France. His only son is **Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh**.

¹⁰ Grand Lodge of Greece website and Wikipedia

Prince Christopher of Greece and Denmark (1888–1940) was a member of the Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg Royal House. When Christopher came of age he joined the Hellenic Army, although apparently he would much rather have rather studied the piano. While a young man, he was offered no less than three different thrones those of Portugal, Lithuania, and Albania - but he declined them all, as he did not wish the stress of royal duties.



King George II (1890–1947) reigned as King of Greece from 1922 to 1924 and from 1935 to 1947. Crown Prince George served as a Major General in the war against Turkey. When the Turks defeated Greece at the Battle of Dumlupinar, the military forced the abdication of Constantine, and George succeeded to the Greek throne on 27 September 1922. Following a failed royalist coup in October 1923, the Revolutionary Committee "asked" him to depart Greece. When a Republic was proclaimed in 1924, he was officially deposed. In 1935, almost 98% of the reported votes supported restoration of the monarchy. George, who had been living at Brown's Hotel in London, returned to Greece and reigned until 1947.

John Metaxas (1871–1941) was a Greek general and statesman. A career soldier, he served in the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 and in the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, in which he was assistant chief of staff. He became prominent as a royalist politician during the Republic of 1924–35. After the monarchy had been reestablished in Greece, Metaxas became premier in 1936. With the support of **King George II**, Metaxas dissolved parliament, and established a dictatorship.

The Eastern Orthodox Church and Freemasonry

The attitude of the Eastern Orthodox Church towards Freemasonry has been the subject of several encyclicals. Cyprianus, the Archbishop of Cyprus, in 1815 issued an Aphorism against Freemasonry and Archbishop Hierotheus of Patras, Greece, published two comprehensive encyclicals against Masonry, one on October 5, 1897, and another on August 22, 1899. The Russian Orthodox Church's Attitude towards Freemasonry was proclaimed by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky).

On August 15, 1932, during the Stalinist period, the Metropolitan issued a Pastoral letter to the faithful, entitled 'An Encyclical on Freemasonry, Theosophy, and Allied Systems', which stated "*it is forbidden for all Orthodox Christians to become Freemasons*"¹¹. The Bishops of the Church of Greece in their session of October 12, 1933, explained their view as follows:-

"Freemasonry is not simply a philanthropic union or a philosophical school, but constitutes a mystagogical system which reminds us of the ancient heathen mystery-religions and cults—from which it descends and is their continuation and regeneration".

However, these encyclicals cannot have been either permanent or widespread in all of Greece because, in addition to those listed above, the Famous Masons list of The Grand Lodge of Greece shows that the following senior members of the Eastern Orthodox Church were members of the Craft¹²:-

- Ecumenical Patriarch **Joachim III**;
- Patriarch of Alexandria **Photius (George Peroglou)**;
- Ecumenical Patriarch **Basil III**;
- Patriarch of Jerusalem **Benedict (Basil Papadopoulos)**;
- Bishop **Cherubim (Anninos)** - Metropolitan of Paronaxia; and
- Bishop **Chrysanthus (Charilaus Philippides)**-Metropolitan of Trebizond, Archbishop of Athens.

¹¹ "*Freemasonry and Its Condemnations by the Orthodox Church*" - Archbishop Gregory 2005

¹² Grand Lodge of Greece website

Conclusions

Greece was the cradle of democracy. The very term comes from the Greek meaning “people power”. Today it is the bulwark of democracy in the Aegean but its neighbours have been struggling with this concept. Its eastern Muslim neighbour, Turkey, struggles with Sharia Law and its Northern neighbours have but recently shed communism. Turkey, Albania and Bulgaria have been war-time enemies at different times.

It can therefore be no surprise that the war against Fascism encouraged both communist and democratic forces to struggle for control of Greece’s Government in the immediate post-war environment. Nor can it be a surprise that Freemasons became involved on both sides of this struggle. The principles which enervated **Marx**, **Trotsky** and **Lenin** are not far removed from the principles of Freemasonry and all three are reputed to have been Freemasons.

It was not these principles which caused the post-war Western nations to fear Russian Communism but the brutal dictatorship of Stalin and its repression of human rights and religion. Mao’s brand of communism brought great progress to China but The West fought against its alleged expansionism and its repression of religion (Buddhism, Islam and Christianity) and Confusion family values, which policy it pursued in order to focus all Chinese loyalty singularly on the State and the Party.

It is understandable why Freemasons in Greece have entered the political struggle for government. What is alien to us is that a Lodge was formed, albeit in France, specifically to fight for Greek independence and that the Grand Lodge allegedly still continues to engage in political discussion. This is quite unacceptable to our concepts of Freemasonry but we have never had a long history of fighting off invaders nor do we have neighbours, who were one-time enemies, and now have such contrary political views to our own.