from Bach bis Brecht. Either sides the starke Position of the Bundesrepublik, von der Griechenland nicht nur ökonomisch abhängig war, und andererseits die oft dogmatisch vorgeformte Identität der zeitgenössischen kulturellen Aktivitäten begrenzten a priori die kulturelle Selbstdarstellung der DDR in ihrer Wirkung.45 Und letztendlich war die westliche Welt, und dazu gehörten auch die traditionellen griechischen Eliten, nicht ohne weites dazu bereit, die nachträgliche Zweiseite der deutschen Nationalkultur für bare Münze zu nehmen.

This is how Pyrsos (Πυρσός) illustrated magazine launched its first issue in 1961. For the duration of its publication, the Greek–language magazine played a significant role in the nurturing of patriotism amongst young Greek political refugees in the socialist states.2

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1 Extract from Pyrsos’ editorial note titled “Γιατί βγαίνουμε”, Pyrsos 1 (1961), 1. The extract is copied in identical order, grammar and spelling from the original but without the use of polytonic orthography.

2 Although I construe patriotism as an expression of nationalism, in this paper, patriotism refers to a category used in Pyrsos and by the subjects interviewed during the research. In this context, patriotism did not suggest allegiance to the (Greek) state, nor it was incompatible to proletarian internationalism. It is worth noting that in a study on youth and patriotism in the GDR, German scholar Anna Saunders also distinguishes patriotism from nationalist sentiments. However, in her study, patriotism ‘primarily denotes loyalty to the civic institutions of the state’. Still, similar to its reference here, patriotism does not imply unity of nation and state. See Anna Saunders, Honecker’s Children: Youth and Patriotism in East(ern) Germany, 1979–2002, Manchester 2007, 3.

Pyrsos was published in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with significant financial support from the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). The magazine was produced by Greek political refugees under the supervision of the exiled Communist Party of Greece, KKE (Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας). Under complex conditions of political and cultural exchanges between people and institutions, Pyrsos aimed to prepare the ground for the repatriation of Greek political refugees and the legalisation of the KKE in Greece. Further, Pyrsos contributed to the Greek Left’s efforts for legitimisation against the accusations and violent suppression it suffered as a result of the Greek state’s official nationalist and anti-Communist doctrine of ethnikofrosyni (national-mindedness). In what follows, I briefly examine the conditions of Pyrsos’ production and circulation before proceeding to a visual analysis of two montage compositions that aptly demonstrate the magazine’s construction of patriotism. Further, I discuss the ways in which these montages express Pyrsos’ attempts to reclaim Greek national history — a discourse that was in line with left-wing patriotism in Greece — and argue that its focus on the heroic and unified resistance against fascism was also characteristic of the GDR’s official ‘socialist patriotic’ rhetoric.

Organisation, production and circulation of Pyrsos in the GDR

Pyrsos (Fig 1) was predominantly financed by the SED’s International Relations Department and was printed at the Verlag Zeit im Bild, an affiliated publishing house in Dresden. The publisher specialised in foreign-language magazines and propaganda, a practice that was common in the socialist states and to a lesser extent in the West during the Cold War. Such publications were typically produced on better quality paper and with larger budgets than the ones intended for magazines aimed at internal consu...
nation. Pyrsos however, was not typical of GDR periodicals and differed from most other foreign–magazines printed by the Verlag Zeit im Bild. Its high–quality production values and dynamic visual language positioned the magazine within the wider international landscape of illustrated press and visual culture in the 1960s. Pyrsos was published in large format, on fine–quality paper, with several pages printed in full–colour, and had a glossy cover. Although the magazine belonged to the foreign propaganda periodical production of the SED, Pyrsos was not (merely) part of the GDR’s strategy of using publications to enhance its diplomatic legitimisation in the West.

The decision to publish Pyrsos was taken in 1958 following the political developments in the Soviet Union and in Greece. In the first instance, the publication of the magazine was aligned with the KKE’s shift in political strategy towards parliamentary representation in the climate of Khrushchev’s de–Stalinization and ‘peaceful coexistence’ rhetoric. Further, the Communist Party’s alliance with the United Democratic Left, EDA (Ενωσιά Δημοκρατικής Αριστεράς), and its increased political strength at the beginning of the 1960s attested to the resilience of the Greek Left after its defeat in the Greek Civil War while it offered the opportunity to discredit ethnokoftromyli by declaring its own patriotism.

Pyrsos’ editorial policy followed three clearly defined strands. Firstly, the magazine set out to connect its readers with Greece through the portrayal of the country’s history, landscape and contemporaneous struggles. Secondly, it aimed to connect young refugees in the socialist states and to act as a platform for their intellectual and cultural exchanges. This strand highlighted the opportunities the youth were afforded in socialism by publicising their educational and professional achievements. Lastly, Pyrsos reported on the cultural, technological and scientific advancements in the socialist states and pledged its solidarity with anti–colonial and liberation movements around the world. The magazine also published literature and poetry extracts, essays on culture and history, reports on politics and travelogues from Greece, the socialist states and the West. It regularly featured articles on architecture, interior design and fashion, recipes and political cartoons, and included a full–colour eight–page supplement for children. Pyrsos often published translated or reprinted articles from the Greek, Soviet and East German press.

Pyrsos’ ideological remit was assigned to author, playwright and member of the KKE’s Central Committee Nikos Akritidis who was also employed as representative of the Party in the GDR. Akritidis’ wife, journalist Marika Sevastou Akritidou, was Pyrsos’ editor–in–chief and academic Marika Mineemi, who worked at the Institute of Greek–Roman Studies at the Academy of Sciences of the GDR (Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, DA), was responsible for overseeing and proofreading the magazine. Pyrsos’ art director Nikos Manousis, was an established artist in the GDR and a member of the German Academy of Arts (Deutsche Akademie der Künste). Notably, Manousis had served on the editorial board of the magazine Junge Kunst alongside intellectuals such as the painter Walter Wowacka and the author, playwright and director Heiner Müller. In addition, Pyrsos benefited from the contributions of distinguished refugee intellectuals and authors such as Dimitris Hatzis, Melpo Axioti, Apostolos Spilios and Elli Alexiou, amongst others. Still, it also regularly published readers’ contributions while strongly encouraged the participation of the refugee associations in the socialist states. Pyrsos’ editors, based in Weimar, Dresden and East Berlin, often negotiated the ideological, visual and material content of the magazine with the KKE’s Enlightenment Committee based in Bucharest; with the representative of the SED in East Berlin, and, with the publisher’s staff in Dresden. Pyrsos’ editorial board and its collaborators travelled regularly to Eastern Europe (festivals, refugee associations, biennials), to the West (international youth and peace festivals), and also visited West Germany, Greece and Cyprus where they encountered political and cultural producers and participants, established contacts and exchanged ideas. Pyrsos’ target readership was young political refugees in the People’s Republics and the Soviet Union a large number of whom had arrived in the socialist states as children, or, were born there. This was almost exclusively the case with the refugees in the GDR who had arrive in 1949 following the so–called ‘children grabbing’ (παιδοφύλαγμα) or ‘children–salvation’ (παιδοφύλαγμα) operations. Young refugees, representatives of

7 One example is that Pyrsos did not carry any adverts unlike the rest of the foreign–language magazines printed at the Verlag Zeit im Bild.

this generation, featured regularly in *Pyros*, and often contributed to the magazine as correspondents. By the 1960s however, they had mostly integrated into the various socialist states and were participating in the social and cultural life of their host countries. In this sense, many young refugees felt disconnected from Greece since they were not able to identify with a ‘homeland’ they had neither fought for, nor visited.13 At the same time as targeting readers amongst the Greek political refugees in the socialist states, *Pyros* further propagated its patriotic discourse to Greek students, youth and economic migrants in the West where the magazine circulated.14 The construction of patriotism as depicted in *Pyros* was in accordance to the GDR’s proclaimed ‘socialist patriotism’. Socialist patriotism was positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum to the West’s ‘bourgeois nationalism’ and alongside its notion of proletarian internationalism.15 In this context, patriotism and proletarian internationalism were considered integral to socialist consciousness and were promoted through education and youth policies. As such, the GDR was not only ‘homeland but (also) the socialist fatherland’.16


In line with the patriotic discourse of the Greek Left in the 1960s, *Pyros* set out to re-claim the role of the Left in the national history against the threat of its eradication by *ethnikofrosyni*. In this context, *Pyros*’ focused on the Greek resistance against foreign oppressors, particularly during the anti-fascist struggle of the 1940s. This narrative has been termed as ‘radical patriotism’ by the author Akis Gavrielidis, who argues that the rhetoric according to which the Greek ‘people’ (λαός) were ‘inherently resistant’ was initially created by the Greek Left during the violent socio-political climate in the aftermath of the Civil War; to encourage, unify, and provide hope to the defeated.21

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14. *Pyros* was distributed to individuals and organisations in Australia, Cyprus, Canada, Egypt, Finland, France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and West Germany, as well as to Greece.
15. On socialist patriotism in the GDR see Joanna McKay, *Concept of the Nation*; Saunders, *Honecker’s Children*.
20. According to Nothnagle, these were constructed in different periods and were presented as ‘official ideological phases of GDR development’. See Nothnagle, *From Buchenwald to Bismarck*, 96, 98.
21. Akis Gavrielidis, Η αθηνόπτητη γενοκτονία του ρωσοπολιτικού πατριωτισμού: Ρίππος – Ελένης – Θεοδο-
Pyrsos often depicted revolutionary moments and traditions that belonged to different temporalities published on the same page. For instance, in Nikos Manousis’ 1965 synthesis (Fig. 2), the artist presented an etching that depicted an 1821 Greek War of Independence fighter, embracing a younger Greek Resistance partisan (1941–1944). Both were juxtaposed with a photograph taken during the Iouliana events in Greece. In the view of the Greek state’s refusal to recognise the role of the Left in the resistance against the Axis powers, Manousis’ montage can be read as a gesture of reassurance. As such, the distant past did not only validate the Left’s engagement in what became known as the ‘National Resistance’, but together with the more recent national past supported the youth’s uprising in Greece in the 1960s. In this context, Manousis’ montage depicts the ‘continuous’ and ‘inherent struggle’ of the Greek ‘people’ thus it vindicated Gavriilidis’ claims. At the same time, Pyrsos’ composition also echoes the GDR’s progressive and teleological reading of history. As was the case throughout the socialist states and according to Marxism–Leninism, history provided a positive model for the encouragement of the youth’s commitment and participation in socialism. For the most part, Manousis’ designs interrupted the flow of history by forcing the visual coexistence of different historical temporalities. In this way, the artist created a space where the past could be problematised a new from the position of the present, and thus, to be reclaimed by it. Manousis often achieved this by drawing on the cultural heritage of the Greek Left by radically updating its iconography (Fig. 3).

It is significant that Manousis’ montages in Pyrsos clarify his relationship with the German avant-garde, especially since pre-war German modernism was officially condemned until 1964. Yet, Manousis regularly incorporated elements such as montage and simultaneity in the magazine’s visual language. His playful juxtapositions generated dialectical tensions between foreground and background, past and present, form and content. On the whole, in his compositions, Manousis brought together diverse elements from several visual archives and different temporalities. In this way, he invited Pyrsos’ readers to engage and participate actively in the production of meaning. Further, Manousis’ montages echoed Pyrsos’ editorial strands in their attempt to proclaim a national, socialist and internationalist agenda. On the magazine’s 1961 cover for example, the artist reconstituted the Greek Left’s victory by placing its cut-out picture in the image of the statue of the Nike of Samothrace, over a photograph depicting the day of the liberation of Athens in 1944 (Fig. 4). In this way, he formally and symbolically reinstated the (violently) taken away victory of the Greek Left in the 1940s. It can be argued, that the artist invoked Greek antiquity in order to portray the continuity of the

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22 The Iouliana events began in July 1965 as a result of the unconstitutional dismissal of Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou by King Constantine II resulting in protests, strikes and riots which lasted for months.

23 Gavriilidis, Η αθεράπευτη νεκροφιλία.

24 Printed by EAM’s publishing mechanism, O Rigas, Athens, 1945. The image has been reproduced here from Assantour Baharian and Petros Antaios, Εικαστικές μαρτυρίες: Ζωγραφική, χαρακτική: Στον πόλεμο, στην κατοχή και στην αντίσταση, Athens 1995, 203.
The historisation of resistance in Pyros provided its readers with a unifying patriotic discourse that was in line with the patriotism of the Greek Left in the 1960s at the same time as adhering to the GDR’s socialist patriotic rhetoric. Manousis’ montages, which contributed to the construction of this patriotism, invited Pyros’ young readers to recognise the relentless efforts of the Greek Left and feel pride in its achievements. Further, the magazine’s rhetoric of resistance appealed to the older generation since it re–awakened (lived and/or constructed) memories; in a sense, it attempted to suture the trauma of defeat. Pyros’ efforts towards the legitimization of the Left in Greece and the repatriation of the Greek political refugees in the socialist states were largely embraced by its readership.

Fig. 4, Pyros frontcover, issue 1/1961.

nation’s and the Greek Left’s struggles. Nike’s theatrical stance and metonymical substitution (posture, gesture or wings) however, had inspired countless cultural productions in the socialist states, almost all of which symbolised the struggle and victory of the ‘people’, over fascism.25 Given this, Manousis’ montages were, on the one hand, far removed from the contrived optimism of Socialist Realist art, while being firmly rooted in the GDR’s anti–fascist discourse.26 Depictions of anti–fascist resistance often delved into the German past so to emphasise revolutionary moments and re–appropriate them for the construction of the socialist nation. These moments were generally claimed in the history and struggles of the East Germans who were presented as both the victims of, as well as the victors over, fascism.27 Therefore, the representation of the Greek resistance on Pyros’ 1961 cover, whilst maintaining its national character, also expressed socialist and particularly East German anti–fascist patriotism.

25 For example, in the 1967 Monument to the Revolution in Yugoslavia, victory was symbolised by Nike’s wings, while in the colossal statue The Motherland Calls in the Soviet Union it was also portrayed through the determined figure of a woman.


27 Sohhan Kattago, Ambiguous memory; the Nazi past and German national identity, Westport 2001, 7, 90; Saunders, Honecker’s Children, 6.