

von Bach bis Brecht. Einerseits die starke Position der 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 weiteres dazu bereit, die nachträgliche Zweiteilung der deutschen Nationalkultur für bare Münze zu nehmen.

RE-CLAIMING GREEK NATIONAL HISTORY IN THE 1960S. THE CASE OF *PYRSOS* ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE IN THE GDR

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Μεγάλη είναι η δίψα για την πατρίδα, για τον καθένα που βρέθηκε αναγκασμένος για ένα μεγάλο διάστημα να βρεθεί μακριά της. Πολύ περισσότερο όταν αυτός έχει τέτοιους δεσμούς μαζί της, όπως έχουν οι εκπατρισμένοι από την Ελλάδα που ζουν στις Λ. Δημοκρατίες και τη Σοβιετική Ένωση, που πολλοί δόσαν και το αίμα τους για την λευτεριά της. Και σήμερα ζουν με τον πόθο να γυρίσουν κοντά της, κοντά στα αγαπημένα τους πρόσωπα, που τους καρτερούν και τους προσμένουν στον τόπο που γεννήθηκαν, και άντρωσαν και μόχθησαν. Γι αυτό και με δίψα ρουφάν κάθε νέο που αφορά την Ελλάδα, πονάν με τους πόνους της και χαίρονται με τις χαρές της.¹

This is how *Pyrsoi* (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 *Pyrsoi*'s editorial note titled "Γιατί βγαίνουμε", *Pyrsoi* 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 *Pyrsoi* 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.

45 Vgl. PA AA, MfAA, A 4568, Brief Scheffler, 9.6.1956 und 5.11.1956.



Fig. 1. *Pirsos* front covers, issues 1961–1968.

Pirsos 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).³ Under complex conditions of political and cultural exchanges between people and institutions, *Pirsos* aimed to prepare the ground for the repatriation of Greek political refugees and the legalisation of the KKE in Greece. Further, *Pirsos* 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 *Pirsos*' 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 *Pirsos*' 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.⁴

Organisation, production and circulation of *Pirsos* in the GDR

Pirsos (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,⁵ a practice that was common in the socialist states and to a lesser extent in the West during the Cold War.⁶ Such publications were typically produced on better quality paper and with larger budgets than the ones intended for magazines aimed at internal consump-

- 3 On the publishing of Greek political refugees in socialist states, see Anna Mattheou and Popi Polemi, *H εκδοτική περιπέτεια των ελλήνων κομμουνιστών. Από το βοννό στην υπερορία 1947–1968*, Athens 2003.
- 4 See Joanna McKay, *The official concept of the nation in the GDR: theory versus pragmatism* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Department of Government London School of Economics and Political Science), London 1995.
- 5 The publisher's portfolio consisted of periodicals in foreign languages such as Arabic, Swahili, French, Spanish and Polish, all of which were intended for worldwide distribution. On publishing in the GDR see, Simone Barck, Martina Langermann and Siegfried Lokatis, *Zwischen »Mosaik« und »Einheit«. Zeitschriften in der DDR*, Berlin 1999. On foreign publications in the GDR see, Nils Abraham, *Die Politische Auslandsarbeit Der DDR In Schweden*, Berlin 2007.
- 6 The opposite was also true. For example, the United States was publishing the Russian-language glossy magazine *Amerika*, which featured the lives of US citizens and was distributed in the Soviet Union until 1994.

tion. *Pyrros* however, was not typical of GDR periodicals and differed from most other foreign-magazines printed by the Verlag Zeit im Bild.⁷ 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. *Pyrros* 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, *Pyrros* was not (merely) part of the GDR's strategy of using publications to enhance its diplomatic legitimisation in the West.

The decision to publish *Pyrros* 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 (Ενιαία Δημοκρατική Αριστερά), 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 *ethnikofrosyni* by declaring its own patriotism.⁸

Pyrros' 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, *Pyrros* 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. *Pyrros* often published translated or reprinted articles from the Greek, Soviet and East German press.

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

8 For an extensive discussion on *Pyrros*' construction of patriotism and the Greek Left's patriotic discourse in the 1960s, particularly in relation to the representations of the Aegean landscape, see: Mary Ikoniadou, "'We Are and We Remain Greeks': The Radically Patriotic Discourse in *Pyrros* Magazine, GDR, 1961–1968". In: Leonidas Karakatsanis and Nikolaos Papadogiannis (eds.), *The politics of culture in Turkey, Greece & Cyprus: Performing the Left since the 1960s*, London 2017.

Pyrros' 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 *Pyrros*' 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. *Pyrros*' art director Nikos Manousis⁹, 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 Womacka and the author, playwright and director Heiner Müller.¹⁰ In addition, *Pyrros* 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. *Pyrros*' 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. *Pyrros*' 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.

Pyrros' 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.¹¹ This was almost exclusively the case with the refugees in the GDR who had arrive in 1949 following the so-called 'children grabbing' (παιδομάζωμα) or 'children-salvation' (παιδοφύλαγμα) operations.¹² Young refugees, representatives of

9 Nikos Manousis was also spelt as Manoussis in certain German archive documents. The choice of spelling by the author here follows the translation of his name as credited in *Pyrros*.

10 The magazine *Junge Kunst* was published by the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ). See Sabine Pannen, »Irgendwie rochen alle, dass da frische Luft ist« – Das kurze Leben der Zeitschrift »Junge Kunst«. In: *Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat* 25 (2009), 70–92, esp. 76.

11 The majority of the Greek political refugees in the socialist states were former partisans of the Democratic Army who had fought in the Greek Civil War, and/or members of the Greek Communist Party who had to flee in order to avoid persecution following the Left's defeat in the Greek Civil War. The refugees were granted political asylum in the socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, East Germany). The Greek government, which since 1949 had suspended their citizenship rights and had confiscated their properties, prohibited them from visiting Greece and did not allow their repatriation to Greece, officially, until 1982.

12 On the Greek political refugee children see Riki Van Boeschoten, "The impossible return: coping with

this generation, featured regularly in *Pyrros*, 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, *Pyrros* 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 *Pyrros* 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

Pyrros was intimately linked to the GDR’s rhetoric of internationalist solidarity and its policy of providing support to ‘brother’ Communist parties and non-German Communists living in the GDR.¹⁷ Since the refugees had lost their Greek citizenship, their

separation and the reconstruction of memory in the wake of the Civil War”. In *After the War was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation and State in Greece, 1943–1960*, ed. Mark Mazower, Princeton 2000, 122–140; Riki Van Boeschoten and Loring M. Danforth, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory*, Chicago 2012; Loring M. Danforth, “‘We Crossed a Lot of Borders’: Refugee Children of the Greek Civil War”. In: *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 12 (2003) 2, 169–209; Irini Lagani and Maria Bontila, Thessaloniki (eds.): “Παιδομάζωμα” ή “παιδοσώσιμο”. Παιδιά του Εμφυλίου στην Ανατολική και Κεντρική Ευρώπη, Athens 2012; Eftihia Voutira and Aigli Brouskou, “‘Borrowed Children’ in the Greek Civil War”. In: Catherine Panter-Brick and Malcolm T. Smith (eds.), *Abandoned Children*, Cambridge 2000, 92–110. On children in the GDR see Stefan Troebst, “Evacuation to a Cold Country: Child Refugees from the Greek Civil War in the German Democratic Republic, 1949–1989”. In: *Nationalities Papers* 32 (2004), 675–691.

13 See Emilia Rofouzou, Οι πολιτιστικές και επιστημονικές σχέσεις ανάμεσα στην Ελλάδα και την Γερμανική Λαοκρατική δημοκρατία στην περίοδο 1949–1989, Athens 2010, 173; Andreas Stergiou, «Σοσιαλιστικό και εθνικό ιδεώδες: Η σοσιαλιστική εθνική διαπαιδαγώγηση μέσα από το παράδειγμα του ‘παιδομαζώματος’». In: *Επιστήμη και Κοινωνία. Επιθεώρηση πολιτικής και ηθικής θεωρίας* 5/6 (2001), 103–126, esp. 14.

14 *Pyrros* 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*.

16 Saunders, *Honecker’s Children*, 12.

17 For more on the GDR’s foreign and asylum policies see Jan C. Behrends and Patrice, G. Poutrus, “Xenophobia in the former GDR – explorations and explanations from a historical perspective”. In: *Nationalisms across the Globe. An Overview of Nationalisms in State-Endowed and Stateless Nations*. Part 1:

status as political refugees in the GDR was described as ‘Greeks without a home country’ (Griechen ohne Heimat). Nonetheless, GDR ideology and policy did not aim to eliminate national identities and cultures; it was expected that foreigners would retain theirs since the anticipation was that they would eventually return to their home countries. This discourse was also desirable by a significant number of the refugees who were brought up to consider themselves as Greek, rather than Greek-German.¹⁸

The GDR’s construction of socialist patriotism involved the cultivation of ‘historical consciousness’ as an ‘ideological weapon’ that was promoted across the socialist states.¹⁹ Notably, the projection of (national) history onto a potential future intended to encourage the youth of the GDR to contribute to a long tradition of struggle. Moreover, it sought to secure confidence in socialism. The state’s focus on national history involved tracing the development of ‘democratic’ traditions and progressive forces throughout German history (e.g. during the Weimar era), at the same time as promoting the GDR’s founding myth of ‘anti-fascist resistance’ as the ground of official GDR identity.²⁰

Re-claiming Greek history through montage

In line with the patriotic discourse of the Greek Left in the 1960s, *Pyrros* set out to reclaim the role of the Left in the national history against the threat of its eradication by *ethnikofrosyni*. In this context, *Pyrros*’ 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 Gavriilidis, 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

Europe, ed. Wojciech Burszta et al., Poznan 2005, 155–170; Damian Henry Tone Mac Con Uladh, *Guests of the Socialist Nation? Foreign Students and Workers in the GDR, 1949–1990* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Department of German, University College London), London 2005; Patrice G. Poutrus, “Asylum in Post-war Germany: Refugee Admission Policies and Their Practical Implementation in the Federal Republic and the GDR between the late 1940s and the mid-1970s”. In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 49 (2014) 1, 115–133.

18 Rofouzou, Πολιτιστικές και επιστημονικές σχέσεις, 172–173.

19 Alan Nothnagle, “From Buchenwald to Bismarck: Historical Myth–Building in the German Democratic Republic, 1945–1989”. In: *Central European History* 26 (1993) 1, 91–113, esp. p.92.

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 Gavriilidis, *Η αθεράπευτη νεκροφιλία του ριζοσπαστικού πατριωτισμού: Ρίτσος – Ελύτης – Θεοδω-*



Fig. 2 *Pyrros* issue 5, 1965 p. 2

Pyrros 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.²² 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.²³ At the same time, *Pyrros*' 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

ράκης – Σβορώνος, Athens 2007. On the concept of the 'inherently resistant character' that Gavriilidis argues against in his book, see: Νίκος Γ. Σβορώνος, *Το Ελληνικό έθνος: Γένεση και διαμόρφωση του Νέου Ελληνισμού*, Athens 2004.

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

23 Gavriilidis, *Η αθεράπευτη νεκροφιλία*.

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).²⁴

It is significant that Manousis' montages in *Pyrros* 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 *Pyrros*' readers to engage and participate actively in the production of meaning.

Further, Manousis' montages echoed *Pyrros*' 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

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, χαρακτηριστική: Στον πόλεμο, στην κατοχή και στην αντίσταση*, Athens 1995, 203.



Fig. 3. "Για τη χιλιόκριβη τη λευτεριά, 1821–1945" Etching by Loukia Maggiorou, from an album of engravings published during the Nazi Occupation of Greece to raise funds for the National Liberation Front (EAM).



Fig. 4. Pirsos 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 Pirsos' 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.

26 April A. Eisman, *Bernhard Heisig and the Cultural Politics of East German Art* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pittsburgh), Pittsburgh 2007, 69.

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

The historicisation of resistance in Pirsos 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 Pirsos' 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. Pirsos' 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.