

Greece: Raped, Humiliated, Frightened But Standing!

By [Andre Vltchek](#)

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A small town of Distomo is just 150 kilometers from Athens, positioned in the heart of Greece, literally squeezed between two great world heritage sites: Delphi, the cradle of the European democracy, and a stunning Byzantine monastery of Hossios Lukas.

But Distomo is much more than some picturesque village surrounded by mountains and history. Here, On June 10, 1944, according to Greek government records, but also according to Western mass media sources like the BBC, “for over two hours, Waffen-SS troops of the 4th SS Polizei Panzergrenadier Division under the command of SS-Hauptsturmführer Fritz Lautenbach went door to door and massacred Greek civilians as part of a ‘retaliation measure’ for a partisan attack upon the unit. A total of 214 men, women and children were killed in Distomo. According to survivors, SS forces “bayoneted babies in their cribs, stabbed pregnant women, and beheaded the village priest.”

Distomo was not the only place where German troops performed despicable crimes against humanity. During the WWII, Greece lost around 8% of its population.

But Distomo became one of the symbols of Fascist madness on European soil, not unlike Guernica or Lidice.

Now on top of the hill overlooking Distomo, a monument commemorates the victims of the massacre. The names of the martyrs are engraved into the stone. And the pole is carrying an enormous Greek flag.

But at a closer examination, instead of serenity, this place is once again radiating eeriness and horror. The flag is torn to pieces at the end, and the entire hill is black – trees and grass are burned to ashes.

Below the hill, several houses and services are standing as ghosts, abandoned, with broken windows and violent graffiti “decorating” the walls.

In a local cafe, I ask a waitress what happened to the hill. She is friendly but firmly refuses to give details:

“It is man-made, but I can’t tell you more.”

Has it been a warning or an act of desperation? A reaction to recent humiliation, to a rape that Greece once again suffered at the hands of Germany, its politicians and banks, and in the paws of the rest of the European Union?

We ask around. Everybody knows but nobody speaks. A local man utters between his teeth: "I know who did it... We all know... But we will not tell".

It is truly an eerie feeling; being in Greece, in one of the most outspoken countries on earth, but in a Greece that is suddenly too frightened, too humiliated, to even open its mouth and to speak, to shout, to howl.

What have they done to you, Greece? How did they manage to terrify you so thoroughly?

I don't like the West. And after all that plunder, mass murder and gang rape that this continent, Europe, has been committing all over the world for centuries, I don't feel comfortable coming here even for a short period of time.

But after Distomo, and after travelling all over Greece on two different occasions this year, I suddenly feel an upsurge of sympathy, of compassion, of love. Not for Europe, but for this country that is both its member and its victim – Greece.

In the recent history, Greece already lost countless sons and daughters during the German, Italian and Bulgarian fascist occupation. It was also choked by North American and British imperialism, which supported Greek military and its horrid dictatorship. That is when the Pinochet-style disappearances, torture, and assassinations took place. Hundreds of thousands of Greek patriots had to flee, and seek asylum at distant shores.

I met Greek intellectuals, Greek doctors, who grew up in Czechoslovakia, a country that gave them both political asylum and free education. It goes without saying that they and their families had never received one single penny in compensation from the United States or the United Kingdom.

Greece was never really compensated for the terror committed against its people during and after the WWII. People of Distomo tried to seek justice. They went to Greek courts. They won. But Germany refused to pay its dues. When Distomo people brought the case to German courts, where the claim was rejected at all levels. Subsequently Italy got involved, allowing Greek plaintive to take over German property on Lake Como, but in 2012, The International Court of Justice passed its final judgment, ruling that "Italy had violated Germany's state immunity, and directed that the judgment by the Italian courts be retracted".

Germany's state immunity! How sensible, really! At the end, Germany, the country that had been murdering Greek babies got easily away with some of the most repulsive crimes committed in the 20th century. The Western "Allies" kept rewarding Germany, eventually turning it into their elite colony. And at some point it was allowed to become one of the toughest industrial neo-colonialist bullies. First – the West Germany and then so called "united Germany". Now of course, Germany is not a colony, but a colonizer.

After spending some time there, it becomes obvious what really happened in Distomo. Someone burned the hill on which the monument rests. It was a symbolic act, a gruesome protest. Then the flag was lowered and shredded, turned into a rug... and then raised again, for everyone to see what has been done to Greece!

Greece is now obviously on the same hit list of the Empire, as are countless other "unruly" nations, from Ecuador and Venezuela, to Russia, China and Iran. I described the system and many of the victims in my latest book, "Exposing Lies of The Empire". But many Greek

people do not realize, yet, what is really occurring, although the Empire has already destroyed several EU-member countries like Bulgaria.

When I saw the faces of people of Distomo, I was overwhelmed. I felt wrath.

In my mind, I kept addressing the Prime Minister of Greece:

Mr. Tsipras... not comrade Tsipras anymore... Oh no. Mr. Tsipras, what had been done to your people? The Greek nation always consisted of fun loving, good-hearted individuals. Of people who like to sing, to dance, and to speak loudly about things that are hurting them, concerning them, outraging them. Greeks are brave people. They fight when there is no other alternative! I don't always agree with them, but I admire them nevertheless. What is this fear, this dark defeatism that is choking your country? These are not Greek people; this is not the Greek nation that I know. Mr. Prime Minister, your people told me that they are scared!

It was obvious that people were scared to speak, to even complain. At Distomo, they did not even look into our faces.

Instead, in a local cafe on the main square, locals were watching on a huge screen, as if hypnotized, some water gymnastics competition. A Chinese girl was really jumping well, entering water in an elegant, confident style. But what the hell had gymnastics to do with collapsing, blackmailed Greece, or with the hill devastated by fire, or with abandoned and destroyed houses of Distomo?

"You were elected in order to serve your people", I was hissing, maliciously, at Tsipras. "You are obliged to protect them, their interests, not the interests of carnivorous neoliberalism, and the Western/EU fascism".

But Alexis Tsipras was in Athens, and we were near Delphi.

"Why are you not fighting, or at least not protesting?" We asked at Delphi, at the "cradle of Western democracy".

A local man, well educated and pensive, replied:

We are scared. We have no leadership. The government uses water cannons and rubber bullets against us, but we have no one to show us direction.

Is there any democracy left in Greece? After the "NO-vote, and after the grand betrayal, or call it a treason, do people of Greece and of Delphi still believe that they live in a democracy?

No!" comes almost the immediate answer. No hesitation; a man does not need to think for more than a few seconds. It is obvious that he already meditated on this topic for many days. Therefore the answer is short and definite: NO!

I photograph the shattered Greek flag, through the horrifying, black, burned trees and branches.

Then I salute the flag.

This time I came to Greece “undecided”, not really sure whether I wanted to get involved.

But by now I know.

Before this, I had no use for “the prestigious EU Greek flag”. But this rag, this flag of a suffering nation is truly sacred.

Internationalists are with you, Greece. We are embracing you. You are not alone. Your flag is our flag now.

But please understand that we are standing by you, hoping that you see by now what the Western imperialism is all about. Hoping that you will join forces with those who are fighting against Western fascism. We are not with you so you could reach another set of agreements, to remain in that “prestigious EU club”, and stay in NATO, the organization that is ruining our entire Planet. We are not with you so your farmers could get further billions in subsidies; money taken away from other starving and destroyed nations, mainly those in Africa and Asia. We are not with you, so your soldiers could help terrorize the world through your membership in NATO.

We are with a new, revolutionary Greece, with the country that voted NO! We are with the country based on solidarity, justice, social equality and international non-interference or better still, on internationalism.

There May Be A Civil War

The “Prosfygika” housing complex in Athens is old, dilapidated, with crumbling walls. It was originally built in 1930’s, to accommodate some of those Greeks who arrived in the capital after a 1923 “population exchange” with Turkey after WWI.

Now it is a home to local squatters, and foreign refugees. But it is also one of the centers of resistance, where Communists and Anarchists are organizing their actions, plotting their strategy.

Local left-wing cadres call this place “self-organized community”.

Mr. Evangelis (perhaps not his real name) is extremely coherent and precise in his analyses. He agreed to speak to us about the situation in his country:

The Poor have been betrayed. We have no political center, right now, but we will manage to create it, again... soon. Greece is heading for a big class war; a class struggle.

People around him are nodding.

Syriza was promoting itself as a movement of class cooperation... Therefore, when the rich said “we will not cooperate” and the government could clearly do nothing about it, it was time to kick the government out.

Then Evangelis says something that could be applied in so many other countries, all over the world:

The government is now scared of us, of those who voted “No!” therefore – of the majority. The government betrayed its people but many of us saw it coming, and it was no shock. I believe that our 1949 civil war never really ended. Those Greeks who were collaborating with the Nazis, and later with the US and the UK – they are the same people who are in power now.

We are asking about that bizarre calm, which is felt all over Greece. There are no strikes and no mass protests. Twice we visited the areas in front of the Parliament and the ministries. There were only few tourists, watching changes of guards.

We are told that Syriza’s betrayal was well planned. It came in the middle of a hot summer, during the time of vacations and holidays.

We will regroup”, promises Evangelis. “We will reorganize the movement. There will be strikes, and huge school protests. We are planning a huge protest on 20 August. Universities are now closed, and union leaders are on vacation, far from Athens. It will all change, soon.

In Greece, it all feels like a calm before a huge storm.

People are being fired from their jobs, we are told.

Hospitals are overcrowded and local doctors are overstretched, but working, heroically, with low, unrealistically low budgets and deeply reduced salaries. But they are working!

No matter what the mainstream Western mass media “reports”, Greece is suffering, but it is not collapsing.

Pensioners are now barely surviving on amounts lower than those in Thailand and in most of Latin America. But they are surviving, due to the strong (un-European) family structure and solidarity of Greek people.

Back in Delphi, a man keeps talking about fear:

We don’t see much hope... Actually, no hope... And we are not sure how to fight, anymore. They harm us when we go to the streets. If we would feel that we could change things, we’d go and risk our lives. 61% voted No! But Tsipras did what he did, anyway. We are afraid now!

But isn’t this actually the reason? To go and to fight, exactly because what was done?

We are afraid.

Afraid of what?

Of everything... of rubber bullets and of water cannons. Of Greece being pushed out of Europe...

But how could it be pushed out? Greece is in Europe.

We are afraid of consequences...

It is all messed up.

On the touristy island of Kos, German tourists, showing indifference, even spite, are stuffing themselves on fresh seafood, downing gallons of local wine. This year, "Greece is bit cheaper than other destinations", a German couple at Athens's airport tells me. "That is why we come". Few meters from the seafront of Kos, a local hospital literally collapsed, with no ability to save human lives.

On top of it, thousands of destitute refugees from destabilized countries (destabilized by the West) from all over the world are now everywhere, at every corner of Kos. It feels like "the last supper of Europe", repulsive orgy of indifference, consumerism, and moral decay.

But no artist bothers to depict it, as there is hardly any political art left in Europe.

My friend and comrade, Peter Koenig, has been desperately trying to convince Greece to default, as Argentina did very successfully, many years ago. Peter is a former World Bank economist, now one of the most outspoken critics of Western institutions and neoliberalism. He and his wife Monica, a Peruvian artist, have been travelling with me all over the country.

Peter loves Greece. He fights for Greece. He is desperately trying to convince Greek intellectuals to leave the European Union, the Eurozone and the NATO. Peter strongly believes that the drachma, pre-EU Greek currency, should be re-introduced.

"But people here are torn", he told me. "Many still see the European Union as some sort of "prestigious club"".

"Prestigious club that plunders the world and now even devours its own children", I utter.

"Russia and China would bail out Greece, if the Greek government would approach them..."

We discuss this topic, constantly. Of course, the Greek government had to "promise" to the Troika that it would not be seeking any funding from "outside" the EU. But as our friend, an international lawyer Christopher Black, pointed out: all these agreements are not valid, as they were reached under duress.

Whenever we talk to Greek people, it all goes in circles: betrayal by the government... shock... uncertainty... what to do next, what steps to take?

It is all very unsettling... This agony, this injustice that is so difficult to confront!

But Greek people are proud and brave. They will not give up easily. They will confront their torturers. They will rise.

At one point, I am overwhelmed by an unbridled desire to test whether Greek humor is still there, still alive.

We enter a psychiatric clinic, and I request to speak to a doctor on duty.

When he arrives, I introduce myself as an internationalist philosopher and investigative journalist. Doctor shakes my hand, enthusiastically.

"Sir", I begin. "I have unconfirmed but very reliable information that at least 5 cabinet ministers of the Greek government had been admitted to your clinic after what the

government dared to do, recently...”

The doctor is staring at me for several seconds, in total bewilderment.

Then his face brightens. He produces a roaring laughter. He hugs me.

“Not yet... But we hope they will bring them here, soon”, he chuckles.

“Greece will be fine”, I say to myself.



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Articles by: [Andre Vltchek](#)

About the author:

Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. His latest books are: “Exposing Lies Of The Empire” and “Fighting Against Western Imperialism”. Discussion with Noam Chomsky: On Western Terrorism. Point of No Return is his critically acclaimed political novel. Oceania - a book on Western imperialism in the South Pacific. His provocative book about Indonesia: “Indonesia – The Archipelago of Fear”. Andre is making films for teleSUR and Press TV. After living for many years in Latin America and Oceania, Vltchek presently resides and works in East Asia and the Middle East. He can be reached through his website or his Twitter.

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