

July 1972

# Reader's Digest

LA

Ring Out, Liberty Bell!	Robert O'Brien	49
One Day in the Life of a Heart Surgeon	Don A. Schanche	54
Feel the Earth	Charles A. Lindbergh	62
The Scandal Behind Soaring Construction Costs	<i>Engineering News-Record</i>	66
Unforgettable George C. Marshall	Marshall S. Carter	71
How to Get Control of Your Time (and Your Life)	<i>New York</i>	79
Is India in Russia's Pocket?	Carl T. Rowan	82
Men vs. Women: Equal—But Different	<i>Time</i>	87
The Man Called Jesus	The Rev. Billy Graham	90
Super Dams: The Perils of Progress	<i>Atlantic Monthly</i>	95
A Dime of Pure Gold	<i>Drama in Real Life</i>	100
Why Kids Are 20° Cooler Than Anybody	Joan Mills	106
Greece: Outcast of Europe	David Reed	109
Ways to Save Money on Meals	George M. Mardikian	114
Do You Know What Happens When You Smoke?	Walter S. Ross	121
The Moon—More of a Mystery Than Ever	<i>New York Times Magazine</i>	126
How People Really Behave When Disaster Strikes	<i>Psychology Today</i>	130
King of Athletes	<i>Kiwanis Magazine</i>	133
Down the Beautiful Blue Danube	<i>Armchair Travelogue</i>	138
Acupuncture—A Chinese Puzzle	<i>Psychic</i>	145
What Do You Do With a Boy Like Pete?	Lester Velie	152
The Challenge That Faces Our National Parks	<i>National Wildlife</i>	172
That Living Legend, Pablo Picasso	Noel F. Busch	181
America's Dying Small Towns: Tragedy or Opportunity?	<i>National Civic Review</i>	199
The Lovable, Unpredictable Panda	<i>International Wildlife</i>	205

*Book Section* } Report From Engine Co. 82 . . . Dennis Smith 211

Behind the Lines, 11—Have You an Amusing Anecdote? 14—Press Section, 17—News From the World of Medicine, 25—Can Archie Bunker Give Bigotry a Bad Name? 29—It Pays to Enrich Your Word Power, 39—Humor in Uniform, 45—Life in These United States, 77—Toward More Picturesque Speech, 99—Laughter, the Best Medicine, 119—Personal Glimpses, 150—Quotable Quotes, 194

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# GREECE: Outcast of Europe

*Five years ago, a group of colonels led by George Papadopoulos seized control of the land which gave birth to the ideal of democracy. The cost to freedom-loving Greeks has been exorbitant*

By DAVID REED

ON Christmas Eve of 1970, Christos Sartzetakis, the Greek magistrate whose courageous investigation of a political murder was depicted in the multi-award-winning film "Z," was arrested in Athens by Greece's dreaded military police. They had no warrant; the regime that now rules Greece merely suspected that he was involved with an opposition group and wanted him interrogated. Only months later did his family learn what had happened to him. For six days and nights he had been forced to stand at attention, without food. Whenever he started to topple, guards beat him upright. There followed 47 days in solitary confinement before he was transferred to a regular prison. Finally, 11 months after his arrest, he was released.

The Sartzetakis case is typical of Greek justice today. The country

which in classical times gave the world the concept of democracy has become a dictatorship, ruled by a former colonel who, with a handful of other colonels, deposed a parliamentary government in a *coup d'état*. Though rightist in outlook, the new government shares many of the repressive features of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe. For Greece's 8.5 million people, all political activity has been banned. Martial law remains in force in the main cities, with suspects often held indefinitely without arraignment or charge. Some political prisoners have, like Sartzetakis, been subjected to torture. Other persons have been forced to live in remote villages under police surveillance. The press has been silenced. A network of informers spies on the nation.

Shadow of Fear. Yet, to the more than two million tourists who flock

to view the glories of ancient Greece each year, these ugly aspects are not apparent. There are no tanks in the streets, no soldiers in evidence. The atmosphere is friendly—indeed, almost everyone in Greece, apart from a small minority of communists and other leftists, is strongly pro-West, pro-American.

Prosperity's face is on the land. Last year, the gross national product rose by an impressive 7.6 percent—with inflation held to only three percent. Athens stores bulge with goods and shoppers. In the late evening, the city's *tavernas* are filled as people dine to racy *bouzouki* music.

Under the surface, however, there is a profound malaise. Ordinarily the most voluble of people when it comes to political discussions, Greeks now fall silent when strangers are within earshot. Telephones are assumed to be tapped. Prominent figures of the former parliamentary government say that they are followed by plainclothesmen. When someone disappears, even if only for a few hours, relatives automatically assume that he has been arrested. For good reason: Greeks have drawn prison sentences of up to ten years merely for holding meetings or distributing leaflets.

In one case that no Greek newsman will ever forget, John Kapsis, editor of the now-defunct newspaper *Enthos*, was given a five-year sentence (he was released after 14 months) for having published a brief interview with John Zigmis, a

former cabinet minister, in which Zigmis urged the restoration of parliamentary government. (Zigmis himself got 4½ years.) The men were convicted under a subtle press law that forbids publishing anything which may create public "anxiety."

**Prometheus Unbound.** When the colonels struck in April 1967, they claimed that they did so "to save the country from communism." But few people in Greece believe that such a threat existed. In actual fact, the colonels had been plotting a take-over for years. Democracy was clearly in trouble, but instead of saving it, the colonels merely finished it off.

For eight years, until 1963, Greece had had a strong and stable parliamentary government under Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis. After his defeat, however, the country slid into growing chaos. Political strikes and riotous demonstrations erupted almost daily. An election was scheduled for May 1967, which was virtually certain to put the late George Papandreu, a former prime minister, in power. Although Papandreu was a moderate, many people feared that his son and political heir apparent, Andreas Papandreu, would eventually turn Greece into a left-leaning state.

The ensuing colonels' revolt will long be regarded as a masterpiece of its kind. A contingency plan, code-named "Prometheus," had been drawn up by the army general staff to meet a possible national emergency by rounding up communists and other radicals and by taking

over key installations such as radio stations and airports. The purpose, of course, was to prevent, not to promote, a coup. But just as Prometheus stole fire from the gods, so the colonels swiped the plan from their superiors. On the night of April 21, the colonels had the signal for Prometheus flashed to police and military units throughout the country. More than 6000 persons were automatically rounded up, and radio stations and airports were seized. Troops under the colonels' direct command picked up cabinet ministers, politicians and loyalist army officers, and tanks surrounded the palace of King Constantine.

Greece was then introduced to the man who had masterminded the coup—a colonel named George Papadopoulos. Like his fellow conspirators, Papadopoulos came from rural Greece, having been born in 1919 in a hardscrabble village on the Peloponnesian peninsula, the son of a schoolteacher. The only avenue of advancement for a bright country lad lay through the army, and at 18 he was sent to the national military academy. In the mid-1950s, he was one of the organizers of a secret society of junior officers, and his conspiratorial ambitions earned him the nickname "Nasser." Much of his career was spent in the murky world of intelligence. For a time, he served in the Greek equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency where, among other duties, he maintained vigilance against those who would conspire against the government. It

was, some say, like sending a goat to guard the cabbage.

At a press conference after the takeover, Papadopoulos likened Greece to a patient who had to be put under restraint for his own good. "We have a patient lying on an operating table," Papadopoulos declared. "If you do not tie him down, you may lead him to his death rather than to an operation that will make him recover." When several reporters rose at once to ask questions, Papadopoulos clapped his hands sharply and barked, "Don't force me to restore order!" The reporters sat down. All of Greece, in fact, sat down.

**Power and Papadopoulos.** At first, a 15-member "revolutionary council," composed almost entirely of colonels who had staged the takeover, ruled the country. Papadopoulos operated behind the scenes as "first among equals." In December 1967, King Constantine, who had opposed the colonels all along, attempted to rally the army for a counter-coup. The effort failed, and the king went into exile in Italy.

Since then, the colonels who lofted Papadopoulos to power have all been eased from positions of direct authority and placed in second- and third-ranking posts. Papadopoulos now is prime minister, minister of national defense, minister of foreign affairs and minister of government policy. In every government office there are photographs of King Constantine and Queen Anne-Marie; in between, there is a slightly smaller

photograph of Papadopoulos. (The only exception is Papadopoulos' own office—with a picture of Jesus between the king and queen.)

Shortly after assuming power, Papadopoulos had a new constitution written, which then was submitted to the public in a referendum. Under martial law, no meaningful debate was possible. Amid guffaws from both Greeks and foreigners, the regime announced that 92 percent of the voters had approved the constitution. In any event, it is not taken seriously by the Greeks. The key articles, dealing with civil liberties and parliamentary elections, have never been implemented.

Indeed, Papadopoulos has done a thorough job of tying the "patient" to his operating table. He rules by decree. Most professional associations, such as those of doctors or lawyers, are not allowed to choose their leaders freely. In place of normal political life, Papadopoulos has set up a "consultative committee." In elections held last December, some 10,000 handpicked "electors," all of them beholden to the regime for their jobs, were allowed to select 60 members of the committee. Papadopoulos then personally chose 15 more members. The committee has no right to initiate or reject legislation; it can only chat about government-promulgated measures.

Greek labor leaders have been ousted, and government appointees have been installed in their place. While workers theoretically enjoy the right to strike, there has not

been a single strike in the five years that Papadopoulos has been in power. "No one would dare," a former union leader says. Universities and lower schools have been brought under the thumb of the government, too, with dissident professors and students having been purged.

Such tactics have led the rest of the world to shun Greece as a political leper. Since the colonels' coup five years ago, only two foreign heads of state—both from African countries—have paid official visits to Athens. At a meeting in 1970 of the Council of Europe—an unofficial but influential forum of opinion—15 governments, most of them members of NATO, accused the Greek regime of "torture and other ill treatment" of political prisoners.\* (Certain that it would be expelled, Greece had previously withdrawn from the Council.) In another expression of disapproval, members of the Common Market have "frozen" Greece's application to join.

**Consulting the Oracles.** Still, Greece remains in NATO, and, at a time of growing Soviet naval penetration in the Mediterranean, her shore facilities are much needed for the American Sixth Fleet. This has caused problems for U.S. policy makers. After the coup, the United States stopped providing heavy weapons to Papadopoulos in an effort to pressure him into restoring civilian rule. But he refused to

\*The frequency of such practices seems to be diminishing because of international scrutiny and the resultant publicity.

budge and, to keep the Greek sector of NATO's defenses from falling into disarray, full military aid was resumed in September 1970. When Congress later passed the foreign-aid bill for fiscal 1972, it prohibited military aid to Greece unless the Administration decided that the "overriding requirements of the national security of the United States" justified its continuance. On February 17, President Nixon signed such a statement, thus continuing the program.

It appears that Papadopoulos will be running Greece for a long time to come. His spokesmen maintain that 80 percent of the people support the government. How they arrive at that figure is a mystery, for the regime has never held a free election. It is clear, however, that some Greeks, fed up with former parliamentary squabbling, accept the current government—if only as a lesser evil.

Many of the country's peasant

farmers, who account for about half the population, also seem to approve, or at least remain supremely indifferent. Opposition comes mostly from Greece's intellectuals, professional people and middle and upper classes in general; most people arrested these days are democrats or royalists. The regime has little to fear from the left, which is fragmented and weak. And, as the old pro in the game of overthrowing the government, Papadopoulos keeps close watch over the army for any young officer aspiring to spring his own Prometheus on the boss.

Papadopoulos maintains that it is his mission to remake Greek society. Constitutional rule will be restored, he has declared, "when I, the bearer of the people's mandate and of the historic responsibility toward the nation and the armed forces, decide that this can be done safely and usefully for the nation." This does not sound like a man who contemplates an early transfer of power.

### Sound Effects

THERE is a 25-cent charge for five minutes of hot water at the public showers in Mesa Verde National Park, Colo. The cold water is free and really cold. Last summer I was parked near the bathhouse when a loud scream came from within it. Leaping from the car, I was rushing toward the entrance when a woman stopped me. "Don't worry," she soothed. "It's just my husband saving another quarter."

—John Riley in *Better Camping*

EN ROUTE to Canada, we pitched our tent one night at a crowded campsite in Michigan. We arose at 4:30 a.m. in order to get an early start. I plugged my electric razor into an outlet on a post nearby and began to shave. I hadn't realized how it would sound in the still morning air, until a fellow in the next tent hollered, "My lord! Can't you wait until this afternoon to mow your yard?"

—Contributed by Robert L. Toland