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THREATS TO THE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE AND
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF GREECE

Letter dated 15 November 1951 from the Head of the Delegation of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, addressed to the President of
the General Assembly

Paris, 15 November 1951.

I have received a copy of an appeal dated 17 October from a group of Greeks, addressed to the Secretariat of the United Nations, Mr. Truman, Mr. Stalin, Mr. Attlee, Mr. Mao Tse-Tung and Mr. Auriol, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the International Law Association and the International Organization of Journalists, concerning the trial of a group of Greek patriots by the Extraordinary Military Tribunal of Greece. Its text reads as follows:

"17 October 1951

APPEAL TO

THE SECRETARIAT OF THE UNITED NATIONS,
MR. TRUMAN, MR. STALIN, MR. ATTLEE, MR. MAO TSE-TUNG AND MR. AURIOL,
THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS,
THE INTERNATIONAL LAW ASSOCIATION,
THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF JOURNALISTS AND
ALL CIVILISED AND PROGRESSIVE PEOPLE,

by persons arrested in December 1950 and to be tried on the day after tomorrow by the Extraordinary Military Tribunal.

The purpose of this appeal is to draw public attention to the barbarous acts which have been committed in the very centre of Athens, in the General Asphalia (Security Police) building. At the same time we wish to call upon all civilised and progressive people, irrespective of their political opinions, to protest against and demand the cessation of this unprecedented barbarism, which brings shame upon the civilisation of our country.

"On Christmas Eve, hundreds of people were seized, some in the streets and some in their homes, and herded like sheep into the cells of the General Asphalia.

All of us -- members of anti-fascist and trade union organizations, intellectuals, journalists, lawyers, teachers, doctors, manual and white-collar workers, men and women, old people, young girls, sufferers from tuberculosis and other diseases -- all were cast into prison cells.

"The story which we will proceed to relate gives but a partial idea of the hell which prevails there. The actual truth, which is not yet known to us in full, defies description and beggars the imagination.

"Our crime consists in the violation of the notorious law No. 509, i.e. in the fact that we do not admit that the existing 'order' is ideal, sacred, infallible and so forth.

"Immediately after our arrest, 'interrogations' were begun in order to ascertain our 'crimes'. We were nearly all kept in complete isolation. From the outset many of us were beaten; our arms were twisted, we were thrown unclothed on the cement floor and left without food. These solitary confinement cells are like tombs, but they are worse than tombs, since in a tomb it is at least possible to lie down, whereas in some cells it is impossible even to stretch one's legs, since their area is 1 square metre. Some of the cells are pitch dark by day and night; others are flooded in bright, blinding light. In winter these cells are like refrigerators, in summer like the ovens of Hitler's Maidanek. The atmosphere reminds one of a cemetery; even coughing is forbidden. The acoustics of the solitary confinement wing are very strange. The slightest noise at one end may be heard in the most distant cell. It is impossible to fall asleep, not only because of the incessant noise of doors and observation windows, and not only because of the shouts of laughter of the prison guards. The most terrifying thing is that suddenly, especially at night, the graveyard silence is pierced by the blood-curdling shrieks of someone who has lost his reason or is recalling the nightmare of torture. There are sudden cries of 'Mother, help me ...', or 'No ... no ... I am not a traitor', and so forth.

"Those who have lost their reason scream unceasingly until they are kicked insensible, bound, gagged, or given a shot with a hypodermic needle. When the shouts of the insane and the laughter of the prison guards die down, the weeping of some women and weaker men may be heard.

"Every hour, the observation window opens and a warder gives the following 'advice': 'You should make a clean breast of it and confess everything; if you do not you will die in a few days'.

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"For a long time visits from relatives were forbidden, and some of us were not allowed such visits for over eight months. In the beginning, we were not even allowed to shave; our beards were cut with clippers. We have to bite off our finger-nails. Newspapers and books are strictly prohibited. Nevertheless, attempts are made to give us various news, with a view to breaking our resistance completely. Here are some examples: 'Mass shootings have begun', 'The 3rd decree is in force again', 'The North Koreans and Chinese have been routed', 'Stalin is dead', and so forth.

"Not only are we constantly called before the investigator, but our cells have been visited by the trio Krondiris, Stassinopoulos and Robert Driscoll. The first is a police officer who formerly served in the correctional police and then under Maniatakis, during the Metaxas regime, and now heads the department for combating communism. The second, an eminent member of the Idea organization, was the Public Prosecutor of the Extraordinary Military Tribunals, and is now an unsuccessful candidate of the Papagos party for the Arcadia prefecture. In view of the fact that some prisoners may not have the 'honour' to know him, he was introduced by Krondiris as if to say 'Here is your executioner'. The third man, Robert Driscoll, known as 'Bobs', is an American, serving in the General Asphalios in the prosecution and destruction of democratic citizens. He is small, stout, fair-haired and blue-eyed.

"These are the circumstances in which the 'investigations' have taken place. Every kind of tortures has been used, and the champion in this field is Mr. 'Bobs', who has not attempted to disguise his executioner's role.

"The prisoners to be interrogated are led into a cell. There they are told that, since they have not told the whole truth, they are to be tested on an apparatus which registers false statements. In actual fact, this so-called 'lie detector' is an apparatus which produces electric charges in the human body and gives rise to electric shocks. This machine is personally supervised by the American, but he has an assistant, a German laboratory-technician who is a former Hitlerite and knows no Greek at all. A modern 'crown of thorns' is placed on the head of the person under interrogation, to the accompaniment of the laughter of those present. The German immediately connects the current and begins to regulate the 'doses', examining the rapidly moving pointers on certain dials. The victim feels as if thousands of needles are piercing his body, nerves and intestines. The pain and suffering are terrible. At the same time, an iron

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hand seems to be clasping the victim's heart and driving him insane.

"The impassive Hiterlite continues to regulate his machinery. The Greek 'interrogator' dictates the victim's answers and the American smiles with the satisfaction of an executioner.

"If the person under interrogation loses consciousness or the German considers that he is about to faint, he temporarily disconnects the current. It is not known how this apparatus came to Greece -- whether it was inherited from some Gestapo prison or whether it was imported from America direct under the Marshall Plan. We only know that although the electrification of Greece is still a dream, the electrification of the methods of torture used in the General Asphalia is progressing most successfully.

"It should be admitted here that the 'lie detector' has not been used on some prisoners who have taken a firm stand from the beginning, for fear they might seize the machine and bring it down on the American's head.

"During these 'investigations', the American has shown great inventiveness. He has even gone so far as to promise women to send them to America and find them husbands there if they would state that 'the National-Democratic movement in Greece has failed'. It should also be noted that there have been cases of assault against women in the cells.

"Thus, in the very first days, Lia Flotia 'committed suicide'. Others lost their reason or suffered serious nervous breakdowns; for example, Dimitri Afanassopoulos, a craftsman, who was sent to a lunatic asylum, Stavros Pitakas, a merchant, Samis, a teacher, Theodora Georgiadou, and then Spiros Longos, who went mad and tried to commit suicide. Many contracted incurable diseases and others became prematurely grey. This is how the Asphalia manages to extort 'evidence' from witnesses who are at the same time the accused.

"Nowhere and never have such terrible attempts been made to undermine men's souls and spirits. And this hell did not continue for days or weeks, but for whole months, sapping the prisoners' blood drop by drop. A prisoner was compelled to fight death every minute. Minutes -- terrible, endless, unbelievably, crushingly oppressive minutes -- were like months, hours like years. At the entrance to this hell there is a notice saying: 'Entrance strictly forbidden to all persons, without exception' but it would have been more suitable to have inscribed Dante's famous words 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here'. Yet even that would not be entirely correct, because those who believe in the

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ideals of freedom and justice never lose faith or hope, in any country. They fight to the last breath, and even in dying win their battle.

"Our case will be heard by the Extraordinary Military Tribunal on 19 October. Approximately one hundred people are on trial. Without any regular legal proceedings, we are to be tried on the basis of 'evidence', given by some persons under the conditions described above.

"But in fact it is not we who shall be on trial. The accused are those who organized these 'interrogations' and the police State which permits and approves them. The Extraordinary Military Tribunal -- if indeed it be a tribunal and not a department of the Asphalia -- should call all those 'investigators' to the witness-stand and interrogate them. Above all, it should summon the American, Robert Driscoll, and his assistant, the Hitlerite executioner.

"In any event, we call upon all civilized and progressive people to take our part and to help us in this trial. Above all, we appeal to all honest people to fight for the abolition of such barbarous prisons, which are a blot on our civilization.

N. BELOYANNIS

G. PODARAS, Trade Unionist

ST. DROMAZOS, Journalist

ELLI ISAINIDOU, Woman Journalist."

AFRODITI MANIATI, Clerk

ST. GRAMENOS, Trade Unionist

K. NIKOLAKOPOULOS, Teacher

In drawing your attention, Mr. President, to the text of the above appeal, I would request you to be guided by the human approach to the protection of victims of the political terror in Greece adopted at the third and fourth sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and to take prompt action through the United Nations to save the patriots accused by the Extraordinary Military Tribunal of Greece, whose lives are in immediate danger under the threat of the death sentence.

At the same time, I would ask you to arrange for my letter to be issued as a General Assembly document and distributed to all delegations.

(Signed) A. VYSHINSKY

Head of the Delegation of the Union
of Soviet Socialist Republics.

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