

The Social Preconditions of the Greek Civil War:

The Case of Epirus

Events that the beginning of the decade 1940-1950 were the war against the Italians, then against the Germans, German Occupation and national resistance. Those events in conjunction with the conclusion of WWII and the repercussions on the international defensive alliances were the main causes of the Greek Civil War. Undoubtedly, the Greek Civil War cannot be understood separately from WWII and the results of its end vis-à-vis Europe and the world.

Besides this plan of analysis, one extensively researched bibliography, it will be proposed that at a secondary level the Greek Civil War spread and intensified and even achieved locally uncontrollable dimensions because of the social and economic impasses which already existed from the inter-war era. In brief, it will be demonstrated that the production dead-end experienced by the rural world during the inter-war era and specifically the one in the region of Epirus created the significant internal reasons which led to the civil war and fanned its intensity. Methodologically, the civil war cannot be regarded through the confluence of the 1940-1950 decade unless seen through that of the inter-war years.

In the mountainous or higher elevation regions such as Epirus, Western Macedonia, Thrace, parts of Thessaly, and Sterea Hellas, the rural populations struggled with social and economic hardships. These difficulties arrested or even canceled the reforming endeavors of the Venizelos period, while additionally creating insurmountable problems for the very survival of rural families. The higher birth rate in farming communities had a negative impact on the household income, while at the same time increasing the undocumented unemployment. It was calculated that unemployment ran to the height of 60% for Epirus and other regions with similar production rates. Undocumented or hidden unemployment is identified as the additional agricultural output that farming families produced by employing more family members in agrarian business. According to specific studies, this additional output was calculated to be close to zero, something that canceled even the slightest accumulation of agricultural income. Added to this was the low rate of emigration abroad, because of quota limits. Also, the effort to develop the country industrially was unsuccessful. The small agricultural holdings had to be subdivided further to the heirs of the farming family. All these factors evidently contributed to the production standstill of the mountainous or piedmont agrarian communities toward the end of the inter-war era. It can be argued that those communities of Epirus and other similar areas, unlike those in some different regions of Greece, faced a vicious circle in production. These local internal impasses of the inter-war era were exacerbated because of WWII and German Occupation and served as the framework that attracted the masses into the resistance movement; afterwards they led to the civil war.