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INK OF FREEDOM: the power of writing in challenging dictatorships

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NATIONAL REPORT

WORK PACKAGE 3 - RESEARCH

COUNTRY: GREECE

I. Executive summary

This research explores the historical memory of the Greek junta regime (1967-1974), aiming to understand how individuals who lived through this period remember it and how these memories have been passed down. The study uses interviews, focus groups, and analysis of historical letters to gather diverse perspectives on the dictatorship. The research also connects the collective memory of the dictatorship regime to Greece's current political climate, exploring its ongoing impact. The various sources of data provided insights into the most prominent themes associated with this period of dictatorship—lack of freedoms, human rights violations, struggles, infrastructure development, negative emotions, and hope for a democratic life. Cross-analysis of the data revealed that, while there are several nuances in the collective memory of the regime, society as a whole condemns it.

II. Introduction

This research seeks to investigate and interpret the historical memory of the period in Greek history known as the Greek junta, or the Regime of the Colonels, which ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974. The primary objective is to understand how this era is remembered by individuals who lived through it, how these memories have been passed down and shaped over time, and whether, and how, they influence the political and social landscape of Greece today.

To achieve this, the study employs a wide range of data sources that provide insights into personal and collective recollections of the dictatorship. These sources include interviews with individuals who experienced the junta firsthand, focus group discussions that gather multiple perspectives on the period, and various types of letters that were exchanged during these years. These letters offer a look at the thoughts, fears, and hopes of people living under the regime.

The data for this research were gathered using three primary methods: semi-structured interviews, moderated focus groups, and the analysis of historical letters. These approaches were chosen to capture a wide range of perspectives and provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical memory surrounding the Greek junta.

In total, 54 historical letters were carefully analyzed as part of this study. These letters, in some cases addressed to a wider public but mostly privately exchanged during the period of the junta, offer firsthand accounts and personal reflections that provide valuable insight into the lived experiences of individuals during that time. The letters were analyzed to identify recurring themes, sentiments, and narratives that contributed to the collective memory of the era.

Furthermore, three focus groups were conducted, involving a total of 29 participants. These focus groups were moderated to facilitate discussion and encourage participants to share their thoughts, recollections, and personal experiences related to the junta

period. By hosting these discussions, the research aimed to capture a variety of viewpoints and experiences, allowing for a richer understanding of how different groups remember and interpret that historical period.

Additionally, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who had direct or indirect experiences of the junta. These interviews provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of personal memories, as well as a deeper understanding of how these memories are linked to the participants' present-day views and political beliefs. The semi-structured format allowed for a flexible yet focused conversation, where key themes could be explored while still allowing for spontaneous responses and reflections.

The research was carried out both in-person and online, with the in-person data collection taking place in Ioannina, Greece, a region that was directly impacted by the junta, while online methods allowed for broader geographical (national) participation. This combination of methods and locations ensured a diverse and representative sample, contributing to the robustness of the data collected for the study.

The primary focus of the study is not just to document these memories, but also to analyze and compare the collected data in a systematic way. The goal is to identify common threads and themes that emerge across different sources, looking for patterns that might indicate shared experiences or societal influences. In doing so, the research seeks to connect the collective memory of the junta period to the current political climate in Greece, exploring whether and how the events and narratives of the past continue to resonate in the present. Through this analysis, the study hopes to provide a deeper understanding of the enduring impact of the Greek junta on modern Greek society and politics, and how historical memory can influence contemporary political dynamics. More widely, saving historical memory at the national level is crucial for building collective identity, fostering reflection and reconciliation, promoting informed citizenship, protecting human rights, and preserving cultural heritage. It is a necessary foundation for a society that values its past while striving toward a more inclusive and informed future.

III. Theoretical framework and historical context

A. Historical context analyzed

In the wake of the Greek Civil War (1946–1949), Greece was profoundly split between left-leaning and right-leaning factions. Anti-communism became ingrained, leading to the sidelining of leftist perspectives and fostering an atmosphere of political oppression. This polarization continued into the 1960s, a decade marked by frequent and intense political crises. The Cold War context also influenced Greece's international relations. The country was a member of NATO and received substantial military aid from the U.S., further aligning it with Western powers.

On April 21, 1967, a group of right-wing military officers, led by Brigadier Stylianos Pattakos and Colonels Georgios Papadopoulos and Nikolaos Makarezos, executed a swift and decisive coup d'état. Tanks and troops quickly occupied Athens, arresting over 10,000 politicians, activists, and suspected leftists within days. The junta promptly suspended constitutional rights, imposed martial law, and justified their actions as necessary to prevent a communist takeover. By violating the democratic rights of citizens, the dictatorship became a painful chapter in Greek history. The country was also internationally isolated, especially in Europe: its association with the EEC was frozen, and Greece was expelled from the Council of Europe. Only the USA maintained a tolerant stance toward the regime and provided military aid, which led to public outrage, as many Greeks blamed the U.S. for both the rise and endurance of the dictatorship.

Many Greek political figures strongly opposed and resisted the regime. Notable among them were Georgios Papandreou, Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, Georgios Mavros, Konstantinos Karamanlis, among many others. At the same time, due to the lack of democratic rights, an estimate of 30,000 individuals were imprisoned and exiled during the dictatorship period, on the basis of their political opposition to the regime. Resistance grew both in Greece and abroad, and it peaked with student uprisings: the Law School protest in Athens in February 1973, and the Polytechnic uprising in November of the same year. The Polytechnic revolt was violently suppressed by military forces on the night of November 17, 1973, resulting in deaths, arrests, and torture. This uprising is still annually commemorated with events and a national holiday, as it is widely viewed as the beginning of the end of the regime.

On November 25, 1973, Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannidis launched a new coup and established an even harsher regime. In 1974, Ioannidis attempted to overthrow Cypriot President Makarios, which triggered the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, with the ensuing crisis resulting in the fall of the dictatorship. The democratization efforts that culminated in the establishment of the Third Hellenic Republic in 1975 were overseen by the returned exiled statesman Konstantinos Karamanlis. While civil liberties were restored under the new constitution, many junta collaborators evaded justice. The transition to democracy was a complex process, involving both domestic and international factors.

Supporters of the regime argue that it safeguarded Greece from communist subversion during a volatile period. Some also contend that its infrastructure projects laid groundwork for post-1974 economic growth. These perspectives emphasize the regime's role in maintaining order and promoting economic development. However, these arguments are contested by critics who point out that the regime's methods were brutal and its economic policies benefited only a small elite.

B. Current situation in relation to the context

The debate over the junta's legacy reflects broader discussions about the balance between security and freedom, and the role of authoritarianism in promoting economic

development. The dictatorship left deep scars on Greek society—its censorship policies distorted cultural discourse for decades, while its human rights abuses remain a stark reminder of authoritarianism's dangers. At the same time, its fall reaffirmed the power of grassroots and all kinds of resistance in restoring democracy, and serves as a stark reminder of the importance of protecting democratic institutions and human rights. Despite facing its challenges, Greece has experienced significant economic growth since the fall of the dictatorship, and its people have regained freedoms and respect for human rights, as indicated by its status as a democratic republic.

However, many significant political and social challenges remain and are evident. Most recent historic events in Greece, suggest that the country, now governed by the liberal-conservative political party New Democracy, is under serious political pressure. In February 2024, the European Parliament adopted a resolution expressing "grave concerns about very serious threats to democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights" in Greece, while raising serious concerns about the Tempi crash and the subsequent investigations. The investigation into the devastating Tempi train crash on February 28th, 2023, which killed 57 people, gradually uncovered evidence of a series of cover-ups and/or a severe lack of quality in the investigative process. This has further convinced a strong majority of the Greek public and experts that a government-driven misleading narrative is being promoted regarding the causes of the tragedy, among other potential crimes. These events induced the largest modern-day nationwide protest in Greece on February 28th, 2025. The Greek public is once again demanding attention to the protection of the general public, human rights violations, justice, and the government's evident involvement in these issues.

Meanwhile, some other democratic freedoms, such as freedom of the press, are increasingly jeopardized in Greece. Over the past few years, media freedom in Greece has significantly eroded, with the country's press freedom rankings falling to the lowest in the European Union. In recent years, Greece has witnessed the broad-daylight assassination of a crime reporter, multiple arson attacks on media offices, a sprawling spyware scandal, and a series of vexatious lawsuits against investigative journalists, among many other incidents linked to the absence of press freedom.

Other examples of ongoing systematic human rights violations and social injustices are found in recent reports and publications by international humanitarian organizations and EU institutions, which highlight Greece's position as one of the lowest in the EU regarding the Gender Equality Index. These reports also condemn Greece for serious violations of basic human rights and the degradation of some of the most marginalized groups - asylum seekers, especially unaccompanied children. These and other similarities, as well as differences, between the current socio-political state of the country and the period of the historic junta rule, may convey warnings, reassurances, or other significant messages.

IV. Methodology

A. Research design

The research adopted a qualitative approach, chosen to gather extensive and original insights that align with the overall goals and objectives of this study and the broader project.

The research procedure and methodology was tailored to each specific technique of data gathering, with general basis on discourse analysis methodology. Apart from academic and other types of credible external resources used in the historic and contemporary contextualization, there were three main types of data gathering: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and historic letters. For the 10 semi-structured interviews, a guideline and general interview script were provided to the young participants interviewing adults or elderly individuals. The entire interview process was voice-recorded, transcribed, and translated. The interviews were then analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns, assess whether the information provided was consistent or contradictory across interviews, and examine how the interviewees constructed their narratives. The data was entered and organized Excel spreadsheets, to ensure proper accounting of the data. Additionally, considerations were made regarding potential metaphors, self-limitation in revealing information, and other influencing factors. Some quotes from the interviews were used to provide some data examples.

During the 3 focus groups, the facilitator/s followed the general script but allowed the discussion to flow naturally, ensuring that the exchange of information was not restricted and that participants felt motivated to share their thoughts on relevant topics of personal interest. The level of intergenerational interaction and non-verbal communication was noted, along with the participants' overall engagement in the discussion. Each focus group was recorded, transcribed, and translated. The transcriptions were analyzed by identifying repetitive themes and patterns, evaluating the support or opposition to each other's individual accounts of history, and exploring how participants constructed and expressed their narratives. The data was entered and organized on Excel spreadsheet in order to ensure proper accounting of the data. The dominant voices and narratives were also assessed, and possible limitations to sharing information due to various influences were considered. Some quotes from each of the focus groups were included in this research report, to highlight and exemplify the findings.

The 54 historical letters were selected based on coverage of a variety of topics and types, with a recognized source of publication chosen to ensure the material's credibility. The letters were categorized as either private exchanges between individuals, official communications between individuals and institutions, or public statements addressed to a wide audience, including various institutions, organizations, media, and collectives.

The analysis of the letters involved contextualizing them, identifying reoccurring accounts of historical events, patterns of themes, daily life, quality of life, expressed emotions, rhetorical elements, symbols, and narratives that reflect the experiences of the period. A discourse analysis was conducted with consideration of the historical

context, identifying potential political, cultural, and social influences on the content of the letters, as well as the historic events described in the letters were compared to the officially recognized historic accounts. Data gathered from the letters was entered and organized on Excel spreadsheets, to ensure proper accounting of the data. Some quotes from the letters were used to provide examples of different perspectives and findings.

A cross-analysis was conducted using data gathered from the three research techniques. Data from each technique was categorized by main themes and recurring keywords across the techniques were identified to highlight common narratives and memories. Contradictory or inconsistent accounts of history across the different data sources were also noted to identify opposing narratives of the historical period. Specific patterns from the various data sources were visualized using diagrams to emphasize the main themes that represent collective narratives of that period. Finally, the methodological advantages and limitations of each technique were considered when drawing the final conclusions from the findings.

B. Selection criteria and ethical procedures

Participants for the focus groups and for the interviews were selected through various sources. Firstly, there was a public call for participation in the project, promoted by the organization conducting the research towards the general population, and by the Europe Direct Information Center office of Epirus towards local and regional institutions. While the focus groups involved also some external individuals, they were mainly composed of participants coming from outreached institutions – Zosimea High Schol of Ioannina, a Center for Elderly of the Ioannina old town, the 1st System of Scouts of Ioannina, and active citizens in touch with the EDIC Epirus office.

Main criteria for selection of participants was the interest to take part in this research and share inputs, learn, discuss with other people on historic and current political situations. Secondly, the age groups were considered: in each interview, one young person aged below 30 interviewed an adult (50-65 years old) or an elderly person aged over 65. During the focus groups, age groups were planned accordingly: the first focus group involved 3 young adults aged 18-30, 4 youth in high school age, and 2 elderly people aged 65+. The second focus group involved 3 young adults aged 18-30 and 5 adults aged 50-65, while the third focus group consisted of 6 school students aged 16-17, and 6 elderly aged 65+.

All participants are residents of our region, although some of them were living in other regions of Greece during the junta period. The balance between youth, adults, and the elderly was considered, as well as ensuring general gender balance. Additionally, the elderly participants had firsthand experience of the dictatorship period in Greece, while the adults were close family members (children) of those who lived through that time. However, no selection criteria were based on the political stance individuals might have held during the junta period, nor was any implication made regarding this when inviting participants.

The 54 letters were selected from one source, the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), which is the leading Greek archival institution for the history of political and social movements, and a member of the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the International Association of Labor History Institutions (IALHI). The Contemporary Social History Archives granted a permit to use the letters for the purposes of the research, with their guidance, respectful care of accurate referencing of each of the used letters. Our efforts to obtain additional letters from other sources such as museums and individuals were unsuccessful.

All participants supporting entities in this research were informed about the context, aims, current and future activities of the project, as well as the expected short- and long-term results. They were also made aware of the importance and intended use of the information gathered during the interviews and focus groups. Participants in both the interviews and focus groups were invited and informed that their participation was voluntary, and the setting of the venues was prepared to be as comfortable as possible according to the opportunities, to support the likely physical and emotional needs of participants.

Those participants who wished to share their data and appear in photos of the events were asked to carefully read and complete a Data Protection and Consent Form, which explained their rights and how their data would be used. The data collected from participants is handled in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) standards, with the utmost care and respect, and is accessible only to contracted employees and the researcher of the organization conducting the research, only for the purposes and needs of this research.

At the same time, participants who wished to take part in the research anonymously were also accepted. Some participants expressed discomfort about sharing their memories and opinions regarding the oppressive political regime publicly under their own name. However, they believed in the importance of the project and wanted to contribute, which is both understandable and greatly appreciated.

V. Data analysis

A. Interview analysis

The 10 semi-structured interviews revealed both consistencies and some contradictions in the obtained information, providing a variety of perspectives on the junta regime in Greece. There was diversity among the participants who were interviewed. For example, half of them were adults aged 50–65, while 5 others were elderly, aged 65, and had experienced the dictatorship period as young adults. Another aspect of diversity that should be noted is their personal or family involvement in the resistance. Only 2 participants disclosed being personally involved in the resistance movements in Greece; 1 of them was a member of the opposing (communist) party before and during the regime, and 1 participated in public speeches against the regime, but only while being exiled abroad. 6 other participants did not disclose or specifically stated that they were

affiliated with any resistance movements of the time. While 5 participants described their closest family and friends facing severe difficulties during the regime, 3 others stated that their family and friends did not experience any known hardships during that period.

When it came to accounts of life during the junta regime in Greece, there were several recurring themes mentioned by a strong majority of the interviewees. 7 participants mentioned living in fear, 7 others referred to the lack of general freedoms and oppression, and 7 participants reported instances of people being detained, imprisoned, and persecuted. Exile, violence, and torture were mentioned by 5 interviewees. 9 participants described limitations on movement and travel, while 5 referenced strict censorship of individuals and the press. Generally, the sociopolitical situation was implied to be unstable in 8 of the interviews, while half of the participants described the economic situation as challenging or very poor. 7 participants noted how residents struggled to maintain employment or experienced severe challenges at their place of employment. Uprisings or resistance movements, especially the uprising at the Athens Polytechnic University—a significant historical moment still marked annually with a nationwide remembrance day—were mentioned 8 times, with 6 interviews referencing this specific event. Few of the participants mentioned it in the context of personal participation in this historic event or resistance movements, while others referenced it more generally. Other repeated topics included descriptions of 5 participants' families facing difficulties and harsh conditions during the dictatorship, and 7 participants recalling the presence and actions of regime enforcers, such as police, soldiers, and security officers. Less recurring themes included some limitations to education or difficulties at school (mentioned by 3 participants), the existence of surveillance (mentioned by 3 participants), and secret access to foreign media for obtaining outside information (mentioned by 2 participants).

There were also contradictions and opposing perspectives among the interviews. For example, while the presence and harmful actions of regime enforcers were described in 6 of the interviews, 1 interviewee described the local police in a positive light, referring to a security officer in their village as "very democratic." A more controversial topic was the recognition of the regime's harm and the pursuit of justice after its fall. While 2 respondents stated that justice was generally served and that regime enforcers and leaders were imprisoned, 2 others argued that the justice and recognition were insufficient, and 1 respondent expressed the view that further justice or recognition seems not to be needed at all.

Responses to the question about support received during the regime stood out, as none of the participants mentioned receiving support from humanitarian or similar organizations, or even being aware of such presence at all. Only 3 interviewees stated that they received support from family and/or friends.

When asked whether the participants could compare the regime and related issues to the present day, they noted that it is generally not comparable. However, 6 respondents further disclosed that there are some evident similarities in a few areas. 2 participants stated that censorship still exists and that the media is not independent, while another

2 acknowledged these aspects as somewhat present. 4 participants argued that the justice system and rule of law are insufficient, citing issues with independence and unequal application. 2 respondents linked the dictatorship period to the present day due to ongoing human rights violations in Greece, while 3 linked it to current social inequalities and oppression. Lastly, 2 participants expressed concerns that the economic situation today is neither stable nor satisfactory for the majority. At the same time, 3 respondents noted that citizens today enjoy more freedoms, and 2 mentioned that the rule of law and participation in the European Union have made times more positive.

Regarding what participants would wish for the future or what they would like to share with the next generations, a strong consistency was found in the direct or implied promotion of democracy as the necessary political system by 7 participants. Other repeated wishes included encouraging the next generations to speak up and resist oppressive powers (mentioned by 3 participants), and not to repeat the mistakes of the past (mentioned by 4 participants).

It is evident that the interviews varied in depth and the level of active participation from the interviewees. Approximately half of the interviews yielded twice as much data as the other half and provided deep insights into specific situations and events. Additionally, while some interview recordings expressed deep emotions such as embarrassment, disgust, sadness, anger, and concern over the events discussed, a few interviewees did not noticeably express negative emotions or serious personal concern about the topic. There is evidence of those participants who were involved in resistance movements, whose families suffered because of the regime, and who recounted events of severe oppression, violence, persecution, censorship, economic struggles, and fear in society were generally more expressive and emotional during the interviews. This may suggest that each participant's narrative is shaped firstly by their own personal experiences and the experiences of their families or close communities during the regime. Overall, the links indicated in the data suggest that there is one general narrative of this period—namely, that the junta regime was a very difficult time for Greece. However, there are important nuances: while the dictatorship took away freedoms, some groups suffered in various ways under the regime, whereas others had a more stable and satisfactory experience.

The methodology of semi-structured interviews was sufficient for discourse analysis of the subject. It provided a variety of personal insights and unique recollections of historical events from individuals who experienced them firsthand or heard stories from close relatives and friends. The approach allowed for the identification of both similar and opposing narratives of history, aligning with the official recognition of the period and the counter-narratives that exist among the general population.

At the same time, there were several limitations and considerations regarding the information gathered through this semi-structured interview approach. Firstly, technical issues with recording affected 2 of the interviews, meaning that data from certain questions in those interviews was not obtained and therefore not included in the analysis. Secondly, the quality of the available equipment or the room's acoustics made some words inaudible. Moreover, 5 out of 10 interviewees chose to remain anonymous

or shared only their first name, expressing concern about being publicly associated with the information they shared. It was also evident that some participants felt pressured or self-limited in their responses, as some provided very brief answers, particularly 3 participants. Although the semi-structured approach allowed for more freedom in the topics discussed—resulting in a wider variety of information—this also meant that not all participants answered every suggested question, somewhat limiting the comparability of data across interviews. Finally, the data collected is based purely on personal memories and stories, which does not necessarily guarantee full accuracy.

In regards to the above analysis of the interviews, some quotes over various areas represented in this analysis are presented below, to visualize the resource of the data.

1) "The world… they didn't understand the level. The level was very low - the intellectual level, the educational level was very low. The economic situation was miserable for everyone, we can't say that they had a good standard of living and many didn't know, let's say, what exactly was happening because newspapers weren't circulating or even the radio was only playing what they [in power] wanted [us] to hear. From the radio, we only heard the news on the BBC and Deutsche Welle. In this situation, fear generally prevailed among most people. About how they should behave, what they should say.."
2) "Another thing I recall is school. Some teachers were staunch supporters of the regime, and the experience was terrible. The first thing they'd ask us at school was our father's name and occupation. There were social distinctions, you understand. I vividly remember my mother pinching my father to stop him from talking, fearing we'd "get in trouble."
3) "The first thing that comes to mind is that we couldn't talk, do interviews, talk politically, to express our opinion, to keep doing the "walks" we were doing. And before 67 at the university when we did many walks and gatherings. Those were the first things to be stopped."
4) "The dead of the Polytechnic uprising were the beginning of the end of the dictatorship."
5) "I felt fear. It took a long time to overcome my fears. Participating in the student elections that took place at my school, I felt strong when I signed the statement that I voted, and it was my first small act of resistance to the regime. I will not describe the following years of the dictatorship. In short, I will mention that people endured, did not speak, were afraid, and there were many who were persecuted, imprisoned, and brutally beaten. I am ashamed of what happened in my country. I am ashamed of what those who resisted suffered."
6) "I did not experience it, but I have heard stories. In the village, due to poverty, my family believes that the quality of life improved without many problems."
7) "Dictatorships are the worst thing that can exist in a country. It is regression, it is direction, it is manipulation, it is many negative things, all of them. It has nothing positive to offer."
8) "I was a civil servant. A teacher. And the dictatorship, because they were chasing me even before, when we had parliamentary democracy, I was being chased by the far-right-paramilitary. Or nationalists as they called them then. They were chasing me in their ways, but I resisted because we still had parliamentary

democracy. However, as soon as martial law was declared, they transferred me from the position I was serving to a distance of 100 km. … I went there compulsorily, you couldn't say I'm not going, because it was considered sabotage. I took up service there. This job was done in May 1967. As soon as the school year ended, a policeman came and told me: "I have a warrant to arrest you. To send you into exile." … I stayed in prison for 5 months. During the prison time, however, they put me on availability in the service, and I was getting 2/3 or half the money for that period. When the 6 months ended, they fired me permanently. I made an application to be recalled, it was rejected and I was left afterwards on the sidelines without work."

B. Focus group analysis

The three focus groups involved 29 participants in total – 8 elderly people aged 65+, 5 adults aged 50-65, 6 young adults aged 18-30, and 10 high school students aged below 18. Overall, it was observed that the elderly and adults had dominant voices during each of the focus groups, with 3 young adults and 1 high school student slightly engaged in the discussions, while the other young adults and youth remained as listeners of the discussions. Each of the focus groups, even though having a facilitator, general script and a common topic, took somewhat different natural directions. The main differences of the directions of each of the focus groups where the following:

1) The dominant people of the first focus group were 2 elderly people who each had the willingness and time to share their memories within fuller narratives of their personal and general population lives before, especially during, and after the dictatorship period. They both were part of the resistance then and are still currently interested/engaged in the sociopolitical situation of Greece. They shared various specific stories and harsh experiences of the people they knew personally and in general of the population, expressed a strong stance on the needed democratic values and their concerns.
2) The second focus group involved adults who were very young children at the time of the junta regime, and they had heard opposing experiences from their family members who were adults at that time. While some of their families experienced harsh situations, some of them did not experience situations that their families would have described as harsh difficulties and/or happening due to the dictatorship. Both stories of very harsh and beneficial experiences during the dictatorship were shared. Numerous concerns about nowadays socio-political situation in Greece were shared, as well as it was agreed that dictatorship approach should never be implemented again. This focus group was more engaging from both participating age groups.
3) The dominant participants of the last focus group were the 6 elderly who lived through that period but were not part of the resistance. In comparison to the previous 2 focus groups, in this only a few stories or claims about difficulties for their families were brought up because they were conforming to the regime for their protection, even their general knowledge of the harsh situation for resisting

populations was acknowledged. Even though the period was not claimed to be something that was absolutely positive and should ever be repeated, many benefits of the dictatorship time were described by all, and some concerns regarding the current democratic system were brought up.

The following amounts of similar statements and patterns among participants should be mostly considered regarding the 13 most actively engaged participants - the 8 elderly and 5 adults who shared personal and family's accounts of the events.

Only 2 of the elderly were personally part of the resistance during the junta period in Greece, however, there were many commonalities shared among the most active focus group participants. 6 of them shared their knowledge about the resistance movements and uprisings, while some other implied that they were aware of those. 7 of the participants mentioned police/security guards/military officers in their stories of daily life, 11 of them described the lack of free speech personally and as media or artist during those times, 5 shared specific knowledge on the travel/movement restrictions, 4 shared and even more implied of surveillance being part of the daily lives of those times, as well as everyone implied or clearly expressed the general oppression and lack of some freedoms. At the same time, 8 of the respondents stated that their closest family members did not experience any serious hardships related to the rule of junta, and 9 people described that in their family villages the situation was stable and even beneficial. This was attributed to the simple farmer's life with often pre-existing poverty, while the junta regime's improvements of the infrastructure brought some developments and benefits to the villagers, such as, built roads, electricity, build sports stadiums and toilets. However, their knowledge of the harsh, violent, and strongly oppressive situations of the regime in the bigger cities was generally known.

Furthermore, 6 of the actively engaged participants shared stories about how people were detained and imprisoned during those times, including for being part of the resistance, for only personally having different beliefs than the ones of the regime, or for no apparent reason. 5 people described instances of the regime exiling people for being involved in the resistance, and 5 shared explicit stories of violence and torture, including towards women and children. 6 of the adults and elderly described the limited access to qualitative education and other issues at schools, such as, violent treatment from their teachers that were the regime supporters. Others less repetitive topics were the general instability, fear, harsh economic situation, severe difficulties at place of employment, that gatherings were not allowed, each of these being brought up 4 times during the conversations.

A commonality that was discussed rather extensively in the 2 first focus groups were regarding the fact that most young people are not aware of many of the details and events that happened during the regime. 1 elderly, 4 adults, 2 young adults, and 1 youth commented on and some elaborated deeply on the fact that the education of history in Greek schools lack some important areas of focus that must be transferred to the next generations, as well as that many family members who experienced the hardships of the regime are often not open to share detailed stories with their children and grandchildren. As possible reasons for not transferring details regarding this historic

event to the next generation could be linked to wanting forget the negative and harsh life, wanting to move on, not wanting to sadden their younger family members, according to the adult and elderly responders.

When we look at the participants' stance on nowadays, they suggest that generally there are not many similarities between nowadays and those times, while some remaining at some level. Almost everyone (10) explicitly agreed that people now enjoy more freedoms, especially the freedom of speech. However, 5 of the participants also noted that media censorship and propaganda still exist nowadays. Mainly 4 people engaged in a lengthy conversation about the power of information both back in the day and nowadays, comparing it's value, how it is shared and used, often being a dangerous tool. When it comes to the negative aspects of today that were on a much lower level during the dictatorship, people mentioned social issues such as deviance (lack of control, harm, misuse of democracy) among the citizens. The same participants and a few more (5) agreed that nowadays the quality and advancement of infrastructure, as well as misuse of public funds, is lower in comparison to the dictatorship times, one of them bringing up the recent national tragedy of Tempi as an example. Regarding nowadays, 2 of the participants shared an opinion that human rights are being violated in nowadays society, too.

When it comes to the participants' views on the future, they agreed that democracy is the way to go, and that that kind of history should not be repeated. Even those participants who agreed that the dictatorship brought benefits to their regions and families, stated that these benefits can't outweigh the loss of freedoms that dictatorship encompassed. 6 of the participants said that, however, democracy and freedoms should have some limits, such as, the freedom of speech can go as far as it does not become harmful. Another 6 participants were very engaged into the need to improve school education system regarding history – the information and experiences of those who lived through dictatorship should not be forgotten by the next generations, so that young people can learn and be attentive.

Generally, the most expressive participants had built their narratives of that historic period around themselves and their personal experiences, then the memories and stories of their closest family members. Secondly, people referred to experiences of other people in their communities and of things they have heard externally (not from their families). It was noticeable that there were participants who based their narrative mostly on personal/ close family members' experiences and stories, and then there were participants who spoke of the period based on their understanding regarding the external national experience of that period, allowing a variety of experiences to be voiced.

Finally, it was typical that participants would turn to discuss about nowadays socio-political situation and the future in relation to their conclusions and reflections. Only few of the participants elaborated on the introduction of the topic in regards to the previous political situation in the country leading to the start of the junta regime.

During the focus groups, also some patterns of contradictions were identified. While, as mentioned above, 9 of the adult and elderly participants shared that life in their parent's

and grandparent's villages was mostly stable and developing, as well as 8 of the participants said their families did not experience any harsh difficulties due to the regime, on the other hand 4 others described severe difficulties their families had to endure, 3 stated and few more implied that and the general state of the country was unstable, and 4 described how miserable was the economic state of the most of the population. While several expressed and implied that people lived in fear during that time, some others said that people "had a happy life if they did not speak up". Some comments from participants might provide a possible explanation of these contradictory perspectives. For example, 2 of the participants described that there were already infrastructure plans in place to bring development to the rural areas, however, since there was general limited access to information and lack of the information around that (described by several participants), the fact that they were implemented during the regime might have left this development of their areas as a significant positive result of the regime in memories of many people in this rural region.

While the general narrative of focus group participants is based on the view that the dictatorship period was problematic and should not be repeated, the different perspectives and experiences each participant includes in their own narrative reveal two nuanced variations: some communities appreciated developments in infrastructure and perceived peace due to not resisting, while others—individuals, communities, and organizations—experienced harsh suffering under the junta regime (which was known and at least generally acknowledged by all participants).

Benefits of the focus group method used for gaining data for this research are wide. Due to the selection of participants of various backgrounds, we could observe diverse perspectives and numerous stories. The focus groups allowed some space, even though limited, for an intergenerational dialogue, for a group reflection on the historic period and its consequences on our society, as well as it could be observed how groups form their common narratives, while learning from each other's perspectives and stories. In addition, several of the participants referred to well-known examples of art that reflect the period of time, which provided an additional source of information regarding that period.

There were also some limitations to this method, such as, the information gap on the subject was evident, often there was low exchange between the participants of different generations, it is possible that some participants did not share information to the extent they would have liked to due to discomfort of expressing their stance very openly, while 15 of the participants remained anonymous stating the reason for not wanting to be publicly associated with sharing information and political stance on this period of the history.

In regards to the above analysis of the focus groups, some quotes over various areas represented in this analysis are included below, to visualize the resource of the data.

From Focus group 1:

1) Regarding personal participation in the resistance: "In 1973, I went to Athens for work and participated in the Polytechnic events. When people gathered at the

Polytechnic, it was clear that social unrest was brewing. I was there for five days during the events, inside the Polytechnic on Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday, when the gates closed, I stayed outside. I experienced the events this way."

2) Regarding not passing the information of the junta period to the next generations: "What our generation went through and how we pass it on to you seems lacking. It appears our generation didn't pass many things on to the next one—to our children, that is. … terrible things happened. People want to forget them. Our generation didn't pass this down to the second generation as a whole—only to a small subset of people. I don't know what my child will pass on to their children. So I find it understandable that you might not know (addressing the participating children). However, schools should describe these events to some extent."
3) Regarding violence: "Those who were arrested suffered terribly. Women especially endured horrific experiences, and men as well. If you read Korovesis' book, you'll understand. Women, apart from torture, also endured sexually related abuses. I knew of some such cases."
4) Regarding nowadays and democracy: "Nowadays, being pushed into a demonstration can still happen, but you won't face torture afterward. The real issue is freedom of speech—how freely you can speak about those in power, those breaking the law, or those who believe they are above it. The law is for others, and I'll do what I want. If such things happen, when we perceive them, we must have the freedom to speak and write about them without fear and demand a response to what we express. That's part of democracy."

From Focus group 2:

1) Regarding unreasonable persecution: "My father had problems with the police, for ridiculous reasons, ridiculous … he had a store and once a policeman asked him for a glass of water from the outside. My father told him, "Come inside and drink." The cop came in, grabbed him and said, "You know I can kill you and not answer to anyone." My father got up and they took him in."
2) Regarding police violence against children: "I remember the atrocious behaviors, let's say, of the police and such towards the children. They were grabbing them by the hair, pulling them, kicking them."
3) Regarding peaceful life and infrastructure benefits for villages: "…for the villagers, for a peaceful family like ours, which was then a farming family, it was excellent. Why? Because they [the regime] built them a road, a toilet, a cafe and a stadium. They were missing those. … And everyone in the village was as if the Junta didn't exist, essentially. Outside the village, in the city there was the issue. …because the infrastructure in the village improved, so their life improved as well, and because the village policeman happened to be, probably, a resistance fighter, I don't know, the friends of the peaceful, they had no problem in the village. That is, they saw an improvement in their life. You understand, it's very strange."
4) Regarding violence in schools: "I have gone home with my back marked, with welts, with the ruler, with bruises from the teacher. Because the years were... It

was terrifying to go to school, what can I tell you now, like that. Terrifying! Nightmare! Beating! Merciless!" … -"I had this issue at school too. Not to that extent, but we were getting regular slaps in line. Slaps with the ruler. And with the ruler on our hands."

5) Regarding poverty: "-In Serres, where my grandparents grew up, who were then, the only thing they had to say about the junta, was not the junta as a junta. It was the poverty that existed and circulated, at least in the city. There was very great poverty. But that had nothing to do with the junta. ... -No guys, there was poverty. There was terrible poverty and they didn't understand. That is, their daily problems were so many in that they didn't have a house, that they lived in a shack." … "I remember what we had in the house back then and what we have today. You can't imagine it. I remember six chairs, a table, we didn't have a refrigerator at first, a closet, beds and trunks. Nothing else in the house."
6) Regarding information of the period not being passed down to the next generations: "… as an idea, I've heard these things. Not with so much detail, but roughly. Now, specific stories from my parents or grandparents, I don't remember. My grandparents died young, my parents haven't discussed the past much, so I can't help much. But in school, at least, it's a topic that isn't discussed much. That is, just at the end of the year, two pages that the book has, I remember they skipped it because it was at the end, they didn't include it in the curriculum. It's something that isn't discussed much."
7) Regarding the power of information: "…the war of information is something that has also shaped generations. So, what was the Junta looking for? Information. Once upon a time, the same war was being waged for a piece of information and the one who had information was rich. Just like that, because you had information. Now information is not what makes you rich or powerful. … - Here, the biggest companies and those that... -Yes, they are essentially continuing to look for information. -These are also the companies that you can't easily do something to. … -And scandals have happened, with information coming out about how much Facebook has influenced its subscribers to go in a certain direction."
8) Regarding violence among citizens, resistance: "The revolutionists came to burn his [my grandfather's] house down, because his brother was a nationalist. A great nationalist. And because his brother's name was on their list, the revolutionists came up, lit a fire inside the house and suddenly my grandmother was calling his [my grandfather's] name and shouting to him: "Themistokli, what are they marking here?" And one of them [a revolutionist] said: "Folks, she is calling him Themistokli, maybe he is one of ours? Guys! Put the fire out, he is one of ours! Guys, it's a mistake!""

From focus group 3:

1) Regarding censorship: "There was no way to open your mouth and say something, because the night would fall on you, but you wouldn't be able to see the dawn. -Even in the letters from soldiers… -They were censored. -Censored, yes. They would erase things. They opened them, erased things, because I had a cousin at the time, and he would send me letters, and some things were erased."

2) Regarding persecutions/exile: “If you went against it, you know what would happen. -You would go to the island.”
3) Regarding use of public funds for benefits of infrastructure in villages: -The only good thing about dictatorships is that some works are done that would never be done otherwise. -And they didn't all steal either. … “There were no abuses of public money, and that's why some works were done, which are done with democracy, but they are done at a very slow pace…” … “The only thing I absolutely agree with is that then works were done, and even correct works. As many roads as were built, as many works as were done were correct. It was… above all. … [now] we're going to hell. And what happened with Tempi and with the bridges that fall and the roads…”
4) Regarding persecutions: “-To have a good time, you had to keep your mouth shut. -Most did, yes, but there were also few who brought it out and they [police] took them and put them in [prisons]. They locked them in. -There was Makronisos, there was Agios Stratis, there was outside of Volos – between … and Volos – there is a camp, which then was full [of prisoners]. … -Had they sent anyone from Ioannina to some island? -Many. Really many. From everywhere. And they weren't communists, they were just democratic people. They just might have let a word slip. And even if they didn't let a word slip, when [for example] I could have accused anyone simply because I wanted to accuse them, they [police] took them straight to the police station.”

C. Letters analysis

A total of 54 historical letters were selected for this analysis and categorized into three types: 42 letters exchanged between two individuals, 8 letters exchanged between an individual and an organization or institution, and 4 letters that were statements addressed to a range of organizations, institutions, parties, etc., with the aim of reaching a wider audience. The analyzed letters were written between April 28, 1967, and June 29, 1974. However, a few letters did not have a specific date, though they were officially identified as having been sent during the dictatorship period.

The purposes of the letters were somewhat correlated with their type. All four letters addressed to broader audiences aimed to disseminate information about the injustices and struggles the senders were experiencing under the regime. The eight letters exchanged between individuals and organizations or institutions were solely related to professional collaboration, information or goods exchange. The 42 letters exchanged between two individuals served two main purposes- sometimes both in the same letter. Of these, 18 were primarily personal or friendly in nature, while 24 focused mainly on professional collaboration, information sharing, or the exchange of goods. Out of all letters, in 6 it was indicated that goods - such as documents or money - were enclosed.

12 correspondents appeared as receivers or senders of the letters more than one time, with 6 of them being involved in more than 2 correspondences. The correspondents that were involved in more than 2 exchanges of the analyzed letters are:

1) Giorgios Mylonas (1919 - 1998) was a high rank politician (Deputy Minister, in the Centre Union political party, member for the parliament representing Ioannina), exiled in island Amorgos during the dictatorship and escaped to abroad. After the dictatorship he returned and was politically active in Greece, as well as founder of the University of Ioannina. Recipient of 23 letters, sender of 2.
2) Dimitris Rokkos (? - 2022) was a professor and a distinguished persona in academia, fired during the dictatorship regime. Sender of 13 letters.
3) Sara Skourtelli, who's area of work could not be officially confirmed. Recipient of 7 letters.
4) Stratis Someritis (1901 - 1978) was a lawyer, journalist, publisher and politically involved in the socialist movements, member of resistance and political organisations such as the EAM (National Liberation Front), ELD (Union of Peoples' Democracy) and the Greek Human Rights Advocacy Group. Recipient of 6 letters.
5) Petros Dimitrakopoulos, who's area of work could not be officially confirmed. Sender of 4 letters.
6) Nikos Karakitsos, who's area of work could not be officially confirmed. Sender of 2 letters, recipient of 1 letter.

Correspondents that were involved in 2 exchanges of the analyzed letters are:

1) Virginia Tsouderou (1924 - 2018) was an economist and politician who opposed the junta as secretary-general of EMEP (Society for the Study of Greek Problems).
2) Spyridon Granitsas was a Director of Information Center at the United Nations.
3) Nikos Argiropoulos (1935 - 2013) was a high rank politician and a lawyer.
4) Mikis Theodorakis (1925 - 2021) was a music composer and politician, involved in several communist/ resistance parties and movements, censored and for periods also imprisoned during the dictatorship.
5) Aris Fakinos (1935 – 1998) was a professor, a known writer and political journalist.
6) Phaidon Vegleris (1903 – 1998) was a lawyer and professor, exiled and imprisoned for periods during the dictatorship.

Apart from other correspondents that appeared in the analyzed letters only once, there were 15 unknown senders or receivers of the letters, in addition to 3 letters that were written by/ represented a large group of people.

Throughout the letters, two main recurring themes emerged most frequently: family and friends (in 11 letters), and political affairs and collaboration (in 27 letters). Most of the letters included a variety of themes and subjects, with the majority focusing on plans to meet with friends or family members, involvement in resistance movements, or work related to those movements. They also referenced participation in meetings, congresses, seminars, committees, and exhibitions—mostly of a political nature. Many letters discussed reading or listening to news about events and the political situation in Greece, as well as topics such as studies, writing, artistic activities, travel or relocation plans, and work on awareness-raising and communication materials. Several letters also

touched on themes related to non-political work or employment, correspondence and communication issues, and travel restrictions.

More specifically, regarding accounts of and the quality of daily life in Greece or of Greek people, nine recurring areas were mentioned or described throughout the letters. The most frequently highlighted was the description or explicit statement of the lack of democracy in Greece, found in 26 letters. Two other areas that were mentioned in many letters and deserve emphasis are: the persecution and exile of those opposing the regime (in 14 letters), and the disagreements and divisions among politically active individuals, organizations, and parties involved in resistance movements (in 10 letters). Other, less frequently mentioned aspects of life during that period included: difficulties in communication (in 6 letters), censorship and/or propaganda (in 5 letters), travel restrictions (in 5 letters), employment limitations or unemployment (in 5 letters), restrictions affecting educators or access to education (in 4 letters), and, finally, economic challenges (in 4 letters).

Furthermore, many emotions were either explicitly expressed or clearly implied throughout the letters, with several recurring frequently. Emotions related to sadness—including sorrow, pessimism, despair, hopelessness, and disappointment—were mentioned 17 times. Frustration-related emotions—such as distress, fear, anxiety, concern, and struggle—were described 15 times, which is the same number of times hope was mentioned. More positive emotions, such as appreciation, appeared 6 times, while happiness-related emotions—including joy and optimism—were mentioned 4 times.

As the majority of the letters discussed events, resistance movements, and areas connected to the resistance, many historical accounts were identified within them. Several letters referenced events that are also recognized historical moments and involved widely known figures associated with the resistance. In one letter addressed to George Mylonas—a politician who held various roles, including Deputy Minister and parliamentary representative, and who was imprisoned during the dictatorship—his escape was mentioned and celebrated by his political collaborator and friend, Dimitris Rokkos. Based on the date of the letter and corroborating historical accounts, this was a reference to Mylonas's escape from exile on the island of Amorgos.

Another letter described the funeral of an unnamed important figure, attended by 30,000 citizens. This event was an act of resistance, as public gatherings of that size were not permitted during the dictatorship. Based on other historical records, it is possible that the letter refers to the funeral of Georgios Papandreou, a prominent liberal politician and multiple-time Prime Minister of Greece. His party was expected to win the elections that were cancelled by the military coup just one month before they were scheduled. His funeral in 1968 is known to have turned into a mass protest against the regime, with an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 people in attendance. However, since the letter does not specify the year it was written, it is also possible that it refers to the funeral of Giorgos Seferis—a civil servant and Nobel Prize-winning poet who publicly condemned the regime. His funeral in 1971 likewise became a large protest against the

junta. Both the letter and historical sources mention that censored songs by Mikis Theodorakis were sung during the funerals as a form of resistance.

Mikis Theodorakis, a globally recognized composer (best known for "Zorba's Dance" and other nationally and internationally acclaimed works), was also the sender of two letters included in this analysis. In his letters, he reflects on the regime's conditions for the Greek population, the resistance movements, and his own imprisonment in Averoff prison. His songs were banned, and he was imprisoned for a period during the dictatorship due to his active involvement in resistance-related political parties and organizations.

A different historical movement of resistance, following Konstantinos Karamanlis, was mentioned in one of the letters. Karamanlis was a well-known politician—Prime Minister, President of Greece, and founder of the conservative democratic party Nea Dimokratia, which led Greece immediately after the fall of the dictatorship regime. In a different letter, another notable politician involved in resistance movements, Ioannis (Giagos) Pesmazoglou, was mentioned. He was imprisoned and exiled for periods during the dictatorship, and his speech against the regime on the sixth anniversary of its rise to power was described in the letter. A further reference was made to the director of the left-leaning newspaper Avgi – Manolis Glezos, in a letter that described plans to reissue the newspaper abroad in detail. Finally, in relation to notable figures connected to the resistance, one of the letters—written by the previously mentioned Dimitris Rokkos—contained a detailed description of the activities of his brother, Kyriakos Rokkos, a well-known artist and political cartoonist.

Other confirmed historical references to resistance movement events and organizations mentioned in the letters included the existence of the Democratic Defense organization, the National Resistance Council, KKE and KKE Interior (communist parties), and the 1968 referendum on the junta regime's constitution. Among more of the significant historical accounts, there were mentions and descriptions of several prisons that held political prisoners or exiles during the junta regime. Three of the letters were sent by groups of prisoners and exiles from three different prisons—Leros, Gyaros, and Aegina.

The letter from the prisoners of Leros (which also served as an inhumane asylum for people with physical and mental disabilities) was included in the analysis due to its significance; however, it could not be fully analyzed due to its poor quality and difficult handwriting. Nevertheless, important keywords were identified that indicated their condition and appeal. The situation of political prisoners in Aegina was described in detail in their letter, which also referenced previous mass releases of political prisoners and exiles. As noted in the letter—and confirmed by external sources—foreign resistance and humanitarian organizations, such as Amnesty International, provided support. For instance, Amnesty issued an appeal for the release of political prisoners from Aegina on the fifth anniversary of the regime. Meanwhile, prisoners and exiles from Gyaros emotionally described the inhumane and dangerous living conditions, including already publicly known facts about the prison predating the dictatorship (for example, prisoners had to live in tents and were forced to build the prison themselves, starting in 1948). According to the letter, many exiled individuals still lived in tents on

Gyaros, while the prison building itself was uninhabitable during the winter months, and their living conditions were life-threatening.

In addition to the historical accounts described above, there were further references to the activities of various organizations. One letter included a detailed description of the procedures surrounding the relocation of a persecuted child, a case managed by the Red Cross. The organization was involved in supporting such cases and also provided medical relief during resistance events of that period. In two letters, the women's movement was mentioned. Notably, one of them described in detail their activities for International Women's Day in 1968, including planned events such as a speech in support of imprisoned women. Finally, there were mentions of the Central Committee (of a political party or organization), the Association of Foreign Correspondents—which was expected to host a Year of Europe event to discuss the political situation in Greece—as well as resistance-themed media. These included the radio program Voice of Truth and the newspapers Nea Ellada and New Dimokratia. However, these references could not be fully verified through other historical sources during the analysis.

The letters also included some metaphors. For example, in two letters, it was indicated that there are people of Greece who are passively waiting for a savior regarding the situation the country was in, as understood from the phrases "They [politicians] are waiting for a Mesiah" and "The thinkers are naturally concerned; others await help from above." In two other letters, the phrases "American-backed dictators" and "Military marriage" were used. In the second case, the phrase appeared in a sentence directly following a description of NATO and the USA as the imperial powers imposing dictatorship on the Greek people. This aligns with some external historical facts and sources that refer to the involvement of foreign powers in Greek politics and the military. In addition to these metaphors, a quote from a letter regarding the re-issue of the censored newspaper Avgi can be interpreted as a metaphor for accountable information being a tool to combat oppressive powers: "the difficulties are enormous… However, with everyone's effort, we believe that we will overcome them by publishing a newspaper that will become a weapon in the hands of every Greek patriot and democrat."

The main narrative found while analyzing the letters is the following: the dictatorship period in Greece was a time of suffering, including lack of freedoms, resistance of oppression, political imprisonments and exiles, and violence, among others.

This methodology for data gathering expanded the range of perspectives and events from that period that could be identified and used for the research, thanks to the diversity in types and themes of the letters. Additionally, cases where letters were exchanged between two respondents over a long period provided more in-depth accounts of their perspectives, personal circumstances, and the development of events. Letters exchanged between individuals and organizations or institutions offered insights into how these entities were aware of the situation in Greece and the support they were providing. Furthermore, public or widely addressed letters and statements from prisoners and exiles provided information about their conditions and the persecution they faced.

However, the use of these historical letters comes with limitations. Notably, there is the potential for intentionally restricted, edited, or encrypted information due to censorship and the risk of prosecution faced by opponents of the regime. For example, some letters contain grammatical errors made by a typewriter, with small handwritten edits over the typed text. These errors may have been either accidental or deliberate, possibly intended to convey hidden messages. Another example involves a letter in which the sender's name appears in a feminine form, even though the sender is now known to be male. Such tactics were strategically used at the time, as they could help the sender avoid direct identification in the event of a search or investigation. These examples, along with other historical accounts, suggest the possibility that some of the analyzed letters may contain meanings that are not immediately understood in this analysis.

Finally, this selection of letters does not fully represent all the narratives and voices from that period for several reasons. Many letters from the researched period have deteriorated, been lost, or destroyed—either intentionally or accidentally—over time. Some of the letters were not fully analyzed due to issues with their quality and handwriting. Moreover, many people, particularly the most marginalized and oppressed, had little or no opportunity to exchange letters or express themselves through writing during the junta regime. Although the 54 letters analyzed provide a substantial amount of data, it should be acknowledged that many more letters exist, including those that are difficult to read and were therefore excluded from this analysis.

Some quotes from the letters, to visualize the findings:

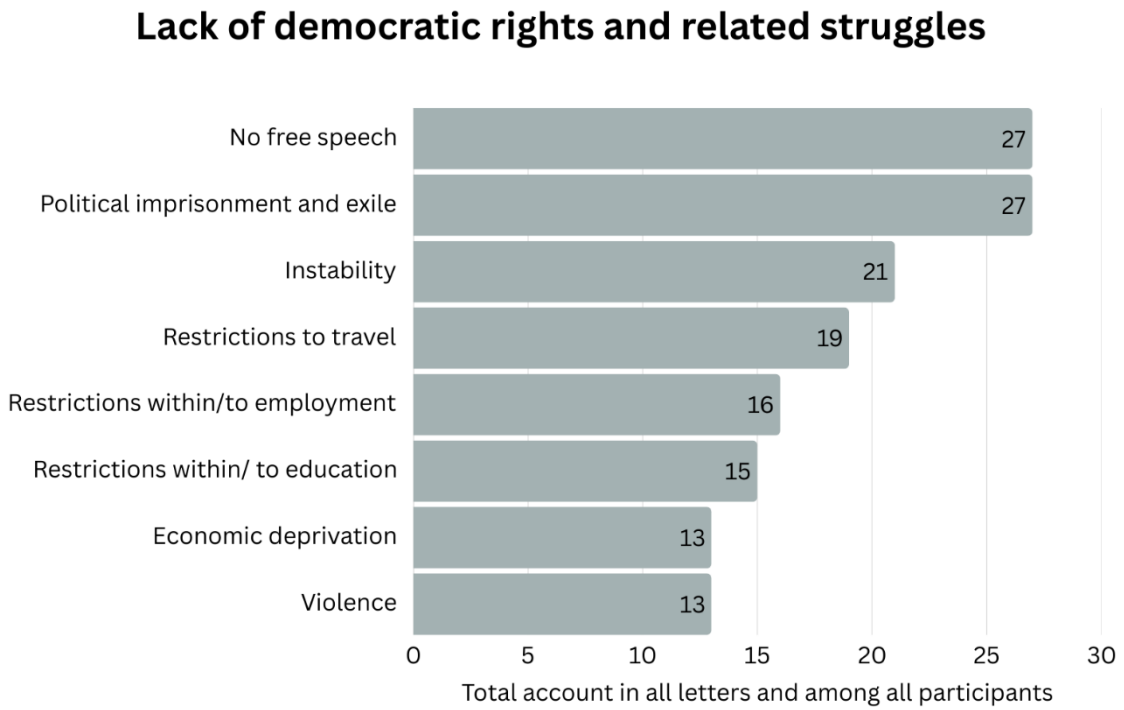
1) From the message from political prisoners in Gyaros, 1967: “Our lives on Gyaros are in danger. […] And our already rough life will become martyrdom if winter arrives. Then the rain and unbearable cold will soak the tents, while the unheated buildings will become refrigerator cells. […] Here we are—thousands of political prisoners—at the mercy of the most merciless nature and the will of our captors. In a hell without categories, under various pressures, blackmail, and coercion measures, we exchange our proud ideas and our devotion to the People and Democracy for a dishonored freedom. We extend greetings to humanity. And we connect our gratitude for what is done in favor of the true face of our homeland with the appeal to abolish Gyaros. Let all political prisoners be freed.”
2) From the letter of Dimitris Rokkos to Georgios Mylonas: “Greetings from sorrowful Athens. Today we buried the unforgettable spiritual leader and the free man. Over thirty thousand people, overwhelmed by profound grief, accompanied the poet and breathed freely for a moment, feeling the strength of their unity and expressing their unquenchable love for Freedom and Democracy.”
3) From the letter from Konstantina Lambrinou to Sarra Skourtelli, 1968: “I am sending you 2 addresses to send money every month. […] You should find people who will contribute 3-5 marks extra each month for the families of prisoners; this can be done among the members, but also from friends who are close to us. […] You should have a notebook to record what each person gives you to avoid confusion. I hope the work goes well. Write to me if you have any questions and occasionally let me know how the women are doing and what is happening with all the women's work.”

4) From the letter of Filippos Kostomitsopoulos to Georgios Mylonas, 1969: "The anti-dictatorship material for the exhibition will be sent to Sweden as soon as possible. […] How many representatives can we send based on our strength? (We are now with a few refugees, a bit more than 20). […] The obvious goal is to create a union of students in socialist countries (as I judge things). […] We are five on the Board of Administrators, all new since January. There is some noticeable activity, although no miracles have happened."
5) From the letter from Mikis Theodorakis to the International Movement of Youth and Children, 1967: "I heard today from the "Voice of Truth" your message, which deeply moved me. On behalf of all Greek patriots who are fighting for the honor and freedom of the Greek people, I send you our warmest thanks for your support in our struggle. The Patriotic Front is actively organizing the democratic resistance of the people against the dictatorship everywhere. […] Particularly, the Greek youth, continuers of our national resistance, are fighting on the front lines."
6) From the letter from Nikos Karakitsos, Democratic Defence, 1973: "Our mutual friend from Sweden informed me of your intention and willingness to work with us. I send you our greetings and thanks. Later, depending on your work and performance, we will connect you with others of ours in Greece. Good luck! Have faith. We will win in the end."

D. Integration and triangulation of data

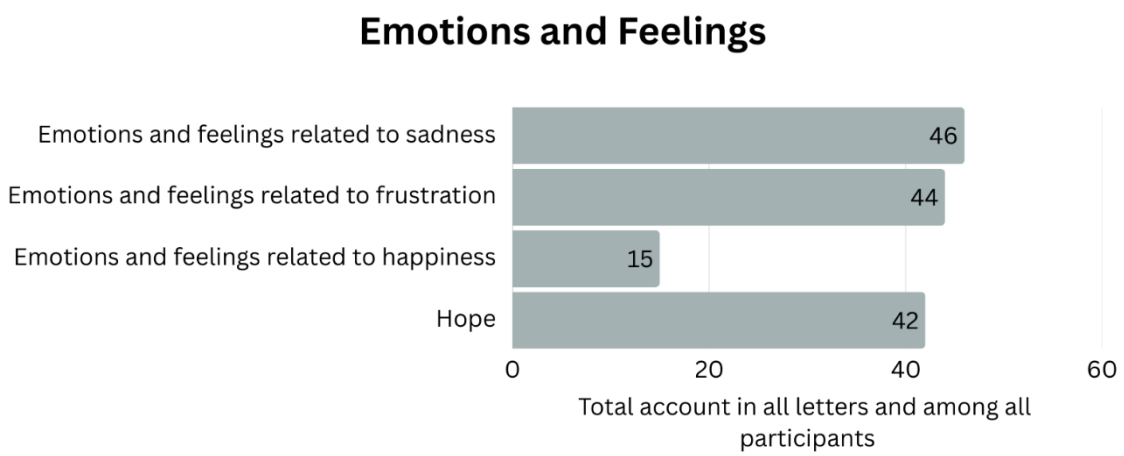
The data gathered from interviews, focus groups, and historic letters used in this research was thoroughly compared, contrasted, and the patterns were categorized. In order to draw links between convergences and divergences among the narratives, the data was categorized in these 3 following areas: lack of democratic rights and suffering, historic accounts, and emotions and feelings.

Within the area of lacking democratic rights, there were strong links of data among all 3 methodologies. Firstly, the lack of democracy and basic democratic rights were acknowledged in all interviews, all focus groups, and the majority of the historic letters (in 26 letters) it was explicitly stated or described. Specific patterns were evident, with these being the most repeated areas: no free speech (censorship or self-censorship) (27), imprisonments and exiles of opposers of the regime (27), general instability (21), restricted travel (19), restrictions at place of employment or to employment (16), restrictions to qualitative education, at the place of education, or to educate (15), economic deprivation or poverty (13), and violence (13). It should be noted, that the amount of mentions and descriptions of these struggles were accounted among 54 letters, 10 interviewed people, and 29 focus group participants of which only 13 were actively sharing information about the dictatorship period.

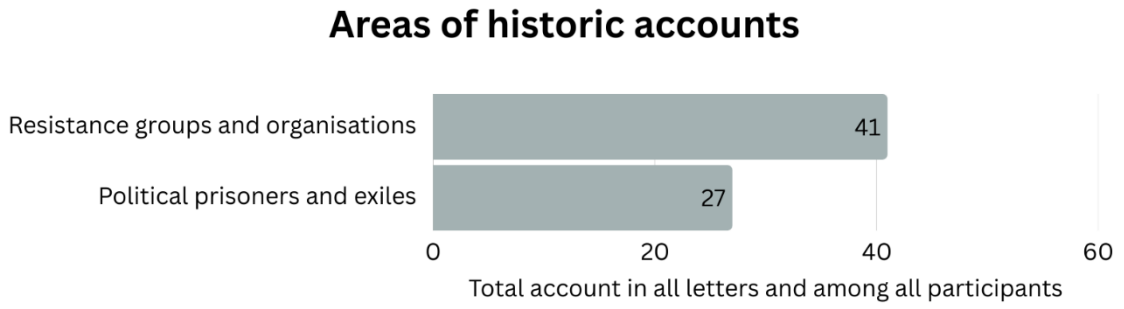


Furthermore, emotions and feelings stated or implied in the letters and among participants of interviews and focus groups were accounted. There were diverse feelings and emotions mentioned and strongly implied, and in order provide some categorization and visualization of these findings, the feelings and emotions were categorized in 3 areas: repeated emotions related to happiness and like (happiness, optimism, and joy), to sadness and dislike (sadness, sorrow, disappointment, pessimism, despair, hopelessness), and related to frustration and anxiety (frustration, anxiety, fear, distress, strong concerns, emotional struggle). At the same time, hopefulness was an emotion that stood out on its own, as being the most repeated and expressed.

While viewing the chart, it should be noted, that the number of mentions and descriptions of these struggles were accounted among 54 letters, 10 interviewed people, and 29 focus group participants of which only 13 were actively sharing information about the dictatorship period. Regarding the focus group participants, while majority of all 29 expressed hopes for future and not repeated similar history, only 13 were actively involved throughout the whole discussion and expressed other types of emotions regarding the dictatorship period. As well, it must be underlined that interpretation and accounting of implied feelings and emotions cannot be absolutely accurate in this research, due to the research conditions, therefore only approximate numbers can be provided. Finally, there was a specific area of the feelings related to happiness that should be further explained in order to provide a clear picture. 9 of the 15 accounts were of like towards the infrastructure developments done during the junta regime, and towards the regime itself. Similarly as other accounts of happiness optimism in other types of data, these emotions were not regarded towards the regime itself but rather to the success of opposition and personal events.



Regarding historic accounts, the 2 main areas present across all data were events and facts regarding resistance groups and organisations (in 28 letters, 6+ in focus groups, and in 7 interviews), and political imprisonments and exiles (in 14 letters, 6 in focus groups, and in 7 interviews). Other historical subjects mentioned only few times but across several or all data gathering methodologies, were the following: infrastructure development in villages, USA support to the dictatorship, political art such as comixes and songs.



Regarding contrasts among the data, there were 2 areas: the development of infrastructure in rural villages, and general stability of daily life during the dictatorship. While the development of infrastructure was praised widely in one of the focus groups and acknowledged by some on another focus group, there were also counter explanations of this positive matter – in one of the focus groups it was explained that those plans were already in place before the regime started, and in 1 letter it was stated that the regime implements infrastructure developments in order to satisfy citizens for their own benefit of lessened resistance. The stability versus instability perspectives came from accounts of different stances. While those living in small villages where people lived not resisting and expressing themselves, as well as those who self-censured themselves to keep our or persecutions, described their and their families' experiences as relatively peaceful and satisfactory. Meanwhile, those involved in resistance movements, politics, and simply speaking their mind, experienced oppression, violence, persecution, and were well aware of the political instability.

Additionally, there was 1 main theme often repeated across all accounts – friends and family (main theme in 11 letters, among 12 focus group participants, and 10 interview participants). Both in focus groups and interviews, respondents did not only talk about their own experience but mostly talked about the situations that their family and friends experienced, often this approach being the first and overpowering own's personal experience, if any, in their narrative. As well in the letters, possibly due to distance and communication conditions during that time period, apart from friends and family being as one of the main subjects of 11 letters, information regarding friends and family and/or regards to friends and family were exchanged between correspondents in strong majority of letters, implying the importance of friends and family in their lives, often no matter the main subject of the letter.

To finalize the cross analysis, we can build a summary of the general narrative found during this research: the dictatorship or junta regime in Greece (1967-1974) was highly oppressive period that deprived people from basic human rights. While the majority of the data demonstrates great suffering (political imprisonments and exiles, restrictions to free speech, to travel, and within education and employment, violence, and others) and strong negative feelings (sadness, frustration, despair, and others), some part of the narrative is also the satisfaction of infrastructure development and perceived peace of some communities (due to not resisting the regime).

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

The data collected from interviews, focus groups, and historic letters has given us a deeper look into the experiences of people living under the junta regime in Greece (1967-1974). Through careful comparison and analysis of the patterns across these different sources, we were able to draw out key areas of focus: the lack of democratic rights and the suffering caused by it, historical accounts, and the emotions and feelings expressed by the participants.

When it comes to the lack of democratic rights, all three data sources consistently pointed to the regime's oppressive nature. The themes of censorship, imprisonment, exile, violence, and general instability were mentioned again and again. This paints a clear picture of just how much these basic freedoms were stripped away. Many participants spoke of the hardship they and others faced, including imprisonment due to political beliefs, economic struggles, restrictions on education, and limitations on travel. The recurring mentions of these themes across letters, interviews, and focus groups clearly demonstrate the widespread suffering under the regime.

Emotions and feelings played a big role in how people remembered and represented this period, and the emotional responses were varied. We could see three main emotional categories: happiness, sadness, and frustration/anxiety. Hopefulness as an individual feeling came up most often, which suggests that, despite the suffering, people were looking, and still look toward a better future. On the other hand, emotions like

sadness, sorrow, frustration, and even despair were commonly expressed. For many, these emotions were tied to the oppressive actions of the junta, particularly the violence and persecution of resistance movements. However, some participants did mention feeling positive emotions, which were tied more to personal achievements or the development of their local communities rather than any praise for the regime itself. This highlights the complexity of the emotional and narrative landscape during this time—while many were suffering, others could still find small sources of personal or community pride, and is also linked to the divide between those who experienced stability under the regime and those who lived through its brutal repression.

A common thread throughout the data was the importance of family and friends. Many participants, especially in interviews and focus groups, spoke more about the experiences of their loved ones than their own. This highlights how closely people's personal experiences were tied to those of their families and communities. In the letters, correspondents frequently shared updates on their family and friends, sometimes even when that wasn't the main subject of the letter. It suggests that, for many people, the junta's impact on their loved ones was just as significant—if not more so—than their own personal struggles.

To sum up, the data collected in this research presents a picture of a harsh and oppressive period in Greek history. The lack of democratic rights, political repression, and suffering are central themes in the narrative. Furthermore, this research highlights the complexity of the junta regime and the need to acknowledge the diverse experiences and emotions that shaped people's memories of this time in history.

B. Recommendations

Recommendations for the artists working on the next activities within the Ink of Freedom project are as follows:

- The artistic representation of this historical period should be approached with great care, especially out of respect for those who suffered under the regime. Even unintentionally, misinterpretations of the voices or a lack of a serious approach could lead to deviations from the expressed narratives, potentially undermining the memory and dignity of the victims and their families.
- All voices have the right to be heard. Even if artists disagree with some of the expressed narratives or data for any reason, the freedom of expression—within the bounds of no hate speech—is a fundamental aspect of this research and project, and should be respected during the artistic process.
- Artists are encouraged to explore the bibliography and annexes of this research report, as they can provide a deeper understanding of the research topics and specific accounts.

Recommendations for the preservation and dissemination of historical memory are:

- It is evident that the generation which directly experienced these historical events, especially those who were old enough to comprehend their experiences, is now elderly. Additionally, many individuals who were actively engaged in political and social affairs during this period, whose accounts from the historical letters were used in this research, have passed away in recent years. The current time period should be considered absolutely crucial for the further recording and preservation of the living historical memory of this dictatorship era.
- During the research, we found that a relatively large portion of the population in our area is unaware of the existing opportunities to preserve and disseminate their family's historical documents, and the opportunities to access the preserved historic documents. Thankfully, there are established practices for the responsible preservation and dissemination of historical documents (for example, the important work done by the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), whose archives were used in this research). However, there is a need for greater public awareness regarding the importance of preserving historical documents and other artifacts they may hold, as well as regarding the existing opportunities to access the information in historic records.
- During the focus groups, it was widely discussed and acknowledged by the participants that the history of this period is not being sufficiently disseminated and preserved within families and education system. Participants suggested that the approach to teaching history in Greek schools should be reconsidered, as there is evidence that younger generations do not hold a full understanding of the junta regime through formal education, and in some cases, barely any at all.

Recommendations for future research in this field:

- As acknowledged throughout the report, the methodology used in this research, like any methodology, has its limitations. Expanding the diversity of information sources and improving some aspects of the methodology could help identify more nuanced perspectives of this historical narrative.
- This research followed a qualitative approach; therefore, further exploration of the findings through quantitative methodologies could provide additional insights.
- To bridge the gap between the past, present, and the possibilities for a more democratic future that respects human rights, future research could focus on specific human rights violations that were evident both during the junta regime and in contemporary times, according to the participants of the research. Some examples include inhumane detention practices in Greece, the lack of free speech, and the significant inequalities faced by the power minorities in the country.

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Document code 080.009.004.006.00001
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Georgios Milonas Archive
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

31. Letter of Filippos Kostomitsopoulos
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114113
Document code GREMIAN-04.010.063.009.00012
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Gianis Gianoulopoulos Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

32. Letter of Xristos Panos
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114069
Document code GREMIAN-04.010.063.009.00007

Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Gianis Gianoulopoulos Collection
"Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)"
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

33. Letter to Georgoulas Beikos
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114048
Document code GREMIAN-04.010.063.009.00002
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Gianis Gianoulopoulos Collection
"Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)"
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

34. Letter to Sarra Skourtelli regarding the shipment of printed material
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114867
Document code GREMIAN-07.009.031.001.00029
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Giannis Kaounis-Maria Aggelaki Collection/Sarra-Foteini Skourtelli-Tsitsovich Collection
"Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)"
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

35. Letter to Takis Mpenas
https://askiarchives.eu/show/68075
Document code 005.09.035.299.2.00004
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI)
"Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)"
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

36. Letters from M.Ploritis to Georgios Milonas
https://askiarchives.eu/show/116920
Document code 080.010.002.002.00001
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Giorgos Milonas Archive
"Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)"
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

37. Letters from Nikos Argiropoulos to Georgios Milonas
https://askiarchives.eu/show/116467
Document code 080.007.001.009.00001
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Giorgos Milonas Archive
"Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)"
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

38. Letters from Sarah Skourtelli
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114896
Document code GREMIAN-07.009.031.001.00034
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Giannis Kaounis-Maria Aggelaki Collection/Sarra-Foteini Skourtelli-Tsitsovich Collection

“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

39. Letters to Sarah Skourtelli
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114896
Document code GREMIAN-07.009.031.001.00034
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Giannis Kaounis-Maria Aggelaki Collection/Sarra-Foteini Skourtelli-Tsitsovich Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

40. Letters to Sarah Skourtelli
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114896
Document code GREMIAN-07.009.031.001.00034
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Giannis Kaounis-Maria Aggelaki Collection/Sarra-Foteini Skourtelli-Tsitsovich Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

41. Letters to Sarah Skourtelli
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114625
Document code GREMIAN-07.009.031.001.00002
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Giannis Kaounis-Maria Aggelaki Collection/Sarra-Foteini Skourtelli-Tsitsovich Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

42. Letters to Sarah Skourtelli
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114625
Document code GREMIAN-07.009.031.001.00002
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Giannis Kaounis-Maria Aggelaki Collection/Sarra-Foteini Skourtelli-Tsitsovich Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

43. Letters from Virginia Tsouderou to Georgios Milonas
https://askiarchives.eu/show/116835
Document code 080.009.004.006.00001
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Giorgos Milonas Archive
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

44. Letters of Nikos Argiropoulos to Georgios Milonas
https://askiarchives.eu/show/116467
Document code 080.007.001.009.00001
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Giorgos Milonas Archive

“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

45. Letters of Spiridon Granitsas to Georgios Milonas
https://askiarchives.eu/show/116513
Document code 080.007.002.007.00001
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Giorgos Milonas Archive
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

46. Letters from Spiridon Granitsas to Georgios Milonas
https://askiarchives.eu/show/116513
Document code 080.007.002.007.00001
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Giorgos Milonas Archive
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

47. Letters of the Notios(Southerner) (Georgios Milonas)
https://askiarchives.eu/show/113018
Document code 1245.002.002.00006
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Mixalis Papagiannakis Archive
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

48. Letters of the Notios(Southerner) (Georgios Milonas)
https://askiarchives.eu/show/113018
Document code 1245.002.002.00006
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Mixalis Papagiannakis Archive
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

49. Message (communication) from political prisoners regarding living conditions
https://askiarchives.eu/show/121896
Document code 1711.002.00006
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Giorgos Zi Archive
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

50. Response letter to Sarah Skourtelli regarding the return of a child involving the Red Cross
https://askiarchives.eu/show/114888
Document code GREMIAN-07.009.031.001.00030
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), EMIAN Collections, Giannis Kaounis - Maria Aggelaki Collection / Sarra - Fotini Skourtelli - Tsitsovich Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

51. Untitled
https://askiarchives.eu/show/79194
Document code 73.00008
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Oikonomakos Nikos Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

52. Statements and letter of M.Theodorakis
https://askiarchives.eu/show/121075
Document code 164.027.001.004.00004
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Mpeikos Georgoulas Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

53. Statements and letters of M. Theodorakis
https://askiarchives.eu/show/121075
Document code 164.027.001.004.00004
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Mpeikos Geourgoulas Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

54. To the fraternal communist parties
https://askiarchives.eu/show/79277
Document code 73.00015
Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI), Oikonomakos Nikos Collection
“Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967-1974)”
https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/

IX. Annexes

1. Commentary on 5 historic letters used in the INK of Freedom project research, by Theoharis Kalampokis, Scientific Responsibility: Leda Papastefanaki
2. Scanned images of OLE! (1973) and OH (1976) political comixes by cartoonist KYR
3. Script of the focus groups
4. Script of the semi-structured interviews
5. Transcriptions of the 3 focus groups
6. Transcriptions of the 10 semi-structured interviews
7. Transcriptions of the 54 historic letters used in the analysis, provided by the Contemporary Social History Archive (ASKI)