

“It happened in Athens”: the relaunch of Greek film production during World War II*

Maria A. Stassinopoulou

The film *It happened in Athens* (Andrew Marton, 1962) was a Hollywood production about the 1896 Olympics. Its cast included Jayne Mansfield, the decathlete Bob Mathias and the Greek-American actor Nico Minardos. Parts of the film were shot on location and Jayne Mansfield became the talk of the town for a few days – a photograph of her on the steps of the Acropolis has recently risen to new prominence on a book cover (Yalouri 2001). In the early sixties Greece not only offered shooting locations for international productions but was also a European country on the way from post-war poverty to economic development and consumerism. A minor sector of its economy, Greek feature film production, was passing from the modest regularity of the early fifties to an annual production of over one hundred films in 1964 (Sotiropoulou 1995: 38). This development was out of proportion, even if one includes Cyprus and Greek communities abroad in the potential audiences. During the so-called golden era Greek film production would reach its peak (with 196 films produced in 1967), followed in the early seventies by the inevitable crisis, the result (among other reasons) of the late arrival of television. For those few years Greek films were responsible for more than 30% of box office returns (Sotiropoulou 1995: 42) and, it has been assumed, for an even higher percentage in second-run and provincial cinemas.

Twenty years before Hollywood's story of actress Eleni Costa (Mansfield) and the marathon runners of the first modern Olympics, something different – and indeed more significant for

* This is a slightly revised version of a lecture given in Cambridge on 8 May 2002. It is part of an ongoing research project on Greek cinema in the twentieth century for a planned monograph on “Greek national cinema” in the Routledge “National Cinema” series.

the history of Greek cinema – had happened in Athens. In late 1942 two film productions were announced and a new attempt at regular feature film-making was initiated after local feature film production had gone through a severe crisis during the previous decade. Between late 1942 and mid-1944 a total of ten film projects were announced: eight began shooting, five reached the cinemas during the Occupation; the others were subsequently re-edited with additional material and shown in 1945 or even later. The difficulty of locating copies, particularly of older films, is especially acute for this period, and this can partly explain (along with the perennial difficulties of archival research in Greece) the rather marginal attention given to the subject. As in all countries which experienced Axis occupation, a further reason for neglecting the topic is probably a reluctance to discuss economic activities during the period. Film-making, an activity requiring, among other things, a scarce raw material, police permits of different types and state intervention through censorship at various stages, must have involved some kind of positioning of the participants vis à vis the Occupation forces, most probably somewhere between the two extremes of collaboration and resistance. While film production in Greece until the sixties did not offer possibilities for significant enrichment – as opposed to distribution and cinema ownership – the subject is still understandably delicate, particularly considering that Modern Greek historiography has not yet sufficiently discussed the different strategies of adaptation and survival among the Greek population (Margaritis 1992), and even less economic collaboration with the occupying forces (Chaidia 1996). The focus of this article is on the position of feature film production between late 1942 and 1944 in the general chronology of Greek film history. Based on the limited published data available and on unpublished material from the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, I propose a provisional narrative of film-making during this short period.

* * *

Cinema-going was already in the late twenties an established form of leisure in Greek towns and cities and most cinemas had adapted to sound by the mid-thirties (Stassinopoulou 2000a and

2000b; Delveroudi 2002). Hollywood was already a major player, but German and French companies and their distributing agents still controlled part of the market in the last inter-war years. In contrast to Greek cinematic culture in general, which expanded impressively during the thirties, the history of Greek feature film-making is a story of hopeful starts and discontinuous take-offs, the most successful one having been the so-called first “flourishing” of Greek cinema in the late twenties and early thirties (Hess 2000). The economic crisis and the introduction of sound interrupted feature film-making in Athens. Feature films for Greek audiences produced after 1933 were shot in Egyptian studios, first in Alexandria and later in Cairo. Film-making in Athens between 1933 and 1939 concentrated on newsreels and documentaries (Soldatos 1994; Stassinopoulou 2000b: 91-3).

Though most film historians tend to attribute the interruption in production to the authoritarian régime of Ioannis Metaxas, the régime was in fact interested in the possibilities of cinema as a propaganda instrument. This interest was demonstrated by new provisions on censorship with tighter control than that of previous parliamentary legislation. The obligatory screening of documentaries and newsreels before feature films was enforced – attempts of former governments do not appear to have been as successful. Unlike the agenda set out for the organisation of the Royal Theatre or the radio, no immediate measures for the strengthening of feature film production were taken. On the other hand, filming of government activities for newsreels was sponsored by the Ministry of Press and Tourism (Soldatos 1994: 121-2).

In 1939 two feature films were produced in Athens after a complete standstill of six years. They reached film theatres in 1940, while a third project would be finished after the war. *To τραγούδι του χωρισμού* (The separation song) was the first film of the most important producer of the cinema boom of the post-war period, Filopimin Finos (Triantafyllidis 2000: 48-9; *Νέα Εστία* 14/27, 1940, 646-8). *Νύχτα χωρίς ξημέρωμα* (Night without dawn) was produced by Antonis Papadantonakis; the film reappeared in 1955 re-edited as *Κάλλιο αργά παρά ποτέ* (Better late than never) (Iliadis 1960: 72; Koliodimos 1999: 1426). A third project, *Σιωπηλή σύρραξις* (Silent fight) starring Iro Chanta, was backed by the new company of Rassel and Barouch, Iro Film (Iliadis

1960: 75). It was completed in 1945, under the title *Διπλή Θυσία* (Double sacrifice), by the new owner Ilias Inglesis, who had changed the name of the company to Orpheus-Film – the name of his cinema in Kokkinia. Little is known about the production background of these films, even less than the meagre information available about the films of the inter-war period in general, but it is evident that new names appeared, while DAG-Gaziadis and Olympia-Dadiras, the two most active companies of the first “flourishing”, which had coincided with the last Venizelos government, did not invest in feature film-making. It was not necessary for film-makers of the years 1939-40 to share the ideology of the régime. Despite proposals to imitate the Turkish initiative of state intervention in feature film production, inspired probably by the German and Italian examples, Greek feature film production remained a private business. Melodrama, because of its narrative flexibility, permits all kinds of identifications for audiences without provoking censorship. A better knowledge of these films, taking account of the context of Egyptian films of the period, would lead to a clearer understanding of the feature film production of the thirties.

With the beginning of the Greek-Italian war on the Albanian front in October 1940, most film-makers formed newsreel crews under the auspices of the Army Geography Service (Γεωγραφική Υπηρεσία Στρατού). According to oral testimony (e.g. interviews with Finos), almost immediately after the German troops had entered Athens the majority of the army film materials were confiscated by soldiers led by the representative of Agfa in Athens, Willy Venzlaff, dressed in SS uniform. That Venzlaff should have been or become a loyal adherent of national socialism is not surprising. Agfa (Actiengesellschaft für Anilinfabrikation) was after all part of the chemicals consortium IG Farben, one of the industries most closely involved in the German state economy and Nazi warfare. Raw film and cameras, one of the sectors Agfa specialized in, were important and expensive products in the process of penetrating the South-East European and Middle East market. According to the Agfa files of the inter-war period, Venzlaff, who had been the first representative of the company since 1931, did not show any particularly active political profile, and film-selling activities in Athens were reduced to a minimum after the economic crisis of

the mid-thirties, with Istanbul becoming a more interesting trading location (Bundesarchiv Berlin, files "IG-Farbenindustrie AG (R 8128), Verkaufsgemeinschaft Agfa, Berlin SO 36, Photo AG Athen 1928-1944"). After the war Venzlaff remained at the Agfa offices in Athens until his retirement.

Greek film histories record without any particular comment the reappearance of Athenian feature films in late 1942. Considering that, with the exception of the short pre-war interlude of 1939-40, films had not been produced on a regular basis in Athens since 1933, the unquestioning attitude of Greek film history, simply registering the relaunch of film production after almost a decade and after the terrible famine of the winter of 1941-2, is, to say the least, surprising. The timing of this new attempt at feature film-making in late 1942 coincides, however, with the general improvement of food availability in Greek cities and particularly in Athens (Thomadakis 1981; Margaritis 1993: 171-3), generating optimism among the population. Christos Christidis wrote in his diary entry of 26 December 1942: "The market is full of merchandise and customers. The theatres and the cinemas are full" (quoted in Margaritis 1993: 172). Antonio Gomes, a Jewish film-agent working for the Skouras companies and travelling through Europe in 1943, surprised his Foreign Office interview partner in Lisbon by stating that survival in Athens was easier than in other cities (Margaritis 1992). The narratives of some of the legendary figures of post-war cinema about how they had managed to hide film rolls from the Greek army, or even to seize German and Italian supplies with the assistance of resistance groups, cannot sufficiently explain film-making at such a time. Probably as a gesture of discretion after the war, discussion of the financial backing, and more importantly, of the attitude of officials, both of the collaborationist government and of the occupying forces, towards the film projects did not take place, at least not openly.

In his recent biography of Maria Callas, Nikos Petsalis-Diomidis describes in a minute case study the great difficulty of avoiding contact with the Occupation forces, at least for performing artists (Petsalis-Diomidis 1998: ch. 20 to 33). This is yet another subject which remained a topic of insider discussion, but not of public debate and certainly not of publications – something which has not changed since Veloudis's remark that

“cooperation” or “collaboration” in the domain of letters remains a taboo subject in Greece (Veloudis 1990: 517-18, notes 3 and 5). In an entry in his diary dated 31 March 1942, Giorgos Theotokas expresses his concern about the involvement of writers in journals and festivities of the Occupation forces (Theotokas [1987]: 351-2). Theotokas was equally disapproving of the appearance of Kostas Varnalis at a banquet held at the Bulgarian Embassy in Athens, as well as of the collaboration of authors with printed media financed and controlled by the Germans and Italians. The diary entry related to the first issue of the Italian propaganda journal *Quadrivio*, published in Greek, which featured an article by a member of the Academy of Athens, Grigorios Xenopoulos, together with articles by Kostas Kairofyllas and Nikolaos Laskaris. In 1943 Theotokas returned to this entry to note in the margin: “Later Kleon Paraschos, Fotis Kontoglou, Alekos Lidorikis, Dim. Bogris, N. Poriotis, Gatopoulos, Mich. Tombros and others. More than we expected (1943).” While the disdain expressed here by Theotokas, a man of strong principles, but also of means, is understandable, it is necessary to point out that during the period of the Occupation the choice for people in the media and cultural sectors was either silence and retreat, meaning also no possibility of making a living, or a direct or indirect declaration of political beliefs.

The influence of the Occupation forces was not only felt in political persecution or censorship but also through financial decisions (see, for example, Bastias 1997: I, 115-17 on the bankruptcy of the “Theatre of Athens”, because its main sponsor’s contract with the Italian army had been suspended). Already in mid-1942 the leftist resistance movement EAM was promoting cultural activities, including the publication of literary journals (e.g. *Καλλιτεχνικά Νέα*, featuring film articles by Alexis Solomos) and the sponsorship of theatrical activities for the ELAS troops (see, for example, Kotzioulas 1986; bibliography in Myrsiades 2000). As usual in times of political crisis in Greece, the pastoral dramas were brought back, functioning as national pageants. In 1944 both *Golfo* and *The shepherdess’s lover* were being played in Athenian theatres and the film *Astero* (DAG Film, 1929) was announced in January 1944 in a new sound version (*Βραδυνή*, 27 and 29 January; Iliadis 1960: 73; for earlier versions

of this phenomenon during the Balkan Wars and World War I (see Delveroudi 1988).

My questioning of the standard narrative on Greek film-making during the Occupation began as I was trying to understand Greek film chronology in the context of international film-making. As with other aspects of social and cultural history, Greek bibliography, more often than not, opts for a *Sonderweg* model, preferring to elaborate on individuality and difference rather than to compare similarities. This is also the case with cinema: dissimilarities to other European cinemas are stressed while similarities are neglected. The discussion of the European film industry during the war has not yet found its echo with respect to Greek cinema. Some cameramen and directors did indeed shoot films for EAM and ELAS, but they mainly filmed the ELAS units in action as well as the liberation scenes in 1944 (e.g. Stelios Tatasopoulos; see Petris 1988: 21), while later accompanying the Democratic Army (e.g. Manos Zacharias). The tragic fact that Finos's father, Giannis, was accused of being an active communist and executed by the Germans in the summer of 1944, while Filopoulin himself escaped with four months' imprisonment and the voluntary donation of his assets, is often mentioned (Triantafyllidis 2000: 29). Unfortunately it does not help in understanding the film business between the autumn of 1942 and the summer of 1944. Giorgos Kavoukidis, co-producer of Finos's first production during the Occupation, mentioned in an interview that it had been said that Giannis Finos was supplying resistance fighters with food, but that he himself was not certain that this was true (Triantafyllidis 2000: 208). I do not approach the subject of film-making during the Occupation with the desire of bringing out family secrets from a locked closet. My primary interest lies in the continuities and discontinuities in Greek film-making from the thirties to the fifties; as is the case with France, I believe that personal, film content, and structural continuities before and after the war are strong. Persons already active in the inter-war period continued through the Occupation and until well into the fifties, shaping the themes and the aesthetic agenda of Greek post-war cinema. I suppose that this is what film historian Giannis Soldatos means when he writes in his short chapter on the Occupation: "The Greek cinema takes

the first steps on its later path, by reconstructing its pre-war remnants" (Soldatos 1999: 55).

The Reich was keen to put both film production and distribution under the control of a company called Ufa, Universum Film AG (Kreimeier 1992: 389-98), while at the same time providing the legal infrastructure for state intervention, in those countries which had developed feature film production mainly in the private sector. The most prominent examples were, on the one hand, the foremost European competitor of German cinema, France, where production continued in both occupied and Vichy France and where the foundations for the post-war structures of the French cinema were laid during this period (Garçon 1984: 31-47; Hayward 1993: 43-4; Thompson and Bordwell 1994: 337-9; Williams 1992: 247-53); on the other, a small industry, the Danish cinema, which flourished particularly in the first years of the Occupation (Thompson and Bordwell 1994: 448; Vincendeau 1995: 110) producing some 92 films from 1940 to 1945, compared with 77 between 1930 and 1939. How did the Germans handle the small but active Greek distribution sector and the paralysed production sector on their arrival in Greece? So far I have looked into the German newspaper which appeared in Athens during the Occupation, *Deutsche Nachrichten für Griechenland*, Greek dailies, as well as unpublished archival materials from the post-war correspondence of American and German authorities, trying to track down the property of Universum Film AG, left in the formerly occupied countries. I have not undertaken, for the moment, any research on the Italian side, which also promoted its own cultural activities.

The Occupation forces moved rapidly in order to take control of the Greek economy in the spring and early summer of 1941. While it is true that the main interest was in food supplies and ores, other sectors such as the textile industry also attracted attention, not in order to invest but rather to confiscate materials or products (Etmektsoğlu 2000; Mazower 1993: 24-6; Thomadakis 1981). Immediately after the Occupation began, several big cinemas in Athens and Thessaloniki were transformed into Soldaten-Kinos, showing German newsreels, propaganda documentaries and German feature films. Cinema was considered by the Wehrmacht as an important part of organised leisure. We know from diaries of German soldiers posted even in small towns,

and later on islands, that they watched films on a regular basis. Men of 164 Infantry Division dispersed among small garrisons throughout Northern Greece saw up to eight films a month already in the autumn of 1941. In his diary for 1944 a member of the SS registered two to three shows weekly (Mazower 1993: 204). For some rural areas these must have been the first film shows ever, but they were probably not open to the local population. A fair amount of film copies was available in order to provide for all units. The number of copies grew after the German retreat from Africa, as some material supplies were transported via Greece to other fighting fronts. After the withdrawal from Greece numerous film copies were apparently left behind. According to the American agent, Carol Hellmann, authorised by the "Liquidationsausschuß", the controlling institution entrusted with the evaluation and liquidation of Ufa assets after the war, film copies were circulating in Greece and being distributed without any rights being paid to the lawful owner (Bundesarchiv Berlin, Universum Film AG (R109 I), file 2302, Ufa-Liquidationsausschuß. Korrespondenz). The correspondence of Hellmann and other representatives of the "Liquidationsausschuß" with Greek distributors mentions several films of the late thirties and early forties. The Greek correspondents confirmed the existence of copies but were not willing to disclose information on how the copies had reached them and, most importantly, on their number (Bundesarchiv Berlin, Universum Film AG (R109 I), various correspondence files).

The small scale of Greek film production probably did not render it immediately attractive for the economic staff, but considering the importance accorded to propaganda activities it is rather surprising that the only documented take-over relating to cinema dates from October 1941, while all major acquisitions had already been arranged by May 1941. A memorandum written in 1954 in an attempt to reconstruct remaining Ufa assets in Greece describes the contents of a contract signed on 28 October (!) 1941. According to the memorandum, Universum Film AG (Ufa) bought the company of Theofanis Damaskinos, already one of the most powerful distributors in Greece and a pre-war Ufa agent, and founded Hellas Film AG with exclusively German capital. Damaskinos was on the board of

directors of the new company, which was conceived not only as a distributing agency of Ufa productions but also as a producing firm. As was the usual pattern, the Italians also appear to have made a similar move by founding Esperia Film, while Damaskinos himself founded a further distribution company, Hermes Film, which continued to exist after 1944, specialising in German films (Lazaridis 1999: 182). In the fifties and again in his memoirs, screenwriter and producer Giorgos Lazaridis, son of Kostas Lazaridis, whose company Damaskinos had taken over before the war, accused Damaskinos of making illegal profits during the Occupation. Even if that does not necessarily hold true, it is certain that Damaskinos was in a position after the war to participate actively in the new distribution game. Together with his partner Viktor Michailidis he controlled to a large extent film distribution in post-war Greece, competing successfully against the Skouras companies (Stassinopoulou 2000b: 126-7). Filmographies mention neither Hellas AG nor Esperia Film as film producers during the Occupation.

The second move of the Occupation forces in the domain of cinema was to include an important relevant section in the new law on theatre published in March 1942. The interest in a direct involvement in production was thus manifest, the legal framework had been adapted to suit the needs of an authoritarian regime even better than the Metaxas law, and in the autumn of 1942 the inhabitants of Athens were becoming more optimistic after the hardships of the first Occupation winter (Margaritis 1993). Finally, as in all Reich territories and countries occupied by Reich forces, only German films and films produced by German allies could be imported and distributed; productions from France, including the Vichy territory, were also formally allowed in some territories but, at least according to the newspapers, they no longer found their way to Athenian cinemas. By December 1942 only German, Italian and Hungarian films were being shown. Obviously investing capital in a film did not appear to be such a risky business. Finos, together with Kavoukidis and Dadiras (Olympia Film) in cooperation with Pergantis, were the first to make the leap.

The films

The first film project of Finos during the Occupation was the film *Η φωνή της καρδιάς* (The voice of the heart), a melodrama starring the legendary leading man of the Greek theatre Aimilios Veakis. The title was probably a translation of the German melodrama *Die Stimme des Herzens* (Karl Heinz Martin, 1937) starring the German star Marianne Hoppe. The film was co-produced with Giorgos Kavoukidis; in the initial campaign it was advertised as a 1942 Finos-Kavoukidis production (Triantafyllidis 2000: 50), while later the film was considered the first production of the Finos Film company. It was written and directed by Dimitris Ioannopoulos, who had studied in Athens and Berlin and had worked for Ufa in the Neubabelsberg studios in Berlin. Ioannopoulos, the director of the theatre section of Greek Radio since 1938, had directed a state-financed short on the population census of 1940, produced by Finos, which received praise in the media (*Νέα Εστία* 14/28, 1940, 1363; Mitropoulou 1980: 81-3; Goutos and Noulas 1996: 108; Triantafyllidis 2000: 208). Ioannopoulos's Berlin background and his career from 1938 onwards do not necessarily confirm a particular ideology, but they were certainly no obstacle to forming a good relationship with the German authorities. On the other hand, Aimilios Veakis is known to have been sympathetic towards EAM and was forced to sign a declaration of political convictions after the Battle of Athens. The film was premièred in March 1943 in two cinemas of the Anzervos company ("Rex" and "Esperos"), and was an immediate success, resulting in spontaneous gatherings of enthusiastic audiences outside the "Rex" (Mitropoulou 1980: 82; Triantafyllidis 2000: 208). It remained on show for three weeks in three Athenian cinemas selling approximately 103,000 tickets; according to one of the two main investors, the photographer Giorgos Kavoukidis, the costs were covered within these first weeks (Triantafyllidis 2000: 206-8).

Olympia Film, the company of Panagiotis Dadiras, who in 1932 had backed the famous *Ο αγαπητικός της βοσκοπούλας* (The shepherdess's lover), the first Athenian film with post-production sound inscription recorded in the Tobis studios in Berlin, produced in cooperation with Ilias Pergantis the melodrama *Η θύελλα πέρασε* (The storm is over). The film was written and directed by Takis Bakopoulos and featured Periklis

Christoforidis, Frangiskos Manellis, Giannis Apostolidis, Kimon Spathopoulos, Christoforos Nezer, Anthi Miliadi, and the young Efi Palmi. Together with *The voice of the heart* they reached the screen in March 1943. In *Deutsche Nachrichten für Griechenland* the film was promoted as a step towards a truly national Greek cinema, liberated from French and Anglo-Saxon influences. Friedrich Herzog wrote in his film presentation under the title "Athenian milieu" on 24 March 1943:

The influence of French and Anglo-Saxon films has created in this country a norm in the general perception of filmic vision, which cannot be overturned from one day to another. It rests in the hands of Greek artists to liberate themselves from this influence, in order to be able to help the creative breakthrough of Greek cinema as the expression of Greek life.

The third film to be shown in 1943 was *Μάγια η Τσιγγάνα* (*Magia the Gypsy*), produced, written and directed by Giannis Christodoulou, who also played the male leading role. Both Finos and Dadiras announced new films in 1944. *Νύχτα αγωνίας* (*Night of agony*) and *Ραγισμένο βιολί* (*Broken violin*) were melodramas, which were to be completed after the German withdrawal. Their titles were changed – as were probably the scripts – into *Η βίλλα με τα νούφαρα* (*The villa with the water lilies*) and *Ραγισμένες καρδιές* (*Broken hearts*) respectively. The Tonis Film production (Papadantonakis) *Η ανθοπώλις των Αθηνών* (*The flower-girl of Athens*) began in 1943 but was also completed in 1945 (Iliadis 1960: 73). Another main player of the distribution and cinema-owning business, Anzervos, former distribution agent of the German company Tobis AG, began the production of *Όνειρα που σβήνουν* (*Fading dreams*), with the owner's son Giorgos Zervos directing and Giorgos Pappas and Vaso Manolidou starring, a film which could not be completed before the end of the war (Iliadis 1960: 73-4). *Το δρομάκι του παραδείσου* (*Paradise alley*), a Mega-Film production (Iliadis 1960: 74), was announced in late 1943 (*Βραδυνή*, 15.11.1943) and seems to have been premièred in April 1944. The producers Megalokonomos and Drimaropoulos were well-known photographers and newsreel producers of the thirties. The film was written by Alekos Lidorikis (who, as we saw earlier, had aroused Theotokas's in-

dignation by cooperating with the Italian magazine *Quadrivio*), directed by Pier Alberto Pieralisi and photographed by Umberto Perugini(?). Its cast included Christos Efthymiou, Dimitris Myrat and Eleni Chalkousi.

Mavrikios Novak, a former sound technician and newsreel cameraman (his son Iason was the cameraman of *Maya the Gypsy*), produced *Χειροκροτήματα* (Applause) on the life of the famous singer Attik. Shooting began in late 1943 and the film was premièred on 27 April 1944. It was the directing debut of one of the most prominent film directors of the post-war period, Giorgos Tzavellas. It also was the second appearance of probably the most successful *jeune premier* on both screen and stage from the forties to the late fifties, Dimitris Horn, who had started his film career in *The voice of the heart*. Novak had already announced in 1943 plans for a musical film production in the spring of 1944 (*Βραδυνή*, 1.12.1943). In May 1944 a new company (*Βραδυνή*, 1.5.1944) announced the film *Love in the classroom*, based on the theatrical success of playwright Alekos Sakellarios *Το ξύλο βγήκε απ' τον παράδεισο* (Spare the rod), a film finally made in 1959 as a Finos Film production. The Gaziadis brothers, who had led the so-called "flourishing" of the inter-war period, are among the exceptions who do not appear in this new phase of production activities, despite their experience in Germany in the twenties. Even after 1944 they did not appear again as producers, but participated as cameramen in early post-war films.

The Athenian films of the period suffered the same drawbacks as their predecessors of the late twenties and early thirties. They were made with extremely old equipment and backward technical standards in studios not worth the name, while direct sound inscription was still impossible. The only reason that Athens had again become attractive as a location for shooting films was that the previously used Cairo studios were out of reach for film-makers and actors living in Greece. The few Greek actors residing in Egypt continued to appear in Egyptian productions, such as the Kalouta sisters in the comedy *Καπετάν Σκορπιός* (Captain Scorpion, Togo Misrahi, 1943), but touring and shooting had become impossible for Athens-based actors. For the first time there was also no real competition at the box office because of the protectionist system of the Occupation forces. After having seen German and Austrian productions like

Immensee, *Der Kongress tanzt* and *Barcarole* several times, audiences were now more amenable to accepting a Greek film than they had been before the war. Furthermore, some of the Greek films, like *The voice of the heart*, featured some of the best Greek stage actors (Veakis, Leivaditis, Konstantaras, Tsaganea, Vokovits) and introduced fresh faces such as Kaiti Panou, who starred in several feature films after the war as an *ingénue*. Greek films were for the first time really successful at the box office. The film-makers involved seem to have perceived this turn of fate for Greek feature film as a positive change. In an article published in early June 1944 in the magazine *Radio*, Giorgos Tzavellas wrote:

The two last films, *The voice of the heart* and *Applause*, which according to the opinion both of the public and the specialists were considered a very good starting point for film production in our country, still do feature serious imperfections. But they have proven that there exist in Greece both technical and artistic elements for cinema. (Aktsoğlu 1994: 27)

Both professional journals and the dailies registered the sudden activity in film production in 1943 and 1944 with optimistic articles (Iliadis 1960: 73-4), perhaps slightly prompted by the authorities. Pavlos Palaiologos finished his article in *Ελεύθερον Βήμα* (26.1.1944) with a hopeful note: "But does the stamina for a long-term work exist? And the ability? And the capital? And the infrastructure? It does, say the omens. May it be so."

The German retreat in the autumn and the Battle of Athens in December 1944 and January 1945 disrupted everyday and social life again and the electricity shortage kept cinemas closed for some time. But by mid-1945 movie-going was booming again and there were plenty of films waiting to be shown: all the Allies, and in particular the Americans, were interested in promoting their film industries. Production continued at approximately the same pace as during the Occupation, growing steadily after 1948 and reaching an annual production of ten films in 1950. A look at Greek feature film production from its beginnings in 1914 (with a *Golfo*) to 1950, which symbolically marks the post-war take-off – among other reasons because the film *Ο μεθύστακας* (The drunkard) sold 300,000 tickets in the first-run cinemas of Athens

and Piraeus alone – reveals an irregular pattern of Athenian production until 1942. With an irony comparable to parallel phenomena in other continental film industries, the German and Italian occupation authorities contributed through protectionist measures and active involvement in cultural politics to an encouragement of producers and to the relaunch of Greek feature film production, which was to continue uninterrupted after the war to reach its golden era in the sixties.

References

Aktsoglou, Babis (ed.) (1994). *Γιώργος Τζαβέλλας* [35ο Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης]. n.p.

Bastias, Giannis K. (1997). *Ο Κωστής Μπασιτιάς στα χρόνια του μεσοπολέμου. Μεσοπόλεμος-Κατοχή-Απελευθέρωση*. Τόμος Α'. Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon

Chaidia, Eleni (1996). "Ειδικό δικαστήριο Θεσσαλονίκης (1945-1946): Η περίπτωση των οικονομικών δοσιλόγων", *Βαλκανικά Σύμμεικτα* 8, 201-10

Delveroudi, Eliza-Anna (1988). "Η καλλιέργεια του πατριωτικού αισθήματος στη θεατρική παραγωγή των αρχών του 20ού αιώνα", in: Giorgos Mavrogordatos and Christos Chatziiosif (eds.), *Βενιζελισμός και αστικός εκσυγχρονισμός*. Irakleio: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis, pp. 306-14

Delveroudi, Eliza-Anna (forthcoming 2002). "Κινηματογράφος 1923-1940", in: Christos Chatziiosif (ed.), *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ού αιώνα*. Vol. 2. Athens: Vivliorama

Etmektoglou, Gavriella (2000). "Η οικονομία της Ελλάδας κατά τη διάρκεια της γερμανικής κατοχής", in: *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*. Τόμος ΙΣΤ'. Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon

Garçon, François (1984). *De Blum à Pétain: cinéma et société française (1935-1944)*. Paris: Cerf

- Goutos, Kostas D. and Noulas, Konstantinos D. (1996). *Λεξικό σκηνοθετών του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*. Athens: Aigokeros
- Hayward, Susan (1993). *French national cinema*. London and New York: Routledge
- Hess, Franklin (2000). "Sound and the Nation: rethinking the history of early Greek film production", *JMGS* 18.1, 13-36
- Iliadis, Frixos (1960). *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*. Athens: Fantasia
- Koliodimos, Dimitris (1999). *The Greek filmography, 1914 through 1996*. Jefferson, N.C. and London: McFarland
- Kotzioulas, Giorgos (1980). *Θέατρο στα βουνά*. Athens: Themelio
- Kreimeier, Klaus (1992). *Die Ufa-Story: Geschichte eines Filmkonzerns*. Munich and Vienna: Hanser
- Margaritis, Giorgos (1992). "Η περίοδος της κρίσιμης καμπής (1942-1943). Μια μαρτυρία για τη μεταβολή των συνθηκών στην κατεχόμενη Ελλάδα", *Μνήμων* 14, 133-49
- Margaritis, Giorgos (1993). *Από την ήττα στην εξέγερση. Ελλάδα: άνοιξη 1941-φθινόπωρο 1942*. Athens: Ekdoseis o Politis
- Mazower, Mark (1993). *Inside Hitler's Greece: the experience of Occupation, 1941-1944*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press
- Mitropoulou, Aglaia (1980). *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*. Athens: Thymeli
- Myrsiades, Linda (2000). "Theatrical metaphors in Theodoros Angelopoulos's *The Traveling Players*", *JMGS* 18.1, 135-49
- Petris, Tasos N. (1988). *Στέλιος Τατασόπουλος*. Athens: Etaireia Ellinon Skinotheton

- Petsalis-Diomidis, Nikos (1998). *Η άγνωστη Κάλλας*. Athens: Kastaniotis
- Soldatos, Giannis (ed.) (1994). *Ο ελληνικός κινηματογράφος. Ντοκουμέντα 1. Μεσοπόλεμος*. Athens: Aigokeros
- Soldatos, Giannis (1999). *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου, Α΄ τόμος (1900-1967)*. 8th ed. Athens: Aigokeros
- Sotiropoulou, Chrysanthi (1995). *Η διασπορά στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο. Επιδράσεις και επιρροές στη θεματολογική εξέλιξη των ταινιών της περιόδου 1945-1986*. Athens: Themelio
- Stassinopoulou, Maria A. (2000a). "Ο κινηματογράφος στον ελληνικό αστικό χώρο και η κινηματογραφική εικονογραφία της ελληνικής πόλης στο μεσοπόλεμο. Ασύμβατες πορείες, διαφορετικές ταχύτητες", *Πρακτικά του Β΄ Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου «Η πόλη στους νεότερους χρόνους. Μεσογειακές και Βαλκανικές όψεις (19ος-20ός αι.)»*. Athens: Etaireia Meletis Neou Ellinismou
- Stassinopoulou, Maria A. (2000b). *Reality bites. A feature film history of Greece, 1950-1963*. Universität Wien (Habilitationsschrift)
- Theotokas, Giorgos [1987]. *Τετράδια ημερολογίου: 1939-1953*. Εισαγωγή, επιμέλεια: Δημήτρης Τζιόβας. Athens: Estia
- Thomadakis, Stavros B. (1981). "Black markets, inflation, and force in the economy of occupied Greece", in: John O. Iatrides (ed.), *Greece in the 1940s: a nation in crisis*. Hanover, N.H. and London: University Press of New England, pp. 61-80
- Thompson, Kristin and Bordwell, David (1994). *Film history: an introduction*. New York and London: McGraw-Hill
- Triantafyllidis, Iason (2000). *Ταινίες για φίλημα. Ένα αφιέρωμα στον Φιλοποίμενα Φίνο και τις ταινίες του*. Athens: Exantas

Williams, Alan (1992). *Republic of images: a history of French filmmaking*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press

Veloudis, Giorgos (1990). "Η ελληνική λογοτεχνία στην αντίσταση (1940-1944)", in: H. Fleischer and N. Svoronos (eds.), *Ελλάδα 1936-1944. Δικτατορία-Κατοχή-Αντίσταση*. Athens: Morfotiko Institutou Agrotikis Trapezas Ellados, pp. 516-28

Vincendeau, Ginette (ed.) (1995). *Encyclopedia of European cinema*. London: Cassell

Yalouri, Eleana (2001). *The Acropolis: Global fame, local claim*. Oxford and New York: Berg

University of Vienna