

The Gregoris Afxentiou SAGA

1 April 1955 – 3 March 1957



Gregoris Afxentiou was born in Lysi on 22 February 1928. He studied at the Cadet Reserve Officers School of Greece and served in the Greek Army. He was initiated into the EOKA Struggle by Leader Digenis himself on 20 January 1955, giving his oath as Greek Officer. On 26 January he was assigned the post of Famagusta sector leader under the name of Zedros. The first persons to whom he administered the oath were Antonis Papadopoulos, Sotiris Ellinas, Pavlos Pavlakis, and Kyriacos Matsis.

On the 1st April 1955 he led the attacks against the British in his Sector. In the attack which was carried out in Dhekelia, he lost his identity card.

The Police found it and put him on the "wanted" list. A reward of £250 was offered for his capture which was later increased to £5.000.

Following the attack he left Dhekelia base and went to Lysi, to his sister's house, where he met his father Pieris, whom he asked to supply him with a gun.

He remained in Lysi until 4 April. Walking through the fields, he reached Ayios Mamas chapel between Kontea and Pergamos. In the morning of 5th April, Christos Masonides took him through Lefkoniko - Akanthou - Kyrenia to Karavas. At first he stayed in Acheropiitos Monastery. Later, he moved to an unoccupied house in the garden of Charmandas where he stayed for one week and on 18th April in the house of Kyriacos Kirkos, which he turned into a hide-out.



In June he went to a natural cave in the "Kakotris" area in Karavas.

On 10 June 1955 he married his fiancée Vasilou and the wedding ceremony was solemnized by priest Papastavros Papagathangelou.

In July he met Stylianos Lenas and Costas Ioannou and the three of them constituted the first mountain guerilla group in Mavro Oros.

He organized strike groups and carried out two operations, one in Ayirta which was very successful, and one at the Police Station of Lapithos, which was unsuccessful.

In July, he moved to Kalograia high on the mountain, to the top of the hill named "Skali"; the group now consisted of Gregoris Afxentiou, Stylianos Lenas, Thasos Sofocleous, Costas Ioannou and Charalambos Kambouris.

ΑΜΟΙΒΗ  **REWARD**

£ 5,000

Ποσόν £ 5.000 πέντε χιλιάδων λιρών θά καταβληθή εις μετρητά ως άμοιβή εις οιονδήποτε πρόσωπον τό όποιον ήθελε παράσχη πληροφορίας δυναμένης νά οδηγήσουν εις την ανακάλυψιν και σύλληψιν ζωντανού ή νεκρού του έπικηρυγμένου τρομοκράτου και ύπαρχηγού της Ε.Ο.Κ.Α. πρώην άξιωματικού του Έλληνικού Στρατού

ΓΡΗΓΟΡΗ ΠΙΕΡΗ ΑΥΞΕΝΤΙΟΥ



REWARD £5.000 An amount of £5.000 five thousand pounds will be paid in cash as reward to any person who will provide information which may lead to the discovery and capture, alive or dead, of the wanted terrorist and deputy leader of EOKA, former Greek Army Officer.



Photocopy of the Reward offered by the British for the capture of Afxentiou. Photis Papaphotis also belonged to the group which he joined from time to time. He organized the guerillas in the area. Two events connected to the group marked this period:

- (1) The capture of Michalakis Karaolis who was on his way to join the Afxentiou group.
- (2) The coming of traitor Hadzimitsis, an agent for the British.

From Skali Afxentiou moved to Mavro Oros, to Mallina, where he made a winter hideout.

On 4 October he carried out a commando operation in daytime in the heart of Lefkoniko town, against the Police Station of Lefkoniko from which he snatched 9 army weapons, two greeners, rounds of ammunition, a wireless and helmets.

Afxentiou was suspicious of Hatzimitsis. He asked him to kill a certain traitor but instead he left the group and

disclosed the secrets of the Organisation to the British. **On 21 October Afxentiou handed the Pentadaktylos sector over to Thasos Sofocleous and moved to Troodos as group leader of Pitsilia.** He was taken by Kyriacos Matsis and Nitsa Hatzigeorgiou as far as Kakopetria.

He was received by Gregoris Gregoras, the group leader of Solea (Davelis). With Christos Tsiartas, Charalambos Kyriakides and Kyriacos Alexandrou as guides, he reached the hideout at Spilia on 29 November 1955. He met with leader Digenis and the group leader of Pitsilia, Renos Kyriakides. The Leader entrusted to Afxentiou the Pitsilia sector and nominated Renos Kyriakides as Group Leader of the guerilla force.

On 5 December he blew up the power transformer at Karvounas from where they seized two hunting guns. They were accompanied by Christos Tsiartas, Kyriacos Kokkinos, Georgios Michael and Georgios Loizides – Apostratos, who subsequently turned into an agent of the British.

Afxentiou operated under the pseudonyms **Zedros, Rigas, Aeos, Aris, Zotos.** Accompanied by Christos Permettis he reached the village of Spilia.

On 11 December 1955 he played a key role in the Spylia battle, where after the first clash of his men, Charalambos Batarias and Kyriacos Kokkinos with the British troops, after realising the great superiority of the British, ordered them to go and join leader Digenis and the entire group who were waiting at the point of escape and to leave the area.

He himself undertook to mislead the British in order to give time to the leader and the whole group to escape to Kakopetria. **He subsequently found himself in between two groups of British soldiers and under the cover of the fog fired shots against both sides. He then started tumbling down. Confused, the British started firing at each other and many British soldiers were killed or injured.**

Afxentiou reached "Strouthkia" and from there he moved to Ayia Irini. He then proceeded to Kannavia, where he slept for three nights in the church. He came in touch with priest Papalexandros who helped him. On Wednesday night, 14 November, with Christos Pirmetis as guide, he reached the outskirts of Saranti village. He then continued on his way alone and reached Lagoudera, where he stayed first in the house of Michael Symeonides and then the house of Michalakis Eleftheriou. Some guerillas from the Spilia group met him there and Avgoustis Efstathiou and Ioannis Pavlou (Pipinos) joined them. The group was reconstituted and moved to a hut in the "Petaoulia" locality, where they spent the night on Christmas Day.

Guerilla Andreas Antoniadis (Keravnos) from Vouni became voluntarily an agent of the British and revealed code words and names to the British.

Gregoris grew a beard and assumed the pseudonym of Aris. He also changed the pseudonyms of his comrades. He gave Charalambos Christodoulou the pseudonym Batarias.

The group was renewed with more guerillas, Georghios Matsis, Antonakis Antona and Petros Stylianou. They celebrated New Year's day at Palechori. Half of the group remained in the house of Andreas and Maritsa Karaoli. Afxentiou remained with other comrades in the house of Christoforos Michael Foris. In the house of Andreas Karaolis they constructed the "oven" hideout.

On 21 January small groups became active in the villages of the area in order to seize hunting guns. 22 January was fixed as the day for collection of guns. According to information they had, the British laid ambushes and carried out searches. Thus some groups could not operate. The Palechori group was attacked with the result that Kyriacos Kokkinos was injured while Giorgos Matsis escaped. The Agros and Ayios Ioannis groups with Batarias and Avgoustis managed to seize the weapons. In Agros, Afxentiou cooperated with Diomedis Mavroyiannis (Agamemnon).

From there he moved to Papoutsas and started to construct a very well designed hideout in Aetofolies. He reconstructed the group which had been scattered and brought the weapons which the group had hidden at Phini in the bus of Georgios Spyrou.

The sector under his command was enormous. It included the villages: Palechori, Agros, Agridia, Dymes, Potamitissa, Pelendri, Ayios Mamas, Trimiklini, Kato Amiandos, Pano Amiandos, Omodhos, Kilani, Kyperounta, Handria, Spilia, Kannavia, Saranti, Alithinou, Livadhia, Lagoudera, Polystipos, Alona, Platanistasa, Fterikoudi, Askas, Ayios Constantinos, Ayios Pavlos, Zoopigi, Kalo Chorio, Louvaras, Arakapas, Eftagonia, Macheras Monastery, Pharmakas, Lazania, Fikardou, Kapedes, Analiontas, Ayios Epiphaniou, Lefkara, Klirou, Kalo Chorio, Deftera, Lythrodontas, Pera Pedi, Mandria, Arsos, Potamiou, Platres, Phini.



The sector mentioned above was "the heart of EOKA". Gregoris Afxentiou moved constantly in the whole area. His object was to seize weapons.

At the end of January 1956, Polycarpus Yiorgatzis escaped from the Kokkinotrimithia detention camp and joined the Afxentiou group at Papoutsas. Afxentiou was now busy constructing hideouts in houses together with Michael Ashiotis.

In February 1956, accompanied by Giorgos Matsis, he went to Macheras Monastery and became acquainted with Abbot Irineos.

On 15 March 1956 the fighters boarded the bus of Kyriacos Tryphonos and drove to Kyperounta from where they reached Handria on foot, where they joined Polycarpus Yiorkatzis and Andreas Tsiartas.

On 16 March 1956 an **ambush** was laid, on orders by Dighenis, at Handria, on the Handria – Agros road near Agridhia, **against two landrovers and a civilian car** which resulted in a number of dead and injured British soldiers. The weapon of Christos Chartas (Yangoulas) misfired. While the group was withdrawing **Christos Chartas was fatally injured** without this being noticed by the group. When they met at Potamitissa and saw that Christos was missing, they were under the illusion that he might have gone to his village. On Saturday the group stayed in the house of Panayiotis Vasiliou at Ayios Ioannis Agrou. In the evening, Afxentiou went to the house of Papakostis in Ayios Theodoros, where he was informed by the priest about the tragic event and Afxentiou ordered that the group should leave immediately for the Papoutsas hideout.

Information about their hideout was disclosed to the British and as they approached the Papoutsas hideout Afxentiou headed for the Aetopholia locality and moved to Macheras stopping on the way at Pharmakas, the old village of Apliki. On 26 March 1956 he moved to Kionia where he stayed for two months. They were helped by forester Christodoulos. Food was brought to the hideout by the Monastery shepherd Petros Philippou. The group now numbered nineteen guerillas. Abbot Irineos was a close supporter. "Aris" in the monastery and during his visits to the surrounding villages wore a clerical robe and his name was father Chrysanthos. During his stay at Kionia, the group was joined with Stylianos Lenas.

On 29 April 1956 he underwent an operation for appendicitis in Limassol in the clinic of doctor Nicos Anastasiades.

On 21 May on instructions by Afxentiou – who continued to stay at the Monastery for convalescence – the group was split into two. One group with Stylianos Lenas and Nicos Spanos went to Lefkara to lay an ambush and the other with Giorgos Matsis moved to Palechori also to lay an ambush.

In the meantime, however, they had received a message from Afxentiou that any activity should be called off and the two groups should meet at Fterikoudi, move to Lagoudera and wait for instructions because there had been information about their presence at Macheras.

He himself even though he had been recently operated on moved with them to Katanaptis mountain above Lagoudera. Accompanied by Lambros Kafkarides, who was familiar with the area and the footpaths, Afxentiou visited many villages of the area.

In mid-June 1956, he left Macheras and headed for Palechori, Ayios Theodoros, Kalo Chorio, Zoopigi, where he stayed in the house of Minas Mina.

Dighenis for the better protection of the guerillas divided the Pitsilia sector into three sub-sectors.

He assigned the leadership of the first to Giorgos Matsis, the second to Stylianos Lenas and the third to Nicos Spanos.

He specified the Palechori – Agros – Zoopigi and Palechori – Macheras areas as field of activities of Gregoris Afxentiou who took up also the coordination of the leaders of the sub-sectors.

In September 1956, while at Palechori he planned a General Operation for the sub-sectors.

On 12 September, while he was at Lagoudera, he was joined by his friend Antonis Papadopoulos, who had escaped from the Pyla detention camp on 8 September 1956. The following day, 13 September, together with Antonis Papadopoulos, he moved to Agros, to the house



of priest Christodoulos, where there was a hideout.

On November 1956 Afxentiou and his groups carried out many attacks against car convoys and premises. The British called it "black November".

From Palechori he moved to Agros. There he met Kyriacos Matsis.

From Agros he moved to Amiandos and Zoopigi.

On 30 towards 31 December 1956 he clashed with agents of the British and Turkish auxiliary policemen and during these clashes Michael Yiorgallas was fatally wounded, while Afxentiou returned, wounded, after walking for six hours together with Minas to the Papoutsia hideout.

He moved to Makheras from where he sent a message to Andreas Karaolis to demolish the "oven" hide-out, in his house because it had been betrayed.

At Makheras they constructed a hideout 1.000 meters from the Monastery.

The searches of the British became more intensive and continuous.

Cart driver Petros Philippou was betrayed by Pipinos and Apostratos.

At Macheras Monastery Gregoris Afxentiou remained with his guerilla fellow fighters Antonis Papadopoulos, Phidias Symeonides, Avgoustis Efstathiou, Andreas Stylianou and Minas Mina, who moved there a few days before the battle.

When the blockade became very tight, they all went down to the hideout on the slope.

When the British discovered the hideout and they called Afxentiou to surrender. He urged his comrades to give themselves up.

He said, that he himself had to fight and die.

His fellow fighters came out on his order but Avgoustis Efstathiou went back to the hideout on orders by an English soldier to see whether Afxentiou had been killed following the throwing of a hand grenade. He remained fighting together with Afxentiou until the moment the British poured petrol on the hideout.

The Macheras eagle fought like a lion for eight hours against thousands of soldiers.

On 3 March 1957 he became a holocaust in his hideout at Macheras.

The British did not defeat him.

They cowardly burnt him with petrol.

But Gregoris Afxentiou will live for ever.



**THE COUNCIL OF HISTORIC MEMORY
OF THE EOKA STRUGGLE 1955-1959**

Telephone: 22305001

Telephone Machairas: 22359334



P.I.O. 257/2007 - 20.000

Published by the Press and Information Office, Republic of Cyprus