



The Archive of History and Art-the War Archive invites you to a presentation on Saturday 6 August 2022 at 19.30 via Zoom (see details in red above) on

Marketing of electricity and electrical goods in Athens 1936-1940

Presented by Andrew Freris

A brief introduction

Marketing and advertising, especially in the press, was quite developed in Greece by the late 1930s. That topic on its own merits a presentation. Cigarette ads are particularly striking with the emphasis of how “healthy” they are and how they protect the throat and cure coughing! Clearly the potential clientele was aware of the dangers of smoking and, hence, the emphasis of the ads was on health! Equally strange, for our times, were ads on prophylactics with emphasis on pregnancy prevention and, of course, venereal diseases. The ad columns of reputable newspapers were full of ads from specialist doctors and exotic treatments for gonorrhoea and syphilis.

But we digress

This presentation is based on a big file collected by my father Velisarios Freris (1900-1968) during his employment with APECO (Athens Piraeus Electricity Company) (1930-1956) where he worked in the PR department. During 1936-39 the PR embarked on highly sophisticated marketing campaign designed to encourage the use of electricity by the Athenian middle classes, and women in particular. The campaign had four main initiatives:

1. A beautifully produced coloring book for children, based and pirated completely, on Disney’s Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs but specially adapted for the Greek audience. The book was based on a fairy tale of a princess and her father who, with electricity and its uses, saves a city designed for children from the invasion of germs! The coloring book has special blank sections at the end where the children could fill in the colors themselves, copying them from the main section!

2. Two specially commissioned advertising jingles, full 3-minute songs, sang by Nikos Gounaris and Mary Lo, famous singers at the time. The

songs are all about the pleasure of living in electric houses! The songs on 78 vinyl of Columbia were distributed to cinemas in Athens and were played during the intervals of the films played. The 78s were lovingly restored and cleaned of surface noise at the Abbey Road Studios in London (Remember the Beatles?) and the recordings are a striking example of the high quality of Greek recordings at the time, as well as the sophistication of the songs and lyrics. (Oops, sorry, I have to be honest, the songs and lyrics were composed by my mother Marika Freris and the fact that APECO actually bought them, we have the contracts, must reflect my father's influence, although there was a public competition at the time for these songs!)

3.A series of pamphlets and booklets on the topic, most of them lost now

4.A series of cookery books, one authored by the famous Greek chef Tselementes, with whom my father worked closely, as well as cookery exhibitions using electrical cookers, stoves etc in prime hotels and locations in Athens, all to invited guests from the upper middle classes.

All these will shown and shared in the presentation, a trip down memory lane of unheard of sophistication (and expense!) of marketing in Athens just before the war.