

COMMUNISM IN CYPRUS

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Communism in Cyprus

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In so far as it is possible to trace the origin of communism in any country to any one man, it is safe to say that the founder of the movement in Cyprus was Dr. Nicolas Othon Yiavopoulos, a Greek subject who was born in the Island in 1898. Dr. Yiavopoulos studied medicine (and, apparently, communism) in Athens between the years 1919 and 1924, when he returned to Cyprus and set himself up as a medical practitioner in Limassol. One of his first actions on his return was to form a "Labourers' Club" in Limassol for the ostensible purpose of bettering labour conditions generally. It came to light shortly after the foundation of this club that communist literature was being supplied to it free of charge from Greece and elsewhere and that Dr. Yiavopoulos was himself in correspondence with communists in Athens and in Moscow.

2. The doctor was also identified with the publication of a Limassol newspaper "Neos Anthropos", a fortnightly publication theoretically edited by a barber, which openly declared itself to be the organ of the Cyprus Communist Party. This newspaper, following the orthodox communist line, at once set about penetrating the peasant consciousness in the rural areas. By June, 1925, Unions of peasants formed out of a class of men recently dispossessed of their lands by money lenders had been formed in three of the villages of Limassol district (Yermasoyia, Kilani and Episkopi). These Unions worked in co-operation and consultation with the "Labourers' Club" in Limassol.

3. Dr. Yiavopoulos was deported from Cyprus to Greece on the 5th July, 1925, on the grounds that he was a source of potential danger to the peace of the Island. His place as leader of the local communists was taken first by Costas Skeleas and subsequently, on his return to Cyprus later in the year, by Haralambos Vatiliotis, a Cypriot who had resigned his post in the Agricultural Department of the Colony in order to "study" in Russia. Both these personalities will be mentioned again in paragraph 7 below.

4. On the 24th December, 1926, the Articles of Association of K.K.K. (the Communist Party of Cyprus) were published in full in "Neos Anthropos". The party was therein declared to be dedicated to:

"(i) the struggle for the organisation and the economic improvement of the circumstances of the classes fettered by the present day capitalists of Cyprus;

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- (ii) the struggle for the political independence of Cyprus from the imperialistic yoke of the United Kingdom ;
- (iii) the development in Cyprus of the international solidarity of the labour movement and the unification of the struggle of the labourers and peasants of Cyprus with that of their colleagues in other countries."

5. Communism did not have a strong and immediate appeal to the Cypriots : the deep-rooted superstitions of a predominantly peasant community, the power of the Church, and the traditional agitation for enosis were too ingrained for that to happen. The communists had a hard task ahead of them : but they possessed, from the start, sufficient training and determination to survive their various vicissitudes. Faced with Cypriot hesitancy about acceptance of the communist creed, they soon brought into use the " popular front " technique, as shown in the following extract from " Neos Anthropos " of the 8th January, 1927 :

" Not until we obtain our freedom and cease to be the slaves of British Imperialism shall we be able to breathe economically. All parties that recognize the need of saving Cyprus from the foreign yoke as the first condition for economic and national restoration should direct their endeavours in that direction. But, in order that such endeavours should bear fruit, they should be united. All the anti-British elements, whether they be townspeople or of the proletariat, whether they be Greeks or Turks, and whether they want Greece or autonomy, must co-operate in the struggle against foreign rule. All views meet on this point. The Communist Party which was the first to suggest the idea of a united front calls everybody to battle against British Imperialism at this critical moment when the British threat looms as a dark cloud over the Cyprian horizon. It is only by means of such a united and tenacious struggle that we shall be able to resist decisively the blows of the English spurs and achieve our liberation. The united anti-British front must be our answer to the British threat. This front must include all Cypriots, all classes and all parties which, for one reason or another, do not want British rule."

Communist part in the 1931 disturbances.

6. The communists realised that the Church and nationalist politicians were striving for the same ends as themselves, though for totally different motives, and they therefore planned to overthrow the *status quo* in the Island



by means of a united front against British Imperialism. The plan miscarried, however, for a violent quarrel broke out between the two parties and grew to a point where the Acting Governor recorded in August, 1931, that "the activities of the communists in Cyprus and the opposition and ill-feeling engendered by them have (since June) so markedly increased as to give rise to apprehension that they may result in serious disorder involving loss of life". The quarrel was probably fostered by the Communist Party of Greece, who sent to Cyprus a proclamation in which the Cypriot nationalist leaders were denounced for aiming at the exploitation of the workers in exactly the same way as British Imperialism exploited them. The Greek communists, at that time violently anti-Venizelos, were no doubt concerned at the efforts of the Cyprus party to line themselves up with the local nationalists. Communist propaganda was therefore turned in full force against the Church generally and the Greek-Orthodox Church in particular, against the Greek Cypriot agitation for enosis and against the local capitalists. K.K.K. supporters were exhorted to "defend the land of the Soviets and work for the liberation of our country from Imperialism for a free Soviet Democracy of workers and farmers in Cyprus".

7. The Church and certain nationalist leaders were solely responsible for the 1931 disturbances, which would therefore have no place in an account of communism in Cyprus were it not for the fact that the communists readily lent their assistance in stirring up the trouble, once it had started, to the greatest possible degree. The communist leader, Vatiotis, was arrested in Nicosia on the 25th October whilst addressing a mob; his lieutenant, Skeleas, was seized in Limassol on the 26th October, after his arrival from Nicosia with pamphlets announcing the communist party's decision to join the nationalists. Both men were deported.

8. After the disturbances the Government took firm action in many directions to restore tranquillity in the Island. On the 15th August, 1933, the Criminal Code was amended with the main object of enabling the authorities to deal effectively with the communist menace and with any other unlawful associations. The following day the Communist Party of Cyprus (K.K.K.) and seven associate communist organisations were proscribed. During 1933-1934, after years of patient work, twenty-eight of the leading Cypriot communists were convicted on charges of seditious conspiracy and received sentences ranging up to 1 years' imprisonment. The movement had by that time

suffered a severe blow and it was principally the energy of two Greek Cypriot brothers, Ploutis Loizou Savvides (more commonly known as Ploutis Servas) and Christos Savvides, which kept it going, albeit tenuously, for the next seven years.

Ploutis
Servas.

9. Ploutis Servas (or Savvides) was born in Limassol in 1909. He first emerged as a leading figure in the Communist Party organisation in the year 1928. In 1929 he went to Greece, and from there to Moscow. In September, 1935, he was deported from Greece by the Greek Government as a dangerous communist. Although he had been excluded from Cyprus under the 1931 Defence Regulations, it was considered that in the circumstances there was no reasonable alternative to allowing him to return to the Island on condition that he signed the following undertaking (a document which proved to be of questionable value):

UNDERTAKING.

I, Ploutis Loizou Savvides, *alias* Zervas, of Limassol, hereby undertake to abstain from communistic and political propaganda and activities during my stay in the Colony of Cyprus.

1.10.35.

Limassol.

P. ZERVAS.

Up to the outbreak of war Servas (in Limassol) and his brother (in Famagusta) devoted their attentions primarily to the formation of trade unions and to labour matters generally, though in June, 1937, the first issue of a clandestine Bulletin for the Communist Party of Cyprus came into the hands of the Police. It gave some useful and interesting information about a proposed revival of the party and it may be more than coincidence that the following year the central committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain claimed that the party in Cyprus had been re-organised and was being given every assistance. Later that year (1938) Servas was prosecuted and convicted for being in possession of prohibited communist literature.

10. The communist propensity for exploiting difficulty was apparent in the early stages of the war, when there was temporarily a good deal of unemployment. More resolute infiltration into the trade unions became the policy. The war was denounced on the grounds that Britain and the Axis Powers, all capitalists, were cutting each other's throats but doing nothing to improve the

This is not true ! You are here only to defend and expand the interests of the American Capital and Industrial Magnates, of the Oil Companies and the other industrial Trusts and Cartels. You are here only to promote their war-plans against other peoples.

You should know that the people of Cyprus, and especially the workers, will stand against these plans. We are for Peace not for War and we shall stand against War. We shall never tolerate our Island being turned into an Anglo-American military Base.

So GO BACK to your Country and work there for the prosperity of your country and your compatriots.

Refuse to work for the furtherance of the Imperialist War Plans."

The out-
break of
war and
the advent
of AKEL.

when the U.S. Sixth Fleet paid its only visit to Cyprus (during August, 1950):

“HANDS OFF KOREA!!

DEAR FRIENDS AND BROTHERS OF THE
AMERICAN FLEET!!

You know that a war is going on in Korea between the people of that Country and the American Army. WHY?

You should know that too! Your officers and the Capitalist propaganda tell you that the war in Korea is for the defence of Democracy! *That is a lie!!* Your brothers and friends, hundreds and thousands of them, are killed and wounded only to support a corrupt and undemocratic regime, the regime of Sygman Ree, the regime imposed on South Korean people by the American monopolists.

You should hear the news. They are bad news for your brothers and friends fighting in Korea. They have been thrown back and are being thrown back. Thousands and thousands of them will either be killed or wounded in their effort to embark.

What you could and should do?

Demand the immediate cessation of hostilities! Demand the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Korea.

Unite your voice with the voice of millions of people crying:

HANDS OFF KOREA!!”

“U.S.A. MARINES AND SAILORS!!

WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS HERE IN CYPRUS?

Why have you come here in our Island thousands and thousands of miles away from your Country?

Your officers and your Government tell you that you are here for the defence of America's interests.

conditions of the workers throughout the world. At the same time, a certain amount of comfort was gathered from the theory that the imperialistic nations would so exhaust themselves as to make it easy for Russia to step in and begin a new communist millenium. This theory was of necessity revised in the summer of 1941 when the German attack on Russia began, an event which gave a tremendous fillip to the Cypriot communists and greatly assisted the foundation of AKEL (the Reform Party of the Working People). Button-hole devices consisting of a red star incorporating the hammer and sickle were worn in public and photographs of Stalin not only adorned the majority of trade union premises but were sold to the public to raise funds for various purposes.

11. The AKEL party was founded on the 14th April 1941, in the course of a private meeting at Skarinou, in Larnaca district. In the main it owed its origin to a desire on the part of the labour leaders that their movement should play an important role in the then pending municipal elections (it later happened that the first municipal elections since the 1931 disturbances were postponed until 1943). The meeting was attended by a few politicians, previously associated with other movements, who hoped to win supporters in the elections by espousing the workers' cause; two of them (by no means communists) were elected to a small central committee. The formation of the party was ridiculed in newspapers unsympathetic to the labour cause and was completely overshadowed by the war events in Greece. Little more was heard of the party until July, 1941, when members sought permission for a second meeting in Limassol “for the purpose of exchanging views on their position in view of present circumstances created by the war”. That second meeting, held on the 5th October, marked the culmination of efforts made by Akelists to exploit the position created by Britain's alliance with Russia for the enhancement of their own position in local affairs. The party was now well and truly launched, and, with Servas as its General Secretary, its line was never again in doubt. Servas, in his address to the meeting, directed that speakers should use the term “collaborators and fellow-strugglers” instead of the usual “ladies and gentlemen”—the more orthodox “comrade” presumably being avoided because the communist party was still proscribed.

12. AKEL's attitude to labour matters was, and has since been, governed by its desire to establish ascendancy over the workers. It was obviously essential to the success of the party that the Government should not obtain the

confidence of the trade unions. A deputation of trade unionists, which included Andreas Ziartides, specifically told the Colonial Secretary in the course of an interview on the 6th April, 1942, that AKEL directed the policy of the unions. Ziartides was elected to the first central committee of AKEL and has been on the committee ever since. He became General Secretary of the Pancyprian Confederation of Workers (P.S.E.) in 1944 and remained so until P.S.E. was proscribed in 1945 and he and seventeen other leading personalities were imprisoned for being officers and members of an unlawful association. He has been General Secretary of the Pancyprian Federation of Labour (P.E.O.), the successor of P.S.E., since 1947. His political leanings have never been in doubt and are illustrated by the fact that he was a signatory to the following telegram sent to Stalin on the 20th January, 1942 :

"The Nicosia Trade Unions on the occasion of the Anniversary of the death of Great Lenin do honour to-day the memory of the man who created the present Soviet Unions, the Greatest Leader of the Universal Proletariat and founder of the International Communism.

Our Labour Organisations on the occasion of to-day's Assembly promise that they are ready for every sacrifice and toil with all their power for a quick, safe and irreparable crash of the Fascist barbarism.

Our Trade Unions convey their greetings to the heroic Soviet people and the brave Red Army, Navy and Air Force, the weapons that overcame the barbarous Fascist hordes saving the whole world from the Fascist slavery and Nazi tyranny.

Our Trade Unions display their confidence for the final victory of the Soviet Army in the universal anti-Fascist struggle, a victory which will contribute to the predominance of the populo-democratic ideals in the whole world."

13. Under the shrewd guidance of Servas, AKEL soon put its house in order as regards enosis, realising that no political party in Cyprus could ever get very far unless it contained some element of appeal to the Greek emotionalism which the Church had monopolised for so many years. AKEL therefore set about celebrating the 25th March (Greek Independence Day) in co-operation with the nationalists. The AKEL demand for enosis has persisted unchanged with the exception of a short break at the time of the 1946-48 constitutional offer. The catchword then switched to "self-government", and all who were in Cyprus

AKEL and enosis.

of the Spanish Civil War, was born in Kellaki, Limassol district, in 1908. He left Cyprus for London in 1930, where, with the exception of his expedition to Spain, he devoted his energies to the pursuit of communism until his return to Cyprus in 1946.

AKEL to-day.

19. To-day the elected Mayors of Limassol and Larnaca are both members of the Central Committee of AKEL. The elected Mayor of Famagusta is a member of the Pancyprian Peace Committee and was elected a member of the World Peace Council in 1953. The AKEL party probably has between three to four thousand members; but its influence extends considerably further afield through the organisations under its control, of which the more important are the Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO), the AKEL Youth Organisation (AON), the Union of Cyprus Farmers (EAK), the Pancyprian Peace Committee (PEE), the Pancyprian Union of Small Shop-keepers (PEM) and the Pancyprian Organisation of Democratic Women (PODY). The AKEL leaders have travelled widely behind the Iron Curtain since the war, the most recent visit to Moscow being made by Ziartides, the General Secretary of PEO, when, in September, 1953, he led a party of six Cypriot visitors who had been chosen to tour the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Secretariat of the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions. The AKEL party is without doubt the only efficient and disciplined political party in Cyprus.

Co-operation between Communism and the Church.

20. Athens Radio and Mr. Xanthopoulos-Palamas, the permanent Greek delegate at the United Nations, have both at times accused the Cyprus Government of encouraging communism. But what are the facts?

In 1947 the first Archbishop to be elected since the 1931 disturbances (Leontios, Bishop of Paphos, who had been Locum Tenens for 14 years) was well known to have been steam-rollered into the vacant See by the Leontios Front, which was dominated by AKEL. It is not on record that he ever repudiated this admirably organised communist support. He died one month after his election before having time to show whether he would repay the party by continuing his contacts with it.

The present Archbishop has all the political acumen of Leontios and has at various times indicated, to the consternation of the nationalist politicians, his appreciation of the value of communist support. Before leaving for the

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Καθημερινή

United States in October, 1952, to attend the General Assembly of the United Nations he was generally known to have told a reporter: "If the Soviet Union raises the [Cyprus] question we shall not be displeased. We demand our freedom by all means". On the 22nd March, 1953, he said in church on his return from the United States: "We shall seek the support [at the United Nations] of every nation and we shall accept support from every hand, even from dirty hands". On the 28th June, 1953, he again said in church: "We [the Cypriots] are prepared to accept assistance from both East and West in our efforts to break away from our imperialistic rulers". This remark so delighted his predominantly communist congregation (many nationalists having stayed away for fear of trouble resulting from uninhibited communist enthusiasm for this particular service) that it provided the first known occasion when the communist "Internationale" was sung, spontaneously and unrehearsed, in a Greek-Orthodox church in Cyprus.

When the Government recently took steps to control the unending sedition appearing in the Greek Cypriot press and so on, the Archbishop acceded to AKEL'S suggestion that he should listen to the views and obtain the advice of the General Secretary of the party—*vide* the following extract from the communist newspaper "Neos Demokratias" of the 10th August, 1954:

"MEETING OF AKEL'S REPRESENTATIVES
WITH THE ARCHBISHOP.

On the 4th August a delegation of the Central Committee of AKEL consisting of the General Secretary of the Party, Mr. E. Papaioannou, and the Organising Secretary, Pavlos Georghiou, had a meeting with His Beatitude the Archbishop at the Archbishopric and exchanged views on the best way of facing the situation. On many points there was agreement."

The Archbishop canvasses in particular the support of the United States in his campaign of anti-British agitation; yet it follows from what has been written above that he at the same time keeps at least one eye on the political value of support from those responsible for the distribution of the following leaflets to American sailors and marines

at the time will remember walls and buildings all over the Island being daubed with the slogan Αὐτοκυβέρνησις. Even so, AKEL never ceased to look back over its shoulder at enosis, as shown by the following extract from the party's information bulletin of the 31st March, 1948:

"The formation of the National Liberation Coalition is a decisive step towards the unification of the Greeks of Cyprus in their struggle for liberation. EAS already numbers more than 20,000 members and is supported by the workers' organisations, the Cyprus Union of Farmers (EAK), the Youth Movement (AON), and a large number of progressive members of the middle classes and the intelligentsia. The immediate tasks of EAS are to secure a constitution granting self-determination to the people of Cyprus. This encounters the bitter resistance of the local reaction which is doing its best to sabotage the work of the Consultative Assembly.

These people hide behind the "Nothing but Union with Greece" and represent the acceptance of any form of constitution as treason to the struggle for liberation. This does not prevent them from collaborating very closely with the Government. Every day the reactionary newspapers write articles expressing their surprise that the Government agrees to confer with communists in the Consultative Assembly although declaring war against them in United Kingdom and try to persuade the Government to dismiss Communist officials. Some papers even suggest that Government should set up concentration camps for Communists.

The duty of EAS is to oppose and isolate the reactionary leaders who strive for perpetuation of the present regime which allows them to exploit the people with impunity. At the same time EAS makes it clear that they regard any form of constitution as temporary and that they intend to use it as a weapon in the struggle for union with Greece. At the same time they point out that in view of the servile attitude of the Greek Government towards the United Kingdom and its refusal to take up the question of Cyprus, the immediate chances of union with Greece are remote and that it is necessary in the meantime to secure a liberal constitution in order to safeguard the political and economic interests of the people pending a change of the international situation which would bring the question of Cyprus in the realm of practical politics."

14. This temporary defection from the "enosis and only enosis" line eventually caused a major upheaval in the party. By the beginning of 1949 the Consultative Assembly had foundered and the municipal elections were hard upon AKEL, which therefore considered it urgently necessary to "purge" the party leadership and to revert to the orthodox and vote-catching political agitation.

15. The present General Secretary of AKEL (E. Papaioannou) recently clarified the AKEL approach to enosis when giving a press interview in London on the 28th April, 1954. He said:

"Some people abroad find it difficult to understand why the people of Cyprus should fight for the Union of Cyprus with Greece when Greece itself has a monarchofascist regime and is actually under American subjugation and control.

The struggle of the people of Cyprus for national rehabilitation must be viewed in relation to the struggle of the Greek people for peace and national independence and not separately. It is part and parcel of the same struggle. Governments come and go in Greece but the Greek people are always there.

When the people in Greece and Cyprus have achieved their national freedom, they will then be able to decide for themselves the type of regime they wish to live under—without any foreign intervention or influence."

16. It is now necessary to go back to the war years in order to trace AKEL's attitude to military service. A clandestine communist party bulletin of the 9th February, 1940, had said:

"The Government of starvation having created all the conditions for an extension of misery now asks for the third time new meat for the cannons, the blood of our children. The most important duty regarding the new attempt is untiring and systematic propaganda against recruiting. We must explain widely amongst the working classes the real object of recruiting and the fact that the recruits are destined directly for the front. The miserable news from those who have already gone must be widely spread. It must be made known everywhere that unemployment is the best means in the hands of the Government for the success of recruiting and for this reason the struggle for the security of the unemployed acquires a special meaning."

AKEL and military service in the Cyprus Regiment.

with the above language

This continued to be the AKEL line, despite Russia's entry into the war, until on the 16th June, 1943, the party leaders seem to have realised that their policy was so absurdly inconsistent with their continual railing against fascism that it could no longer be maintained. Their facile *volte-face* in abruptly deciding to urge members to join the forces proved to be little short of calamitous to the Cyprus Regiment and later led to the formation of the Union of Cypriot Ex-Servicemen (EKA). This organisation was ostensibly founded in order to protect the interests of ex-servicemen though its activities could lead to the conclusion that the true object was to spread disaffection and subversive propaganda amongst Cypriot soldiers and to enrol them into the AKEL party on their release from the army. Eleven of the seventeen members of the party's central committee enlisted. Five years later (in 1948) the General Secretary of AKEL (E. Papaioannou) was quoted in the press as saying that if war broke out between "imperialism" and communism, AKEL would stand by the side of the latter.

17. The most important item on the agenda of the fourth congress of AKEL, held in August, 1945, was the "resignation" of Servas. In fact Servas had already been suspended by the party on the grounds that (a) he had refused to comply with party decisions regarding his transfer from Limassol to Nicosia, (b) he had put conditions on his future stay in the party, (c) he had neglected his duties towards both the Limassol District Committee and the Central Committee, and (d) he had declined to be present at party meetings at which he was likely to be criticised. Servas admitted that he was guilty of disobedience but explained that this was the fault of his opponents who were trying to undermine his authority. The result was that he was reinstated in the party but excluded from its central committee. At the fifth congress, in 1947, he rejoined the central committee. Servas finally severed his connections with the central committee in the summer of 1952.

18. Servas' place as General Secretary of the party was taken by Fifis Ioannou in the course of the fourth AKEL congress. Ioannou was subsequently a victim of the purge referred to in paragraph 14 above, since when he has edited the afternoon newspaper "Phos" which has consistently recommended acceptance of a constitution. He was succeeded by Ezekiel Papaioannou, who remains General Secretary to this day. Papaioannou, a veteran

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