

GEORGE C. FIDAS

The Evolution of Cypriot Communism

T. W. Adams. *AKEL: The Communist Party of Cyprus* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1971, xxii + 284 pp.). "Comparative Communist Party Politics," ed. by Jan F. Triska, Hoover Institution Studies No. 27.

While the paradigm developed by the editor of this series (see the preceding review) is a sophisticated and inclusive one, the present volume—the first book-length study of Communism in Cyprus in English—falls somewhat short of meeting its standards. To be sure, Adams brings with him a good general knowledge of Cypriot politics, culture, and social life, typical of a country expert. Unfortunately, however, his acquaintance with the history and dynamics of the international Communist movement does not equal his country expertise, while his lack of proficiency in Greek prevents him from making full use of the meager data on the Communist Party of Cyprus. The result is a conjectural, sparsely documented account of both, marked by more than an acceptable number of factual errors, by omission of crucial details, and by contradictory statements. A chapter-by-chapter account will serve both to explicate the paradigm and to describe the author's attempt to apply it.

Scanned / Transcribed by
The Socialist Truth in Cyprus – London Bureaux

<http://www.st-cyprus.co.uk/intro.htm>

<http://www.st-cyprus.co.uk/english/home/index.php>



Chapter One of the common framework is supposed to present a concise, analytical history of the Party, focusing on the causes behind its emergence, evolution, and organizational strength. Yet little is said or made of the origins of Communism, which in Cyprus as elsewhere began as a movement of alienated, youthful intellectuals intent on modernizing their society. Little is said of the overwhelming presence of the Communist Party of Greece, whose cadres played a leading role in prematurely organizing the fledgling Cypriot movement at a time when there was no readily available mass base for it to seek, a circumstance accounting in part for its isolation during the first two decades of its existence. Nothing is said of the Comintern's Balkan Federation scheme, whose adoption caused the Party to call for an autonomous Cypriot state within a Balkan Federation of Soviet Democracies in lieu of the traditional Greek Cypriot goal of union with Greece, and made that isolation complete. No mention is made of the absence of a socialist party, a circumstance which—once the nascent working class began to grow, and coupled with the abandonment of the Balkan Federation scheme in favor of lip-service to union with Greece—enabled the Party to organize and dominate that sector of the political spectrum and pose as its sole spokesman. This dominance enlarged the Party's ranks and pushed it toward a reformist, electoral posture. Neither does the author indicate that he is aware of the Party's "bolshhevization," which resulted in the ouster of the Party's intellectual leaders and a takeover by those of its affiliated trade-union federation. This is unfortunate because, unlike the European parties which bolshevized in seeming accordance with the Comintern's bolshevization directive of 1924, the Cypriot Party underwent this process in the 1940s when its links with the Cominform were at best tenuous. The process could perhaps be explained solely in intraorganizational terms—that is, as the inevitable result of the tendency of the Party's founding intellectual leaders to be replaced by those of its affiliated "transmission belts," particularly its trade-union federation, upon which the Party must rely for recruits and funds and which, ironically, may thus come to dominate the Party. Nor does the author attempt to explain why, despite its initial wavering, the Party participated in the 1931 uprising against the British, whereas in 1955, when faced with a similar opportunity, it stood aside and in fact called for strictly legal, non-violent tactics against the British. The latter fact might be related to the *embourgeoisement* of its proletarian leaders, who came to value the perquisites of office above their Party's proclaimed revolutionary goals. Instead, the author has reconstructed a rather sketchy, chronological account from a very

short selection of sources, some of which are over-heavily relied upon. Furthermore, except for the omission or modification of a word here and there, all thirteen pages of a Cyprus Government document entitled *Communism in Cyprus* have been reproduced with only partial acknowledgment (see pp. 13-41 and 250-251).

Chapter Two is supposed to deal with the Party's role and organization. It is intended, according to the Triska paradigm, to test and refine the models constructed by Gabriel Almond, Hadley Cantril, and Lucian Pye depicting the three assumed stages of Party development. According to these models, in developing societies, NRCPs function as dynamic, modernizing forces dominated by alienated intellectuals (stage one). In incompletely developed societies, they function as mass protest movements, aggregating the interests of the unintegrated and dispossessed (stage two). In developed societies, they come to function as electoral parties of linkage and lose their revolutionary, heretical character (stage three).

Unfortunately, the author has ignored the central intent of the paradigm, along with the theoretical works cited above, and nowhere deals with the Party's changing function within Cypriot society. This is especially disappointing because the Cypriot Party is one of the few that have already traversed the first two stages and are well on the way to the third. That is, it began as a dynamic, modernizing movement of youthful intellectuals in the 1920s through the 1940s; came to function as the aggregator and articulator of working-class interests and demands and ultimately integrated that class into the body politic in the 1950s and 1960s; and is now beginning to represent the interests of a much broader spectrum of groups, as evidenced by the 39.9 percent vote it garnered in the parliamentary elections of 1970—a fact that can only have served to strengthen its movement toward deradicalization.

Contrary to Triska's intent, the author's discussion of the Party's organization is limited to its formal aspects. Consequently, the Party's organizational capability is evaluated on the basis of prescriptive criteria. It is concluded that the Party is a tightly-knit, conspiratorial organization well organized on all levels despite Adams' own evidence to the contrary and a subsequent statement that the Party did not fare well during its periods of proscription. In fact, the Party's formal structure has been modified by its contact with the peculiarities of the Cypriot socio-economic structure with its dispersed, unradicalized agricultural sector dominated by the small family property, and its small-scale industrial sector based on the paternalistic family firm. Thus, the Party has become top-heavy, with little organizational

capability and initiative on the local level, particularly in the countryside. Moreover, it has not been successful in establishing as many work-place cells (the conspiratorial instrument *par excellence*) as it would like, while, owing to its shortage of able cadres, its other cells have become inflated in size, ranging up to one hundred individuals, and can no longer be said to function as conspiratorial instruments of subversion. In fact, the Party has lost its character as an "organizational weapon" in the process of adapting to its host society. In structural terms, it is little different from well-organized non-Communist parties, though not those in Cyprus—a conclusion also reached by Sidney Tarrow in his study on *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy*.

Proportionately the Cypriot Party is second only to the Italian in size; in absolute terms, it ranks in the upper third. The plurality it garnered in the last election is one of the highest percentages ever scored by an NRCP. Given the paradigm's proclaimed focus on the differing strength of such parties, then, the account of the causes behind the Cypriot Party's inordinate success is crucial. Yet the author is at a loss to explain it. As a substitute, he doubts the veracity of Party membership figures, although they are little different than those of the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence. Elsewhere, he persists in the simplistic view that Communism is somehow an alien feature imposed on an unsuspecting people by trickery and performs no necessary function within its host society. Thus, Adams claims that a "Greek Cypriot is everything that a stereotyped communist is not," while elsewhere he holds that "Communism in Cyprus made its mark on the unlikely Cypriot people during past times of stress and national anxiety, but the cut has not been deep and with enlightened treatment the scar may not be lasting."

Perhaps the only redeeming section of the book is that dealing with the Party leadership. Here the author notes the process of *embourgeoisement* and the ensuing careerism that has come to characterize the present leaders who constitute an "Old Guard." It is the latter's efforts to safeguard their position through the enforcement of discipline and the establishment of rigid promotional criteria that have prevented the infusion of new, better-educated blood and have led to the Party's overall intellectual stagnation. His point that the Party's mass organization leaders are coopted into the Central Committee, where they share the trappings though not necessarily the substance of power, is well taken, as is the point that the Central Committee represents a link between the decisionmaking process within the Politburo and the Party's mass base. One might add, however, that with few exceptions the Politburo itself is composed of the top leaders of each of the

Party's mass organizations along with former leaders, thereby suggesting that the Party has been taken over by its so-called "transmission belts" and is in fact a multi-nuclear organization and not the monolith posited by the prescriptive Bolshevik organizational model.

The analysis in this section is marred, however, by his supporting evidence. Thus he claims that the Party's two most powerful leaders—Ezekias Papaioannou, General Secretary, and Andreas Ziartides, Politburo member and General Secretary of the Party's powerful labor arm—came up through the ranks, and suggests that the Party's "ideologist" is Andreas Fantis, assistant General Secretary. In fact, Papaioannou came directly to the leadership after fifteen years of service within the Communist Party of Great Britain, while Ziartides was coopted into the Central Committee only one year after joining the Party as a result of his leadership position within the labor movement. To refer to Fantis, the former construction worker, as the Party's ideologist, on the other hand, is somewhat to stretch the meaning of that word. In fact, that role is shared by the Party Deputies Ntinos Konstantinou, economist, and George Savvides, educator, both of whom received their training in East Europe.

Chapter Three is supposed to describe the Party's indigenous operational environment. Here the analysis suffers because of the deemphasis of those environmental variables most salient for the organization, growth, and behavior of the Party. Thus there is no adequate coverage of the structure of the island's agricultural and industrial sectors or of its changing demographic patterns, and there is an overall lack of cross-time data on socio-economic development. Moreover, the author has employed the now outmoded "national character" concept in lieu of the more acceptable "political culture" approach, thereby rendering his conclusions useless for comparative purposes.

Chapter Four examines the Party's past and present operational code from the perspective of the Party's interaction with its indigenous environment. According to the paradigm and social movement theory in general, the relationship will be a dialectical one, resulting in the modification of both. For the Party, such change involves a movement from extreme radicalism toward deradicalization, while, for its host society, it is one of extreme hostility to cooptation of the Party's men and ideas. Yet the author's analysis is notable for the omission of this dialectic. The result is an understatement of the Party's initial revolutionary character. In a subsequent chapter, for example, Adams claims that the Party's initial goals "could have been those of any

liberal party in the West." Besides being patently untrue, such a characterization of the Party's goals and behavior cannot explain the present high-societal cooptation of the Party's men and ideas, unless one accepts it as the result of societal "goodwill" and not anti-systemic pressure from the Left—hardly an accepted view of societal dynamics among social scientists. Moreover, in accounting for the present high-societal toleration of the Party, the author is forced to present the superficial argument that it arises from the fact that the nationalists' attention has always been directed elsewhere, when in fact it is largely the result of the Party's gradual deradicalization and accommodation to the dominant societal consensus in accordance with the above-mentioned dialectic.

The Party's present operational code is thoroughly obfuscated by the many contradictory assertions offered in the course of its elaboration. Thus, at one point it is claimed that the Party has consistently emphasized its "peaceful and parliamentary nature." At another, it is held that the Party's perception of Cypriot class dynamics follows "dogmatic Marxist-Leninist lines on class war" despite the subsequent inclusion of a quotation from a Party source that the immediate goal of national liberation must be secured by a united front of "the entire people . . . everyone except those who have linked their interests with the interests of imperialism"—that is, a front that includes the national bourgeoisie, and thus most of the island's capitalists. The extent of the author's familiarity with the strategy and tactics of Communism is further revealed by his reference to the preceding as a "united front from below." In fact, the Party is now an electoral organism seeking recruits and supporters within all classes and is *plus royaliste que le roi* in its support of the Makarios regime.

Chapter Five deals with the Party's international operational code, which is also to be viewed from the perspective of the Party's growing interaction with its indigenous environment. Yet the analysis is persistent in its treatment of the Party as an organizational apparatus that has thus far been "controlled" from abroad, and is both contradictory and wholly conjectural. Thus it is claimed that it was at the insistence of Nikos Zachariades, General Secretary of the Greek Communist Party, that Ezekias Papaioannou was elevated to the General Secretaryship in 1949. Elsewhere, it is asserted that in 1956 the Party decided to become "devoted to the dictates of the Soviet Party." Still elsewhere, it is claimed that between 1949 and 1960 the Soviet Union "worked closely" with the Cypriot Party except for the period between 1955 and 1959. At yet another point, it is held that prior to the island's independence (1960) the Party was "thought to

receive its policy guidance from the British Party." Typical of the conjectural nature of these propositions is the "evidence" offered in their behalf. Thus it is suggested that "it could have been—while there is no evidence to support this—on a signal from Moscow that a new front was formed in 1941," following which the proscribed Party dissolved itself and its cadres entered the legal front. Yet this smacks of liquidationism, and while the Kremlin is now willing to countenance this, it was an unthinkable heresy thirty years ago.

Elsewhere, and despite a previous claim that the 1949 change of leadership was made at the insistence of the Greek Communist Party leader, it is suggested that Papaioannou "could have convinced" the Kremlin that a "cult of personality" was developing within the Cypriot Party and should be "nipped in the bud." One can only gasp in disbelief at the thought of anyone attempting to ingratiate himself with the Kremlin by using the "cult of personality" argument in 1949.

To be sure, the Cypriot Party has always considered itself to be a constituent member of the international Communist system, and it enjoyed a particularly close relationship with the Greek and British parties prior to the island's independence, a relationship now assumed by the Soviet Party. To suggest, however, that it is a tightly controlled agent is to attribute to that system a degree of organization and centralized day-to-day control which it has never possessed and to deny that its constituent units are functioning social systems with their own organizational imperatives and goals. Indeed, what appeared in the past as control was in fact influence based on authority *vis-à-vis* the system's once purposively motivated constituent units, and is now becoming cooperation based on a coincidence of material interests. Because it is less sacrosanct, it is also more tenuous.

Available data suggest that the Cypriot Party has made most of its major operational decisions on its own in the absence of external "directives," and on occasion in violation of them. Typical of the former was the Party's decision to accept the British offer of self-government in lieu of union with Greece in 1948. As told to this writer by Neofytos Ioannou, ex-Party member and General Secretary at the time, it was only after this policy created dissension within the Party and brought on a reaction from the nationalists that Ioannou went abroad to solicit advice. First, he went to Britain where Harry Pollitt, General Secretary of the British party, counseled him to follow strictly legal tactics against the colonial government. He next made his way to the mountains of Northern Greece where Nikos Zachariades chastized the Cypriot Party for coming to terms with the British while his Party was fighting them and urged Ioannou to revolt, since he

would be marching into Athens in two months' time. Having received conflicting advice, Ioannou then went to Bucharest to solicit guidance from Cominform headquarters, but he was told that it was a logistical impossibility for the committee to meet at that particular time and was advised to contact Moscow. As he tells it, he waited in Bucharest for two weeks, but Moscow did not reply to his inquiry and he returned to Cyprus without a clear "directive." Typical of the Party's occasional opposition to external "directives" was its open break with the Soviet Union over the latter's adoption of the pro-Turkish Cypriot "federation" and "two-communities" concepts in the continuing dispute over the island's future (the Cypriot Communist Party has always been almost exclusively a Greek party).

The closing chapter of Adams' book is devoted to the principal determinants of the Party's behavior. While those offered by the author are in part tautological, they correctly center around the Party's need for organizational maintenance and its desire to please the Soviet Union through the furtherance of the latter's foreign policy objectives. That the Soviet Union would take precedence should the two come into conflict, as suggested, however, is doubtful and does not accord with the Party's past behavior.

Because this is the first book to appear on the Cypriot Party, one would expect it to be a pathbreaking, if not a definitive, account. Unfortunately, it is difficult to characterize *AKEL* as either, if only because the author simply did not have the data to make it so. Given the esoteric and secretive nature of NRCs, it is perhaps naive to expect that a credible account—let alone one able to meet the rigorous standards of Triska's paradigm—can be produced by anyone not versed in the particular Party's language. One can only hope that this pitfall will be avoided in future volumes of this promising series.