

## **Claiming the Homeland - The Turkish Cypriot Opposition in the Period 1964-2004.**

**[Διεκδικώντας την Πατρίδα - Η Τουρκοκυπριακή  
Αντιπολίτευση την Περίοδο 1964-2004.]**

**Nikos Moudouros**

**Psifides Publications**

**Thessaloniki, 2022 [pp. 499]**

**ISBN: 978-618-85930-2-2**

The book *Claiming the Homeland - The Turkish Cypriot Opposition in the Period 1964-2004* analyses the course of the Turkish Cypriot community during the time period 1964-2004. The special contribution of the book lies in the fact that it approaches the Turkish Cypriots as a subject of History. It does not treat them as a whole either as organs of Turkey or as victims of the Turkish expansionist and revisionist policy. It does not treat them as a group of people with common views, common aspirations and a common attitude towards Turkey's policy and interventions in Cyprus. On the contrary, the book presents the different positions and the progress of the various parties of the Turkish Cypriot community, as well as of dynamic trade union organisations of Turkish Cypriots, such as the Teachers' Trade Union. It also outlines the rise of Rauf Denктаş to the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community, the policy pursued by him, and his political collapse.

At the same time, it highlights the process of the emergence of social movements. In particular, it analyses the emergence of the Turkish Cypriot Left and the dynamics it managed to develop, despite the internal pressures on behalf of the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite and the external pressures from Turkey itself. It presents the power and the interventions on a political, economic, cultural and social level, exercised by Turkey in the Turkish Cypriot community. It is a situation which the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite accepts, maintains and reproduces, and which the Turkish Cypriot Opposition objects.

Turkey attempts to establish and strengthen the 'Motherland – Small Homeland' relationship, a concept it cultivated -long before 1974- seeking to promote its geopolitical aspirations for Cyprus. Studying the policy that Turkey consistently and rigorously followed concerning Cyprus, we conclude that even decades before the

invasion, Turkey was manifesting much more than a *droit de regard* towards the Turkish Cypriot minority.

As characteristically mentioned in the book, the Turkish Cypriots are treated neither as equal nor as 'adults' in their relationship with Turkey; furthermore according to Turkey 'they should not be considered as Cypriots'. As the author claims, Turkey's authoritarian relationship with the Turkish Cypriots also had ideological implications: the Turkish Cypriot 'periphery' was 'provincial, rural and always suspect due to its proximity to the national enemy'.

Of particular interest is the approach to the issue of the Cypriotness of the Turkish Cypriots. Especially, Turkey treats with suspicion the expression of Cypriotness on the part of the Turkish Cypriots, considering that it harms Turkishness and that it implies the claim of coexistence with the Greek Cypriots. Therefore, supporting Cypriotness poses obstacles to Ankara's dichotomous strategic visions. In fact, committing the international war crime of settlement, Turkey attempts -among other things- to damage the Cypriot identity of the Turkish Cypriots. Rauf Denktaş fights against the Cypriotness, while the Turkish Cypriot Opposition claims the preservation and promotion of the Cypriot identity of the Turkish Cypriot community.

The book presents opinions and positions of a part of the Turkish Cypriot Left, which opposes the illegal self-proclamation of the pseudostate and highlights the need for independence and autonomy of the Turkish Cypriot community from Turkey's interventions. They support the federal solution, as they believe it provides a guarantee for the preservation of the identity and autonomy of the Turkish Cypriot community. It is worth mentioning that some Turkish Cypriots characterised the pseudostate as an 'open prison', as a 'camp for prisoners of war', or as a 'proclamation of the disappearance of the Turkish Cypriots'.

After the illegal self-proclamation of the pseudostate, Turkey's interventions in the Turkish Cypriot community, in the field of the economy, are intensified. In particular, the author describes the attempt of neoliberal transformation of the Turkish Cypriot economy on the part of Ankara, and the transformation of the northern regions of Cyprus into a kind of free trade zone. Denktaş adopts and supports the aforementioned efforts of Turkey, which opposes the Turkish Cypriot Opposition. Mass protests and strong strike actions take place, to which Denktaş' authority responds with authoritarianism and violent repression. In a highly polarised political environment, the mobilisations of the Turkish Cypriot Opposition contributed to the weakening of the

Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite, which sought the political, ideological and moral delegitimisation of opposition views.

The book mentions acts of intimidation, threats and persecution of members of the Turkish Cypriot Opposition. It also refers to murders of individuals, such as Turkish Cypriot journalist Kutlu Adali, and its social and political subsequents.

According to the author, the authority of Denktaş has begun to suffer blows, however its collapse comes with the support of the Annan Plan by the majority of the Turkish Cypriot community. The correlations are described as follows. On one side is Denktaş, who is supported by Turkey's military and bureaucratic establishment. On the other side is the Turkish Cypriot Opposition, which is supported by the new, still weak, Turkey's AKP government. Finally, the Annan Plan was rejected, as 75.8% of Greek Cypriots voted 'no', and 64.9% of Turkish Cypriots voted 'yes', in separate referendums held in the two communities on 24 April 2004.

After its strengthening, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government initiates a new era of interventions and control of the Turkish Cypriot community and the occupied territories of Cyprus, continuing Ankara's consistent invasive policy, on a political, economic, cultural and social level. As the author emphasises, the concept of managing a 'Turkish prefecture', a 'Turkish province' prevails again. Part of the Turkish Cypriot trade union movement continues to express its concern regarding the preservation of Cypriot identity and communal existence. However, as it is pointed out, political parties that have traditionally opposed the creation of dichotomous political structures have now become part of their management.

The time period on which the book focuses starts from 1964 and reaches 2004, for which period it highlights the attempt, to a state of exception, of the Turkish Cypriot Opposition to transform the relations of the Turkish Cypriot community with Turkey.

The author selects the two aforementioned dates as decisive. As he states, he chooses 1964 as the moment of 'a first form of division of the Cypriot space and population', given that from 1964 to 1974 -when the Turkish aggression on Cyprus took place- with the intercommunal conflicts, the vast majority of Turkish Cypriots was settled into enclaves. The period under study includes 1974, the year of the illegal Turkish invasion in Cyprus, which was carried out in two phases, and the illegal occupation of over 36% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus. The author places his analysis in the new Post-Cold War global environment, concerning relations and dynamics that develop between Turkey-Turkish Cypriots, Greece-Greek Cypriots-European Union, until the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union,

on 1 May 2004. He chooses 2004 as the moment in which the majority of the Turkish Cypriot community approved the solution of the Cyprus problem proposed by the Annan Plan, in the referendum that took place.

In conclusion, this book is a very interesting monograph, which provides the reader with a comprehensive picture of the Turkish Cypriot community, during the time period 1964-2004. It focuses on the Turkish Cypriot Left, highlighting its emergence, its positions, the course it charted, its strengthening, and ultimately the leading role it played. It presents the authoritarian relationship and the complete control -at a political, economic, social and cultural level- that Turkey exercises over the Turkish Cypriot community, as well as the attempt of the Turkish Cypriot Opposition to transform this situation. The author shows particular diligence in pointing out the various positions and tendencies of the political parties and trade unions of the Turkish Cypriot community. It could be argued that the author succeeds in abolishing the 'depersonalisation' of the Turkish Cypriots, which is often encountered in studies concerning the Cyprus problem, and which is mainly the prevailing image for the Turkish Cypriot community.

**Virginia Balafouta**