Cypriot Nationalisms in Context: History, Identity and Politics

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This book represents a further elaboration of papers presented at the international conference "The emergence and development of Nationalisms in Cyprus", which was held in Nicosia on 27th April 2013. It is a collective volume with contributions from fifteen writers who attempt to shed light on various aspects of the Cyprus question under the rubric of theoretical constructs such as nationalism, imperialism and colonialism.

The book's originality consists on the one hand in managing to reveal aspects of the Cyprus issue on which the interest of investigators has hitherto not focused (e.g. the stance of the Greek and Turkish Left towards the Cyprus problem, the role of the Legislative Council, the stance of women's organizations, the activity of the far right organization "X", the re-founding of Turkish-Cypriot identity among settlers, the incorporation of the Armenian community, the generation of communalist prejudice among children) and on the other hand the fact that to a great extent the presentation of empirical material is mediated through deployment of the theoretical schemata of nationalism, Marxism, ethnogenesis, colonialism, imperialism.

The publication's editors in the introduction to the book follow Anthony Marx's definition of nationalism, according to which "Nationalism...is a collective sentiment or identity, bounding and binding together those individuals who share a sense of large-scale political solidarity aimed at creating, legitimizing or challenging states". In this way nationalism becomes perceptible or is justified by a sense of historical commonality which holds together a population within a territorial entity, drawing a boundary between those who belong and those who do not belong."

The theoretical intervention of the introduction is enriched through a deepening of the content of nationalism, presenting the distinctions between formal and infor-

mal nationalism, with formal nationalism understood as the variety which comes "from above", that is to say, from the state institutions which elaborate an official nationalistic ideology aimed at homogenizing and disciplining society, whereas unofficial nationalism denotes more emotional and reactive values more related to everyday life. Another distinction is that between civic and ethnic nationalism. The former signifies a specific variant emphasizing a shared civil or political belongingness embracing people located in the same geographic space whereas the second denotes a national identity pointing to common nationality, culture and tradition. One case pertains more to "liberal" nationalism and the other to "conservative" nationalism.

On the basis of the above we can be led to a geography of nationalism and highlighting of the difference between western and non-western nationalisms. Although there is a distinct and recognized continuity from the European ideological currents of the 19th century, at the same time very important, and inevitable, changes have occurred, from the moment that nationalism begins to involve cultures entirely different from those that existed, and exist, in the West.

Christofis and Kyritsi subsequently endeavour to link the concept of nationalism to Marxism, focusing on the fact of the liberation process of the former colonies in the first post-war decades and its linkage with the demand for socialism. This effort has come to be associated with more general developments in the social sciences which have been conducive to a more intensive and fruitful investigation of the nationalist phenomenon.

In the first part of the book there is an examination of early manifestations of nationalism in Cyprus. From the viewpoint of methodology the section in question corresponds to the first and second phase of Hroch's schema for the historical development of nationalist movements. The first phase is characterized by the study and promotion of the linguistic, cultural and, often, historical characteristics of a dominated ethnic group without explicitly positing the question of securing national self-determination. In the second phase, a significantly large number of activists mobilises to awaken the national consciousness of its nationals, with a view to constructing a future nation.

Basic elements in the first phases of the Cyprus question, as presented in the book, are the emergence of those social groups, which, in conjunction with the activation of political institutions, provided the incentive for the rise of Greek nationalism on the island in the first years of the 20th century. A phenomenon that was

intensified once the Greek national self was constituted against the national other. This empirical description is reinforced by reference to the three conflicting currents in research on nationalism: a) the primordialism whose view is that national identities are historically embedded because nations have their roots in a common cultural heritage and language which lead to a demand for, and the establishment of, national states b) the modern constructivists who approach the nation as artificial construction of an invented tradition or as an imagined community, attributing emphasis to the linking of ethnogenesis to the phenomenon of industrialization. This process is the product of an ideological plan originating from the modern state and/or from the most powerful social strata c) the ethnosymbolism embodying a critique of modernism, considering that for the creation of a nation state, importance must be assigned to elements such as myths, symbols, and traditions. The second part of the book corresponds, from the theoretical viewpoint, to the third phase of nationalism in accordance with the Hroch schema. It is the period when nationalism wins mass support. The book covers the period from 1940 up to the Turkish invasion in 1974.

The third part deals with the question of endogenous Cypriot nationalism (Cypriotness). In this connection, it is interesting how the numerically small Armenian community has been integrated into Cypriot society, and particular into Greek Cypriot society, without losing elements of its own specific national identity. The contributors to the book see this as a potential model for coexistence in a future unified Cypriot state.

The fourth part concerns the local-global relation with the Cypriot question. The national liberation movements after the Second World War linked the anti-colonialist demand with socialism, but it very soon became clear that the national dimension overshadowed a certain Marxist rhetoric. In that context both the Greek Left and its Turkish counterpart functioned more as nationally responsible forces following the official policy of their states on the Cyprus question than as agents for social emancipation and internationalist solidarity. Naturally at that level too there were differences because the Turkish Left (and specifically The Workers' Party of Turkey) in a first phase favoured protection of Turkish Cypriots from the prospect of *enosis* of Cyprus with Greece, without this meaning Turkish intervention outside of the borders of Turkey. In the next phase, they aligned themselves with official Turkish foreign policy, also accepting external intervention. Another aspect linked with the aforementioned was the entry of Cyprus into the Non-Aligned Movement

which, above and beyond the endeavors of Makarios to manoeuvre between the USA and the USSR, was also a consequence of the development within the Greek Left of considerable sympathies for the movements of the Third World.

As indicated, the book operates both at a theoretical and at an empirical level. On the theoretical level the value of the book is that, on the one hand, it highlights the basic (vertical) approaches to the phenomenon of nationalism (primordialism, modernism, national symbolism) but also the specialized (horizontal) approaches (formal/informal, official/unofficial, civic/ethnic). Also emphasized is the uncompleted attempt to link with Marxism particularly in the first post-war period. Included among the virtues at the empirical level is the highlighting of a number of questions around giving prominence to the nationalist phenomenon in Cyprus (the role of women, the relation of Cyprus to the Third World, the integration of the Armenians, the role of the Legislative Council, the incitement of reflexes of prejudice in small children, the resignification of the Turkish Cypriot identity through the arrival of the settlers). Finally there should be emphasis on the value, not always self-evident, of the participation of Turkish Cypriot writers in the publication of a book on Cyprus.

All in all *Cypriot Nationalism in Context* is work of originality focusing attention on a number of aspects of Cypriot nationalism that have so far not been investigated in depth, and this makes it worthy of the attention of people concerned "professionally" with the subject but also with the general public. From this viewpoint it would be worthwhile for the book to be published both in Greek and in Turkish. Beyond the above, there are questions on which more detailed discussion would make the book richer thematically.

The first, which in my opinion warrants some questioning is that a more social/class approach to the phenomenon, and indeed over time, is conspicuous by its absence. In other words, I think that a study of the evolution of nationalism would be enriched by a cross-sectional examination of the growth of the capitalist system within the Cypriot social formation. Something like this would start from a basic question: was there a clear distinction between the two communities during the later Ottoman period which, with the advent of the British, evolved into an emergence of the two nationalisms? And if this is the case, to what extent did the economic superiority of some strata of the Greek Cypriot element contribute to the shaping of the Greek consciousness and in what way did the economically subordinate Orthodox sections of the population adopt this consciousness? Correspondingly, to

what extent did the Cypriot economy in the 20ᵗʰ century, in the evolution of which the Greek Cypriot economic elite played a decisive role, sow division between the two communities?

Similarly, a highlighting of the relations of the two communities with their "mother fatherlands" would add further interest. This not in the sense of the dispatch of diplomatic delegations and so on (such aspects have been adequately covered in the existing literature) but in the light of the degree to which the Orthodox and Muslims of Cyprus considered themselves part of the Greek and Turkish nations respectively. In addition to this it is also important to determine from when this began to happen in a majoritarian sense within each community (e.g. how the Orthodox of Cyprus became committed to the establishment of an independent Greek state).

One final point: the first territorial division of the island took place in 1963/64 and was completed with the Turkish invasion of 1974. The passage of such a long period has undoubtedly dimmed memories of cohabitation. Because of what device could one leap over, in a general sense, not only the problems created by nationalisms but also the reality of years of separation? One possible answer to that could be the content of the article on the Armenian community. Even then a number of reservations emerge: the Armenian community had essentially been incorporated in the Greek community with which it has a religion in common and there are no historical memories of enmity (in contrast to the relation of the Armenians with the Ottoman Empire and Turkey). Moreover when the incorporation process took place the Armenians did not have their own nation-state. Obviously, the above observations pertain to questions that require further study and elaboration. They are covered by the present volume, but only marginally. However, even this limited reference to them adds further interest to this in any case fine publishing endeavour.

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