

# **The Impact of the Greek Civil War in Cyprus: The Political, Socio-Economic, Educational and Sports Aspects**

## **[Ο Αντίκτυπος του Ελληνικού Εμφυλίου στην Κύπρο: Οι Πολιτικές, Κοινωνικοοικονομικές, Εκπαιδευτικές και Αθλητικές Πτυχές]**

**CONSTANTINA CONSTANTINOU**

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Constantina Constantinou's book examines the consequences of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), a four-year conflict which, among other things, affected the political discourse in Cyprus. This period, which coincides with the beginning of the Cold War, was, as evidenced by the author, crucial for the political history of Cyprus: both the Left and the Right in Cyprus were affected by the Greek Civil War at its climax and developed along similar lines to the Greek political sides during that war. From demonstrating simple solidarity with the two opposing sides in the Greek Civil War to participating by sending fighters and/or financial support to their comrades in Greece, both sides in Cyprus viewed the war as a development that mirrored their respective ideologies.

The book, apart from the Introduction and the Conclusions, is structured in ten chapters and examines the political history of Cyprus since the founding of AKEL, in April 1941, and the escalating reaction and attempt of the anti-communist camp to organise itself, mainly as a response to AKEL. In the chapters that follow the introduction, the importation of the intense civil-war climate is presented, highlighting the bipartisan confrontation during 1948 and 1949 in the areas of the Church, education, mass sports and football, trade unions, and in every form of economic activity. Finally, the contribution of the Greek Cypriots in the two camps of the Greek Civil War is recorded, both in soldiers and material or financial aid, although the names and the number of participants is not accurate. As the author points out, it was not possible for AKEL to support the Communist Party of Greece as much as

they wanted due to logistic reasons, as well as because of the internal crisis of AKEL which started to appear around that period.

The differences between Left and Right were unbridgeable and would ultimately lead to a frontal collision. The introduction, however, of the civil-war climate to Cyprus launched these differences to maximum heights: Left and Right now crossed swords in a divided political climate which was re-contextualised by the Greek Civil War. Both Right and Left adopted the propaganda of the conflict but, for a number of reasons, most of them internal, they avoided armed confrontation.

The transposition of the climate which was prevailing in Greece at the time was completely normal, as the majority of Greek Cypriots had been furiously seeking union with Greece. The fact that Greek Cypriots considered themselves an integral part of Greece justified their great interest and their partial involvement in the events of the civil war. The Right not only sought the introduction of a civil-war confrontation to satisfy its political principles but also for the sake of expediency, since, in this new arena, it could pursue arguments which were ancillary to its purpose, namely its efforts to convince the majority of the population to fear an internal enemy, AKEL, which was accused of conniving with its 'fellow travellers' and for having completely associated itself with EAM and the DSE to unite a 'free Cyprus with a free and democratic Greece.'

The influence of the civil war on political developments in Cyprus is part and parcel of the partial two-way relationship between the two sides of the Greek Civil War and their commensurate Greek Cypriot factions. More specifically, the Greek government never relented in its attempts to control the Greek Cypriot Right and the Church of Cyprus. In consequence, Cyprus either as an internal matter for the political leadership of Greece or as an irredentist issue, was a continual point of reference: the claim for union (enosis) made by Greek Cypriots, and the British response to these claims had a direct impact on Greek foreign policy. The decisive interventions of successive Greek governments to push enosis forward or back were significant. The participation of the Greek Right, through its Consulate, in the confrontation between the Cypriot Left and the Right, as well as the Consulate's contribution to conveying the atmosphere of the Greek Civil War to Cyprus, are of importance, as proven by a number of Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents and correspondence from Greek consuls in Cyprus with Athens.

AKEL might have considered the British Communist Party as the metropolitan party with which it consulted, particularly during critical periods and, especially,

with regard to the Cyprus issue, but official guidance came from the national party, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). KKE monitored AKEL's internal affairs, keeping up to date with every move its leading officials made. Apart from the visit to the Greek mountains and the subsequent change in AKEL's stance toward self-government–enosis, the instances wherein KKE decisively steered AKEL were many. KKE understood that within Cyprus lay many pitfalls for the Greek government, since 'Greece today breathes with two lungs, one American and one British, and thus cannot, because of the Cyprus issue, risk suffocating.'

So, besides its responsibility to guide its fellow travellers in Cyprus, KKE was interested in how it could use the political situation in Cyprus to weaken the two 'lungs', figuratively speaking, namely American–British imperialism, and its opponent, the Greek government, by exposing it and therefore suffocating it.

The British occupation of Cyprus and the strict police measures were the main reasons why the transfer of the Greek Civil-War climate didn't escalate or lead to domestic bloodshed. As for its internal effects on Cyprus, Constantinou's book analyses to some great extent phenomena such as the anti-communist discourse of the Cypriot Church, the role of the Greek Consulate in Nicosia in intensifying political passions in Cyprus in 1948-1949, the relation between AKEL and KKE, the establishment and the action of the organisation X in Cyprus, etc. The consequences in sports and the division of football clubs are also analysed, in addition to the trip of then general secretary of AKEL, Fifis Ioannou, and the leader of PEO, Andreas Ziartidis, to 'Free Greece', which was controlled by the guerrillas of the Democratic Army, in December 1948.

This is a book that constitutes a significant scientific contribution to the Cypriot historiography based on original archival material which enriches our knowledge about a period of national importance for Cyprus and Greece: the formation of the political discourse of the two rival wings and the polarising division in Cypriot society, which minimised the chances of political cooperation and conciliation just a few years before the beginning of the EOKA struggle. I strongly believe that this book is among the most systematic studies for this critical period. Despite some minor flaws, this book is an original contribution and rich with new findings, while it surely succeeds in providing constructive knowledge and a new perspective on the study of the contemporary political history of Cyprus.

**Alexis Alecou**