

# ‘That crucial summer of 1956’? Stalinism, Anti-imperialist Strategies and the Fragmentation of the International Communist Movement – a view from Cyprus, c. 1949-1960.

*George Odysseos*

**Abstract:** This article explores the complicated impact of Stalinism’s political crisis and anti-imperialist politics on Cypriot communism in the 1950s. While the year 1956 has featured prominently in the historiography of western communist parties, the date hardly features in studies of Cypriot communism, nor in the history of the communist AKEL (Progressive Party of Working People). These latter studies have instead focused on AKEL’s stance towards the right-wing EOKA (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters) campaign against British colonialism (1955-1959). Nevertheless, many of the issues that lent their weight to the significance of 1956 – such as the process of de-Stalinisation and question of party discipline, as well as the dilemmas opened up by the development of ‘national roads’ to socialism – played an important role in Cypriot communism during the period. AKEL, then, offers a case of a party connected to the ‘global 1956’ that did not centre on that particular calendar date. The article focuses on two prominent figures who were expelled from the party as a result of AKEL’s intra-party crisis of 1952; the young lawyer George Cacogiannis, and Evdoros Joannides, perhaps the party’s foremost propagandist resident in London. In discussing their writings and activities, the article reveals the global arena Cypriot communists

operated within, highlighting the ways issues of international communism were adapted to Cypriot conditions and concerns, which revolved around effort to 'internationalise' the national issue. In doing so, it demonstrates that, for some parties, the resonance of the Suez Crisis outlasted the shock of the Soviet invasion of Hungary, and offered a framework for the 'recontextualisation' of the Soviet Union through the Non-Aligned Movement.

**Keywords:** Cypriot Communism, AKEL, Middle East, Suez Crisis, anti-colonialism, transnationalism

The crises of 1956 are often seen as a turning point in the history of international communism, with accounts stressing the fragmentation of the International Communist Movement, centred on Moscow. Yet the date hardly features in studies of Cyprus' communist party (AKEL – Progressive Party of Working People), which managed to retain significant support without disavowing its orientation towards the Soviet Union. Where significant dates are invoked in historical studies, these are often a function of political events taking place on the island. The milestones and themes presented in general accounts of the party's history often subsume the narrative of Cypriot communism within the larger framework of the 'national issue' – the question of what form self-determination would take on the island, encompassing the anti-colonial struggle against British colonial rule (1955-1959), as well as the various conflicts (not least between the Greek Cypriot majority and Turkish Cypriot minority) that plagued the subsequent independent republic from 1960 until the partition of the island in 1974, following a coup aided by the Greek dictatorship and the Turkish invasion.<sup>1</sup> Where attention is drawn to the international dimension of the party's history, these often focus on the role played by figures in the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), and less often the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), in shaping AKEL's attitude to the national issue.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, since there had been no change in AKEL's Moscow-orientated leadership, which had been appointed in 1949, nor any indication in the scholarly literature that 1956 saw a significant loss of party member-

ship, one is left with the impression that the convulsions of 1956 passed AKEL by.

This article seeks to place AKEL within the context of the 'global 1956' that rippled through the world communist movement. It focuses on the trajectories of two party members who were expelled during the party's internal crisis of 1952: a Cypriot member of the CPGB resident in London, Evdoros Joannides (also known by his *nom de plume*, Doros Alastos); and a young lawyer in Cyprus, George Cacogiannis.<sup>3</sup> The trajectories of these two individuals illustrate the transnational world that Cypriot communists operated within, as well as some of the continuities and tensions inherent in the 'global 1956.' Their writings and activities further show how individuals adapted debates and currents within global communism to local conditions. The article therefore utilises the framing of the 'biographical approach' to open up questions not only about the transnational dimension of the communist commitment, but also about its periodisation and perceived ruptures by allowing us to examine historical 'moments' from the perspective of actors on the periphery of both Europe and the communist world. Such an approach has the benefit of providing insights into the tensions within AKEL, which presented itself as a monolithic party, during a period it had been driven underground following the party's proscription by the British authorities in December 1955.

While this study demonstrates the salience of the national issue in 'peripherising' the impulses of 1956, it also shows that this did not render local concerns as merely insular. Cyprus' position in the eastern Mediterranean made it susceptible to the anti-imperialist upheavals against the 'Anglo-Mediterranean Order'.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, if 1956 can be seen as a hinge in the story of Cypriot communism, it is the Suez crisis that looms large in the perceptions and orientations of its adherents, rather than the flashpoints centred on Poland, Hungary, and Moscow. More specifically, the juncture of the mid-1950s, characterised by the persistent question of Cypriot national self-determination, the intensity of the on-going process of decolonisation in the neighbouring Arab world, as well as the recontextualised role of the Soviet Union through its renewed emphasis on anti-colonial and developmental politics, offered Cypriot communists – both within AKEL and those opposed

to its leadership – a common framework within which to oppose British colonialism and the incursion of NATO interests. While this juncture allowed for a degree of alliance building with right-wing forces on the island, it also allowed the AKEL leadership to avoid much of the fallout from the 1956 crisis of Stalinism. The article therefore speaks to studies that highlight the 'interactions and hybridisations with different international projects and forces,' particularly that of the newly emerging Non-aligned Movement.<sup>5</sup>

### **That crucial summer of 1956? Anti-colonialism and the Suez crisis**

When an armed campaign against British rule began in 1955 it was not led by Cypriot communists, but by the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA). EOKA's stated aim was *Enosis* (Union) with Greece, and its fiercely anti-communist leadership excluded AKEL from the struggle, despite AKEL's endorsement of the aim. Although the demand for *Enosis* directed Greek Cypriot attentions towards Greece, the island's position as a Crown Colony in the eastern Mediterranean made it sensitive to the ebbs and flows of anti-imperialist sentiment in the broader Middle East. With the Suez crisis of 1956 marking a decisive phase of decolonisation in the region, these events also affected politics on the island and Cyprus' place within the British Empire.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in 1954 the British Army's Middle East headquarters had been transferred from Suez to the island, and its importance for Britain's commitments in the Middle East, centred around NATO and the Baghdad Pact, were reiterated at a Tripartite Conference with Greece and Turkey in the summer of 1955, five months after the initiation of the EOKA campaign.<sup>7</sup> Despite the armed hostilities on the island, Nicosia's airfield had provided the launch base for the preliminary aerial attacks on Cairo's airport.<sup>8</sup> One crisis affected the other, and the short term impact of the Suez crisis was a hardening of British government attitudes towards the on-going demands for their withdrawal from Cyprus. Writing in 1957, Lawrence Durrell, the poet and author who acted as Government Information Officer on the island, offered 'the vantage-point of Whitehall,' stating that:

[Here] in London, Cyprus was not only Cyprus; it was part of a fragile chain of telecommunication centres and ports, the skeletal backbone of an Empire striving to resist the encroachments of time. [...] Palestine and Suez had been questions of foreign sovereignty; they had never been Crown possessions. Cyprus belonged, from the point of view of geography and politics, to the Empire's very backbone. Must it not, then, be held at all costs?<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, by the time Harold Macmillan succeed Anthony Eden as Prime Minister, the Suez fiasco was already causing uneasy stirrings; early into Macmillan's premiership, suggestions were made that perhaps retaining Cyprus *as* a base would not be a necessity, but that merely possessing bases *on* Cyprus would suffice.<sup>10</sup>

Lawrence's account illustrates how, even as Cyprus became its own flashpoint in international politics, its interpretation was understood through larger regional and imperial crises such as that of Suez. Indeed, the connections between Suez and the potential of Britain relinquishing control of the island were not lost on contemporary Cypriot commentators. From his own vantage point in London, Evdoros Joannides, perhaps the most prolific propagandist for the Cypriot cause in the English language between the late 1930s and early 1950s, also noted the importance of the Suez crisis in his final monograph. *Cyprus Guerrilla* was published in 1960, following the conclusion of the EOKA campaign and the declaration of the independent Republic of Cyprus. Partly based on Joannides' interviews with fighters and political leaders in Cyprus, the book was an English-language journalistic account of the campaign. Although limited in its discussion of communist matters, Joannides nevertheless highlighted 1956 as a critical year due to the escalation in tensions on the island resulting from the first executions of captured EOKA members, as well as the exile of EOKA's political and spiritual leader, Archbishop Makarios III, who also acted as the organisation's chief negotiator. Importantly, Joannides further identified Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 'that crucial summer of 1956' as overshadowing 'the Cyprus problem' for the British, and may have been aware of Durrell's comments when he made explicit its connection to Cyprus:

It was not only geography which linked Cyprus closely with this fresh burst of nationalism; the outcome could scarcely leave [Cyprus'] future unaffected. Perspectives were altering rapidly and the introduction of the Soviet factor into areas which were the traditional preserve of the West vested them with unfamiliar potentialities.<sup>11</sup>

Once the Suez crisis broke out in the autumn, Joannides presented 'Cypriot sentiment [as being] on the side of Egypt'. Even as he passingly deplored the Soviet Union 'pitilessly crushing the revolution in Hungary', Joannides emphasised the crisis as offering 'the greatest opportunity' even to 'the old anti-Communist chief' of EOKA, General George Grivas, who remained undeterred by the 'threat of Russian action in the Middle East'. Indeed, the EOKA campaign was intensified in the wake of the crisis. November 1956 provided the highest monthly figure of attacks against British soldiers and the British base at Akrotiri was bombed. Joannides concluded that 'the seven-day war [...] demonstrated that a country whose population was hostile had many disadvantages as a base'.<sup>12</sup>

*Cyprus Guerrilla* formed part of a constellation of publications and commentary written by Greek Cypriots who sought to gain support for the national cause within the imperial metropole.<sup>13</sup> Based in London from the early 1930s, Joannides was well-placed to offer interpretations of events in Cyprus to British audiences. By 1960, he had been doing so for about twenty-five years, publishing books, pamphlets, and writing articles in the British press.<sup>14</sup> Much of his work appeared in media affiliated with the CPGB, a party he had joined soon after arriving in Britain. Like many Cypriots, Joannides had been drawn to the CPGB's anti-colonial stances as well as the party's willingness to allow these recent émigrés to organise their own 'Cypriot branches' within the London party.<sup>15</sup> The CPGB offered these Cypriots a platform for publications, as well as links to the British parliament, the labour movement, and anti-colonial organisations such as the League Against Imperialism and, later, the Movement for Colonial Freedom.<sup>16</sup> While limited to Greek Cypriot perspectives, these activities helped to place Cyprus on the conceptual map of the British left. By the 1940s, the efforts of Cypriot

CPGB members were praised in AKEL conferences in Cyprus and vilified in the Cypriot right-wing press.<sup>17</sup> Although these Cypriots' activities were often limited to Britain, Joannides' party connections also allowed him to travel to Greece, France, and the headquarters of the United Nations in New York in both journalistic capacities and to lobby for the Cypriot cause.<sup>18</sup>

In highlighting Suez in *Cyprus Guerrilla*, Joannides was responding to the political situation the crisis had provoked in Britain. His focus is all the starker when considered against other examples available to critics of Empire in Britain during this period of decolonisation, which provoked polarising sentiments.<sup>19</sup> The choice of comparison often indicated the framework the Cyprus emergency was to be interpreted within. For example, the initiation of EOKA's violent campaign in April 1955 and the subsequent build-up of British troops on the island had prompted the CPGB to publish a commentary which hoped to spark moral outrage by rhetorically questioning whether Cyprus was to become 'a new Kenya' in relation to rumours of British brutality.<sup>20</sup> Responding to this cycle of violence in 1958, the *New Reasoner*, one of the early publications of the British New Left, emphasised the importance of the Cyprus crisis in Britain by describing it as 'our Algeria,' in reference to the immense political impact of the latter war in France the publication hoped to emulate.<sup>21</sup> Joannides' choice of Suez pointed to the continuities that were inherent even in hinge moments such as the Suez Crisis. He was able to draw on a longer history of linking the Cypriot cause with Middle Eastern concerns through his experience of writing for CPGB publications, such as *World News and Views*. From as early as 1946, Joannides had warned that the military bases then being established in Cyprus, beyond their purported purpose of 'defence of the Suez Canal,' would be turned against the 'turbulent Arab nations, struggling for freedom, whom the R.A.F. can effectively dominate from Cyprus'.<sup>22</sup> Considering this experience, Joannides was likely aware of publications such as *Guilty Men 1957: Suez and Cyprus*, a critique of the British government's policy co-authored by the left Labour member Michael Foot.<sup>23</sup> Joannides would have surely recognised the author's name through the latter's brother, Lord Hugh Foot, who served as the last colonial Governor of Cyprus.

Yet beyond appealing to a British audience, *Cyprus Guerrilla's* references also indicate that Joannides was responding to political developments in Cyprus, particularly the enthusiasm that was emerging for what was often termed 'the non-aligned' or 'Afro-Asian' countries in Cypriot newspapers. His emphasis on the Suez crisis, as opposed to the contemporaneous insurgencies in Algeria or Kenya, was not only based on Egypt's influence in the region, but also pointed to Nasser's prominent position among a cohort of leaders from newly independent former colonies in Asia and Africa, who had initiated efforts at collective action at the Bandung Conference of 1955.<sup>24</sup> Seeking to open a space beyond the Cold War binary, in 1961 this new international grouping formed the basis of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in an attempt to assert their countries' demands beyond the alliances demanded by the United States, European colonial powers, as well as the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup> These developments were registered in Cyprus and were closely tied to the rise of the young new leader of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios III, who had attended the Bandung Conference as an observer. Having wrested control of the anti-colonial struggle away from AKEL and towards the conservative church in the early 1950s, Makarios emerged as EOKA's political leader during the campaign, before being elected Cyprus' first president in 1960, a post he would retain until his death in 1977.<sup>26</sup> Writing in 1960, Joannides claimed that, at Bandung, Makarios had 'met Nehru, U Nu, Nasser, Soekarno [*sic*] and other Afro-Asian leaders. He could not help comparing the position of these last-named personalities with his own'.<sup>27</sup> Makarios appears to have been pleased with *Cyprus Guerrilla*, as it is reported he ordered 100 copies, which were to be placed in Cypriot libraries.<sup>28</sup>

These developments represented a rupture in Cypriot politics. In attending the Bandung conference and organising the EOKA revolt, Makarios showed himself capable of working outside the framework of Anglo-Greek Friendship, which had dominated elite attempts at achieving *Enosis* by appealing to London and Athens to work the matter out themselves – with limited Cypriot involvement.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, despite his initial reluctance to work with AKEL, Makarios had nevertheless courted the passive support of the left from as early as 1953 as part of his efforts to 'internationalise' the issue of Cypriot self-determination.



In a famous speech, Makarios stated that in their efforts for self-determination, Cypriots would 'stretch out both our right hand and our left to take the help offered by East and West', a statement that allegedly inspired the congregation 'to strike up the Communist "Internationale"' due to the implicit reference to the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup> Keen to avoid a tri-partite agreement between Britain, Greece, and Turkey due to the assumption that Turkey would get a more favourable hearing within a NATO context, Makarios' 'internationalising' efforts were directed at presenting the Cypriots' case at the United Nations, where he believed it would gain the sympathetic audience of the 'Afro-Asian' countries as well as the socialist bloc, who Makarios calculated would be keen to wrestle the island from NATO powers.<sup>31</sup> To this end, Makarios directed his diplomatic efforts towards the emerging forums in the global south, and his participation at the Bandung Conference foreshadowed his later decision to join the ranks of the NAM from its founding.

Crucially, *Cyprus Guerrilla* appeared at the tail-end of over a decade of political wrangling within AKEL. By the early 1950s, the party had lost the leading role it had cultivated the previous decade in the growing anti-colonial sentiment on the island, partly due to Makarios' rise and partly due to a party crisis, which reached its zenith with a number of high-profile expulsions in 1952, a topic further discussed in the next section.<sup>32</sup> By the time the book was published in 1960, Joannides had thoroughly distanced himself from his erstwhile comrades, having been suspended from the CPGB in 1953. Joannides' position had been tainted by his association with one of the expellees in Cyprus, George Cacogiannis, but also by accusations leveraged by Cypriot comrades in Britain, that he had orientated himself towards merely petitioning the British Houses of Parliament at the expense of organising among trade unions and rank and file members of the CPGB, thus having become 'a rotten bourgeois intellectual'.<sup>33</sup> Although he had appealed against his suspension, Joannides would later claim that by 1939 he had already begun 'increasingly questioning my Marxist philosophy' through his engagement with other sources of thought in 'nationalism, tribalism and its offshoots, and human psychology and atavism'.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the trajectory of the Cyprus Committee, a London-based organisation that sought to propagandise for Cypriot self-determination of which Joannides was

the leading light, appears to bear this out.<sup>35</sup> Citing the heightening of tensions between the left and right in Cyprus, a 1947 decision made the Committee, hitherto AKEL's representative in Britain, into a non-party organisation, which sought to remain 'uninfluenced by party agitation'.<sup>36</sup> A report by British CPGB members during Joannides' appeal against his suspension further concluded that his 'political degeneration' was at least partly attributable to his 'hostility born of personal differences to the Party leadership of AKEL'.<sup>37</sup>

Despite these differences, the growing popularity of the 'Afro-Asian' countries, as well as Makarios' 'internationalising' efforts at the UN, offered both Joannides and AKEL an opening into the new configuration of Cypriot politics. In registering his frustration in 1947 at the Cypriot failure to create a united front against imperialism, Joannides pointed to the examples of other colonial peoples 'like the Indians, the Burmese, the Arabs, the Blacks of Africa and the West Indies' who had their own organisations in London and whose progressive left had allied with bourgeois nationalist forces in their own countries.<sup>38</sup> One of the most active of these was V. K. Krishna Menon's India League, which sought to build a united front of Indian forces across the political spectrum as well as links across the whole of the British left.<sup>39</sup> Although there is little evidence to suggest that Joannides had developed sustained links with other anti-colonial movements, it is noteworthy that he did share a platform with Menon in 1938.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, Menon was present at the London Cypriots' first Conference organised by the Committee in 1943.<sup>41</sup> Writing in *Guerrilla* in 1960, Joannides further praised Menon's interventions on the Cyprus question at UN debates, where he acted as India's representative, as well as Makarios' receptiveness to the Indian diplomat's proposal of independence, rather than *Enosis*.<sup>42</sup>

In AKEL's case, the attack on Egypt and growing popularity of the 'Afro-Asian countries' was utilised to recontextualise even a crisis such as the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The outbreak of the Hungarian crisis prompted conflicting interpretations in Cypriot papers, with nationalist outlets such as *Ethnos* (nation) and *Eleftheria* (Liberty) declaring their support for the Hungarian 'revolutionaries' and AKEL's *Haravghi* (Dawn) decrying the insurgents as 'counter-revolutionaries' and 'fascist criminals'.<sup>43</sup> Yet following the outbreak of the Suez crisis, and within

the context of both crises being discussed at the UN General Assembly, *Haravghi* approvingly and prominently quoted Krishna Menon, who pointed out the 'inconsistency' of the Western demand for Soviet withdrawal from Hungary while claiming that the raid on Egypt was conducted in the service of peace. *Haravghi* noted that the resolution calling for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary was met with 'strong opposition' from 'the Indians and other countries'.<sup>44</sup> These interpretations were contextualised with further commentary, which listed 'the commendable stances of the United Nations, the determined mobilisation of the British people, the world campaign against war' as well as 'the role of the Soviet Union' as maintaining peace and avoiding an escalation in the Middle East.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the same *Haravghi* issue also concluded that 'world interest' was growing 'in the solution of the Cyprus issue' and assured its readers that the Soviet Union would 'unreservedly support' the Cypriots' claims at the UN General Assembly.<sup>46</sup>

As we shall further discuss in the section below, the UN was becoming one of the AKEL leadership's preferred avenues for handling the national issue. In this context, the development of a non-aligned politics acted as a powerful framework that recontextualised and maintained the importance of the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc to Cypriot communists as well as to Cypriot nationalists who followed Makarios' line. Although AKEL's support for Makarios was limited in 1956, the anti-western critiques emerging from countries like Egypt and India, as well as the signals coming from Moscow regarding 'non-capitalist paths' to socialism, set the tone for AKEL's later support for Cyprus' participation in the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>47</sup> By April 1961, the party called for the Makarios government of the newly independent Cyprus to follow the lead of countries like the United Arab Republic, Iraq, 'the Indies', Indonesia, and Cuba, whose trade with the Soviet Union, it was argued, allowed them to maintain their 'independent, neutral position'.<sup>48</sup> Beyond the potential economic support the socialist states could provide an aspiring post-colonial state, Makarios would, in imitation of Nasser, also request weapons from the eastern bloc (particularly from Czechoslovakia) throughout the 1960s and early 1970s to resist Cypriot forces keen to place the island within NATO's sphere of influence as well as domestic critics of his style of personalised rule.<sup>49</sup>

While never stable, AKEL's relationship with the NAM would shift over time. By the early 1970s, the organisation was criticised for what the party saw as its oscillating policies. One article wrote of the non-proletarian character of many of the countries of the NAM, which led to 'nationalism and selectivity with regards to the two basic social systems of the divided world'.<sup>50</sup>

Yet in the late 1950s, AKEL was able to capitalise on the popularity of the 'Afro-Asian countries,' as well as the moral support being offered by the eastern bloc. Despite accusations of treachery due to having not supported the EOKA campaign, by 1963 the Deputy Secretary General could claim that AKEL had succeeded in raising the membership from 5,000 in 1945 to past the 10,000 mark, out of a population of about 550,000.<sup>51</sup> This followed a similar pattern in countries such as Indonesia, as well as India and Cuba where, as Vijay Prashad notes, despite the Hungarian crisis and fallout from Khrushchev's speech, the Soviet Union was not penalised as it was in Europe.<sup>52</sup> In Britain too, Cypriot membership within the London District of the CPGB rose from 435 in 1957 to 752 in 1961, during a period when the overall membership of the London party fell from 7,186 to 6,692.<sup>53</sup> It was perhaps Joannides' awareness of AKEL's continued popularity, the party's links to important international allies, and the fragile united front achieved among anti-colonial Cypriots, that led to an omission of any sustained critique towards his former comrades despite an acrimonious disciplinary hearing. This omission is particularly evident when compared to his brother's accusation that British communists simply extracted favours and money from Cypriot émigrés, as well as side-lined Cypriot 'intellectuals' in the party in favour of the 'most uncouth, servile and slavish' of the Cypriot members so as to exert their influence over the London Cypriot community.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Joannides' penultimate monograph, *Cyprus in History*, published less than two years after his suspension from the CPGB, only went as far as characterising AKEL as being initially 'organised as a broad movement,' with a membership that included trade unionists, rural organisations, peasants, as well as 'lawyers, doctors, journalists, and members of cultural associations'; crucially, he further claimed in a footnote, with no further commentary, that the party 'later evolved

into a Communist Party'.<sup>55</sup> It was these alternative visions of AKEL that ultimately led to the 1952 crisis.

### **The 'new wind' – Khrushchev's speech, internationalism, and the politics of national liberation**

Even as both the 'internationalisation' of the national issue and the emergence of the 'Afro-Asian' countries on the world stage recontextualised the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, AKEL was not entirely shielded from the reverberations of the crisis of Stalinism. While Joannides' critique of his erstwhile comrades was marked by its omissions, another expellee of the 1952 purges, George Cacogiannis, spoke enthusiastically of the 'new wind in all the communist parties of the world' brought about by the Twentieth Congress's condemnation of the personality cult, along with its assertion of 'the great importance of the Leninist principles of intraparty democracy', and the restoration of figures who had been previously expelled by 'narrow-minded party dictators'.<sup>56</sup> These comments were made in a long pamphlet, *The AKEL leadership and the Armed Struggle – A Marxist Critique*, published in 1959, as well as a follow up text some months later, both of which criticised the AKEL leadership's condemnation of the EOKA campaign. Cacogiannis' trajectory illustrates that, while factionalism within AKEL centred on perspectives on national liberation, these disagreements were not entirely divorced from issues opened by the crisis of Stalinism. While issues of party democracy were discussed, these critiques remained localised and did not lead to the explicit advocating of 'national roads' to socialism, nor any more generalised critique of 'Stalinism'.

Published in the run-up to AKEL's return to legality following the conclusion of the EOKA campaign, Cacogiannis' 1959 text came, as Joannides', at the tail-end of over a decade of crisis within the party, centred on the national issue. While both Cypriot and Greek communists had long advocated for an independent Cyprus which would eventually join a Balkan Socialist Federation, the late 1940s had seen the crystallisation of *Enosis* as the stated goal of both AKEL and the Communist Party of Greece (KKE).<sup>57</sup> However, within AKEL, there

remained conflicting perspectives that either interpreted *Enosis* as a principle to gradually work towards, or a demand to be immediately implemented, or even those who rejected it as an aim. These differing perspectives came to a head in 1947, when disagreements emerged over whether to accept a British offer of a degree of self-governance while remaining within the Empire. Sensing an opportunity to build the mass support of the party, the General Secretary, Fifis Ioannou, had accepted the offer, which drew allegations of betrayal and collaboration with the British authorities from right-wing and conservative politicians, the Church, as well as within his own party.<sup>58</sup> AKEL's leadership therefore sought the advice of the KKE, whose General Secretary, Nikos Zachariadis, chastised the Cypriot comrades for their 'liberalism' and encouraged them to seek immediate *Enosis*.<sup>59</sup> Confident in victory in the on-going Greek Civil War, Zachariadis had expected Cyprus to join a communist Greece.

By 1949, a new leadership had coalesced around the figure of Ezekias Papaioannou, who became General Secretary of AKEL. With Papaioannou's rise, the party pivoted towards supporting *Enosis* and rejected any compromise with the British. This turn was controversial, largely due the fresh defeat suffered by the KKE in the civil war and the prospect of Cyprus joining a right-wing Greek state, but also due to the potential alienation of Cyprus' own sizeable Turkish-speaking minority – a fifth of the island's population – from the anti-colonial struggle. Yet with the conclusion of a referendum in 1950 that had claimed over 90 per cent Greek-Cypriot support for *Enosis*, Papaioannou could claim to be acting on a popular version of self-determination expressed by 'the unwavering will of our people to unite with Greece'.<sup>60</sup> The crises continued despite this change in leadership. Notwithstanding their earlier admonition, the KKE had in the early 1950s openly disagreed with AKEL's decision to boycott the municipal and Church elections on the island – the only form of elections permitted by the British authorities.<sup>61</sup> This attack had encouraged party members in Cyprus to level their own critiques against AKEL's new leadership at the party's seventh Congress in November/December 1951, which led to the expulsion of several prominent AKEL members from the party, including Cacogiannis, the following August for having allegedly formed an 'opportunist faction'.<sup>62</sup>

While this 'opportunistic faction' did not form a coherent group, their various grievances indicated the multifaceted aspects of the critiques levelled at Papaioannou, some of which Cacogiannis would draw on in *Critique*. The two most prominent rebels were the former mayors of important cities with a popular following: the educator Adam Adamantos, and a former General Secretary, Ploutis Servas. Their criticism revolved around opposition to *Enosis*, which Papaioannou's leadership had reinforced. Both men advocated a return to the pre-1949 policy of accepting the British offer a constitution and limited self-governance.<sup>63</sup>

In contrast, George Cacogiannis was reportedly not opposed to *Enosis*, as the other 'factionalists,' but had instead focused on issues of party democracy, claiming that the leadership was 'drowning criticism within the Party'.<sup>64</sup> Papaioannou's leadership had heralded significant changes. AKEL had been established in 1941 as a broad progressive party. Although the initiative had come from Cypriot communists, who had been operating underground since their party's proscription in 1931, there had been disagreements regarding the extent of communist involvement in AKEL's leadership.<sup>65</sup> As the son of an eminent lawyer, politician and Knight Bachelor of the British Empire, who had himself been called to the Bar at Gray's Inn, Cacogiannis' background was illustrative of the broad base of support that AKEL had cultivated. With the party's sixth Congress of 1949, Papaioannou's leadership sought to instigate 'a real turn towards a Bolshevik party reconstruction,' which included the utilisation of 'autobiographical records' when considering the recruitment of members to the party, the implementation of 'self-criticism' in the party's daily work, the establishment of schools for cadres and ideological publications, as well as an emphasis on 'vigilance' in the party's work and ideology maintained by loyal party members.<sup>66</sup> With the party driven underground once again in 1955, it is not clear to what extent the leadership were able to implement these changes. Indeed, in a 1963 article in the *World Marxist Review*, AKEL's deputy General Secretary complained that the party had formerly 'attached little importance to ideological work among its members'.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, writing in 1959, Cacogiannis claimed that 'genuine' Marxists who had remained in AKEL fought against this

'political vigilance,' and advocated for mechanisms that would allow criticism to flow 'not only from top to bottom but also from the bottom to the top'.<sup>68</sup>

Much had changed between Cacogiannis' expulsion in 1952 and the publication of *Critique* in 1959. Cacogiannis was emboldened by 'the words of Khrushchev at the twentieth Congress,' and what he saw as the reassertion of the 'Leninist principle' of 'collective leadership' in the international communist movement.<sup>69</sup> Yet most of Cacogiannis' *Critique* focused on his disagreement with AKEL's position on the national question, which remained the most important element of Cacogiannis' opposition to Papaioannou's leadership. There was some evidence of this opposition from as early as 1950, as indicated by an incriminating letter Cacogiannis had sent to Joannides, which was a factor in both their expulsions.<sup>70</sup> The letter was written following Papaioannou's return from a tour of both the eastern bloc and the West as a member of an AKEL delegation organised to promote the *Enosis* referendum as part of the party's own 'internationalisation' efforts. Written in English, its content demonstrated Cacogiannis' concern that Papaioannou was overly reliant on the eastern bloc:

I find a lack of sympathy here for the "intellectual class". Of course, history has shown that we are the ones to be less trusted, but at the present stage of Cyprus' politics, effort should, I think, be made to embrace the intelligence (if it exists in the literal meaning) of Cyprus. The people here are convinced that one of the People's Democracies is going to place the Cyprus question before the present [UN] assembly. Pappy [Papaioannou] seems to have brought this message with him. [...] And I wonder whether our «πρεσβία» [delegation] really has any concrete ground on which to base this confidence that the Cypriot question shall be brought up before the UN.<sup>71</sup>

Having recently returned to Cyprus from Britain, Cacogiannis was expressing here a frustration that too much focus was being given to the search for allies in the international diplomatic field, at the cost of cultivating local opportunities and initiatives. These critiques would



extend to the end of the decade, following both the start of the EOKA campaign and the 1956 crises.

Despite never explicitly expressing it, Cacogiannis' *Critique* prefigured the debates between 'Peaceful Co-existence' and armed revolt that would characterise much of the 'global 1960s'.<sup>72</sup> Although outside of the party, Cacogiannis' intervention was triggered by AKEL's 'dogmatic' condemnation of EOKA's armed campaign. Cacogiannis had himself joined EOKA as a member of the small group of about a few dozen 'Left-wing Patriots.' Although AKEL supported *Enosis* and had been agitating for a 'united front' with bourgeois anti-colonial Cypriot forces, the party had assessed Cypriot conditions as being inconducive to an armed struggle and condemned EOKA as 'narodniks'. This critique was drawn from AKEL's assessment of EOKA's use of 'individualised' terroristic activities and what the party saw as the 'idolisation of "heroes"' such as Grivas, at the cost of the mass action of the proletariat.<sup>73</sup> Ultimately, it indicated the extent the Moscow-orientated leadership was embedded in the culture of the international communist movement, with the Bolshevik experience given primary place. In response, Cacogiannis presented the EOKA campaign as a united, patriotic alliance among all sectors of Cypriot society. He emphasised the differences between Tsarist Russia and Cyprus, highlighting that Cypriots, operating within a small country, were attempting to 'shake off the colonial yoke of a foreign Imperialist Power,' which precluded any 'open' and 'mass' campaign, while further emphasising EOKA's role in organising 'national-patriotic' mass rallies, demonstrations, strikes, as well as political organisations.<sup>74</sup> Such was his enthusiasm for national ends that he claimed that he sought to save the reputation of communists from the charge of being 'anti-nationalist, anti-patriotic and allies of imperialism' and not wanting '*Enosis* with Greece but with Moscow'.<sup>75</sup>

While the salience of the national issue focused minds to local events, Cacogiannis did not neglect the world situation. Cacogiannis retained his enthusiasm for 'the World socialist revolutionary movement of which the Cypriot workers – Greeks and Turks together – form an integral part'.<sup>76</sup> He further claimed that, 'many patriots/fighters' would, from the crucible of conflict, 'constitute the purest embryo of the true fighters of the proletarian revolutionary army'.<sup>77</sup> While his enthusiasm

for national revolts caused AKEL to condemn his assessment as being 'à la Tito' Cacogiannis made no reference to the Yugoslavian 'national road'.<sup>78</sup> Instead, his references illustrated the impact of the turbulence in the Arab world on Cypriot politics, by pointing to the insurgencies in 'Algeria, Cuba, Latin America' as well as 'Iraq and all the Arab countries' as positive examples of national liberation struggles.<sup>79</sup> The EOKA campaign was framed by these insurgencies, and Cacogiannis highlighted the impact of Suez by emphasising the campaign 'reach[ed] its heights during the Anglo-French incursion against Egypt, thus harassing the imperialists at their rear'.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, the violent overthrown of British rule from the island was presented as a necessity to prevent the imperialist powers from attacking the socialist bloc as they had already attacked Egypt and Jordan.<sup>81</sup>

Crucially, Cacogiannis' position reflected that of the non-aligned politics that was emerging on the island, which sought to gain the support of the Soviet Union without becoming beholden to it. While citing Lenin to show that Cypriot communists were justified in the pursuit of armed struggle, Cacogiannis nevertheless recontextualised the Soviet experience that the AKEL leadership held as exemplary by claiming he had 'proved our positions with excerpts [of Lenin's work] that directly referred to the insurrections in the colonies and not to the socialist revolution in Europe in 1915 [*sic* – 1905?] or the Russian revolution of 1917'.<sup>82</sup> Cacogiannis' *Critique* made no reference to the purges and camps evoked by Khrushchev's speech, nor to the invasion of Hungary. Indeed, despite the frustration exhibited in the letter cited above, Cacogiannis spoke approvingly of the Soviet Union, citing their characterisation of EOKA as 'patriot heroes'.<sup>83</sup> He further argued that EOKA's armed insurgency 'gave the opportunity for the people of Cyprus, Greece, and the people of all the colonised and oppressed countries to differentiate their friends from the enemies' due to the support provided by 'the Soviet Union and the People's Republics' at the UN, while exposing the perfidy of 'the so-called "Free Nations" of the West'.<sup>84</sup>

Cacogiannis' ire was instead directed at the local AKEL leadership. Much of Papaioannou's prestige as a leader appears to have been drawn from his proximity to the communist world – a world in which

Cypriot communists had been on the periphery in the 1940s. AKEL had often sought advice from both the CPGB and KKE, with the latter often acting as intermediaries with other Eastern European parties.<sup>85</sup> It is indicative that when AKEL's leaders had sought the advice of the KKE in 1947, they also travelled to Bucharest in the hopes their request for similar advice could be forwarded to the Soviet Party – they never received a reply.<sup>86</sup> As a veteran of the Spanish Civil War who had spent about two decades in London, Papaioannou was well-placed to utilise his connections to parties abroad. Part of the reason he was able to mobilise against the expellees of 1952 was due to the forewarning offered by Peter Kerrigan of the CPGB as well as members of the KKE, who were in Cyprus for AKEL's seventh Congress, and who had been approached by the 'factionalists' seeking their help in dismissing Papaioannou.<sup>87</sup> Papaioannou was often reported to be abroad building links with other parties. In one prominent example, he was depicted as arriving to cheering crowds bringing 'a message of unity and struggle' after having visited Paris, London and New York, as well as Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary and Poland, to gain support for the Cypriot cause at the UN.<sup>88</sup> To Cacogiannis' frustration, as indicated in the letter cited above, Papaioannou appears to have been able to present himself as using his international connections for national ends, placing him within an older Cypriot tradition of appealing to higher powers through delegations.<sup>89</sup> Such was his flexibility that Papaioannou would remain AKEL's General Secretary until shortly before his death in 1988.

Yet despite Papaioannou's prominence, and despite Cacogiannis' brief references to the critique of the 'cult of personality' that were gaining traction, Cacogiannis' explicit identification of AKEL's issues with the General Secretary remained limited. In most cases, Cacogiannis' target in *Critique* was the collective 'AKEL leadership'. On the rare occasions where Papaioannou was singled out, it was in the company of Andreas Fantis, a leading figure of both AKEL and the communist-controlled Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO).<sup>90</sup> This is perhaps due to the central place in AKEL's rhetoric given to Stalin as 'the great teacher of the working class' following Papaioannou's appointment in 1949, rather than Papaioannou himself.<sup>91</sup> Prior to this period, references to the Soviet leader in congress publications were scarce, most likely due to the repres-

sion Cypriot communists had faced from 1931, as well as the constraints placed upon AKEL as a broad party since its establishment. Nevertheless, by AKEL's seventh congress of 1951, Papaioannou's speech was littered with references to the Stalin's writings and aphorisms.<sup>92</sup> Upon Stalin's death in 1953, AKEL's newspaper reported on two-minute silences, the closing of entertainment venues, and Papaioannou's characterisation of Stalin as 'a beloved teacher, father and leader of the Soviet peoples and of the workers of all the world'.<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, it was Harry Pollitt who provided one of the most gushing assessments of 'Pappy [Papaioannou] as he was known to every Cypriot in London and thousands of other comrade Londoners', during his visit to Cyprus in 1954, for penning 'one of the best and most detailed analyses there has ever been on the Cypriot situation'.<sup>94</sup> This assessment sat in contrast to a leader whose birthday was not celebrated in the party paper before the 1980s.

Cacogiannis' lack of discussion of the geopolitical implications of the cult of personality reflected his reticence in discussing events in the Soviet Union and illustrates the limits of the '1956 moment' in Cyprus. This reticence sat in contrast to his co-expellee, Adamantos, who had condemned the Soviet Union and Stalin as 'warmongers' shortly after his expulsion from AKEL.<sup>95</sup> Cacogiannis drew few larger conclusions from the 'new wind' emanating from Moscow, beyond its potential localised impact on AKEL's party democracy. This was even as he identified with recently reinstated communist leaders in the eastern bloc who had been previously accused of 'rightist deviations' by pointing out that many of the 'left patriots' in EOKA had been expelled from AKEL 'in the same period that the Polish and Hungarian parties expelled Gomułka and Kádár because they dared to raise their voice in witness against the state of internal democracy and criticism from below'.<sup>96</sup> The limits of Cacogiannis' observations reflected the way AKEL handled the crisis caused by Khrushchev's speech. Having reported on the matter only briefly in April 1956, *Haravghi* published a front-page article in July dealing with 'an issue of general interest, which has brought about a storm of discussions', after the news was reported on by nationalist and liberal-orientated news.<sup>97</sup> With press censorship still in force, this report was merely a reprint of a CPSU Central Committee announcement, and reflected the limits of Khrushchev's own critiques. As limited as these

reports were, they included an open acknowledgment of issues regarding the 'distortion of party principles and party democracy', and Stalin's name was expunged from subsequent congress publications.<sup>98</sup>

It is worth bearing in mind that the national issue and sense of emergency the EOKA campaign had introduced would have demanded the focus of Cypriot communists. Despite not participating in the EOKA campaign, the colonial government had proscribed AKEL as an 'unlawful association' in December 1955, its publications were banned and over 120 of its leading members were imprisoned. Although AKEL succeeded in getting permission to establish a new newspaper, *Haravghi*, in February 1956, figures like Papaioannou were forced underground, having escaped custody in April 1956.<sup>99</sup> By 1957, AKEL's membership was also being actively targeted by EOKA members. It is therefore little wonder that, according to one member, during a secret meeting of Central Committee members who had evaded arrest, the main topic discussed was whether the party should risk civil war by arming itself against the right.<sup>100</sup> These experiences framed even the memoirs of figures who later left the party, such as Pavlos Digklis, who presented the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, and AKEL's 'Stalinist' leadership's support of the USSR, as the most important 'milestone' in his eventual break with AKEL.<sup>101</sup> Despite his opposition to Stalinism, and although he had joined the Central Committee of AKEL in February 1956, Digklis described that period as the party's 'most difficult period' not due to the crisis of Stalinism or the invasion of Hungary, but due to its members facing suppression by the colonial authorities as well as right-wing violence.<sup>102</sup>

The limits of a 'global 1956' notwithstanding, Cacogiannis' later trajectory, as well as that of his *Critique*, demonstrates the longer-term impact of 1956, but also shows that the post-1968 moment was more conducive to building a sustained challenge to AKEL from the left. A third figure Cacogiannis had mentioned in *Critique* alongside Papaioannou was Zachariadis, the 'then leader of the KKE and now outcast of the party' who had been expelled following the upheavals resulting from Khrushchev's secret speech, and who had disparagingly characterised EOKA's bombs as 'firecrackers'.<sup>103</sup> Yet despite the new KKE leadership endorsement of EOKA's armed campaign, Cacogiannis

had apparently failed to build an alliance with the Greek party, and his references remained vague.<sup>104</sup> While there is little information regarding George Cacogiannis' political activity in the 1960s, in 1969 he was a co-founder of the Unified Democratic Union of the Centre (EDEK) along with Vasos Lyssarides, a prominent Cypriot politician who had founded the 'Left Patriots' group in EOKA. EDEK was a social democratic party whose youth group formed an important core of the post-1968, 'Third Worldist' Cypriot left. The links Lyssarides cultivated with figures like Fidel Castro, Yasser Arafat, as well as European socialist parties provided crucial networks for a generation of young communists in EDEK's youth group, who began mobilising around their self-published party newspaper, *Socialist Expression*, in 1973. Such links were instrumental in developing these youths' connections with the revolution in Cuba, with the Palestinian cause, and with anti-Soviet socialist ideas more generally, providing a forum where alternative models to the USSR were discussed. These networks also led to a convergence of the post-1956 legacies in Cyprus and Britain, with Christopher Hitchens, writing for the *New Left Review* (NLR) in 1975, naming Lyssarides' EDEK as a challenger to AKEL's dominance of the working-class movement in Cyprus, and approvingly referring to Cacogiannis' 1959 critique of the latter.<sup>105</sup>

## Conclusion

AKEL was not untouched by the 1956 crisis of Stalinism, but it did not play a decisive role in the party's attitude towards the Soviet Union, nor did it lead to the downfall of Papaioannou. The national issue proved to be a salient feature of communist commentary, with the period 1955-1959 proving a high point of discussion and controversies. While these discussions appear to have tempered the reception of a 'global 1956,' the writings of Joannides and Cacogiannis indicate that its impact was registered on the island primarily through the Suez Crisis, as well as the emergence of the 'Afro-Asian' states. Makarios' decision to join the Non-Aligned Movement would therefore prove to be an important factor in recontextualising the Soviet Union and allowing the AKEL

leadership to bypass many of the problems registered in western communist parties. While the Suez Crisis played an important role in Cypriot politics, there were marked continuities both before the outbreak of fighting as well as into the 1960s.

**George Odysseos** was awarded his PhD in History by the University of Manchester. His thesis – ‘So Small an Island’? Radical Networks and Anti-imperialist Politics in Cyprus during the ‘Global 1960s,’ 1955-1977 – explored Cyprus’ connection to the ‘global sixties.’ His research interests include the history of communism and socialism, Cyprus, anti-imperialist politics, and the history of the wider Eastern Mediterranean.

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