

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

PAR-17

The Greek Cypriot Election--II

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Dear Peter,

In late November, when former Institute fellow Dennison Rusinow passed through Istanbul, he remarked that, when he had been in Cyprus just a few days before, the island's Greeks had betrayed surprisingly little interest in the parliamentary elections scheduled for the 8th of December. As usual, he was right.

For a brief time, I thought the contrary. I reached Nicosia late in the evening four days before the poll. On the drive in from the airport at Larnaca, I chatted as best I could with the man conveying me to the Kennedy Hotel. In Istanbul, taxi drivers are more likely to know a smattering of English or German than anyone else; in Nicosia, the opposite is the case. Like as not, the ordinary man on the street will be fluent or at least reasonably competent in English. By contrast, the ordinary taxi driver is relatively mute in all but demotic Greek. This one was no exception. I resorted to ancient Greek pronounced in the modern fashion, and he did what he could with the few English phrases he knew. But the most that I was able to get out of him was: "I vote for Kyprianou. Kyprianou democrat. Like Makarios. Klerides Junta. Papaioannou Russia." What he meant to convey was that the current President of Cyprus is a democrat much like his predecessor; that Glafkos Klerides, the leader of Democratic Rally (DYSY), had been a tool of the Greek Colonels in Athens; and that Ezekias Papaioannou, the leader of the Greek Cypriot Communist Party (AKEL), had sold out to the Soviets long ago. Here was a political partisan with strong preferences--but it turned out that he was the exception. Among the nonpoliticians I met, few seemed to care much one way or another which party emerged the victor on December the 8th.

My first morning on the island, I called the Press Information Office and set up some interviews. Thereafter, I was

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temporarily at loose ends; so, I wandered off to MAM--a small bookshop that stocks works dealing with the history of Cyprus. After buying a number of weighty tomes, I stumbled across the passageway behind MAM to survey the contents of a pottery emporium. The young woman who was tending the store was, like a good many of her compatriots, extremely hospitable and friendly.

Her name was Maria, and she wanted to know whether I was English and whether I had come to Cyprus as a tourist or for some other purpose. When I explained why I was snooping about on her island, she laughed. "I think that you are far more interested in the elections than we are," she said. "Of course, the politicians are interested. Very much so! But the common people are not." She added that she did not know what to think of the various parties. She had recently returned from attending university in Athens and had had to settle for what was a relatively boring job. Finding better employment was of far greater concern to her than the results of the elections to be held that Sunday.

The typewriter salesman at the Canon outlet I visited later that morning was less indifferent to political concerns than Maria. But one could not say that it mattered much to him who topped the poll. He, too, made discreet inquiries regarding my presence in Nicosia, and he ventured his opinion of Cypriot affairs without being asked. "I think that not one of our leaders is truly interested in a settlement," he observed. "They are only concerned with who will sit in the Presidential chair. ... Mr. Denktas is a clever man; he makes gains from our mistakes."

I

On the whole, the Greeks are an excitable people, and the Greeks of Cyprus are no exception. They love the drama and the pageantry of politics, and they tend to turn out for demonstrations and rallies. This December, though the weather was warm and inviting, the Greek Cypriots stayed at home and watched excerpts from the party-organized demonstrations on the evening news. I missed the rally staged by the conservative party DYSY, which was held on the Sunday before my arrival, but I did manage to attend the rallies put on by Spyros Kyprianou's Democratic Party (DIKO), by Vassos Lyssarides' Socialist Party (EDEK), and by AKEL.

Of the three, the first two were poorly attended. They were both held in Nicosia's Eleutheria ("Freedom") square, and they were much alike. For hours, the organizers played tapes of modern Greek music at a volume sufficient to deafen passers-by; then, the deputy leaders of the party harangued the crowd; and, finally, at a pre-ordained moment, the party leader arrived and delivered an address.



KYPRIANOU CASTS HIS BALLOT

Because I know ancient Greek and because the political vocabulary of Hellas has changed remarkably little over the last two thousand five hundred years, I can with time and effort make a certain amount of sense out of Greek newspapers. Even when listening attentively to a harangue, I can here and there make out the meaning of phrases. And, of course, it is relatively easy to distinguish an eloquent orator from one who is tone-deaf simply by paying attention to rhythm and cadence, and one can always tell whether the crowd in attendance is bothering to listen. There was much to learn at the rallies.

Kyprianou may be a shrewd politician, and he is certainly a survivor; but he is not much of an orator.¹ I could say of him what a friend once said of Arthur Goldberg--that, one evening, I

1. I owe the photograph printed above and those printed below to the Press Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus.

spent a week listening to the old boy talk. Kyprianou described his rivals in DYSY and AKEL as men sick with ambition; he denounced as tantamount to treason their willingness to make concessions to the Cypriot Turks; and, thereafter, he rambled on interminably, defending the sanctity of the Cyprus constitution, warning of the threat to the island's political stability inherent in the attempts to force him from office, and citing his sacred duty to remain at his station as President of the Republic of Cyprus. He did manage to hold the attention of his audience. But he stirred little, if any enthusiasm. At best, he earned polite applause: those who attended the DIKO rally were no doubt prepared to vote for their man, but they showed little inclination towards dragging their neighbors into following their example.

Lyssarides is, by contrast, a natural demagogue. One could easily discern his great, rolling Ciceronian periods, and even I could follow the gist of his argument as it unfolded. I even knew when to stamp my feet, applaud, whistle, and cheer. In fifteen minutes, Lyssarides mentioned Kurios Papandreou thirty-seven times. The small crowd of well-dressed men warmed to the theme: to oust the Turk, we must follow the lead of the Prime Minister of Greece and demand implementation of the UN Resolutions calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops from the island and for the return of all the refugees to their homes.

The DIKO and EDEK rallies were extremely tame; the audiences were largely male; and the music was entirely pre-recorded. In all three respects, the AKEL rally was radically different. The other Greek Cypriot parties are really parties of notables grouped about a recognized leader. One could speak of "those about Klerides" and of "the friends of Kyprianou" in much the way that the ancient Greeks spoke of "those about Pericles" and of "the friends of Cimon." If Vassos Lyssarides were to die tomorrow or if he were banned from the island for a decade (as Aristides "the Just" was once ostracized from Athens), EDEK would collapse: the party is the vehicle of its leader and little else.² By contrast, when Ezekias Papaioannou goes to meet Marx, AKEL will live on and may even prosper. The communist party of Greek Cyprus may be in decline,³ but it still commands the fierce loyalty of a sizeable proportion of the island's Greek population. That was evident at the rally. Women and children were everywhere: the music was provided by choruses of children wearing party uniforms and by local entertainers of considerable

2. The same pattern has long persisted in Greece, but there has been since 1974 an attempt to provide a firmer institutional foundation for political affairs. After founding the New Democracy Party, Constantine Karamanlis deliberately kept his distance; in particular, he avoided attending the party's provincial congresses; he wanted the party members to get into the habit of cooperating in his absence. As a consequence, the party lives on under his successors--though one faction has walked out, and it remains an open question whether New Democracy can win an election without its original leader. Glafkos Klerides is pursuing the same course with DYSY: whether it will break up when he passes from the scene is anyone's guess.

3. See PAR-15.

talent. Those attending knew all the songs and chants and readily joined in. When Papaioannou was introduced to speak, the gathered multitude paused for a moment in respectful silence. For a few minutes, they were even attentive to what he was saying, but no one listened for very long--and the old man droned uselessly on. The inattentiveness of those present might be interpreted as a sign of apathy, but I suspect that it mattered not a whit; AKEL's stalwarts heard little of what their party leader said because they had no need to do so: they had learned the rough outlines of his denunciations of the American imperialists, the Nato warmongers, and their local instruments long ago; and, in any case, they were having too fine a time at the rally to bother with particulars.

Much against my natural inclinations, I found the AKEL rally oddly stirring, but local reporters did not. It apparently fell far short of previous efforts both in the numbers gathered and in the enthusiasm shown. Later, I asked Barnabas Varnavides, the son of the man who owns the hotel in which I was residing, just why there was such a lack of interest in this particular electoral campaign. "Why should anyone care?" he replied. "In twenty years, we change nothing. Just wait! You will see. Nothing will change. A percentage point or two. Nothing more."

The electoral statistics confirmed the impressions I had gained from conversation and observation. Greek Cypriots are required by law to vote; those who fail to do so can incur a fine. In the interim between the 1981 and the 1985 parliamentary elections, the number of registered voters had increased from 308,729 to 346,450. But the number of those actually voting had dropped from 295,602 to 287,759, and the number of valid ballots cast had dropped from 291,021 to 265,147. By past standards, a sizeable proportion of those eligible to vote stayed home, and a fair number of those who did turn up deliberately spoiled their ballot papers. Of those eligible to vote in 1981, 95.7% had turned out and 94.3% had cast valid ballots; by contrast, in 1985, only 83.1% turned out and 76.5% cast valid ballots.

II

Everywhere, politics makes strange bedfellows--but nowhere more than in Greek Cyprus. Glafkos Klerides' party is itself a contradiction in terms. The DYSY leader has long been committed to reaching an accommodation with the Turks, but he has nonetheless welcomed into his party many of the diehard supporters of the late George Grivas. Just a few years ago, these men who were bitterly opposed to Klerides and to Archbishop Makarios on the grounds that they were insufficiently vigorous in pursuing enosis with Greece; in the early 1970s, they accepted aid from the Greek Colonels in Athens, formed EOKA-B, and launched a terrorist campaign designed to drive Makarios (and Klerides) from office.

In December, the men whom AKEL's leaders regularly denounce as "fascists" and "coupists"⁴ found themselves working in tacit cooperation with the island's communists against Kyprianou. AKEL and DYSY made up what the Cypriot press called "the concessionist front."

The rival alliance was no less strange. It involved three major elements: Kyprianou's DIKO, which is a sleepy, middle-of-the-road, patronage party composed largely of civil servants and of ardent admirers of the late Archbishop; Lyssarides' EDEK, which is a fiercely anticlerical, Baathist-style socialist party largely funded by Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi; and the Greek Cypriot Church, which is the most conservative force in the entire society. Supporting DIKO within this "rejectionist front" were three smaller parties that had secured altogether some 7.445% of the votes cast in the 1981 elections and had therefore failed to gain representation in the Greek Cypriot parliament.

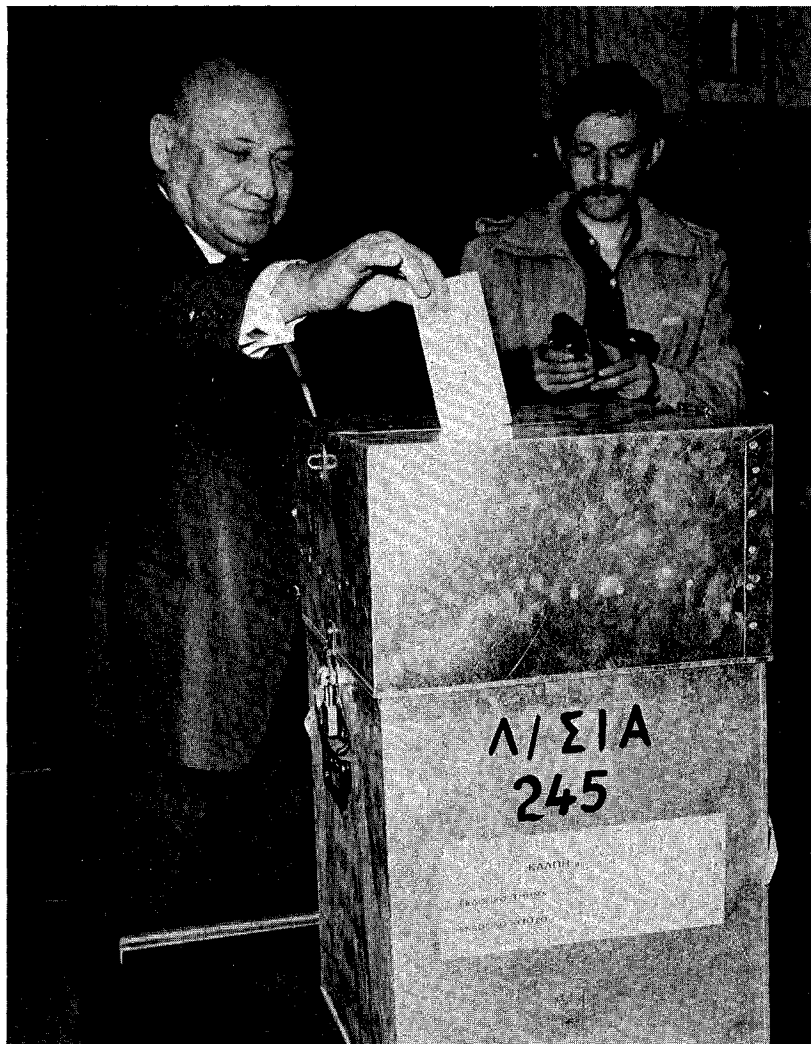
The odd couplings were formed because the campaign focused on a single issue that cut across the normal concerns of class and economic interest--Kyprianou's competence as the national leader and his failure to endorse the draft agreement negotiated with the Cypriot Turks and presented to both sides for signing by UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar in mid-January, 1985. AKEL, DIKO, and EDEK managed to present economic programs but not until three days before the polls; DYSY did not even bother to draw up a document. No one was going to pay any attention to it anyway. The "national issue" was the question on which everything was to turn.

From the outset, DYSY and AKEL accused the Greek Cypriot President of having made a mess of the negotiations with the Cypriot Turks. DIKO defended Kyprianou's record, arguing that signing the January agreement would have been catastrophic for Greek Cyprus and that the revised version of the January document sketched out last April (and rejected by Rauf Denktaş as unacceptable) safeguarded essential Greek Cypriot interests.⁵ Both EDEK and Archbishop Khrystostomos contended that there was no point in negotiating with the Cypriot Turks at all. There would be plenty of time for discussion when the Turkish troops occupying the northern sector of the island had been forced by the international community to withdraw and the refugees had been allowed to return to their homes.

The alliance between Lyssarides and the Church was particularly close. It was widely rumored that the socialist leader had placed two candidates nominated by the Archbishop high on the electoral list presented by EDEK. When I saw Lyssarides, the handsome, shaggy-maned orator was in high dudgeon. He compared the Turkish government unfavorably with the late Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime and argued that the Turkish intervention on Cyprus

4. This is a word peculiar to Cypriot English: it refers to those who collaborated in the coup mounted by the Greek Colonels in July, 1974 against Archbishop Makarios.

5. Klerides argued that the January and the April documents were virtually identical; Kyprianou and Denktaş (his tacit ally in the campaign) argued that they were markedly different.



DYBY'S KLERIDES AT THE POLLS

was part of a grand expansionist plan. He advocated the Greek Cypriot government's holding a binding referendum on three questions--the withdrawal of the troops of occupation from the North, the unrestricted implementation of the "three freedoms"

mentioned in the Makarios-Denktaş agreement of 1977,⁶ and the abrogation of the Treaty of Guarantee, which gives Turkey, Greece, and Great Britain the right to intervene on the island to restore the Constitution of 1960 should that constitutional order break down,⁷ and the Treaty of Alliance, which allows Turkey and Greece to station small garrisons on the island. Lyssarides vigorously denies that it is possible to make any compromise on any of these issues. As he put it, "You do not avoid death by committing suicide." I doubt that Archbishop Khrystostomos would be willing to endorse Lyssarides' claim that, in the absence of the mainland Turkish troops, "class confrontation will replace national confrontation" on Cyprus--but, in most other respects, he speaks the language used by his ally.

III

The results of the election surprised nearly everyone involved. On this point, Barnabas Varnavides was proved wrong: there was a powerful surge in support for DIKO and EDEK. In the 1981 parliamentary elections, the first to be held under a system of proportional representation, AKEL had lead the poll with 32.768% of the vote, followed closely by DYSY with 31.918%. DIKO had trailed with 19.5% of the ballots, and EDEK had gained only 8.169%.

Late in November, a poll taken for the newspaper Phileleftheros by the Middle East Marketing Research Bureau (MEMRB) indicated a considerable shift of voters away from AKEL to Lyssarides' EDEK and Kyprianou's DIKO. Of the 1085 individuals who participated in the sample, 19.2% cast blank ballots; 25.9% voted for DYSY, 23.7% for AKEL, 19.6% for DIKO, and 9.3% for EDEK. The pollsters concluded that DYSY would eventually secure anywhere from 29-35% (with 32.1% as the average) of the Greek Cypriot vote, that AKEL would get anywhere from 26.4-32.5% (with 29.4% as the average), that DIKO would emerge with anywhere from 21.4-27% (with 24.2% as the average), and that EDEK would poll

6. In February, 1977, the leaders of the two Cypriot communities agreed that "questions of principle like freedom of movement, freedom of settlement, the right of property and other specific matters are open for discussion taking into consideration the fundamental basis of a bi-communal federal state and certain practical difficulties which may arise for the Turkish Cypriot community." At the time, Lyssarides opposed Makarios' acceptance of any restrictions on Greek Cypriot freedom of movement throughout the island, Greek Cypriot freedom of settlement anywhere on the island, and the right of Greek Cypriots to reclaim all the property lost in 1974; today, he still remains opposed to "taking into consideration the fundamental basis of a bi-communal federal state and certain practical difficulties which may arise for the Turkish Cypriot community." For the agreement itself, see PAR-16.

7. The coup staged against Makarios provided the excuse for the Turkish intervention in 1974--which was aimed not at restoring the 1960 Constitution (which had collapsed in December, 1963) but at imposing a new settlement in an island henceforth to be divided into ethnic cantons.

anywhere from 9.4% to 13.6% (with 11.5% as the average). But no one believed them. As I mentioned in an earlier letter,⁸ the local political commentators predicted that AKEL would suffer at most a marginal and inconsequential decline. No one seriously expected the party to lose one-sixth of its support, and no one was ready for the electoral earthquake that did take place.

ELECTION RESULTS (%)

	1981	1985	Change
DYSY	31.918	33.563	+1.645
DIKO	19.500	27.647	+8.147
AKEL	32.768	27.429	-5.339
EDEK	8.169	11.072	+2.093
Centre Union	2.738	--	--
New Democratic Camp	1.919	--	--
PAME	2.788	--	--

In the end, DYSY registered a marginal increase in support with 33.563% of the vote; AKEL dropped to 27.429%; and both DIKO and EDEK chalked up dramatic increases. This time, Kyprianou's party received 27.647% of the unspoiled ballots cast while Lyssarides and his associates gained 11.072%. DIKO had increased its support by 41.779%, and EDEK's vote had jumped by 35.536%. Much of the DIKO increase arguably came from the 4.657% of the voters who had cast their ballots for the small right-wing parties--the Centre Union and the New Democratic Camp--in 1981. Local observers thought that EDEK may have owed a portion of its 2.093% gain to the 2.788 % of the voters who had once supported the small leftist party PAME. But no one doubted that these two parties had picked up considerable support from AKEL.

IV

When the dust had settled, I decided to go back over the campaign and to try to make sense out of the results in light of the drift evident from the public statements of the candidates in the course of November and early December. Ordinarily, this would be difficult for someone incapable of reading the Greek press quickly and with full confidence that he has understood what has been said. But, as it happens, there is a company in Nicosia that prepares a daily press summary in English for the various embassies and foreign news agencies. TANJUG, the Yugoslav News Agency, was among the subscribers; and Nada

8. See PAR-15.

Dugonjić, the TANJUG correspondent, had a full set of the press summaries for the period of interest and kindly lent them to me.

The story that emerged from their perusal was most revealing. In conversations with me, the DYSY leader Glafkos Klerides had made it quite clear that, had he been President, he would have signed the January, 1985 draft agreement and pressed on for a settlement with the Cypriot Turks. He was perfectly ready to accept the continued presence of Turkish troops on the island as long as the numbers were gradually scaled down. He recognized that the Turkish Cypriot community would never agree to the abrogation of the Treaties of Guarantee and Alliance, and that bothered him little. He was prepared to accept that the Greek property left in the Turkish sector was irretrievably lost and that there would have to be some restrictions on freedom of movement and settlement--at least for a time. As he put it to me, "We have nothing to lose. At least, with a settlement, we will gain some territory, and we may lay the groundwork for reuniting the island. I can give ground to Denktas with regard to local autonomy, the three freedoms, and the presence of Turkish troops on the island--if he can give ground to me on the matter of territory. I would need to satisfy a certain percentage of our refugees. It all depends on which land he concedes."

In public, Klerides was not nearly so forthcoming. He hinted at his private position on the question of the Turkish troops by pointedly distinguishing between "the troops of occupation" and the Turkish troops quartered on the island under the Treaty of Alliance. But he was not prepared to acknowledge that, if there were to be an agreement with the Turkish Cypriots, some of the refugees would have to abandon all hope of returning to their homes.

Papaioannou's statements were similar in character. As the campaign wore on, Kyprianou, Lyssarides, and Archbishop Khrystostomos hammered away on the theme that all of the Turkish troops must leave the island and all of the refugees must be allowed to return to their homes as a precondition for the establishment of a transitional government; and, step by step, Klerides and Papaioannou backed off. By the end, the rhetoric of "the concessionist front" was not markedly different from that coming from "the rejectionist front." Everyone contended that the Turkish troops must go, that there must be full freedom of movement and settlement right away, and that all the refugees must be able to return to their homes. When pressed, Klerides was even willing to endorse the suggestion made by Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou at an interparty conference that a Greek division be moved to the island to bring pressure on the Turks to withdraw their troops.⁹

9. Lyssarides taxed Klerides repeatedly in the course of the campaign with having objected that such a move would be rash and might bring on war. When I spoke with Rauf Denktas's son Raif, who died as a result of a car accident that took place two weeks thereafter, he told me that any attempt to introduce so large a

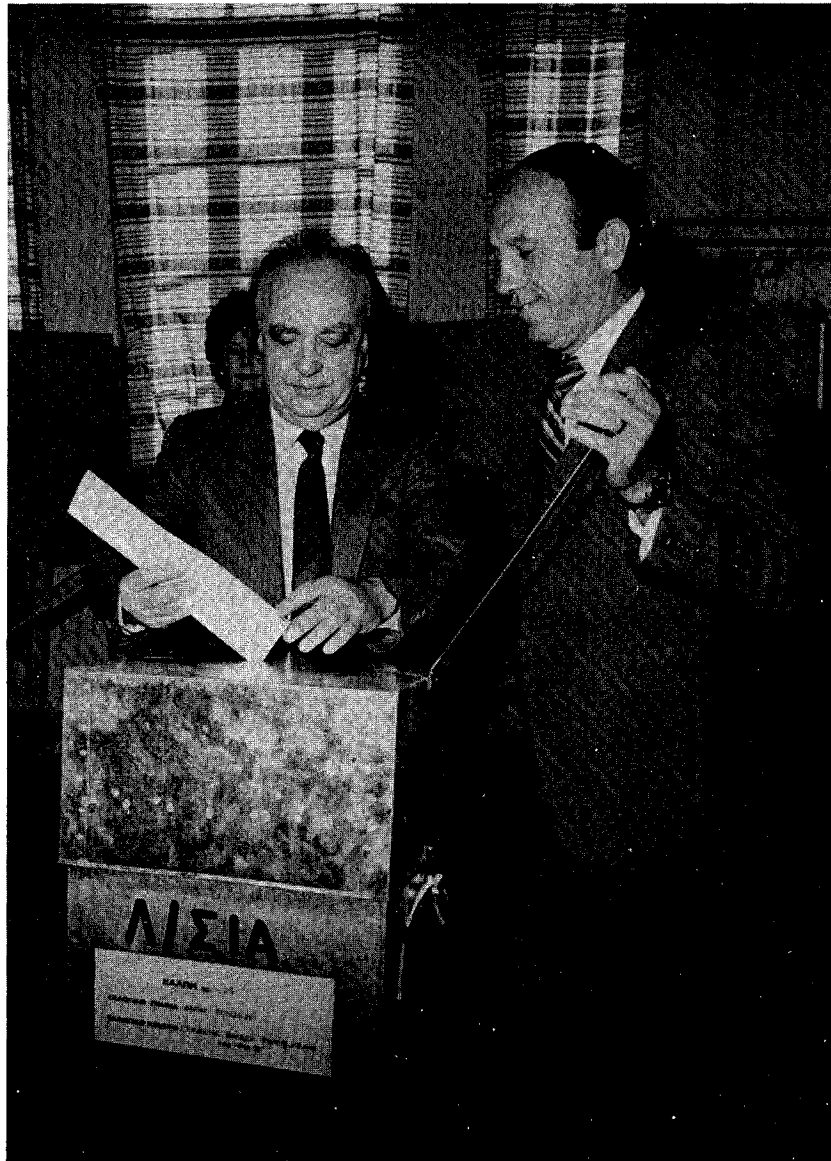
Klerides and Papaioannou could agree that Kyprianou had made a mess of the negotiations, but neither was willing to say in public that he should have signed the January, 1985 draft agreement. In the end, the strongest point in the case they made against the President of the Republic of Cyprus was that, because of his incompetence, the Greek Cypriots had incurred the blame for the collapse of the talks. It is either the case that no politician seeking high office in Greek Cyprus can afford to tell his compatriots the full truth of what they will have to swallow if the island is to be once again united--or that no leading politician has the necessary courage. I left Cyprus persuaded that, if Spyros Kyprianou's opponents failed to unseat him, it was at least partly because they deserved to fail. In trying to be all things to all men, they failed to make a case that they could do a better job.

V

Spyros Kyprianou was not the only and perhaps not the principal victor in the contest that reached its conclusion on the 8th of December. In the year that passed between his ejection of AKEL from his cabinet and the parliamentary elections two months ago, the President of Cyprus managed to exchange one set of masters for another. Ezekias Papaioannou has repeatedly contended that Kyprianou's break with AKEL was a response to American pressure, but other members of his party are prepared to concede that, however pleasing Papaioannou's anti-American diatribes may be to Moscow, there is no evidence for this charge. When I spoke with Andreas Ziartides, an AKEL deputy and the leader of the communist-controlled Pancyprian Federation of Labor (PEO), he suggested that Andreas Papandreou was the real culprit. Glafkos Klerides later told me that, in December, 1984, Papandreou had forced Kyprianou to choose between his alliance with AKEL and cooperation with the government of Greece. There is every reason to suspect that the PEO and DYSY leaders are right.

As the date for the election approached, there were reports in the opposition press that Kyprianou had begged Papandreou to intervene. On Friday, the 6th of December, a mere two days before the poll, the Greek Prime Minister did just that. In a speech before the Greek parliament, he attacked the Perez de Cuellar initiative, denied that the intercommunal problems were at the heart of the Cyprus question, and demanded that, in the future, the government of Cyprus bring the focus back to UN Resolution 353 and its call for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and for the return of all the refugees to their homes.

contingent of Greek troops to the island would indeed mean war. Nikos Rolandis, Kyprianou's former Foreign Minister, had expressed the same conviction when we spoke earlier.



EDEK LEADER LYSSARIDES VOTES

"We regard Cyprus," he told his listeners, "as a national space for us. A decision that there should be a solution with the presence of the Turkish troops is, for us, nationally unacceptable. Thus, we, at least, are not going to agree that there is a solution before even the last Turkish soldier leaves.' The stalwarts of "the rejectionist front" could not have asked for more. Though Klerides pointedly refrained from objecting to anything in the Greek Prime Minister's statement, it was made

perfectly clear to everyone that a vote for DYSY or AKEL was a vote for division within the Greek camp.¹⁰

When I left Cyprus in late December, it was still uncertain who would be elected President of the Greek Cypriot parliament. Each party nominated its leader; each failed to get the requisite number of votes; and it was immediately evident that some horse-trading would have to take place. Klerides told me that Archbishop Khrysostomos was pressing Kyprianou to swing the DIKO deputies behind Vassos Lyssarides; rumor had it that Andreas Papandreou was using his influence on behalf of his Greek Cypriot alter ego as well.

Shortly after I left, they succeeded. The man who has most consistently opposed all negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots now holds the second highest office in Greek Cyprus. He presides over the parliament and, in the absence of Kyprianou, he is Acting President of Cyprus. Whether Spyros Kyprianou wants to be or not (and I would argue that he is perfectly happy with the prospect), he is now the prisoner of "the rejectionist front."

Rauf Denktaş can rest easy for a while: the authorities in Washington and Ankara who have an interest in settling the Cyprus question can hardly blame the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus for failing to reach an agreement with the government now in charge in Greek Nicosia. Perhaps, Barnabas Varnavides was right after all: in substance, nothing much seems to have changed, and nothing much will--unless, of course, Papandreou and Kyprianou opt for a policy of brinkmanship and transport across the water to Cyprus that Greek division so much talked about in the course of the campaign.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Rahe