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**Abstract:**

EDA (*United Democratic Left*) was formed in 1951, and was the first party to represent leftists from across the spectrum, incorporating into its ranks not only socialists, but also communists and social- democrats. Despite getting only 10-14% of the national vote in 1958, EDA was the first leftist group in Greek history to become the leading parliamentary opposition party. EDA's ideas, however, have so far not received sufficient attention and review. Thus, the aim here is a brief demonstration of EDA opinions and policies on the Cyprus Question during the 1950s and 1960s. More specifically, our main goal is to present the rhetoric and foreign policy of EDA.

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## **Greek Leftist Foreign Policy or A Pie in the Sky: United Democratic Left and The Cyprus Question**

### *Introduction*

The island of Cyprus was always part of the national and foreign policy agenda of Greek governments and it was understood as an extension of Hellenism. It is not an exaggeration to claim that the issue of Cyprus was viewed only through the prism of the official/national stance of the Greek state, whereby Cyprus was treated as a Greek national issue. Similarly, the Left in Greece also treated Cyprus as part of the national agenda. Cyprus also proved to be an issue of contention between the Left and the Right, especially, within the context of the Cold War in post-civil war Greece. Finally, Cyprus, among other issues, provided also the vehicle by which the Left, through its representative, EDA, would be in a position to be incorporated anew into Greek society, without fear of being stigmatized as non-patriotic and not-national.

EDA was initially conceived in 1951 as an umbrella organization to participate in national elections by rallying leftist votes dispersed among a coalition of parties and personalities.<sup>1</sup> Despite getting only 10-14% of the national vote in 1958, EDA was nevertheless the first leftist group in Greek history to become the leading parliamentary opposition party.<sup>2</sup> Deriving from this significant point, it is our purpose to point out – briefly – some key features of EDA's stance on foreign policy and more specifically, on the Cyprus question, since the restrictions of this presentation do not allow us to analyze them fully.

### *EDA, Cyprus and Foreign Policy: Some Remarks*

EDA believed that Greek foreign policy should serve the country's true national interests, which could be obtained only through an independent position beyond its borders.<sup>3</sup> As a true and consistent party of the Left, EDA took an active position within the Cold War environment, standing critical towards British and American imperialism, as its program states outright:

“The approval of the Truman Doctrine by the Greek oligarchy was followed by the adherence to NATO and by a series of political financial and military agreements that were in opposition to the national interest”.<sup>4</sup>

What becomes obvious is that for EDA, Greek national independence was never fully completed, due to the collaboration of the imperialists with their domestic allies in the government of the Right, the Palace and the Army. This also became obvious in the party's official publications and newspaper *Avgi* (Dawn), which decried the tragic nature of the Greek Revolution and how national independence was never fully achieved.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Meynaud (2002). *The Political Forces in Greece, 1946-1965*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Athens: Savvalas, p. 229; Michalis P. Limperatos (2011). *From EAM to EDA*. Athens: Stochastis, p. 106 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The most authoritative account in Greek for the pre-authoritarian period remain E. Nicolakopoulos (2001). *The Feeble Democracy. Parties and Elections, 1949-1967*. Athens: Patakis.

<sup>3</sup> EDA (1957). *Draft Programme of EDA*. Athens, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> EDA (1961). *Programme of EDA*. Athens, p. 13-14; EDA (1957). *Draft Programme of EDA*. Athens, p. 4.

Cyprus was the space for contentious politics<sup>5</sup> between the Left and the Right. Since its formation, EDA “declared its full and unconditional support to the heroic fighting people of Cyprus, in order for the pan-Cypriot and, at the same time, the pan-Hellenic desire of *enosis* with Greece to be accomplished”. When the Cypriot Ethnarchy requested the Greek government to appeal to the UN, EDA backed Nicosia’s demand. *Avgi* noted: “Greek people have no illusions that the UN with today’s artificial American majority can possibly solve the issue of freeing Cyprus. But recognition of the Cyprus Issue on the agenda at the international organization helps towards that direction. The government has the obligation to put the issue on the UN General Assembly’s agenda”.<sup>6</sup>

All parties agreed the Cyprus cause was “just, self-explanatory and above all, nationally imperative”. EDA never failed to express its patriotism through the strong commitment to the Cyprus cause:

“the issue of *enosis* is beyond argument. Everybody knows that *enosis* of Cyprus with Greece carries the morality, the history, the logic and the freedom with the self-determination of the people”.<sup>7</sup>

*Enosis*, thus, was the national interest EDA was referring to, while any other solution was considered treacherous, serving only party interests. Besides, as the party stated: “the *hellenicity* of the island was never contested”.<sup>8</sup> It was believed that the government choices, which were characterized as “one-sided”, were compromising the national interests. Therefore, Cyprus was presented as: “the lighthouse that sheds light and guides the Greek people to the path of kicking over the traces of foreign tutelage, to a foreign policy in the service of the true Greek national interest”.<sup>9</sup>

Believing, as it did, in the EOKA struggle, which was considered in the spirit of the time as an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist one, and therefore, a legitimate one, EDA strongly opposed the Tripartite Conference taking place in London in 1955, dismissing it as a “British manoeuvre, inspired by the Americans a) to postpone the enlisting of the Cyprus issue to the UN agenda, b) to provide time to the British to suppress the struggle of the Cypriot people, c) to provide better strategic positions to the imperialist powers in the Mediterranean, d) to recognize rights of the Turkish government, which does not represent the Turkish community in Cyprus, and thus, to go on with the policy of “divide and rule”.<sup>10</sup>

Pasalidis’ address to the Greek Parliament on the occasion of the Conference concluded with some positions that EDA believed would solve the Cyprus Issue, or which could, at least, form the basis for just and healthy negotiation. For EDA, the national policy on Cyprus meant: “a) official clear reset of the Cyprus Issue on the ground of self-determination, immediate and

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<sup>5</sup> Contentious is used here according to Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2007). *Contentious Politics*. Boulder – London: Paradigm Publishers.

<sup>6</sup> *Avgi*, 22 February 1953.

<sup>7</sup> Vasilis Efraimidis, 14 May 1952, *Cyprus Question in the Greek Parliament*, vol. 1, p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Avgi*, 1 January 1956.

<sup>10</sup> ASKI, “Statement of the Administrative Committee of EDA”, 1 July 1955, EDA Archives; see also Tasos Trikkas (2009), *EDA. The New Face of the Left, 1951-1967*, Athens: Themelio, p. 306.

unconditional, b) internationalization on the ground of the issues of self-determination of the people and the disturbance of world peace, and c) usage, without commitment or prior and blind obedience to NATO, of all appropriate and effective means”.<sup>11</sup>

According to EDA, the Cyprus Question can be solved only “under the condition that Greece will take full responsibility for its handling; it will place the issue decisively in the context of the anti-colonial struggle and it will ask for support from everywhere, wherever response could be found”. EDA claimed the alliance of the government with the “free world” (as defined by Truman in 1947) and the “allied front” actually left the country with no real allies, adding that the “allied front” is the real enemy of *enosis*.<sup>12</sup> The American interference with the Radcliffe proposals in 1956 was a prime example of the imperialist powers not wanting *enosis* of Cyprus with Greece, and also demonstrated the government’s obedience and betrayal.<sup>13</sup>

The party chose ‘neutrality’ as the best suitable foreign policy for Greece, not siding with the socialist camp. “The simplification or the vassals of NATO or the Soviet bloc, is a gross propaganda scheme” it declared. “There are many avenues of dissenting independent policy. There is also the possibility of the exercise of a dissenting policy within the frame of the same allies, as other countries, such as Norway, Denmark etc., do. There is neutrality”.<sup>14</sup>

The Greek government’s passive stance of compromise and inability to press the British on the issue of Makarios’ exile since March 1956 was received and interpreted by the party as underpinning the escalation of the violent uprising in Cyprus. Thus, after the release of Makarios the party welcomed him to Athens and seized the opportunity to express its unfailing support for the Cypriot people and the Cyprus goal. While the EOKA struggle was escalating, the British hanged three Cypriot fighters, providing fertile ground for Pasalidis to criticize the government’s stance, declaring that:

“The government and its policy are in direct contravention of pan-Hellenic feeling. It is also in direct opposition to the content of the request by the leader of EOKA, as this has been declared so far [...] The government alone opposes the national unity, alone it adulterated, and still does, the demand for self-determination of the Cypriots and alone it has remained, and still remains, slavishly subjected to the irreconcilable “allies” of NATO. Its immediate abstinence from power becomes a pan-national

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<sup>11</sup> Ioannis Pasalidis, 5 April 1956, *Cyprus Question in the Greek Parliament*, vol. 2, p. 103; EDA’s position is known since it was repeated again a few months ago, in 23 July 1955, “Announcements of the Organization Committee of EDA on Cyprus”, Athens, 23 July 1955, p. 29 in EDA (1955). *Decisions and Announcements of the General Council and of the Executive Committee of EDA on the Vital Problems of the People and the Country*. Athens.

<sup>12</sup> ASKI, “Announcement of the Organization Committee of EDA”, 11 August 1956, *EDA Archive*; The Administrative Committee of EDA with an announcement in 22 September 1956 repeats the positions.

<sup>13</sup> A January 1957 delegation of the Executive Committee of EDA visited the President of the Government and the Interior Minister and developed its position. The copy of the note was sent to the leaders of all the parties and reprinted as “The Opinions of EDA on the Progress of the Cyprus Issue”, pp. 11-14 in EDA (1957). *The Policy of EDA. Official Documents (Decisions – Announcements – Declarations of Representatives, 3.12.1956 – 20.9.1957)*, issue 20, Athens.

<sup>14</sup> Elias Eliou, 11 March 1957, *Cyprus Question in the Greek Parliament*, vol. 2; Elias Eliou expressed the same views a year later claiming that “neutrality is a third way”, 14 December 1958, *Cyprus Question in the Greek Parliament*, vol. 2.

front”.<sup>15</sup>

For EDA “Greece has to choose not between East and West, but between survival and total destruction. The policy followed so far is blind [...], it is headed to the road of annihilation, passing every intersection towards a real Greek foreign policy and maintenance of friendly relations with the Western world, all while our dominant rights are being broken down at the same time as trying to develop friendly relations with everyone”.<sup>16</sup> EDA claims that “the pointed hostility of the Turkish government, guided by Great Britain and covered by the U.S., proves that the only existing dangers, [...], are coming from the members of the NATO alliance. [...]”.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, as the time the London-Zurich Agreements were being signed, EDA was criticizing government policy fiercely both in parliament and through its newspaper *Avgi*.<sup>18</sup> Eliou attacked the foreign minister’s claims that the agreements were placing Cyprus one step closer to independence, saying they “lacked legitimacy”. He continued to state that “Cyprus is neither a republic, nor independent”.<sup>19</sup> The London-Zurich Agreements are, he wrote, “diabolical, and will create dead-ends and obstacles in Greece’s path” adding the constitutional status of Cyprus will be too “complicated” to function. In addition, the foreign military presence, the British, Greek and Turkish right to intervene and the maintenance of British bases on the island, testify to the “collective occupation” of the island.<sup>20</sup>

The party even published an analysis of the Agreements in book form, in which it stated that: “all the opposition parties condemned this agreement”, but the “factitious governmental majority in parliament approved them”. It is also argued that the agreement, “while, in fact, prolonging the colonial slavery in Cyprus, adulterated the pure anti-colonial character of the Cypriot struggle, which was to confront the British colonial power”, and therefore, the issue does not only concern Cyprus and Great Britain anymore. It also concerns the Turkish state, and the return of “*Turkey to Cyprus creates a new status full of dangers, both for Cyprus and Greece*”. Finally, it is argued that the Agreement marks the victory of the British and the Turks, the partition of the island, and finally, eliminates the right of self-determination of the Cypriot people.<sup>21</sup> *Avgi*, on its return, codified the main reasons EDA was against the London-Zurich Agreements: 1) self-determination is eliminated forever, 2) independence is fake, and 3) it is not a democracy.<sup>22</sup>

EDA was presenting a consistent and persistent approach concerning Cyprus and criticized the Centre Union government, despite playing a large part in its electoral win. Thus, EDA accused the government’s policy on Cyprus of being identical to that of the previous government of ERE.<sup>23</sup> Following the crisis of 1964, the shift of Soviet support to the Cyprus cause only

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<sup>15</sup> ASKI, “Statement of the Organization Committee of EDA”, 1 July 1955, *EDA Archive*

<sup>16</sup> Extensive Statement of the Administrative Committee of EDA, “The Issue of Reformulation of the Foreign policy of the Country”, 22.9.57, pp. 37-44, here pp. 42-43 reprinted in EDA (1957), *The Policy of EDA. Official Documents (Decisions – Announcements – Declarations of Representatives, 3.12.1956 – 20.9.1957)*, issue 20, Athens.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> For the articles criticizing the Greek government concerning the London-Zurich Agreement, see reports in *Avgi*, 13 March 1959 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Elias Eliou, 25 February 1959, *Cyprus Question in the Greek Parliament*, vol. 3, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p. 28.

<sup>21</sup> All quotations taken from EDA (1959). *The Cyprus Issue and the London-Zurich Agreement*. Athens.

<sup>22</sup> *Avgi*, 13 February 1959.

<sup>23</sup> ASKI, Fifth Synod of EDA, *EDA Archive*, Box 14, folder 4.

strengthened EDA's argument on an independent foreign policy free of commitments either to the west or the east. However, EDA seemed to be trapped between positions on Cyprus arguing that "the idea of partition and a 'federated' state was avoided, due to the struggle of the people of Cyprus", but, "in the name of 'anti-communism' the unity of the Cyprus people is undermined"; a masking American and British imperialist interests.<sup>24</sup> By the time EDA radicalized its rhetoric and approach to anti-colonialism and its association with Cyprus,<sup>25</sup> the Generals Coup in Greece violently extinguished any democratic embers that still smoldered.

### *Concluding remarks*

Throughout its existence, EDA was perhaps the only party that was persistent and consistent on the Cyprus issue, which was one of many national-liberation struggles to emerge from that period British suppression, and which was, therefore, seen as a fight against colonialism and imperialism. However, the paradox is that although Cyprus was seen as an anti-colonial struggle, the outcome of the struggle would not be independence, but enosis with Greece, which itself was considered just another state that belonged to NATO. This question though never commanded any considerable attention in the rhetoric of EDA. *Enosis* was the only solution to the issue. While, at the same time, Cyprus comprised a national issue, and therefore, an issue of national interest; national interests that the Greek governments, regardless whether these were represented by ERE or the Centre Union, were jeopardized by collaborating with the imperialists, be they British, American or Turk, reviving and adopting the stereotypes of the 'Other'.

National interest, it has been argued, is a language shared by those state agents involved in determining state action and by the audience for whom the state action must be legitimate.<sup>26</sup> National interest is constructed as if a meaningful, tangible object, intended to create a collective identity. Through Cyprus, EDA attempted to legitimize itself in Greek society, and more importantly, to delegitimize the governments of ERE and Centre Union, as the only patriotic forces of the country. Cyprus thus, as noted, became the vehicle through which all parties, and especially the Left, considering the Cold War anti-communism, tried to prove their patriotism.

For EDA, 'national interest' goes beyond politics, as seen in EDA's call for a "national patriotic front" to fight united the Cyprus cause. At the same time, in order to fulfill its purpose, the party does not hesitate to appropriate the same symbols, rhetoric, and the same state agents it traditionally opposes, as was the case with Archbishop Theoklitos words that "Cyprus transcends politics and alliances". The appropriation, however, of the dominant ideological scheme and historical narrative deserves additional attention and is beyond the scope of our short presentation.

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<sup>24</sup> Statement of the Executive Committee of EDA, ASKI, *Sixth Synod of EDA*, 9-12.5.1964, *EDA Archive*, Box 14, folder 5.

<sup>25</sup> See for example Ch. Odysseos, "The Cyprus Issue in the Light of the British-American Contradictions", *Greek Left*, issue, 6, January 1964, pp. 28-33; Chronicle, "International and Financial News", *Greek Left*, issue 8-9, March-April 1964, pp. 73-83; the anti-colonial, as well as, the internationalist aspect will be dealt later in our study.

<sup>26</sup> Jutta Weldes (1996). "Constructing National Interests". *European Journal of International Relations*, 2(3), pp. 275-318.

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