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Economic and social conditions of the development of the Greek Communist movement

As in all other countries the specific features of the Greek social system and the conditions of the country's economy had a distinctive influence on the beginnings of the Labour movement. The following table gives an idea of the economic conditions prevailing in Greece.¹

	1861	1870	1879	1907	1920	1928
primary sector agriculture	74,0	74,8	69,9	66,3	70,0	68,3
secondary sector						
industry/craft	10,0	10,3	11,8	12,8	13,1	14,7
tertiary sector	16,0	14,9	18,3	20,9	16,0	17,0
trade/banking/traffic	6,1	6,3	7,3	11,1	9,2	10,7
private services	3,9	3,8	5,2	3,4	2,2	1,9
army & public service	4,4	3,4	3,9	3,2	2,0	1,5
professions	1,6	1,4	1,9	3,2	2,6	2,9

But even this table² is misleading to a certain degree because the secondary sector includes people working in tiniest shops. In 1920 there were 34.892 industrial enterprises of which 31 987 had less than 5 workers. 2413 »factories« occupied between 6 and 25 workers and 492 more than 26 workers. According to west European standard this could hardly be called industry. Greece was an agricultural country with some trade.³

The urbanisation process continued. Until 1920 the growth of Greek towns had been caused by the usual migration from the countryside to the towns. The living conditions in Athens and Piraeus were intolerable. In 1920 five to six people shared one room. But this was idyllic compared with the catastrophic conditions two years later when one and a half million refugees from Asia Minor poured into the country. Within a very short time the population of Athen/Piraeus almost doubled (1920: 453 042; 1928: 802 000). Almost needless

¹ Nikolinakos, Marios: Materialien zur kapitalistischen Entwicklung Griechenlands, Teil 1, In: Das Argument, 12 (1970 2/3), p. 213.

² Parts of this table are reproduced in Panagiotis Noutsos, Greece, In: van Linden, Marcel and Rojahn, Jürgen (eds.): The Formation of Labour Movements 1870–1914. An International Perspective. Leiden/New York, 1990, Vol. I, p. 440.

³ The general setback of the trends noticeable after 1907 in all three sectors was caused by the Balkan Wars by which Greece's national territory increased by 68 per cent and the population by 67. But these gains were agrarian and thus slowed down the development towards industrialisation.

to say that the infrastructure of the capital could not keep pace with this development. Most of the town dwellers had no jobs and tried to make a living with casual work. In 1928 thirty nine per cent of the refugees were without a job. A totally unjust tax system hit the poor especially hard: forty two per cent of the income of a peasant or worker family were devoured by indirect taxes. In 1939 the yearly per capita income of a Greek amounted to 75 \$; in Great Britain the comparative figure was 469 \$. Greece was one of the poorest countries of Europe between the wars.

Politically Greece was unstable as well. In 1909 the old political system had become so thoroughly rotten that a kind of Young Turk Rebellion took place in the armed forces. This rebellion is known as the Revolution of Goudi. The officers were clever enough not to try to run the country themselves and called the liberal politician Eleftherios Venizelos to the fore. In 1910 and 1911 Venizelos reformed the Greek state, i. e. he modernised outdated structures and updated the constitution. Beginning social unrest was channeled by creating paternalistic unions and bringing them under the tutelage of the liberal party.

During the First World War the country was deeply split. The king wanted to side with the Middle Powers, and Venizelos strongly believed in the ultimate victory of the *Entente*. Venizelos was right and in the peace treaty of Svres he won a big portion of Asia Minor for Greece. Unfortunately his royalist successor gambled away his gains: He started a war against Kemal Atatürk's resurgent Turkey without allies and lost it. The price was paid by the Greeks of Asia Minor. 1.5 million of them were driven out of land their ancestors had occupied 2500 years ago.

Greece now became a republic. But this republic was even more unstable than the Weimar Republic. Governments rarely survived a few months. There were coups and short lived dictatorships. The electorate was called to the polls seven times between 1924 and 1936. During the same period there were two plebiscites on the form of government. The electoral system was changed in each election. In 1935 the monarchy was restored by a fraudulent plebiscite and 1936 a fascist dictatorship⁴ was erected by King Georg II and General Ioannis Metaxas. The most astonishing feature of this period, however, was that not even the Asia Minor Catastrophe was able to destroy the old two party system which had come into being during the First World War. Even the refugees did not turn radical or communist and voted against the bourgeois parties which had created the disaster. And the refugees became and remained the staunchest supporters of Venizelos. This brings us to a feature of the Greek political system which is totally strange to Europeans.

⁴ On the fascist character of the regime see note 58 of this paper.

When the modern Greek state was created in 1832 it inherited and developed political structures alien to Europe, i.e. Greece generated her own specific political culture.⁵ In the context of this study one of its multi-faceted features is of major interest: Greece's clientelistic system.

The roots of this custom reach back into the time of the Ottoman Empire. During the 400 years of Turkish rule it became »customary for the local notable to intercede with the authorities on behalf of his fellow citizens. This role gave added prestige, power, and wealth; the villagers gained a sponsor and security. There was some reciprocity, since it was recognized that the notable had a call on the service or loyalty of those for whom he did favors. Conversely, the notable had an obligation to protect the interests of those who entered into this relationship [...].⁶ In the last resort this system served to protect the individual and his family against extra-community forces, i. e. against infringements by Ottoman power bearers.

However, after 1821 this system's character changed radically. From now on clientelism was used to tie the individual to the political system. The previous »patron-protectors« began to involve themselves in politics as party leaders and soon found that their clientelistic networks could be used for exerting political power. The client's original desire for physical security gave way to the aspiration for social protection or promotion. The patrons soon discovered that they were able to grant favours to their clients and in turn would gain their votes. Thus in the 19th century a highly sophisticated system of favoritism, nepotism, patronage and favors or *roustetia* (fulfilment of voters' wishes by legal or illegal means) was created which kept the clientele together. At the same time many patrons detected that there were others more powerful. Therefore they subordinated themselves to these and became part of their clientelistic network. At the beginning of the 20th century two rivalling clientelistic pyramids existed which vaguely resembled European conservatives and liberals.

The state machinery became the object of the patrons' exploitative greed: job haggling and horse-trading, corruption, log-rolling manoeuvres and spoils system ruined the administration, judiciary and military. The parties which resulted from this system of »political procuring« as it was characterized by a deputy towards the end of the 19th century did not know any party program, organisation or congresses let alone internal democracy. The party bosses were the absolute overlords of their organisations. Conflicts within a party led to the splitting of whole clientelistic networks and in the last resort to factionalisation. According to the success or failure of a party leader his clientele grew or shrank. According-

⁵ Richter, Heinz: Zwischen Tradition und Moderne: Die politische Kultur Griechenlands. In: Reichel, Peter (Hg.): Politische Kultur in Westeuropa, Bürger und Staaten in der Europäischen Gemeinschaft. Bonn, 1984, pp. 145–166.

⁶ Legg, Keith R.: Politics in Modern Greece. Stanford, 1969, p. 34.

ly, the Greek voter did not vote for the policy of a party but against the party which had not done him the expected favour (*rousfeti*).

The population growth which slowly led to an urbanisation of the country did almost not touch this system. Not even when the process of industrialisation, accompanied by capitalist exploitation showed the first obstacles, was the system shaken noticeably. In fact, the exploited sought remedy from their patrons. The idea to turn against them did not come into their minds. It needed the Great Depression and the political crisis towards the end of the (Venizelist) republic to deliver a first blow to the system. The fascist dictatorship between 1936 and 1941 beheaded and paralysed the clientelistic networks by arresting and deporting the patrons. The bewildered clients were left alone and started to look for new guidance. The occupation of Greece by the Axis powers created a political vacuum which was filled by the Greek communist party offering leadership in the resistance struggle against the invaders. Individuals and whole clientelistic networks shifted their loyalty to the new organisations promising a brighter future.

The only political factor totally alien to this system was the Greek Communist Party (*Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*; KKE) which introduced unknown elements of European political culture such as party programme or party discipline and, above all, could offer no *rousfeti*. When investigating the history of the Greek Communist Party six distinctly different periods seem to be discernible between its founding in 1918 and the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943. They may be characterized by the following headings: Convulsions of birth, 1918–1920; factional strives 1920–1924; bolshevisation, 1924–1931; intervention of the Comintern and subsequent stalinisation, 1931–1936; struggle for survival against the fascist dictatorship of Metaxas, 1936–1941; resistance and development towards a mass movement, 1941–1944.

Available Sources

Until 1974 research on the history of KKE was seriously impeded by the fact that the party had been outlawed since December 1947. Most party publications after the end of the Civil War (1949) appeared somewhere in Eastern Europe under the name »Political and Literary Editions« (*Politikes kai Logotechnikes Ekdoseis*). Few found their way into Greece and almost none into a public library. During the colonels' dictatorship (1967–1974) all public libraries were thoroughly purged from the few remaining leftist books. Nowhere in Greece were sources published by KKE legally obtainable. Material dealing with the interwar period did not exist at all. It had been banned and burned during Metaxas' dictatorship (1936–1940) and the little which may have had survived the onslaught of the

secret police had disappeared after 1947. Only with great difficulty was it possible to trace some private collections and to obtain admission to them. The party's archives were inaccessible because they were located somewhere in Eastern Europe, most probably in Bucharest. When KKE in the 1960s was preparing a series of documentations parts of the archives were moved to Skopje.

Alekos Papapanagiotou who worked in the Institute of National History (*Arhiv na Instituta za Nationalna Istorija*) at the University of Skopje was chosen as the official party historian and editor of the »Official Documents« (*Episima Keimena*) series dealing with World War II and the Civil War. When the party split in 1968 he sided with the Euro-Communist wing (KKEes). Freed from control by the orthodox mandarins, he began to publish broadly in a scholarly way taking up even very controversial issues especially of the Civil War period.⁷ His *Episima Keimena* volume of the war years was so embarrassing for the orthodox wing that they decided to publish their version as well.⁸ After 1974 he prepared the Civil War volume of the series but it was never published. Apparently the contents were still too embarrassing for some leading Euro-Communists. Over the years Papapanagiotou had built up a huge archive in Skopje containing all sorts of material. When he died in the late 70s the archive disappeared but it re-surfaced in 1991. It is now part of the ASKI (*Archeia Synchronis Koinonikis Istorias – Archives for Modern and Social History*) Foundation closely linked to EAR, the party succeeding the KKEes. ASKI is open to scholars. It even publishes a journal which has the same name as the foundation.

A few years ago KKE set up an institute of Marxist studies (*Kentron Marxistikon Erevnon*) in Athens where most of the reprinted material is available. Controversial and sensitive material, however, will be searched for in vain by researchers. Though the party's archives were moved to Greece they are not accessible to scholars. The standard excuse is that the material is being restored because a few years ago heavy rains drowned much of the archives situated in the basement of the Central Committee building.

There are a few private collections containing communist sources which are difficult of access. Government sources – especially police records – exist but are in bad order and may only be consulted after 50 years, if at all.

Since 1990/92, after the opening of the Moscow archives the source situation regarding the early history of KKE has improved considerably. Scholars may consult most of the archives of Komintern and individual communist parties; some groups of sources, however, remain closed. KKE-Documents, files of the Greek EKKI representation and cadre folders can be found in the RGASPI (*Rossiskij Gosudarstvennij Archiv Socialno-Politicseskoj Istorii – Russian State Archiv for*

⁷ See Richter, Heinz A.: Greece and Cyprus since 1920. Bibliography of Contemporary History. Heidelberg, 1984, pp. 275, 278ff., 310.

⁸ See footnote 10.

Social-Political History). Another important source on Komintern policy are the published diaries of Dimitroff.⁹

Despite these impediments the primary source situation as far as official party documentation is concerned in reality has not been bad – provided the publications could be traced.¹⁰ Secondary sources such as memoirs and reminiscences dealing with the period until 1931 are scarce.¹¹ For the years to the Second World War their number is meagre.¹² The resistance period, however, is characterised by abundance.¹³

⁹ Bayerlein, Bernhard H. (ed.): Georgi Dimitroff. Tagebücher 1933–1943. 2 Vols. Berlin, 2000, pp. 712, 773; Greek edition: Kousinopolous, Spyros (ed.): Georgi Dimitrov. Selides apo to aporito imerologio. Athens 1999.

¹⁰ In 1947 KKE published its first two volume documentation dealing with the period from the party's foundation until the intervention of the Comintern: KKE (ed): To KKE apo to 1918 eos to 1931. Vol 1: To KKE apo to 1918 eos to 1925. Athens, 1947 and To KKE apo to 1918 eos to 1931. Vol 2: To KKE apo to 1926 eos to 1931. Athens, 1947. The crucial period of stalinisation was covered by another volume: KKE (ed): Pente Chronia Agones 1931–1936. Athens, 1936. This volume was reprinted as KKE (ed): Pente Chronia Agones 1931–1936. Athens, 1946. Yet another book deals with the years 1935 to 1945: KKE (ed): Dekh Chronia Agones 1935–1945. Athens, 1945; reprint in Athens in 1977 by Poreia. In 1953, after the end of the Civil War KKE published a source book for the years 1931 to 1952: KKE (ed): To KKE apo to 1931 eos to 1952. Vasika Dokoumenta. 1953. In 1958 the first comprehensive documentation of the party history was published: KKE (ed): Saranta Chronia tou KKE, 1918–1958. Epilogi Dokoumenton. 1958. A reprint edition appeared in 1964 allegedly in Athens. In the 1960s KKE published a documentary series covering the period to the Second World War: KKE (ed): To Kommounistiko Komma tis Elladas. Episima Keimena. Vol. 1: 1918–1924. 1964; this volume was reprinted in Athens in 1974 by Synchroni Epochi. KKE (ed): To Kommounistiko Komma tis Elladas. Episima Keimena. Vol. 2: 1925–1928. 1965; reprint in Athens in 1974 by Synchroni Epochi. KKE (ed): To Kommounistiko Komma tis Elladas. Episima Keimena. Vol. 3: 1929–1933. 1966; reprint in Athens in 1974 by Synchroni Epochi. KKE (ed): To Kommounistiko Komma tis Elladas. Episima Keimena. Vol. 4: 1934–1940. 1968. This series of documentation will be quoted as: Episima Keimena. For the resistance period there are two volumes of this series, one published by KKE Esoterikou and the other by KKE: KKE esoterikou (ed): To Kommounistiko Komma tis Elladas. Episima Keimena. Vol. 5: 1940–1945. Rome, 1973; reprint in Athens in 1974. KKE (ed): To Kommounistiko Komma tis Elladas. Episima Keimena. Vol. 5: 1940–1945 (Athens, 1981). Of course most of the documentations appearing after 1974 are compilations and reproductions of earlier editions but they are obtainable whereas most of the earlier documentations have vanished.

¹¹ The most important are the memoirs of two former party secretaries: Benarogias, Avraam: I Proti Stadiodromia tou Ellinikou Proletariatou. Athens, 1975; Stavridis, Eleftherios: Ta Paraskinia tou KKE. Airetai to Parapetasma tou KKE apo tis Idryseos tou mechri ton Symmoritopoleon. Athens, 1953. Some information may be gathered from A. Stinas: Anamniseis. 60 Chronia kato apo ti Simasia ths Sosialistikis Epanastasis, 2 vols. Athens, 1977.

¹² Only the more important ones are mentioned. Bartziotas, Vasilis: Ki'Astrapse Fos i Akronafplia! Athens, 1977 and Stis Fylakes kai tis Exories. Athens, 1978; Manousakas, Giannis: O Chalamos. Apo to Chorio stin Akronafplia. Athens, 1978 and Akronafplia. Thrylos kai Pragmatikotita. Athens, 1975; Michelidis, Dimitrios: O Skliros Dromos. Ena Chroniko pou Apoka-

Scholarly research on a communist or leftist topic in Greece proper before 1974 was non-existent for two reasons: Official historians considered contemporary history (*Zeitgeschichte*) as current politics and therefore as unscholarly and the Greek state did everything possible to discourage research and historiography in this field.¹⁴ It inspired, however, the publication of pseudo-scholarly studies on KKE which were scarcely more than pieces of anti-communist propaganda.¹⁵ The same purpose was served by publishing accounts of KKE-renegades.¹⁶ But in our context they are irrelevant.

Research outside Greece was arid. In the US there appeared a monograph on the history of SEKE/KKE which regrettably was written from an extreme cold war position.¹⁷ Another American study scrutinized the Greek trade union movement.¹⁸ The development of social question in the 19th and 20th century was the topic of a study published in the Federal Republic of Germany.¹⁹ The first account of the party's history from a KKE-point of view appeared in 1945 when secretary general Nikos Zachariadis made a first effort to interpret KKE's history.²⁰ The first concise official party chronicle appeared in 1952²¹ and was soon followed by a lengthier history.²² The next effort at a party history was made by KKE in 1978.²³ All of them were rather uncritical and reflected scarcely more than the prevailing ideological position at the time.

thista tin Alitheia sto Diastima tis Paranomioas tou KKE kata tin 4i Avgoustou. Athens, 1983; Nefeloudis, Pavlos: Stis Piges tis Kakodaimonias. Ta Vathytera Aitia tis Diaspasis tou KKE. Athens, 1979; Nefeloudis, Vasilis A.: Martyries 1906–1938. Athens, 1984; Palaiologopoulos, Mitsos: Ellines Antifasisites Ethelontes ston Ispaniko Emfylio Polemo. Athens, 1977; Partsalidis, Avra: Anamniseis apo ti Zoi tis OKNE. Athens, 1976; Someritis, Stratis: I Megali Kampi. Martyries – Anamniseis 1924–1974, Vol 1: Apo ti Dimokratia sto Fasismo 1924–1941. Athens, 1975.

¹³ See Richter: Greece and Cyprus, pp. 104–116, 276f.

¹⁴ Richter, Heinz A.: Aspekte der griechischen Zeitgeschichte. In: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, 14/15 (1. April 1988), pp. 25–35.

¹⁵ See Pavlopoulos, Athanasios: Istoría tou Kommounismou en Elladi. Athens, 1967.

¹⁶ See Papakonstantinou, Theofylaktos: Anatomia tis Epanastaseos. Athens, 1952.

¹⁷ Kousoulas, D. George: Revolution and Defeat. The Story of the Greek Communist Party. London, New York, 1965.

¹⁸ Jecchinis, Christos: Trade Unionism in Greece. A Study in Political Paternalism. Chicago, 1967.

¹⁹ Mathiopoulos, Basil P.: Die Geschichte der sozialen Frage und des Sozialismus in Griechenland, 1821–1961. Hannover, 1961.

²⁰ Zachariadis, Nikos: Theseis gia tin Istoría tou KKE. Athens, 1945. Reprinted in Eastern Europe 1950 and in Athens in 1975 by Gnoseis.

²¹ KKE (ed.): Chroniko tou Agona, 1878–1951. Dokoumenta kai ylika apo tin Istoría tou Laikou mas Kinimatos. 1952. Its author was Vasilis Bartziotas. It was reprinted in Athens in 1975 by Na Ypiretome to Lao.

²² KKE (ed): Voithimata gia tin Istoría tou KKE. 1952. Reprint in Athens in 1975 by Ekdoseis tou Laou and in 1978 by Koinonikes Ekdoseis. The author was again Vasilis Bartziotas.

²³ KKE (ed): Exinta Chronia Agonon kai Thyseon. Vol 1: 1918–1945. Athens, 1978.

After 1974 the situation changed radically. Immediately after the fall of the military junta the Karamalis government legalised KKE. The taboo, which had hindered research for decades, fell. During the ensuing years a kind of literary explosion took place in Greece: memoirs, reminiscences, articles, monographs and all kinds of reprints appeared in ever increasing numbers. The focus, however, was on the time of the National Resistance. The earlier period was still paid little attention to by historical researchers, but since most of the earlier party documentations and histories were reproduced the source situation improved considerably. The fact that since 1968 there had been two communist parties in Greece (the orthodox KKE and the Eurocommunist KKE *esoterikou*) furthered research as well because KEs published documentations based on parts of the party's archives which often diverged substantially. Unfortunately, however, these revealing discrepancies deal with the late resistance period and the beginning of the civil war. But there are a few memoirs of members of the Eurocommunist KKE which prove helpful in our context.

In 1984 the present author published the first and so far only comprehensive bibliography on Greek communism, socialism and trade unionism²⁴ which lists more than 1700 titles dealing with this topic. The entries dealing with the history of KKE until 1941, however, scarcely exceed 120. These include party documents, monographs, memoirs, biographies, articles in periodicals, essays in books, dissertations, and pamphlets.

In 1974 an *Unit* journalist with intimate knowledge of KKE, Antonio Solaro, presented a story of KKE from a Euro-communist position. Despite lack of sources Solaro's account was a valuable contribution as it shed light on certain controversial episodes of the party's past.²⁵ The multi-volume history by Katsoulis on the other hand is written from a position very close to KKE and methodologically it is scarcely more than a compilation of well known party documents linked by accompanying text.²⁶

However, even after 1974 historical research by non-communist historians dealing with the period under consideration has been scarce. The pre-history of KKE was analyzed by a Greek-American historian.²⁷ Panagiotis Noutsos' multivolume work on Greek socialist thinking is a bonanza for scholars researching

²⁴ Richter, Heinz A.: Greek Communism, Socialism and Trade Unionism. In: Richter, Heinz A.: Greece and Cyprus since 1920, pp. 263–325.

²⁵ Solaro, Antonio: Storia del Partito Comunista Greca. Milano, 1974. Greek edition: Istoría tou Kommounistikou Komma Elladas. Athens, 1977.

²⁶ Katsoulis, Giorgis: Istoría tou KKE, 7 vols. Athens, 1976–78.

²⁷ Leon, George B.: The Greek Socialist Movement and the First World War. New York, 1976; Greek edition: To Elliniko Sosialistiko Kinima kata ton Proto Pankosmio Polemo. Athen, 1978; a short version is: The Greek Labour Movement and the Bourgeois State, 1910–1920. In: The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora, 4 (Winter 1978 4), pp. 5–29.

the early history of SEKE/KKE.²⁸ Elefantis' account²⁹ of the interwar period is another noteworthy exception, though, strictly speaking, it is not a party history. The studies of Matthias Esche,³⁰ Hagen Fleischer,³¹ und Christophe Chiclet³² contain a wealth of information about the history of KKE during the Axis occupation, the *Dekemvriana* and the Civil War but do not touch the earlier period. The story of KKE from its foundation to the Meraxas dictatorship is still waiting for its historian. The KKE-Comintern connection was treated in German by me in a general way³³ and thoroughly by a Russian scholar.³⁴

Convulsions of Birth, 1918–1920

The Greek Communist Party was founded in November 1918 as Socialist Workers' Party of Greece (*Sosialistiko Ergatiko Komma Elladas*, SEKE). The foundation of SEKE in November 1918 came about as an aftermath of the First Panhellenic Trades Union Congress in October 1918. Provoked by labour unrest in 1911 the liberal government of Eleftherios Venizelos had established a system of paternalistic control over the emerging tiny unions by introducing the French organisation system (*bourse du travail*). Right from the beginning the Worker Centres became part of the Venizelist party clientele network. In 1914 the right to form a union was established and simultaneously control by the state and the Venizelist party increased. Nevertheless socialist ideas spread among the unions. But until the end of the First World War Greek trades unions remained local and extremely fragmented. During the First Congress three political trends were discernible: The so-called reformists adhered to the Venizelist paternalistic system and opposed any political activity by the unions. The two other groups represented the right- and left-wing of the socialist trend. They propagated class struggle and rejected any state intervention. As the socialists had the majority in the congress

²⁸ Noutsos, Panagiotis: I sosialistiki skepsi stin Ellada apo to 1875 os to 1974, 3 vols. Athens, 1990–92.

²⁹ Elefantis, Angelos G.: I Epangelia tis Adynatis Epanastasis. KKE kai Astismos ston Mesopolemo. Athens 1976.

³⁰ Esche, Matthias: Die Kommunistische Partei Griechenlands 1941–1949. München, 1982.

³¹ Fleischer, Hagen: Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte. Griechenland 1941–1944. 2 Vols. = Studien Zur Geschichte Südosteuropas Nr. 2. Frankfurt, 1986.

³² Chiclet, Christophe: Les Communistes Grecs Dans la Guerre. Paris, 1987.

³³ See Richter, Heinz A.: Griechenland im Zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, Vol I, Megali Idea – Republik – Diktatur. Köln, 1990.

³⁴ Ulunian, Artiom A.: Kommunisticeskaja Partija Gretsii. Aktual'Nie Voprosi Ideologii i Vnutrennei Istorii 3 Vols. Moskow, 1992–4; Idem, The Communist Party of Greece and the Comintern. Evaluations, Instructions and Subordination. In: Rees, Tim/Thorpe, Andrew (eds.): International Communism and the Communist International. Manchester, 1998, pp. 187–204.

the statutes of the General Trade Unions League (*Geniki Synomospondia Ergaton Elladas*, GSEE) bore their handwriting.

Despite this initial success the original fragmentation continued. Due to the state-imposed election procedure of delegates to GSEE congresses the creation of mini-unions was encouraged which in turn became an easy prey of the rival political parties. This in turn introduced all the negative features of the clientele system into the unions. Thus the GSEE-unions assumed the character of unofficial state unions. By 1936 the Greek unions counted several hundred.

Inspired by the October Revolution Greek socialists decided to found a nation-wide party. Until that date there had been few isolated socialist groups. The strongest was the Socialist Federation of Thessaloniki founded by Jewish intellectuals which before the First World War had been in contact with the Second International. Some days after the First GSEE-congress few unionists and left intellectuals founded SEKE. They were idealistic leftists and their knowledge of socialism was limited. Accordingly the programmatic resolutions were a colourful mixture of marxist and liberal concepts combined with Wilsonian idealism.³⁵

When in March 1919 the Comintern was created trouble began. The left-wingers in the SEKE leadership demanded the severing of all contacts with the Second International and entry into the Comintern. In May the Party Council (*Symvoulío tou Kommátos*) found a compromise which postponed the split for the time being: Contacts with the Second International were to be broken off and it was decided to get in touch with the Comintern. The final decision of adherence would be taken by the 2nd Party Congress. Despite this compromise the bickering continued. In September during another meeting of the Party Council the left-wing majority decided to enter the Balkan Federation of Socialist Parties which a few months ago had joined the Comintern. As this verdict anticipated the resolutions of the 2nd Congress the social-democratic president of SEKE, Aristos Arvanitis, resigned and left the party. The Party Council further decided to establish contact with the Comintern. The story of this first abortive mission to Moscow would easily form an ideal film plot but is much too long to be retold in this context.³⁶

In April 1920 the 2nd SEKE Congress convened. Since the Communist faction controlled the majority of the delegates the decision to enter the Comintern was taken almost unanimously. According to the report of the Central Committee (CC) SEKE counted approximately 1000 members and the youth movement about 500. The Congress further decided to change the party's name into SEKE

³⁵ The documents of the founding congress may be found in: Episima Keimena, I, pp. 3–13.

³⁶ See Stavridis: Paraskinia, pp. 129ff; Gkourvits, Lew: Orion Alexakis. Athens, 1979; Ulunian: Communist Party, p. 189. The story on page 188 that a 16 years old Zachariadis was one of the leading figures of International Unity of Workers in Constantinople lacks credibility. Obviously the author did not always crosscheck the Comintern sources with Greek evidence.

(K) [*Kommounistiko*]. This decision caused the resignation of many leading socialist oriented members with their clientele from the party and a split of the GSEE. The reformists created their own GSEE and within the left GSEE two factions developed which soon became absorbed in ideological infights. The Greek union movement was *de facto* paralyzed.

Factional Strives 1920–1924

In summer 1920 the 2nd Congress of the Comintern put up the notorious 21 conditions of adherence. When these became known in Greece they almost led to a split in SEKE (K) as a considerable number of party members refused to submit to the leadership of the Comintern. In September 1920 the Comintern accepted SEKE (K) as a member of the – in the meantime renamed – Communist Balkan Federation. Thus at the end of 1920 SEKE (K) was only an indirect member of the Comintern. At the same time it became clear that the Balkan Federation would have a say in all matters of the Greek party. Internally the party stood before severe struggles.

In early 1921 three factions fought for the control over SEKE (K). The extreme left (N. Sargologos) propagated a revolutionary course. The »centre« (N. Dimitratos) demanded cooperation with the Venizelists and the dropping of any revolutionary activity. The »right« (G. Georgiadis, Giannis Kordatos, Avraam Benarogia, P. Dimitratos) steered a more socialdemocratic course. Still another line was propagated by the owner of the party's newspaper, Giannis Petsopoulos. In order to overcome the conflict a delegation was sent to the 3rd Comintern Congress which took place in June 1921. The Greek delegation was allowed to participate in the congress but no leading representative of the Comintern received them. They met the Comintern responsible for the Balkans (Christian Rakovski) and the Secretary General of the Bulgarian party (Vasil Kolarov). When the Greeks asked for admission to the Comintern they were told to purge their party from all dissidents and to accept the 21 conditions. Clearly the Comintern did not trust the Greeks since they were no proletarians but obviously intellectuals. The delegation returned to Greece with a lot of propaganda material but little financial help.³⁷

In the meantime the Greek-Turkish war was reaching its climax. SEKE (K) organised an anti-war campaign which provoked repressive measures by the Greek government (Gounaris). In February 1922 the party's »centre« and »right« staged a coup: they called together the first panhellenic party conference which was not provided for by the charter. As many from the »left« were at the front

³⁷ Stavridis: Paraskinia, p. 32.

the moderates had a majority and waved through a social-democratic platform (participation in elections and parliament). From now, on the party would consider the Comintern resolutions as historical documents, which might serve SEKE (K) as orientation on the specific Greek way towards socialism.³⁸ Kordatos was elected secretary of the CC. The taking over by the moderates led to renewed factional strife among the rank and file which even reached the members at the front in Asia Minor.

In May 1922 the Executive Bureau of the Communist Balkan Federation met in Sofia. The Secretary General of the Bulgarian Party, Vasil Kolarov, tabled a resolution for the autonomy of Macedonia and Thrace otherwise the Bulgarian refugees resulting from the treaty of Neuilly would side with IMRO.³⁹ With this demand the Bulgarian party took over positions of the bourgeois parties aiming at the creation of a greater Bulgaria. The representative of SEKE (K), Petsopoulos, managed with great difficulties to hinder the passing of this resolution for the time being.⁴⁰ However, the Greek embassy in Sofia learned about the affair and informed the Athens government. Thus when Petsopoulos returned to Athens he and the whole SEKE (K) leadership was arrested.

During the ensuing months the Greek-Turkish war ended in the »Asia Minor Catastrophe« and the population exchange between Greece and Turkey agreed upon within the framework of the Lausanne peace treaty.

In November 1922 the 2nd Extraordinary SEKE (K) Congress convened. The »left« majority reversed the decisions of the party conference by reinforcing the decisions of the 2nd congress. A new CC and CC-secretary (Sargologos) were elected. Despite this, factional strives continued in 1923. Dissidents were fired, new members especially from Asia Minor joined the party. Among them were Serafeim Maximos who belonged to the International Worker' Union of the Comintern and Pantelis Pouliopoulos who would become CC-Secretary and was later denounced as a Trotskyist. In May 1923 the first Comintern emissary (Andrej Pestkovsky, CC-member of CPSU) appeared in Athens to assist in overcoming the factional strives. Neither he nor the election congress in September 1923 succeeded. Some comrades were thrown out of the party because of right-wing deviation and Sargologos was replaced by T. Apostolidis but the infights continued.

³⁸ Episima Keimena, I, p. 213.

³⁹ On the Macedonia Policy of Komintern see Zila, L. I. and Popovskij, V. T.: *Makedonskij Vopros v Dokumentach Kominterna*, Vol. 1, Part 1, 1923–1925. Skopje, 1999; a good account of the whole problem is Sfetas, Spyridon: *Makedonien und interbalkanische Beziehungen 1920–1924*. München, 1992; later developments are described in: idem: *Die Autonomiebewegungen der Slawophonen im Jahre 1944, die KKE und die Sicherung der Griechisch-Jugoslawischen Grenze*. In: *Thetis* 3 (1996), pp. 21–230.

⁴⁰ Petsopoulos, Giannis: *Ta Pragmatika Aitia tis Diagrafis mou apo to KKE*. Athen, 1946, p. 47 and Benaroglia: *I Proti Stadidromia*, p. 156.

In December 1923 SEKE (K) received an almost lethal blow. At that time the 6th Conference of the Balkan Federation took place in Moscow. Since the last meeting of the Federation the Bulgarians had secured the assistance of Dimitrij Manuilskij and Christian Rakovski from the Comintern leadership. Thus, when the conference began, the Greek delegate (Sargologos) and the Yugoslav were asked to agree to a resolution demanding an independent Macedonia and Thrace. The Yugoslav flatly rejected this. Sargologos, who had no instructions, was blackmailed by the Russians into accepting it. When he returned to Athens he was violently attacked. Totally frustrated and disillusioned he emigrated to the United States.⁴¹

The CC was split. *Rizospastis* editor Kordatos railed against the resolution: The slogan for an autonomous Macedonia and Thrace lacked any basis. Macedonia had been divided into three parts and the Greek section (after the population exchange) was populated almost homogeneously by Greeks. Perhaps the slogan was useful for the Bulgarian party but it certainly damaged the Greek. They were not ready to ruin the Greek party in order to correct the mistakes of the Bulgarian party.⁴² Maximos held the opinion that the Comintern resolutions had to be obeyed. CC-Secretary Apostolidis steered a neutral course. It was decided to bring the whole matter once more before the Comintern.

Comintern's demand for Macedonian autonomy was based on wrong information dating from the time before the Balkan Wars. In 1923 Greek Macedonia was inhabited by an overwhelming Greek majority. By the population exchange of the Lausanne Treaty the Turks living in Macedonia had left the country and Greeks from Anatolia had been settled there. There remained two minorities: The Aromunes living in the area north of Serres and in the Pindus mountains and a Slav speaking group spreading from the Yugoslav border towards Kozani. The Aromunes were of Greek descent but spoke a language of their own related to Rumanian. Though the Slav minority spoke a West-Bulgarian dialect they were more attached to Yugoslavia than to Bulgaria, a fact which they shared with the »Macedonians« around Skopje. The only Bulgarian speaking minority in Greece were the Muslim Pomaks living in the Rhodope mountains in Western Thrace, but they were neither Bulgarians nor Slavs.⁴³

The Macedonia policy of the Comintern intensified the factional strives within SEKE (K). In February 1924 the Party Council met and replaced the so far leadership by a committee (Kordatos, Apostolidis, Maximos). Its task was to purge

⁴¹ Stavridis: Paraskinia, pp. 175–180.

⁴² Kofos, B.: Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia. Thessaloniki, 1964, p. 74; the following book contains some interesting information despite the fact that it was written from a Cold War position: Naltsas, Christoforos: To Makedoniko Zitima Kai i Sovjetiki Politiki. Thessaloniki, 1954.

⁴³ Richter, Heinz A.: Friede in der Ägäis? Zypern – Ägäis – Minderheiten. Köln, 1989.

the party from all opportunists (Socialdemocrats) and extremists (Trotskyists). In the months to follow the »deviationists« left the party or were expelled and founded their own organisations. These, however, degenerated quickly into sectarian groups which did not play any role in Greek politics.⁴⁴

Bolshevization, 1924–1931

In June 1924 the 5th Comintern Congress massively criticised the Greeks and Yugoslavs for their attitude towards the Macedonian question. When the Greek delegates (Pouliopoulos, Maximos) gave in, the Congress decided that the matter would be settled by the 7th Balkan Federation Conference which was to take place after the end of the Comintern Congress.⁴⁵ There the Bulgarian scored full success. The position of the Yugoslav and Greek parties was denounced as right deviationist and liquidarist. Pouliopoulos and Maximos surrendered and signed the resolution. Knowing that pushing through this decision in the Greek party would lead to a major controversy they asked for moral assistance from the other CPs.

This aid was granted, indeed. In spring 1924 Greece and the Soviet Union had reestablished diplomatic relations. In June the first Soviet ambassador (A. M. Ustinov) appeared in Athens to be followed by further diplomatic personnel and a number of graduates from the Communist University of the Workers of the East (*Kommunisticheskij Universitet Trudyashchaya Vostoka*; KUTV; 1921–1952). Western European communists were trained in the party high school at Sverd-

⁴⁴ There were two main directions: the Socialdemocrats (Mensheviks) and the Trotskyists or Archive-Marxists (*Archeio Marxistes*). Whereas the former vegetated on a very low level, the Trotskyists had some impact on the country's history as suppliers of progressive ideas. The Trotskyists were called Archeio-Marxists because they published a journal with this name. In 1931 they were officially recognized as the Greek section of the International Left Opposition (ILO). Allegedly they had 2000 members but this number seems very exaggerated. See Alexander, Robert J.: *International Trotskyism 1929–1985. A Documented Analysis of the Movement*. Durham, London, 1991, p. 501. Further details are found in Nikilopoulos, Theodoros: *I ali opsi tou ellinikou ergatikou kinimatos (1918–1930)*. Athens, 1983. In 1934 the Archive-Marxists left ILO but since 1928 there was another Trotskyist group, the Spartakos Group, publishing a journal with this name. Its leader was Pantelis Pouliopoulos, the purged former Secretary General of KKE. This group had 75 members in 1932. During the Dictatorship of Metaxas and the Axis Occupation the Trotskyists were persecuted but survived. During the *Dekemvriana* (the December 1944 events), and the ensuing Greek Civil War, however, they came under the attack of KKE and many were killed. See Panagiotis Noutsos: *Sozialpolitische Theorie und Geschichtsschreibung*. Ioannina, 1993, p. 75 and idem, *Säuberungen innerhalb der griechischen KP (1931 bis 1956)*. Ibidem, pp. 73–78.

⁴⁵ Rothschild, Joseph: *The Communist Party of Bulgaria. Origins and Developments 1883–1936*. New York, 1959, p. 236f.

lovsk, but as the Soviets considered Greece an Eastern country Greek communists received their training at KUTV. The KUTVists as the graduates were called in party jargon were mostly Greeks who had grown up in Russia or Greeks from Asia Minor who had found their way to the Soviet Union after the Asia Minor Catastrophe. Among them was Nikos Zachariadis who would later become Secretary General of KKE. The Soviet embassy asked SEKE (K) to employ the KUTVists in party work. The SEKE (K) leadership did this, though reluctantly, since they did not trust their loyalty. They were right: These cadres felt loyalty only to their masters in Moscow. Soon they monopolised the contacts with the Soviet embassy and thus controlled the material aid flowing from Moscow to Athens.⁴⁶

When the Macedonia resolution became known to the party members it created an uproar. In order to quell this the Comintern in November 1924 sent two emissaries to the 3rd Extraordinary Congress of SEKE (K): Manuilskij and the Secretary General of the Czechoslovak party and member of the Comintern Executive Committee, Richard Smeral.

This congress constitutes a milestone in the history of the party. SEKE (K) was renamed KKE, the 21 conditions were accepted and the organisational structure was remodelled according to the CPSU pattern, i.e. the cell system was introduced. With massive help from the Comintern emissaries the Macedonian policy of the Comintern was enforced.⁴⁷ Pouliopoulos was elected new CC-Secretary. But even then KKE hesitated to align itself publicly with this policy. When the first article appeared in *Rizospastis* many members left KKE and in early 1925 after a further article the Greek government had KKE's leadership arrested and brought to court for treason. However, before the trials began the Pangalos dictatorship was established and KKE was outlawed. Clumsy management of the trials offered the accused the chance for propaganda in which they were assisted by an international press campaign organised by the Comintern which presented them as political martyrs.⁴⁸ Pangalos' anti-communist campaign played into the hands of the KUTVists: As most of the old party leaders were arrested the KUTVists' influence grew: they had been trained for illegality and

⁴⁶ Zapantis, Andrew L.: Greek Soviet Relations, 1917–1941. New York, 1982, pp. 169ff. It is interesting that the comrades of the Communist Party of Cyprus (KKK – *Kommunistiko Komma Kyprou*) were sent to the »western« cadre school. See Heinz Richter: Die Kommunistische Partei Zyperns (KKK) 1926–1944. In: *Thetis*, 3 (1996), pp. 207–216.

⁴⁷ *Episima Keimena*, I, pp. 513–518.

⁴⁸ Comintern itself was rather ill briefed on the situation in Greece in 1926. Its Russian representative Korzokov, who became a member of KKE's Politbureau under the pseudonym Eftichiadis, reported that General Kondylis and Colonel shared left ideals. Ulunian: *Communist Party*, p. 196. It was Kondylis who organized the restoration of the Monarchy in 1935 by a coup d'état and during the Axis occupation Zervas was a kind of Greek Michailovic.

thus many of them managed to escape the persecution of the police and soon controlled large sections of the party.

After the fall of the Pangalos dictatorship in August 1926 the conflict with the KUTVists began. CC Secretary Pouliopoulos resigned from his post and attacked the Macedonian policy: It ruined the party and ought to be given up. Equally calamitous in his eyes was the growing influence of the KUTVists. They did not take root in the party and only aimed at bringing it under Moscow's control.

In the general elections of 7 December 1926 KKE received 41 982 votes (4.38 %) and according to the proportional voting system applied, 10 deputies. In the previous elections (December 1923) under the majority system and politically totally different conditions SEKE (K) had won roughly 10 000 votes but no deputy. The increase of votes was caused by three factors: As the proportional system was applied the Greek voter did not waste his ballot if he voted for KKE. The repressive measures of the dictatorship provoked a protest reaction against the old clientelistic parties and finally in the election campaign KKE did not mention the Macedonian problem.

In the meantime Pouliopoulos continued his attacks. During an enlarged CC meeting in mid December 1926 the KUTVists accused him of liquidarism. Pouliopoulos countered: the Macedonian policy would have serious consequences for the labour movement in Greece. It was unacceptable that any international institution decreed the course of the various parties. In each country there were specific conditions. This was clearly a Trotskyite position and the KUTVists had him condemned for factionalism and liquidarism. In February 1927 Kordatos sided with Pouliopoulos: The Macedonian policy and not the persecutions of the Greek government had delivered the *coup de grâce* to KKE. The Greek workers considered the Greek communists as allies of Bulgarian chauvinism. Kordatos and Pouliopoulos were right: In March 1927 KKE counted 860 members.⁴⁹

Despite this distressing situation the fights between the factions continued. During the 3rd Party Congress in March 1927 three factions became discernible: The »liquidarists« around Pouliopoulos which had the support of the deputies demanded the dropping of the Macedonian policy. They wanted the building of an efficient cadre structure prior to the enlargement of the mass basis. The KUTVists assisted by the Comintern emissary and member of the CC of KPD, Hermann Remmele, aimed at sacking the »petit bourgeois intellectuals« and wanted to create a mass basis which they could control more easily. The »centrists« around Maximos took an opportunistic position. Thus the KUTVists gained a partial victory. The Macedonian policy was declared obligatory and it was decided to open the party for the mass influx of workers. These, however,

⁴⁹ Rothschild: Communist Party, p. 238; Kofos: Nationalism, p. 81.

showed rather little interest since KKE could offer no *rousfetia*. If the Comintern faction did not score full success it was due to the KKE deputies who threatened to lay down their mandates if the KUTVists tried to purge the »liquidarists«.

In August 1927 the crisis reached its climax. Pouliopoulos attacked the KUTVists from the front by condemning Stalin's policy of socialism in one country as anti-marxist and anti-leninist and openly sided with Trotsky, Sinoviev and Kamenev. The Stalinist Politbureau from which the »centrists« had resigned in June fired him from the party and had his expulsion confirmed by the Comintern.⁵⁰ Now the KUTVists turned against the »centrists« around Maximos. The Comintern asked him to come to Moscow what he wisely refused. In November 1927 the KKE Politbureau accused him of factionalism. But they hesitated to sack him directly since this would have meant the loss of deputies as well. The Stalinist had found a better way: They started a campaign for the autonomy of Macedonia. The Greek government promptly lifted the parliamentary immunity of KKE's deputies and sent them for trial. Though they were soon released they lost control over their followers and the KUTVists were able to expel them from the CC at a meeting in February 1928. The Comintern agreed. At the same time it was planned to create a purely communist union.

In the elections of 19 August 1928 KKE mustered 14 325 votes (1.41 %) but since the majority system was applied no seat. The drop in votes was caused by a variety of factors. The Macedonian policy surely played a major role but more important was the return of Venizelos to active political life. On the other hand under the majority system any vote for KKE was a forlorn vote. Therefore, many left voters transferred their votes to the liberals whence moreover there might come *rousfetia*.

Despite this election defeat the purges continued. In December 1928 the 4th Party Congress attended by a Comintern delegation sacked all former deputies save one (Kostas Theos). The new Stalinist leadership under A. Chaitas approved the measures taken by the Comintern and the Soviet government against Trotsky. The Comintern emissary in turn congratulated KKE for the successful purge of the party.

The ensuing two years were the blackest in the history of KKE. In February 1929 KKE founded – as planned – the communist union federation (*Enotiko GSEE*; EGSEE; United GSEE) which institutionalised the split of the Greek labour movement and made it easier for the Greek government to persecute the communist unionists and reinforce state control over the non-communist unions. In March 1929 the Venizelos government introduced a bill (*Idionymo law – sui generis law*) which made agitation against the social order a crime. In Juli it became a law. Though KKE denounced this law as fascist and the Comintern

⁵⁰ To KKE apo to 1931, II, p. 220.

mobilised Europe's public opinion against the dictatorial situation in Greece the repressive measures of Venizelos were rather mild, scarcely more than administrative hindrances to the party's work. If the KKE's star sank to its lowest this was not caused by the government's persecutions but by the continuation of the internal strife.

The quarrels were not about ideological differences but about personal rivalries in the top leadership. The 4th Congress had demanded an increase of membership to 5000. Instead the number shrank. In March 1930 KKE had 170 members in Athens and in red Piraeus only 70. The total membership was below 1500. Not even when the world economic crisis hit Greece could KKE attract new members: When in August 1931 an anti-war demonstration which had been prepared for weeks took place only 150 persons showed up. Quite rightly this period of KKE's history is called the time of unprincipled opportunism.

The Comintern had watched these fights with growing displeasure. In June 1929 a Comintern emissary tried in vain to lead KKE back to the »right« way. In January 1930 during the 3rd plenum communist deputy of the *Reichstag* and emissary of the Comintern, Ernst Grube, made another attempt to overcome the personal feuds. But the squabbles continued. Two groups were discernible which accused each other as responsible for the decline of the party: the Stalinist clique around Chaitas and a less orthodox and more nationally oriented circle around Theos and Georgios Siantos. In August 1931 the Greek police tried to arrest KKE's leaders. Though Chaitas was arrested he managed to escape to Moscow where in 1935, he was executed as a Trotskyist. Siantos had left for Moscow before the police raid. When Theos was caught in September KKE was leaderless.

Intervention of the Comintern and Stalinization, 1931–1936

In view of this desolate situation the Comintern decided to intervene directly into the internal affairs of KKE. In November 1931 a Comintern resolution analysed the situation in Greece and made it known that the party had a new leadership.⁵¹ In December the 4th Plenum met and in the presence of a Comintern emissary (Henryk Walecki of the Polish CP) the new leadership under the KUTVist Nikos Zachariadis was established.

As Zachariadis led the party until 1956 a few words about his career seem useful. Zachariadis was born in Adrianople (Edirne) in 1903 as son of *petit bourgeois* parents. As his father often changed his place of work he grew up in various towns of Ottoman Turkey. His formal education consisted of four years of primary school and one year of High School. From 1919 on he worked in the Istanbul docks and later as a Black Sea sailor. During this time he got in touch with the local unions. In 1923 he joined the CP of Turkey and was sent to KUTV. In 1924 the Comintern sent him to Greece. Between 1924 and 1929 he held various posts in the communist youth movement OKNE (*Omospondia Kommounistikou Neolaion Elladas*; Federation of Communist Youth of Greece) and KKE. Several short stays in prison interrupted his activities. In 1929 he left Greece to be trained as a cadre in the Soviet Union until 1931. Zachariadis was an absolute henchman of Stalin.⁵²

The new leadership promised to follow all the instructions of the Comintern. Indeed, during the ensuing two years the organisational structure of KKE was remodelled on the Bolshevik model. In July 1932 the 1st Panhellenic Organisational Conference declared the factory cell as the basis of the party. In August a conference on union questions took place. In the September 1932 elections KKE received 58 223 votes (4.97 %) and, as the proportional system was applied, won 10 deputies. KKE rejoiced and attributed the success to the competent leadership of Zachariadis.

This was exaggerated of course. The true reason for the gains was that the Greek voters had turned against Venizelos' liberal party which had proved incapable and unwilling to cope with the disastrous effects of the Great Depression on Greece. They voted for the conservative Populists or for the smaller progressive parties among which was KKE. The new KKE deputies were all staunch supporters of the Stalinist line.

Towards the end of 1932 the economic situation deteriorated rapidly. The two big bourgeois parties were unable to form a stable government therefore new

⁵¹ Pente Chronia Agones, p. 13–26.

⁵² Stavridis: Paraskinia, p. 477.

elections were held in March 1933. Despite the application of the majority system KKE received 52 958 votes (4.64 %) but no seat in parliament. The effects of the Depression had obviously paralysed some of the old clientelistic mechanism and thus the KKE electorate stabilised.

During the following years KKE played a totally passive role in Greek politics. It was preoccupied with reorganising itself. The most important event for the development of the party was the 6th Plenum of January 1934 which laid down the ideological line which would be valid until 1945.

Since until then KKE had not worked out any party program (the first official program was to be formulated in 1961) the basis of thought was the Comintern resolution of November 1931 which was quoted at length in the relevant document.⁵³ According to the resolution Greece belonged to that number of countries which were on the road towards capitalism. In their agriculture, however, there still remained important semi-feudal elements. In these countries, before the socialist revolution could be carried through, the bourgeois revolution must first be completed. But it was possible that this transformation process could quickly evolve into a socialist revolution. So far the 6th Plenum document reproduced the Comintern resolution correctly but then its authors blurred the matter when they described the manner and evolution of the transformation process. Evidently elements of the Comintern resolution were mixed up with KKE's own concepts in a way which shows that they had not a very clear idea what it was all about:

»The hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution, won in the struggles leading to victorious revolution and safeguarded in the form of rule by soviets, with the active cooperation of the international proletariat, will ensure the rapid transition from bourgeois-democratic to socialist revolution. Government by workers' and peasants' soviets which in the first stage of the revolution will achieve the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry in the form of soviets, will now become the government of the dictatorship of the proletariat.«⁵⁴

In other words, KKE hoped to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a radical-democratic system of government, a system of soviets somewhat resembling the workers', peasants' and soldiers' soviets in Russia in 1905 and 1917 or in Germany at the end of 1918. This means that in 1934 KKE rejected the parliamentary system and preferred the radical-democratic, Leninist system of democracy by soviets.

A piece of self-criticism by the 6th Plenum sheds an interesting light on the social composition of KKE. Only 44 % of the rank and file were workers and

⁵³ The text of the Comintern resolution may be found in: *Episima Keimena*, III, p. 294–306; the text of the 6th Plenum of January 1934 is reproduced in *Episima Keimena*, IV, pp. 13ff.

⁵⁴ *Episima Keimena*, IV, p. 24f.

among them no more than 9.1 % factory workers. 44 of the 590 party cells were factory cells. Obviously the overwhelming majority of KKE's members stemmed from the *petit bourgeoisie*.

In the local elections in February 1934 KKE scored its first great success. Dimitrios Partsalidis was the first communist elected mayor of Greece in Kavalla. In May, however, the government unseated him under the accusation that he had turned the town hall into a communist stronghold.

The 5th party congress in March 1934 ratified the course of the 6th Plenum and propagated the Comintern slogan of establishing an antifascist popular front. The still-provisional leadership around Zachariadis was made permanent. Obviously KKE was well on the way towards Bolshevik unity. Finally the congress accepted a party constitution which was modelled after the CPSU statute and soon developed into an instrument to discipline dissenting party members.

In the months until the abortive *coup d'état* of March 1935 KKE tried to mend the union connection but met with deep distrust by the other trends. At the same time it tried to prepare the mass basis for a general strike in case of a military take over. In vain – Greek workers refused to join KKE. Thus KKE had to confine itself mainly to the role of an onlooker. The 3rd Plenum of April 1935 complained bitterly that the party had no chance to influence developments. But the same Plenum received the Comintern's permission to change the slogan of Macedonian autonomy into »full equality of all minorities within the Greek state«. Thus one of KKE's handicaps was removed.

The elections of June 1935 were boycotted by the Venizelist parties because the ruling Royalists were going to rig them thoroughly. KKE did not join the boycott and thus won 98 699 votes (9.59 %) but no seat in parliament due to the majority system applied. This success was caused mainly by two factors: Firstly, many Venizelists were not ready to succumb to the royalists passively and thus voted KKE out of protest. Secondly, the Venizelist clientelistic network was beginning to disintegrate and many disillusioned Venizelist followers shifted their loyalty to KKE. The new Macedonian policy probably did not have much influence on the voters.

The electoral success filled KKE with new self-confidence. The 3rd Organisational Conference obliged the party to work for the establishment of an anti-fascist popular front. The efforts to improve the relationship to GSEE were intensified but still received a cool reception. The 4th Plenum in September 1935 ratified the decisions of the 7th Comintern congress about the popular front strategy and elected Zachariadis Secretary General of KKE.

In December 1935 the 6th Party Congress took place. With pride the leadership stated that all delegates were workers. However, no words were wasted on the composition of the rank and file. In best Stalinist manner the delegates approved unanimously the work of the CC since the last congress. Obviously Sta-

linism had been successfully implanted. In order to alter the social composition of the party in favour of the workers the congress decided to found a peasant party (*Agrotiko Komma Elladas*; AKE) which was to organise the popular front in the country side. Until the Second World War AKE was a typical communist controlled front party without any attractiveness to the peasantry. AKE's time came during the occupation when it became one of the parties active in the Greek Resistance.

More important for KKE, however, was the introduction of the personality cult surrounding the Secretary General. A later leading cadre, Pavlos Nefeloudis remembers: »The Sixth Party Congress can be seen as the Party Congress which implanted and fostered personality cult in Greece. To all the defects which characterised the internal functioning of our party from its birth there was now added a new evil, the cult of one person, of the person of the leader [...] They began to weave the legend of the »omniscient« [*panexygnos*], the great theoretician, the heroic leader [...] It is he who has created the new party strategy for a bourgeois revolution based on deep study and scientific analysis of the Greek situation. He it is who inspired the Resolutions of the Sixth Party Congress for a united Peasant Party. He is the great conspirator, the phantom whom the Security Police cannot catch.«⁵⁵ But this was only the beginning. A few years later one of Zachariadis' henchmen stated: »The party is Zachariadis and Zachariadis is the party.«⁵⁶

In October 1935 the Greek monarchy was restored by a fraudulent and unfree plebiscite. The returning king, however, insisted on correct elections in January 1936. KKE campaigned as popular front and won 73 411 votes (5.76 %) and 15 deputies. The drop in votes in comparison to the June 1935 elections by more 25 000 was caused by the return of the protest voters to the liberal parties. The relatively high number of votes comprised without any doubt still a great number of protest voters. Membership of KKE in 1936 was well under 10 000⁵⁷ and even these were not seasoned communists in the sense that they were adherents of the teachings of Marx and Lenin or Stalin. Most of them were people who were dissatisfied by the existing clientelistic system and wanted social reforms. The hard core of KKE were the KUTVists and a few hundred staunch supporters, altogether less than one thousand.

The electoral success of KKE, however, soon gained disproportionate weight since the conservative and the liberal camps had come out of the elections with almost equal strength (Venizelist 141 seats, Antivenizelists 143 seats). Thus nei-

⁵⁵ Nefeloudis: *Stis Piges tis Kakodaimonias*, p. 107.

⁵⁶ Zografos, Zizis: *Provlimata Schetika me to Esokommatiko mas Kathestos*. In: *Neos Kosmos* (December 1956), p. 48.

⁵⁷ Richter, Heinz A.: *Griechenland im Zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, Band 1: Megali Idea – Republik – Diktatur*. Köln, 1990, p. 196.

ther of them was able to form a government on their own. Since they had been on hostile terms for years a coalition government in the bourgeois camp was precluded. So conservatives and liberals began bargaining with the popular front in order to win their votes to form a minority government; a coalition with KKE was precluded, of course. A deal with the conservatives was blocked by the military. The negotiations with the liberals were more successful and ended in the conclusion of a mutually-satisfying agreement. At the decisive moment, however, the leader of the liberals, Sofoulis, did not have the courage to face the furious attacks of the conservatives in parliament and ducked out. KKE took revenge by revealing the contents of the negotiations with both parties. This and growing labour unrest offered the Greek right-wing politicians a unique chance to conjure up the communist danger.

The Struggle for Survival – the Fascist Dictatorship of Metaxas, 1936–1941

The strike wave which passed over Greece in spring 1936 was not the work of the communists. In 1935 mounting misery of the working population caused the socialist unions to dissolve their organisations and its members returned to the Venizelist controlled GSEE. As the Venizelists had been ousted from government the liberals approved strikes since these would bring the conservatives into trouble. From January 1936 on the base organisations of communist EGSEE increasingly participated in the strikes. The government reacted with brutal repression the anticlimax of which was the 9 May demonstration in Thessaloniki where the police actually killed 12 and wounded 300. Ensuing protest strikes spread all over Greece. Prime Minister Metaxas cleverly used these to increase the communistophobia of the Greek bourgeoisie to hysteria. In July the GSEE-leadership agreed to organise a nationwide strike together with the communist unions on 5 August. Though the danger of a communist takeover existed only in the frenzied minds of fanatical anti-communists Metaxas and the King used this as an excuse to establish a dictatorship on 4 August 1936.

One of the main characteristics of the fascist⁵⁸ regime of the 4th of August was its anti-communism. Accordingly the communists became the first victims of the regime's repressive measures. Up to November 1936 the secret police had arrested 1330 »communists«. The definition of a communist was left to the police and they discovered »Venizelo-Communists«, »Populo-Communists«, »An-

⁵⁸ For the discussion about the character of the regime see Richter, Heinz: Griechenland zwischen Revolution und Konterrevolution 1936–1946. Frankfurt 1973, pp. 54–67 and Griechenland im Zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, pp. 201–205 by the same author.

glo-Communists«, or »Gallo-Communists«. In other words, whoever was not prominent enough to be branded as a communist was denounced as one, jailed or banned to an island. Towards the end of 1936 the prisons were so overcrowded that the authorities established a concentration camp for communists in the former fortress of Akronafplia. Similar camps were established on Aigina and Corfu.

The dictatorship did not confine itself simply to incarcerating the communists but subjected them to a »re-education program« which should lead them back to the right way. The methods applied to obtain the declarations of repentence (*dilosis metanoias*) recalled the most sinister procedures of the Inquisition and included all kinds of torture. When the victim signed such a declaration in which he condemned Communism and praised the dictator it was published and he was set free. Nevertheless he was branded as a former communist which on the one hand led to his isolation in society and on the other hand made his former comrades break off any contact with him. Until 1939 the secret police collected over 45 000 such declarations. This figure, however, does not reflect the real number of KKE-members but the zeal of the hunters.

In the beginning the KKE-leadership tried to direct the party out of jail but this soon proved to be a hopeless enterprise. The still free (second rank) cadres and members had difficulties enough to avoid arrest and were not able to do any underground work. In order to confuse the rank-and-file of KKE even more, secret police minister Konstantinos Maniadakis had some renegades and under cover secret police agents form a CC and even edit a *Rizospastis*. To keep up appearance the police persecuted the distribution of the fake *Rizospastis* as well. The bogus CC which became known as the provisional leadership (*prosorini diikisis*) managed to get in contact with true KKE cells whereby the cell's members were exposed to persecution.

Until 1940 less than 1000 KKE-cadres and members resisted the onslaught of the regime and did not sign a *dilosis*. Since the prisons and concentration camps were overcrowded the regime could not isolate the communists and they taught the other inmates their message thus turning the prisons into communist smithies where future cadres were forged.⁵⁹

If Metaxas did not succeed in destroying KKE he was succesful in ruining the clientelistic networks of the conservatives and liberals. As most of their clients had internally never identified themselves with the clientelistic system but had used it out of sheer destitution it was easily wiped out. Many of the former clients hated the fascist system but as their former masters showed only little readiness to fight against it they looked for new leaders. Thus KKE as a resistance organisation gained an attraction which it would never have gained if the old

⁵⁹ See Bartziotas' reminiscences mentioned in note 12.

setup had continued. KKE became the bearer of hope for all those who wanted to fight fascism.

In February 1939 Siantos who had managed to escape from his exile island called together a few leading cadres who had not been arrested for a meeting which became known as the 5th Plenum of the CC. Analysing the national and international situation they came to the following conclusion: »Our party fights to secure the independence and integrity of Greece, but at the same time it announces that the greater enemy of our independence and of the integrity of our country is in Athens – the monarchofascist dictatorship.«⁶⁰ The fight against the internal enemy had priority. Sometime in the course of July 1939 the Comintern corrected this position: »Your country is being threatened by the fascist Axis and especially by Italian fascism which is very active in the Balkans. The first duty of KKE is to defend the independence of your country. As long as the Metaxas government is fighting against the same danger, there is no reason for you to give priority to its overthrow.«⁶¹ Siantos and Zachariadis complied and reoriented KKE's propaganda accordingly. A few KKE leaders (Ktistakis, Papagiannis), however, were taken aback by this Comintern *volte face*. They did not understand that the Comintern had since long degenerated into an instrument of Soviet foreign policy and at this particular period Soviet foreign policy was trying to build a dam against fascist expansion in the Balkans at all cost. Zachariadis and Siantos were of the opinion that the security of the Soviet Union had priority.

After the conclusion of the Hitler-Stalin-Pact and the change of the Comintern line to ending this imperialist war they kept a low profile whereas the other group (Ktistakis, Papagiannis) switched to the Comintern's line and demanded a revision of priorities. Thus it was now they who staunchly supported the Comintern's policy whereby lastly they became tools of Axis propaganda.

Mussolini's attack on Greece on 28 October 1940 complicated the situation even more. In a letter of 31 October 1940 Zachariadis took an absolute nationalistic position as regards the war against Italy.⁶² Though he apparently knew about the Comintern directive of September 1939,⁶³ he dismissed it deliberately and returned to the Comintern position of July 1939. His underlying motives for this step are subject to speculation. However, when the Greek army succeeded in pushing the Italians far back into Albania, Zachariadis in a second letter⁶⁴ dated 26 November 1940, took a position halfway between his first letter and the September 1939 Comintern directive. He denounced the Greek advance as an impe-

⁶⁰ *Episima Keimena*, IV, p. 463.

⁶¹ *Deka Chronia Agones*, p. 140.

⁶² The letter was eagerly published by the Greek authorities in the press of the time. It may be found in: *Episima Keimena*, [KKE esoterikou], V, p. 16.

⁶³ John C. Loulis: *The Greek Communist Party 1940–1944*. London, 1982, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Text in: *Episima Keimena* [KKE esoterikou], V, p. 22f.

rialist war which served only the interest of Britain. The British should leave the country and the war should be stopped and an armistice effected through the good offices of the Soviet Union.⁶⁵

When on orders of Security Minister Maniatakis the publication of the second letter was prohibited Zachariadis made another effort. On 15 January 1941 he wrote a third letter. In it he again condemned the Albanian war as a fascist war of conquest and complained that Metaxas had not sought the mediation of the Soviet Union. The continuation of the war only served the Greek plutocrats and British imperialism. Therefore Metaxas remained the main enemy of the people and of the country. His overthrow was the primary target. Army and people should join in an effort to establish an anti-Fascist, anti-plutocratic, popular regime.⁶⁶ Luckily for Zachariadis this letter, too, was not published. It might have ruined the positive impression the first letter had created among the rank-and-file and the Greek people in general and Zachariadis' appeal to the army to overthrow the regime at a moment when the Greek nation was fighting for survival might have had similarly disastrous consequences as the Macedonian policy.

Resistance and Development towards a Mass Movement, 1941–1944

In April 1941 Hitler's troops conquered Greece. The invasion scattered the remaining residues of the clientelistic networks. But in the Albanian campaign and in the battles against the Germans the people had developed a new mentality. They had learned that things did not have to be accepted passively; even superior forces could be resisted. The victories against the Italians were victories of the people and not victories of its defeatist leadership.⁶⁷ And this will to resist was not broken by the occupation. Spontaneously in summer 1941 the first resistance groups came into being.

The old elites had no part in this. As they could not expect to lead the resistance in the old clientelistic way they decided to sit the occupation out. Only

⁶⁵ The second letter was neither published by the Greek authorities nor by KKE at the time being.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

⁶⁷ The former commander of the British Military Mission with the Greek partisans judged: »In the Albanian Campaign it was the people of Greece who fought and did so splendidly against the enemy inspite of the regular Army. The regular army was shamed into fighting by the will of the people. The people advanced inspite of the senior regular Army officers who where directed largely by Metaxas himself, rather than the Greek C.-in-C. were not only unwilling to fight and incompetent but had not the spirit to lead the Greek Army against the invader.« Quoted from E. C. W. Myers, *Inside Greece. A Review*. Unprinted manuscript in the possession of the author.

few younger intellectuals and a number of democratic and republican minded officers and the few remaining communists were ready and had the expertise to organise and lead the spontaneous resistance. The communists who had survived the dictatorship in illegality numbered 200 and in the chaos of the first days of the occupation a few hundred others managed to escape from prisons and camps. Zachariadis was taken over by the Gestapo and sent to Dachau where he remained until the end of the war. Thus when the Greek communists reorganized themselves they were no longer under the lead of the international professional revolutionary Zachariadis nor under Komintern tutelage. Their new leader, the »national« communist Siantos was a different type. True, he was a communist but also a Greek, as a communist he fought for a socially just post-war society and as a Greek he longed for freedom.

Since no new Comintern instructions had arrived in the meantime during the first days of the German occupation KKE showed signs of uncertainty which line to follow. But when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 KKE caught step again. The 6th Plenum which met a few days later appealed to members of the two communist groups to set aside their disagreements and contribute to the reconstruction of the party. The basic duty of each communist was it to organise the struggle for the defence of the Soviet Union and for the overthrow of the foreign Fascist yoke. The communists must help the people to survive, organise the resistance against the invaders and explain that only a government of the workers and peasants could permanently free Greece from foreign dependence and internal exploitation.⁶⁸ This resolution which was not influenced by any Comintern directives repeated the old slogan of the defense of the Soviet Union but oriented the party towards resistance. In the 7th Plenum of September 1941 and the 8th Plenum of January 1942 – still without any guidance from the Comintern – the CC though still paying lip service to the defence of the Soviet Union changed priorities. The struggle for national liberation became the primary aim and only after this was achieved could the establishment of a different social system be thought of. The resistance struggle would be organised on the broadest possible popular basis.

The story of this ensuing development has been well researched.⁶⁹ Thus we can confine ourselves to registering the developments of interest in our context.

In September 1941 KKE founded EAM (*Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*; National Liberation Front). The horrible famine during the first occupation winter (1941/42) once more showed the masses that they were abandoned by their up to now leaders. Help came mainly from a suborganisation of EAM called EA (*Ethniki Allilengi*; National Solidarity) which saved thousands by feeding them.

⁶⁸ Deka Chronia Agones, p. 120f.

⁶⁹ See Richter: Greece and Cyprus, pp. 104–116, 276ff. and the introduction to this article.

Within the next three years EAM developed into a mass organisation. In half a dozen suborganisations EAM allegedly recruited about 1.5 of 7.5 million Greeks. Its members came from all classes and strata of society.

Enemies and critics then and later denounced EAM and its suborganisations as communist front organisations. According to them KKE built up EAM in order to erect the dictatorship of the proletariat after the war.

It is true that KKE played a major role in creating, organising and leading of EAM but EAM never became a creature of KKE. In the leadership of EAM besides the communists there were a number of progressive and left personalities and former leaders of small leftist clientelistic networks. The rank-and-file was similarly heterogeneous: Great parts originated from the former liberal clientele who shifted their loyalty temporarily to EAM. Others were simply patriots who wanted to free their country and again others dreamed of social reform. And there were the few »true« communists who followed their leaders unconditionally. Though KKE had placed its cadres in all decisive posts their number was far too small to control the mass organisation of EAM and to keep it on the track of communist orthodoxy. The communists within EAM who had been KKE members before the dictatorship counted less than 800. But most of these were – as it was already stated – not seasoned communists but people wanting reform. The KUTVists were just a handful without any guidance by the Comintern.⁷⁰

With growing success and expanding membership numbers the influence of KKE cadres decreased. One of the reasons for the dwindling control of KKE over the movement was that in the liberated areas EAM developed new forms of political expression of will whose main features were open discussion and free voting, in other words, grass roots democracy.

At the same time KKE encountered mass entry of new members. Up to the end of the occupation KKE membership had expanded to about 200 000. These new members were no disciplined cadres and ideologically staunch communists but humans who wanted social reforms and a new democratic republican post-war Greece and by no means a return to the prewar clientelistic system. Roughly half of them were of peasant origin. The influx of new members of course changed the character of KKE as well. Out of a monolithic leninist-stalinist sect a mass party evolved in which pluralism of opinions and strifes between its various wings were normal. In other words, KKE was undergoing a process towards a heterogeneous, democratic, socialist mass party with strong populist features.

⁷⁰ From an entry in Dimitrov's diary of 26. December 1943 we learn that Comintern had only very vague ideas about the Greek Résistance. Therefore Dimitrov asked Tito, who was in contact with EAM/ELAS, to inform him about the size of the armed forces, the areas of activity and the organizations supporting it. Cf. Ulunian: Communist Party, p. 202.

Among the new members, of course, were not only idealists. EAM and KKE benefited from the clientelistic thinking of the Greeks. The new organisations attracted the masses because they showed perspectives the old parties had never offered. This development was facilitated because the links with the Comintern had been broken and the KUTVists had lost control over the movement. The war-time KKE leader Siantos despite his KUTV training allowed himself to be carried away by the new spirit from communist orthodoxy and steered a course which may be characterised as democratic socialist with strong national features. A Greek way towards socialism and national independence began to loom on the horizon. A revolutionary takeover in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat was out of the question.⁷¹

This development, however, was stopped in 1944 first by a Soviet and then by a British intervention. Since summer 1943 EAM had increasingly met with opposition from the British government which saw its traditional role as protecting power endangered by the developments in Greece. In order to stop EAM's course towards independence the British and the Soviet governments in May 1944 agreed upon temporary spheres of interests. (In October 1944 these were made permanent in the notorious percentage agreement.) The Soviets honoured British readiness to acknowledge the Soviet sphere by sending a Soviet military mission to ELAS who demanded a more compromising attitude towards the British. Though the Comintern had been dissolved a year before the Greeks complied and thus paved the way towards the British intervention in December 1944 which destroyed everything what the resistance had built up and brought about a complete reversion of forces which triggered a development leading directly to the civil war from 1946 to 1949.⁷² During this period KKE was shrunk from a mass party to a cadre party of Stalinist type, a process which was analysed elsewhere.⁷³

⁷¹ This topic has been discussed for years. The first who stated clearly and authoritatively that KKE had not aimed at an armed uprising and a takeover was the former Secretary General of EAM: Chatzis, Thanasis: *I nikifora epanastasi pou chathike (1941–1945)* 3 vols. Athens, 1977–1979; more recently the former Secretary General of KKE Farakos: Farakos, Grigoris: *O ELAS kai i Exousia*. 2 vols. Athens, 2000.

⁷² Richter, Heinz A.: *The Battle of Athens and the Role of the British*. In: Sarafis, Marion (ed.): *Greece: From Resistance to Civil War*. Nottingham, 1980, pp. 78–90

⁷³ Idem: *Die griechische kommunistische Partei (KKE) 1944–1947: Von der Massenpartei zur Kaderpartei*. In: Staritz, Dietrich and Weber, Hermann (eds.): *Einheitsfront, Einheitspartei. Kommunisten und Sozialdemokraten in Ost- und Westeuropa 1944–1948*. Köln, 1989, pp. 453–468; idem: *Die Entwicklung der Griechischen Linken 1918–1996*. In: Moreau, Patrick/Lazar, Marc/Hirscher, Gerhard (eds.): *Der Kommunismus in Westeuropa*. Landsberg, 1998, pp. 131–166.

Conclusion

The developments of the Comintern and of KKE are asymmetrical. When the first was flowering the latter was scarcely more than a sectarian group in Greek political life. The reasons for this underdevelopment of the Greek labour movement were exogenous and endogenous.

The external impediment for KKE's development was the Comintern policy itself. By enforcing the pro-Bulgarian Macedonian policy upon KKE it branded the Greek communists as anti-national and discredited them in the eyes of the Greek electorate. As long as KKE could be stigmatised as traitorous it did not have the slightest chance to play any role in the political life of the country.

Among the internal factors contributing to the delay the predominantly agrarian character of Greek economic life proved to be the major obstacle. The second impediment for KKE was the specific political culture of the country and especially its clientelistic system which prevented the intrusion of communist or socialist ideas into the lower social strata. This allegiance towards the leaders of the clientelistic networks could not even be shaken by the Asia Minor Catastrophe: Even the refugees voted for a clientelistic party i.e. for the liberals of Venizelos. It needed the social shock of the Great Depression to seriously weaken the hold of the bosses.

For the first time KKE attracted a greater number of voters. Most of them, however, did not vote communist out of conviction but out of protest. The party's attractivity did not increase and this the more so since from 1931 it was stalinised. Before this became visible the Metaxas dictatorship was established. This paralysed the traditional political clientelism. Though KKE was decimated it survived the persecutions. Paradoxically enough, it was the Axis occupation of Greece which removed the external and internal encumbrances for KKE and brought the breakthrough.