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Cham: Springer, 181 p.

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The monograph "Greece's Ostpolitik: Dealing With the 'Devil'" by Associate Professor Andreas Stergiou is a major contribution to a vital but neglected topic: Greece's Ostpolitik (the opening of the Greek State to the Communist countries) during the Cold War. It offers a fresh perspective on the foreign relations of Greece with the East, utilizing unpublished archival materials from five countries, and personal interviews with former diplomats and politicians.

The book consists of six chapters dedicated to several historical periods of Greek Cold War foreign policy. The author proposes Greece's Ostpolitik be divided into three periods: "(1) from early 1950 until 1965, (2) from 1969 until 1973 and (3) the timespan stretching from 1975 until in the late 1980s" (Stergiou, 2021, p. 175).

The main argument of the study is that the Greek political and economic opening to the Soviet Bloc, unlike those of European countries, was designed to fulfill multiple purposes. Put differently, "the term Ostpolitik, as it has been conceptualized in literature, only incompletely applies to the Greek case. The Greek state's tentative opening to the Communist Bloc in the 1950s and 1960s, culminated in the 1970s and 1980s, only partly dovetails with the notion of Ostpolitik" (Stergiou, 2021, p. 2).

Chapter 1 serves as an in-depth historical introduction. Professor Stergiou stresses the crucial geographic position of Greece and its strategic value for the Western Alliance, as together with Turkey it blocked Soviet access to the Eastern Mediterranean. From 1955 onwards the escalation

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of tensions between Greece and Turkey (both NATO members since 1952) due to the Cyprus issue and failed American mediation policy meant that Greece, a frontline state against the Warsaw Pact, had become a strategic gap. Thus, Greece feared that in case of a local war with its Northern neighbors it would be abandoned by its allies.

Chapter 2 discusses the Greek postwar economy. The author attempts a detailed appraisal of the microeconomic and macroeconomic developments and their repercussions in the Greek economy and society. Highlighting specific statistics of the international trade balance, he focuses on the deeper causes that led the Greek conservative governments to a limited economic opening to the Soviet bloc. It is argued that, on the one hand, this opening was considered necessary for the absorption of Greek agricultural products and the industrialization of the country through investments; on the other, vehement Greek anticommunism due to the recent experience of the Greek civil war combined with the counterproductive rhetoric of the Soviet leader Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, fomented political controversies due to the reactions among hard-liners in the government.

However, in 1961 Greece was incorporated into the European Economic Community (EEC). The USA played a decisive role in this development, sensing that otherwise Athens would become economically dependent on the Moscow-led markets. Thus, vividly describing the economic relations between Greece, the USSR and the countries of the Warsaw Pact, the author concludes that “From 1958 to 1970 the Eastern European share in Greek exports amounted to almost 25 %, among the highest in the West” (Stergiou, 2021, p. 48). In other words, important qualitative and quantitative changes in Greece’s relations with Eastern Europe indicated a real, albeit idiosyncratic, Ostpolitik.

Chapter 3 argues that the Cyprus issue was a variable in the Soviet Bloc’s policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, and due to this the Greek governments had to adapt their own economic policy towards the Soviet bloc accordingly. Focus is drawn to the help provided by the Soviet government to Cyprus during the 1964 crisis, following the Turkish threat to invade the island. The pivotal role of the USSR’s economic

opening to Turkey, during a period when the Soviet government desired détente, capitalizing on Turkish disillusionment with NATO after the 1964 crisis, is also noted.

Regardless of the vital insights about Soviet foreign policy pursued there, also supported through other publications by the author based on the Archive of the German Foreign Ministry (Stergiou, 2007), limited access to Soviet sources restricts the author’s knowledge on both the complexities and deep ties between the USSR and the Greek Cypriots. Consequently, elaboration on the implications of the Soviet government’s proposals on the Cyprus question in 1965 should have been further highlighted in order to further support the book’s main argument.¹ Nevertheless, the author accurately concludes that during the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus “Soviet diplomacy towards Cyprus was much more sophisticated and effective” (Stergiou, 2021, p. 75).

Chapter 4 analyzes Greek Ostpolitik from 1967 to 1974, the period of military rule in Greece. The Greek junta invoked Cold-War security concerns such as the role of Bulgaria, the increased Soviet presence in the Mediterranean, and the possibility of predatory Soviet moves against Yugoslavia and Romania. The next pages demonstrate how the State Department concluded that it was advantageous to maintain close relations with Greece. However, the European states practically expelled Greece from the EEC, resulting in the political and economic isolation of the country. Thus, despite the regime’s vehement anti-communism, trade with the Eastern Bloc was chosen as a means of diminishing surpluses of agricultural products and applying pressure on NATO officials.

The advent of the Greek junta’s Ostpolitik initially found support inside the Soviet bloc and several trade agreements were signed with

¹ It should be mentioned that the archive of the Soviet Foreign Ministry (AVP RF) and the archive of the CC of the CPSU (RGANI) have been meticulously researched in a dissertation successfully defended at the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia titled “The Cyprus issue in the foreign policy of the USSR, 1953—1974” (in Russian) in 2021. Thus, the above-mentioned comments aim to inform the reader about new aspects of Soviet foreign policy activities in Cyprus and in no way seek to undermine the author’s research.

Communist countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania, while in 1971, Greece and Albania restored diplomatic relations after a 30-year hiatus. But the Greek junta used its Ostpolitik for propaganda purposes and did not intend to change the pro-NATO policy of the country, something the Soviet Foreign Ministry understood very well. Ultimately, it was the Turkish invasion in Cyprus, the fall of the Greek junta, the restoration of the democratic regime under Constantine Karamanlis, and Greece's exit from the military structure of NATO that allowed for bilateral contacts with the Soviet Bloc to flourish.

Chapter 5 is devoted to Karamanlis' multi-dimensional foreign policy and security policy priorities. From the mid-1970s and early 1980s, Greek security planners were less concerned about an attack from the Warsaw Pact countries, instead focusing on the deteriorating situation in the Aegean Sea and Cyprus. Greece reconsidered its relations with its Balkan neighbors, utilizing international détente to secure its northern borders, on the one hand. On the other, Greece attempted a fresh economic opening to the Soviet bloc mostly to counterbalance Turkish hegemonism and to exploit those countries' positive attitude regarding the Greek position on the Cyprus issue. Greece's Ostpolitik from 1974 to 1981 ultimately provided significant opportunities for economic cooperation, while Greece's overall trade volume with the USSR, its neighbors, and Eastern bloc countries grew drastically.

In the final chapter it is argued that in the 1980s Greek politics was heavily influenced by the rise of the Greek Socialist Party (PASOK) and its leader Andreas Papandreou, who won the 1981 general election. The new foreign policy

doctrine of the Greek Socialists was one of Cold War neutrality fueled with nationalistic and anti-NATO rhetoric due to the existential threat posed by Turkey. However, the Greeks never seriously considered abandoning the West, or even joining the Warsaw Pact, because they were well aware that there was no serious alternative to NATO.

Athens pursued an active foreign policy, aiming at the development of bilateral relations with the Soviet bloc countries, Greece's non-aligned neighbors, the isolated Maoist Albania, and the Arab countries. But the author accurately highlights that these moves were oriented in an attempt to find potential allies in the Greek-Turkish conflict over the Aegean. In other words, the Greek Ostpolitik aimed to gain leverage towards the United States, toying with the psychological argument, that the Greek-Turkish conflict would disrupt the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Overall, "Greece's Ostpolitik" expands our understanding of Greek foreign policy. It is a well-structured book, with rigid argumentation, and extensive usage of recently declassified primary materials. The indubitable merit of the book in terms of clarity and persuasiveness of the presentation and conclusions, as well as the dynamic writing style, should also be noted. Finally, the fact that the author himself acknowledges the limitations of his archival research and highlights the materials that were not available to him creates the necessary foundation for future research. But it is beyond doubt that had Andreas Stergiou ensured access to these archives, he would have treated them with the same passion and care as the existing ones in this exquisite monograph.

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