

**The politics of working class communism in Greece,
1918-1936**

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List of Abbreviations

BCF: Balkan Communist Federation
CC: Central Committee
CI: Communist International
CP: Communist Party
CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union
EC: Executive Committee
ECCI: Executive Committee of the Communist International
EEE: National Union Hellas
EGSEE: Unitary Confederation of Greek Labor (communist)
EKO: Unitary Tobacco Workers' Federation (conservative)
EMEA: United Front of Workers and Peasants
EOKDE: United Organization of Communist Internationalists of Greece
GSEE: General Confederation of Greek Labor (reformist)
IFC: International Financial Committee
KAKE: Communist Archival-Marxist Party of Greece
KDEE: Party of Communist Internationalists of Greece
KEK: Tobacco Workers' Union of Kavala
KKE: Communist Party of Greece
KOE: Greek Tobacco Workers' Federation (communist)
KOMLEA: Communist Group of Marxists-Leninists of Greece -Archeiomarxists
KPD: Communist Party of Germany
KUTV: Communist University of Workers of the East
LAKE: Leninist Opposition of KKE
OKDE: Organization of Communist Internationalists of Greece
OKNE: Federation of Communist Youth of Greece
POADA: All Refugee Defense Organization for Beneficiaries of the Exchanged [properties]
RSC: Refugee Settlement Commission
SEKE: Socialist Labor Party of Greece
SPD: Social Democratic Party of Germany
TAK: Tobacco Workers' Insurance Fund

Map of Greece



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Time Line

Date	Developments in Greece	Developments in the World
1918	-Foundation of GSEE and SEKE -The Treaty signed between the Entente powers and the Ottoman Empire allows for Greek troops to be sent in Istanbul and Asia Minor.	-End of World War I -The Civil War in USSR begins -November Revolution in Germany -The German Communist Party is founded.
1919	-1st National Council of SEKE -First Political strike in Greece concerning state intervention in the composition of the GSEE leadership- Greek troops land in Smyrna, Asia Minor.	-Foundation of the 3rd International - Defeat of the Spartakists in Berlin and the Soviet Bavarian Republic -Counter revolution in Hungary. -The CPs of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Great Britain are founded.
1920	-2nd Congress of SEKE -Link with the 3rd International is decided -Venizelos loses the National Elections and SEKE receives some 100,000 votes.	-The Balkan Communist Federation is founded -2nd Congress of the CI: the 21 Terms of Admission are set -The Amsterdam International is founded -The League of Nations is formed -The CP of France is founded.
1921	-Mass strikes are organized successfully by SEKE nationwide -Greek troops advance in inner Turkey -The CC of communist soldiers is formed.	-3rd CI Congress -End of Civil War in the USSR -The CP of Italy is founded.
1922	-1st Convention (or the February Convention) of SEKE (later dismissed as 'reformist') - Extraordinary Congress of SEKE -The Asia Minor Front collapses- The Union of Old Soldiers is formed.	-4th CI Congress -NEP Policy in the USSR -Foundation of the USSR - Mussolini carries out a coup.
1923	-All Workers' strike in Athens and Piraeus. 11 workers fall dead after clashing with the police in Piraeus -In the National Elections SEKE receives just 18,000 votes -Venizelos wins the elections.	-The Bulgarian revolt fails and an authoritarian regime is established -The Hamburg revolt is put down
1924	-Inner party crisis. Break away social democratic members form other parties -3rd Extraordinary Congress of SEKE which is renamed KKE	-5th CI Congress -Lenin dies -The Italian socialist leader Matteoti is murdered.
1925	-Pangalos Dictatorship. Mass persecution against communist and trade unionists.	-Trotsky resigns from the Ministry of War -The Opposition of Kamenev and Zinoviev is condemned -Hindenburg becomes president of Germany -The Fascist Party becomes the only legal party in Italy.
1926	-3rd Congress of GSEE -Pangalos is overthrown and in the following national elections KKE elects 10 MPs -Pouliopoulos resigns as Secretary General of KKE.	-The group of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev is formed. The latter is replaced as the head of the CI.
1927	-3rd Congress of KKE -Open letter of Pouliopoulos and Giatsopoulos to the members of the Party- Three other members of the Politburo resign.	-15th Congress of the CPSU -Trotsky and Zinoviev are expelled along with other members of the opposition
1928	-Expulsion of the Liquidarists and Centrists from KKE -4th Congress of the GSEE, which through state intervention, passes under the control of the 'reformists' -4th Congress of KKE -The 'Spartakos' group ('Left	-6th CI Congress. The theory of social fascism is put forward -The Opposition in the USSR splits -Trotsky is exiled to Alma Ata -Purges in the CPs of Germany, Yugoslavia and Rumania -

	Opposition to KKE') is formed.	KPD receives 3.3 million votes in national elections.
1929	-Inner party crisis in KKE -The Unitary GSEE is formed -The anti-communist <i>Idionymon</i> Law is voted.	-The Bukharin group is condemned -Purges in the CPs of France and Czechoslovakia -World economic crisis.
1930	-Workers Relief is outlawed by the courts -5th Congress of the GSEE -The Greek / Turkish Friendship Treaty is signed.	-The Nazis in Germany score an electoral victory -The KPD receives 4,6 million votes
1931	-The leadership of KKE is replaced following the intervention of the Comintern	-Fall of King Alfonso in Spain -Japan invades Manchuria
1932	-Venizelos quits. In the following elections the Populists are voted into office. KKE elected 10 MPs	-1st Five-Year Plan is fulfilled in the USSR -Hitler / Hindenburg alliance.
1933	-KKE scores 4,64% in the national elections	-Anti fascist congress in Paris -Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany. The Reichstag in flames followed by persecution of communists. Dimitrov is put on trial. Germany leaves the League of Nations.
1934	-5th Congress of KKE -KKE scores important electoral gains in local elections -'Common Action' Agreement among communists, socialists, agrarians and the labor federations.	-Popular Fronts in France and Spain -Hitler proclaimed himself as the Fuhrer -Fascist coup in Austria.
1935	-KKE receives 9,59% in the national elections -6th Congress of KKE -Attempted coup by Venizelist General Plastiras failed. Coup by General Kondyles.	-Trial of Kamenev and Zinoviev in Moscow -Stakhanovite Movement -7th Congress of the CI -Popular Fronts in France and Spain spread -Italy invades Ethiopia (Abyssinia).
1936	-15 communist MPs are elected in Parliament -Agreement between KKE and the Venizelists against fascism. The Popular Front is formed -Venizelos died -Events of May in Salonica. Mass strikes and mobilizations nationwide -Metaxas comes to power on 4th of August.	-Victory of the Popular Front in Spain -Franco's coup in Spain. The Spanish Civil War begun -Battle of Madrid -The Axis between Germany and Italy is established. -Victory of the Popular Front in France.

Chapter 1: A review of Greek labor movement historiography

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the relatively unknown territory of labour movement and working class communism in Greece as they developed in the years between the First and Second World Wars. Accordingly, it will put forward and examine previously unidentified aspects of communist politics, as they can be drawn from the experience of two main industrial centres of Greece with relatively large working class concentrations: that of Kokkinia in Piraeus and that of Kavala in Northern Greece or Macedonia. In the literature review of labour and communist historiography we aim to identify and engage with widely held preconceptions concerning the reasons behind the emergence, growth and political orientation of the organized labour movement. Accordingly, we shall underline problems in the methodologies and explanations offered to interpret these social phenomena. This discussion will serve as a background against which the argument of the thesis will unfold, facilitating the development of an alternative approach to the study of working class communism.

By labour movement we mean the praxis of workers coming to form unions and parties, part-time or full-time, based on economic or political aims, founded on their worker status. The labour movement has been historically expressed through fraternities, trade unions, co-operatives, political parties, labour congresses and the working class press.¹ But why do some sections of the working class organize their economic or political demands in trade unions and political parties respectively, while others do not? E P Thompson writes:

“Experience arises spontaneously with social being, but it does not arise without thought; it arises because men and women (and not only philosophers) are rational, and they think about what is happening to themselves and their world...Changes take place within social being, which give rise to changed experience: and this experience is determining, in the sense that it exerts pressures upon existent social consciousness and proposes new questions.”²

These “pressures” appear to be essential in understanding the relation between ‘experience I’ (lived experience) and ‘experience II’ (perceived experience). Thompson has tried to clarify the way

¹ Kouloules G (1994) p16

² Thompson E P (1978) p257

he saw that process, saying that history “shows that events within social being give rise to ‘lived experience’, which does not instantly break through as ‘reflections’ into experience II, but whose pressure upon consciousness cannot be indefinitely diverted, suppressed, or falsified by ideology.”³ Therefore, a history of the labour movement could not exist outside social history, of which it is an organic and dialectical part.⁴

Accordingly, any approach to the history of the labour movement would have to take into consideration the social and economic structures of the given case study, as well as the political and economic conjunctures (national and international), the ideology(ies) of the movement, the role of the state in the various manifestations of social life, the specific cultural traditions, and the history of ‘social mentalities’. In other words, it will have to be polymorphous, incorporating the theoretical insights and methods provided by other social sciences (such as economic and sociology)⁵, examining the various factors that may lead or contribute to or indeed prevent a break with a life/mentality/ideology of conformity. Thus, a history of the labour movement would contribute to a deeper understanding of ‘general history’, since the former is set to examine the development of long-term expressions of worker resistance, which, aims to limit or to abolish exploitation.

As far as the Greek case is concerned, there is a near consensus on the state of labour movement historiography: “Almost non-existent”⁶, writes Koukoules; at an “infant stage” notes Leontaritis⁷; a “neglected area in the historiography of modern Greece”, argues Mazower⁸. Some writers have attributed the lack of literature on the subject to the particular form and place that the labour movement acquired within Greek society over the decades: its close association with the extreme left and its continuous struggle against the state marginalized it as a possible subject of academic research.⁹ Others have traced the problem to a lack of reliable statistical data on the period concerned, as well as the lack of research in relevant areas of academic interest.¹⁰

³ Thompson E P (1981) pp405-6

⁴ It should be noted here that Thompson’s concept of ‘experience’ is not un-problematic. Is it, for example, used as a medium between structure and consciousness, and how successful such a ‘new concept/category’ would be in an analysis of labor radicalism/conservatism? Anderson addresses the validity of Thompson’s concept of experience in Anderson P (1980).

⁵ For more on the argument concerning the interconnectedness of history and other disciplines see, for example, Evans R J (1997) Ch.1; Burke P (1980)

⁶ Koukoules G (1994) p25

⁷ Leontaritis G (1980) p4

⁸ Mazower M (1991) p3

⁹ Koukoules G (1994) p25; The writer also points out, as evidence for this argument, that most research on the Greek labor movement done by Greek academics has been done in foreign academic establishments.

¹⁰ Leontaritis G (1980) p4

As far as the existing literature is concerned, the following observations can be put forward. The initial attempts to record and interpret the history of the Greek labour movement (overwhelmingly Marxist-based literature)¹¹ have tended to identify the working class as a whole with the relatively smaller in size organized labour movement, its more militant members. However, such conceptualization of the working class from the point of view of the higher strata of its organizational structure, does not necessarily constitute the ‘whole picture’ of the processes that define the particularities of the emergence and growth of the organized labour movement, or that define the boundaries of political behaviour or social consciousness of the popular base of that movement.¹²

In addition, the existing Marxist literature (including Communist Party literature) also appears theoretically and analytically restricted. This is partly due to the existence of an extremely limited number of Marxist works available in Greek.¹³ The rather mechanistic supposition that “it is the condition of the workers which is directly responsible for the rise of working class communism”¹⁴ has been dominant throughout the literature.

However, if such limited theoretical explanations of the working class are to be successful for analytical purposes, they would have to be examined through the framework of internal relationships of the social and economic structure that contribute to its existence and its re-production. Accordingly, it would not be possible to form a satisfactory view of the labour movement in its social framework, without an understanding of practical expressions of the theoretical and organizational contradictions and conflicts within the early labour industrial and political organizations and of new ideologies and theories in the light of traditional mentalities and manifestations of action.

In addition, it would admittedly be an over-simplification to reduce a materialist conception of the labour movement to a mere ‘side-effect’ of the booms and busts of the economic condition of the labouring masses: “We must suppose the raw material of life–experience to be at one pole, and all the infinitely-complex human disciplines and systems, articulate and inarticulate, formalized in

¹¹ Such as Kordatos G (1956); Jecchinis C (1967); Benaroya A (1921) and others. Later examples of similar historiography would be, for example: Livieratos D (1976), (1985), (1987), (1994) etc.

¹² Although this approach has been a dominant characteristic of labor historiography in its early years, it is still quite far from overcome in the case of Greek literature.

¹³ For example, Lenin’s ‘State and Revolution’, the first to be translated in Greek, was published in 1923, followed by ‘The Three Components of Marxism’ (1924), ‘What is to be Done’ (1927) and ‘Leftwing Communism: An Infantile Disorder’ (1934); all other works were published after World War II.

¹⁴ Engels F (1958) p3

institutions or dispersed in the least formal ways, which 'handle', transmit, or distort this raw material to be at the other." In other words, any material historiography of the labour movement should indeed, focus at exactly this "active *process*- which is at the same time *the process through which men make their own history*."¹⁵

Similar criticism to that outlined in the beginning, applies to literature that is confined to or is dominated by an 'anthropological' view of Greek politics, and of the labour movement in particular. Accordingly, clientism and patronage are put forward as the key concepts, for an understanding of political allegiances and developments: characteristic examples of such literature would be Campbell's *Honor, Family and Patronage* (1964) and Mouzelis's *Parliamentarism and Industrialization in the Semi-Periphery* (1986)¹⁶. However, an examination of clientism and patronage as explanations of incorporation and conservatism within the working class is insufficient for understanding the factors behind labour radicalism.

Accordingly, labour historians such as Mavrogordatos, Mouzelis, and Koukoules have focused on the 'official', i.e. the labour movement that enjoyed the approval of the authorities. However, it was the trade union movement that often bordered illegality, which managed to develop a more autonomous political framework of theory and action. Theoretical models based on high-level politics do not possess the tools to interpret movements that existed outside the official frameworks and channels of power. Accordingly the question of trade union legitimization is often overlooked. Their political and social challenge to the status quo, manifested in various ways, is treated as non-existent.

Koukoules, further argued that state incorporation of the labour movement, through economic dependency and the manipulation of labour leaders, became an extension of the state bureaucracy that contributed to the 'preservation of the status quo', directly through the adoption and promotion of government politics, or indirectly by enhancing the fragmentation in the labour movement.¹⁷ Involvement in the political processes was held to be based on individualist motives. This is attributed either to the 'individualistic' character of the Greek's involvement in politics as it is facilitated in the vertical or horizontal modes of incorporation, manifested in various 'modes of

¹⁵ Thompson E P (1981) p398

¹⁶ See also Legg K R (1969); Mouzelis N (1978) and (1980)

¹⁷ See Koukoules G F (1984) & (1985). He went as far as suggesting that "a trade union movement organized on a confederal structure...has never existed in Greece, whatever the arguments to the contrary. What did exist, was simply a few labour organizations and occasionally some groupings." (Koukoules G F, 1984, pp11-12)

domination' and in the patron-client system.¹⁸ In relation to the development of the labour movement: "incorporation as used here refers to the *de facto* control that the state exercises on the associations which, whilst, on paper free from legal commitments to keep the 'social peace', are weak and therefore easily subjected to state manipulation and control."¹⁹ State corporatism is also put forward by Mavrogordatos in order to explain the 'failure' of the working class to organize its interests autonomously of clientist/party networks and government politics.²⁰

Accordingly, industrial action was seen as an example of spontaneity, rather than of conscious collective action, and as the result of extremist leftist groups, which operated as sects in the trade unions, occasionally exploiting the dissatisfaction of the workers, but never fully developing into a workers' movement. The 'individualism' of the Greek, institutional or not, prevented him or her from forming factory councils or developing class solidarity.

In addition, there has been a body of literature that has emphasised the argument concerning the incorporation of the working class movement, by pointing to the take over of the General Confederation of Greek Workers by the reformists in 1926-7 (and the general low level of unionization) and the small membership of the Communist Party throughout the inter-war period.²¹ Although, methods of state incorporation of the labour and socialist movements are indeed important in the examination of labour politics, it is often the case that the elements that lead to their radicalization are ignored, and the prospects or conditions whereby the working class is capable of creating its own 'world-visions' marginalized.²²

However, the present literature stressing the element of incorporation appears incomplete. It ignores aspects of incorporation, such as state violence and the use of police and military to actively intimidate and suppress radical sections of labour. Such forms of intimidation include the daily work

¹⁸ The former refers to the role of bureaucracy and the various social formations used to incorporate political theory and action, manifested in the "state's tendency to inhibit the formation of an autonomous civil society" Mouzelis N (1967) p74. See also Mouzelis N (1978) and (1986). For the role of the clientage system in Greek politics see Mavrogordatos G (1983)

¹⁹ Mouzelis N (1986) p75

²⁰ "Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories, in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports." (Schmitter P C, 1979, p13)

²¹ See for example Mavrogordatos G (1983); Leon G B (1976); Apostolakou L (1997); Rigos A (1999) etc

²² Michael Mann has argued that state incorporation strategies were crucial in the understanding of labor and socialist movements' politics: reformism was more likely to be adopted by such movements where successful incorporation took place of at least some sections of the working class; on the contrary, the writer suggests that movements that are not provided with any 'legitimate' channels to express their demands and are 'marginalized' tend to adopt more extremist politics. (Mann M, 1993, p629)

of trade unions, arresting left delegates to influence the composition of labour congresses, closing down papers and exiling labour leaders. On the other hand, government interference appears to be confined to the control of union representation and labour leadership through its extensive clientage networks. However, a number of state-created labour institutions are frequently neglected as contributors to the incorporation of labour, such as the Labour Home, or the Labour and Social Welfare Branch of the Ministry of Finance that intervened both economically and administratively in the operation of trade unions.

In considering the above, both Marxist and non-Marxist literature have been largely empiricist in their analysis. In the first case, examination of labour movement politics is largely reduced to a mere account of Party resolutions, strikes, and state oppression, focusing mainly on its direct manifestations, such as bans on the press and violent suppression of demonstrations. Its indirect manifestations, such as trade union legislation, the cultivation of anti-communist ideology and labour incorporation through patronage, are often marginalized or, as it is generally the case, not mentioned at all.

Furthermore, attempts to link growing working class radicalism or conservatism with crises or stabilization of the national and international economy have admittedly been too mechanistic to be able to offer much to the understanding of the development of Greek labour movement politics during the interwar years. Such exclusively economic interpretations have been frequently adopted by both Marxist and non-Marxist related literature, which however does not deal with the actual consequences of such processes on the ground level, but merely accepts the formula of economic crisis + working class = communism, and moves from then onwards to build on further suppositions.

In addition, an increasing focus on key institutions, individuals or groups that constitute major actors in holding or competing for power, has tended to ignore the potentially powerful and the processes through which their individual or collective conditions and experiences progressively led them, or not, to the realization of that power. Indeed, there is little reference to the experience of the industrialization process itself, or indeed of the development and role of community identities and solidarities, as significant factors in the forming of labour politics. There is little reference to the processes that operate within the movement as it tries to define itself. Accordingly, as H Blumer suggests it would be essential to bear in mind that “what seems to be so essential to social movements deliberately seeking change, namely, the intricate play of factors which must be skilfully

employed to forge and direct a movement, as well as the fortuitous circumstances that facilitate their use.”²³

Finally, it should be noted that, for historical and political reasons having to do with the Greek Civil War (1945-1949) and the Cold War, Marxist and non-Marxist accounts have been largely reduced to pro-communist and anti-communist accounts respectively. Those in turn, either have glorified or condemned the communist party and the organized labour movement and identified them with each other, for their own political ends. Accordingly, Marxist historians tended to overemphasize the role of the Party in the labour movement, ignoring at the same time any potential weaknesses or limitations this may have presented in their account. On the other hand, non-Marxist historians tended to concentrate their analyses on ‘why did the Communist Party fail’, attribute the growth of communism to working class misery or naivety, or even deny that a radical labour movement ever existed. Hence, political historiography in Greece has been seriously limited by intense political attributions.

Factory=industrial proletariat=working class movement?

The mechanistic application of Western European models and experience to the Greek case, seen for example in comparison of the Greek Trade Union Movement with the British TUC, may not be useful in explaining the development of the Greek case.²⁴ Working class organization and consciousness is not necessarily an exclusive prerogative of societies that experienced an intense degree of industrialization according to the western model; a view shared by Marxists of the time as well.²⁵ Writers such as Mouzelis attribute the ‘weaknesses’ of the Greek labour movement, as they

²³ H Blumer (1957) p147. And the writer adds: “A consciously directed and organized movement cannot be explained merely in terms of the psychological disposition or motivation of people, or in terms of a diffusion of an ideology. Explanations of this sort have a deceptive plausibility, but overlook the fact that a movement has to be constructed and has to carve out a career in what is practically always an opposed, resistant, or at least indifferent world. Thus, conscious movements have to depend on effective agitation, the skillful fomentation and exploitation of restlessness and discontent, an effective procedure for the recruitment of members and followers, the formation of a well-knit and powerful organization, the development and maintenance of enthusiasm, conviction, and morale, the intelligent translation of ideology into homely and gripping form, the development of skillful strategy and tactics, and, finally leadership which can size up situations effectively, time actions, and act decisively. These are ingredients of successful movements. To ignore them through preoccupation with the ‘causes’ of movements leads to inadequate and distorted knowledge.”

²⁴ As in the case of Jecchinis Ch (1984) pp54-7

²⁵ See Chatzopoulos, cited by Kordatos G (1972) p29; In *What do we mean by ‘socialist direction’*, Yiannios Archives, File1, ELIA

perceive it, to its failure to develop effective class organizations and autonomous politics, appropriate to the process of industrialization.²⁶

However, to what extent can such models that have been applied to western societies with liberal regimes and long labour traditions be applicable to our study? In the Greek case, it was not only the extent of industrialization that played an important role in the emerging shape of working class politics, but also its timing. The lack of pre-existing strong labour traditions, in combination with rising ideological doctrines that did not exist in the nineteenth century but proved decisive in the beginning of the twentieth, that required further elaboration in any attempt to interpret labour politics in Greece during the interwar period. Timing of industrialization is an important factor in the Greek case for an additional reason. It largely coincided with an unresolved national question. As we examine the case studies, we shall come across the notion of national trauma and the importance of identity among the working class of refugee origin, as well as the complexities of the politics in newly annexed national territories, such as Kavala. These features will be examined in combination alongside the themes of development and regime change: the existence of a state that was not very representative, but possessed and extensively exercised a repressive capability.

Greek Communist Party Historiography

Having touched upon a number of considerations and issues regarding labour historiography, we now need to focus on the historiography of the Greek Communist Party, identifying and addressing potential limitations. Elefantis characteristically notes:

“Unfortunately, there is no satisfactory history of the KKE...On the contrary, the bibliography is congested with propagandist documents, where however, one would attempt in vain to find the real characteristics of the Party, and the elements that add up to the communist movement in Greece.”²⁷

The overall picture that a reader would find throughout most of the non-communist literature on the history and politics of the Greek Communist Party in the inter-war period would be one of a

²⁶ Mouzelis N (1986), especially pp73-76

²⁷ Elefantis A G (1999) p27

“sect”²⁸ within the labour movement, and a party “slavishly dependent on Moscow”,²⁹ mainly due to its “sentimental” enthusiasm and “inexperience”.³⁰

On the other hand, most of the existing respective communist literature draws a rather different picture: The Communist Party is attributed a “primary role” within the domestic labour movement,³¹ it is portrayed as the “qualitative leap towards the unification of Marxism with the country’s labour movement”,³² the “inspirational, organizational, guiding force of the working class.”³³ The Party itself stands as the product of the “maturing of internal economic, social, and political developments”.³⁴

The Communist literature also puts forward an uncritical view of the Greek Communist Party’s relationship with the Third or Communist International (Comintern), founded in March 1919.³⁵ The Comintern is portrayed as the “connecting link between the national and international labour movement.”³⁶ The affiliation and relation to the Comintern is described as “a historically justified political action that contributed to the Marxist-Leninist development of the Party.”³⁷ However, it should be taken into account that many party ‘histories’ were meant as pedagogic advisory history manuals for new party members, and therefore are usually limited to a non-analytic, schematic description of the various ‘phases’ of the Communist Party development.³⁸

In view of the above discussion, a number of considerations emerge. First of all, there should be a degree of scepticism regarding the literature that emerged from the ideological confrontation between the two superpowers in the twentieth century, and which admittedly was more preoccupied with justifying doctrines, rather than offering a contribution to the existing knowledge on Communist Parties and the labour movement. Anderson notes that “Cold War monographs –far the most numerous genres, [were] spawned by the specialized institutions and grants for communism-watching. Written in a frankly counter-revolutionary spirit for the most part, their quality too is most

²⁸ Mavrogordatos G (1983) p152; Apostolakou L (1997) p415

²⁹ Mavrogordatos G (1983) p147; Kousoulas D G (1965) pp1-20

³⁰ Kousoulas D G (1965) p2; Mavrogordatos G (1983) p147

³¹ Belogiannis N (1998) p249; See also Mavrikos G E (2001) pp27-117; Moskof K (1988) pp397-474

³² KE tou KKE (1988) p34; KE tou KKE (1986) p7

³³ KE tou KKE (1986) p7

³⁴ KE tou KKE (1988) p7; The above points drawn from communist literature are, to a large extent reproduced in a variety of official Party documents and historiography, such as for example: KKE (1958), KKE (1974a), KKE (1974b), KKE (1975a), KKE (1975b), KKE (1975c).

³⁵ On the founding of the Comintern see McDermott & Agnew J (1996)

³⁶ KE tou KKE (1988) p7

³⁷ KE tou KKE (1988) pp40-1; See also Tsintzilonis Ch (1999) p32-33

³⁸ See for example KE tou KKE (1988); Zachariades N (1945) etc

uneven". Such examples of Cold War literature include Kousoulas (1965),³⁹ and Burks (1961), which admittedly offer a rather unbalanced and negative critique of the Greek Communist Party.

The most frequent practice among researchers of Communist Party history was to use as the foundations of their analysis various structural/organizational elements (e.g. Party organization, leadership, internal opposition, policies etc), supported by a number of statistics (such as composition of membership, electoral successes and failures etc). Although these are crucial in any attempt to construct a Party profile, certain observations should be made. Most statistics and data concerning membership, internal organization and policy making are drawn from the limited information available in official party historiographies and published documents.⁴⁰ Access to Party archives has been restricted, limiting the scope of any research. Official party documents, although quite useful, constitute a 'selective' source of party material that reflects the 'official' point of view of why and how party developments took place. Accordingly, records and documents from the lower and middle party hierarchical strata are not included, and hence, no evidence can be found on the relationship among the different levels of party organization. There are also no indications as to the relationship of the Party with the Communist International. Views of the various (and indeed numerous) opposition groups and fractions are excluded in their totality or, at best, distorted through the interpretation of their character and positions by the dominant fraction that went on to write the 'official' history of the Party. The granting of access to the Greek Communist Party Archives for the requirements of this research in itself should constitute a significant contribution to Communist Party historiography.

Statistics can be manipulated to produce the desired end-result. To take an example: the argument that the Communist Party was 'weak' and a 'sect' within the labour movement during the inter-war period, has frequently been based on the poor performance of the Communist Party in national elections and its low membership.⁴¹ However, such conclusions can be misleading: electoral support for the Communist Party might have been low nation-wide, but it was significantly higher in industrial urban centres.⁴² Elections were also frequently accompanied by state violence, the suppression of the press and the rigging of the ballot. Low membership was, to an extent, a product

³⁹ Anderson P (1981) p146. Similar views are to be found in Koukoules G F (1994) p184

⁴⁰ Such as the ones mentioned previously

⁴¹ Such literature would include: Elefantis A G (1999); Mavrogordatos G (1983); Apostolakou L (1997); Kousoulas D G (1983)

⁴² Such pieces of information exist dispersed throughout the literature, such as Legg K R (1969) p212, Burks R V (1961) p58, Elefantis A G (1976) p336, but seem to be quite frequently 'lost' in the overall argument.

of internal party weakness (such as fractional struggles), but surely other factors should not be ignored. The frequent banning of the party and its press, the active persecution of its members and, to a certain extent, the party policy of insisting on 'quality' rather than 'quantity' of its membership should be taken into account in any analysis of Communist Party history.

Sole reliance on archived material, such as state or governmental archives, as it is most frequently the case with the vast majority of Greek literature, also has an additional drawback. As Richard Evans points out "The traces left by the past...do not provide an even coverage of it. Archives are the product of the chance survival of some documents and the corresponding chance loss or deliberate destruction of others. They also are the product of the professional activities of archivists, which therefore shape the record of the past and with it the interpretations of historians. Archivists have often weeded out records they consider unimportant, while retaining those they consider of lasting value. This might mean for example destroying vast and therefore bulky personnel files on low-ranking state employees such as ordinary soldiers and seamen, manual workers and so on, while keeping room on the crowded selves for personnel files on high state officials. Yet such a policy would reflect a view that many historians would now find outmoded, a view which considered 'history' only as the history of the elites."⁴³ This constitutes a theoretical approach that has not yet been overcome by the main bulk of Greek labour historiography, which tends, on the one hand, to over-concentrate on government policies, party structures and leadership, and, on the other, to ignore the processes that take place between workers and party members at the level of the community and the workplace.

Partly as a consequence of the above, the means and processes of developing and forging communist identity and consciousness at the base or local level have been marginalized or even ignored, in favour of the decisions, resolutions and struggles that took place among the party leadership, at the Party Congresses and in other formal institutions. However, as Draper notes, communists are made, not born: "The founding leaders are not born Communists; they could not join an already fully formed and hardened movement. Most of them came out of other radical movements with different traditions; they were made Communists at the same time as the Communist movement itself was in the making."⁴⁴ It has been argued by researchers of communism and working-class militancy in other countries, that touching upon "the consciousness that was fostered by a whole

⁴³ Evans R J (1997) p87

⁴⁴ Draper T (1963) p4

range of activities and emblems”, such as “the banners, the bands, the evening socials and sport, the youth groups, the Friends of the Soviet Union and so on”,⁴⁵ is crucial in understanding the development of communist or radical consciousness. In addition this bottom-up approach contributes greatly to the understanding of the relationship between leadership and activists, who subject to a number of collectivities such as the family, the neighbourhood, and the workplace, have quite frequently found such allegiances at odds with the Party and/or the Comintern.⁴⁶ Also the attempts to ‘translate’ national politics and rhetoric⁴⁷ to practical agendas for struggle and forms of popular mobilization addressing the peculiarities of various local realities are important in any understanding of party successes or failures in particular working class communities.⁴⁸

As far as the Communist Party’s relationship to the Third International is concerned, Anderson’s comments are characteristic: “The Comintern remains to date a sociologically unique phenomenon, as an organization which commands an absolute loyalty, a disciplined fidelity, amongst its constituent national sections... On the other hand, it is also necessary not to bend the stick too far in the other direction, that of the characteristic Cold War histories, which tend to represent each national communist party as if it were just a puppet whose limbs were manipulated mechanically by strings pulled in Moscow”⁴⁹. Speculation and arbitrariness have dominated this particular aspect of Communist Party research for another, perhaps more practical and objective reason: the Comintern Archives, centralized in Moscow were inaccessible to most researchers before 1990. However, this is no longer the case, and new research has already been introducing fresh contributions to the debate: the importance of the “language of control and domination”, the “complexity and contestation” of a relationship that was never as linear and straight forward as represented in most literature, the processes of legitimization of the Comintern in Communist Party and party members’ consciousness, are issues that have been ever more raised in recent literature.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Macintyre S (1980) p173

⁴⁶ See Morgan K (1989) p13; Macintyre S (1980) pp173&176; Drew A (2000) p3

⁴⁷ For the importance of the ‘language of labor’ as a means of shaping consciousness and translating theory to day-to-day issues, or indeed as a tool of domination and control see Jones G S (1983), especially pp21-22, as well as Belchem J & Kirk N (1997) pp2-3

⁴⁸ See for example the work by Savage M (1987), and especially pp188-200

⁴⁹ Anderson P (1981) p150; that proposition was certainly true in all non-communist literature (see for example, the respective literature mentioned in the beginning when dealing with the Party’s relation to Moscow).

⁵⁰ See for example Thorpe A (2000), as well as the review of this book in Howell D (2001) pp916-7. Other issues would involve the role of the Comintern as a strengthening and legitimizing force for ‘weak’ movements in countries where the socialist tradition was a relatively recent phenomenon. In some cases a

A characteristic failing of the official Communist Party historiography and the literature sympathetic to CPs would be the marginalization of large sections of the non-communist working class. That would range from “a failure to take seriously, or weave into the picture adequately, what the non-communist sections of the national working class are feeling and doing”⁵¹ to a mystification of the labour movement, dividing it into “heroes and villains”⁵².

Various groups and fractions have been represented in official and un-official party (and ‘opposition’) historiography⁵³ with a multiplicity of labels (the most utilized being the dichotomy between Stalinists versus Trotskyites), that have crystallized in the successive attempts to provide an analysis of the development of the politics of the wider left in general and the Communist Party in particular. However, these categorizations seem quite arbitrary and superficial, as explanatory tools. These rather simplified analytical dichotomies, do not take into account the fact that the reasons why they came about in the first place were as a product of much more complex processes. These often involved the creation of self-images and the moral self legitimization of opposing groups, as well as, of course, ideological and political (and personal) differences and conflicts.⁵⁴

In terms of the working class’s ‘routes to communism’ the vast majority of non-communist literature has focused on phenomenology rather than process, i.e., it has focused on the decisions of the leadership, the appeal or not of party policies and labour leaders and patrons. Little or no reference is to be found to the *processes* through which certain sections of the working class became ‘strongholds’ of communist support.⁵⁵ The tobacco workers of Kavala constitute a good example: Rigos traced their sole cause for radicalization in the threat posed to workers’ control of the labour process by the mechanization of the industry.⁵⁶ Most other literature where a reference can be found

review of the responsibilities of the local Communists has been overshadowed by the overestimation of the Comintern. See Drew A (2000) p2-3

⁵¹ Anderson P (1981) p149. He later adds: “...they tend to ignore large sections of the working class, which, particularly in the inter-war period –were either apolitical or apathetic or else formed part of the electoral constituency of bourgeois parties...” (ibid). Similar concerns can be found in Savage M (1987) p.ix

⁵² However, as Burke mentions: “A history constructed round heroes and villains makes it impossible to understand how the past happened as it did”. (Burke P, 1981, p8)

⁵³ See inter-alia: For KKE, KE tou KKE (1945), (1946), (1947), (1952); for the ‘opposition’ see: Karliaftis L (1991), Asteriou E & Lampatos G (1995), Emmanouilides M (2002)

⁵⁴ A moral legitimization that often reached the point of ‘mythology’ (See article in *Kommounistiki Epitheorisi* by Tsokopoulos v, 1990, p79)

⁵⁵ Macintyre’s ‘Little Moscows’ would be a good example for the usefulness of such an approach. (Macintyre S, 1980)

⁵⁶ Rigos A (1999) p141

has put forward the high concentration of workers in the warehouses.⁵⁷ The distinct cultural dimensions, the inner-class communication network which progressively forged their class identity, in other words, the processes through which experience is channelled into radicalism (or indeed, conservatism or apathy), is effectively marginalized.

Finally, the history of the transition from the Socialist Worker Party of Greece to the Socialist Worker Party-Communist, to the Communist Party of Greece-Greek Section of the Communist International, is often viewed as a linear and unproblematic development. On the one hand, the Communist Party-based literature views the process as a more or less 'natural' process of 'maturity', whereas, on the other, the non-communist literature views the same process as a more or less 'inevitable' and 'predictable' process of 'Stalinization' of the Party. However, the transition and further development of the Party seems to have involved a dialectical (although not equal) relationship between the Comintern, the Balkan Communist Federation, and the Greek Communist Party and its leaders, activists and sympathisers. This complex relationship was characterized by both ruptures and continuities that have to be examined in relation and contradiction to each other in order to provide a wider understanding of the development of communist politics in Greece. The interplay of formal party politics and what communists did in the community will constitute a central theme of this research.

Sources, methodology and scope

The identification and accessibility of sources undoubtedly pose a challenge for any researcher of Greek social history. Koukoules had characterized the situation of historical sources in Greece as a "kingdom of darkness and chaos."⁵⁸ That is partly due to the inadequate, incomplete or non-existent citing of the material used by previous research, which creates serious obstacles in identifying and tracing a potential number of sources. It is also due, however, to the existence of a large number of small public or private archives and collections, which in most cases do not possess an efficient and organized cataloguing system, and to which the degree of accessibility varies considerably. Thus, locating and then granting access to the sources had been a most time and energy consuming

⁵⁷ Mavrogordatos G (1983) p146; Jecchinis H (1987) p61; Mazower M (1991) p121

⁵⁸ Koukoules G (1994) p7

process. Nevertheless, a significant variety of primary sources had been collected and used for the purposes of this study.

The types of archives that have been used vary from national, to regional, to private ones; a detailed list of which is presented at the end of this study. Governmental papers were drawn in the Parliament Archives, the General State Archives as well as the Venizelos Archive that is hosted at the Benaki Museum. Special reference should be made to the Archives of the Communist Party of Greece, which offered the opportunity of examining a large number of previously unseen and unpublished materials.⁵⁹

This research had also consulted a wide range of newspapers and journals published in the interwar period, numbering forty eight in total. Out of these, twenty one are mainstream popular newspapers with national circulation, whereas nine are local newspapers. Of the rest, eleven were published by the Communist Party of Greece (nationwide, locally, factory and youth papers) and another seven by various political groups opposing the Communist Party. *Rizospastes* newspaper constitutes the main official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece.

In addition, a number of interviews have been used for this study, which as oral history sources, complement the printed or written archival material and provide an insight into the perceptions and viewpoints of local leaders and activists. These interviews were of people who have either been Communist Party members at the period concerned or continued to be at the time of the interview. There were also a number of people who have never been Party members, but have been activists or sympathisers. Finally there were a number of people who had never been either of the two, but nevertheless were active trade unionists, or have simply encountered the communists at their place of work. Apart from one interview, all the others have been conducted by other individuals. Despite that fact, however, these interviews had never been utilized in the past for the purposes of such research.

As far as the scope of this study is concerned, the time frame is limited to the period between the end of the First World War in 1918, which is also the date when the General Confederation of Labour and the Socialist Labour Party of Greece were established, and the rise of the Metaxas' dictatorship in August 1936. The time frame is important in this study since in the Greek case the First World War came to a conclusion later, in 1922 with the Asia Minor disaster and the refugee

⁵⁹ Despite initial intentions I had not visited the Comintern Archives in Moscow, which continue to remain a challenging source for future research.

influx that had a most significant impact on the domestic social and political developments. In addition, the Popular Front policy came to an end rather early in Greece as a result of the Metaxas' regime oppressive anti-communist policies that left the Communist Party absolutely devastated on the eve of the Second World War.

In terms of the geographic location of the two case studies, the first one, Kokkinia, is located west of Piraeus, the largest port of Greece, whereas the second, Kavala, that is also a large port, is situated at the province of Eastern Macedonia in Northern Greece. They both constituted important industrial centres, with a significant working class concentration that was overall uncommon in Greece, an overwhelmingly agricultural country.

Finally, in a brief overview of the contents of this study, chapter 1 provides a background against which the argument of the thesis will unfold, facilitating the development of an alternative approach to the study of working class communism in the particular national context of interwar Greece. Chapters 2 and 3 provide the economic and political framework respectively for the development of the working class and the organized labour movement in Greece. In particular, chapter 2 will examine a number of assumptions and perspectives about what inhibited or favoured the emergence of radicalism. The various methods of incorporation of the labour movement that will be examined in chapter 3 will provide a backdrop for the following chapters where we shall examine the extent to which various sections of the working class managed, or not, to respond to and deal with them, and why was that so. Accordingly, chapters 4 and 5 will deal with the Communist Party at the national level and its relationship with the Communist International. Chapters 6 to 8 are case studies that deal with the development of labour and communist politics in the localities of Kokkinia and Kavala. Chapter 9 provides a summary and a set of conclusions to the study.

Chapter 2: The morphology of Greek industry and the Greek proletariat.

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the economic framework that facilitated the development of the working class in Greece during the inter-war years, and put forward the potential for and limits on radicalization. It will touch upon and expand on a number of assumptions and perspectives about what inhibited or favoured the emergence of radicalism. One of the key factors that is widely put forward in the literature as inhibiting working class radicalism in interwar Greece is the peasant background of the average Greek worker. Writers such as Mavrogordatos (1987) and Moskof (1988) have pointed to the subsequent transfer of personalistic relations of production that were dominant in the country side to the cities, -ties with land, as well as a 'peasant mentality'- in order to explain a lack of unionism and radical action among first or second generation workers of peasant background.

Another important assumption about what inhibited collective action and the growth of working class radicalism concerns the size of industry and the dominance of small shops, artisanship and the particular relations between employer and employee that characterized them. This is traced back to the particularities in the development of capitalism in Greece, its position in the international capitalist system, its vulnerability to external pressures.⁶⁰

On the other hand, there are a number of conditions that have been widely held to have facilitated the emergence of radical enclaves. Those include working and living conditions, decline in wages and the impact of international crises, such as war or the 1929 economic crisis, on Greece. Mavrogordatos points to the existence of a landless proletariat that came about with the influx of Asia Minor refugees in 1922, whereas Mazower notes that it was industrial and urban growth itself that "produced new social forces into Greek life" which would pose a threat to the existing social and political fabric.⁶¹

Accordingly, the argument in this chapter will unfold by presenting an overview of the morphology of the peasantry and the political economy of agriculture, followed by an outline of some general characteristics of the Greek political economy since independence was acquired by the

⁶⁰ See Mouzelis N (1980) and Elefantis A G (1999)

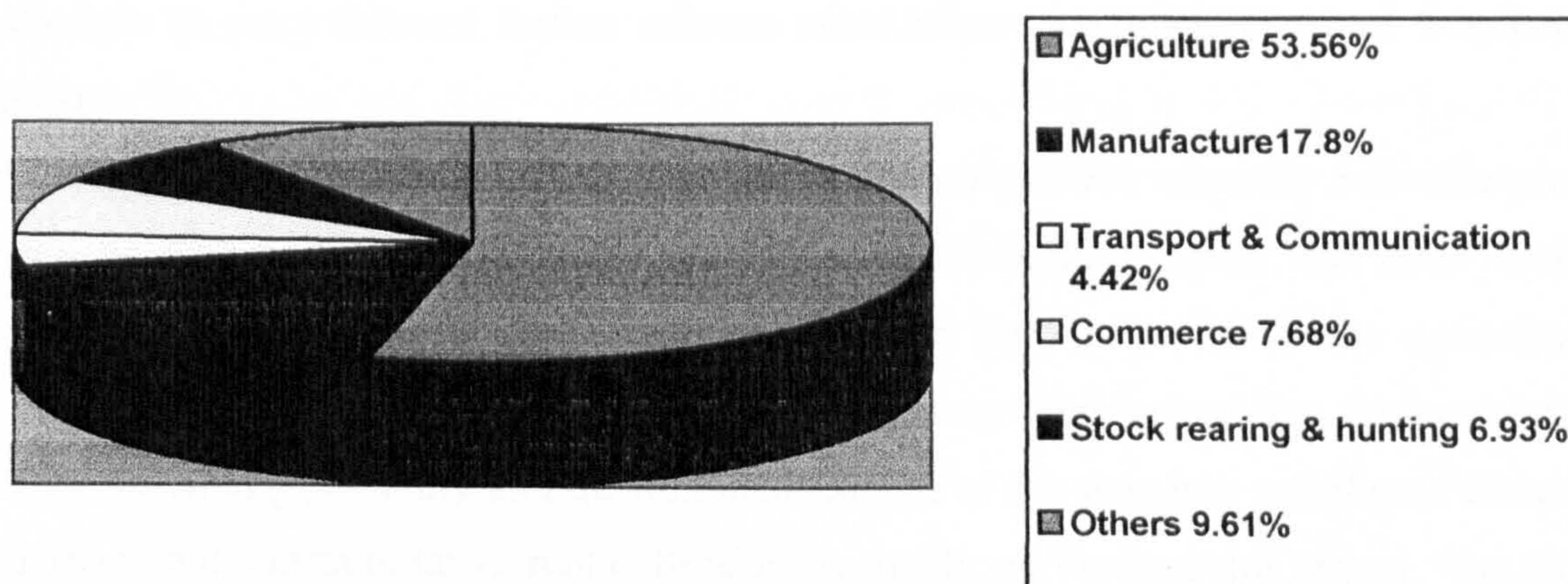
⁶¹ Mazower M (1991) p 295 and Mavrogordatos G (1987) pp144-145

Ottoman Empire in 1821. The main bulk of the chapter will deal with issues concerning the growth of industry and the conditions under which the Greek working class developed, the emergence of an urban proletariat and an overview of their living and working conditions.

The morphology of the peasantry and political economy of agriculture in Greece since independence

A predominantly rural society: No study of the Greek labour movement would be sufficient without at least some reference to the peasantry or the political economy of agriculture, since “the rural space remains, from Independence to the end of the inter-war period, the dominant living framework of the Greek.”⁶²

Graph 1: Employment by sector (1928 Census)⁶³



Since Greece was a predominantly agricultural society, it is understandable why land reform became a key-political issue even as early as the War of Independence in 1821.⁶⁴

a. *National Lands:* Out of the 1,859,000 acres of arable land that existed within the national borders in 1830, more than 1,450,000, previously belonging to the Ottoman state or Muslim landowners, were declared ‘National Land’. During the War of Independence, some 510,000 acres were illegally acquired by Christian peasants, and another 145,000 acres were given legally by the Greek state as compensation to the financiers of the revolutionary governments and to a number of

⁶² Moskof K (1988) p119

⁶³ Based on the 1928 census returns, cited in *Statistiki Epetiris tis Ellados, 1938*

⁶⁴ See Kordatos G (1925) Chapters 1-3. Kordatos G (1973) p279; Zografos D (1923) pp140-155

war veterans and victims. By 1870, however, there were still some 658,750 acres, some ¼ of the total arable land, that were owned by the state. The 'National Lands' have attracted various comments throughout the existing literature. Vergopoulos claims the existence of "a consistent policy of the Greek state that favoured small land-ownership" and remained suspicious of large land estates; the 'nationalization' of land was the first step in that policy⁶⁵. Moskof argues that the 'National Lands' constituted the state itself as a landowner, acquiring 25-30% of the production, and keeping the peasants who cultivated those lands under a system of feudal economic relations⁶⁶. However, Kordatos maintains that, although in the first instance it may have looked as though the Greek state had become a landowner, in practice it was merely a 'virtual' owner, since the majority of the former Ottoman owned land were acquired through various means by Greek landowners.⁶⁷

b. *Land Reforms*: Independently of the status and character of the 'National Lands', the issue that is of most relevance to this study is the fact that the so-called 'nationalization' of land did not automatically result in its redistribution, but only the possibility of this outcome. The subsequent legislative attempts to carry forward further reforms were either incomplete or, most frequently, remained on paper.⁶⁸

Small ownership: Nevertheless, land reform in Greece in the early 1900s was early and widespread compared with its eastern European counterparts.⁶⁹ The small holding sector had three further implications. Firstly, small plots of land rarely produced a surplus: most of the agricultural production was consumed by the producer almost in its entirety. This meant that the connection between the self-sustaining peasantry and the dominant classes or the state was manifested directly, outside the market, in the form of tax or rent collection. Secondly, as Vergopoulos argues, "the state, due to the redistribution of land in small properties succeeded in stressing the impersonal character of the system, and therefore, fortified its position in the totality of the economy."⁷⁰ Finally, small holdings enhanced individualism: "Of all individualistic Greeks, the farm workers are the most notably so" Carey and Carey note. "They found little appeal in the idea of collective farming,

⁶⁵ Vergopoulos K (1975) pp152-153; Vergopoulos K (1974) pp91 onwards

⁶⁶ Moskof K (1988) p125

⁶⁷ Kordatos G (1973) p279

⁶⁸ Such as the relevant Laws of 29/2/1848, Law YAA' of 1871, the relevant legislation of 1886 (Kordatos G, 1973, p280); See also Moskof K (1988)pp125-6

⁶⁹ By 1917, land reform in Greece involved some 49.8% of the land, compared to Rumania, 1920:29.7%, Czechoslovakia, 1918:14.1%, Yugoslavia 1919:4.6%, Bulgaria, 1919:2%. See Stefanides D (1948) p396; Kitsikes D (1964) p155

⁷⁰ Vergopoulos K (1975) pp174-5

particularly as the land reform of that era had increased the small number of farmers deeply attached to their own bits of land, no matter how tiny.”⁷¹

The town-countryside relationship: The function of the town during the pre-industrial era consisted mainly in the organization of village production, particularly to advance commercialization through the spread of specialization of production. The town was mainly a market, and its role was that of an intermediate between the various rural productive units. When peasants left their villages for the cities in search of employment they maintained strong links with the former: it was overwhelmingly the male population that migrated, leaving the family behind, only to rejoin them at the time of sowing and harvest. For a transitional period that sometimes lasted a generation the labourer of peasant origin who ended up in the town was still dependent on the village. Proletarianization in terms of the peasant’s economic and ideological status was hence retarded for decades, dividing even more his social consciousness.⁷²

Peasants’ responses to oppression/deprivation: Frequent piece-meal reforms (in 1836, 1848, 1871, 1886, 1890, 1907, 1914 and 1917) that resulted in small private ownership of land (or at least the prospect of it), as well as the implications of small private ownership discussed above, meant that peasant radicalization never went beyond sporadic localized revolts that were easily suppressed by the state or the landlords.⁷³ On the contrary, without valid or obvious channels of escape from their ever-worsening position (such as the case of the currant crisis of 1892-1909), a frequent ending to social tension would be immigration or emigration. In the fifteen years of the crisis almost one third of the peasantry involved in currant production moved to the cities or across the Atlantic.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Carey J & Carey A (1968) p116

⁷² See Zolotas X (1926)

⁷³ With the example perhaps of the Kileler revolt of 1910, when the army had to be brought in. 4 peasants were killed and several others wounded (Triantafillos P, 2001, p62). There are of course other factors that contributed to the limitations of collective action in the peasantry, such as the particular nature of process of their political demands through the clientage system, which are going to be dealt in more detail in the following chapter.

⁷⁴ An index of such a development is the rising numbers of emigrants to US (Source: Zolotas X, 1926, pp25-26; *Deltion Statistikis Ypiresias 1900-1915*)

Year	Average No	Year	Average No	Year	Average No
1870-75	23	1885-90	75	1900-05	10,175
1875-80	25	1890-95	313	1905-1910	32,100
1880-85	23	1895-1900	1,105		

General characteristics of Greek political economy since independence

Greek political economy has shown a number of distinctive characteristics. These concern the nature of the bourgeoisie, uneven development, the vulnerability of Greek industry to international pressures due to the character of its initial development, and issues of economic dependency and control.

Peculiarities of the Greek bourgeoisie: Following the formation of the Greek state (1830s), the main bulk of the Greek bourgeoisie found itself situated outside the national borders. This peculiarity can be explained from the fact that the Greek bourgeoisie was historically formed and developed without the existence of significant links with the domestic productive forces. Indeed the vast majority of the Greek bourgeoisie was developed abroad: in Turkey (mainly Asia Minor), South Russia, Rumania and Egypt.⁷⁵

Several Greek entrepreneurs were connected to the international capitalist market. The main characteristics of this connection were, on the one hand, the export of raw materials from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean towards Western Europe (commerce), and on the other, their involvement in the financial opportunities that were offered by the markets of Berlin, Paris and London (banking). Thus, the relationship of the Greek bourgeoisie with Greece itself was that of a representative of the international market or a direct partner of the European capitalist centre. This created another peculiarity: a fundamental dichotomy between a relatively 'underdeveloped' peripheral domestic society connected to an 'overdeveloped' bourgeois class, and the absence of a substantial intermediate class.⁷⁶

Uneven development: Although a sequence of international events would eventually force the Greek bourgeoisie to seek local conditions for the reproduction of its capital,⁷⁷ the particularity of

⁷⁵ See Tsoukalas C (1974)

⁷⁶ See Vergopoulos K (1975) pp12-13; Legg K R (1969) p82. While the bourgeoisie remained outside the Greek national borders, the majority of the petty-bourgeoisie who were to be found within, occupied themselves with the political decision-making process of the newly formed state: "Under these terms, and despite secondary disputes, these two sets of interests were not competitive with each other, but complementary: the petty-bourgeoisie acquired the effective act of power and the bourgeoisie was content with exercising supervision of 'the last instance'. As a direct result there was an overdevelopment of a state mechanism of civil servants and of a 'political' class." (Vergopoulos K, 1975, p14)

⁷⁷ Such events would include the October Revolution and the subsequent Civil War that damaged the Greek merchant controlled wheat trade of South Russia (1917-1922), the emergence and success of the Young-Turk movement in the Ottoman Empire where the interests of Greek capital were highly concentrated (1909), the instability of the Northern Balkans (Balkan Wars I & II), the commercial crisis in Egypt where the Greek merchants controlled the import and export of cotton and textiles etc.

concentration of capital accumulation in the commercial (35%) and maritime sectors (16%),⁷⁸ would have a great impact on the industrialization of Greece. Indeed, it is no surprise that the first industrial centres were exclusively concentrated at commercial ports and in the surrounding areas.⁷⁹ Accordingly, communication infrastructures such as railways and roads were mainly limited to the service of those ports, hence restricting mobility and social communication, as well as the further spread of industry, industrial relations and ideas.⁸⁰

The initial steps towards the establishment of industries and the vulnerability of Greek industry to international pressures: The first efforts to introduce industrial production units in Greece were short-lived due to the external influences of the international market. For example, the cotton factory in Patras, established in 1846 closed down during the 1860s due to a sudden increase in the price of raw material caused by the American Civil War,⁸¹ and the economic crisis of 1883-8 meant that the leading industrial units in Syros lost almost half of their workforce. Finally, the Crimean War, as well as the increasing dominance of the steam-boat, meant that the Greek maritime industry declined sharply after the 1850s, from a tonnage of 255,233 in 1848, to 145,361 in 1901, to 101,459 by 1909.

Reflecting the characteristics of a society and economy of peripheral capitalism, industrial development in Greece was largely dependent and uneven due to external pressures.⁸² Hence the development of a working class was slow. In 1874 industry was still at an infant stage, employing

⁷⁸ *Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Nouvelle Série, Grèce, Vol 12, 13* cited by Moskof K (1988) p146. At the same time the industrial sector would represent 18% of capital accumulation, whereas another 18% would represent investment in estates. The figures concern capital accumulation in the beginning of the 20th Century (1900-1910).

⁷⁹ "By 1922 Piraeus had outstripped Naples and Genoa, and run close to Marseilles in the volume of its total shipping (5,789 steam vessels, 5,792 sailing ships) handled annually." (Dakin D, 1972, p247) Similar growth (but to a lesser extent) witnessed other main ports such as Salonica, Syros, Patras etc.

⁸⁰ The first development was the 6 mile line between Athens and Piraeus (1867-1869). A Naval Intelligence report on the state of the railways (1944) mentions characteristically: "Greece, is of all the Balkan countries, the least well supplied with railways, with the exception of Albania, which has none at all. There are only about 1,653 miles, representing 1 mile of railway for every 30 sq. miles of territory (cf. Great Britain 4.4 sq. miles, France 5.5, Yugoslavia 13, Bulgaria 19), or 1 mile of railway to 4,261 inhabitants (cf. Great Britain 2,291, France 1,088, Yugoslavia 2,382, Bulgaria 2,855). Similar figures for the Balkan Peninsula as a whole are 1 mile to 19 sq. miles, and 1 mile to 2,877 inhabitants." (Naval Intelligence Division, 1944b, p335) A comparative look at roads gives a similar picture:

Country	Miles of road per sq mile	No of inhabitants per mile of road	Country	Miles of road per sq mile	No of inhabitants per mile of road
Greece	0.17	830	Italy	1.05	339
England-Wales	2.64	267	Spain	0.33	374
France	1.84	107	Yugoslavia	0.27	591
Germany	0.73	528	Bulgaria	0.49	328

Source: Naval Intelligence Division (1944b) p313

⁸¹ *Cotton Supply Register*, 28/1/1864

⁸² Vergopoulos K (1975) p11; also see Mouzelis N (1987)

just 7,342 regular workers, and some 20-25,000 seasonal workers.⁸³ By 1909 the number of regular workers increased to 60,114, out of which 37,174 lived in the capital and Piraeus.⁸⁴

Economic dependency and control: Legg points out that “Greece was an impoverished state, and the question of foreign debts bedevilled Greek politics throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, influencing policies of internal development, taxation, and diplomatic alignment. By manipulating their financial demands, foreign powers could force abrupt changes in the allocation of Greek resources for domestic purposes.”⁸⁵ In addition, foreign debt had another two-fold impact on the industrialization of Greece. Firstly, loans were generally not directed to productive purposes,⁸⁶ and secondly, loan re-payments absorbed a significant part of the national income.⁸⁷

Greece’s economic dependency on foreign powers is seen in the role played by the International Financial Commission (IFC). In 1898, the IFC deemed that the Greek government was unable to “manage their financial matters in a manner satisfactory to western tenets of fiscal administrative efficiency”,⁸⁸ and it set up a Management Company of Greek State Monopoly Goods. The Company, representing all of Greece’s major creditors (although, in paper, under the jurisdiction of the Greek state)⁸⁹, effectively took over key sources of revenue re-assigned for the service of debt.⁹⁰

The inter-war period-The legacy

Throughout the interwar period small family businesses predominated in Greece’s manufacturing sector and gave it a strongly petty-bourgeois character, not untypical of Greek society as a whole. According to existing indications, the majority of non-agricultural workers were employed

⁸³ See *Acropolis* 10/5/1888

⁸⁴ See *Ekthesis Ergatikon Kentron*, Athina, 1911

⁸⁵ Legg K R (1969) pp68-69

⁸⁶ Levandis J A (1944) p.ix; Pepelasis A A (1959) p173

⁸⁷ From 1830 to 1860 Great Britain and France received as part of their loan repayments some 30% of the Greek national income. By the end of the century the loans would have been repaid at a 3-fold of their real value. On the burden of foreign debt see Dertilis P (1956), Belogiannis N (1998)

⁸⁸ Levandis J A (1944) p.ix

⁸⁹ All major creditors were represented –UK, France, Germany–(Moskof K, 1988, p115). Greece’s role, on the other hand, was reduced to one of a bystander, since it was not permitted to enact any law that overstepped on its sources of revenue (see Break G & Turvey R, 1964, p207)

⁹⁰ These involved: 1) Government monopolies: salt, petroleum, matches, playing cards, cigarette paper, Naxos emery. 2) Duties: Stamp duties, tobacco dues. 3) Import duties collected at Piraeus. (See Geographical Section of the Naval Intelligence Division, Naval Staff, Admiralty, 1921, p163)

throughout this period in artisan workshops or other small businesses.⁹¹ Accordingly, little economic or social distance separated them from their petty bourgeois employers, to whom they were very often, and in various degrees, tied through manifold personal or traditional bonds, such as family or of common rural origin. The prospect, realistic or otherwise, of eventually replacing their employer or becoming owners of a small shop themselves, was a common and widespread ambition.

Furthermore, Greek workers commonly owned some land in their village of origin, maintaining strong family and economic ties with small property, and many workers were actually home owners.⁹² Greek workers also carried with them the traditional 'guild' mentality and the complex network of personalistic politics and endemic factional conflicts, which constituted a problematic foundation for a growing and stable labour organization.⁹³ In addition, many workers joined unions out of imitation rather than due to the development of class consciousness.⁹⁴

To a large extent the structure of Greek industry reflected its natural endowments. Heavy industry was confined to an engineering sector consisting mainly of mechanical-repair workshops and traditionally-run shipyards, and to a metallurgical sector involving mainly a refining arm of the Lavrion mines. The major industrial sectors were food and drink, soap refining, chemicals, furniture and leather working. The overall picture of Greek industry, therefore, could be described as one where a traditional manufacturing sector was dominant, with a few isolated examples of modern industrial practices.

⁹¹ Coutsoumaris, drawing from the 1930 Census of manufacturing mentions that out of a total of 65,811 establishments, there were 61,336 (93.2%) employing less than 6 employees, or no hired labor at all, 3,751 (5.7%) employing between 6 and 25, and only 724 (1.1%) employing 26 or more. Goutsoumaris G (1963) pp34&37

⁹² Venizelos's Agrarian reforms of 1917 and 1918 (that were carried through throughout the inter-war period) "Gave the final blow to large-scale landed property in Greece. From the 1920s onwards, the small family plot has been the dominant form of land ownership in the Greek countryside." (Mouzelis N, 1980, p245) The process of land re-distribution was accelerated with the arrival of refugees, reaching some 425,000 hectares by 1936. So radical was the policy of agrarian reform at the time that it was attacked by Venizelos's opponents as an example of 'bolshevism'. (Mouzelis N, 1986, pp84-5; Georgiki Enosis, 1922, p14) Carey and Carey suggested that industrial employees continued to maintain a 'peasant outlook' throughout the interwar period, "with no conception of what uniting the 'workers of the world' meant." (Carey J & Carey A, 1968, p116)

⁹³ Zolotas X E (1926) p65; Elefantis A G (1976) pp319-324; Benaroya A (1975) pp223onwards. According to the latter, a guild mentality and organization persisted even in industrial enterprises throughout the interwar period. Small family enterprises and larger industries co-existed, without the former being swapped by the latter, at any rate close to the industrializing process experienced in the industrialized West.

⁹⁴ See Benaroya A (1986) p220

The growth of industry and working class in the inter-war period

However, despite its relatively backward character, manufacturing achieved an unprecedented prominence in terms of its overall importance within the Greek economy during the inter-war period. Indeed, as Mouzelis argues, "From the thirties onwards there is no doubt that the capitalist mode of production had become firmly established in the industrial sector, to function as the dynamic pivot of the Greek economy -where dynamism is meant to imply not only high rates of growth, but also the systematic transfer of resources from the simple-commodity sector (prevalent in agriculture and small industry) to the industrial capitalist sector."⁹⁵

Manufacturing in Greece soon acquired greater importance in the Greek economy than in any of her Balkan neighbours, as the following table indicates:

Table 1: Comparative Manufacturing/Agricultural Output among three Balkan states in millions of their national currency.⁹⁶

Output	Greece	Bulgaria	Rumania
Gross Crop Output	1,719	2,378	3,978
Gross Manufacturing Output	1,077	761	2,328
Crop/Manufacturing Output ratio	1,60	3,12	1,71

The growth of industry is indeed impressive: between 1923 and 1939 industrial production doubled in value and horse power, and tripled in volume.⁹⁷ In the decade between 1928 and 1938 electricity production quadrupled, and, in the same period, Greece experienced one of the highest increases of industrial production (65%) in the world, surpassed only by the Soviet Union and Japan.⁹⁸ The growth of industry inevitably resulted in the expansion of the working class, which almost doubled in the decade between 1920 and 1930, as the following table illustrates:

⁹⁵ Mouzelis N (1980) p247

⁹⁶ Sources: Greece, *Annual Statistics* 1933, pp434-8, Bulgaria and Rumania, Table 10.5, Jackson M & Lampe J (1982). Data for Greece are for 1921. For Bulgaria and Rumania the data refer to 1922. The data are in millions of national currency units.

⁹⁷ Gregoriadis S (1974) p48

⁹⁸ Vergopoulos K (1977) p330. See also tables 1 and 2 in Appendices

Table 2: Growth of workforce in industry in the period 1920-1930⁹⁹

	1920	1930		1920	1930
No of persons occupied in industry	154,633	280,331	Workers	103,777	181,512
Employers- Managers	45,475	87,196	Of which women	21,089	39,087
Clerks	5,381	11,623	No of businesses	33,811	76,591

Nevertheless, although agriculture was declining in economic importance, it still employed the majority of the Greek workforce (although to a lesser degree than in other Balkan countries), as the tables below indicate:

Table 3: Proportions of National Product by Sector of Origin (%)¹⁰⁰

Period	Agriculture	Manufacturing, Mining, Construction	Transport & Communications	Commerce
1935-9	40	21	6	12

Table 4: Comparative Rural Population Density in 5 European Countries¹⁰¹

Country	No of inhabitants per Sq. km.	Rural Population per sq. Km. of arable land	% of population dependent on agriculture
Greece	48	86.7	60
Bulgaria	59	95.4	80
Yugoslavia	56	100.1	75
Italy	133	53.4	44
Germany	139	52.1	20
England/Wales	264	33.8	5

⁹⁹ Source: *Statistiki Epetiris tis Ellados 1930*, pp177&181

¹⁰⁰ Source: Table J2 in Mitchell B R (1992) p914. The Figures are as proportions of NPD to 1949

¹⁰¹ Cited in Stavrianos L (1958) p596

A new urban proletariat?

In addition to the growth of an urban workforce in response to industrial development, the 1922 Asia Minor Disaster produced some 1,221,489 refugees¹⁰² ('homeless people'¹⁰³) whose settlement gave a sudden boost to the growth of urban centres. The population of small villages increased from 242,236 in 1907 to 571,735 in 1928, whereas the population of the cities increased from 627,973 to 2,064,696 in the same period, especially around urban industrial centres such as Athens and Piraeus.¹⁰⁴

Table 5: Population Increase in Refugee Settlements of Athens and Piraeus¹⁰⁵

Athens	1920	1928	Piraeus	1920	1928
Kaisariani	11	15,357	Nea Kokkinia	0	33,201
Vyrona	0	7,723	Drapetsona	0	17,652
Nea Ionia	79	16,382	Keratsini	0	10,827
Nea Philadelphia	110	6,337	Peristeri	123	7,268
Kallithea	4,940	29,446			

Table 6: The distribution of population in Greece (1879-1928) according to the size of settlement¹⁰⁶

Settlements (No Of Inhabitants)	1879		1889		1896		1907		1920		1928	
	Pop.	%	Pop.	%	Pop.	%	Pop.	%	Pop.	%	Pop.	%
Over 5,000	292,997	18	464,658	21	525,886	22	627,973	24	1,336,371	27	2,064,696	33
2,000-5,000	161,707	10	189,504	9	235,471	9	242,236	9	486,383	10	571,735	9
Under 2,000	1,199,063	72	1,533,046	70	1,672,469	69	1,761,743	67	3,194,135	63	3,568,253	58
Total	1,653,767	100	2,187,208	100	2,433,806	100	2,631,952	100	5,016,889	100	6,204,684	100

Of course, refugees did not immediately settle permanently in one place. Indeed, it was not until 1928 that the Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) could observe that "after the successive fluctuations of the refugee population from one part of the territory to the other, the refugees have

¹⁰² *Statistiki Epetiris tis Ellados*, 1930

¹⁰³ *League of Nations Official Journal* 1/3/1924

¹⁰⁴ *Statistiki Epetiris tis Elladas*, 1930

¹⁰⁵ Source: Hirschon R (1998) p41

¹⁰⁶ *Statistiki Epetiris tis Ellados*, 1932 pp47-8. The table shows that although there was a clear tendency towards urbanization before 1920, the influx of refugees accelerated the process significantly. In particular, the size of urban settlements has grown some 49.7% in the period between 1920 and 1928 (Livieratos D, 1987, pp176-7). It would be useful, when comparisons are made, to take under consideration that Greece acquired new territory in 1881, 1913 and 1920.

finally settled down and the majority of towns in Greece are now inhabited by refugee families more or less in proportion to their capacity.”¹⁰⁷

Refugees were overwhelmingly absorbed in industry and commerce. More specifically, the male workforce found employment in industry (49.45%) and commerce (23.41%), whereas the majority of the female workforce was employed in industry (71.73%) and as menial staff (15.52%). As a result, the morphology of industry changed significantly: the proportion of employees in small industries was reduced to 51% of the total; the proportion in middle-size businesses remained stable at 19%, while the share of employees in large businesses rose to 30%.¹⁰⁸

Table 7: Occupation distribution of urban refugees, 1928¹⁰⁹

Occupation	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Mining	979	0.46	936	0.59	43	0.09
Industry	114,517	54.82	78,424	49.45	36,088	71.73
Transport	18,742	8.97	18,607	11.73	135	0.3
Lending	4,347	2.08	4,023	2.53	324	0.64
Commerce	38,516	18.43	37,133	23.41	1,383	2.74
Personal Services	13,864	6.63	6,056	3.81	7,808	15.52
Free Occupations	13,023	6.23	9,114	5.74	3,909	7.77
Public Services	4,903	2.34	4,286	2.7	617	1.2
Total	208,881		158,579		50,307	

In addition to providing an extra army of wage-labour in the urban industrial centres of the country, new industrial sectors were developed, such as the textile industry. As an MP noted in a parliamentary discussion in 1925:

“...textiles... which are exclusive to the refugee world from Asia Minor, have begun to expand: the labour involved a total of 4,000 working women; the output amounts to 10,000 square meters; their sales value in Greece amounts to 107,634 drachmas; while the value of carpets sold abroad during

¹⁰⁷ *Twentieth Quarterly Report of the Refugee Settlement Commission*, 16/11/1928, p10

¹⁰⁸ *GSTY, Apografi ton katastimaton kai ton viomixanikon kai emporikon epixeiriseon energeithisa to Septembrio 1930, 1934*

¹⁰⁹ Source: GSYE, *Statistiki Epetiris tis Ellados*, 1930, p75

1924 was 18,722,609 drachmas. The refugee world, abandoned with only 100-150 million drachmas of occupational loan, has managed to perform miracles with this amount.”¹¹⁰

However, “the dreadful housing conditions and the underpaid work...echoed those in the novels of Victor Hugo and Charles Dickens in the 19th century”.¹¹¹ The Chairman of the Refugee Settlement Committee (RSC) noted that the wages paid to the refugees “translated themselves, in practical terms, into half a loaf of bread per person per day, a handful of olives, a little olive oil, and meat or fish perhaps once or twice a month.”¹¹² As Mavrogordatos notes, “lacking the support that small property, family ties, clientism, and unbroken traditions provided in the case of native workers” and with their ambitions for upward mobility destroyed, male refugees threatened the domestic social fabric with radical proletarianization of labour.¹¹³

But it was not only the refugees who swelled the ranks of the new-born proletariat. As a weekly newspaper, critical of the Liberal Party leader Venizelos, writes:

“The farmer in northern Greece is coming to believe that the cause of his misfortune is the insatiability of capitalism which all bourgeois governments serve, the present one especially. Both reality and the Press teach him this. He learns that in the towns live a mass of rich privileged people who enjoy cinemas, theatres, cars and a thousand other benefits while he works increasingly and goes hungry. Instead of this however the support of the RSC [the Refugee Settlement Commission] has ended, likewise the loans...and in their place come failed harvests, the worldwide economic crisis and sheer poverty. What is he supposed to do?”¹¹⁴

The answer to that question was seen in migration towards the urban centres. Indeed, in 1928, the composition of towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants was 35% indigenous Greeks, 33.35% rural migrants, and 31.7% refugees that had arrived in Greece following the Asia Minor disaster of 1922. Furthermore, almost one third (33%) of Athens’s population were refugees, and a similar proportion

¹¹⁰ *Efimeris ton Sinitiseon tis Voulis*, 29/5/1925

¹¹¹ Kritikos G (2000) p202

¹¹² Morgenthau H (1929) p249

¹¹³ Mavrogordatos T (1989) p145

¹¹⁴ *Peitharhia*, 15/5/1931

were recent migrants from the countryside.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the movement of labourers in search of employment was almost constant throughout the inter-war period, as the table below indicates:

Table 8: Annual Migration Statistics (In thousands)¹¹⁶

Year	Emigration	Immigration	Year	Emigration	Immigration
1919	...	12.0	1928
1920	12.2	7.7	1929
1921	4.1	9.1	1930
1922	...	7.8	1931	23.4	19.6
1923	15.3	9.5	1932	26.6	19.0
1924	...	10.3	1933	21.8	18.3
1925	3.6	...	1934	26.6	19.0
1926	6.7	...	1935	21.4	17.7
1927	9.3	...	1936	17.2	14.5

Of course on their arrival in the urban centres, these people did not find the ‘luxurious’ life mentioned above; that unfortunately existed only in rural popular imagination. On the contrary, they faced harsh living conditions and unemployment: “The agricultural workers who go to the towns and cannot find employment in industry”, a League of Nations report noted, “would inevitably go to swell the ranks of those who depend for their livelihood on parasitic trades or casual labour. This class is already numerous and its existence precarious, and there is a risk that its members may one day join the extremist elements.”¹¹⁷

Urban working class living and working conditions

Living conditions for urban workers were indeed bleak. To a delegate from the International Labour Office who stressed the bad working conditions and the widespread violations of international conventions concerning child labour, Venizelos responded:

“The urgent necessity of securing work for the great mass of refugees, the small proportion among them of male workers, and finally the necessity of dedicating all the available resources to the most urgent task of resettlement, have not permitted the implementation of measures which would be

¹¹⁵ *Statistiki Epetiris tis Ellados*, 1931

¹¹⁶ Source: Mitchell B R (1992) p130. Immigration statistics refer to immigrants from Greece only and not immigrants to Greece.

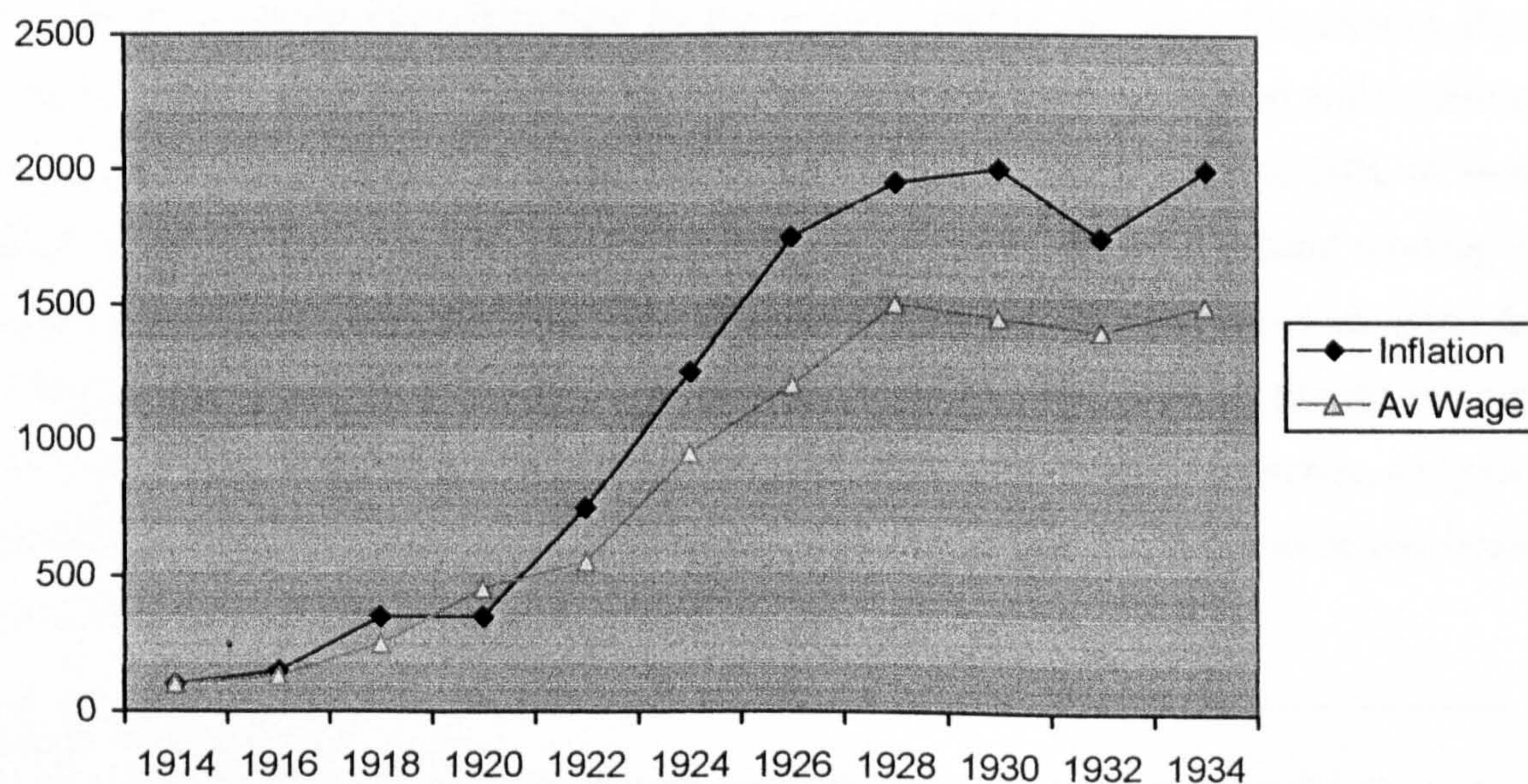
¹¹⁷ League of Nations (1931) p189

useful but might prevent the creation of new industries –which were anyway often unstable- and halt the development of others.”¹¹⁸

Of course the problem of refugee resettlement and employment was significantly reinforced by the strong resistance and reaction of the business lobby to any form of labor protection or wages legislation, since the unprecedented growth of Greek industry (hence profits) was largely founded on ever-reducing labor costs. Mazower cites a characteristic example of the business world’s reaction to any form of legislation threatening their profiteering. The Tsaldares government in 1935 put forward a number of legislative measures to provide a degree of state control of the production costs of domestically produced goods. The reaction of the business lobby to the government plans was put forward as a move “against what it described as the ‘party state’”. Furthermore, N Kanellopoulos argued that the MNE [Ministry of National Economy] was “continuing to restrict that entrepreneurial freedom which was always the basis of the bourgeois state and its new proposals would lead to an ‘unprecedented bolshevism’.”¹¹⁹

As the following graph illustrates, wages decreased in real terms (gap between wages and inflation) throughout the inter-war period compared to the increase in living costs:

Graph 2: The Development of the Average Male Daily Wage compared to Inflation, 1914-1934 (1914=100)¹²⁰



¹¹⁸ Stefanou S (1969) p483

¹¹⁹ Mazower M (1991) p261

Accordingly, if the average wage in 1914 was 100 units, in 1934 it was 1500. However, the living costs rose even faster, climbing from an average of 100 units in 1914 to 2000 in 1934. And given the country's highly regressive tax structure, as well as the comparatively high taxation on essential goods (seen in the tables below) post-tax income disparities would have been greater even still:

Table 9: Indirect Taxation and their impact across three different income groups¹²¹

Income Group	Indirect Taxation	Income/ Taxation in %
1,500 Dr/ a month	549 Dr	36,5%
1,500-2,500 Dr/ a month	698 Dr	28-33%
4,500-5,500 Dr/ a month	1,195 Dr	26-21%

Table 10: Taxation on 3 essential goods across 4 European countries¹²²

Country	Sugar	Coffee	Tobacco
Greece	269%	92%	350%
UK	72%	20%	343%
Holland	50%	128%	172%
France	72%	53%	180%

According to the evidence brought to light by the annual report of the Labor Supervision Bureau, in 1920, the number of businesses where violations of protective labor legislation and occasions of bad working conditions were recorded amounted to 4,554 cases. In 1921 up to 50% of workers employed in industry were women and children. An investigation of two thousand working class homes in Athens and Piraeus showed that 81% of them consisted of only one room accommodating some 4-5 people under appalling hygienic conditions. Out of the one thousand houses sampled in Athens, 767 were of one bedroom, 206 of two, and 27 of three; only 125 had a kitchen, and just 165 were considered 'hygienic'. Accordingly in Piraeus, 852 out of one thousand were one-bedroom homes, and only 194 were classified as 'hygienic'¹²³

¹²⁰ Source: Riginos M (1986) p154

¹²¹ Belogiannis N (1998) p353. The writer does not specify the exact date; however, it overall refers to the beginning of the 1930s.

¹²² *ibid.* p349

¹²³ *Ekthesis tou Prosopikou Eitheoriseos Ergasias epi tis Efarmogis ton Ergatikon Nomon: Etos 1920; Ekthesis tou Prosopikou Epitheoriseos Ergasias epi tis Efarmogis ton Ergatikon Nomon: Etos 1921*

Taking into consideration the above data, it would come as no surprise that by 1936 Greece had the highest proportion of deaths from diseases such as typhoid, paratyphoid and malaria in Europe.¹²⁴ An International Labor Office inspector reported in 1926 that “the general condition of the workers is bad... large numbers of employed children aged from 9-11 years old are used for the most harsh types of labor... Those minors, of both sexes, become weaker, their growth stops... and in the end [they] become tubercular.” In 1925 as many as 42% of the workers employed in the tobacco industry died of tuberculosis.¹²⁵ Child labor was indeed widely used throughout the various branches of industry, ranging from a quarter, to sometimes more than half the workforce as the following data show:

Table 11: Distribution of the female workforce in the Piraeus textile factories according to age groups, 1921¹²⁶

Age	No of Workers	% of total	Age	No of Workers	% of total
12	44	2.26	18-22	552	28.32
12-14	149	7.64	22+	448	22.99
15-18	756	38.79	Total	1,949	100.00

Table 12: Male under-aged employment in industry in Athens, 1926¹²⁷

Branches of Industry	No of enter-Prises	Total of Workers	Workers 12-13 Years old	% of total	Workers 14-18 Years old	% of total
Textiles	35	902	78	8.65	163	18.07
Silk	12	295	67	22.71	74	25.08
Carpets	55	201	-	-	-	-
Hat-factories	27	258	12	4.65	56	21.71
Other	88	350	69	24.36	44	14.91
Total	217	2,006	226	11.27	337	16.80

¹²⁴ See League of Nations (1941) p72. In more detail, the death rate per 100,000 inhabitants (1936) for typhoid and paratyphoid fevers was 21.9, tuberculosis 103.9, malaria 75.2, pneumonias 207.4 etc.

¹²⁵ Cited in Seferis K (1975) pp57-58

¹²⁶ Source: Ypourgio Ethnikis Oikonomias, Diethinsi Ergasias, Ektheseis tou prosopikou epitheoriseos ergasias epi tis efarmogis ton ergatikon nomon. Etos 1921, p82

¹²⁷ Source: Geniki Statistiki Ypiresia tis Ellados, *Miniaion Statistikon Deltion*, 1930

Table 13: Female under-aged employment in industry in Athens, 1926¹²⁸

Branches of Industry	No of enter-Prises	Total of Workers	Workers 12-13 Years old	% of total	Workers 14-18 Years old	% of total
Textiles	35	3,977	504	12.67	1,314	33.04
Silk	12	1,986	315	15.86	884	44.51
Carpets	55	5,447	921	16.91	1,796	32.97
Hat-factories	27	777	67	8.62	290	37.32
Other	88	1,838	569	25.23	832	35.82
Total	217	15,015	2,376	15.82	5,116	34.07

In addition to the low wages paid to minors, employing child labor had another great advantage: they were not of an age to unionize, and, perhaps even more crucially, were not allowed to participate in the debates about voting for strike action.¹²⁹ Similarly, the female workforce, which constituted a significant portion of employees in industry, was also underpaid and had a low level of unionization:

Table 14: Participation of women in various occupational categories in % (excluding peasantry and fisheries)¹³⁰

Occupation	1920		1928		1928 (refugees)	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Industry	58,652	20.00%	99,712	23.20%	36,088	31.51%
Transport	1,140	1.46%	914	0.86%	135	0.72%
Commerce	3,263	2.47%	4,958	2.67%	1,383	3.59%
Personal Services	32,682	62.73%	37,377	64.92%	7,808	56.32%
Free Occupations	10,789	17.47%	18,230	21.21%	3,909	30.02%
Public Services	2,332	4.78%	2,421	5.44%	617	12.58%

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Under-aged employment also had an impact in the high levels of drop-out from education. According to the statistics that are published in *Rizospastes* in 1936, out of the 120,622 boys and 112,891 girls (in total 233,513) that entered the 1st grade of primary school during the school year 1926-1927, only 39,108 boys and 24,179 girls (a total of 63,287) made it to the 5th Grade (1931). Therefore some 170,226 abandoned education before even finishing primary school (almost 73% of the total). See *Rizospastes* 6/2/1936

¹³⁰ Source: *Statistiki Epetiris tis Ellados* 1930, p75

Table 15: Average daily wages in various branches of industry, 1928 (min. wage required for the daily nutrition needs: 10,80 Dr)¹³¹

Men

Wine-making	11,50 Dr	Soap-making	7,70-9,60 Dr	Tanning	6,50-9 Dr
Fertilizers	5-8 Dr	Cement	5-8 Dr	Tobacco	10,70-15,60 Dr
Dye works	6-16 Dr	Machines	10 Dr	Paper	10-12 Dr

Women

Wine-making	3-5 Dr	Tile Works	6-7 Dr	Cloths	6,50-10 Dr
Powder	4-8 Dr	Tanning	3-5 Dr	Paper	5-6 Dr
Soap-making	4,60-7 Dr	Cotton	6,90-10,70 Dr	Hats	4-10 Dr

The female workforce was particularly susceptible to exploitation and unlikely to unionize.¹³² A large number of them were widows or orphans, placing them in a disadvantaged bargaining position when it came to demanding better working conditions or better pay:

Table 16: Family status of female industry workers, 1926¹³³

Branches of Industry	Total	Widows	% of total	Married	% of total	With Parents	% of total	No Parents	% of total	No Father	% of total
Textiles	3,997	384	9.63	464	11.67	953	23.96	963	24.21	1,214	30.53
Silk	1,986	322	16.21	93	4.68	658	22.13	187	9.42	726	36.56
Carpets	5,447	1,247	22.89	426	7.82	548	10.06	1,217	22.34	2,009	36.88
Hats	777	60	7.72	45	5.79	276	35.52	81	10.42	315	40.54
Other	1,838	129	4.21	26	1.3	921	33.06	563	24.32	1,189	42.75
Total	15,015	2,141	14.26	1,054	7.02	3,356	22.35	3,011	20.05	5,453	36.32

In addition, as table 16 above indicates, women were mostly employed in personal services, which mainly involved short-term/part time employment. In many other cases female workers would be

¹³¹ Riginos M (1987) p43-55

¹³² Accordingly they were utilized as a 'hanging threat' to prevent workers from unionizing or calling a strike. As a worker reported in an article in *Rizospastes* "if one even talked about a raise in wages, he would be thrown on the streets and immediately be replaced with girls." (See *Rizospastes* 20/2/1927)

¹³³ Source: GSYE, *Miniaion Statistiko Deltion, Ianouarios-Dekembrios 1930*, p58

confined to their living quarters, where very often “the single room of the house was transformed into a workshop, doing laundry, making furniture, mending cloths etc.”¹³⁴

The impact of the 1929 international crisis

Before we conclude this chapter it is important to make a separate reference to the 1929 international economic crisis and how that affected Greece. Its impact on Greek economy was two-fold. Mazower argues that “a striking feature of Greece’s economic experience in the early 1930s was the speed of her domestic recovery”, achieving industrial growth rates that were only “surpassed by the Soviet Union and Japan”.¹³⁵ That was, according to him, mainly because of the quick response of the Greek government and industrialists that entailed the reinforcement of domestic industries and the capitalization of former investments. Particularly impressive was the rise in profits in the textile industry. These rose from 5.1% in 1931 to 13.2% in 1933. This increase in profit was followed by a growth in the labor force that was “unparalleled in any other branch of manufacturing.”¹³⁶ Note that the majority of textile manufacturing was concentrated in Athens and Piraeus, employing mainly a refugee labor force.

On the other hand, the industries that suffered significantly from the international crisis were the export orientated industries, namely the tobacco and currant industries which comprised the bulk of the country’s total exports. Tobacco exports in particular, which were directed to countries that were severely affected by the crisis (such as Germany and the United States), saw their earnings halved. This distinction between the impact of the 1929 international crisis in the domestic and export orientated industries and its implications will also emerge when we deal with the case studies of the growth of working class communism in interwar Greece.

Conclusion

The inter-war period industry and the working class inherited a pre-war legacy that did not seem to favour the growth of a labour movement. The small size of businesses, which in their vast majority

¹³⁴ Svolou M quoted by Riginos M (1997) p235

¹³⁵ Mazower M (1991) p237

¹³⁶ The output of the textile industry had risen by 20% in the period 1932-1933 and some 40% in the period 1932-1934. The rise in the labor force employed in the industry rose some 20% in the same period. (See Mazower M, 1991, p254)

(90%+) employed less than 6 people, and sometimes none, meant that the relationship between employer and employee was rather one of the master and his apprentice, than one of class.¹³⁷ In some businesses the number of apprentices would be as much as a third of the total workforce, as tables 19 and 20 indicate:

Table 17: Male apprentices (under 19 years) in various industries in Athens and Piraeus (1930)¹³⁸

Industry	Workers -19	% of total workers	Apprenti- ces	% of -19	Workers	% of -19	Total
Foods	912	22.82	205	22.48	707	77.52	3,997
Cement	635	31.59	92	26.67	642	73.33	1,092
Engineering	2,242	39.45	1,374	61.28	868	38.72	5,683
Wood	1,706	42.34	747	43.79	959	56.21	4,029
Cloths	534	42.93	305	57.12	229	42.88	1,244
Press	461	31.11	200	43.38	261	56.62	1,482
Total Industries	8,176	31.00	3,198	39.11	4,978	60.89	26,370

Table 18: Female apprentices (under 19 years) in various industries in Athens and Piraeus (1930)¹³⁹

Industry	Workers -19	% of total workers	Apprenti- ces	% of -19	Workers	% of -19	Total
Textiles	3,237	76.69	42	1.30	3,195	98.70	5,590
Cloths	1,071	66.99	504	47.06	567	52.94	1,832
Tobacco	32	6.23	16	50.00	16	50.00	514
Total Industries	5,879	56.09	654	11.12	5,225	88.88	10,482

The vast concentration of under-aged workers (apprentices) was found in businesses employing 1-5 persons (58.88%), whereas their percentage declined significantly with the increasing size of business (22.23% in businesses employing 6-25 people, and 18.88% in businesses employing more than 26 workers).¹⁴⁰ The morphology of Greek industry, dominated by small businesses and workshops, did not favour the development of sharp distinctions in working class consciousness of

¹³⁷ As Andreades notes "In smaller industries...where an almost patriarchal character had been preserved for so long, the worker is rarely inclined to quarrel with an employer that works as hard as hw does and under the same conditions." (See Andreades A, cited in Koumandaraki A, 1995, p47)

¹³⁸ *GSYE, Apografi ton Ergaton kai Ypallilon ton Viomixanikon kai Emporikon epixeiriseon energithisa to Septemvrio tou 1930*

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *GSYE, Apografi ton Viotexnikon kai Viomihanikon Epihiriseon 18/12/1920*

the role between employer/employee, capitalist/worker. Instead, it created expectations of individual mobility.

Personal and patronage relations, resulting from a common village or indeed family background (in combination with the persistence of rural ties of migrant laborers), were often transferred from the rural to the urban centers, becoming another dominant feature of Greek manufacturing and industry. The lack of heavy industry and the persistence of relatively traditionally organized manufacturing industries also prevented the emergence of a large industrial proletariat on the scale of that in the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe. The influx of refugees and rural migrants was absorbed by industry only to a limited extent, forcing them eventually to enter the already crowded service sector, where the reproduction of self-employed occupations and intense competition in the labor market meant an additional obstacle to the growth of organizational activity.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, the inter-war period witnessed an unprecedented growth in industry, followed by a sharp increase in the size of the working class, which doubled between 1920 and 1930. Although in terms of numbers, the amount of workers employed in agriculture was still larger than its industrial and manufacturing counterpart, the capitalist mode of production became, in terms of economic importance, the dominant feature of the Greek economy. As we have seen, during the interwar period, Greece was the most industrialized of the Balkan countries.

The influx of refugees and their settlement in the cities, in combination with the large numbers of migrants from rural Greece, led to the emergence of an urban proletariat, which in the case of the refugees had no ties with land or any form of small property. Living conditions were appalling, protective labour legislation existed only on paper, ever-falling wages made it progressively more difficult for workers to purchase even essential goods (which were extra burdened by taxation), and regressive taxation further reduced the worker's purchasing power. The rural proletariat, attracted by popular beliefs that presented the cities as a 'paradise on earth', were disillusioned when urban life welcomed them with under-employment and harsh conditions.

On the other hand, it should be noted that along with the above developments that favoured the growth of an urban working class and the emergence of a radical consciousness, there were co-existent elements that were working against such a development. First of all, the constant movement of populations lasted, as we have seen above in the report of the Refugee Settlement Committee,

¹⁴¹ Tarrow S G (1967)p35

until the late 1920s, meaning that for many people involvement in local party or trade union politics was not credible since their place of living and work lacked stability.

The persistence of under-aged employment (sometimes amounting to half the workforce) heightened the characteristics described above. The female workforce was also difficult to unionize since either their work was of temporary part/time nature (like personal services, housekeeping etc), or their place of work was confined to their living quarters. In the case of refugee women, their family status (widows and orphans) reduced their bargaining position with their employers when it came to wages and union rights. Thus, despite the rapid growth of the urban working class during the interwar years, its harsh and uncertain conditions hindered the possibilities for organization.

Chapter 3: Aspects and mechanisms of the incorporation of the labor movement

Introduction- (re) constructing the bourgeois order

“If in the turmoil of 1918-1919 a new European world seemed to be in birth by the late 1920s much of the pre-war order appeared to have been substantially restored.”¹⁴²

In his work ‘Recasting Bourgeois Europe’ Charles Maier analyses the politics of containment of the Left and the various paths towards corporatist stability that took place in Western Europe following World War I. These politics of reform and repression aiming to separate the labor movement from socialist and communist influences were also applied in Greece. However, in the Greek case the rationale behind them was somewhat different. In Greece they acquired largely a pre-emptive character, since up to 1918 there was no autonomous, organized or sizable labor movement that might pose a real threat to the social order.

Nevertheless, the politics of incorporating the labor movement into bourgeois society –by which I mean the containment of radicalism, or at least the possibility of this- was very much on the agenda. Subsequently, the various measures that were taken by the government, either in the form of reform or active intervention, were “designed to forestall the danger ‘which has appeared from new theories...of seeing peasants, workers of the fields, and the industrial workers of the towns united in overturning the lawful state’.”¹⁴³ These measures involved both the application of new methods of containment and incorporation -some ‘borrowed’ from the paradigms of western European counterparts- such as a series of anti-communist legislation, and the adaptation of old methods, such as clientage relations. These were intended to combat the spread of subversive doctrines and to facilitate social cohesion.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview and analysis of the frameworks of incorporation of the labor movement. These frameworks were political/ideological and legislative, and involved a range of direct or indirect methods of intervention, including institutional, legislative and paternalist means to complement active oppression. An outline of those aspects and mechanisms of incorporation of the labor movement is crucial in understanding the constraints facing the

¹⁴² Maier Ch (1988) p3

¹⁴³ From a speech of Prime Minister Venizelos, cited in Mazower M (1991) p76

development of its politics. In juxtaposition to those mechanisms of incorporation we will then examine the politics of emancipation, i.e., the various 'deviations' and 'defense' mechanisms that the labor movement, or sections of it, managed to develop during the period concerned, with the aim of understanding why some were more successful than others.

A. A political framework

Ideology

In this section we investigate briefly two aspects of the ideological incorporation of the Greek labor movement. These are the 'national schism' (or '*dichasmos*' as it is frequently referred to in the literature) and the 'anti-communism' that to a great extent replaced the nationalism of late nineteenth and early twentieth century as the national ideology in Greece.

Any understanding of the development of national ideologies in Greece must begin with a recognition of Greece's political as well as economic dependence on major European powers. "The future of Greece will be decided in London not at Athens"¹⁴⁴ were Lloyd George's words to John Stavridi as they appeared in the latter's diary, remarks concerning the developments following the Balkan Wars. However, political dependence was exposed as early as independence, "by the development of three parties each attached to one of the country's three international patrons. In this way, until the Crimean war, the English, French, and Russian ambassadors unofficially presided over parties led domestically by Mavrogordatos, Kollettis, and Metaxas respectively."¹⁴⁵ The personal manifestation of foreign political dependency came with the import of the Monarchy.¹⁴⁶

The construction of a Greek national identity raised the problem of legitimacy. As Holden notes, "when Greece was reborn in 1832 in the form of a modern nation-state there was, in consequence, a fundamental ambiguity about her entire national character."¹⁴⁷ The process of establishing a national

¹⁴⁴ Smith M L (1973) pp15-16

¹⁴⁵ Campbell J & Sherrard P (1968) p89

¹⁴⁶ King Otto was brought from Bavaria (1834); King George who followed was brought from Denmark (1863). For the processes of selection, and the involvement of the Great Powers see Mavrogordatos J (1931) pp33-39 & 54-58

¹⁴⁷ Holden D (1972) p28; for the question surrounding the nation-building process in Greece see also Toynbee A (1922). Holden further notes characteristically: "Typical of this is the inspissated confusion that still surrounds the name of Greece. For who was it that bestowed this title upon the modern nation-state, and who now thinks of its inhabitants as Greeks? Not, I fear, the Greeks. They may well once have had a word for everything, as the antique legend says, but 'Greece' and 'Greeks' have rarely figured in their

identity was impeded by intense localism at the bottom and foreign intervention and the import of authority at the top of the newly-born Greek State. The quest for legitimacy was eventually manifested in the ideology of *Megaloideatimos* (Great Idea)¹⁴⁸. This was a myth of continuity between ancient Greece, the Byzantine Empire and the Modern Greek state that involved a vision of redeeming the ‘unredeemed’ Greeks of the Ottoman Empire by bringing them within the confines of a single Greek state. In a speech made before the constituent assembly in 1844, Kolletis argued that Greece was not confined to the existing borders of the Kingdom, but to “any land associated with Greek history or the Greek race”.¹⁴⁹

In this view, the Greek nation is defined in terms of ‘historical roots’ as well as race.¹⁵⁰ In the 1864 constitution, the new ideology found symbolic expression in the new title given to the new King George I – ‘King of the Hellenes’ as opposed to ‘King of Greeks’. ‘National identity’ and ‘national purpose’ were established (at least at the level of the elite) only to be fundamentally challenged with the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922.¹⁵¹

vocabulary. Officially, Greeks call their modern state *Hellas*, after the classical world of 2,000 years ago, and by the same token they are officially known as Hellenes, which implies descent from their illustrious classical forefathers. But at the same time, colloquially, they call themselves *Romios*, derived from *Rum*, or Rome, and signifying that they are citizens of the eastern Roman Empire whose capital was Constantinople – in short, that they are really the children of Byzantium. ‘Greece’, on the other hand, is derived from the Latin *Graecia*, the province of the Western Roman Empire which stretched south of Mount Olympus through the peninsula of Attica and the Peloponnese. Its international use to describe the sovereign state that currently occupies that territory is merely a reflection of the fact that ‘Greece’ in this modern sense is literally a western invention.” (Holden D, 1972, p29). For a Marxist account see Rousos P (1955) pp175-84

¹⁴⁸ It worth mentioning at this point the work by Hobsbawm ‘Inventing Traditions’, where the author touches upon the importance of ‘manufacturing’ traditions and symbols in any nation-building process. He mentions three types of ‘invented traditions, of which two, are of most relevance to us: a) “those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities”, and b) “those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority.” (Hobsbawm E, 1983, p9)

¹⁴⁹ Cited in Clogg R (1980) p76

¹⁵⁰ Smith wrote that “the pre-Christian history of Hellenism in Asia Minor helped to form the modern Greek view of the geographical and cultural boundaries of Hellenism; it was in the Greek’s view of his country destiny.” (Smith M L, 1973, p23) At the same time, in the speech cited, Constantinople, the former capital of the Byzantine Empire, is portrayed as the ‘real’ capital of the ‘Greek nation’.

¹⁵¹ Legg notes: “The kingdom had been created relatively rapidly; its boundaries had been marked within the living memory of many of its citizens. This newness limited the extent of feeling for the state.” (Legg R C, 1969, p86)

The 'National Schism'

“And so the Greek people are divided from now on into...friends of the Greek people and...enemies of the Greek people. Friends of the Greek people are, needless to say, the Venizelists. Enemies of the people are the rest of the Greek citizens!”¹⁵²

The 'national schism' constituted the great political division of the inter-war period between the supporters of Eleftherios Venizelos, leader of the Liberal Party and main advocate of Parliamentarism, and the Anti-Venizelists, supporters of the Monarchy and its head, King Constantine.¹⁵³ The schism originated from the conflict between the anglophile Venizelos and the germanophile King over the issue of Greece's attitude towards the 1914-1918 War. The former was committed to Greece's entry into the war on the side of the Entente, while the latter insisted on neutrality.¹⁵⁴

Views of the character of this schism have varied. The majority of historians, such as Veremis and Markezinis, have generally portrayed the schism as a struggle between competing alliances of civilian and military fractions for dominance over the state apparatus, a conflict that took place mainly at elite level between the royalists and the republican supporters of Venizelos.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, Mavrogordatos has suggested that at the elite level the 'schism' had deeper roots that expressed a number of fundamental social cleavages, thus introducing the element of mass politics into the debate.¹⁵⁶ He extended the argument from one that focused on a mere 'clash of personalities' into one involving a wider 'clash of ideologies'. It was a battle between two visions of society: the one advocated by a newly born entrepreneurial bourgeoisie led by Venizelos and the Liberal Party, upheld a 'pragmatic irredentism' that involved a program for state expansion and industrialization. The other, advocated by the old established 'state apparatus' and the supporters of

¹⁵² An anti-Venizelist article that portrays the dynamics of the national schism in dividing people into 'friends' and 'enemies' of the 'nation', according to ones affiliation to one or the other opposing camps. *Chronos* 30/6/1923

¹⁵³ E Venizelos (1864-1936) was born in Crete and his initial steps in politics revolved around his contribution to the local struggle for independence against foreign occupation. He entered the prime ministerial office for the first time in October 1910 and played a crucial role in the making of Greek politics and society until his death. For more information on his personality and politics see Vournas T (2001) pp7-29

¹⁵⁴ Mouzelis N (1986) p94; *Istorika*, 12/12/2000, p5

¹⁵⁵ Veremis T (1977), Veremis T (1997); for a typical example of historiography on the issue see also Markezinis S B (1968)

¹⁵⁶ Mavrogordatos G (1983)

the Monarchy, upheld a vision of Greece that consisted of a combination of a 'Byzantine romanticism' and a 'modern Greek irredentism' directed by a 'military-bureaucratic' regime with the King at its head.¹⁵⁷ "The struggle therefore explicitly involved totally conflicting *conceptions* of the future of the Greek nation, state, and society, 'a fundamental difference of conceptions regarding the nature of the Constitution and the fortune of the Race,...*a difference between two political worlds!*'."¹⁵⁸

The 'national schism', however, was also marked by clear geographical boundaries and assumed a regional character: the territories of the pre-1912 Kingdom of Greece constituted the electoral strongholds of Anti-Venizelist and royalist support, whereas the New Provinces of Northern Greece, the islands, as well as the cities of Piraeus and Thessaloniki, supported the Venizelist block.¹⁵⁹

Table 19: Area Distribution of Electoral Gains (5 March 1933)¹⁶⁰

Category of District	Seats at Stake	Seats won by Anti-Venizelism	Seats won by Venizelism	Seats won by The Agrarian Party
"Narrow" (Old Greece)	107	97	8	2
"Wide" (New Lands)	79	13	66	-
Athens	21	20	1	-
Piraeus	10	-	10	-
Thessaloniki	18	-	18	-
Jews	2	2	-	-
Moslems	4	-	4	-
Privileged Districts	7	4	3	-
Total	248	136	110	2

The impact of the 'national schism' on the consciousness and the formation of the views, passions and allegiances of ordinary people has been extensively documented in an endless anthology of a variety of sources ranging from press reports, speeches and personal accounts to poems and songs.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. pp60, 127, 128, 131. Similar views are put forward by Maximos, who writes on the 'National Schism': "Although this clash was initiated on matters of foreign policy, it became an internal struggle...When later on the masses aligned themselves with the old parties, with the Royals at the head, versus the liberals, the political confrontation became a class one. The clash of the two bourgeois camps developed into a clash of classes whereby the oppressed strata of society lifted the anti-Venizelist banner as a symbol of their struggle against capital. That explains why anti-Venizelism often appeared with anti-capitalist feelings..." (Maximos S, 1975, pp13 &15)

¹⁵⁸ Papandreou G (1941) p81, quoted in Mavrogordatos G (1983) p127-128. Italics in the original.

¹⁵⁹ The geographical division was mainly due to the particular settlement of the refugees in the Northern Provinces and the industrial centers, who overwhelmingly supported Venizelos –the reasons of which we will examine in more detail in a later chapter.

¹⁶⁰ Source: Mavrogordatos G T (1983) p314

Opposing views of Venizelos are presented below.¹⁶¹ The first is an appeal sent to the exiled Venizelos on November 14, 1923, to return and ‘save the country’ as he had in the past:

“Our Father,

Away from us for so long, you haven’t seen with your own eyes the people’s longing. You haven’t heard their deep repentance for the bitter cup of ingratitude they gave to you on that cursed day...Come, father. And if the eternal mob later votes you down again, and ingratitude shouts ‘Crucify, crucify Him!’ don’t forget that this is the fate of the great.”¹⁶²

A Marxist writer of the time remarked scathingly upon the return of Venizelos in 1928: “Only an exceptionally demagogic personality could make it simultaneously credible, to workers and bourgeois, to capitalists and peasants, to republicans and monarchists, that he is in a position to satisfy all, to better the condition of all. Only a wizard could play such a role with success and this under certain conditions, objective and subjective.” The writer continued that: “Since the situation was unavoidably leading to a generalized crisis of Parliament, and since this crisis carried with it all parliamentary parties, the only solution for both party and Parliament to be saved was Venizelos, as a model, as leader, fist for the bourgeois, honest administrator for the people, pro-labor for the working masses, a ‘father’ to the refugees, conservative for the conservatives, leftist for the leftists, conciliator for the conciliators, intransigent for the intransigents.”¹⁶³

To his supporters Venizelos was a Father and savior of the Nation, and he was frequently hailed as a hero, liberator, messiah, prophet. To his opponents he was a fraud; an ‘evil force’ against which only the monarchy could stand. As with the case of the Venizelist cult, the examples of extreme admiration are numerous. The views of the Reservists of Peloponnesus are representative. In 1916 the Reservists wrote to

“...Express to their god-send King [Constantine] and sweet Father limitless devotion, and declare that they are ready to sacrifice themselves to the last for the realization of the national ideals, and the defense of His laurel-growing Throne. To You the living image of the nation,

¹⁶¹ See also a quite representative set of images of the ‘National Schism’ in Appendix 3.

¹⁶² Mavrogordatos G (1983) p56. For more examples on the continuing ‘adoration’ of Venizelos by his followers in 1935-36, see Birtles B (1938) pp213-215

¹⁶³ Maximos S (1975) p147

to you the Ruler agent and executor of the will of the state, to you the King of Kings, in whom we firmly believe the national ideals and the majesty of the fatherland are concentrated...”¹⁶⁴

The opposing personified manifestations of the ‘National Schism’, Venizelos and King Constantine, seem to have acquired a symbolic character, expressing the social cleavages of the ‘masses’, who sought to find a symbol to concentrate their sentiments of anger and disappointment generated by their conditions of living, as well as hope for a better future. As the prominent (later pro-monarchist) politician P Kanellopoulos wrote in article to *Acropolis* in 1935: “when the peoples lack ideals, they turn to symbols.”¹⁶⁵

The ‘national schism’ led to the emergence of strong ideological passions and political allegiances of an almost religious character, which operated as a powerful conservative mechanism in inter-war Greece, contributing significantly to the delay of the urban and rural labor movement’s entrance into active politics. Compared to the peasant movements that were growing in neighboring countries at the same period, such as in the Bulgarian case under the leadership of Stambuliiski, the Greek proletariat seemed ideologically trapped in an ‘intra-bourgeois’ conflict that had politically little to do with the advancement of their own ‘class’ interests. This of course raises the question why Greek workers remained ideologically contained. Elefantis argues that the dominant bipolar politics could not be overcome overnight, especially in view of the ‘defense’ mechanisms, such as repression, state controlled trade unionism and anticommunism that the bourgeoisie had developed and deployed from quite early on.¹⁶⁶

For Elefantis, the ideology of communism appeared at a time when the ‘old ideologies’ that were manifested in the Schism still dominated popular consciousness. It was only in the 1930s when this “polarization withered away”.¹⁶⁷ Following the 1922 Asia Minor Disaster, however, there appeared to be a change in what characterized and upheld power relations. Accordingly, Charalambis notes

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Paparregopoulos K (1932) p234

¹⁶⁵ And the article continues: “Those in favor of the Monarchy say that it will ensure two great goods: 1) our national unity and 2) political stability. However, if national unity of a people is in need of a lie in order to maintain itself, its existence is superfluous...It is a symptom of great slavishness for a people to declare that in order to stand up to its national effort it is in need of bowing in front of even the last of the servants of an arbitrary king.” (cited in Kalergis A, 1965, pp56-7)

¹⁶⁶ A comparison could perhaps be drawn with the Irish Free State where languages and myths of dominant parties played a crucial role over the formation of the state.

¹⁶⁷ Elefantis A G (1976) p345

that “Populism and the cohesive role of the charismatic leader did produce, to an extent, social discipline and the acceptance of the existing power relations. However, after 1922, it is not sufficient. Soon, anti-communism becomes the leading force of reproduction of power relations.”¹⁶⁸

Anti-communism replaces nationalist irredentism as the national ideology

The First World War transformed the Greek political-ideological landscape in two ways. In the first place, it gave birth to the royalist-republican/Anti-Venizelist-Venizelist schism, which proved the dominant and overpowering feature of Greek inter-war politics. At the same time, it signaled the bankruptcy of a nationalist-irredentist ideology that had been a dominating feature of political elite mentality since the Independence War of 1821. Therefore, the political impact of the 1922 Asia-Minor catastrophe,¹⁶⁹ which put an end to the ‘*Megali Idea*’, i.e. the dream of creating a Greater Greece in the Near East, should not be underestimated:

“The war ended, the ‘Disaster’ had abruptly and rudely closed the first century of modern Greek independence. The second century was beginning in anarchy and discontinuity. Greece had suddenly found herself without a form of government, without a constitution, without institutions or state organizations, without ideologies, because all had been bankrupted in the conscience of the nation.”¹⁷⁰

The Asia Minor catastrophe put an end to the largest Greek community outside the realm, signified the end of Greek irredentism and the beginning of a parochial signification of Greek identity. The element of continuity had to be re-established, leading to the emergence of an “exclusive relationship with antiquity”, which “became one of the two legitimizing elements of ethnicity”.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Charalambis D (1989) pp111-112

¹⁶⁹ This refers to the collapse of the Asia Minor front, and the subsequent wave of refugees.

¹⁷⁰ Theotokas G, cited in Doulis T (1977) p93. Accordingly, as Katifores wrote: “The great danger that the state and the bourgeoisie in Greece faced in the years 1922-23 originated from the negative, anarchic one would say, phenomena of social disobedience (mutinies etc). Initially the state perceived communism as another form of disobedience...Its defense was against the collapse of the traditional structures that left behind them a social and ideological vacuum... We observe throughout the period a hostility in the behavior of the authorities, clearly counter-revolutionary, without, however, a revolution. Only the panic felt by the leadership of Greek society facing the collapse of the structures of *Megali Idea* can explain this.” (See Katifores G, 1975, p12)

¹⁷¹ Veremis T (1995) p41

This continuity took the form of official ideology during the Metaxas Dictatorship (from August 4th, 1936). That regime defined itself as the “Third Civilization”, succeeding the Classical and Byzantine traditions and combining elements of both.¹⁷²

As for the ‘external’ enemies of the state, which previously included neighboring states with Greek ethnic minorities or majorities, these were progressively replaced by the ‘enemy within’. This involved a force that had only recently entered the political arena: the Greek Communist Party (KKE). This partly reflected the new meaning and significance acquired by the notion of ‘Greekness’, a notion that involved the forming of a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, whereby the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ were defined in juxtaposition to each other:

“...The powerful material and ideational processes of nation-building have set the parameters of political legitimacy within the modern Greek nation-state. One aspect of this has been the rise to prominence of ‘Greekness’ in the hierarchy of identities shared and exchanged among the population. Being ‘Greek’ has become almost a pre-requisite to full participation in the [‘fictive’] community of the nation-state and access to the privileges accorded to such ‘legitimate’ citizens.”¹⁷³

In 1924 the Comintern and the Balkan Communist Federation put forward a policy known as the ‘Macedonian Question’. This advocated the establishment of an autonomous Macedonia, thus making the KKE a target of much abuse by the state. A conspiracy to alienate territory from the national body did not conform to the newly established definition of ‘Greekness’.¹⁷⁴ Apostolakou suggested that “to counter the internationalistic and egalitarian rhetoric of the KKE, the state employed the notion of ‘Greek identity’, which was endowed with the heroic and essentially unique attributes of the race, or the national community. The juxtaposition of this national archetype to

¹⁷² Sarandis C (1993) p161; the following extract is indicative of how the ideologues of Metaxas’ 3rd Civilization viewed ‘national continuity’: “The Nation constitutes...a conscious historical reality... It is not the instant product of just the present generation, but the product of historical development, the work of a long series of generations.” Cited in Alivizatos N (1983) p122. On the other hand, the Communist Party rejected such transcendental notions of nationhood as a ‘sovunist’, ‘utopian’ and ‘adventurist’ delirium. (cited in Rousos P, 1955, pp30-31)

¹⁷³ Karakasidou A (1993) p457. Accordingly national identity became a primary objective of school education. Hence, in 1927 the Ministry of Education, through a circular, recommended the “introduction of lectures against communism, and intensification of work towards the cultivation of nationalist values among the pupils.” (see *Rizospastes* 23/3/1927)

¹⁷⁴ On the ‘Macedonian Question’, the KKE and its relationship with the Comintern and the Communist Balkan Federation we will elaborate further on a later Chapter.

communist ideologisms –such as ‘class struggle’ and ‘proletarian solidarity’- resulted in the construction of contending *public* identities. Communists were to be seen as the ‘others’ in Greek society.”¹⁷⁵

Communist identity, founded on European paradigms such as the 1917 October Revolution in Russia and the 1918-1923 insurrections of the working class in Germany, triggered numerous pronouncements from across the political and social spectrum seeking to exorcise this identity by denying the existence of any reasons for dissent or unrest. As I Nafpliotis explained:

“Ideas which evolved in Northern countries, under different social conditions, different manners and customs, on a different land and under a different sky, cannot easily prevail in a country which lives and breaths within a unique environment and whose people have century-old roots and traditions that constitute the foundation of their national, political and social substance.”¹⁷⁶

In a similar tone, A Makris, a merchants’ association delegate, argued in his speech at the First All-Merchant Conference in Piraeus in 1924 that:

“...no distinction whatsoever exists between the professional, merchant, industrialist and laboring classes. The Greek workers are not of the same nature as their European counterparts; they have nothing to do with the workers in London who have only one shirt and sleep in the streets.”¹⁷⁷

This notion of communism as being anti-national extended the widespread ‘stigma’ that had been attributed in the past against socialists (such as the Social Democratic Party in the Kaisers’ Germany) of going against ‘national interest’. Of course the extent to which the hegemony of the nationalistic state ideology was indeed threatened by the new discourse of class struggle and the internationalistic world-view introduced to the Greek political scene by the Socialist Workers’ Party

¹⁷⁵ Apostolakou L (1997) p417. Saarela notes on the implications of the nation-building process for the newly-formed communist movements: “In these new nation states anti-communism often became an important theme in the creation of national identity...Communism was a more important issue in national politics than the size and status of...[national] communism would otherwise justify.” ¹⁷⁵ The author refers to the Finnish experience. In Saarela T (1998) pp21-2

¹⁷⁶ Nafpliotis I (1923) p45

¹⁷⁷ Commemorative Album of the First All-Merchants Conference in Piraeus (1924) p125

of Greece founded in 1918 and precursor to Communist Party of Greece, is something that remains to be examined in later sections of this study. However, it is perhaps indicative that in many cases the authorities considered communism to be a ‘disease’ that had to be ‘contained’.¹⁷⁸

The image of the communist as a conspirator, a ‘foreign agent’, who was working on a “fully developed communist plan” was further enhanced by the press, which ‘discovered’ communist conspiracies behind almost every workers’ action.¹⁷⁹ *Rizospastes* responded to the coverage of the Communist Party through the columns of the ‘bourgeois’ press:

“Who are these communists anyway? For whatever happens they are always responsible. If there is no rain: it is their fault. Someone committed suicide: it must have been the finger of Moscow. A lady of the aristocracy has stomach-ache: the communists must have made a deal with a hell demon...”¹⁸⁰

Of course these developments were not exclusive to Greece. Numerous such examples can be drawn from the European experience, from the fiery articles in the French Press revealing a so-called communist conspiracy to overthrow the government in October 1928, to blaming the communists for the arson of the Reichstag in February 1933.¹⁸¹

To conclude, in this section we have seen the ideological framework that emerged from the events of World War I and the Asia Minor disaster. The political world was dominated by the ‘National Schism’ between two bourgeois parties. This managed to confine within its ideological boundaries the peasantry as well as the growing, but still numerically weak, urban proletariat. The state ideology had to re-invent itself after the bankruptcy of the nationalist irredentism that came with the collapse of the vision for a ‘Greater Greece’. The subsequent notion of Greek identity sought to restore the sense of continuity, but was challenged by a new political force: the Communist Party.¹⁸² The

¹⁷⁸ As in a report of the Commissioner of the Regular Admiralty Court, 27/3/1929, concerning the ‘Draft on the Security of the Social Regime’ (on the debate for the final version of the anti-communist law of *Idionymon* that was voted on Parliament the same year). In K Zavitsianos Archive, File1, ELIA

¹⁷⁹ See for example the coverage of the Tobacco Workers’ strike (on wages) in Salonica that ended in bloodshed, whereby the press reported an ‘attack’ of the demonstrators against the police as a ‘part of a communist plot’. *Rizospastes* 17/2/1927

¹⁸⁰ *Rizospastes* 4/4/1927

¹⁸¹ *La Gazette* 6/10/1928, cited in *Rizospastes* 13/10/1928

¹⁸² On the importance of ‘continuity’ as a factor of state ideology and stability see Hobsbawm E (1990)

following section will examine the various methods and mechanisms of control and incorporation of the growing labor movement, on both trade-union, and the political levels.

Parties, Elections and Clientist Networks

The establishment of a parliamentary system based on universal male suffrage became reality long before it did in countries with well established parliamentary representative systems, such as Great Britain. As early as 1843 there was universal male suffrage with a few exceptions. The 1864 Constitution effectively established the constitutional guarantees for the unrestricted exercise of political rights to all members of the male population.¹⁸³

However, the establishment of a parliamentary representative system in Greece based on universal male suffrage was primarily a manifestation and a mechanism of domination. It did not arise as a product of social struggle from below. Rather it was imposed by the local elite from above in order to maintain their political and social dominance, by securing their presence in the apparatus and power-structure of the newly-established Greek State.¹⁸⁴

The initial attempts in the 1830s to create a central rationalized form of authoritative power by Kapodestrias and King Otto were met with fierce opposition from the local elites: universal male suffrage was the solution that allowed power to remain dispersed in the peripheries rather than concentrated in the centre. The form of governance did not, therefore, arise as an attempt to balance contradictory social forces, or as a result of social struggles between oppressors and oppressed; it was merely the outcome of a dispute that took place in the higher strata of society, a 'revolution' from above.

Political and social expression in Greece was manifested in the institutionalization of social collectivity, for example through universal suffrage and constitutional parliamentary representation. However, this institutional framework remained superficial as far as the real dimensions for the establishment of social cohesion were concerned: these existed outside institutions. Institutions, as

¹⁸³ See Petrides P (1984); Alivizatos N (1981)

¹⁸⁴ According to Weiner "only when politics becomes increasingly legislative in character, and when elections and universal suffrage is introduced, do numbers, and consequently organizational numbers, begin to count." (Weiner M, 1962, p16) "However", Legg suggests, "the Greek experience suggests that under certain conditions, if universal suffrage is introduced before social and economic differentiation is far advanced, organization and numbers may still not be crucial. In Greece, the existing clientage structures simply accommodated universal suffrage; this in turn inhibited large-scale interest politics..." (Legg K R, 1969, p104)

networks of guarantees, typically organized the framework of individual and social communication. But in reality and practice they constituted secondary elements, since they merely functioned as a legitimizing framework that allowed the mechanisms of domination through the clientage system to operate.¹⁸⁵

In a brief overview of the characteristics of the clientage networks in Greece, the following should be mentioned. Clientage networks were to a large extent dependent on intense localism and an endemic insecurity that derived from the existence of (or mere perception of¹⁸⁶) economic scarcity.¹⁸⁷ Both of these were related to material factors: the level of development and particularly the dominance of the rural economy, and the lack of communication networks and infrastructure.

In addition, the institutional framework contributed to establish the legitimacy of the state, and the social acceptance of that legitimacy took place at the level of inter-personal relationships and individual rationality. A powerful individualism emerged as a result. This individualism did not arise as a product of capitalist relations of the market-system, but due to the continuous struggle for the achievement of a personal relationship with the patron at the expense of others, for the grant of favours or prerogatives. Under these conditions, the meaning of social solidarity outside the boundaries of the family as a social value remained almost unknown, because even when the appropriate conditions emerged for the collective interest to be pursued, the inter-personal outweighed the objective interest.¹⁸⁸ The latter, applied to the labour movement, constitutes for many historians a key explanatory factor, for what they perceive as the lack of union density in Greece. Comparatively, however, the Greek case was not that much different from its western counterparts.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Clientage was to a large extent a heritage of the "corporate tradition of the Ottoman Empire", where it was customary for the local notable to mediate on behalf of his fellow citizens with the authorities. (Petropoulos J A, 1968, p53)

¹⁸⁶ This refers to the sort of 'geographical determinism' mentioned by Sanders I T (1962) p12

¹⁸⁷ Subsistence agriculture in combination with the inconsistent and incomplete character of land reforms and the frequent crises in demand (as we have seen in the section that dealt with the peasantry), resulting to immigration or migration are some examples of insecurities an average peasant would endure.

¹⁸⁸ It should be mentioned at this point that the 'individualistic' character of the Greek is perhaps quite frequently over-emphasized in the literature (for example Legg K R, 1969; Clogg A, 1979; Jecchinis C, 1984, etc). To what extent, however, could that characterization be applied as a general explanatory categorization for the Greek worker, is somewhat problematic. Since, if that was the case, how could acts of workers' solidarity, which existed in many forms and instances, be explained? For such examples see *Rizospastes* 17/2/1927, 2/3/1927, 8/5/1927; *Ergatika Dikaia* 6/10/1919 etc.

¹⁸⁹ Such writers would include, for example, Fakiolas R E, 1978; Campbell J & Sherrard P, 1968; Jecchinis C, 1984; etc. For a comparative survey of trade-union density levels in a number of countries see Appendix 4.

Furthermore, loyalties rarely lay with central institutions. The family's role as the focal point for loyalty was critical. Petropoulos mentions that "though its role varied from place to place according to custom, the family constituted not merely the basic social unit, but the fundamental economic and political unit as well."¹⁹⁰ Considering the centrality of the family in the processes of social life, it should come as no surprise that politics was, to an extent, a tool for furthering the family interest, whereby "the individual uses politics, either as a politician or as a voter, for family advantage".¹⁹¹

Finally, the parochial attitudes towards the state or central authorities were further enhanced by the piecemeal acquisition of new territories, which under the sectionalist politics favoured by the Ottoman State, were already used to a great degree of autonomy and a lack of uniform administration.

Although, there is always a danger of underestimating the existence and significance of 'national' structures by focusing exclusively on clientage networks,¹⁹² it nevertheless seems to be the case that localism and politics at the local and regional levels played the most crucial role in the formation of national politics and party allegiances. Although, the historical experiences and social structures varied from area to area,¹⁹³ the rise, establishment and institutionalization of local fractions seem to have dominated politics at the local level. This was by no means a characteristic restricted to rural society; it extended in lesser forms to provincial towns and even large cities, especially through the influx of rural migrant labour who largely became agents of this form of political organization in the urban centres.

Before the 'National Schism', factions were largely founded either on personal ties or instrumental patron-client relations, or on existing social divisions formed across locality and traditional,

¹⁹⁰ Petropoulos J A (1968) p56. Pizaniias mentioned: "The family is simultaneously the means and the end. Consequently every projection and identification...is realized within an extremely closed social field...Given that the location of the workplace is quite often that of residence, relations amongst workers are quite close and more importantly, they are not differentiated...The narrow social surroundings and the concomitantly confined spiritual horizon facilitate the re-discovery of spiritual tools with which they regard themselves...This attitude is shaped by the belief in the socially powerful, and indifference to one's own social weakness." (See Pizaniias P, 1993, p146-7)

¹⁹¹ Legg K R (1969) p33 He later on goes further to suggest that in Greece "family loyalty outweighs public feeling; it is commonly accepted that political office will be used to advance family or clientage interests. (ibid.p37)

¹⁹² Such as, for example, in the case of Legg K R (1969);Charalambis D (1989) and others

¹⁹³ In the area that occupied the pre-1912 Kingdom of Greece (or 'Old Greece' as sometimes it is referred in relation to the 'New Lands' that were annexed during the Balkan Wars and World War I) local fractions were more dominant and deeply-rooted in the running of local politics. On the other hand, their political influence in the 'New Lands' were less tight, mainly due to the effects of war and the large movements of populations.

ideological, party or ethnic lines.¹⁹⁴ The ‘National Schism’, however, provided a political framework that forced local factions into a bipolarity, illustrated by the struggle of those who supported the Venizelists against the Anti-Venizelists.

The nature and form of the clientage network (voter-local/provincial patron-national party) has been extensively debated. Mouzelis, for example argues that “local oligarchic patrons had such a degree of control over the voters, and enjoyed such an autonomy vis-à-vis the national party leaders, that on the national level the various parties were nothing more than extremely loose coalitions of provincial political barons.”¹⁹⁵ However, although there is no doubt about the influence of local patrons on the voter as well as the party policy-making machine, assuming that national party composition and structure was no more than a mere reproduction of local politics on a macro-level would be an oversimplification.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the conclusion that we can extract from both positions is that the existence of an advanced clientistic network contributed significantly to the ‘control’ of voters and party allegiances, reinforcing the ‘National Schism’ at the level of local politics.

Another crucial characteristic of party allegiances organized on a patron-client or vertical basis is that they transcend class barriers or horizontal divisions. Although it has been argued that clientage relationships are themselves a form of exploitative structure and should be therefore seen as class relationships,¹⁹⁷ “political conflict along clientistic, ‘vertical’ lines often cuts across and inhibits the political organization of the dominated classes (e.g. the peasantry) along ‘horizontal’, class lines”¹⁹⁸. A prominent Anti-Venizelist, D Gounares presented a view in parliament that could be seen as an ideological defence of clientist politics and its allegedly ‘egalitarian’ nature:

“... The sum, the union, the harmonious connection of the interests of all individuals, whose *individual* promotion, development, and betterment is and should be object of the occupation

¹⁹⁴ For examples on local factions see Kordatos G K (1960) pp988-995

¹⁹⁵ Mouzelis N (1978) p487

¹⁹⁶ As Mavrogordatos suggests: “To begin with, this aspect was of distinctly secondary importance on the national level. Not that patron-client sets could not exist within a parliamentary party: both the leader and prominent party figures might have a number of deputies. However, insofar as a party could be characterized as simply clientistic on the national level, it would probably consist of a *horizontal* alliance of patrons...rather than a *vertical* patron-client set.” Mavrogordatos G (1983) p78

¹⁹⁷ On that position see Causi L L (1975)

¹⁹⁸ Mouzelis N (1978) p475

of us all, constitute the interest of the people. Beyond this, there are only empty phrases, useful for the deception of the simple-minded.”¹⁹⁹

The Press of the time went even further, questioning the ‘Greekness’ of parties organized around class interests:

“In Greece there is a peculiar constitution both of the individuals and of the groups. Above the economic interests which may create an identity, one places the esteem of persons, the Greek tradition, the belief in the person as a strong leader, the local origin, the good management of the country by a party. The industrialists have common economic interests, but do not constitute one party. They place themselves politically according to the individual temperament of each.”²⁰⁰

The party system in Greece, organized along clientistic lines had a twofold function working in a dialectical manner: clientage relationships worked as an agent of political and ideological control and incorporation of the ‘exploited’ as well as a medium between the state ideology and world-view and the citizen. Organization along class lines therefore was inhibited within the existing ideological and political-structural framework. Accordingly, labor demands were also channeled through such networks. The following letter to the Deputy Minister of Labor on 17/11/1936 is quite enlightening about the manner in which the patron-client relationship worked in terms of putting forward labor demands:

“Dear Minister,

We are honored to submit to you a list with the names of the unemployed members of our Union, and we plead, given that we recognize in your person our sole patron, that you

¹⁹⁹ Chamber, May 22nd, 1906; Cited in Mallos I H (1926) p93. The view that the function of a national party was to transcend rather to represent class interests was not only one advocated by the Anti-Venizelists. Sofoules, a prominent Venizelist stated in 1925: “...neither the antagonism of classes, nor the economic conflicts, nor other programmatic differences constitute the basis of the electoral struggle here [in Greece]...The parties are distinguished from each other only by virtue of the leader’s personal character and temperament.” (Fourth Constituent, June 22nd, 1925, p669)

²⁰⁰ *Neos Kosmos*, July 13th, 1934

mediate [on our behalf] so that our national Government ensures that our unemployed Union members are granted the sum given to unemployed of other Unions.”²⁰¹

The clientage framework of power relationships did not provide platforms for confrontation, but consolidation. Accordingly, it is indicative that following the disagreement that arose between the General Confederation of Labor’s leadership and Venizelos, the former attributed the ‘ruptures’ between the two to an “unfortunate incident”, which left the State authorities with the “impression that the representatives of the Confederation intended to question its honesty and good will, which never crossed their minds.”²⁰²

Table 20: Electoral results in the interwar period (1926-1936)²⁰³

Party/Election	1926	1928	1932	1933	1935	1936
Venizelists	48,59%	62,74%	47,1%	46,32%	Abstained	43,86%
Anti-Venizelists	41,11%	33%	39,46%	59,22%	65,04%	48,14%
Agrarian Party	4,97%	1,68%	6,17%	1,77%	Abstained	1,02%
Other Left	0,12%	-	0,07%	-	-	0,09%
Communists	4,34%	1,41%	4,97%	4,64%	9,59%	5,76%

Elections became another means of political dominance over the working class. As we saw earlier, universal male suffrage was granted in 1864, but it was not a product of long-term struggles for suffrage as it was in most European countries of the industrialized west. In inter-war Greece, elections were conducted mainly under two systems: the ‘narrow-wide plurality system’ (1923, 1928 and 1933), and proportional representation (1926, 1932 and 1936), with minor modifications each

²⁰¹ This letter was sent during the Dictatorship, however, the attitude of reformist labor leaders was not that different in the period prior to Metaxas’ coming to power. Letter of the Union of Employees for confirming and receiving municipal and port taxes in Piraeus to A Dimitratos, Deputy Minister of Labor, 17/11/1936, in Aristides Dimitratos Archive, File1, ELIA

²⁰² Letter of the Greek General Confederation of Labor (GSEE) to Venizelos, 15/4/1930, in A Dimitratos Archive, File10, ELIA

²⁰³ Source: Elefantis A G (1999) pp430-431. Note that the Venizelists constituted a coalition of up to 10 different parties in various periods, whereas the respective number of parties comprising the Anti-Venizelist coalition amounted to 10, varying from period to period.

time. Regarding the constant change and alternations of the electoral system, Mavrogordatos writes that “in sharp contrast to the previous stability of the electoral system...the interwar period was an era of constant change and deliberate “electoral engineering”, which was inaugurated by Venizelism in 1923 –in reaction to the traumatic electoral defeat of 1920.”²⁰⁴

Table 21: Changes in electoral systems and winners of electoral battles (1923-1936)²⁰⁵

Election	Electoral System	Winner
1923	Narrow-Wide	Venizelists
1926	Proportional Representation	Venizelists
1928	Narrow-Wide	Venizelists
1932	Proportional Representation	Venizelists
1933	Narrow-Wide	Anti-Venizelists
1936	Proportional Representation	Anti-Venizelists

Another aspect of the electoral process, neglected by Mavrogordatos, is state repression. Just before the 1920 election, the newspaper *Ergatikos Agon* published the following statement by the newly formed Socialist Workers’ Party of Greece:

“In view of the forthcoming elections, the government employs every means of suppression and terrorism, seizing election material through its police forces, banning worker rallies and demonstrations, terrorizing with its thugs, such as in the case of Athens, forbidding farmers to come in contact with the party, such as in the case of the director of the telegraph office in Patras...”²⁰⁶

In a 1923 letter to the government, the Socialist Workers’ Party claimed that:

“From the various sections and branches of our Party and from our comrades in the countryside, we have indisputable information, that the police and military authorities use

²⁰⁴ Mavrogordatos G (1983) p351. The narrow-wide plurality system involved the combination of two types of electoral districts. The ‘narrow’ ones referred to the territories of Old Greece and the ‘wide’ ones to the lower court districts of the New Lands.

²⁰⁵ Sources: Elefantis A G (1999) and Mavrogordatos G (1983)

²⁰⁶ *Diamarturia kata tis proeklogikis tromokratias*, in *Ergatikos Agon*, 29/9/1920

tyrannical measures against our electoral struggle, aiming to terrorize the labor and peasant masses that express in favor of our party. Those measures reached the point of exiling our party candidates..., of closing down party offices (Kavalla, Drama, Serres)..., of threatening and terrorizing our comrades and supporters (as in Kalamata, Skiathos, Kazaklar and elsewhere), of censoring or seizing our mail.”²⁰⁷

Such practices, including ballot rigging,²⁰⁸ would become the norm throughout the inter-war pre-election periods, only to worsen through the 1930s.²⁰⁹ Intervention in the political processes reached ultimate expression in military coups –or, the imminent threat of one- which became dominant in the inter-war period (1924, 1925, 1926, 1933, 1935, and 1936).²¹⁰ These military interventions did not aim at permanent control of the state machinery (prior to the 1936 Metaxas dictatorship) and were all short lived. They were due to the increasing ineffectiveness of the existing system of political organization, based on clientage and populism, to provide stability and social cohesion. They derived from military circles which sought to maintain a balance among the forces competing for political power and control of the state apparatus.²¹¹ The Greek political scene was overall a rather unstable one. As Fakiola points out, during the interwar period there were “20 changes of government, 8 attempted coups, and 3 dictatorships.”²¹²

B. The General Confederation of Greek Labour (GSEE): Crippled at birth?

In Greece the unification of trade union organizations followed the French model, acquiring the form of labour federations, local as well as nation-wide (Labour Centres and Federations). A central nation-wide union structure organized according to occupation rather than locality (i.e. an equivalent to the TUC) did not emerge until 1918, several years after the emergence of the first local labour

²⁰⁷ *Diamarturia tou Kommounistikou Kommatos, Rizosastis, 1/12/1923*

²⁰⁸ The US ambassador’s report on the 1935 referendum on the Monarchy (when the Monarchists received some 90% of the votes cast) is highlighting such practices: “...not only is the Monarchist majority so great as to ‘prove’ Greece practically unanimous in its desire to see the King restored, but the figure given for the Monarchist vote is actually higher than the total vote cast by all parties together in any previous election in Greece, and this by no small margin but by over 400,000 ballots! There may therefore be some truth in the rumor that when shown the returns, General Kondyles, the Regent and Premier, expressed annoyance with his followers for ‘exaggerating’.” (MacVeach L & Iatrides J, 1980, p60)

²⁰⁹ See Livieratos D (1994)

²¹⁰ For a detailed analysis on the role of the military in Greek politics see Veremis T (1997)

²¹¹ See Charalambis D (1989) p102 and also the article by Mouzelis N (1980)

²¹² Fakiola P E (1978) p91

centre. This particular form of highly localized labour organization was encouraged by the Greek state, which created the necessary legal framework for preventing any alternative development of the trade union movement. Indeed, according to Law 281/1914, Article 43: “Two or more labour organizations are allowed to form an association or union...only if maintaining their economic and administrative autonomy.”²¹³ This way the government attempted to achieve “a loose trade union structure, which would be easier to control.”²¹⁴

This control was achieved by restricting both union organization and collective bargaining to a local or district level. In other words, although a large part of responsibility for the status of wages, conditions of work, and working conditions lay with central government, labour unions could only put pressure and present their demands to the representatives of local government; or indeed as it was sometimes the case, to their local MP, who would then use his influence to achieve a compromise between labour and employer. Labour disputes and strikes that did not extend beyond the boundaries of a ‘local crisis’ were much easier for the authorities, than a nation-wide labour strike organized by the whole occupational category.

The particular development of labour organization was in part dictated by the economic conditions of the time, the small number of wage-labourers, the lack of communication and transport between the various pockets of industrialization.²¹⁵ In addition, Benaroya put forward another theme on the reasons for the weakness of the Greek labour movement as a national presence:

“The historically formed Greek mentality and the unpredictable petty-bourgeois character of the Greek ‘proletarian’ allowed for the idea of workers organization to acquire the form of a non-stop process of creating many trade unions consisting only of presidents and seals...Many trade unions were led by executives appointed rather than forged through the struggles of the working class...using the titles and seals of the trade unions for personal exchanges, economic and political in nature, alien to workers’ aims.”²¹⁶

Once again we observe the phenomenon of ‘revolution from above’ in Greek politics. Thus, the lack of unity of organization and struggle at a national level was mainly due to the following factors.

²¹³ Law 281/1914

²¹⁴ Tzekinis C (1984) p28

²¹⁵ For details on the morphology of the Greek industry and proletariat see chapter 2.

²¹⁶ Benaroya A (1975) pp111-112

The first was the low level of economic and industrial development that produced a numerically small and largely scattered working class. This in turn led to another factor, the loose connection between labor organizations, a practice favored by both employers and government. This offered better control through the incorporation of local unions into the existing clientage networks. Whenever clientism was relatively ineffective, nevertheless local disputes could be dealt with by the authorities.

Venizelos's legislative measures (a subject that we will deal in more detail below) determined the form of organization and the federal mode of unification of trade unions. This, in combination with the lack of a concentrated urban working class due to the absence of heavy industry, prevented the workers from realizing the benefits, or indeed the necessity, for a centralized labor nation-wide organization.

Nevertheless, there were efforts towards trade union unity. On November 3rd, 1918, the first Pan-Hellenic Labour Congress was convened in Athens and attended by 252 delegates representing 200 labour associations, 10 labour trade unions, 2 labour federations and 2 professional trade unions. They represented 48 occupations and approximately 60,000 out of a total of some 75,000 organized workers.²¹⁷ Given the attitude of the state towards labour unity, why was this allowed to take place? A number of writers²¹⁸ explain this episode by reference to a change in the attitude of Venizelos. There are two reasons. The first one had to do with the rapidly changing conditions on the international scene following the Russian Revolution in 1917. One symptom was the radical political climate that was forming towards the end of World War I.²¹⁹

The second reason was the growing discontent among workers and socialists over the oppressive character of the regime²²⁰. An agreement on the composition of a delegation for the forthcoming 3rd

²¹⁷ Clogg A (1979) p76

²¹⁸ See for example: Leon B G (1976), Apostolakou L (1997), Mavrogordatos G (1987)

²¹⁹ Leon, for example argues that: "...the war aims revisionist debate, spearheaded by allied and neutral socialists after the Russian Revolution of March 1917, affected Venizelos policy. His fear that the growing anti-war sentiments in the allied countries and the pressures exerted by the socialist and labor movements for a revision of the war aims might adversely affect his own war aims, prompted him to facilitate the unification of the Greek labor and socialist movements, hoping thereby to secure their support for his foreign policy and through them influence the western socialist and labor movements which were expected to play an important role in the future peace settlement." Leon B G (1976) p vi

²²⁰ In addition to Demetratos and Konstantinides, two prominent socialists, who had imprisoned, four University students, members of the Socialist Youth, were court-martialed and given 4 year sentences for having printed and distributed one of Kropotkin's pamphlets; they were soon released on Venizelos's orders following many protests. In February, two other figureheads of the Greek socialist movement, Petsopoulos and Yannios were once more arrested because of certain articles published in *Rizospastes*. See

Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist conference that was acceptable to both government and socialists seemed almost a futile task. It was not only a number of socialists, who might have previously placed themselves in favour of a workable compromise with Venizelos's government, who were now alienated from the regime. Characteristic of the attitude of organized labour in Athens vis-à-vis Venizelos's regime was the fact that upon the occasion of Venizelos's return from the West in early January 1918; only 9 out of 26 trade unions participated in a welcoming ceremony –an event that made an impression upon official circles.²²¹ Leon contends that:

“Now, since the movement toward labour unity could not be disrupted or diverted by means of the old tactics, the government, which was, after all, not totally impervious to the influence of young bourgeois reformers, decided to accept the inevitable in the hope that through the appropriate manipulation of local labour centres it eventually could secure an anti-socialist, Venizelist or at least mildly reformist majority in a centralized organizational structure. Having reached this stage of indirect control, the government would be able to infuse the movement with reformist ideas, secure its support, maintaining social peace, neutralize radical influences and drive a permanent wedge between socialist and labour movements.”²²²

Did the Congress live up to the government's expectations? According to Benaroya's account, four major factions dominated the Congress. The first was the Piraeus faction led by Machairas. This included most of the delegates affiliated with the Piraeus General Confederation of Labour, and was generally anti-socialist (mainly Venizelist-Liberal). A second faction was made up of various labour organizations from Athens, including delegates from Peloponnesus, and was under the influence of the Labour Centre of Athens (mainly Anti-Venizelist- Royalists). The third faction, which proved to be the most cohesive (overwhelmingly socialist), included the Salonica Labour organizations, some Thessalian groups, as well as the Socialists of Athens and Piraeus. Finally, the fourth faction consisted of the Yannios group led by Elias Delazanos and Achilles Chatzimichales who collaborated with the Salonica delegation.

Rizospastes 22/10/1918, 29/10/1918, 27/1/1918, 28/1/1918, 30/1/1918, 19/2/1918, 23/2/1918, 25/2/1918, 2/5/1918

²²¹ See Moskof (1987) pp196-213; Kordatos Y (1956) pp57-105

²²² Leon G B (1976) p102

Therefore it would seem that the Congress had no clear or indeed homogenous ideological direction, and that the socialists were a minority.²²³ A Liberal, Machairas, the leader of the Piraeus faction²²⁴ was elected at the head of the Executive but perhaps even more importantly for the government, a war aims program was adopted.²²⁵ In view of these developments Vice-President E Repoulis wrote triumphantly to Venizelos: “Labour Congress proceeded according to our plans. Climate [was] anti-socialist.”²²⁶

Following the conclusion of the 1st Pan-Hellenic Labour Congress, preparations began for the unification of the Greek socialist movement. Although, we are not going to deal with the Congress itself in this chapter, it would be useful to briefly mention certain characteristic processes that preceded it. In early September the Organizing Committee for the Socialist Congress appeared before Venizelos to discuss the presence of a socialist delegation to the Inter-Allied Conference capable of pushing forward the Greek claims (which pre-supposed the creation of a socialist party)²²⁷. The Committee presented to Venizelos a series of demands: a) permission for two Congresses, b) two months of freedom of action for the successful preparation for the Congresses – through the lifting of martial law that was in place, and c) the termination of behind the scenes government interference in the internal affair of trade unions. Benaroya, who was a member of that committee, described Venizelos’s response:

“Mr. Venizelos accepted the first two terms and promised to give orders as for the loosening up the martial law, without however lifting it as such. As for the issue of

²²³ *Valkanikos Tachidromos* 12/10/1918, 24/10/1918, 25/10/1918, 27/10/1918, 30/10/1918; Benaroya A (1921)

²²⁴ *Rizospastes*, 26/10/1918, 17/10/1918; Of the 12 member Executive Committee, 4 were socialists.

²²⁵ The program included among others: a) entry to the League of Nations, b) the proclaim of a Republic of Thrace, c) International status for the channel of Bosphorus, d) the annexation of North Epirus and Ionia, e) the proclaim of Pontos as an independent republic and the impact of Wilson. It resembled the reformist programs set forward by their European social-democrat counterparts with an additional ‘nationalistic’ tone of Greek war claims. See Moskof (1987) p401; Kordatos G (1956) p311

²²⁶ Leon B G (1976) p108

²²⁷ Kordatos writes in the ‘Communist Review’ in 1924: “The Serb and Bulgarian (wide) socialists made much noise in Europe for the ‘national’ interests of the Balkans. The Serbs advocated Serb imperialism and the Bulgarians the Bulgarian one. Venizelos’ Greek government...wanted Greek socialism to also make noise abroad in favor of the Greek ‘just causes’. For that to happen though, there needed to be a labor movement, as well as socialists.” (Kordatos G, 1924, pp114-5); See also Article by Vice-President Repoulis in *Estia* 30/12/1917.

government interference...Mr. Venizelos pretended to be surprised claiming that such a case never existed...!”²²⁸

In any case, whether the Congress was pro or anti-socialist is not the most important element. What was indeed crucial was the clear intention of the government to prevent the development of a politically autonomous and potentially radical labor movement. The Labor Congress itself was only the beginning of a long series of government interventions, which would play an important role, one way or another, in shaping the politics of organized labor.

C. Legislation as a means of incorporation (the stick...)²²⁹

In Greece the right to establish worker’s associations was granted as early as 1864 by article 11 of the Constitution. This stated that “Greeks have the right to form associations, complying to the laws of the state...having acquired in advance governmental permission to do so”.²³⁰ Batikas claims that the fact that this right was granted to the working class without struggle, i.e. top-down (in contrast to other European cases) had a negative impact on the formation of a militant consciousness. This was because it greatly influenced the attitude of the workers towards their exploiters and the state.²³¹

The foundations for the establishment of a legislative framework for the development of the labor movement in the inter-war period were laid in 1914 by Law 281/1914 (Associations Act). The character of this piece of legislation as well as the ideological framework that it reflected was made clear from its introduction:

“The spirit of the right to form associations did not come across, since 1864, the same difficulties, seen in other countries through long-term conflicts...Workers’ associations constitute today a major social force, acting for the benefit of the social whole, moving

²²⁸ *Valkanikos Tachidromos*, 22/3/1931

²²⁹ Moudopoulos makes an interesting observation on the character of legislative measures, which is rather enlightening as an introductory comment: “Legal rules, most of the times falsify instead of reflecting social reality that they aim to regulate according to abstract rules and usually do not correspond to it...Abstract rules of law have the power to affect social reality and to shape it according to their content.” (Moudopoulos S, 1987, pp8-9)

²³⁰ Svolos A (1972) p129

²³¹ Batikas K (1994) p211

parallel to the official association of the state, which in plenty of cases has contributed to the fulfillment of its aims, being for the state a valuable assistant...²³²

It was assumed, in other words, that the purpose of trade unions and worker associations was to contribute to the state's efforts (being a 'valuable assistant'²³³) for the betterment of the social whole. However, in furtherance of that aim, certain measures had to be taken in order to regulate workers' associations through legal provisions concerning their establishment and operation, and to keep their activity under supervision. Throughout the interwar period there would be plenty of examples whereby workers' unions, while initially 'formed for the pursuit of the common interests of its members', would at one point or another, appear as 'an element hostile to social peace and a dangerous one for the state authority'.²³⁴ Accordingly, in February 1927 the Larissa Court of First Instance decided on the dissolution of the city's Labor Center on the grounds that it "went astray of the legal purposes for which it was established". In the same period more than ten trade unions were either dissolved or refused ratification of their statutes in the city of Larissa alone on the grounds that they were "pursuing aims that were not in reality the ones written on their statutes, but ones that were illegal and immoral"²³⁵

Accordingly, any reference to the adoption of 'class struggle' as a means of pursuing their interests, any estimate by the relevant supervisory state organ that any union practice was the product of choice based on class, would result in the prosecution and eventual dissolution of the particular Union.²³⁶ The interpretation of the law would go as far as the persecution of workers for even participating in the electoral struggles of the Communist Party.²³⁷

²³² Leontaritis G (1980) p77

²³³ Accordingly the State would attempt to become a 'patron' for the labor movement, and by 1918 the State would also be in charge, by law, of resolving industrial disputes (see *Report of the Socialist Party on the anti-labor legislation*, 15/12/1919, in Yiannios Archive, File1, ELIA)

²³⁴ This is described in the introduction of the law concerned (281/1914) as a 'right of the State to defend itself', cited in Vagias A I (1975) p40.

²³⁵ And the Court decision continues "for the purpose that their founders were communists and therefore their pursuing aims were anti-national, against country, religion and family." (See *Rizospastes* 21/2/1927). Similar reasons were put forward for the dissolution of the Volos' Labor Center 5 months later (See *Rizospastes* 20/7/1927)

²³⁶ These implications of the existing trade union legislation were put forward in Parliament by the Socialist MP, A Sideres (See *Efimeris tw'n Sizitisewn tis Voulis*, January 1920, p449)

²³⁷ Such as in the case of a number of rail-workers who were sentenced to imprisonment, fines, deprivation of their political rights and exclusion from any future employment from the public sector, for their participation in the Party's pre-election struggle. The sentence was passed by the Magistrates Court of Larissa, in *Rizospastes* 29/1/1927

Therefore, in order to prevent the creation of associations hostile or dangerous to itself and its notion of social cohesion, the state drew up a legislative framework that allowed it to regulate and observe all aspects of trade union functions and actions, from their foundation to their dissolution. For a newly founded trade union to acquire the right of lawful existence and activity it was required to submit its statute to the judicial authorities for approval. This significantly undermined the right of trade union members to draw up their constitutions freely and according to their own interests. In comparison with relevant experiences in other countries, Greece had one of the most restrictive and interventionist legal framework regarding trade union activity.²³⁸

An application for the legal recognition of a trade union by the state would include: a) two copies of the statute, b) a copy of the records of the foundation procedures, and c) a list of the names of the founding members as well of the executive.²³⁹ The submission of the statute to the Court of First Instance involved significant government interference. In the article 80 of the Civil Code it was noted that “a statute, would be considered invalid, unless it determines: 1) the purpose, the name, and its head-office, 2) the terms of entry, retirement and expulsion of the members, as well as their rights and obligations, 3) the sources of funding, 4) the manner of its legal representation, 5) the executive organs and the terms of its composition and its termination...”²⁴⁰

In other words, this legislative framework secured, for the authorities, the scope for complete control over trade union activity, preventing them from acquiring an independent and autonomous militant character. The occasions whereby trade union statutes were dismissed on pretext, such as for reasons of ‘morality’ were numerous. A 1928 decision of the Court of First instance in Kavalla was indicative of how judicial authorities perceived ‘morality’. Since one of the law’s clauses ruled that a union’s name should not contain ‘terrible, immoral or ill-reputed’ words, the Court refused to sanction the legal recognition of the trade union ‘Proletarian’ on the grounds that “this word is not included in the Greek vocabulary: this Latin word denotes a class of vile human beings capable only of child-bearing and cannot be sanctioned as a union’s name because it indicates social distinctions which the constitution forbids.”²⁴¹

²³⁸ According to the International Labor Office, Greece appears alongside such as Salvador, Honduras, and Turkey as one of the few countries in the world with the most intensive judicial interventionism in the operation and activity of trade unions. See ILO (1976)

²³⁹ Law 281/1914

²⁴⁰ Article 80 of the Civil Code

²⁴¹ Kladas S (1945) p64-65

...and the carrot

Alongside its authoritarian and restrictive character, the legislative framework that took shape in the early twentieth century and that dominated labor-state relations throughout the inter-war period also included a number of positive provisions and effects. First of all, it put an end to the existing system of 'guilds' or 'craft associations', in which small employers, independent craftsmen, and workers had traditionally joined together to minimize economic hazards through mutual help. This meant that employers and employees could no longer be members of the same organization or union.²⁴²

In addition, for the first time there were legal provisions for the carrying out of collective bargaining, which allowed trade unions and workers' associations to pursue their demands as unions and not as mere individuals, thus significantly increasing their bargaining power.²⁴³ Finally, there was a series of legislation passed concerning working conditions (such as Law 3934/1911 'On the Hygiene and Safety of the Workers and on Working Hours), women and child labor (Law 4029/1912 'On Female and Under-Aged labor), as well as wages (Law 4030/1912) etc.²⁴⁴ These reforms were carried forward partly due to Venizelos' strategy of rationalizing and modernizing the Greek state as well as a pre-emptive policy for easing the effects of industrialization and thus avoiding the emergence of social problems as had appeared in Western Europe throughout the previous century (such in the case of pre-1914 UK, US and Germany).

Other interventionist mechanisms were subsequently established. The Ministry of Labor was formed in 1935; however, there were a number of other state agencies that carried forward the processes of intervention in the labor movement, such as the Labor and Social Welfare Branch of the Ministry of Finance. Its responsibilities included inspection duties for monitoring the application of Labor legislation, the operations of trade unions and their finances, as well an advisory role on new provisions or additions to the exiting labor legislation. It was also responsible for the administrative supervision of trade unions. Officials of the Ministry had the right to carry forward "a written or oral examination of the administrators of a trade union", to check trade union records, as well as to be

²⁴² Kordatos G K (1956) pp25-26, 177-178

²⁴³ Theos K & Gkrozos A (1955)

²⁴⁴ See Leontaritis G (1980) p55; Katsanevas T K (1983) p68. On the actual effect of this legislation we dealt on previous section. However, as Dimitratos noted in his report on 'The Labor of Foreigners in Greece': "the attention of the State is rather drawn on granting favors [*rousfeti*] than the vital problems of Greece." A Dimitratos Archive, File 16, ELIA

present in union meetings and observe compliance with the law and trade union statutes.²⁴⁵ “Through the various organizations and mechanisms that lay under its jurisdiction, and also directly, it intervened on the labor movement, administratively, economically and ideologically.”²⁴⁶

The Labor Home (Εργατική Εστία) was established in 1931 by the Venizelos Government through Law 5204/31, which stated that the purpose of the organization was “the assistance of laborers in the pursuit of the economic, spiritual and moral betterment of their class.” This would be carried forward mainly through the provision of buildings to house the “occupational organizations of the working class”. Not all organizations would benefit from this arrangement, but only those “whose aims and activity complied to the existing laws”.²⁴⁷ According to Koukoules, “the Labor Home had a clear purpose from the very moment of its conceptualization: the incorporation of the labor organizations into the state mechanism and the creation of an even more complex trade union bureaucracy”.²⁴⁸

Legislation was also created for increasing working class participation in various organs of social administration. Representatives of the working class were allowed to participate in various councils such as the Advisory Board of Labor (1920), the Supreme Finance Council (1930), in various other councils of worker insurance agencies, and in the Senate, which had a provision for Labor Senators as representatives of occupational organizations. However, as Seferis noted, the composition of those councils was limited to the representatives of government approved trade unionism, hence excluding the communists who led a large number of unions.²⁴⁹

The degree of how interconnected and incorporated labor leaders were in the frameworks of power provided by the state was demonstrated by the ‘curriculum vitae’ of labor leader A Dimitratos. In 1928 he was secretary general of the General Confederation of Labor. In 1931, on the suggestion of Venizelos, he was elected a member of the Supreme Finance council. In 1936, under the Demertzis’ government he took part in the Regulative Committee for Labor Disputes. Under Metaxas’

²⁴⁵ Vagias A I (1975) p39

²⁴⁶ Batikas (1994) p221; see also Goutos H G (1985) p218

²⁴⁷ Law 5204/31, in *Efimeris tis Kiverniseos*, 28/7/1931. The provisions of the law clearly excluded the communist-led Unitary GSEE and the trade unions that operated under its ‘umbrella’ from the benefits of the Labor Home. Since the Confederation was dissolved by a court ruling on 3/1/1930, the Labor Home was exclusively intended to provide assistance to the ‘official’ trade union representative organ, the GSEE.

²⁴⁸ Koukoules G F (1984) 13

²⁴⁹ Seferis K (1975) p58

government he was appointed Deputy Minister of Labor. Finally he also served as the secretary general of the 'Labor Party'.²⁵⁰

D. Oppression as a means of containing and controlling the labor movement

Shortly after the 1928 Liberal electoral victory, the Bill 'on security measures of the social regime and on the protection of citizens' liberties', more commonly known as the *Idionymon*, was submitted to parliament. This reflected the government's determination to reinforce the existing legislative framework against communist influence on the labour movement. The *Idionymon* decreed the imprisonment of those who organized or led a communist or 'similar' movement which aspired to the violent subversion of the existing social order or to the prevalence of a certain class. Conversion to or public propagation of communism was similarly penalized, while Articles 4 and 5 banned communist assemblies as 'dangerous' for public security and prohibited gatherings of individuals who advocated any communist or 'similar' ideology.

The *Idionymon* Law, however, was not a conceptualization exclusive to the Greek State. On the 8th November 1927, a conference organized by the *Entente Internationale Anticomuniste* (International Anti-Communist Alliance) took place in the Hague. Attended by lawyers and legal experts representing most European countries, the purpose of the conference was to discuss the possibilities of an anti-communist struggle through legal means. The conference suggested the adoption of a number of measures (to be undertaken by the interested governments), such as the penalization of any group that was affiliated to the Third International and that conducted communist policy, or even whose actions could potentially lead to communist objectives.²⁵¹ In addition, similar pieces of legislation had already been passed in Bulgaria, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Estonia and others.²⁵²

At the same time, throughout Europe, the idea of a 'strong' state was becoming increasingly popular among those in power: Mussolini came to power in Italy in 1922, Primo de Rivera's regime

²⁵⁰ See A Dimitratos Archive, Files 1 and 16, ELIA. Theodoropoulos would constitute another good example: his name would become almost synonymous of paternalistic state trade unionism. A Kordatos wrote: "At the time, socialists were raising complaints that Theodoropoulism was an obstacle to the development of our trade union movement because he propagated state socialism and gave workers false promises that prevented them from going into action." (See Kordatos, 1956, p179)

²⁵¹ Kepetzi M (1930) p5

²⁵² *Efimeris Sinitiseon tis Voulis*, 30/5/1929

maintained power in Spain between 1923 and 1930, Salazar established his regime in Portugal in 1928; and King Alexander the First abolished the constitution in Yugoslavia in 1929.

Even if communist parties were not outlawed as in the cases mentioned above, various regimes aimed to establish legal provisions that attempted to penalize not only subversive actions, but also ideas. Britain utilized the 1351 Treason Act, the Seditious Libel and Enlistment Act of 1870 as well as the Official Secrets Act of 1911 and 1920, and a series of bans following the industrial unrest of 1926. Twelve Communist Party leaders were arrested just the year before in 1925. In Germany, although the KPD was not banned, its involvement in trade unions was criminalized as “participation in the trade unions aiming at the subversion of the Reich government”. In France labour activists faced revived legislation from 1893 and 1894 that penalized anarchist and communist ideas.

When the *Idionymon* was debated in the Parliament and Senate there was extensive reference to the international situation, such legislative measures and the satisfactory results that they had produced against revolutionary unrest in Germany and elsewhere.²⁵³ It has been suggested that in more ways than one the *Idionymon* resembled Bismarck’s 1878 Anti-Socialist legislation, described as “one of the most complete legislative pieces as far as persecution of social crimes was concerned”.²⁵⁴

Oppression escalated under the *Idionymon*. *Rizospastes* wrote about the new wave of authoritarianism. In 1929, the first year of its application, “there were 1,495 arrests, 554 convictions amounting to 2,532 months imprisonment, 125 convictions of exile amounting to 237 months, 265 injuries and 3 deaths of workers. There were also 107 attacks on trade unions”.²⁵⁵ The Confederation of civil servants was banned, their right to strike re-called, and their wages reduced by 6%. Venizelos’s response to a civil servant’s committee that visited him in order to submit its complaints about those measures was characteristic: “Why would you want with a Confederation, an organization amounting to 40,000 members? It is dangerous. I’ll maintain the Federations... [However] if there is any more misconduct, we shall proceed even to their abolition as well.”²⁵⁶ In a similar tone, Venizelos addressed a gathering of tobacco workers in Kavalla in November 1929: “Let us make it clear, if you are Communists, you are enemies of the state and we

²⁵³ *Efimeris Sizitiseon tis Voulis*, 30/5/1929; *Efimeris Sizitiseon tis Gerousias*, 17/7/1929

²⁵⁴ Lidtke V (1966) pp339-45

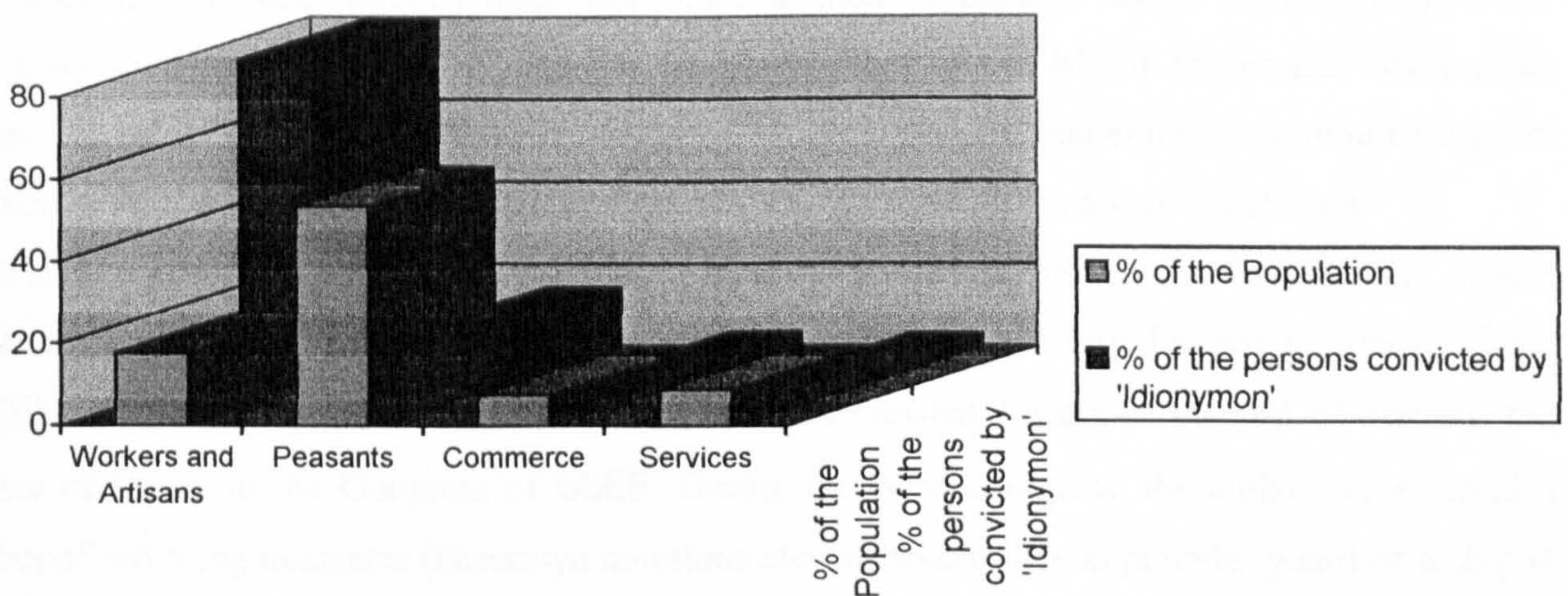
²⁵⁵ *Rizospastes*, 26/3/1930

²⁵⁶ Kastaniotis G (1981) p93. The Federations were organized at a local or regional level.

shall dissolve your organizations as hostile. We do not recognize your right to band together to become stronger and more threatening to the state.”²⁵⁷

In 1928, Papanastasiou warned Venizelos that “the policy which today is directed against the communist threat, fundamentally and essentially aims against legitimate labour demands.”²⁵⁸ Indeed, during the next few years, the *Idionymon* Law was used indiscriminately against any form of radical agitation, involving not only pro-communist workers, but workers across the political spectrum; even those who supported the regime. A striking example can be drawn from the letter of the Liberal president of the Agricultural Credit Cooperative in the town of Giannitsa requesting the halt of the persecution of two teachers as communists, because they were in fact Liberals! In the same letter he proposes the persecution of another two schoolteachers belonging to the rival Farmer-Labour Party of Papanastasiou as ‘communists’!²⁵⁹ The tables below show a number of interesting characteristics of the ‘witch-hunt’ initiated under the provisions of the *Idionymon* Law:

Graph 3: Convictions under the *Idionymon* Law by occupation ²⁶⁰



²⁵⁷ Mazower M (1991) p128

²⁵⁸ *ibid.* p128. Note that article 1 of the *Idionymon* wrote that “whoever took advantage of a strike or a lock out aiming to cause agitation and riots would be punished with same sanctions” that the law prescribed, i.e. imprisonment up to 2 years and exile.

²⁵⁹ Letter of Metozes to Venizelos, 26/6/1931. As Papanastasiou himself had stressed in Parliament while the law was debated “we need to keep in mind that none of us can consider themselves safe, because the law does not guarantee anyone’s safety.” In *Praktika Sizitisewn tis Voulis* 30/5/1929

²⁶⁰ Source: Hellenic Crime Statistics (1929-1934, 1936, 1937); *Statistiki Epetiris tis Ellados*, 1938 (1928 Census)

Table 22: Presentation of the areas where most convictions took place in relation to other social and political factors²⁶¹

Prefectures where most convictions took place (1929-37)	Number of cases	% of the total	Total Population Of Relevant Prefectures	Industrial Workers as % Of total Population	% of refugees out of total population	% of KKE support		
						1926	1933	1936
Attica- Viotia	1195	41.5	1,024,667	16.1	27.5	3.2	7.1	6.0
Larisa	297	10.4	278,465	9.6	11.4	14.9	13.6	17.7
Thessaloniki	227	7.9	539,986	11.0	48.1	9.9	7.3	9.6
Kavalla	144	5.0	119,140	17.3	62.7	14.9	27.5	23.8
Lesbos	84	2.9	161,557	8.4	22.0	5.4	15.3	14.2
Samos	59	2.7	70,497	9.1	10.2	0	2.2	5.3
Drama	38	1.3	111,572	9.4	70.3	7.3	7.0	14.1

The above tables show the extent of arrests and convictions that took place, removing many labour movement militants away from activism for various periods of time ranging from a few months to several years. They also indicate that the great majority of the ‘victims’ of the *Idionymon* were workers, a number directly disproportionate to their percentage across the total population. This gives credibility to the view that the law was aimed at the labour movement. Most cases occurred in areas with either large concentration of workers or areas that enjoyed communist support well above the national average, which was around 5%, reinforcing the above conclusion.

The state used other forms of intervention to oppress the labour movement. For example, it was able to intervene in the composition of the Congress of the General Confederation of Greek Labour (GSEE). In 1926, the authorities carried forward a somewhat ‘original’ method of altering the balance of forces in the Congress of GSEE. During its Third Congress, the authorities arrested a number of left-wing delegates (Benaroya mentions eleven) whom they kept under guard on a ship at the port of Piraeus until the closing day of the Congress! In this way, the majority of the executive that was marginally voted into office were reformist, leaving the communists in the minority.²⁶²

At the Fourth Congress of the GSEE (1928), apart from the arrests of delegates, there were also additional actions carried forward by the Confederation’s executive, further undermining the organization’s role as representative body of the labour movement. The majority of the Executive, which, as mentioned above, belonged to the reformist camp within the Confederation, decided

²⁶¹ Sources: Hellenic Crime Statistics 1926, 1933, 1936; 1928 Census; Burks R V (1961) p221

²⁶² Benaroya A (1975) pp178-181; Livieratos D (1985) pp162-169

during the fourth day of the Congress proceedings to cancel the cards of the delegates. Issuing the renewed cards to their 'own' delegates meant that those delegates not possessing the renewed card were prevented from attending the Congress by the police: 213 out of the 443 delegates were excluded.²⁶³ Therefore, the change in the balance of forces in the Confederation was not, as it is usually portrayed by a number of labour historians, the product of a shift in ideology, but one that was 'artificially' created through state intervention.²⁶⁴

The authorities also intervened in individual unions and workplaces through both indirect and direct means of intervention. In the case of the former, the most frequent involved the surveillance of trade union assemblies, which was not within the legal competence of the authorities.²⁶⁵ Examples of the latter can be found in the arrest of communist trade unionists during a union assembly by the authorities who were already present, such as the case of the Heraclion Asia-Minor Refugee Union.²⁶⁶ Artificial majorities were not only attempted and achieved at the higher level of the national labour organization, as in the case of the Confederation of Labour in 1926 and 1928, but also at the medium level of workers' organizations, i.e. the Labour Centres.

The case of the Labour Centre of Athens offers a good example. Prior to the convention of the Centres' General Assembly in 1927, eight out of the thirty unions affiliated to the Centre were expelled and excluded from representation. The existing leadership of the Centre received 49 votes and renewed its term in office. The 'Left' Unions' voting power consisted of the 35 votes that corresponded to the Union delegates who were excluded from the proceedings, another ten votes of delegates who were not excluded and managed to vote, and another twenty who were excluded from voting on the grounds that they were not in order with their financial responsibilities towards the Labour Centre. On the other hand there were allegations that at least twenty out of the Union votes that supported the existing leadership were either artificially engineered or belonged to Union that

²⁶³ KE tou KKE (1988) p71

²⁶⁴ See for example: Fakiolas R E (1978) p93 and Jecchinis C (1984) p63

²⁶⁵ For example, see the telegram of protest sent to the government by the Assembly of Administration Boards of the organizations of All-Workers' Center of Volos, whereby it is asked to "order the Volos police to stop surveiling the assemblings of the workers' organizations according to the law." *Rizospastes* 15/1/1927

²⁶⁶ See *Rizospastes* 3/4/1927 The reason given by the authorities for the arrests was that the communist union members "were obstructing a legal assembly...by disturbing through indecent means the order of the particular union".

were non-existent.²⁶⁷ Therefore, although the balance of forces in the Labour Centre of Athens was favourable to the Left (65 to 49), that faction found itself in a minority position.

This method of state intervention was, however, not always successful. A Report by the Minister of Transport noted that “when in 1933 there was a change in government, there was every attempt to favour the workers that were government-friendly. However, that was not easy since replacing the permanent workforce with others would cause the uprising of the workers.”²⁶⁸

During the inter-war period the police authorities, alongside their surveillance of trade union activity duties, were also responsible for infiltrating the unions and the union leadership, aiming in the long-run to split them and create unions that were more government and employer-friendly. In view of the above police activities, the Labour Centre of Salonica published on 21st of May 1922 a petition condemning the methods used by the authorities: “The head of the Salonica police Headquarters colonel Papakonstantinou has reduced almost all of his local professional activities to the coordination of the persecution of the working class...He was willing to dissolve the labour organizations and accordingly he established a special force of undercover men... who revelled at the expense of the workers.”²⁶⁹

In 1924, the MP Yiannis Pasalidis publicly condemned from parliament the mass creation of such reactionary unions by the state authorities. According to Pasalidis, the authorities in Macedonia and Thrace were establishing fascist groups that terrorized trade unions as well as fascist worker’s clubs that were provided with arms. Pasalidis presented to parliament the relevant evidence and documentation, among which there was a written order by Garrison Headquarters to provide armory to such ‘unions’. The Prime Minister was forced to acknowledge the activities of the authorities, but justified it on the argument whereby “nationalist workers have also the right to form unions”, and

²⁶⁷ Accordingly the 4 representatives of the Bakers’ Union were illegal because they had been recalled by their own Union prior to the Assembly. The Well-Diggers’ Union had 4 delegates although they were only allowed 1 (since they did not have more than 100 members). The Tobacco Workers’ Union were represented by 5 delegates, whereas they were only allowed 3 (they had about 200 members), whereas there were another 2 Unions (the Porters’ Union and the Butchers’ Union) which did not exist at all, and were nevertheless, represented by 2 delegates each, etc. (See *Rizospastes* 23/5/1927, 24/5/1927, 28/5/1927, 31/5/1927) A few days after the elections in the Athens’ Labor Center the Municipality of Athens decided its funding of an extra 50,000 drachma (*Rizospastes* 6/6/1927)

²⁶⁸ And the report continues “taken further into account that the Left, who mobilize the workers, having the power, would find the excuse to call for assistance from the rest of Piraeus workers, even the Athenians, towards the creation of disturbances.” (Report *On the Organization of the Working Personnel of OLP*, p2, in A Dimitratos Archive, File 16, ELIA)

²⁶⁹ Livieratos D (1987) pp96-7

continued to say that the current policy is a mere continuation of a practice introduced by the previous Liberal administration.²⁷⁰

The extended establishment of such unions, which in many instances existed only in name, had a significant effect in altering the balance of forces within the GSEE.²⁷¹ As Benaroya observed, “after eight years of existence, the Confederation received unions that did not exist, or existed only in fantasy. Their delegates came with orders from the reactionaries of Piraeus, who have managed to receive from the Piraeus Municipality great sums of money towards their expenses.”²⁷²

It also had a great effect on every-day life of workers as well as on the running of trade unions. Such was the extent of terrorist activity against the working class that it is worth citing extracts from a testimony of an eye-witness:

“A fascist parastate organization called “National Greek Union” [Εθνική Ένωση Ελλάς], or 3E, stormed at nights in working class neighbourhoods and trade unions firing guns. They had the go ahead by the police.

I remember when I was in a meeting with other workers, because we were being briefed by a tobacco-worker who had just arrived from Russia, and 7 members of the 3E stormed and started firing on us... A month earlier they have been to the Maritime Union, and they had also been to the Construction Worker’s Union, where they shot dead Staboulidis, their secretary...

We started placing special guards outside union buildings.

After a while, stormings became daily, not just by the 3E, but also by the police...

In 1933 there was a storming on the Salonica Labour Centre...defended by some 150 workers...Seven workers were shot dead, many were wounded and we organized a mass rally outside the White Tower [Λευκό Πύργο].”²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Accordingly he mentioned: “The previous government gave the order to the administrative authorities and in agreement with the military authorities for the establishment of nationalist worker’s unions, which, however, are not reprehensible”. Cited in Livieratos D (1985) p49

²⁷¹ Batikas mentions that in the establishment of such unions contributed the ever-worsening material conditions and living standards of the workers; most recruitment was taking place in the lower strata of the working class and the unemployed. (Batikas K, 1994, p253)

²⁷² Benaroya A (1975) pp179-180

²⁷³ Mpratsos N (1998) p15

Conclusion

We have seen that the Greek state, unable to provide legislative reform or effective political mediation, increasingly relied on the use of force. The *Idionymon* Law, inspired by political developments and legislative innovations that were taking place in various forms and to different degrees throughout the continent aimed to eliminate communist influence in the labour movement by penalizing not only communist activity, but also actions leading to such activity. What followed, however, was a general attack on almost all manifestations of working class radicalism. On many occasions this became a tool for resolving personal and political differences.

There were almost simultaneous efforts to, on the one hand, alter the balance of forces in the leadership of the General Confederation of Greek Labour in favour of the reformist pro-government camp, and on the other, to terrorize the working class and the trade unions by establishing and arming parastate groups and reactionary unions. This was a simultaneous attack on the top and bottom of the organized working class aiming at its effective control.

Those anti-working class measures exhibited striking similarities with those taken by the Fascist governments of Italy and Germany. Indeed, one year before the establishment of the fascist regime of General Metaxas on August 4th 1936, Kondyles made much of his meeting with Mussolini in the Summer of 1935, hailing him as “the greatest man of the present epoch” who had “achieved a magnificent task, having disciplined a lively people...and having solved the problem of the cooperation of capital and labour.”²⁷⁴ The stability offered by Italy’s (and Germany’s) example was becoming increasingly ever more appealing to the ruling elites of Greece.

²⁷⁴ Andrikopoulos G (1977) p150

Chapter 4: The Development of socialist politics, Part I: The Communist Party of Greece (1918-1936)

Introduction

Any attempt to produce a political history of the Communist Party of Greece, is a challenging project. That is because of the existence of long-standing ‘myths’ and ‘foregone conclusions’ held and re-produced in the existing literature. This chapter analyzes those claims and assumptions.

One long-standing but unchallenged claim is that of the direct line between the leadership and the members of party at grass-root level. This has been portrayed as a unidirectional power relationship that worked from top to bottom. Accordingly, the image of the monolithic Party has generally been taken for granted, even though ‘substantive’ homogeneity was achieved quite late in the course of the development of the history and politics of the Greek Communist Party.

This chapter argues that relationships between party leadership and party base, national (KKE), regional (BCF), international (CI) manifestations of the communist movement were never smooth or clearly defined, but varied considerably throughout the inter-war period. Continuities and ruptures are also not as clear as has been assumed. Relying on party and CI politics as they have been presented in party Congresses and publications, much of the present literature presents an account of the development of communist party politics, which is superficial. The relationship between the Communist Party and the organizations that developed outside the ranks of the communist party has also been neglected by the literature.

As far as the role of the Comintern is concerned, although it would be a mistake to examine the historical development of the Communist Party strictly from a ‘national’ point of view, there is the danger of over-emphasizing the role of the international element, and of imposing categorizations and theoretical dichotomies, that either did not correspond to ‘national’ realities, nor provide a fixed ‘set’ of explanatory tools for interpreting political processes that involved a much more complex inter-play of factors. As Saarela noted on the variety of pre-existing identities: “The reception of ideas and concepts was not...a passive occurrence; national communists interpreted new ideas and concepts through their past.”²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ Saarela T (1998) ‘International and National in the Communist Movement,’ in Saarela T & Rentola K (eds.) *Communism: National and International* (Helsinki: SHS) p12

Finally it should be noted that incorporation frameworks such as legislative and active oppression are indeed crucial in any explanation of the different manifestations of national communism. However, they are not necessarily sufficient on their own to provide an explanation of how the various 'defensive' methods and mechanisms came about. These did not evolve as product of some mechanistic process, i.e., as a straight forward response to particular circumstances, but often involved various degrees of creative flexibility and initiative on behalf of the 'defendants'.

Accordingly, our approach to Communist Party historiography is not going to be solely based on the 'classic' categorizations and periodizations used so far, notably the First, Second, and Third Periods used by the Comintern. A mechanistic application of such explanatory models risks oversimplifying national and regional developments within a specific Communist Party. 'Obvious' outcomes do not always derive from 'obvious' reasons. Rather, we shall focus on the interplay of relationships among the agents involved in the making of the politics of the Communist Party. The Communist International was indeed one of these agents, but was it always the determining one? If and when it was, what were the circumstances? Could it be argued that in the case of local communist party politics it played little, or even no part at all?

To what extent is reference to the Comintern and the periodization it established to interpret the international situation and determine the politics of the communist movement a useful explanatory tool in examining the history and politics of a particular national section? And perhaps more crucially, what would be the value of such reference for the purposes of this particular exercise? There are two considerations that need to be made:

- a) First of all, this Thesis argues that the development of working class communism had more to do with processes at grass-root level (i.e. the community and workplace) and less with decision making at the top level. If this is the case, then what will that mean for the impact of CI politics itself on those processes?
- b) And even if we assume that CI influence affected mainly the top-level of the party, what form did this influence take? Was it consistently effective throughout the interwar period?

Early Greek Socialism

In terms of the formation and development of radical socio-political thought and organization in Greece, the historical period that preceded the foundation of the Socialist Labour Party of Greece (precursor of the Communist Party), can be divided into three phases.

The first period dates from 1833 to the mid-1870s. During this period, the first elements of radical thought were 'imported' and 'implanted' within the Greek social and political thought by Western European immigrants and political refugees, who arrived in Greece to avoid prosecution in their home countries. These represented an ideological spectrum that ranged from French Utopian Socialism (brought by supporters of Saint-Simon),²⁷⁶ to anarcho-socialism (brought by Italian labour immigrants, and political refugees, proponents of the Garibaldi movement).²⁷⁷ However, the former's ideological influence never went beyond the limits of various intellectual circles whereas the latter, although developing notable political activity, remained confined within the ethnic limits of Italian communities, and the geographical limits of the major port-cities, where those communities were to be found.²⁷⁸

Major manifestations of both radical theory and practice that emerged in Greece in that period failed to assume the form of 'concrete' social alternatives to the status quo, and to develop into popular movements. Instead they made their appearance as 'conceptions' for social change that co-existed with popular demands, such as the widening of Constitutional freedoms.

The second phase dates from the mid-1870s to the beginning of the 1910s, and was characterized by the formation of Socialist Clubs.²⁷⁹ The first Socialist Clubs were formed by intellectuals, such as Drakoulis and Kallergis, most of who had either studied or lived abroad, such as Skliros, Argiriadis, Yiannios, Theotokis, Chatzopoulos and others. Those efforts to introduce socialist thought²⁸⁰ and

²⁷⁶ These would include, among others, F Gaillard, L Delaury, V Bertrand, and perhaps most notably, Gustave Eichthal. On the activity and impact of the supporters Saint-Simon on Greek thought see: Moskof K (1988) pp148-50; Vikela D (1893) pp277-31; Dimitriou M (1985) pp49-55.

²⁷⁷ On the activity and impact of the Italian labor immigrants and refugees see: Moskof K (1988) p152, Dimitriou M (1985) pp62-70; Kairofulla K (1923);

²⁷⁸ Namely, the ports of Patras, Piraeus, Syros and others. On their inability to develop into mass movements, Leon G B, mentions: "The radical ideology of these first nuclei failed to reach the masses who were spontaneously reformist when politically conscious. The slowly growing labor movement in towns such as Patras and the Piraeus...proved to be more amenable to reformist socialism than to anarchism." (Leon G B, 1976, p3); See also Farakos G (1984) p60

²⁷⁹ See Dimitriou M (1985) pp113-71; Leon G B (1976) pp3-7; Farakos G (1984) pp61-3; Ioannidis Ch (1971) 32-5; Koutsoulakis Ch (1966) pp17-21

²⁸⁰ This involved the emergence of an extensive number of socialist –or socialist inclined- press, such as the 'Hellenic Republic' (*Elliniki Dimokratia*), the 'Socialist' (*Socialistis*), *Noumas*, *Rigas*, *Ardin* and others,

organization²⁸¹ in Greece had several characteristics. Firstly, they were localized, and did not acquire the form or dynamic of a nation-wide movement. Secondly, there was little ideological uniformity among them, due to the fact that they revolved around the ideological ‘authority’ of certain key-intellectuals who most often were also the founders and lifetime leaders of their Club.²⁸² Their ideological persuasions involved an amalgamation of anarchism, Christian socialism, humanism, Darwinism and German Social Democracy, the theoretical boundaries of which remained on several occasions rather vague in their perception, interpretation and application.²⁸³ Thirdly, the localism of the first socialist labour organizations, in combination with the ‘personalization’ of their politics, became the major obstacle in subsequent efforts to unify the various scattered Socialist Clubs into a national political party. In a letter dated 7th of July 1911, Drakoulis wrote to Huysmans, the Secretary of the International Socialist Bureau on the failure of those efforts: “In reply to your letter..., I hasten to inform you that our Socialist Party is still imperfectly organized. There are a number of obstacles to overcome, and the greatest of these come from those who should be our comrades. Through intrigues, personal jealousy, bad faith and general ineptitude our work is still in an embryonic state...”²⁸⁴ The inability of socialist organizations (outside KKE) to transform themselves from ‘parties of personalities’ into ‘parties of principles’ remained dominant throughout the interwar period.²⁸⁵

that addressed various social problems from ‘radical’ points of view. At the same time, the first translations of socialist and anarchist pamphlets, and works made their appearance through Journals and other publications (such as a variety of extracts from the ‘Capital’, and the ‘Communist Manifesto’ in *Parnasos*-1878-, Engels’ ‘Utopian and Scientific Socialism’, in *Mellon*-1909-, as well as various brochures by Kropotkin, Bebel and others).

²⁸¹ Although theoretical work clearly out-weighted organizational expansion, a number of Socialist Clubs did emerge, such as ‘The Sociological Company’ (*Koinoniologiki Etairia*) –1907-, the ‘Federation’-1908-, The ‘Socialist Democratic Union’ –1909-, the Greek Socialist Party –1909-, and others.

²⁸² Characteristically, in a letter/article to *Noumas* (September 1911) the author, referring to the leader of the Socialist Club of Athens, Yiannios, talks about Yiannionism, stressing the impact of the individual ‘authority’ in socialist politics, as well as the ‘interpretation’ of socialist theory in Greek reality. (In the File: Publications on N Yiannios, ELIA)

²⁸³ The account of Benaroya (Salonica Federation) on his first visit to the Socialist organizations of Athens in 1912 is indicative on the diversity of ‘perceptions’ of socialism at the time. Accordingly the Jewish socialist describes his surprise to find the portrait of “Jesus instead of Marx” hanging in the offices he visited. (Benaroya A, 1986, p69)

²⁸⁴ Cited by Leon G B (1976) p7

²⁸⁵ In an answer to a membership request to the Socialist Party of Greece, Yiannios mentioned: “I think that you have understood that those who follow Stratis [a leader of a rival socialist organization] are not true socialists, but follow him due to personal liking, which is not at all socialistic.” In *Membership Request to the Socialist Party of Greece by the President of the Athens Commerce Employees Association*, 13/9/1931, Yiannios Archive, File1, ELIA. Note that the membership request was not addressed to the Party, but its leader, Yannis himself.

The third phase dates from the early 1910s to the formation of the Socialist Labour Party of Greece in 1918: This period is characterized by the continuous efforts to unite the scattered socialist organizations. These include the 1911 initiative of the Socialist Centre of Athens; the 1915 initiative of the Salonica 'Federation', the Socialist Centre, and Socialist Union of Athens; the 1917 initiative between the Socialist organizations of Piraeus and Athens; the January 1918 initiative of the Labour Socialist Union of Athens, the Salonica 'Federation'; and lastly, in August 1918, an initiative called by the Socialist Organizations of Volos, Corfu, Piraeus, Athens and Salonica.

The main factors that underlined the failure of such attempts can be summarized as follows. Firstly, the struggles for hegemony between the various socialist organizations resulted in a great deal of suspicion between the different parties during talks. On that issue, the answer of Speras to Yiannios is characteristic: "I find myself unable to collaborate in your group, which was proved to utilize ideology for personal disputes"²⁸⁶. These were further re-enforced by on-going personal antagonisms among the leaders of the various groups concerned, being mostly organizations revolving around the persona of particular key-figures.²⁸⁷ Secondly, the increasing ideological schism between the groups, which became more and more evident in debate on the issue of the Socialists' attitude towards World War I in general, and Greece's irredentist ambitions, in particular, impeded unity efforts.²⁸⁸ Finally, there was political 'flirting' of certain socialist leaders with Venizelos' Liberal Party, notably in the case of Drakoules and Yiannios.²⁸⁹ To the above should be added a

²⁸⁶ See *Letter of K Speras to Yiannios, 1920, In the File: Publications on N Yiannios*

²⁸⁷ A most characteristic example would be the feud between Yiannios (the leader of the Socialist Center of Athens) and Benaroya (a distinctive socialist of the Salonica 'Federation'). During the preparations for the convocation of the first Pan-Hellenic Socialist Conference, Yiannios was calling for the 'Greek' socialists to "save Greek socialism from any Jewish influence" (namely the Jewish dominated 'Federation'), concluding that "they don't want Jewish socialism in Greece." (*Rizospastis*, 4/9/1918). See also Benaroya A (1949) p71, Benaroya A (1986) pp80 & 87; Lazaris V K (1996) pp451-470; Kordatos G (1972) p171

²⁸⁸ The attitudes of the Greek Socialists towards the War and Greece's role in it varied from: a) Drakoules' support for Venizelos' policy aiming to the realization of national territorial expansion through active involvement in the war on the side of the Entente (see Drakoules E, 1915, pp128-133; Scatcherd F R, 1915, pp333-4), b) Yiannios's support for involvement in the war only as a policy of national defense (see relevant articles in *Sosialistika Fulla*, issues 1, July 1915, and 2, August 1915), to c) the 'Federation's' position which adopted an anti-war policy, and later on subscribed to the Zimmerwald movement (see article by Benaroya, in *Tachydromos*, 18/3/1931)

²⁸⁹ Yiannios wrote in November 1916: "We are not Venizelists. We believe, though, that whoever attacks Venizelos today becomes an ally of King Constantine, and the socialists choose the lesser of evils." (*Sosialistika Fulla*, 10, November 1916) The link between Yiannios and the Liberal Party may not have been of the nature that has occasionally been stressed in the communist press with various characterizations: 'agent of Venizelist-terrorism', (*Rizospastis* 1/8/1924), 'employee of the Liberal Club', (*Rizospastis* 29/3/1922), but evidence can be found in order to confirm the 'flirting' with Venizelism (membership fee receipt for the Liberal Club, relevant correspondence, etc-In the File: Publications on N Yiannios, ELIA)

series of occasions of state oppression manifested in the prosecution and banning of the socialist press, and the prosecution and conviction of socialist leaders.²⁹⁰

Unity is achieved- The foundation of the Socialist Labor Party of Greece

The Pan-Hellenic Socialist Congress took place in Piraeus from the 17th to 23rd November 1918. It aimed to unite the various scattered socialist organizations and to establish a “unified party of the working class, with independent class politics...”²⁹¹ The composition of the delegates reflected the multiplicity of ideological currents that dominated the socialist movement and thought in Greece that preceded the Congress. In addition to the polymorphous composition of the delegates, the Congress was simultaneously faced with a plethora of dilemmas. Those dilemmas reflected a variety of what may be called ‘classical’ socialist problems that have troubled all socialist parties across Europe, as well as a number of issues that were perhaps more specific to the 1918 context, i.e., issues of the Greek involvement in war, and attitudes towards the post-war order.

- Should they adopt a maximalist or a minimalist program?
- Should the party operate within the existing bourgeois-parliamentary structure, or pursue an exclusively revolutionary strategy
- Should they open party ranks to a broad membership, or should the Party be restricted to a conscious socialist avant-guard?
- Should they strive for the establishment of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ or for the establishment of a ‘people’s republic’ as a transitional stage towards socialism?
- Should they embrace or reject the League of Nations as a bourgeois construction?
- Was the best course of action to advocate the abolition of the monarchy or tolerate it in order to aggravate internal contradictions that would lead to revolution?
- On the issue of the on-going war in Asia Minor, should they position themselves in favor of a ‘war of national defense’, or condemn all wars as ‘bourgeois wars’?²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Such as in the case of *Ergatikos Agon* (See *Ergatikos Agon*, 27/8/1917)

²⁹¹ *KE tou KKE* (1988) p30

²⁹² *Ai Archai kai to Programma tou Socialistikou Ergatikou Kommatos; Ypomnima epi ton Eksoterikon Zitimatou; O Organismos tou Socialistikou Ergatikou Kommatos; Rizospastis*, 17/11/1918, 18/11/1918, 19/11/1918, 20/11/1918, 21/11/1918, 22/11/1918, 23/11/1918

Table 23: Organizations and ideological currents represented in the 1st Pan-Hellenic Socialist Congress²⁹³

Area	Organization	Members	Delegates	Right	Center	Left
Athens	Socialist Union	100	6	2	4	-
	Socialist Youth	250	-	-	-	-
	Socialist Centre	20	1	1	-	-
	Drakoules	30	-	-	-	-
Piraeus		100	4	-	3	1
Salonica	Federacion	500	10	-	5	5
	Youth	300	1	-	1	-
Kavalla		30	1	-	1	-
Volos	Socialist Union	100	4	1	3	-
	Socialist Club					
Larisa	Socialist Union	50	2	2	-	-
	Socialist Club					
Corfu		20	1	-	-	-
Mitiline		20	-	-	-	-
Other		200	1	-	-	-
	<i>Socialist Youth</i>	550	7	-	-	7
	<i>Press</i>	3	3	1	-	2
	<i>MPs</i>	2	2	-	2	-
Total			42	7	19	15

The debates on those issues reflected and led to the crystallization of two contending tendencies within the party. The first was theoretically affiliated to the European model of Social Democracy especially as manifested in the Erfurt Program of the German Social Democracy.²⁹⁴ The second subsequently advocated adherence to the Communist International, and eventually comprised the Left opposition within the party.²⁹⁵

However, apart from the departure of the Yiannios' centrist-reformist group from the conference, the newly formed Socialist Labor Party maintained its unity.²⁹⁶ The reformist majority was dominant on the domestic agenda, passing political resolutions, such as the establishment of a people's republic as the intermediate transitional stage to socialism, and promoting economic demands, such

²⁹³ Sources: Benaroya A (1931); Courie et al (1918); KKE (1974) pp3-4. The rather vague categorization of the participants in Right/Center/Left had to do with an amalgamation of factors including, their attitude towards the issues of Greece's participation in World War I, their attitude towards the Internationals etc.

²⁹⁴ Moskof K (1988) pp400-1

²⁹⁵ Nikolopoulos T (1983) p17

²⁹⁶ On the grounds of becoming "an instrument of anti-national elements...manipulated by the Salonica Jews" Kordatos G (1956) p311

as a reduction in indirect taxation.²⁹⁷ On issues of foreign policy, however, the dominance of the Left was sealed with the passing of resolutions, such as the letter of solidarity “To the Soviet Republic”, as well as a proclamation of “Condemnation of the Entente’s intention to intervene in the civil war in Russia”.²⁹⁸ The Congress also adopted a resolution advocating the establishment of a Balkan Confederation, as well as the forming of a political bureau coordinating the class struggle in the peninsula.²⁹⁹ Finally, the Congress adopted the position of “revolutionary violence, being necessary for the acquisition of power”, as well as the necessity of a “common struggle, centrally directed, of the international proletariat.”³⁰⁰

The minutes of the conference reveal certain key characteristics that are crucial in the understanding of the future development of the new party. Firstly, the amalgamation of ideologies, politics, and diverse leading personalities that stood as a major obstacle to the process of the unification of the Greek socialist movement in the past, remained clearly evident throughout the proceedings. The confrontations were rather personal in character -Yiannios, responding to various ‘detractions’ against him, noted that “there are admittedly certain matters that can only be solved through pistols”³⁰¹ - with delegates questioning ‘the socialist qualifications’ of each other.³⁰²

Secondly, the newly-formed party lacked confidence in its effort to establish a political and ideological identity and hoped to draw from the experience of its Western-European counterparts (experience that was not yet realized in the Greek conditions) even to the extent of obvious imitation. Characteristic is the proposal concerning the party’s statute comprising a mere translation from the International,³⁰³ or the debate over having an introduction or not (in accordance with the French or German examples).³⁰⁴ In the debate concerning the party’s attitude towards the League of Nations that had been embraced by most socialist parties in Europe, Yannios dismissed the various doubts expressed by a number of delegates by saying that “we are primitive socialists, showing lack of respect towards the socialist parties of Europe.”³⁰⁵

²⁹⁷ See *Programma ton Simerinon Apaitisewn*

²⁹⁸ KE tou KKE (1988) p33

²⁹⁹ *Psifisma peri tis Idriseos Balkanikis dimocratikis omospondias*

³⁰⁰ Moskof K (1988) p401

³⁰¹ KE tou KKE (1982) p110; see also pp29, 47-53, 78, 108, 115

³⁰² See for example: KE tou KKE (1982) p78 & 110

³⁰³ KE tou KKE (1982) p38

³⁰⁴ KE tou KKE (1982) p55

³⁰⁵ KE tou KKE (1982) p78

Finally, there was the problem of infiltration of secret agents, aptly expressed by the demand: “May the secret agents leave [the Conference]!”³⁰⁶ The conference voted to issue a complaint to the government for banning the press from reporting on the conference proceedings, and to inform it that “it can take part in the conference in an official and honourable manner through its officials, and not through the various agents of secret police. We are not in session secretly, but openly.”³⁰⁷ There was a general but nevertheless clear tendency to present socialist politics as law-abiding, existing within the limits of legality, which, in the eyes of its advocates, did not justify the various state measures against it.

The impact of the Russian Revolution

The 1st Pan-Hellenic Socialist Congress was inclined towards a social democratic ideological tendency. Some 60% of the delegates supported this outlook.³⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the prevailing spirit was revolutionary. It is characteristic that, unlike the Inter-Allied labor and Socialist Conference, the Greek socialists, including the right-wing, adopted a resolution on the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, expressing their support for the Soviets and condemning any allied intervention. It is striking that many of the delegates who voted for this resolution, were also delegates at the London Conference that took place just 10 months before, where they distanced themselves from the Russian Revolution expressing their ‘disappointment’ at the turn of events.³⁰⁹

However, those events and processes within the domestic socialist scene need to be understood against the backdrop of circumstances prevailing in the international socialist movement. As we have seen, the debates put forward in the 1st Pan-Hellenic Socialist Conference were quite similar to the issues that were debated in the European socialist parties.³¹⁰ The Social-Democratic tradition and ideological framework that emerged based on the domestic and international developments mentioned above was challenged in autumn 1917 by the successful Russian Revolution as well as the Left opposition within Social Democracy itself. At the same time the founding of the Communist International in March 1919 arguably intensified the progressive undermining of its predecessor as the sole ‘spokesperson’ for the international labor and socialist movement. The Greek socialist

³⁰⁶ *KE tou KKE (1982) p47*

³⁰⁷ *KE tou KKE (1982) p45*

³⁰⁸ See table 23

³⁰⁹ *Moskof K (1988) p401*

³¹⁰ See Geary D (1989); Defler L (1973)

movement had no significant social-democratic tradition behind it. Indeed, Greece was the last to form a nation-wide socialist organization in the Balkans; Serbia had formed one in 1903, Bulgaria in 1894 and Rumania in 1893.³¹¹ Timing was to prove crucial.

The Russian Revolution as well as the revolutionary activity in Germany, which was taking place at the same time as the Congress, had a dual effect on Greek socialism. On the one hand, it contributed to the realization of workers and peasants, in different ways and to different degrees, of the division between them and their employers, until then, seen largely as job-providing patrons. The effects of war and the Asia-Minor military campaign were highly unpopular among a populace worn out by having “been almost on continuous war footing since 1912.”³¹² They had alienated the lower classes from the nationalistic vision of the “bourgeois crusaders”. At the same time, news was coming from Russia of an uprising that advocated redistribution of wealth (namely land) and the end of all wars, giving the Greek socialist movement a significant boost towards achieving unification. The limited and somewhat ‘selective’ images of what was happening in Russia would prove crucial in the formation of perceptions among Greek socialists.

Therefore, it would be an over-exaggeration to claim, as many writers have,³¹³ that the Left tendency at the 1st Pan-Hellenic Socialist Congress was mainly a product of “disillusionment”,³¹⁴ or of “unrealistic politics”,³¹⁵ since the developments in the party did indeed reflect particular domestic processes and considerations. The Russian Revolution was a catalyst, not a foreign model copied and imposed on the Greek reality. There was also a great degree of millenarianism. Delegate Oikonomou mentioned characteristically:

“The golden day of salvation has arrived. The sunrise has begun. The entire world is on the move. It could not have therefore be otherwise for the Greek workers, its conscious part, to depart on the long road of its salvation...Honor and glory belongs to the workers of the North that sounded first the great call of resurrection.”³¹⁶

³¹¹ On the development of Socialist Parties in the Balkans see Stavrianos L S (1958)

³¹² Apostolakou L (1997) p413

³¹³ Such as Apostolakou L (1997); Leon G B (1976); Kousoulas D G (1965)

³¹⁴ Apostolakou L (1997) p413

³¹⁵ Leon G B (1976) p113

³¹⁶ KE tou KKE (1982) p24 [All translations are from Greek]

On the other hand, the Russian Revolution forged in the consciousness of Greek socialists a strong sense of the need for unity. It pushed the small, non-coordinated, scattered socialist groups towards a new sense of ‘historical responsibility’ and towards the establishment of a united party and trade union movement.³¹⁷ And as we have mentioned before, there was no strong social democratic group to insist that unity must be achieved on their terms. As the delegate from the Socialist Youth of Athens mentioned in his opening speech to the conference:

“The general revolution [Russian and German] and the labor agitation in Greece, gives us the right to believe that the working class is approaching its awakening. These favorable conditions have to be taken advantage of, so that we can bring Greece where other peoples have already arrived.”³¹⁸

From Social Democracy to Bolshevization

In a series of articles published in the *Communist Review* (*Kommounistiki Epitheorisis*) in 1922, Georgiades, an executive member of SEKE, portrayed the first four years of the party as a sequence that varied from the initial ‘revolutionary utopia’ (the preparation for the forthcoming socialist revolution, the realization of which went far beyond the existing capabilities of the party), to the subsequent acknowledgment of Greece’s petty-bourgeois character, which would inevitably require the establishment of a political formation which would revolve around ‘propaganda and organization.’³¹⁹

However, it would seem that the boundaries between those two phases were much less clearly defined: indeed, the latter was evident from the very birth of the party. Despite the almost millenarian enthusiasm (the ‘revolutionary utopia’ as Georgiades put it) that was expressed by the majority of the founding delegates, there were numerous indications throughout the 1918 conference of what the character of the party was intended to be. This ‘utopia’ would soon wither away in the consciousness of many of them. By 1924, many of SEKE’s social-democratic leaders, such as

³¹⁷ See Rousos P (1977); Kordatos G (1956) p292

³¹⁸ KE tou KKE (1982) p23; another delegate noted: “We all need to understand it. It is up to us, whether to prolong the weaknesses and messyness of Greek labor, or to create here the awakened working class that would be capable of following the steps of the working class of the rest of the world in the great international movement.” (ibid, p24)

³¹⁹ See Georgiades G A (1922a) pp97-104; Georgiades G A (1922b) p181

Georgiades and Sideris, held the view that the bourgeoisie had overcome the temporary setbacks caused by the radicalization following World War I and had stabilized its authority nationally as well as internationally.³²⁰

On the issue of minimum and maximum programs, Kouriel stressed the need for the Party to focus on how it would be able to carry through its propaganda in the best possible way “within the existing status quo.”³²¹ On the issue of whether to make a reference in the party statute concerning religion, Chatzimichales mentioned that the addition of any such article “would be bad for propaganda.”³²² On the issue concerning the name of the newly formed party, there was a debate whether it should be called just ‘Socialist’. Accordingly, Damigos and Chatzimichales argued that although the addition of the word Labour in the Party title would be appealing to workers, it may put off intellectuals who may be less willing to join their cause.³²³ On the debate concerning the requirements for becoming a party member, Yiannios stressed to his comrades: “...you don’t want to create socialism, but an electoral movement.”³²⁴

Therefore, despite the ‘revolutionary’ phraseology, it would seem that in practice, the newly founded Socialist Labor Party of Greece was intended to be a political organization that would operate within the framework of the ‘status quo’ rather than seeking to overthrow it, aiming at the electoral support of wider strata of society rather than at ‘ideological purity. Over the next years, the party issued several statements of complaint to the government concerning ongoing prosecution against its members and press, insisting on the non-subversive nature of its politics and methods, thus confirming its social-democratic character.³²⁵ By February 1922, the reformist ideological orientation of the party had crystallized. In a resolution of the first Pan-Hellenic Conference of the party it was noted that:

“The Party, still going through a period of organization and propaganda, needs a long period of lawful existence. The level of the party’s offensive cannot exceed the limits of the

³²⁰ See articles by Kordatos entitled “Who they are and what they seek” in *Rizospastes*, 30/1/1924, 31/1/1924, 1/2/1924

³²¹ KE tou KKE (1982) pp64-5

³²² KE tou KKE (1982) p85

³²³ KE tou KKE (1982) p101

³²⁴ KE tou KKE (1982) p110

³²⁵ “The particular behavior of the government towards an rival political party, that carries forward its political struggles under the rule of law, can only be characterized as political cowardness.” (*Rizospastes*, 13/11/1921). See also *Diamarturia tou Sosialistikou Ergatikou Kommatos dia tis piaseis kai fulakiseis*, in *Rizospastes*, 13/2/1919, *Diamarturia tou Sosialistikou Kommatos*, in *Rizospastes*, 23/11/1919

party's political strength... Taking into consideration that Greece is a petty-bourgeois country, it is necessary to fight the spirit of petty-bourgeois compromise, shown by the devotion of the people to the democratic and parliamentary principles, not with negative and fruitless propaganda, but with the widest possible participation of the party in all parliamentary struggles and organizations.”³²⁶

The resolutions adopted by the party in that convention became known in Party history as the ‘February Theses’. It is interesting that three months earlier, an article in the ‘Red Trade Union International’ that referred to the ‘peculiarities’ of the development of the socialist movement in Greece, had mentioned: “A most crucial [characteristic] is the petty-bourgeois psychology of the masses, due to which, at times, even the pioneer elements of the Greek proletariat are forced to exercise politics of compromise.”³²⁷

However, by October 1922 the balance of forces in the ideological composition of the party's grass roots membership was overturned in favor of more radical politics, due to the return of the party members who had been at the Asia Minor front.³²⁸ The social-democratic leadership would soon find itself marginalized. By 1924 most of the founding-members of SEKE would be outside its ranks, either because they were opposed to the Party's ideological turn or because they were expelled for being ‘reformist’. Some of them formed various short-lived and marginal political groups, and others aligned themselves with Venizelos' Liberal Party. This shift in the balance of forces had a significant impact. Since the ‘old guard’ “possessed political experience and organizational skills”, their exodus allowed the party to be exposed to “another uncontrollable and revolutionary-like group”.³²⁹

The Irregular Congress of the party that took place in the same month declared the resolutions of the last Congress to be a “temporary basis” of action, and called for the determination of a “detailed, complete, and elaborate maximum program”.³³⁰ By the Third Irregular Congress (26th November 1924), the process of transformation from the Socialist Labor Party of Greece to the Communist Party (Greek Section of the Communist International) was complete, and the party resolved to

³²⁶ Rizospastis, 20/2/1922.

³²⁷ See Roussos P (1975) p107

³²⁸ See Noutsos P (1994) p47; See also Kousoulas D G (1965) pp10-11

³²⁹ Maximos S (1924)

³³⁰ KKE (1974a) p268

embark on a process of re-organization according to the requirements of its new political identity (the process of bolshevization).³³¹

What was the attitude of the newly founded Party towards the International in this first period? From the outset, the question “which school do we belong to?”³³² was a troubling one. To a party that looked to foreign models and experience for the construction and legitimization of its own ideological identity, the timing of its foundation was crucial: it had taken place between the decline of the Second and the rise of the Third International.³³³

The establishment of the Communist International in March 1919 renewed the debate concerning the party’s international affiliation, an issue that had a prominent position at the discussions that took place at the annual meeting of the party’s National Council, just two months later.³³⁴ The vagueness surrounding the character of and issues around the newly founded International and the unsettled situation in Russia, combined with the fact that the Second International had been the main source of historical experience and theoretical guidance. Despite the significant sentimental impact of the October Revolution, the earlier experience with the Second International still had an important influence. The position adopted at the National Council reflected the variety of views on these issues.

Although the party was instructed ‘to prepare the ground’ for its future adherence to the Comintern (the proposal to join immediately was voted down), it additionally declared that such a decision “should not prevent the party from maintaining relations with those parties of the Second International which remain faithful to Socialist principles.”³³⁵ Furthermore, in the discussions concerning the ‘21 Points’ of acceptance to the Comintern, leading members of the party provided their own versions of what they thought those terms meant in relation to the development of the ‘national’ socialist politics. Kordatos underlined that the significance of the terms and principles of

³³¹ See *Rizospastis*, 12/12/1924; 21/12/1924

³³² *KE tou KKE* (1982) p58

³³³ Panagiotopoulos mentions characteristically: “The resolution of the [founding] Congress that concerned the party’s affiliation to the [Second] International could not have foreseen the founding of a new revolutionary International. In a letter of the Central Committee to the B’ International it announced the foundation of the party as well as its resolution to join the International; however, it also expressed its reservations concerning its ultimate affiliation, since the establishment of the new International, compels them to re-examine the matter.” Panagiotopoulos D (1978) p74

³³⁴ According to the official communist party historiography the composition of the National Council was 1/3 to the ‘Right’ tendency and 2/3 to the ‘Left’. See *KE tou KKE* (1988) p37

³³⁵ *Rizospastis*, 30/5/1919

the Comintern consisted in their “educational and empirical value”,³³⁶ whereas Sideris argued that due to the particular class composition of Greek society, it would be necessary for the party to determine “at least temporarily” its politics “at its own accord.”³³⁷ Of course this vagueness about the 21 Points was very characteristic at the time across the socialist parties worldwide –the Socialist Party of Italy and the Independent Labor Party in Britain are cases in point. Nevertheless, it is interesting that at the same time that the discussion on the 21 Points was taking place, an article appeared in *Rizospastes*, written by an Italian Socialist, which concluded: “We accept the dictatorship of the proletariat, but not the dictatorship of Moscow.”³³⁸

It is not surprising therefore that at the February Conference of 1922, the party adopted a resolution whereby it accepted “all the resolutions of the Congresses of the Communist International up to this time as documents of historical significance which should ‘enlighten’ the party in its course, according to the historical period the movement in Greece is going through.”³³⁹ And this was decided despite the fact that the 21 Points themselves included an emphasis on international discipline.

However, there were also co-existing counter-factors to these developments. There was widespread concern among the Greek socialists not to “stay behind” in the “international struggle” (identified increasingly with the Comintern and the Soviet Union), but “to follow the road that has already been taken by the rest of the Socialist Parties of the Balkans”.³⁴⁰ In April 1919 the founding Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia took place. In May 1919 the Bulgarian Social Democratic Labor Party was renamed the Communist Party of Bulgaria, and in January 1920, the Balkan Socialist Federation became a section of the Comintern and was renamed the Balkan Communist Federation.³⁴¹ To the above should be added the “psychological influence”³⁴² that the October Revolution exercised on the consciousness of members, reinforcing their faith in the

³³⁶ *Rizospastes*, 17/3/1921

³³⁷ Georgiadiou-Katsoulaki A (1984) p31

³³⁸ See *Rizospastis*, 8/12/1920

³³⁹ *Rizospastes*, 20/2/1922

³⁴⁰ *Apofasis gia ti Triti Diethni*, in *Rizospastes*, 12/4/1920. To the occasional allegations by political rivals, or former members who broke away from the party, that the over-dependency on ‘foreign’ decision making centers was damaging the ‘national’ movement, the Party answered characteristically: “They mean in this manner to separate the workers of Greece from the rest of the international labor family and to push them towards a struggle full of retreats and compromises at a time when the working class in other countries, step by step, struggles for power...” (*Rizospastis*, 9/2/1924)

³⁴¹ See Apostolides A & Dagkas A (1989) pp55-56; See also Noutsos P (1994) p25

³⁴² See Georgiades G A (1921) p25

Comintern, even when the revolutionary movement in Europe was in decline, and the isolation of the Soviet Union was becoming apparent.³⁴³

Bolshevization (re-organization) and Crisis

Following the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern in 1924, re-organizing the Party on the basis of cells became an immediate task. This involved the replacement of the “contemporary organizational division in electoral districts in accordance with the administrative division of the State”, with one based “primarily on the location of the workplace (factory cells) and secondly on the location of their place of living”³⁴⁴; hence “taking a great step towards becoming a real Communist Party.”³⁴⁵

This attempt however to apply the ‘bolshevik model of the one way to revolution’ to all countries was not without problems. Initially the party base resisted the re-organization: old sections co-existed with the newly established cells, which in many cases existed on paper but not in reality.³⁴⁶ However, the process became the “center of our organizational work...concentrating all the energies of the party”, resulting in an increasing “lack of touch between the party and the masses” and ultimately in “the loosening of the labor movement”.³⁴⁷ This experience was not unique to the Greek party. Similar problems were reported also by larger and more experienced communist parties, such as those of Great Britain, France and Germany.³⁴⁸

In addition, the existence of multiple mechanisms, such as organizational committees, trade-union committees, propaganda, alongside the district committees made the party mechanism too heavy and

³⁴³ This was not of course exclusive to the Greek case. Thorez, in an article on the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution comments on the founding of the French Communist Party. He wrote that “the decision of the majority of the socialist party...to align itself with the principles of the October Revolution and the newly-founded International was mainly a product of emotionalism...” (Roussos P, 1975, p106)

³⁴⁴ *Rizospastes*, 12, 21/12/1924; Quoting Lovovsky (Red International of Labor Unions) in a plenary session of the District Committee of Athens it is stressed: “this is not just an organizational matter. The issue of communist cells in factories is of a great and primary importance political one.” *Position on the Labor Issue for the 1st Plenary Session of the Athens District Committee*, 10/10/1927, p8, F5, CPA. On the change in the Party structure see Appendix 9.

³⁴⁵ *Report on the condition of the Party to the 3rd Ordinary Congress of the Party*; CPA

³⁴⁶ KKE (1974b) p228; In a report by the Executive Committee it is noted that “in the realization of the relevant decisions nothing has been achieved due to lack of effort... The cells, in their great majority have not even been formed, or did so mechanistically, which means that, on the one hand, the old social-democratic organizations has been dissolved, but on the other, it stood unreplaced by the formation of a new one.” (See *Report of the EC from 1/9 to 15/11 1925 to the Extraordinary meeting of Salonica*, p2, F1, CPA)

³⁴⁷ See *Analysis of the decisions of the 4th Party Congress*, F8; *Report of Thomas Apostolides to all the members of KKE*, F3; *Report on the actions of the CC, from 9/9/26-25/2/29*, p2, F3, CPA

³⁴⁸ See Carr E H (1976b) pp632-637

inflexible. It weakened “creative work at the base”, the effects of which were further re-enforced by a “bureaucracy of directives”.³⁴⁹ “The mechanistic division” and “overload of Party work” among cell members, especially as the number of members per cell had been reduced due to re-organizing, had led to the disappointment of Party members and their eventual exit from the Party ranks. This phenomenon was especially evident among new members.³⁵⁰

Table 24: The development of KKE membership³⁵¹

Date	Membership	Date	Membership
1920	1,320	1930	1,500
1924	2,200	1934	6,000
1928	2,000	1936	17,500

Such an elaborate restructuring scheme proved time consuming and overstretched the already limited human resources of the Party. However, despite the numerous problems faced by the process of re-organizing the party (in addition to the “total lack of experience” and the difficulties posed by state prosecution and oppression),³⁵² the cell system did eventually show signs of cohesion and stability, and by mid-1927 the first positive reports begin to arrive at the desks of the Party headquarters.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ KKE (1975a) pp373, 520-1; *Proceedings of the Salonica District Committee*, 1/4/1928, F10..

³⁵⁰ See *Letter of the Politbureau to the Cavalla District Committee*, 25/3/1929, F13; *Memo of the Organizational Office of the KKE to all cells*, 11/5/1927, F6; *Decision of the Politbureau of the CC on the situation of the Pireaus organization*, 21/1/1929, F12; KKE (1975) p416; *Report on the actions of the Piraeus District Committee, 13 August-End of November*, p3, F6; *Decision of the District Committee of Salonica*, 19/5/1930, F14, CPA

³⁵¹ Elefantis A G (1999) p319. See also Appendix 8.

³⁵² See *Analysis of the decisions of the 4rth Party Congress*, F8; *Report of the actions of the CC to the 3rd Extraordinary Congress of KKE*, p11, F1, CPA; On the issue of state oppression there will be a more detail section further on this chapter.

³⁵³ See *Letter of the Salonica District Committee to the Politbureau of the KKE*, 3/5/1927, F5; *Memo of the Salonica District Committee to the CC of the party*, 19/5/1927, F5; *Analysis of the decisions of the 4rth Party Congress*, F8, CPA

Party crisis and its characteristics

Like many other Communist Parties, the KKE was often torn by internal struggles. These often concerned the issue of democratic centralism and internal democracy. An issue of *Deltion*, the organ of the Party's Central Committee (1/2/1926) states: "A communist party needs to found its organization based on democratic centralism. However, democratic centralism may be fully exercised only in communist parties that enjoy lawful existence. An illegal communist party is obliged to achieve a strict centralization, so that it could guarantee its bolshevik monolithic unity, discipline and direction in action. This must be done at times at the expense of [party] democracy, despite whether or not it is characterized by some as a supposed authoritarianism on behalf of the responsible administrative organs of the party." It was later stressed, however, that "centralism does not mean annihilation of initiative of local branches", which was particularly encouraged in periods of illegality when communication between the 'centre' and 'periphery' of the party was weak.³⁵⁴

The emphasis on the importance of 'homogeneity', especially at the top levels of party hierarchy, was shared by a variety of members who belonged to either the dominant or opposition group in the party. This was clearly evident in the proceedings of the Central Committee (CC) session on 4/4/1927 which discussed the composition of the CC. During that session all sides argued against the proposal of the CI representative of electing a 'balanced' CC, and in favour of one comprised of a majority "of one or the other fraction".³⁵⁵ Homogeneity in the highest decision-making body of the party was not achieved until 1931-2, although it was not the outcome of an internal process, but rather an outcome of external pressure and intervention.³⁵⁶

However, centralization and homogeneity by no means meant that inner-party discussion was non-existent. In 1923, for example, the forthcoming Party Congress stressed through the pages of the party press that "in view of the internal dissensions, the CC will follow a policy of impartiality, and will allow the expression of all trends of thought so that at the next regular congress, the struggle will be based on platforms and clear-cut trends and not on personal antagonisms."³⁵⁷ Discussion

³⁵⁴ *Deltion*, 1/2/1926 See also *Rizospastes* 11/4/1927; KKE (1975a) pp371-3

³⁵⁵ (See *Proceedings of the Session of the Central Committee*, 4/4/1927, F3, CPA)

³⁵⁶ See the section on the interventions of the International. It should be said that also crucial as a bonding element in terms of the homogeneity of the Central Committee, was its Secretary Zachariades, whose prestige among ordinary and non-ordinary members, evident in the frequent characterization of him as the 'Leader', reached the levels of a personality cult. (See KE tou KKE, 1947, where in just the first 5 pages of the preface the name of Zachariades is mentioned 12 times; also see KE tou KKE, 1945)

³⁵⁷ *Rizospastes*, 25/9/1923

platforms were provided especially during the peak of the inner-party crisis of 1925-1927 on party tactics. This crisis broke out during the Pangalos dictatorship (1925), whose widespread persecution of communist activists and organizations had caused serious problems for the party. Those discussion platforms were manifested in the publication of statements and views of both sides in party press,³⁵⁸ as well as within the party organizations themselves.³⁵⁹ Even Stinas, who was later expelled from the Party and led a Trotskyist group, admitted in his memoirs that during the 1925-1927 Party crisis “there was truly free discussion.”³⁶⁰

This crisis was mainly about the character of the party. Pouliopoulos, perhaps the most prominent figure of the ‘opposition’ group, argued that the Party had to go through a re-structuring process which entailed a more “strict selection” of members, in order to combat the “bad quality in the composition of the Party.” “There cannot be”, he argued, “a serious Party unless it attracted a number of intellectuals from the bourgeois or petty bourgeois strata, who would be able to provide enlightenment to the uneducated Greek proletariat on the grounds of scientific socialism.”³⁶¹ This of course went against the Party effort to build a mass organization, hence the development of an inner-party conflict was imminent.

Critique and self-critique of the upper Party organs was sometimes quite fierce, and such views were openly put forward in party discussions.³⁶² Admittedly, however, after 1931, the monolithic character of party discipline was fully realized for the first time since the party’s establishment, and inner-party debates took place either strictly within the limits of party branches, or sometimes not at all.³⁶³ It should be mentioned though, that keeping the inner-party discussion strictly an internal matter was a policy shared by quite a few grass-roots members, who were preoccupied with the catastrophic consequences of the ‘open debate’ (the publication of opposing views in the Party press during the 1925-1927 crisis), for the image of the party to outsiders, as well as for party morale. A

³⁵⁸ See Rizospastes, 30/8/1923, 16/7/1925, 9/8/1927; Objections were forwarded (on request) to the CI (*Rizospastes*, 31/10/1927)

³⁵⁹ See *Decision of the Xanthe Achtida*, 1/12/1927, F5; *Letter of the Cavalla Achtida to the Politbureau*, 11/7/1927, F5, CPA; *Letter of the Cavalla Achtida to the Politbureau*, 13/7/1927, F5, CPA; *Decision of the Salonica Session on the inner-party struggles*, 14/8/1927, F5, CPA; *Letter to Maximos*, 23/2/1928, F8, CPA.

³⁶⁰ Stinas A (1985) p123

³⁶¹ Quoted in Strigkos L (1979) p41

³⁶² See for example the proceedings of the 3rd Extraordinary Party Congress (In *Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE*, 1991, pp45, 110-111, 115)

³⁶³ It is rather indicative that although until 1931, diverse views within the party were given the opportunity to publicly develop their argument through the columns of party press, after 1931 there is absolutely none. Party press became in name and in practice ‘the organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party’.

Party member wrote to *Rizospastes* in March 1927 to warn that “workers who are supporters of our Party still talk about the ongoing ‘nagging’, as they tend to characterize this inner-party discussion.” In another letter to *Rizospastes*, it was mentioned that this process has led to the destruction of the idea of the leadership as the “sum of the best fighters”. This now appeared as a “bunch of selfish and malevolent individuals”.³⁶⁴

The arbitration of inner-party disputes had the following characteristics. *Rizospastes* stressed in 1927 that “the mechanistic means of expulsion are the last means that the party would use against harmful tendencies.”³⁶⁵ Accordingly, the issue of the “party purges” through “the expulsion or compulsory redundancy” of the opposition,³⁶⁶ as has been presented by various Communist Party historiographers such as Kousoulas or Noutsos, appears somewhat problematic. The case of Pouliopoulos and his fraction, which became known as *Liquidarism*,³⁶⁷ constitute a good example. Accordingly, he was portrayed by Kousoulas as the first major “victim of the Stalinist fraction”³⁶⁸. Pouliopoulos was appointed Secretary of the party, only to decline on the grounds of finding himself “unable to meet the requirements of the post for the central organ of the party”.³⁶⁹

The CC then embarked on an attempt to keep him in the party: the newly appointed party secretary was sent to meet him in order to convince him to change his mind, he was proposed as a party candidate for the parliamentary elections of November 1926, which he once more declined and finally on 10/10/1926 he resigned from the Party.³⁷⁰ He explained his reasoning in a statement published in June 1927 entitled ‘Views on the basic problems of the Greek Communist movement’. In this brochure he argued that the low quality of Party members prevented it from fulfilling its historic duty. Accordingly, he placed himself outside the ranks of the party and asked for a purge of

³⁶⁴ Article of N Klaras in *Rizospastes* 10/3/1927 and *Rizospastes* 16/2/1927, see also article of Papadopoulos V in *Rizospastes*, 8/3/1927

³⁶⁵ *Rizospastes* 9/8/1927

³⁶⁶ See Kousoulas D G (1965) pp22-9; Noutsos P (1994) pp21 onwards; Noutsos P (1993)

³⁶⁷ The term ‘liquidarism’ that was attributed to the opposition refers to a term that the Bolsheviks used in 1908 to describe “a group of intellectuals that aimed the dissolution of the party by all means.” (See KKE, 1952, pp48-9)

³⁶⁸ See Kousoulas D G (1965) pp-22-3. For an analysis of the terminology that were adopted by communist party historiography (such as Stalinism versus Trotskyism) see later on in this section

³⁶⁹ P Pouliopoulos was born in Thebes in 1900. He studied law at the University of Athens. He became familiar with socialist ideas during the war in Asia Minor (1919-1922) where he took an active part. He was the KKE representative at the 5th CI Congress in 1924, and at the 3rd Party Congress that took place the same year he was elected Party Secretary (He was just 24 years old). After his expulsion from the Party in 1927 he established the Opposition *Spartakos* group and remained politically active in various trotskyist organizations until his execution by the Italian army in 1943. (See Livieratos D, 1992)

³⁷⁰ See *Decision of the CC of KKE on the matter of comrade Pouliopoulos*, F3, CPA; *Letter of Pouliopoulos to the CC*, 10/10/1926, 24/9/1926, 30/9/1926, 15/10/1926

all “diminishing elements”.³⁷¹ His views, however, did not find much support among the rest of the members of the CC.

Two months later he announced his wish to ‘offer his services’ to the party. He was required by the CC to produce a statement of ‘self-critique’, which later on was considered ‘unsatisfactory’, and the CC hence decided to postpone the arbitration of the matter until the forthcoming party congress. In the debate that followed, the CC’s demand for more than a “typical statement of discipline” from party branches on the issue was characterized as “blackmail” by various sections of the party, which rejected the notion of committing “either typical or virtual indiscipline.”³⁷² The issuing of “humiliating” statements of repentance, which became a standard requirement for re-entry into the Party ranks deterred many former members from rejoining the party throughout the period.³⁷³ Party members who did not aspire to the views of the one or the other fraction soon felt the pressure to “join the inner-party struggle on the side of one or the other”, resulting in the voluntary resignation of several members.³⁷⁴ Characteristic of the situation was the following letter published in *Rizospastes* (16/3/1927):

“5 days ago comrades Aggelis and Flokos came to me, presenting me with a statement that they wanted to publish in *Rizospastes* on the ongoing discussion. They asked me to sign it as well. I told them that I had only recently joined the Party and therefore I was not yet fully orientated [on the issues involving the discussion]. They informed me that all my fellow sailors were in agreement and, as a ‘communist’ I had an obligation to sign. I made the mistake of doing so. Could you please take the necessary action to suspend my signature. I believe that several other comrades were deceived [into signing]...”³⁷⁵

³⁷¹ *Neo Xekinima*, June 1927, F4, CPA. See also Livieratos D (1992) p31

³⁷² Report on the inner-party status and the responsibilities of the Piraeus organization, 1927, F6; Letter no66, F8, CPA

³⁷³ See for example Vgenopoulos’ statement in *Kommounistikon Vima*, no38, January 1925. This practice seems to have been utilized for preserving a legitimate image of the Party to the outsiders, rather to the insiders, since in internal discussions the party did admit that it was on the wrong side. See Sklavos’ statement (ibid). They both refer to the issue of re-entry of the break-away group of Communist Union, which was expelled by the Party in 1924.

³⁷⁴ Such as in the case of Maximos. See Letter of S Maximos to the Politbureau, 1927, F4; See also Report of Thomas Apostolides to all the members of the KKE, 1924, p7, F3, CPA

³⁷⁵ *Rizospastes* 16/3/1927 The statement signed was a declaration against the views of Pouliopoulos (opposition), published in *Rizospastes*’ column on *Internal Discussions*. It was sent by the 6th Piraeus Party Cell.

Almost identical phraseology was used by both leadership and opposition to justify their positions and attack each other (the ‘true’ communists and representatives of the international communist movement against the ‘sectarians’, or ‘social democrats’, etc).³⁷⁶ On many occasions the confrontation turned from political/ideological into personal, on the basis of “who/what are you, and who/what am I”, accompanied by “prescriptions of Leninism, heaping up irrelevant bits and pieces from Lenin’s works.”³⁷⁷ It is interesting to note the opposition’s response to the allegations that appeared in the bourgeois press on a supposedly forthcoming split of the party: “we have never expressed any desire to split from the Communist Party, and we continue, with the same decisiveness, to consider ourselves soldiers of communism.”³⁷⁸

In addition, there were allegations that “party discipline” was rewarded by the assignment of posts in the party hierarchy.³⁷⁹ On the other hand, the opposition also advised its sympathizers/ supporters “to remain in the party by any means possible”, to “align themselves with the party line, present themselves to the masses as advocates of the party line in order to gain their sympathy and occupy party posts.”³⁸⁰ However, compared to the opposition’s claim that its views were shared by the “majority of party members”, the leadership’s claim that it enjoyed a 96% support (although admittedly exaggerated) seems closer to the actual balance of forces in the party.³⁸¹

³⁷⁶ See *Letter to Maximos*, 15/6/1928, F8; *Decision of the Piraeus District Committee on the present party crises*, 1927, F6; *Report on the internal situation and the responsibilities of the Piraeus organization*, 12/8/1927, F6, CPA; Similar ‘practices’ were reported in later inner-party struggles: see *Declaration of the minority of the Politbureau of the CC of KKE*, 11/2/31, F15; *Declaration of Voreinos to the Politbureau on the inner-party struggle*, 1931, F15, CPA

³⁷⁷ Article of Maximos in *Rizospastis* 15/2/1927, published in the special column provided by the paper for internal discussions

³⁷⁸ See *Declaration of Giatsopoulos and Pouliopoulos*, 1/7/1927, p1, F4; See also *Letter of the Piraeus District Committee to the Politbureau*, 16/3/1927, F6; *Agkit – Prop Program of the Piraeus District Committee*, 29/9/1927, F6. Such indications of support to the party would be significant in understanding the lack of rival political parties, which will be dealt with further on this Chapter.

³⁷⁹ “Whoever liked to be seen as disciplined members of the illegal party, even if they were ignorant on persons and situations, were called upon to slander, based on ‘directives’ myself, Kordatos, and other comrades. Their use of course was not without reward: they were ‘appointed’ cell, *achitdes*, district committee leaders, etc.” See *Report of Thomas Apostolides to all the members of the KKE*, 1924, p7, F3, CPA

³⁸⁰ See *Proceedings of the Opposition*, 9/3/1928, p2, F8, CPA

³⁸¹ See *Neo Ksekimima*, June 1927, p1, F4, *Rizospastis*, 27/12/1927. The estimation of the latter is confirmed by evidence on support provided by the proceedings of the opposition itself where it is mentioned: “in Piraeus: we have strength; in Athens: not really; in Salonica: we have just begun to set the foundations; in all other cities we have none.” (See *Proceedings of the Opposition*, 9/3/1928, p3, F8, CPA)

The party's attitude towards the choices of its past leaderships could perhaps be characterized as a continuous process of self-invalidation of its own history.³⁸² Accordingly, past leaderships were dismissed by the succeeding ones as “opportunist”, “liquidarist”, “petty-bourgeois”, “leftist”, “centralist”, “fractionist”, or “without principles”.³⁸³ The ‘aphorism’ of individuals, which in many cases acquired moral, rather than political content (stigmatizing words were used, such as “traitor” or “spy”), was also a frequent practice of party leadership towards those members who had “gone astray”.³⁸⁴ This practice led to the following remark by the representative of the BCF: “the comrades of the Greek Party place too much emphasis on personalities and relationships among individuals...with characterizations of individuals you seek [however] to escape your own responsibilities.”³⁸⁵

During the development of inner and extra-party disputes, opposing fractions adopted ideological characterizations for themselves as well as each other: Stalinists/Leninists – Liquidarists/Trotskyists – Centrists. These ideological categorizations, which later on crystallized in communist party historiography were, however, over-simplistic. Most categorizations were adopted from one or the other side in order, not so much to explain analytically, but to morally and politically discredit the opponent, while at the same time establishing their own moral and ideological ‘high ground’. These, yet again, not only constituted exclusive ideological and political armories in the disputes between Communist Party and Opposition, but between different fractions of the Opposition itself, which was far from homogenous³⁸⁶.

The dichotomy of Stalinism versus Trotskyism poses the most interest, as it is admittedly the most widely present in relevant literature.³⁸⁷ The answer is probably best provided by the founding

³⁸² Accordingly, in the critique made by newly-established leaderships on the previous ones was characterized by a mistake-ology, supported by political characterizations such as ‘opportunist’, ‘sectarian’, etc. The term ‘mistake’ became a “tool of political confrontation and not of analysis” (See Tsokopoulos V, 1990, p82)

³⁸³ See for example KE tou KKE (1945); KE tou KKE (1946); KE tou KKE (1947) etc.

³⁸⁴ Accordingly, Kordatos, a key Marxist theoretician, and former Secretary general of the party will find himself to be called anything, from a “Trotskyist dazed goat” [note: Kordatos was never a Trotskyist], to an “agent of the bourgeoisie” (See *Neoi Protoporoi*, March 1934. The article was signed by Zevgos, member of the Central Committee)

³⁸⁵ The remark referred to the attitude of the Party towards the break-away section of Papanastasiou, that came about to establish the ‘Communist Union’ (see *Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE*, 1991, p196)

³⁸⁶ Accordingly different fractions and groups that considered themselves to be in the ‘Opposition’ of KKE battled with each other “for the title of the genuine Bolshevik” (see *Neos Dromos*, 1/6/1936, p2; *Simea tou Kommounismou*, 10/7/1932, p4, as well as issues of the latter, 17/7/1932 and 24/7/1932)

³⁸⁷ Used both by Communist Party and non-Communist Party publications, each utilizing the dichotomy for their own purposes (for examples of the latter –namely Trotskyist friendly accounts- see Asteriou E & Lambatos G, 1995; Emmanouilides M, 2002)

members of what was later to become the national section of the International Left Opposition. Accordingly, Maximos noted in *Spartakos*, the opposition's theoretical journal, that the inner party struggle that broke out immediately after the Pangalos dictatorship would have occurred despite the existence or not of an "international opposition"³⁸⁸. The leader of the 'opposition' Pouliopoulos also noted in *Spartakos*, that the timing of their movement, in relation to the internal struggles within the CPSU, was merely a "historical coincidence"³⁸⁹. Another Trotskyist, Anastasiades also mentioned that "those years [1925-1927, when the supposed break between Stalinists and Trotskyists occurred] we did not know much about Trotsky. We were not informed on those disputes."³⁹⁰

The dichotomy of 'Hero' versus 'Villain', as an explanation of inner/extra-party disputes, dominated both party as well as the respective opposition's written and spoken legacies, and served as the basis for constructing self-images.³⁹¹ Finally it should be noted that besides the political or the personal character that the inner-party disputes have occasionally acquired, most opposing individual or groups indicated that the drive behind their actions was a deeply rooted belief in the 'cause'; it was a question of which way was the right one.³⁹²

The role of the International in the period 1924-1931

The International became a means of legitimization. By becoming a 'national section' of an international organization such as the Comintern, the Greek socialists added legitimacy and prestige to a Party that otherwise lacked these due to its short history and lack of tradition. It is characteristic that the references to the Communist International increased remarkably during party crises. Indeed,

³⁸⁸ See *Spartakos*, March-April issue, 1928, p130.

³⁸⁹ See *Spartakos*, February Issue, 1928, pp82-9.

³⁹⁰ See Anastasiades Bibliographical Note, in Syriggas Nikos Archive, Sub-File: Memoirs of the member of the Opposition, ELIA

³⁹¹ Accordingly, break-away groups of the Communist Party will present themselves as 'genuine', 'honorable', 'courageous', 'fighters', with 'ethos', having written "the brightest pages in the history of our labor moment". On the other hand, the 'opponent' would be characterized as 'compromising', 'nationalist', 'fascist', 'working behind the scenes', etc (see Nikolopoulos Th, 1983, p7, Stinas A, 1985, pp66, 67, 80, 99, 100 etc)

³⁹² See inter-alia: self-critiques that can be found in the proceedings of the 3rd Extraordinary Party Congress (Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE, 1991); Stinas A (1985); *Declaration of the United Opposition of the KKE*, in *Spartakos*, p1, 4/11/1927, F4, CPA etc. Characteristic is the attitude of 'Stalinist' Barziotas (see Karliafis L, 1991; p8) towards his characterization as 'Stalinist': "I am proud of the characterization...Indeed Stalin committed theoretical and political mistakes, gross violations of the Leninist principles of collective leadership and rules of Party life...", however, "for us, the old generation of KKE, Stalin was considered as the one who carried forward Lenin's work..." (Barziotas V G, 1986, pp345-7)

the 'authority' of the International was used by both leadership and opposition to justify their positions. In a letter of the 'minority of the Politburo' to the 'majority' written in early 1931 there were even allegations that decisions and policies of the Comintern were misused or misinterpreted in order to serve the latter's position in the inner-party struggle. It particularly mentioned: "Comrades, up to now you have pursued an anti-party policy of distorting the opinions of the opposition by forging the documents of the Comintern... You appear as acting in accordance with and under the approval of the Comintern only to serve your own ends..."³⁹³

The interventions of the Comintern took various forms, such as in the decision making of the Central Committee.³⁹⁴ In the debate concerning the composition of the Politburo (meeting of the CC, 4/4/1927), the Comintern representative had proposals on which individuals should be voted into which positions. Those proposals were not without opposition. Papanikolaou commended: "My experience makes me foresee a total anomaly. Fractionism and compulsory resignations. We have to be allowed to vote for a majority of one or the other...freely."³⁹⁵ The answer of the Comintern representative was characteristic:

"Our experience, larger than that of comrade Papanikolaou, does not make me foresee what he does...The delegation proposes precisely the best comrades. The development of other parties shows us the development that the KKE will follow with the solutions put forward by us. The comrades must have faith in the experience of the CI."³⁹⁶

The remark by Chaitoglou that "the manner by which we tend to pull comrades by the hair and place them in higher responsible positions cannot possibly be to the service of the Party"³⁹⁷ came in

³⁹³ *Letter of the minority of the Politbureau to the Politbureau of the CC of KKE, 11/2/31, in F15. See also Letter of Haitas-Eutibiades to the Politbureau, 28/1/1931, F15; Letter of Nefelcudes-Vareinos to the Politbureau, 30/1/1931, F15; Rizospastes, 21/8/1927; Letter to the Polibureau (no43), F4; Why we quite from the Politbureau: Open letter to the members of KKE and the Executive Committee of the Communist International, F4; CPA*

³⁹⁴ It would be difficult to pin-point the exact time that a representative of the Comintern began to be present at meetings of the higher administrative organs of the Party and how regularly, due to the incomplete nature of the Party Archives. However, the earliest example found was in the proceedings of the 3rd Extraordinary Party Congress (26/11-3/12/1924). There is also one present in a CC meeting dating 4/4/1927, F3, CPA

³⁹⁵ *Meeting of the CC, 4/4/1927, p2, CPA*

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *ibid. pp3-4*

vain: the CC voted overwhelmingly in favor of the representative's proposals.³⁹⁸ It should be noted that by 1927 the Soviet Union could claim to be the sole example of a successful revolution, since all other attempts such as Germany and Hungary had failed. Accordingly, the USSR's authority and credibility among communists should not be underestimated. As far as the Comintern was concerned, it regarded itself as "the only representative of Marxism and the only power which is capable of leading the proletariat in its struggle for the overthrow of capitalism."³⁹⁹ This view was shared by the vast majority of Greek communists.

In addition, Comintern interventions manifested themselves in the arbitration of inner-party disputes. This often involved an evaluation on behalf of the CI of the content and the parties involved in the dispute that did not always correspond to reality. Accordingly, Pouliopoulos made the point that "the object of our inner-party struggle is not the acquisition of certificates of 'leftism', but the arbitrary differentiation made by the delegation of the Comintern [between different groups in the Party]."⁴⁰⁰ This differentiation between different groups in the leadership, and their 'classification' was noted to be more reflective of the inner-struggles within the CPSU rather than the KKE.⁴⁰¹ It is also interesting that despite early examples of 'defiance',⁴⁰² the CP increasingly relied on the approval of the CI on organizational matters concerning membership, especially regarding the higher administrative strata of the party.⁴⁰³ However, the CI's interventions were not exclusively aimed to 'silence' opposition, as has often been written, but sometimes to ensure that dialogue was taking place: accordingly during the Third Extraordinary Party Congress the CI

³⁹⁸ Yes: 10, No: 4, Abstentions: 2 (ibid. p4). Similar votes can be found in the proceedings of the 3rd Extraordinary Party Congress, when the proposals of the CI representatives overwhelmingly defeated that of the CCs by 29 votes to 21 (See *Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE*, 1991, p112, see also pages 188 and 191)

³⁹⁹ 'Extracts from an ECCI manifesto on the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Comintern', 2/3/1929, in Degras J (1965) p19

⁴⁰⁰ *Open letter of Pouliopoulos to the members of KKE*, in *Neo Ksekinima*, p6 F4; In a statement addressed to all the members of the Party made by Apostolides it was noted, among others, that there was a degree of favoritism on behalf of the representative of the Balkan Communist Federation (that often operated as a medium between the Party and the CI) towards those in the CC who 'took care and flattered him', who also happened to be the individuals he would choose to talk to. (Report of Thomas Apostolides to all the members of the KKE, F3, CPA)

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, pp10, 12

⁴⁰² Such in the case when the CI representative suggested the expulsion of all members of the party apart from 100 (as a measure of 'cleansing' the party which was torn from inner-party struggles); a suggestion that was strongly opposed by the party and was not carried forward (see *Deltion* 4/5/1926)

⁴⁰³ On 2/10/1927 the Politbureau asked the CI for its approval for the expulsion of two opposition members, which it did not carry forward until the CI has answered positively on the issue (see *Rizospastis*, 10/10/1927 & 21/10/1927. For another case see *Letter to the Politbureau*, 28/1/1931 by Chaitas-Efthimiades, F15, CPA; and *KKE*, 1975a, p579). This tactic appears officially for the first time as part of the organizational structure of the Party as late as the statute of 1936, whereby "the hiring or expulsion of members of the CC must be passed over to the CI and await its approval." (*KKE*, 1975b, p317)

representative cautioned the Party for not having carried forward the necessary discussions at grass roots level, nor receiving feedback from them.⁴⁰⁴ It should be mentioned here, however, that it would be difficult to determine exactly how seriously those cautions were meant. There were also cases when the Party's decision to expel members of the opposition were overturned by the Comintern.⁴⁰⁵ In other words in many cases the CI had the last word.

Finally Comintern interventionism manifested itself in the determination of policies –for example, the case of the Macedonia Question, also known as the National Question. The slogan for a 'Unified and Independent Macedonia' was adopted by the BCF during its 6th and 7th Convention (1924). Hence, the Greek section was required to publish a manifesto propagating this position. The reception of the slogan by the party's local sections was not encouraging, and the majority of them even "refused to debate them altogether", leaving the CC in a position where it received "pressures internally as well as externally".⁴⁰⁶

However, fractures appeared not only at the grass-roots level, but also at the higher levels of Party authority. Stavrides, Kordatos and Apostolides, all members of the CC, warned against the adoption of the slogan arguing that it was alien to the actual national condition since it did not take into account the recent significant changes in the ethnic composition of the territories concerned, notably through the settlement of Greek refugees from Turkey.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, they contended, the policy would favor the nationalist propaganda of 'Greek reactionaries' and trigger a wave of oppression, which could even lead to the outlawing of the party.⁴⁰⁸

Those arguments were put forward at the Fifth CI Congress in 1924. It was recognized that the slogan served the propaganda interests of the Bulgarian party, which was hegemonic within the

⁴⁰⁴ He specifically stressed that "in a regular Congress, the public opinion of the Party must be represented, something which is not the case here. There were no pre-congress meetings among the various branches, but only gatherings of some of the members." (Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE, 1991, p20) See also Istoriko Arxeio (1993) pp21-4, 35-7.

⁴⁰⁵ Such as in the case of Pouliopoulos (see Stinas A, 1985, p123), or the expelled member that went on to form the Communist Union (see the proceedings of the 3rd Extraordinary Congress, in Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE, 1991, pp197-200)

⁴⁰⁶ See *Report of Thomas Apostolides to all the members of KKE*, F3; *Proceedings of the Extraordinary Congress of the Party (November 1924)* p2, CPA; Objections were raised in the 3rd Extraordinary Party Congress by the representatives of the Macedonia District, such as in the case of the Drama branch (Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE, 1991, p188)

⁴⁰⁷ Note that the particular slogan was elaborated by the Bulgarian party only months before the exchange of populations that came after the Asia Minor catastrophe. See SEKE(K), 1991, pp99-102; See also *Report of Thomas Apostolides to all the members of KKE*, F3, CPA

⁴⁰⁸ Papadopoulos' answer was characteristic: "It is certain that we will be under persecution. But won't we be under persecution in all our struggles since we operate under a bourgeois regime?" (Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE, 1991, p119)

BCF, causing fractures within the Federation. But it also recognized that KKE could be outlawed as a result of its potential adoption. Nevertheless, the Comintern insisted on the position of the BCF.⁴⁰⁹ The objections of the Greek party were rejected for reasons ranging from “not-truly communist”, “self-seeking”, “Austro-Hungarian”, “nationalist” and “Luxemburgian”. Moreover, at the Party Congress that followed, the CI representative spoke of a “social-democratic opportunist” tendency.⁴¹⁰ In the vote that followed only 2 votes out of 31 opposed the adoption of the slogan.⁴¹¹

However, it should be noted that the notion put forward by the existing literature, that the adoption of the slogan was a classic example of crude Comintern intervention within its national sections, is somewhat problematic.⁴¹² That is because it does not take into account that the notion of ‘federalism’ in the Balkans was not a foreign invention. On the contrary, it had been an issue propagated by the progressive forces throughout the Balkan states (including Greece), whose roots can be traced as back as the ‘federalist vision’ of Regas Pheraios (Velestinles) at the beginning of the Eighteenth century.⁴¹³ The notion that “the struggle for social salvation of the Balkan peoples” could be only be realized “through the framework of a federalist multi-ethnic *Politeia*” was also popular among the Jewish socialists of Salonica, who held a crucial role in the formation and the politics of the Communist Party.⁴¹⁴ They held a defensive attitude towards the progressive Hellenization of Macedonia.⁴¹⁵

In the 1926 general elections, just two years after the policy’s adoption the Communist Party scored three to four times more votes in Northern Greece (11-16%) than it did on a national average (4,38%). However, the Party provided the government with a pretext for suppression on the grounds

⁴⁰⁹ See *The Communist International (1960)* pp157, 185; *Report of Thomas Apostolodes to all the members of KKE*, F3, CPA

⁴¹⁰ *Declaration of Pouliopoulos to the 3^d Regular Congress of KKE*, 10/9/1926, F2; *Report of Thomas Apostolodes to all the members of KKE*, F3; *Open letter of Pouliopoulos to the members of KKE*, in *Neo Ksekinima*, p6 F4; *Proceedings of the Extraordinary Congress of the Party (November 1924)* p5, CPA

⁴¹¹ The Congress endorsed the views of the CI representative stressing that the adoption of the slogan was not a “product of a narrow conception of discipline, but of conscious realization of our principle program”, “a question of principles...and not a strategic manoeuvre.” See *Proceedings of the Extraordinary Congress of the Party (November 1924)* p, CPA. On a similar tone, Nikolaides, the Party’s representative in the BCF argued at the 3rd Extraordinary Congress of the Party that “the carrying forward of the BCF decisions was not a mere matter of discipline”, but, “our obligation as a communist party.” (*Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE*, 1991, p119)

⁴¹² See, for example Stavrianos L S (1959) p670; Elefantis A G (1999) pp45-48; etc

⁴¹³ See Kordatos G (1977); also Daskalakes A V (1976) and Kitromilides P (1998). This ‘federalist vision’ was also propagated by various ‘bourgeois democratic’ groups such as the ‘Democratic East Federation’ group of Panas, Likiardakopoulos and others (on the particular group see also Zeugos G, 1946, p95)

⁴¹⁴ See Benaroya A (1986) pp9-10, 22

⁴¹⁵ The Jewish socialists saw the annexation of Macedonia by Greece as an “annexation that themselves refused to recognize” See Benaroya A (1986) p34.

that it aimed at the territorial dismemberment of the Greek state. The actual ability or indeed will of the Communist Party to carry forward this project is rather doubtful. Nevertheless, the accusation would constitute the grounds for anti-communist legislation and prosecution up to the 1970s.

Pouliopoulos, who at the Congress was one of the main advocates of the BCF position, made his self-criticism just two years later:

“Our politics on the issue...went bankrupt, and it could not but have gone bankrupt in Greece, because it came, not only as the result of a false estimation of the real balance of forces in our country, but also of a pure revolutionary romanticism...”⁴¹⁶

The proclamation of the policy provoked a series of oppressive measures by the State: party members were prosecuted and convicted for treason, and parliamentary immunity of Communist Deputies in parliament was lifted.⁴¹⁷ The slogan was not replaced until 1936 by ‘Total equality among ethnic minorities’, when it was noted that “the change does not mean the rejection of the Marxist-Leninist principle of the self-determination of peoples”, but is imposed “by the very change in the ethnic composition in the Greek part of Macedonia.”⁴¹⁸ Nearly fourteen years later the Party acknowledged the ‘Greek realities’ that were put forward by its own members at the very beginning, but they had been at the time dismissed as a social-democratic opportunist tendency.

The new Party

This period was initiated by an act of the CI. The intervention of the Comintern arguably reached its peak in 1931, when it carried forward the replacement of the entire Central Committee. CI interventions in the composition of CP leaderships were common during the Third Period (see the cases of Rumania, Yugoslavia and Germany in 1928, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Britain, US and France in 1929, Poland and Spain in 1932). However, it should be stressed that the intervention was officially invited by the Party (indeed by both ‘sides’ involved in the dispute), which found itself

⁴¹⁶ Declaration of Pouliopoulos to the 3rd Regular Congress of KKE, 10/9/1926, F2, CPA

⁴¹⁷ See *Action Review of the CC to the Extraordinary Congress of the KKE (1925)*, p7, F1; *Decision of the Politbureau on the Party policy concerning the Macedonian issue*, 5/1/1928, F8, CPA; *Efimeris ton Sizitisewn tis Voulis*, 1st Period, 2nd Session, 1927-8, pp253-452

⁴¹⁸ KKE (1975b) p296

unable to arbitrate the internal strife on its own.⁴¹⁹ It is crucial to refer to the developments that preceded the CI intervention to understand what followed.

In January 1931 the ECCI issued a resolution regarding the inner struggle over Party tactics in KKE, warning the Party of an imminent split and criticizing the paralysis of Party activity as a result of the on-going internal fighting. The resolution was published in the Party press causing even greater havoc, with the 'minority of the politburo' accusing the 'majority' of using the prestige of Comintern to legitimize its own position within the Party. The rivalry in the Politburo intensified resulting in an almost complete halt in all other Party activity. There were allegations that local organizations that did not side themselves with the majority of the politburo were denied financial aid, and there were several cases whereby Party branches refused to fulfil Party directives.⁴²⁰ In view of the unfolding situation, the majority of the politburo proposed the realization of a Congress "under the guidance of the CI in order to find a way out of the dead end that the Party faces today."⁴²¹

The minority of the politburo also agreed that "the fractionist struggle was leading to a split" and that "the Party had been absorbed in a vicious inner-party struggle between the two groups"; hence it "failed to mobilize its forces against capitalist attack". The solution proposed was not much different than the one put forward by the majority: "Our differences with the present majority of the Politburo continue to exist in full. And they will continue to exist until a final solution is brought about by the ECCI to which we have referred our inner-party disputes." The passage that followed this statement is characteristic: "We side in advance with the Comintern line concerning the arbitration of our inner party struggle. The Communist International, which concentrates the experience of the international revolutionary movement cannot but help our Party to find its way through its tested and proven guidance."⁴²² It comes therefore as no surprise that apart from the objection of a few party officials,

⁴¹⁹ The invitation of the Comintern to intervene is verified by letters and statements coming both from the leadership as well as the opposition: For the prior see *Decision of the Politbureau of the KKE*, 27/4/31, F15, CPA; for the latter see *Declaration of Voreinos to the Politbureau on the mistakes during the inner-party struggle*, 24/3/1931, F15, CPA. The installation of the new leadership was accompanied by a 'Call of the ECCI to all the members of the KKE' (See *Neos Rizospastes*, 1, 2, 3/11/1931)

⁴²⁰ See *Decision of the Politburo of the CC*, 27/4/1931, in F15, CPA, and Letter of Voreinos and Nefeloudes to the Politburo, 30/1/1931, in F15, CPA

⁴²¹ Letter of Chaitas and Eutichiades to the Politburo, 2/2/1931, in F15, CPA

⁴²² Letter of Voreinos to the Politburo, 24/3/1931, in F15, CPA

the new leadership, which 'enjoyed' the approval of the International –and therefore reflected its prestige- was accepted by the grass-root membership with little opposition.⁴²³

The unity achieved within party ranks revived optimism and militancy producing positive results in a short period of time. First of all, KKE's membership began to grow steadily each year up to 1936 ending a long period of stagnation which had objectively limited its capabilities as a party. Over six years (1930-1936) Communist Party membership increased from just 1,500 to some 17,500.

At the same time, the number of workers mobilized by the Communist Party grew significantly. In 1932 KKE-led strikes accounted for 41.5% of the total workers mobilized. In 1933 the respective figure was 80.2%. Following the 1933 elections, the Communist Party became the largest political force in five major working class cities (Larissa, Karditsa, Volos, Xanthe and Kavala) and established itself as an important political actor in many others.⁴²⁴

Based on the decisions of the Seventh Comintern Congress as well as growing domestic demand, in 1935 the Party announced its Popular Anti-fascist Front policy and was active thereafter in its pursuit. Several attempts were made to approach potential allies such as the GSEE, the Agrarian Party, the Socialist Party as well as the Liberals and an Agreement on 'Common action against military fascist dictatorship' was signed in October 1934.⁴²⁵ The character of this effort were reflected in the Security Report of the Ministry of Interior, published in July 1935 by *Acropolis*. The report mentioned that "Special efforts towards that purpose [it refers to the anti-royalist-fascist front] are taking place by the communists at the Labor Center, where, as the report suggests, they find more fertile soil. Their executives in their vast majority already have embraced the slogan of an 'anti-royalist-fascist front', and that is due to the fact that until now in every gathering of Democratic citizens, communist workers and other individuals have played a leading part, demonstrating an aggressive attitude against the authorities and clashing with them."⁴²⁶ The dynamic of the Popular Front was, however, halted by the establishment of General Metaxas' Dictatorship in August 1936, introducing a whole new chapter in the history of the Communist Party of Greece.

⁴²³ Elefantis described the attitude of the party members towards the International's intervention as one of "absolute trust" (See Elefantis A G, 1999, p139)

⁴²⁴ *Party Activity Report*, published in *Neos Rizospastes* 21/1/1934

⁴²⁵ *Rizospastes* 6/10/1934 The parties that signed the agreement were: the KKE, the Agrarian Party, the Socialist Party, the Workers Social Democratic Party, the GSEE, the Unitary GSEE and the Independent Unions.

⁴²⁶ *Acropolis* 17/7/1935

Conclusion

This chapter discussed a number of issues central to the understanding of the development of socialist politics in Greece and to the Communist Party in particular. Uneven development resulted in the concentration of labour in scattered pockets of industrialization. The localism that became a distinct feature of the trade union movement, as seen in chapters 2 and 3, had an impact on the development of socialist thought and action as well. The belated emergence of a nation-wide socialist movement, in combination with key international socialist developments, such as the October Revolution and the formation of the Comintern, and with key national developments, such as nation-building, help to explain the Greek Communist Party's unique characteristics.

It may be argued that the emergence of communism in Greece did not coincide per se with the formation of the Socialist Workers' Party of Greece (SEKE). Indeed, in the period 1918-1924 the SEKE constituted an amalgamation of predominantly social democratic elements and of trade union officials who exercised great influence among large sections of the working class. It was not until the Third Extraordinary Congress of KKE in November 1924 that this period ended. The party now developed a clearer ideological orientation. Nevertheless it faced two serious problems. The first one was the unprecedented wave of suppression that was introduced by the Pangalos' Dictatorship of 1925 and that continued with the introduction of the 1929 *Idionymon* Law. It took the Communist Party a long time to adapt to and deal with these developments. The second problem was that although the party managed to agree on a general ideological orientation as a section of the Communist International, there were subsequent disputes over the tactics that should be utilized to fulfil its goals. The latter led to confusion, a continuous alternation of policies and to internal divisions.

Accordingly, in the period between 1925 and 1931, the Party went through two major internal crises, one in 1925-1927 and another in 1928-1931. The first crisis was mainly about the character of the party, involving views on the necessity of a re-structuring process which entailed a more strict selection of members. This view was expressed and championed by Pouliopoulos and an emerging 'Opposition' group. But it did not find a favourable audience with the majority of the Party, which aspired to become a mass organization and not an elitist group of revolutionary intellectuals. During the second crisis the conflicting views were as follows: one group (Eutichiades, Chaitas) argued that

the focus of the Party should be on the organizational effort. They argued “first organization and then revolution”.⁴²⁷ The other group consisted mainly of trade unionists such as Siantos, Papparigas and Theos who argued in favour of a party policy that focused on transforming the various spontaneous strikes into a general political strike.

Table 25: Changes in slogans and campaigns of the Communist Party in the interwar period⁴²⁸

Date	Slogan / Campaign	Comments
1918	‘Popular Democracy’ (1 st SEKE Congress)	Dismissed as reformist
1920	‘Workers and Peasants government’ (2 nd SEKE-K Congress)	
1926	‘Left Democracy’	Dismissed as reformist
1928	‘Revolutionary Democratic Dictatorship of workers and peasants’ (4 th KKE Congress)	
1930	‘General political strike, of armed demonstrations of the working masses, of mass action of soldiers and sailors’	Dismissed as a leftist deviation by the CI
1932	‘War against war’	
1934	‘United Anti-fascist Front’ (5 th KKE Congress)	

Following the intervention of the Comintern in 1931, the party acquired a clear character and strategy.⁴²⁹ Elefantis characterized the post-1931 KKE as “a new Party” that enjoyed homogeneity at the level of leadership, was free of internal strife and had the legitimizing approval of the Comintern: “Indeed, following the party crisis and the decline of the 1926-1932 period, a wind of optimism, militancy and revolutionary spirit blew within the KKE.” The dynamic that developed in that period reflected in the growing party membership that rose from 1.800 in 1931 to some 15-16.000 by 1936.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ See KKE (1975a) p161

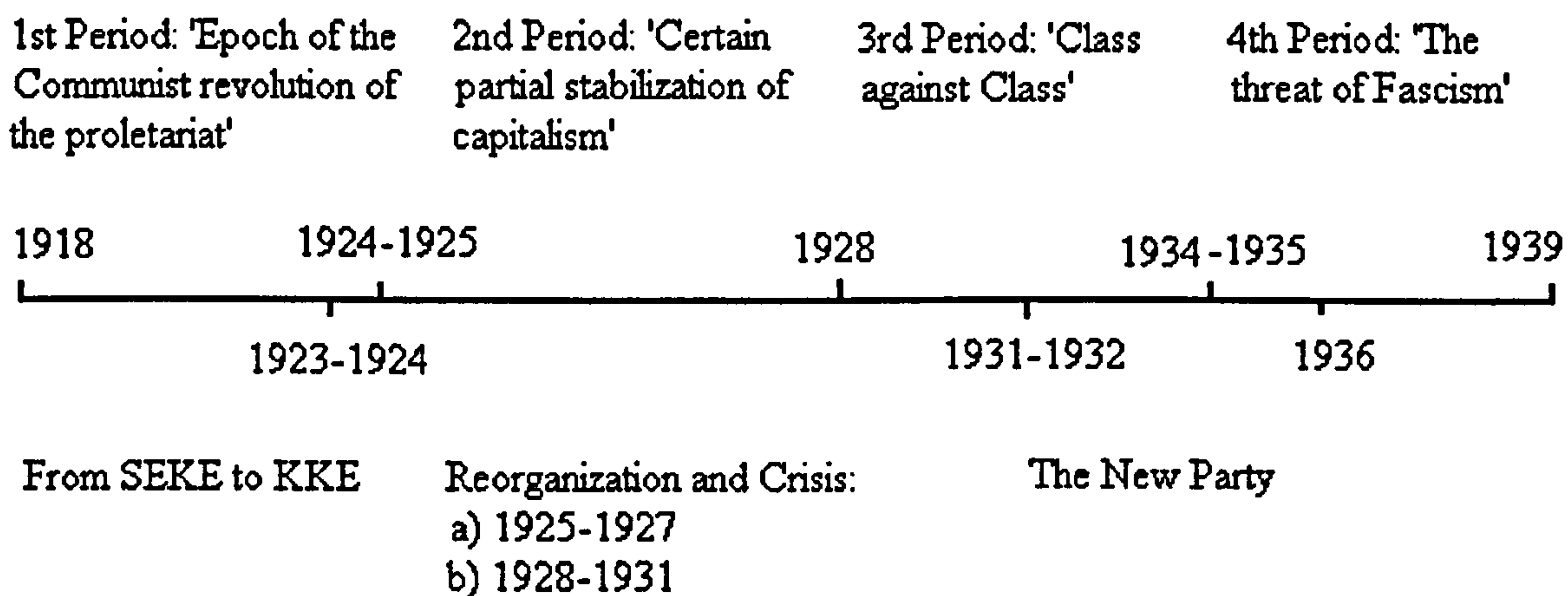
⁴²⁸ Based on the Party’s official documents as they are presented in KKE (1974a), (1974b), (1975a), (1975b), and KE tou KKE (1988)

⁴²⁹ Which in context had to do, among others, with failure to lead the growing spontaneous wave of strikes, the failure of the ‘general political strike’ campaign, the continuation of the inner-party dispute despite the existence of a clear CI directive for its halt, the slowing down of the process of bolshevization, and others. (KKE, 1975a, pp294-306)

⁴³⁰ Elefantis A (1999) p139

Another important aspect of socialist politics was the relation with the International. Accordingly this chapter argued that this relationship was not one of a mere mechanistic implication of Communist International directives by its national section. Policies that made sense in the Greek context and in the minds of Greek socialists were implemented much faster, and in some cases, certain elements of such policies pre-existed in domestic politics, such as in the case of the Macedonia issue and the forming of an underground party apparatus. Those policies of the Communist International that did not correspond either to Greek realities or to sentiments of Greek socialists found strong resistance, from both the top and the bottom of party hierarchy, such in the case of re-organization according to factory cells. Critically, however, this changed over time.

Schema 1: Comintern periodization vs CP historiography periodization



Accordingly, there were distinct differences to the extent the Comintern influenced Communist Party politics. In the first period (1918-1924) the Comintern had little more than 'moral' authority. In this period, SEKE stressed on numerous occasions the need for "national ways to socialism" and accepted the documents of the CI on the grounds of their 'advisory value'.⁴³¹ During the second period (1925-1931) the Comintern influenced the Party in a number of policies, notably the Macedonian Question. However, although Comintern directives were acknowledged in official party documents, there was little elaboration on their subsequent application to Greek realities. In many cases their existence remained on paper only. Nevertheless, there are a number of developments

⁴³¹ See 'Decision on the Communist International', *Rizospastes* 11th and 12th of April 1920 and *Rizospastes* 20/2/1922

within the Communist Party during this period, as we will see later on, that can indeed be traced to wider developments in the international communist movement. It was not until the period after 1931 when the Communist Party managed, with some success, to adapt the general positions of the CI to the specific national conditions and to develop an effective strategy to build upon them and achieve its goals.

Chapter 5: The development of socialist politics, Part II: Qualitative characteristics

This chapter will discuss a number of qualitative characteristics of the development of the Communist Party, with particular emphasis on Party composition and on particular situations. It will examine how Party members responded to state oppression. How did communists manage to extend their influence in a hostile environment? What organizations did they use and how effective were they? This chapter will then discuss the various divergent movements and tendencies that developed internally and externally of the Communist Party. These elements are crucial in providing a holistic picture regarding the development of the Communist Party throughout the interwar period and will prove a useful tool in the later examination of the case studies.

Membership and composition

The following quote from the party press is characteristic of the selection and acceptance of members: “Many members are easy to find. Good members are difficult to get. It is the latter we need to focus on...A good communist does not ask for membership, but for work; does not ask for rights, but for responsibilities. He will earn these rights by carrying forward his responsibilities.”⁴³²

The Greek Communist Party conducted its recruitment in the form of campaigns. This may seem to contradict the above, since although importance was placed on ‘quality’ rather than ‘quantity’, cells were expected to fulfill the requirements of these recruitment campaigns and answer for their success or failure –usually the latter.⁴³³ It was not until 1932 that the party realized that “the question concerning the recruitment of members in the Party is not a matter of special campaigns but one of the most significant day-to-day aspects of its work.”⁴³⁴

The party considered what it characterized as the earlier ‘petit-bourgeois’ composition of its members as the main factor producing inner-party crisis.⁴³⁵ This belief, in addition to the process of bolshevization that stressed the need to attract more industrial workers to the ranks of the party,

⁴³² Accordingly it was stressed to the cells not to accept members without evaluating their past history of struggles and contemporary performance in action. *Deltion*, 4/5/1926

⁴³³ See *Action report of the Salonica District Committee, 1927*, F6; *Action report of the Piraeus District Committee for the months January, February, March 1928*, p5, F10; *Action report of the Athens District Committee, March-August 1926*, p8, F9, CPA

⁴³⁴ Hence the Party called for a “radical change in the up-to-now recruitment methods.” KKE (1975a) p373

⁴³⁵ *Rizospastes*, 23/11/1926

constituted the socio-economic composition of membership as an issue of primary importance.⁴³⁶ A memorandum from the Politburo to the Thessaly District Committee underlined that: “if in a given time period 100 members were recruited, out of which the 70 were not industrial workers, then their recruitment could not be seen as having any value.”⁴³⁷ However, the objective of establishing a membership based on industrial workers was never fully realized, as table 2 indicates.

Table 26: Social composition of Party Membership (1927)⁴³⁸

July 1927	Workers	Non-workers	Peasants	Total	December 1927	Workers	Non-workers	Peasants	Total		
Members	1040	260	292	1592	Members	1189	238	418	1845		
%	60.40	16.40	23	100	%	56.20	12.7	31.2	100		
Cells	Industry	Small Industry	Street	Village	Total	Cells	Industry	Small Industry	Street	Village	Total
Number	53	77	31	51	222	Number	58	75	30	79	242
%	28.20	34.50	14.20	23	100	%	19.25	32.20	37.75	37.75	100

By 1933 the social composition of party membership was as follows: Factory workers: 6.6%, Other workers: 36%, Land laborers 3.7%, Total workers 46.3%, poor and middle peasants: 50.7%, Employees: 1%, and Miscellaneous: 2%: “Not at all satisfactory”, according to the Party.⁴³⁹ On the other hand, the social composition of member representation at party congresses was overwhelmingly in favor of members of working class origin.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁶ See *Report of the Athens District Committee*, March to August 1926, p6, F9, CPA; *Analysis of the decisions of the 4th Party Congress*, F8; The examination of the past of members was also an additional measure of preventing “instruments of State security forces from infiltrating the cell” (KKE, 1975a, p418)

⁴³⁷ See *Memo of the Politbureau of the CC to the Thessaly District Committee*, 18/3/1928, F8, CPA; Note that Thessaly is a predominantly peasant district.

⁴³⁸ The numbers are presented exactly as shown in the party statistics (even when in cases they don't add up to precisely 100%). See *Strength and Composition of the Party during the two periods July-December 1927*, F8; Similar numbers can be found from statistics drawn from Districts with relatively high concentration of workers, such as in the case of Athens (workers: 53%, peasants: 31%, misc: 16%), or the Macedonia District (Industrial workers: 27.6%, other workers: 25%, peasants: 39.9%, misc: 7.3%). See respectively *Statistics for the Athens Organization*, June 1927-November 1928, F4; *Organizational Status, October 1928*, F10, CPA

⁴³⁹ KKE (1975a) p473

⁴⁴⁰ At the 4th Party Congress (1928) the social composition of the delegates were as follows: workers: 70.8%, peasants: 8.4%, misc: 20.8%. See *Analysis of the decisions of the 4th Party Congress*, p2, F12, CPA. Similarly, there was efforts to keep a ‘working class majority’ in the composition of the leadership as well (See *Istoriko Tmima tis KE tou KKE*, 1991, p188)

It is interesting to note that up to the early 1930s,⁴⁴¹ membership remained at more or less the same levels, with minor fluctuations upwards or downwards. This appears to be not so much due to the lack of recruitment, but due to the fact that new recruitment only just marginally made up for the number of members who were expelled, quit, or became “inactive”.⁴⁴² It is also quite interesting to note the ratio between party members and party “influenced”.⁴⁴³ In the Salonica District, for example, the ratio between party members and party influenced ranged from 1 to 2, to as much as 1 to 25. That meant that the Party’s strength could not be measured solely on the grounds of its membership, but extended, to a wider circle of people.

Table 27: Party members and party ‘influenced’ as reported for the 1st *Achtida* of the Salonica District (1928)⁴⁴⁴

Cell	Members	Influences	Ratio m/i	Cell	Members	Influences	Ratio m/I
1 st	10	250	1/25	4 th	7	15	½
2 nd	25	350	1/14	5 th	17	200	1/12
3 rd	15	120	1/8	7 th	4	90	1/22.5

To what extent did it make sense to re-organize a party along the lines of workplace, with special emphasis on factory cells considering that Greece was largely an agricultural country, and that Greek politics were traditionally characterized by an intense localism? No doubt, it had partly to do with concerns within the party over its identity. However, although it may appear at first glance that the re-organization entailed by bolshevization was entirely a product of a misconceived mechanistic application of a CI directive to distinctive domestic conditions, it should be noted that the re-organization of the party had been on the agenda since June 1922, due to the nature of the

⁴⁴¹ KKE (1975a) pp471-483

⁴⁴² See for example *Action report of the Central and West Macedonia District Committee*, F6; *Organizational strength and Social composition of KOA in the period March to September 1928*, F9; It is also interesting that at the 1928 Party Congress only 8.3% of members were members since the first 2 years since the party was founded (1918-1919), whereas the percentage of members who had join in the last 3 years since the Congress (1925-1927) was 37.4%. See *Analysis of the decisions of the 4th Party Congress*, p2, F12; The ‘party age’ of the Athens organization in 1926 was 1-2 years: 75%, 2-4 years: 15%, 4years and over: 10%. See *Report of the Local Committee on the status of the Athens Organization and on the action of the committee and the measures for the betterment of party work*, F2, CPA

⁴⁴³ Party ‘influences’ were mainly Party sympathizers that were seen as potential members

⁴⁴⁴ *Report of the last Session of the Salonica Organization*, 1/4/1928, p2, F10, CPA

“contemporary political situation.”⁴⁴⁵ The latter referred to the realization that the existing party organization left members too exposed and, hence, vulnerable to increasing state oppression.

Elections

The party's attitude towards the issue of elections is analytically significant, since it provides qualitative and quantitative answers to a considerable number of CP historiographers who have presented the KKE as a 'sect', based, at times, almost exclusively on the record of its electoral performance.⁴⁴⁶ They do not take into account however, that the party itself did not consider itself as another 'electoral machine' comparable to other Greek political parties during the inter-war period. As Stavrides argued: “The Party does not believe it can ever win power through elections but only through revolution. Yet it must always take part in elections because the electoral campaign offers excellent opportunities for propaganda and agitation; besides, the rostrum of Parliament is an excellent forum for the propagation of the Party's views to the people.”⁴⁴⁷

Accordingly party cells were instructed that putting aside day-to-day party work in favor of electoral campaigns was totally unacceptable.⁴⁴⁸ The party also discouraged local or district party branches that would put forward 'moderate' electoral programs aiming at improved voting turnouts, as these, it believed, would lead to “the direct adulteration or even disappearance of the class character of mass struggles...”⁴⁴⁹

The party's electoral turnout in areas with higher concentrations of working class voters was as much as 2-5 times the national average.⁴⁵⁰ Indeed, the party obtained the first place in the voters' preferences in a number of working class towns such as Volos, Serres, Kavalla, Drama, Xanthe, and working class municipalities of Athens and Piraeus, such as Drapetsona, Kaisariani and Kallithea.⁴⁵¹ Yet, the ratio of party support and actual votes appears to have been unbalanced. The party claimed to have mobilized as many as 150,000 people during its electoral campaigns in 1932 and 1933 but received just 60,000 and 80,000 votes respectively. Although this could simply be a matter of the

⁴⁴⁵ *Rizospastis*, 29/6/1922

⁴⁴⁶ Such as for example Kousoulas D G (1965); Mavrogordatos G (1986) etc

⁴⁴⁷ Stavrides, quoted by Kousoulas D G (1965) p40; See also *Action Report of the CC, from 9/9/1926-25/2/1927*, p14, F3, CPA

⁴⁴⁸ See *Action Report of the CC, from 9/9/1926-25/2/1927*, p8, F3, CPA

⁴⁴⁹ See *Letter of the Politbureau to the Salonica District Committee*, 18/5/1929, p2, F13, CPA

⁴⁵⁰ See relevant tables see Appendices 1 and 2

⁴⁵¹ See KKE (1975b) p190, 300; *Neos Rizospastis*, 1/10/1932; Linardatos, cited in Vournas T (1997) p381

Party exaggerating the numbers, it seems to be confirmed by the electoral results of local elections, which was relatively higher, ranging from 15-60%.⁴⁵² This was also due to other factors: a party report acknowledged that not all votes for the party were “conscious” or ideologically aware votes. The number of ‘non-conscious votes’ was estimated at some 20% of the total.⁴⁵³ It should also be taken into account that the anti-communist law of *Idionymon* denied those who were convicted under it of their electoral rights.⁴⁵⁴

State oppression and its impact on the Communist Party

State oppression against the party manifested itself in a multiplicity of ways during the inter-war period. First of all, it was apparent through threats against participation in party rallies. This occurred through the press, the issuing of leaflets and false announcements concerning supposed cancellation of rallies, and the personal intervention of officials. In Larissa, for example, the National Bank warned that possible attendance at a forthcoming party rally would result in “a refusal of credit.”⁴⁵⁵ By 1928, it would be within the official competence of the authorities to shadow public gatherings and ‘suspicious persons’.⁴⁵⁶

This authoritarianism also manifested itself in the form of prosecution of Labor centers and trade unions associated with the party “aiming to the bankruptcy of the KKE in the consciousness of workers”, on the one hand, and a “positive contribution to the reactionary labor center in order to substitute for the CP”, on the other.⁴⁵⁷ Communist Party members were also often laid off in factories,⁴⁵⁸ as well as expelled from their trade unions.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵² The estimates were calculated by the numbers cited in *Statistiki ton Vouleutikon Eklogon, 1933, 1936* and from *Greece-Communism: Report for the First Half Year, 1935*, FQ286/1131, PRO; *Neos Rizospastes*, 1/10/1932, 9/4/1933. Not all communist members or supporters were holders of electoral books (which were necessary to vote). On the 1936 election *Rizospastes* mentions that “in certain Party Cells at least one third of the members did not possess electoral books...The same, more or less, was the case among the supporters of the Popular Front.” *Rizospastes*, 31/1/1936

⁴⁵³ See *Report of the Executive Committee from 1/9 to 15/11 1925 to the Extraordinary Session of Salonica*, p8, F1, CPA

⁴⁵⁴ See *Rizospastes* 8/1/1936

⁴⁵⁵ See *Report on the Peasant Rally of 10/7/1927*, F5; There were reports from other party rallies concerning attempts to arrest the speakers, etc (*Letter of the East Macedonia and West Thrace District Committee to the Politbureau, 5/5/1930*, F14, CPA)

⁴⁵⁶ See *Foreign Office to the Undersecretary of State Report, 29/8/1929*, p99 in FO 371-12926, PRO; *Duties that may be allocated to the Gendarmerie in the Towns Police are, or may be in the future, established, 29/3/1928*, p2, PRO

⁴⁵⁷ “The class conscious trade unions...that have not yet been dissolved by law, were denied the right of assembly and rallying...The arrests, imprisonment, and exile of our militants are a daily phenomenon...”

Another method utilized by the authorities was the infiltration of informants into party ranks.⁴⁶⁰ Admittedly, one has to question the validity of accusations of 'spying' both by the communist party itself, which used the term regularly to dismiss political opponents, as well as in police reports, which included individuals who sold 'information' as an easy source of income. There are, however, cases that confirm the practice of infiltration which refer to specific party members, such as the case of the editor of *Rizospastes* (1929).⁴⁶¹

There were also violent confrontations with the forces of the police, cavalry and occasionally the army. These were employed to dissolve party or party-led rallies and demonstrations.⁴⁶² Violent clashes also took place with supporters of the Venizelist or the Royalist 'camp'.⁴⁶³ The most frequently utilized method of oppression against the Communist Party was perhaps the imprisonment or exile of grass-roots and top party members (*Stelechi*).⁴⁶⁴ The ill-treatment of communist party members while in confinement was almost an every day phenomenon: on average, in the period 1927-1936 there are 198 allegations concerning use of violent treatment published per annum in *Rizospastes* alone.⁴⁶⁵ The conditions of confinement were even worst in exile, as described

Resolution of the Session of Central West Macedonia on the status and responsibilities of the party organization, 16-17/4/1932, p2, F17; See also Action Report of the Salonica District Committee, from VI-XIX 1927, p3, F6; Action Report of the Central and West Macedonia District Committee, F6, CPA

⁴⁵⁸ As a result the factory cell (M) was dissolved. See *Action Report of the Athens District Committee for the Second regular District Session of the Athens organization, p10, F9, CPA*. Similar examples are reported also in Pireaus, resulting to the dissolvment of the 8th and 13th cell of the 4th *Achtida* (see *Action Report of the Piraeus District Committee for the months January, February, March 1928, p10, F10, CPA*) Also in the case of Rail-workers (*Rizospastes* 5/1/1927) and Tobacco Workers (*Rizospastes* 3/4/1927)

⁴⁵⁹ Such as in the case of 15 party members from the Shop Assistants Union of Athens under the allegation that "they were trying to take over the Union in order to turn it into an instrument of their anti-national propaganda" (See *Proceedings of the Emergency General Meeting, 30/3/1933, in Aristides Dimitratos Archive, File1, ELIA*). Another example can be found in *Meeting Shop-Assistants Union of Athens, 19/11/1928, in Aristides Dimitratos Archive, File1, ELIA*) when 23 members were expelled on the grounds that they were pursuing "foreign aims".

⁴⁶⁰ See *Letter of the Central and West Macedonia Organization to the Politbureau of the CC, 26/9/1930, p3, F14, CPA*. In *Neos Rizospastes, 12/1/1933* the party warned "all the party branches", that informers "travel around the country side presenting themselves as party officials, possessing false certificates and seals of the CC of KKE)

⁴⁶¹ This information is included in a report of the Admiralty (GEN) to the Ministry of Interior-Ministers Office, characterized as 'top secret', entitled: *On the collection of evidence on the matter of distribution of revolutionary brochures, 14/5/1929, in Zavitsianos Archive, File1, ELIA*.

⁴⁶² See *Letter of the Central and West Macedonia District Committee to the Politbureau, 16/3/1928, p2, F10, CPA*

⁴⁶³ These were usually intensified during election periods: see *Rizospastes* 7/1/1924, 22/8/1928 etc

⁴⁶⁴ See *Report of the East Macedonia and West Thrace District Committee to the Politbureau, 7/11/1927, F5; Analysis of the decisions of the 4rth Party Congress, p1, F8; Letter of the Politbureau to the Thessaly District Committee, 18/3/1928, F8, CPA*

⁴⁶⁵ *Rizospastes, 28/7/1925* In view of the treatment communist party members received from the authorities the party warned: "Those who get arrested must not talk on what they know on organizational matters of

in a letter dated 20/7/1926 by Maximos: “malaria is destroying us. We are in a state of physical, typical as well as practical isolation...”⁴⁶⁶

The party’s electoral campaigns were obstructed by methods that included confiscation of electoral material, electoral fraud, arrests of party candidates, closures of its electoral centers; the ill-treatment of its electoral representatives –who observe the regularity of the electoral process, arrests and exile of party members and sympathizers.⁴⁶⁷

The Party press was banned for periods, and its circulation obstructed.⁴⁶⁸ Occasionally, the authorities even imposed ‘pre-emptive bans’ on particular kind of articles, which “would refer to the provocation of passions, the incitement of divisions, or the encouragement of citizens to disobedience, and the spread of subversive and worrying news.”⁴⁶⁹ The authorities could be quite resourceful in coming up with allegations to prosecute members who distributed brochures or other propaganda material. Indeed, in Thassos, three party members were taken to the prosecutor on the allegation that they were “stirring [the population] into civil war”!⁴⁷⁰ During the period 1929-1931 alone there were 175 reported indictments against the paper, which amounted to a total of 202 years of prison and millions of drachma in fines. At the same time there were 24 police raids and attacks by extreme right groups against its offices and press facilities.⁴⁷¹

At the same time among some sections of society there was indirect tolerance and sometimes active support of state involvement⁴⁷². This was seen in the setting up and encouragement of para-state anti-communist organizations of fascist or ultra-nationalist orientation, such as the ‘All-Worker Union of Nationalist Trade Unions’, the “Organization of the National Sovereign State”, the

the party. To talk about anything, even after beating or other torture, would be considered treason against the struggle...” *Deltion*, 1/2/1926. Ill-treatment was so harsh that occasionally resulted to death (*Rizospastes*, 16/7/1931)

⁴⁶⁶ Letter of Maximos 20/7/1926, KKE Archives. Persecution has occasionally caused international reaction (See *Protest of the Austrian ‘Committee against Terrorism’*, in *Rizospastes* 5/6/1927; *Protest of the Defense Committee for the Victims of White Terror*, in *Rizospastes* 17/6/1927, etc)

⁴⁶⁷ *Ergatikos Agon*, 29/9/1920; Linardatos S cited by Vournas T (1997) pp380-1. See also reports by *Rizospastes* 12/1/1936 until 27/1/1936. Allegations against various means of obstruction of the Party’s electoral campaign are reported daily.

⁴⁶⁸ *Rizospastes*, 6/7/1930; 18/7/1930; *Neos Rizospastes*, 12/12/1932. *Rizospastes* was renamed to *Neos Rizospastes* from 1/9/1931 to 11/3/1934, due to a ban its publication

⁴⁶⁹ *Memo to all newspapers of Athens and Pireaus*, 10/10/1935, in Sfaelos Dimitrios Archive, ELIA

⁴⁷⁰ *Rizospastes* 7/2/1927

⁴⁷¹ See Zorbalas G (1967) p70

⁴⁷² By 1935 the admiration of high government officials with fascism and its ‘achievements’ was clearly evident. Government Vice-President G Kondylis’s words were characteristic: “The Duce. By creating fascism and placing it as a barrier to the wave of catastrophe utopian ideas [he is referring to the Russian Revolution], saved the world...from barbarism...Long live Italy, long live the Duce!” cited by Vournas T (1997) p386

“Company of Social Defense and Providence”, and the organization of ‘National Conferences’ (‘Against the Enemies and Corruptors of Religion, Language, Family, Property, Moral Consciousness of the Country’).⁴⁷³ Towards the end of the interwar period, violence against members of the KKE by such groups became progressively intensive, resulting sometimes even in death.⁴⁷⁴

State oppression had a variety of results. In many cases party cells were dissolved, and party work in trade unions was suspended or diminished. Party members were reported to be “literally terrified”.⁴⁷⁵ Many sections of the party were unable to convene due to the lack of quorum, resulting in disruptions in the day-to-day functions of the party at a grass-root level.⁴⁷⁶ On some occasions state oppression led to passivity or “disbelief that, with its present strength, the party was able to defend itself...”⁴⁷⁷

Due to hiding, imprisonment or exile, the party was often deprived of its executive members, seriously distorting its decision making process. A letter from the Politburo to the Thessaly District Committee dated March 1928 stated: “On the vacuums that were created due to arrests there is no other way of filling them, other than the spring up of new *stelechi* [executive members].”⁴⁷⁸ Those arrested included the party secretary (1925), the Central Committee in its entirety in 1926. This was replaced by a reserve CC set up precisely in the event of such a development. Arrests also involved the party’s MPs (1932), and the party’s elected local authority officials, including the Mayor of Kavalla (1934).⁴⁷⁹ The arrests, apart from the impact on the organization of the Party, had an impact

⁴⁷³ See KKE (1975a) p335; Rizospastes 24/4/1934, 5/11/1934, 21/12/1934; Action Report of the CC to the Extraordinary Congress of KKE, 1925, pp8, 12, F1, CPA; Resolution of the Session of Central-West Macedonia on the status and responsibilities of the party organization, 16-7/4/1932, p1, F17, CPA; Dimaras A (1975) p143 Mission Statements of such organizations propagated “the battle against foreign propagandas, and especially communist propaganda” (Mission Statement of National Union of Greece [EEE], 1927, in Sfaelos Dimitrios Archive, ELIA)

⁴⁷⁴ Such as in the case of Thomopoulos, who dies from an attack from members of the EEE (National Union Greece), see Syriggas Nikos Archive, File1, ELIA. Note that in 4/6/1927 Labor leader Dimitratos sent a telegram to the Minister of Agriculture asking him to “mediate to the Government in order for the official armoring of the ‘conservative’ workers should commence, so that they could defend themselves against the communists.” (See Rizospastes 5/6/1927)

⁴⁷⁵ See Action Report of the Athens District Committee for the Second regular District Session of the Athens organization, p10, F9, CPA; See also Action Report of the Piraeus District Committee for the months January, February, March 1928, p10, F10, CPA; On the wider impact on trade unions see Memo of the Politbureau to all the party organizations on the re-organization of trade-unions, 26/6/1930

⁴⁷⁶ Rizospastes, 9/5/1921, 20/2/1922

⁴⁷⁷ Rizospastes, 15/8/1931

⁴⁷⁸ Letter of the Politbureau to the Thessaly District Committee, 18/3/1928, F8, CPA; See also Report of the East Macedonia and West Thrace District Committee to the Politbureau, 7/11/1927, F5, CPA; Analysis of the decisions of the 4th Party Congress, p1, F8; Report on the post-strike condition of Salonica, p1, F11, CPA

⁴⁷⁹ Rizospastes, 16/4/1925, Deltion, 1/2/1926, Neos Rizospastes, 12/12/1932; Rizospastes, 9/9/1934

on its politics as well, since the absence of certain executive members could easily change the balance of forces in the Central Committee.⁴⁸⁰

On the other hand, the violent clashes with the state authorities often had the opposite results, arousing enthusiasm and fighting spirit among the victims of their aggression. A letter to the Politburo dated March 1928 notes: "We should not try to avoid confrontations...but seek confrontations which arouse the militancy of the masses."⁴⁸¹

Accordingly, the party developed a variety of means of defense against state oppression. These included the acquisition of typewriters and polygraphs to ensure the continuation of publications of the party press, as well as the establishment of 'safe houses' for party meeting and sessions.⁴⁸² Preferably these were houses of party sympathizers, rather than members who were known to the authorities. Public places, such as trade union offices were avoided.⁴⁸³

Party cells were instructed to keep records of only absolutely necessary party material; the rest were to be destroyed.⁴⁸⁴ They were to set up 'substitute committees' and secretaries, in case their regular counterparts were dissolved or deprived of members due to persecution.⁴⁸⁵ Contact between party 'center' and 'periphery' through the post and other written means was to be limited, and increasing emphasis was put on direct (face to face) exchange of information⁴⁸⁶ They were also to re-arrange re-assembling points in case rallies and demonstrations were dissolved, and to set up safeguard measures for rallies and speakers.⁴⁸⁷ Anti-fascist unions and clubs were also founded.⁴⁸⁸

The Party also established "Workers' Relief", an organization that aimed to provide legal, financial and moral help to the persecuted, imprisoned, exiled members and their families⁴⁸⁹ There were also 'survival groups, or collectives' organized in prison as well as in exile, which worked as a means of

⁴⁸⁰ Such as in 1930 when majority in the Politbureau (Chaitas, Eytichiades, Douvas, Karagiannes, and Nefeloudes) became a minority after the arrest of Chaitas and Eytichiades

⁴⁸¹ See *Letter of the Central and West Macedonia District Committee to the Politbureau*, 16/3/1928, p3, F10, CPA; on a similar note see *Letter of the East Macedonia and West Thrace District Committee to the Politbureau*, 5/5/1930, F14, CPA

⁴⁸² *Letter of the Cavalla organization to the Politbureau*, 17/5/1927, F10; *Memo of the Politbureau to all the party organizations*, 8/1/1929, F12, CPA

⁴⁸³ *Memo of the Politbureau to all the party organizations*, 8/1/1929, p1, F12, CPA

⁴⁸⁴ *Memo of the Politbureau to all the party organizations*, 8/1/1929, p1, F12, CPA

⁴⁸⁵ *Memo of the Politbureau to all the party organizations*, 8/1/1929, p1-2, F12, CPA

⁴⁸⁶ *Memo of the Politbureau to all the party organizations*, 8/1/1929, p2, F12, CPA

⁴⁸⁷ *Letter of the Central and West District Committee to the Politbureau*, 16/3/1928, p2, F10, CPA; *Letter of the East Macedonia and West Thrace to the Politbureau*, 5/5/1930, F14, CPA

⁴⁸⁸ *Resolution on the organization of Anti-Fascist Unions of self-defence*, 1932, pp1-2, F16, CPA

⁴⁸⁹ There will be further elaboration 'Worker's Relief' further on in this Chapter

solidarity, but also acquired an educational, political and moral character.⁴⁹⁰ Workers' Relief even organized escapes from prison or exile.⁴⁹¹

In May 1932 *Deltion* brought to the attention of party members an additional hazard to the party: gossip! The article mentioned in particular:

“On many occasions, gossip that involves party matters in cafes and streets by comrades and non-comrades, has become the cause of assault on party organizations...In the case of Piraeus, comrades opened a conversation with non-party members ‘when x was the secretary we were doing well, and now that we have y the organization has dissolved’...[and as a consequence] they were sounded out by security forces-informers who seek to open such discussions.”⁴⁹²

Legal and illegal status

Kousoulas mentions that “while the Politburo was organizing the ‘illegal’ apparatus, the Communist Party was legally recognized and operated freely in the political arena.”⁴⁹³ In a collection of memoirs Partsalidou makes reference to the nature of ‘legality’ the Communist Party enjoyed:

“So we therefore entered legality, or rather to the well-known status of semi-illegality, the ‘legal-illegality’ as we called it then. Communists who were handing out leaflets were arrested, there were search raids in houses, others were dragged to the police stations for their documents, there was biting in Security [police stations]”⁴⁹⁴

The question of legal and illegal status and activity received a great deal of debate in the party. Up to 1923 there were numerous occasions where the party expressed its intentions to operate within the

⁴⁹⁰ See *Birkas K* (1966) p98; *Kamarinou K A* (2002) see Part4, pp111-113, CPA

⁴⁹¹ Such as in the case of Bezantakos M on 4/3/1932 (see Syriggas Nikos Archive, File1, ELIA)

⁴⁹² *Deltion*, no4, May 1932 (photocopy), F16, CPA

⁴⁹³ Kousoulas D G (1965) p86

⁴⁹⁴ Partsalidou A (1983) p10-11

framework of legality.⁴⁹⁵ This tendency in the party manifested itself in the so-called 'February Theses', in which it was noted that state oppression was "beyond the party's capacities to cope", and that therefore the party was in need of an "extended period of legality".⁴⁹⁶ These views were dismissed "*de facto*" just 4 months later, and characterized as "opportunist".⁴⁹⁷

Apostolides' account of 'how we got' to the February Theses involved a combination of factors. First of all, the initial blend of the beliefs of the founders of the party "did not constitute a very safe guarantee for the revolutionary development of the party." Secondly, he pointed to "the decline of the revolutionary movement of Europe". Thirdly, he noted the failure "of the 'leaders' at the 1920 elections", and also the persecutions "that made them reveal their true selves".⁴⁹⁸

The question of legality derived from objective conditions, namely the inability of the party organization to cope with external pressures. Hence, it became an issue of contention among the different ideological currents of a party that had still not crystallized its political identity. Eventually, an 'underground' party organization was set up to co-exist with the 'legal' one.⁴⁹⁹ The process, however, due to the inexperience of the party, was not without problems: there were reports of inefficiencies of the 'illegal' apparatus up until the early 1930s. Commenting on the impact of state persecution against the Greek Communist Party and the latter's ability to develop an underground mechanism, the CI official Kabaktsiev wrote: "Unfortunately the KKE did not have the experience of its sister parties and therefore, the present conditions of terrorism have resulted in the complete disintegration of the party activities."⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁵ These included the issue of a series of complaints to the government on the imprisonment of members, obstruction of the party's electoral campaigns, bans on party rallies etc: note that these bans were respected, and the party's response did not go further than the issue of a complaint. Later on those bans would not be as effective. See *Rizospastes* 13/2/1919; 23/11/1919; 13/11/1921; 20/2/1922; 12/4/1922. It should be noted that such concerns were not exclusive to the Communist Party, but also to the wider organizational manifestations of the Greek Left: In the Proceedings of the Socialist Party of Yiannios it was mentioned, among others, that organizing political rallies were not even "an issue for debate", if they fell outside the limits of legality defined by the regime. (*Proceedings Book of the Administrative Committee, Meeting of 3/7/26, Yannis Archive, File 1, ELIA*)

⁴⁹⁶ *Rizospastes* 20/2/1922. See also Apostolides A. & Dagkas A. (1989) pp58-9

⁴⁹⁷ *Rizospastes* 27/5/1923. On the ideological changes and shift of party tactics see the sections 'From Social Democracy to Bolshevization', and 'Inner-party Struggles'.

⁴⁹⁸ *Report of Thomas Apostolides to all the members of KKE*, F3, CPA

⁴⁹⁹ The party insisted throughout the inter-war period on the co-existence of the 'legal' and 'illegal' apparatus: "We need to fight decisively the legalist tendencies concerning the adaptation of our work in the possibilities provided by the bourgeois law, as much as the 'left' ones, that abandon without a fight all possibilities of legal work and proclaim the direct pass to illegality." KKE (1975a) p370

⁵⁰⁰ *Deltion*, no1, February 1926. See also *Action Report of the CC from 9/9/1926 to 25/2/1927*, p7, F3; *Report on the Party status during the July Session, 1927*, p11, F8; *Letter of the Politbureau to the Salonica*

Legal 'front' organizations: Defence mechanisms against state persecution and ideological incorporation

The Party developed legal organizations to defend itself against state repression. As one Party report states: "KKE, although an illegal organization, must form whenever possible, legal organizations in order to use them for propaganda and agitation among the masses. Co-operatives, art, sport and other organizations could be included in such 'legal' organizations."⁵⁰¹ The KKE established a number of such organizations. One example was Workers' Relief.

Workers' Relief (*Ergatiki Voithia*) was the Greek section of the Workers' International Relief (M.O.P.R). It was established following the period of Pangalos' Dictatorship (1924-1925), and it aimed to provide "relief for the victims of proletarian struggle through the development of class solidarity and the exploitation of the humanitarian beliefs of the petit-bourgeois strata."⁵⁰² The Party stressed the importance of not presenting "Workers' Relief" as a communist organization, the effects of which "would be catastrophic", considering that "the period of relative legality is only temporary."⁵⁰³ The Greek section of Workers' Relief, like its International counterpart contributed a great deal in creating "points of contact" with the majority of "indifferent workers who live apathetically, who have never taken part in political events."⁵⁰⁴

International Workers' Relief was gradually marginalized after 1929 as a consequence of the Third Period. However, despite occasional reports of mishandling funds,⁵⁰⁵ the Greek section of Worker's Relief engaged in significant activity throughout the rest of the interwar period, providing material and moral support for the exiled, the imprisoned, fugitives escaping prosecution and their families, as well as legal and medical support.⁵⁰⁶ However, the organization did not manage to conceal its

District Committee, 19/9/1928, p2, F8; Decision of the Central and West Macedonia District Committee, F15, CPA

⁵⁰¹ See *Deltion*, no1, February 1926, KKE (1975a) p525, KKE (1975b) p191

⁵⁰² See *Deltion*, no2, February 1926, F2, *Decision of the 3rd Congress of KKE on Red Relief*, pp1-2, F3., CPA

⁵⁰³ *Decision of the 3rd Congress of KKE on Red Relief*, pp4, F3, CPA

⁵⁰⁴ Munzenberg W, quoted in Carr E H (1976a) p273

⁵⁰⁵ Such allegations can be found in *Letter of the Cavalla organization to the District Committee Bureau, 12/12/1928, F10; Report on the handling of the W.R.C, 1928, pp1, 3, F10, CPA*

⁵⁰⁶ *Report to the Politbureau of the CC of KKE, 28/8/1928, p1, F8, CPA; Letter of the Central and West Macedonia District to the Politbureau of the CC, 26/9/1930, p2, F14, CPA; For first hand experience on the work of WR see Partsalidou A (1983) pp15, 17, 60*

party affiliations, partly due to the attitudes of members themselves who saw it as an extension of the party, and by the mid-1930s Workers' Relief was declared illegal by the courts.⁵⁰⁷

The 'Union of Old Soldiers' was the Greek section of 'Internationale des Anciens Combattants et des Victimes de la Guerre', established in 1924. This consisted mainly of demobilized soldiers of the Asia Minor front. With slogans such as "war against war" and a radical agrarian reform program, the Union managed to make considerable progress, and soon they "were to be found everywhere" with a membership amounting "to at least 20,000."⁵⁰⁸

Another front organization was the 'Red Federation of Sport'. Red Sport involved a variety of sports, ranging from football, running, boxing, swimming, cycling, volley-ball to boat racing, witnessed considerable growth consisting by the mid-1930s of some 100 sport clubs and 10,000 members nation-wide.⁵⁰⁹ It maintained that "the bourgeois class shows us the way. It shouts at us: Sports for class struggle."⁵¹⁰ Finally, other organizations included 'Friends of Soviet Russia', 'Social Solidarity', 'Pan-Hellenic Anti-Fascist Organization' and 'Union of Defense against Capitalist Attack'. All of these were national sections of an international network of front organizations supervised by the Communist International up to the beginning of the 1930s.⁵¹¹

Other organizations of the Greek Left and KKE's relationship with them

These groups, were derived either from the contradictions forming throughout the political and ideological development of the Communist Party itself or pre-existed as parts of the small, but distinctive, socialist tradition. However small these groups were, their existence, their rise and decline was closely linked with the development of the Greek Communist Party.

⁵⁰⁷ See *Report to the Politbureau of the CC of KKE, 28/8/1928*, p3, F8, CPA; *Greece: Communism, Report for the Second Half Year, 1934*, p5, FO 286/1131, PRO

⁵⁰⁸ See *Letter of Mr Bentinck to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston*, FO 286/856, PRO; *Letter of Mr Bentinck to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston*, 8/8/1923, FO286/858, PRO; for the radical program of the Union see *Union of Old Soldiers and Victims of War (1975)*

⁵⁰⁹ See *Greece: Communism, Report for the Second Half Year, 1934*, p6, FO 286/1131, PRO; Tsintzilonis Ch (1989) pp175, 195. Red Sport, since its establishment in 1927 would be receiving extensive coverage through the columns of the party paper (*Rizospastes*, 27/3/1927, 3/4/1927)

⁵¹⁰ And the article continues: "Because itself [the bourgeois class] is using it for its own interests, to pull us away from our class, to turn us against our class." *Rizospastes* 4/9/1927 The transfer of politics to the arena of sports poses much interest. Accordingly there would much talk, for example, about the 'unfair treatment' of "the bourgeois referee, against the working class athletes" *Rizospastes* 3/4/1927

⁵¹¹ See *Greece: Communism, Report for the Second Half Year, 1934*, p5-6, FO 286/1131, PRO; *Letter of Mr Bentinck to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston*, 8/8/1923, FO286/858, PRO

Social democratic tendencies derived from the ideological belief or political observation that “domestic communism has no objective grounds for existence”, that “due to the particularity of capitalist development in Greece, the obligations of the Communist Party were those of pre-war Social Democracy”, or indeed that “the preaching of socialism according to the foreign models was too premature for the Greek worker”, who ought to, first of all, “learn how to read and write, and acquire some lessons of morality.”⁵¹² Greece was perceived as “socialistically backward” by a number of Greek Socialists who argued that the national advocates of the socialist ideology being “as uneducated and as divided... were not yet in position to give direction to the working class”.⁵¹³ Accordingly, recurring key-themes that can be found in a wide range of socialist literature of the period include “socialist quality, not quantity”,⁵¹⁴ and “education first, action later”.⁵¹⁵

Although a number of those political or ideological tendencies developed to form political parties, some more successfully than others, they initially established themselves solely aiming to promote theoretical work and education. Characteristic is the case of the ‘Marxist Archive’ group that formed within the ranks of KKE in 1923, in order to familiarize Greece with the fundamental works of “Marxist Theory and Action”.⁵¹⁶ Similar views can be found in the ‘Policy Outline’ of the *Spartakos* Journal.⁵¹⁷

Below is a schematic representation of the development of socialist organizations throughout the interwar period:

⁵¹² Article of Papanastasiou in *Democratia*, 16/9/1924; Announcement of the opposition of KKE, in an extraordinary publication of *Spartakos*, p2, 1927, F4; Chatzopoulos, cited by Kardatos G (1972) p29

⁵¹³ In *What do we mean by 'socialist direction'*, Yiannios Archives, File1, ELIA

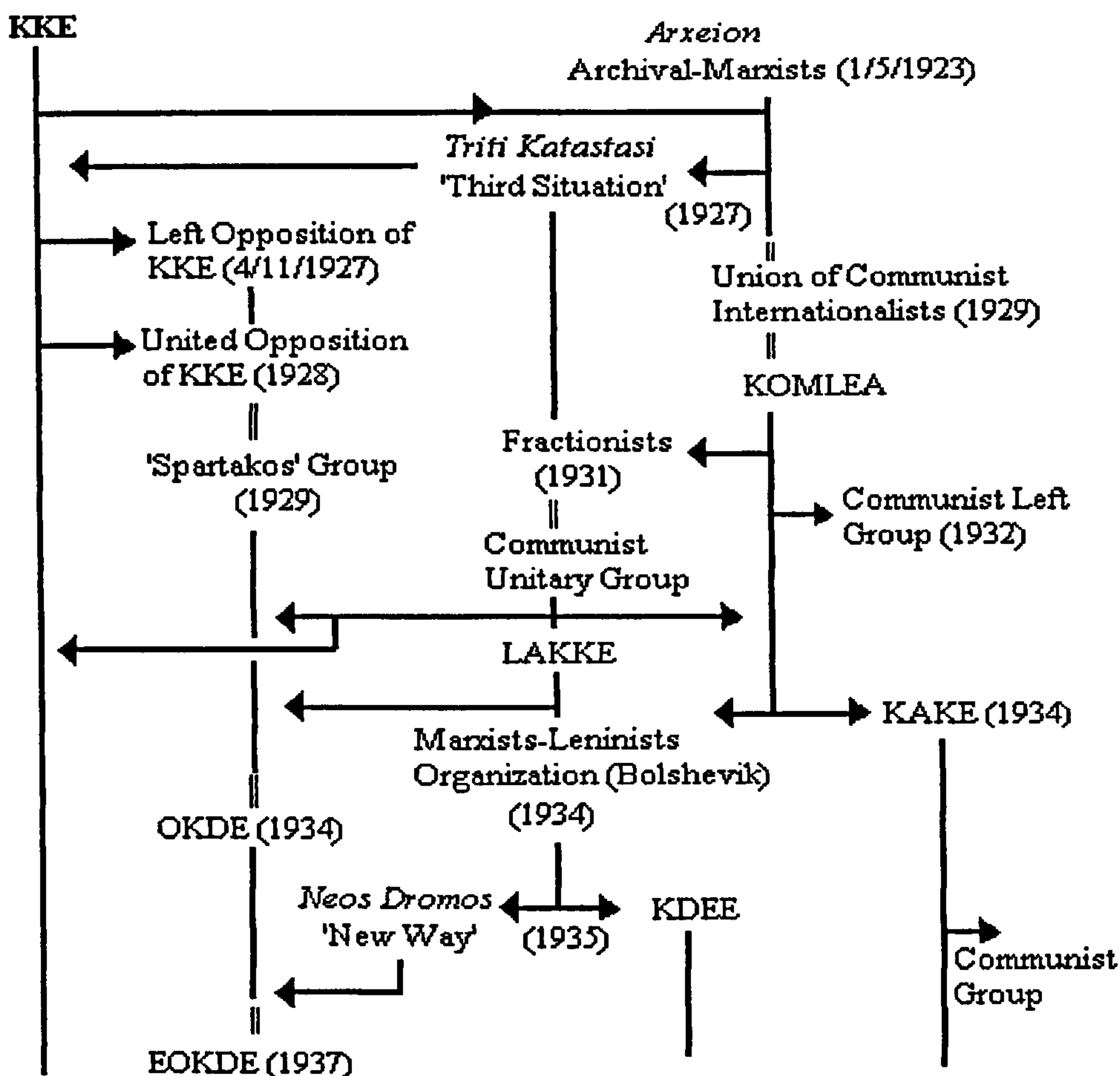
⁵¹⁴ In *What is the Socialist Party of Greece*, Yiannios Archives, File1, ELIA

⁵¹⁵ “We primarily seek to educate socialists, not to produce voters” (in *What is the Socialist Party of Greece*, Yiannios Archives, File1, ELIA)

⁵¹⁶ See *Arxeion Marxismou*, no1, 1-5-1923; Also see *Letter of Konstantine Paras (difficult to read) to the Politbureau*, F9; Similar examples would constitute the publication of several theoretical magazines, such as *Nea Zwi*, *Nea Epochi* etc. Maximos who wrote in *Spartakos*, in view of the group’s eventual decision to form a party, quit arguing against “the need of forming new communist parties”, and re-approached KKE. (See Noutsos P, 1993, p116)

⁵¹⁷ *Spartakos*, 4/11/1927, p4, F4. Similar views can be found also in *Kommounismos* 1/10/1920 (Journal of the ‘Communist Union’)

Schema 2: the development of socialist organizations in the Inter-War period



Explanation of Symbols/Abbreviations	
→	Split / Adherence to another group-party
=	Group title change
KOMLEA	Communist Group of Marxists-Leninist of Greece -Archival Marxists
LAKKE	Leninist Opposition of KKE
KAKE	Communist Archival-Marxist Party of Greece
OKDE	Organization of Communist Internationalists of Greece
KDEE	Party of Communist Internationalists of Greece
EOKDE	United Organization of Communist Internationalists of Greece

In many cases the independent course of those groups was short, ending either with their dissolution, their fusion with other groups or, as was quite common, with their total or partial re-

entry into the ranks of the Communist Party.⁵¹⁸ Internal heterogeneity, which in most cases ended in conflict and even splits, was by no means an exclusive ‘privilege’ of the Communist Party. Indeed, quite frequently, even break-away fractions from the KKE would soon find themselves with almost as many internal ideological and political tendencies “as the number of its founders”.⁵¹⁹ The history of the political organizations that existed outside or derived from the Communist Party can be perhaps characterized as a continuous process of split and unification, which often involved re-establishment and re-naming. Most of them end “small inward-looking groups”.⁵²⁰ The factors behind this development were both domestic, i.e., the ongoing disputes among hegemonic figures and the numerous diverse tendencies that either pre-existed or emerged as soon as the groups embarked on their independent political course,⁵²¹ or indeed international, concerning mainly the ongoing struggles within the ranks of the International Left Opposition. An article in *Spartakos* in October 1933 argues that:

“If despite its criminal mistakes, Stalinism remains the dominant current of the proletarian movement, it is because of the leadership fraction with Trotsky in the core, of the monstrosity, which calls itself International Left Opposition.”⁵²²

KKE managed to be identified, even in the consciousness of its political opponents and dissidents, as the dominant, if not exclusive, domestic manifestation of the international socialist movement.

⁵¹⁸ Such as in the case of the ‘minority’ of Workers’ Socialist Union of Greece (1924), a section of the Communist Union (1924), the entirety of the 3rd Situation (*Triti Katastasi*), a section of the Communist Unitary Group (1931), the greatest part of Group for the Bolshevization of KKE (1930); See *Rizospastes* 14/12/1924, 20/6/1927, *Neos Rizospastes* 14, 15, 16/9/1931; See also *Letter of Konstantine Paras (difficult to read) to the Politbureau*, F9, CPA.

⁵¹⁹ Nikolopoulos Th (1983) p81. In this case, the author specifically refers to Workers’ Socialist Union (ESE) that was established in 1924, by former members of SEKE (such as Georgiades, Sideris, Benaroya, etc)

⁵²⁰ See Asteriou E & Lambatos A (1995) p90; A view also shared by Emmanouilides M (2002) p44 The latter would expand on the previous observation by noting that “the Left Opposition in Greece... not able to find foothold in the labor movement would remain politically marginalized.” (*ibid.* pp44-5) In the proceedings of the meeting of the International Bureau on the 4th International (1937) it is mentioned that the 1934 crises of the Arxeion, which was the main political organization besides KKE, left it from a total of 1,600 members to just 75 with Busson (Vitsores) and 60 with Witte (Giotopoulos). Cited in Michail S, 1982, p44. See also Appendices 12 and 13.

⁵²¹ On the role of hegemonic personalities and their role in maintaining or undermining group cohesion, there is a quite indicative series of memoirs in Syriggas Nikos Archive, Sub-File: Memoirs of the Members of the Opposition, ELIA. See especially the memoirs of G Theodoratos (Mastrogiannis) and D Sotias.

⁵²² See *Spartakos*, no35, 14/10/1933, p2; See also *Spartakos*, no17, November 1931, pp24-25

Even as late as 1931, the 'Trotskyist' opposition would identify KKE with "the revolutionary party of the proletariat in its totality",⁵²³ and actively supported it in its electoral struggles.⁵²⁴ The domestic hegemony of the KKE party was further re-enforced by taking advantage of the CI policy on the existence of only "one communist party in every country".⁵²⁵ This CI policy provided international legitimization to its Greek national section (KKE), and it worked as a deterrent against the independent development of a number of break-away groups.⁵²⁶

Aspects of Communist Party work in the trade unions

The main medium of party policy within the trade unions were the 'fractions' (*fraksia*). *Deltion* indicates their purpose and character:

"The fractions are party organizations within other organizations of workers, whether legal or illegal. The fraction, unlike the cell, is not based on the place of work but on the participation of a member in a given non-party organization. The fraction is composed of all party members belonging to the same non-party organization...

The fraction channels party views into the organization. The fraction has its own organization, discusses issues, reaches decisions in connection with matters which interest the organization in which the fraction operates, but it always did so in accordance with party directives."⁵²⁷

⁵²³ See *Spartakos*, September Issue, 1931, pp1-5; A view that also echoed in the open letter of the 3 members of the Politbureau that quit during the inner-party struggles of 1925-7. In the letter it was mentioned that the opposition "recognized repeatedly that the KKE is the sole proletarian party in the country, and condemned in practice the schism and break-up, that may have resulted from some of their declarations." (See *Open Letter of S Maximos, K Sklavos, T Chainoglou 'Why we resigned from the Politbureau' to all the members of the party and the Executive of the Communist International*, p7, 1927, F4, CPA. (See also *Declaration of the United Opposition of the KKE*, in *Spartakos*, p1, 4/11/1927, F4, CPA; Similar views were expressed by the organization 3rd Situation (*Triti Katastasi*) whose members eventually re-joined KKE (*Rizospastis* 20/6/1927)

⁵²⁴ See for example *Spartakos* no4-5, October-November 1930, p11; *Spartakos* no22, 15/7/1933, p1

⁵²⁵ Zinovief G (1921) p156

⁵²⁶ Such as, for example, in the case of Papanastasiou's Communist Union. In the proceedings of the party published in *Kommunistikon Vima*, Papanastasiou stresses that "the Communist Union toeing the line of the International and to the interests of the struggle desires its unification with the Communist Party..." (*Kommunistikon Vima*, no38, January 1925)

⁵²⁷ "By non-party organizations we mean trade unions, co-operatives, conventions, councils, administrations, committees, meetings etc." *Deltion*, no1, February 1926; see also *Rizospastis*, 21/12/1924

Throughout the inter-war period there was a significant divergence between the actual number of party members operating in the workplace and their wider influence in terms of individual workers as well as unions as a whole, although the latter seems to be partly due to the apathy of most unionized members. It is interesting to note the ratio among organized/non-organized workers, as well as fraction members/'influences'. The following statistics are for the trade unions in Athens that are considered "under Communist influence":

Table 28: Communist Party influence in trade unions.⁵²⁸

Trade Union	Non-Organized	Organized	Active Members	Fraction Members
Industrial Union of Builders	1,500	1,200	550	70
Leather	2,000	2,500	400	110
Metal	5,000	250	100	12
Foods	10,000	3,000	1,500	80
Railways	-	1,500	1,500	40
Press	1,000	500	400	25
Bakery workers	1,500	550	250	20

Table 29: Ratio of fraction members to sympathizers/supporters in Salonica (January 1927)⁵²⁹

Trade Union	Fraction Members (1)	Sympathizers / Supporters (2)	Ratio (1) / (2)	Trade Union	Fraction Members (1)	Sympathizers / Supporters (2)	Ratio (1) / (2)
Tobacco	24	2,800	1/117	Railways A	9	300	1/33
Technicians	16	Majority in the Council	-	Railways B	30	500	1/17
Brewery Workers	-none-	Under KKE influence	-	Press	-none-	Complete party control	-

The situation among "reformist" and "revolutionary" trade unions appears to be "almost identical": in particular, "the number of unionized members is too small", "there are no strong ties among unions and workers", and "the unions do not bother with the day-to-day issues of workers

⁵²⁸ See *Report for the II Ordinary Session of the Athens District Organization, and Ordinary Local Sessions (I in March 1926-II in November 1926, and an extraordinary in August 1926)*, pp13-4, F9, CPA; Similar picture is given by reports on other cities such as Salonica (*Letter of the Salonica District Committee to the Central Trade Union Committee of the Party*, 30/1/1927, F5, CPA), and Piraeus (see *Action Report of the Piraeus District Committee, from 13/8 to end of November 1927*, F6, CPA); *Rizospastes* 9,10/4/1927

⁵²⁹ See *Letter of the Salonica District Committee to the Central Trade Union Committee of the Party*, 30/1/1927, F5, CPA

and fail to guide them effectively.”⁵³⁰ There were warnings against the substitution of communist-influenced trade unions and their administrative organs by party organizations, resulting in a “lack of democracy, non-regular accounting of administration, the replacement, without approval of the workers, of elected officials”, etc.⁵³¹ Caution was also raised in Party circulars concerning the lack of attention that was given to organizing the unemployed or politically exploiting their occasional spontaneous mobilizations.⁵³²

Apart from ‘external’ factors that obstructed communist work in trade unions, such as state and employer oppression, perhaps “the greatest factor”, was, according to a Party report of 1927, “the subjective weaknesses of our own organization, its inability to arouse enthusiasm among the masses through its slogans...”.⁵³³ By the early 1930s the party realized that it was more effective in the mobilization of workers under the banner of day-to-day demands, concerning wages and working conditions, than under political slogans.⁵³⁴

Similar observations were made on the matter of ‘approaching workers’, where it was stressed that “whenever we presented our selves to the workers intending to recruit them straight away in a party cell, the results were minimal”, whereas, “on the other hand, when we talked to them about wages, bread, their living and other matters of their factory...then we had favorable results...”.⁵³⁵ Most notably, it was mentioned throughout party circulars that the party’s labor policy was most frequently dependent on the “spontaneous development of events”.⁵³⁶ However, apart from the rather non-systemized character of Party work in the trade unions, up to the beginning of the 1930s, there were plenty of examples where of communist contribution led to the foundation or re-establishment of Unions and Labor Centers in places where they had not previously existed, or had become

⁵³⁰ See *Decision of the Politbureau of the CC on the situation of the Piraeus Organization*, 21/1/1929, p2, F12, CPA; In another instance it is mentioned that “We could mention even more examples to show that the actions of many communist administrations of trade unions is no different to those that are non-communist.” (see *Letter of the Secretary of the Military Prison cell*, 22/6/1925, p20, F1, CPA)

⁵³¹ KKE (1975a) pp429-30

⁵³² See for example *Report for the II Ordinary Session of the Athens District Organization, and Ordinary Local Sessions (I in March 1926-II in November 1926, and an extraordinary in August 1926)*, p18, F9, CPA; *Decision of the Central West Macedonia District Committee Session on the condition and responsibilities of the party organization*, 16-7/4/1932, p6, F17, CPA

⁵³³ See *Action Report of the Piraeus District Committee, from 13/8 to end of November 1927*, p2, F6, CPA; See also *Report for the II Ordinary Session of the Athens District Organization, and Ordinary Local Sessions (I in March 1926-II in November 1926, and an extraordinary in August 1926)*, p15, F9, CPA; It is also noted that many members of the party even fail to register at their own unions (KKE, 1975a, p392)

⁵³⁴ See *Decision of the Politbureau on the Question of the General Political Strike*, F14, CPA; KKE (1975a) p336

⁵³⁵ KKE (1975a) pp412-3, 425

⁵³⁶ *Neo Ksekinima*, June 1927, p8, F4

inactive for one reason or another.⁵³⁷ From 1932 onwards, however, party work in trade unions became more systemized, and the increasing party influence was seen in the growing labor mobilizations that took place under its guidance or by its initiative.⁵³⁸

Theoretical work in the party

The impact of the Russian Revolution on the Greek intellectual world was immense. A call to the “Suffering peoples of Russia” published on 24th October, 1921, signed by 24 of the most prominent Greek writers, poets and artists, stressed:

“We the Greek intellectuals are also spiritual children of Russia, of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Gorky, Andreyief, and so many other great Russian teachers who helped us to see the light of artistic truth, the way of true civilization.”⁵³⁹

Although in their great majority they pursued their theoretical and artistic contribution to the ‘cause of socialism’ outside the ranks of the communist party with perhaps a few exceptions, such as K Paroritis and D Glinos, they produced an extended series of theoretical works propagating or sympathetic to the socialist ideal.⁵⁴⁰

Within ten years after its establishment the Party was deprived, through resignation or expulsion of the vast majority of those intellectual members who were theoretically equipped to ‘teach’ Marxism or apply its method to the ‘domestic condition’.⁵⁴¹ Once they were no longer in the Party their theoretical contributions were rejected, as the following example illustrates:

⁵³⁷ Such as in the case of Shoe Maker Union of Thebes (*Rizospastes* 26/2/1927), Dock Workers of Nauplion (*Rizospastes* 2/3/1927), Labor Center of Corfu (*Rizospastes* 2/3/1927), Shoe Makers of Chania (*Rizospastes* 23/5/1927)

⁵³⁸ In 1933, more than half the workers mobilized, and more than 2/3 of strikes that took place were communist party-led, and the numbers grew progressively reaching their peak in 1936. See *The Condition of the Trade union area after the call of the CI, 1932*, F16, CPA; *Neos Rizospastes* 30/11/1933, 21/1/1934, *Rizospastes* 16/5/1936

⁵³⁹ *Rizospastes* 24/10/1921. Among the signatories were Kostas Palamas, Ioannis Gryparis, Konstantinos Theotokis, Pantelis Horn, Grigorios Xenopoulos, Aggelos Sikelianos, Kostas Varnalis, Nikos Kazantzakis and others.

⁵⁴⁰ Such examples can be found in the publication of various Journals, such as *Neai Protaparai*, *Simera*, *Koinoniki Ereuna*, *Noumas*, and others. Such efforts were also influenced by developments in European intellectual currents: so after Spring 1933, when Andre Zid embraced the socialist ideals it produced a “true intellectual storm”. (G Vourmas, 1997, p450)

⁵⁴¹ Such individuals would be, among others, for example, Kordatos, Sklavos, Maximos, Sideris etc.

“G Skleros’ ‘Marxism’ is the most crude distortion of Marxism in favor of the interests of the bourgeoisie, but, the various opportunist individual and groups that KKE fights against, do not represent anything else but, in one form or another, the opportunistically distorted ‘Marxism’ of Skleros, and play no other role, but that of the agent of the class enemy in the proletarian camp.”⁵⁴²

The ‘intellectual vacuum’ was to be filled with the graduates of the Communist University of Workers of the East (KUTV). From 1931, all the members of the Politburo, apart from one, were former students of the KUTV.⁵⁴³ The ‘drainage’ of the party’s theoretical sources was further re-enforced by the process of bolshevization, which, through its emphasis on a party composition based on members of proletarian background, produced a subsequent ‘suspicion’ towards intellectuals.⁵⁴⁴ A final factor contributing to the suspicion of intellectuals was the influence of the international movement which entered a phase of ‘popularization’ and dogmatic interpretation of Marxist knowledge and method, especially during the Third Period in the early 1930s.⁵⁴⁵

Theoretical work in the party developed different manifestations. The establishment of a ‘Bureau of Propaganda and Statistics’ stressed the importance of the existence of “systematic educational work” in the Party, which had to extend beyond the limits of “empiricism and narrow everyday improvisation.”⁵⁴⁶ The party press, included *Rizospastes* and Communist Review and a few other domestically produced publications. But for the most part imported and translated works were the

⁵⁴² By ‘various individuals and groups’ the writer of the article (Zeugos, member of the CC) he means Kordatos, Poulionopoulos, the *Arxeion*, etc), in Zeugos G (1933a), p9; In another article he refers to Kordatos, perhaps the most important Marxist theorist of the time (and former Secretary of the party) as “forger of the teachings of Lenin”, “apologist of the parasitic Greek bourgeoisie”, “ideologist of agrarian-fascism”, “praiser of counter-revolutionary trotskyism”, etc (in Zeugos G, 1933b , p24; see also Zeugos G, 1933c, pp7-11)

⁵⁴³ That is Siantos. It is difficult to know the exact number of Greek Communists that attended various educational establishments in the Soviet Union, but, for example, a publication by *Istoriko Arxeio* talks about a total of 15 persons in the year 1935-1936 (see *Istoriko Arxeio*, 1993, pp28-9)

⁵⁴⁴ Characteristic is the intervention of the CI representative during the CC session in April 1927, when it is suggested to replace a member of the Committee of intellectual background, with one of working class background, so that “the relative balance among intellectual and workers [in the CC] would be overturned.” See *Proceedings of the CC*, 4/4/1927, p2, F3, CPA; On the matter of excepting intellectuals (especially at higher post of the party hierarchy) it is mentioned that “Intellectuals are welcomed to the Communist Party. However, Agkit-Prop [Agitation-Propaganda Dept], ought to focus on the creation of executive members of working class origin, because only in their case it is possible to establish a close connection with the masses... and secure the dominance of a proletarian psychology in the Party.” See *Deftio*, no4, 1926

⁵⁴⁵ On an interesting critique in party press see Tsokoudoukos V (1990)

⁵⁴⁶ *Rizospastes* 11/1/1925

main sources of political education.⁵⁴⁷ The Party press involved the wide-spread involvement of members in production of articles: in 1934 alone there were some 10,000 letter-articles published in *Rizospastes* from party members.⁵⁴⁸ Participation in contributing to the collection of articles was widely encouraged, as was the publication of smaller localized newspapers based in the workplaces where Party members were employed.⁵⁴⁹ *Rizospastes* was the first attempt to establish a daily nation-wide newspaper that reported systematically and through specialized theme columns on labor issues.⁵⁵⁰

Agkit-Prop (Agitation-Propaganda) classes took the form of a series of theoretical courses across party organizations.⁵⁵¹ However, they suffered from low attendance,⁵⁵² and the suggested bibliography and sources derived mainly from works of Lenin, Stalin, Zinoviev, and resolutions of the CI. The complete absence of the 'Classics' of Marx and Engels was striking.⁵⁵³

The following statement from the report of the Athens Party Committee (1926) completes the picture described above: "With the exception of a tiny minority of members which just manage to approach a medium level of Marxist education, the rest are still on the level of illiteracy."⁵⁵⁴ The inefficient level of theoretical work in the party that threatened to "keep it at a level of infant age" was on several occasions addressed throughout the inter-war period, but admittedly there were no major breakthroughs.⁵⁵⁵

This reinforced a tendency towards dogmatism. In a series of articles Kordatos addressed what he called the "vulgar economism and technocracy" in the party, condemning the subjection of the communist party to a centralized authority in Moscow that presents itself holding "Papal

⁵⁴⁷ Up to 1927 there were no translated works of Lenin, apart from the 'Three Articles on Marxism', and some extracts from various works published in the *Arxeon tou Marxismou* 1923-4. Marx and Engels works that were translated (in whole or in part) were: 'The Communist Manifesto', 'Civil War in France', 'The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', 'Critique of the Gotha Program', 'Poverty of Philosophy', 'Anti-During', 'The Origins of the Family, Property and the State', 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', 'Theses on Feurbach'. After the establishment of the Marxist Library, publications intensified.

⁵⁴⁸ See Zormpalas S (1967) pp73-4

⁵⁴⁹ See Kamarinou A (2002) p93 Such newspapers included 'The Fertilizer Worker' (25/3/1930), 'The Red Engineer' (6/7/1930) etc. On the circulation of *Rizospastes* see Appendix 7

⁵⁵⁰ On the development of labor press see Smyrnis K 2000

⁵⁵¹ These were, in many occasions, taught by university students members of the Communist Youth who were occasionally dispatched to party cells, for precisely that purpose (see Partsalidou A, 1983, p21)

⁵⁵² See for example *Action Report of the Piraeus Local Committee (January to April 1927)*, p2, F6, CPA

⁵⁵³ See *Agkit-Prop program of the Piraeus District Committee*, F6, CPA; *Course program for the Marxist Leninist School of Athens Piraeus*, 1932, F17, CPA

⁵⁵⁴ See *Report on the Condition of the Athens Organization and the Actions of the Committee on the measures on the betterment of party work*, F2, CPA

⁵⁵⁵ See *Deltion*, no4, 4/5/1926; *Letter of the Secretary of the Military Prison Cell*, 22/6/1925, p24, F1, CPA

infallibility”, degrading Marxist theory and method into “religious dogma”.⁵⁵⁶ Dogmatism, which existed throughout the Party hierarchy right down to the grass-root level,⁵⁵⁷ was condemned by the Party itself by the mid-1930s,⁵⁵⁸ and there were a series of theoretical attempts to de-dogmatize Marxism, especially regarding its vulgar application to the Greek conditions.⁵⁵⁹

There were, however, few attempts to produce any substantial theoretical analysis and understanding of the Greek conditions, and hence, to suggest ‘domestic’ solutions to key-issues of action and propaganda. Party understanding of the domestic conditions was founded, the most of the inter-war period, on the relevant analyses of the CI of “countries with medium level of capitalist development.” The first attempt at a “scientific anatomy of the country’s economic structure” did not take place until 1934.⁵⁶⁰ This inevitably hampered the Party’s ability to attract a mass base. By the time it managed to do so, the popular front dynamic that had begun to develop was suppressed by the Metaxas’ regime of 1936-1941.

Conclusion

This chapter we has discussed a number of qualitative characteristics of the Greek Communist Party. Firstly, we have seen that despite the fact that the Communist Party aspired to be the political expression of the organized working class, in terms of the social composition of its membership it was a Party with a mainly peasant base. This feature remained dominant throughout the interwar period and posed a constant problem for the Party leadership. Its preoccupation with increasing its working class membership meant that potential members from the countryside were inevitably excluded from its ranks. Of course Party membership should not be confused with Party influence. As we have seen, in many factories the ratio of Party members to Party ‘influenced’ could be as high as 1 to 100 or more. One the of the most striking examples of this was in the working class city of

⁵⁵⁶ See articles by Kordatos ‘Forgers of documents and charlatans of Marxism’, pp179-187, ‘Lenin and Leninism’, pp213-9, and ‘Back to Marx’, in *Nea Epitheorisi*, 1933-1934 issue. On similar observations see *Neo Ksekinima*, p15, June 1927, F4, CPA

⁵⁵⁷ Partsalidou wrote in her memoirs: “Many of us were dogmatic due to lack of knowledge and experience, and we stuck in models...It would take several years for us to overcome such vulgarities, which did so eventually with the massification of the party.” (See Partsalidou A, 1983, pp29 & 56)

⁵⁵⁸ See Zachariades (1945) pp52-5. Although there are doubts as to what extent the ‘condemnation’ of the mistake of dogmatism of previous leaderships by the new one is not but a ‘tool of political confrontation rather than analysis’ utilized for settling inner-party disputes. (See Τσοκopoulos V, 1990, p82)

⁵⁵⁹ See Roussos P (1942) pp64-73

⁵⁶⁰ Zachariades N (1945) p31

Kavala, where in 1934 the KKE, numbering just over 100 members, received 3,781 votes and elected a Mayor.

State oppression was important in understanding the politics and attitude of the party towards certain types of work, such as elections and other legal activities. The Communist Party bordered on illegality throughout the interwar period despite its actual legal status. Accordingly, even when the Party was not officially banned, the extent of state persecution against its members and their activities did not vary significantly. However, the crucial element in examining the State's response to the 'communist danger' consisted in the various structures and defence mechanisms that the Party developed against state persecution and ideological incorporation.

Finally, the examination of internal party struggles and inner party democracy, as well as, of the divergent tendencies that developed inside and outside the Communist Party is crucial in understanding the power relationship between the Party's membership and its leadership. This relationship was never one-way or straightforward, and it varied considerably over time. In addition, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the language and categorizations that emerged during party disputes are also important in order to analyze and break down long standing pre-conceptions in Communist Party history. Accordingly, we have seen that the Party crisis of 1925-1927 that was recorded in Communist Party historiography as the first clash between 'Stalinists' and 'Trotskyists', a Greek version of the developments in the CPSU, was in reality nothing like that.

The crisis began on matters of Party tactics that had to do solely with the Greek experience following the impact of the Pangalos' dictatorship. It was only later that Pouliopoulos, the leader of the Greek opposition, aligned himself with Trotsky. In other words, this so-called clash between 'Stalinists' and 'Trotskyists' never actually took place because the particular categorizations did not apply at the time. On the contrary, it was a historical coincidence that was later adopted by both parties for their own reasons. The 'Stalinists' adopted it because it proved handy to use against any future opposition within the Party, which they just dismissed by labelling it 'Trotskyist'. The 'Trotskyists', on the other hand, adopted it because it provided them with international legitimization of their existence as a political force. It is crucial to determine the nature of the relationship between the two groups in order to understand why in some cases, despite the split, the two parties did at times cooperate locally.

To conclude, this chapter has highlighted the importance of qualitative characteristics, such as social composition, membership attitudes and schisms, in understanding Communist Party politics.

The implications of this for examining Communist Party politics in different localities will be discussed in the following case studies.

Chapter 6: Working class communism in interwar Greece – The case of the refugees in Kokkinia, Piraeus. Part I

Introduction

Chapters six and seven discuss Communist Party activities in Kokkinia, which was an administrative part of the district of Piraeus for most of the inter-war period. Chapter six discusses the economic, social and political background in which the Communist Party operated in Kokkinia. It examines various aspects of refugee settlement and conditions of living, and investigates how the process of settlement itself was utilized as a means of political incorporation. The chapter then examines the channels of political participation and power, the electoral process, and the effects of incorporating the refugee populations into the existing national dichotomy between the Venizelists and the Populists. Finally, it touches upon the relations among refugees and the authorities, state officials and the RSC, which played a crucial role in forging community identity. It concludes by looking in detail at community politics and ideology.

Several writers have put forward hypotheses about the impact of refugee status in Greece on political consciousness. Mavrogordatos, for one, argues that “the refugee workers themselves rapidly became the most radical part of labor. Regardless of their background, petty bourgeois illusions and ambitions were soon largely destroyed –lacking the support of small property, family ties, clientism, and unbroken traditions provided in the case of native workers.”⁵⁶¹ Other writers such as Mazower (1991) point to urban refugee living conditions and political neglect in order to explain refugee radicalism. On the other hand, Clogg argues that refugees “were largely lacking the mutual trust and hierarchical authority necessary for cooperation and collective action.”⁵⁶² This chapter will critically assess the validity of those claims as applied to Kokkinia.

The settlement of Nea (New) Kokkinia was established in 1923, mainly by refugees from Asia Minor who fled following the collapse of the front and the retreat of the Greek army. It constituted an administrative part of the Municipality of Piraeus until 1934 when it became a separate municipality. In 1929 the newspaper *Acropolis* referred to Kokkinia as a “great working class city”

⁵⁶¹ Mavrogordatos G (1989) p145

⁵⁶² Clogg K R (1969) p115

which “constitutes the main engine that drives the commercial and industrial life of Piraeus.”⁵⁶³ By 1936 it was reported to be the fifth largest city in Greece.

Settlement and conditions of living

On the 13th of August 1922, a counter attack by the Turkish forces under Kemal brought about the collapse of the Asia Minor front. Just two weeks later the Turkish army entered the regional capital Smyrna. The weeks and months that followed saw an unprecedented effort to evacuate the populations of the area and the remnants of the Greek army. To illustrate the magnitude of the refugee influx, a former president of the Refugee Settlement Commission noted that a US equivalent would amount to some 26 million persons or one quarter of the country’s population.⁵⁶⁴

According to a report on the refugee situation in late 1923, the number of self-supported and partly self-supported refugees was estimated at some 280,000 and 250,000 respectively (for issues of employment and geography of industry see the following chapter). The number of entirely dependent refugees amounted to some 620,000; this estimate was expected to rise as the winter set in to some 934,000. Furthermore, the percentage of refugees estimated to have been ‘definitely absorbed in the normal economic life of the country’ was 25%, alongside which another 25% were said to be self-supporting “through partial employment, help of more fortunate friends and relatives etc.” The remaining 50%, a figure that was expected to rise, was characterized as “completely destitute.”⁵⁶⁵ As late as 1935, 13 years after the arrival of refugees on Greek soil, there were still an estimated 35,000 (out of a total of some 330,000) families that had not fully settled.⁵⁶⁶

The financial assistance that was provided in the early years of settlement was rarely enough to contribute towards a return to work in a profession that resembled the one abandoned back home. Most of that money was spent on subsistence. Most refugees had to find additional income doing all

⁵⁶³ *Acropolis* 14/2/1929. For additional information on the city see Prefecture of Piraeus (1966) p28 and *Paratiritis* 28/6/1936

⁵⁶⁴ Morgenthau H (1929) p2

⁵⁶⁵ ‘Statement regarding the refugee situation in Greece: Prepared for the Committee on Mercy and Relief of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America’. Sent by B P Salmon, Special Commissioner of the Greek Minister of Public Assistance, 3/12/1923.(Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/131)

⁵⁶⁶ Kyrkos M K, 1959, ‘The refugee problem as it appears today, Athens, pamphlet) p4, See also Central Refugee Supervisory [Κεντρική Επιτροπή Προσφύγων] 1957, ‘The refugee problem at its present phase’ (Athens), p10, in Archive of M K Kyrkos, ASKI

sort of petty jobs, whereas others lived through petty-commerce.⁵⁶⁷ Some 73% of a survey sample taken by the General Statistical Service of Greece in 1930 had an income that was lower than that required to achieve the minimum of subsistence.⁵⁶⁸ According to the newspaper *Acropolis*, the sudden loss of property and professional status created a mentality of fatalism among the refugee population that could be summarized in the phrase “there is only today, no tomorrow”.⁵⁶⁹

One of the major issues involved in the settlement of refugees was housing. According to a memo of the RSC to Venizelos, many apartments were built with only one room, in many occasions lacking a kitchen, or even a toilet. Communal toilets, sewages and washing places were often located at a common back yard that connected a number of such one-roomed apartments.⁵⁷⁰ POADA would characterize RSC contractors as “business wolves” that took advantage of refugee desperation for security and “built the known houses, without any roofs, without floors, without varnish, and a thousand other deficiencies...”⁵⁷¹ Even as soon as 1929, there were reports of many newly-built or half-built houses that were at the point of collapse.⁵⁷²

Refugee families would occupy houses yet to be finished “in order to secure some form of permanent housing, fearing that they might be left behind and homeless.”⁵⁷³ At the same time, a number of refugees became squatters and individually built small tin houses that would resemble the *favelas* (tin houses) in Brazil.

According to a survey carried forward in 1940 by the National Insurance Foundation (IKA) some 71% of the houses in Palaia (Old) Kokkinia consisted of just one room, housing up to 5 individuals.⁵⁷⁴ One refugee, Argyropoulos, describes the houses of the settlement in his memoirs: “Each of them [he refers to them as a series of shacks] was 60 meters in length, and 6 meters wide; the whole shack was divided into 40 rooms, measuring 3x3... Whatever you spoke, no matter how

⁵⁶⁷ Interview, Cassette ‘Experiences/ Memories’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁵⁶⁸ Cited in Maurogenes Papagelopoulos (1999) p133

⁵⁶⁹ *Acropolis* 14/3/1929

⁵⁷⁰ And that situation occurred “despite the good will and experience of the RSC planners.” See Memo of the RSC to Venizelos 30/6/1930 (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/133)

⁵⁷¹ *POADA* 8/1/1926. *POADA*: All Refugee Defense Organization for Beneficiaries of the Exchanged [properties] (Παμπροσφυγική Οργάνωση Αμύνης Δικαιούχων Ανταλλάξιμων)

⁵⁷² *Proceedings of the Executive Board of the Political Asia Minor Center* 10/10/1929 (Archive of the Political Asia Minor Center, ELIA)

⁵⁷³ Interview, Cassette: ‘verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934’, Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁵⁷⁴ Cited in Vasiliou I (1944) p150 That is considerably higher than the average 57% that involves Athens and Piraeus.

quietly you spoke, you'd be heard by [at least] three of your neighbors. And you would be able to hear them too.”⁵⁷⁵

Table 30: Overall table of the refugee settlements in Piraeus (14/10/1928)⁵⁷⁶

Settlement	Houses (1)	Houses (2)	Rooms	Families	Persons	Value (Drs)
Ionia	714	2,785	5,495	3,539	14,126	58,526,288
Kaisariani	283	1,419	2,777	2,993	10,780	26,098,982
Vironas	228	1,341	2,883	2,094	7,710	34,900,042
N Kokkinia	925	4,728	9,134	6,390	33,332	82,279,302
Total	2,150	10,253	20,289	15,016	65,948	201,804,614

On occasion of yet another flood, *Acropolis* would write in December 1933: “Within those pitiful and disgraceful hovels hundreds of thousands of refugee families still live, although with the money spent, they could have been able to have all acquired, not of course palaces, with elevators and central heating, but surely humane houses, which would not be under constant danger of collapsing over the heads of their poor tenants at the first blow of the wind or the first rain.” The end-result of the flood was that 250 houses were deemed un-habitable or abandoned in P Kokkinia, and another 24 in N Kokkinia. In total some 36 houses collapsed in P and N Kokkinia, whereas some 2,000 homeless people left homeless.⁵⁷⁷

Despite the existence of specific construction regulations for the housing of refugees provided by the RSC, these were rarely observed in practice, leading to a somewhat ‘chaotic’ establishment and the growth of refugee urban settlements. It is suggested by Vlachou that these ‘irregularities’ concerning the settlement planning and contraction were not merely the product of incompetence of the various architects and contractors who carried out the job, but of political intent of corruption as a result.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁵ Argiropoulos S (1980) p12

⁵⁷⁶ Numbers 1 and 2 refer to different types of housing. Report of the Ministry of Hiegyne, Welfare and Precaution (Engineer Athanasiades) 14/10/1928, (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/132). See Appendices 14 and 15 for more data on housing.

⁵⁷⁷ *Acropolis* 4/12/1933.

⁵⁷⁸ See Vlachou G et al (1978) pp117-120. We shall elaborate further on political intent behind settlement further on in the course of this chapter.

An additional issue that had to do with housing was, of course, rent. The RSC was by no means a charitable organization: its funds, allocated for the housing of refugees, were to be returned (at least in part) in the form of rent. That meant that the majority of refugees found themselves indebted right from the very beginning; the threat of eviction remained for many years to come. Inability to keep up with their tax payment responsibilities resulted in the imprisonment of even petty-professional refugees.⁵⁷⁹ A refugee from Kokkinia recalls: “You used to read on the shops: Closed due to bankruptcy. The newspapers published every day, court decisions of bankruptcies of commercemen and small commercemen, and next to these [the announcement] of several suicides. The picture was completed by the confiscations carried forward by the various mayors and others that occupied a responsible post on the state apparatus.”⁵⁸⁰

The death rates among the refugee population were staggering: The ratio of deaths to births in the period between 1923-1925 was 3 to 1; an average of 6,000 per month were estimated to have died just in the first 9 months following their arrival on Greek soil. In certain cases, the death rate reached some 20% in a matter of just a year.⁵⁸¹ *Acropolis* reported in 1933 that “the unfortunate refugees that are in need of medical care compete with each other for a bed”, since the existing 30 hospital beds in Kokkinia are not sufficient for Piraeus’ largest settlement, with chronic problems of hygiene.⁵⁸²

The settlements lacked even the basic infrastructure: “The biggest problem of water supply is faced by the especially important and large settlement of Kokkinia. Built on the north of Piraeus, this settlement is located in an area that is particularly dry...” Water was pumped “only a few hours per day”, whereas it is mentioned that “new wells that have been opened by the Ulen Company at the area of Renti, east of Kokkinia, create some hope for the increase of water supply.”⁵⁸³

Financial and social hardship was further reinforced by the inability of the state to provide the refugees with the much needed compensation that they were promised from the very beginning of their settlement. A complaint put forward by ‘Greek citizens from Turkey’ dated 31/1/1935 mentioned the ongoing changes towards the resolution of the issue concerning compensation: “Facing this new situation, the interested parties mentioned that it is a sign of state heartlessness towards them, the continuing alternation of laws aiming to the resolution of not such a complicated matter and their subjection to numerous procedures.” The new situation that is mentioned above,

⁵⁷⁹ *Rizospastis* 22/8/1935

⁵⁸⁰ Argiropoulos S (1980) p19

⁵⁸¹ See introduction of Greek Refugee Settlement Commission (1926)

⁵⁸² *Acropolis* 7/12/1933, 12/6/1931

⁵⁸³ League of Nations (1926) p138

refers to the eventual reduction of compensation to just 20%, which in the end was accepted in view of the “economic despair” of most refugees.⁵⁸⁴

Settlement was to prove an ongoing and gradual process, which in the case of many refugees would last as long as a decade after their initial arrival in Greece. As noted by H Morgenthau, the Chairman of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission: “During these three years at least, the urban refugees, urged by some strange instinct, were continually on the move. There are few urban families which have not flitted again and again from one large town to another in order to see with their eyes the possibilities offered by each locality visited.”⁵⁸⁵

This ‘strange instinct’ becomes clearer through the testimonies of refugees themselves. A refugee named Nikolaides mentioned: “Those of us who settled in the country-side acquired pieces of land with our compensations and live relatively good life. The others that stayed in the cities live on the daily wage, even the petty-professionals.”⁵⁸⁶ However there were cases of refugees who were sent for rural settlement in Macedonia, and came back to Kokkinia “penniless and threatened to die of hunger”, with the thought that at least the urban centers could at least provide them with some sort of wage.⁵⁸⁷ Furthermore, as many places were not suitable for settlement, lacking the physical or economic resources to sustain a population, refugees were quite often forced to disperse from their original location trying their luck in other parts of the country; many would perish in the process.⁵⁸⁸ Another estimated 50,000 refugees emigrated from Greece to other countries in search of employment.⁵⁸⁹

But that was not the only reason behind constant refugee mobility: “In the course of their flight, the members of a family became scattered and lost one another, and in many cases survivors did not succeed in rejoining each other until after a year or two. For two years the newspapers devoted many columns to insertions by those who were looking for relatives scattered around Greece, or who had disappeared in the confusion. Even to-day cases occur of a mother discovering her child or a father his family.”⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁴ ‘Complaint of the Greek Citizens from Turkey’, 31/1/1935, in Archive of Mauromates Family, Sub-file 4, ELIA

⁵⁸⁵ Quoted in Morgenthau H (1929) p258

⁵⁸⁶ Microfilm SE35: Today’s Settlement of Piraeus and Suburbs, Archive of the Center for Asia Minor Studies

⁵⁸⁷ *Acropolis* 6/2/1929.

⁵⁸⁸ See Testimonies of Magdaline Kamakidou and Minas Anthemides, in Microfilm SE35: Today’s Settlement of Piraeus and Suburbs, Archive of the Center for Asia Minor Studies

⁵⁸⁹ Cited in Hirschon R B (1976) p4

⁵⁹⁰ Greek Settlement Commission (1926) p3

Kokkinia was not an exception to this rule. As another refugee mentioned, “not everyone came straight from Asia Minor to Kokkinia, because they kept moving to various parts of Greece...and that was determined by various reasons and especially by the occupation they once had had. Some left [Kokkinia] because they were farmers and moved to rural centers or villages...and vice versa.”⁵⁹¹ The degree of mobility can be seen in the table below showing the population increase in Kokkinia throughout the interwar period:

Table 31: Population increase in N Kokkinia⁵⁹²

Year	Population	Change in %	Year	Population	Change in %
Pre-1922	-	-	1934	40,086	20.73%
1926	29,285	-	1940	59,552	48.56%
1928	33,201	13.37	Change 1926-1940		103.35%

Social and economic hardship among the refugees was widely held to be a basis for potential political radicalism. Indeed, echoing a typical view that was widely held in literature a journalist would note: “What kind of social stability would you expect when popular strata, economically exhausted from high rents, dying or undermined from a multitude of diseases in miserable shacks, became very easy victims of the attractive revolutionary teaching?”⁵⁹³ However, the RSC officials were aware of that ‘social threat’, and the Chairman of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission Ch P Howland made it clear in the 1926 Commission’s Report that the motivation behind the settlement of refugees was political as much as it was humanitarian, if indeed not more so. He mentioned in particular that “...children dying of want, and men become anarchists. There were not lacking those who fish in such waters, and who use for that purpose the poacher’s apparatus of dynamite. Relief of despair on such a scale is as much a political necessity as a human responsibility.”⁵⁹⁴ So was settlement a means of refugee incorporation into the status quo?

⁵⁹¹ Interview, Cassette ‘Experiences/ Memories’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁵⁹² Data based information found in League of Nations (1926) & Kayser B and Thompson K (1964)

⁵⁹³ From a conversation with a journalist, cited in Leontidou E L (1981) p155

⁵⁹⁴ Greek Refugee Settlement Commission (1926) p.xvi. My emphasis.

Settlement as a means of incorporation

Refugees were not to be 'incorporated' into the existing urban centers. On the contrary, RSC settlement planners decided to locate them in separate 'satellite' communities so that "they would not interfere with the 'normal' life of existing cities", and in order to "ensure a more homogeneous social environment within the urban refugee settlements."⁵⁹⁵ They were accordingly built at a minimum distance, varying from one to four kilometers from the 1922 city boundaries.⁵⁹⁶ Hence, the suggestion made by Leontidou that "exclusion and segregation of refugees was *planned*" appears to be not far from the truth.⁵⁹⁷ The actual distance in addition to the distinctiveness of refugee housing that was quite uniform ("resembling a military camp" as the League of Nations put it⁵⁹⁸), and the limited means of communication and transport with the existing communities of native Greeks, turned the refugee settlements into actual ghettos, where social life was effectively isolated. A ghetto mentality was further reinforced by their cultural and linguistic differentiation, which was further enforced by cultural stereotypes attributed to them by native Greeks. As Hirschon notes, "the urban quarters soon developed a distinct character based on both physical and social distance. This in turn gave rise to various ideas regarding differences between the two groups and soon the social boundaries between the two sections of the population were marked and differentiated by a multitude of notions regarding their cultural attributes."⁵⁹⁹ It is essential to note that one of the areas of activity where refugees and natives did interact to a certain extent was that of employment (as we will touch upon in more detail further on in this chapter).

In addition, it is often suggested that the allocation of refugee settlements was politically exploited as a means of gerrymandering. In particular, Pentzopoulos mentions that "instead of trying to influence the political returns of an area by changing the geographical borders of the electoral districts, the same result was obtained by altering the population density of the region and by increasing the liberal element in politically crucial counties."⁶⁰⁰ Similar political intent was implied for the administrative decentralization that took place in 1934 and meant the creation of 4 separate

⁵⁹⁵ Papaioannou J (1975) cited in Leontidou E L (1981) p127

⁵⁹⁶ Leontidou E L (1981) p129

⁵⁹⁷ Leontidou E L (1981) p128

⁵⁹⁸ League of Nations (1926) p137

⁵⁹⁹ Hirschon R B (1976) p34

⁶⁰⁰ Pentzopoulos D (1962) p182

municipalities that previously were part of Piraeus, one of which was Kokkinia (we shall elaborate further on this issue later on in this chapter).

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that refugee settlement was not carried forward without consideration of limiting social threats, and more specifically communism. In particular, N Astroulakis, a refugee member of the city council of Piraeus from Kokkinia, mentioned in an article in a local paper that the whole exchange and settlement of refugee populations was conducted in view of international developments (i.e. social unrest and revolutionary movements in Europe). Specifically, he stated that developments concerning the refugee issue unfolded the way they did because “those with power were scared that those two and a half million refugee hungry stomachs, which according to Napoleon are the ones that fight the wars, were capable in bringing about the overthrow of the contemporary social regime.”⁶⁰¹

In the 1930 Bulletin of the National Bank of Greece, the role of the RSC in the battle against the ‘internal enemy’, i.e. communism, was praised: “If the patriotism of the ruling classes and the good sense of the refugees continue to hold in check those doctrines which claim that happiness and the progress of a nation can only be acquired by submitting to the rule of a group of fanatics, enemies of the enlightenment, persecutors of all liberties and all initiative; and if, in several dozen years...a strong race of peasants, born out of the mixing of all elements of Hellenism secures...the prosperity of Greece, that result will have been due to the impulse given by the RSC.”⁶⁰²

Finally, there is little doubt that RSC planning of settlements was conducted in a more or less direct link to existing or emerging industrial areas around urban centers.⁶⁰³ The rationale behind this policy was twofold: on the one hand “the refugees were in need of a well organized and prosperous industry”, and on the other “the factory owners had an interest in the settlement and guaranteed accommodation of workers”. However, the relation between these two factors was not always harmonious: the factory owners would on the one hand employ as much as double the workforce located around their factory, but on the other, as industry grew, it would often do so at the expense of existing or further settlements.⁶⁰⁴ For example, in 1935, an MP for Piraeus would submit a

⁶⁰¹ *Anagenisis* 13/11/1932

⁶⁰² *National Bank of Greece Bulletin*, issue 100, December 1930, p1268

⁶⁰³ As Leontidou mentions: “The RSC policy thus created a close connection between industry and refugee communities, and consequently a strong *employment linkage* among the industrial population of Greater Athens.” In Leontidou E L (1981) p137

⁶⁰⁴ Copy of the Report of the Commission [RSC] that looked into the expressed complaints of Panaras’s Company against the expropriation of fields for refugee settlement. Sent by the Minister of National Economy to the Prime Minister’s Political Office 1/11/1928 (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/67)

question in Parliament regarding the ‘unreasonable’ demolition of refugee houses following the request of a factory owner. That was not a unique episode according to the MP.⁶⁰⁵

Channels of political participation and power

Soon after the arrival of refugees, a new ‘class’ emerged within their ranks known by the popular name of *tzormpatzides* or *prosfugopateres* (=refugee fathers). They were quickly incorporated into the status quo through their assignment in managerial positions in the RSC or in Banks and Ministries⁶⁰⁶. Many of them acquired loans from the National Bank for setting up enterprises, and thus formed an ‘elite’ among the refugee population.⁶⁰⁷ Their social and political status in refugee communities was further reinforced through the emergence of hundreds of refugee associations⁶⁰⁸, which facilitated “their personal advancement” by “achieving disgraceful exchanges” among them and their protégés. The Communist Party would dismiss the role of those refugee associations, branding their presidents as “organs of the big *tzormpatzides*”, who “have become negotiators of refugee issues and exploiters of poor refugees whom they suck dry in various ways.”⁶⁰⁹

In 1929 an auction of permanent housing in the refugee settlements was announced, the responsibility to “determine the number of houses that would be built in each settlement” was given to individual refugee MPs, who would produce a report after touring the settlements⁶¹⁰. The decision therefore of who got what in the newly built settlements did not fall to an independent committee who would make a decision based on clearly defined criteria, but to refugee patrons following individual tours of the settlements. Calls by non-communist refugee groups for “the organization of the refugee world to be realized...not for creating victims of clientism and looking for hatred and new schisms, as everyone has been doing up to now” fell on deaf ears.⁶¹¹

A typical example of such an association in Kokkinia was the ‘Political Asia Minor Center’. An article in *Rizospastes* in 1929 notes that since the association was founded in 1922 neither an

⁶⁰⁵ *Eleftheron Vima* 20/1/1935

⁶⁰⁶ See League of Nations (1926)

⁶⁰⁷ There are also often quoted allegations of acquiring through various means larger and numerous compensations, or manipulating the System of City Associations [Σύστημα Αστικών Συνεταιρισμών] in order to acquire the best pieces of land to house themselves, etc. (See *Rizospastes* 25/4/1929)

⁶⁰⁸ This was also facilitated by the existing legislation that allowed the formation of associations as long as they had more than 7 members! (See *Patris* 25/2/1929)

⁶⁰⁹ *Rizospastes* 25/4/1929

⁶¹⁰ *Acropolis* 8/5/1929

⁶¹¹ *Mikrasiatiki* 8/4/1932

assembly had been called, nor did an executive council exist. There were almost no members in order to justify the association's typical or legal status, nor was its statute known to the people. So how did the association come about? "In the beginning some assistance has been provided to the newly arrived refugees, cloths, food and various sums of money that were distributed personally by the president [of the association mentioned above] at his own discretion, without having to answer to anyone, because the refugees knew nothing then about unions..."⁶¹² Elections were eventually held in mid-1929, in a meeting called by the 'president' himself, who was elected by 299 votes out of 537 cast. His election was not free of allegations of buying votes in exchange for various favors.⁶¹³ There were also allegations that he "threatened to evict from their houses all those that belonged to other unions apart of his own."⁶¹⁴

Various initiatives for the emergence of local refugee associations, were often met with hostility by established ones. So for example, when the residents of P Kokkinia decided to proceed in elections for a local branch of the Political Asia Minor Center of P Kokkinia, the executive council of the Center rendered it in advance invalid and illegal and proceeded with expulsions.⁶¹⁵

To what extent were such refugee associations representative of refugees? A letter to *Rizospastes* in 1923 notes that only 240 out of 20,000 refugees took part in the election for the delegates to a Congress of refugees from Pontos living in Athens and Piraeus. In particular, some 100 voted in Athens and another 130 in Piraeus electing 24 delegates each, while many settlements were not represented at all. As the writer concludes, "in other words, a number of individuals, members of the organizational committee, took it upon themselves arbitrarily, to represent their flock...These individuals put themselves and their friends on the organizational committee, and in a close circle they voted for delegates to the congress, and at the congress they elected a Board of Directors for the Central Union."⁶¹⁶

⁶¹² *Rizospastes* 11/6/1929

⁶¹³ "He gave money to a number of people to get their vote, and more specifically to Stauros Argiris, to Stellos Argiris of Loxandra from 50 Drs each, and also promised to Loxandra herself that he would provide her with a tent [τσαντίρι] to house sick niece at an exotic place. He also gave 50 Drs to Michael Petrakes, house [παράγκα] number 358, whereas some voted twice..." Article by A Chatzidimou (*Rizospastes* 7/7/1929)

⁶¹⁴ See *Rizospastes* 20/7/1929. And he was indeed able to realize his threat of eviction, such as in the case of his former daughter-in-law Sofia, although for personal rather than political reasons. (See *Rizospastes* 26/8/1929)

⁶¹⁵ See *Proceedings* 6/11/1929 and 11/12/1929, *Archive of the Political Asia Minor Center, ELIA*

⁶¹⁶ *Rizospastes* 13/7/1923. The letter is published in a free column

Could those refugee unions be considered as an effective pressure group for refugee interests? Rizospastes alleged in 1929 that POADA was pretty much hooked “on the government’s car.”⁶¹⁷ This was probably not far from the truth, but relations between refugee unions as well as other refugee committees and the Liberal Party were not always harmonious. Despite the fact that no serious breakdown ever occurred, there were occasional frictions, mainly surrounding the issue of elections and the inclusion of their representatives in the Party electoral tickets. In 1928, when Venizelos turned down the demands of POADA for listing its candidates, they threatened to enter the electoral struggle on an independent ticket. In the end, a compromise was achieved between the two parties, and three refugees instead of one were listed on the Liberal ticket. It is suggested that Venizelos did not want to have more than one refugee candidate in the parliamentary elections.⁶¹⁸

However, such refugee committees cannot be seen as serious pressure groups when it came to demands that went beyond those having to do with their own incorporation into the political system in general and Venizelos’ Liberal Party in particular. In the occasional instances where they would move away from their open reconciliatory politics they would do no more than “threaten with paper war and ridiculous announcements”. Avoiding direct confrontation by taking their demands to the streets they would rather “gather the seal-keepers of the refugee associations and make resolutions.”⁶¹⁹ Indicative of this unwillingness for direct action are the proceedings of such an association: the Political Asia Minor Center. Accordingly, in a meeting on 7th May 1927 it was “suggested that the refugee world should mobilize a little, in order to show its dissatisfaction against the government.” There was also a great deal of talk about the “profiteering of the capitalist and financial centers”. So, what course of action was in the end decided? None other, but the forming of a committee that would “present itself to those responsible in order to express either their complaints or problems.”⁶²⁰

The effectiveness of such action, however, was doubtful. Refugee committees would often appear at the doorstep of a ministry, asking for a hearing by the minister or his deputy, in order to channel their demands. On many occasions they would just be turned away and told to come back ‘next week’.⁶²¹ Furthermore, the various refugee associations were divided by personal rivalries, making

⁶¹⁷ *Rizospastes* 20/1/1929

⁶¹⁸ *Rizospastes* 4/8/1928 and 7/8/1928

⁶¹⁹ *Rizospastes* 25/4/1929 A view that was also quoted in *Acropolis*, called refugee associations an ‘abuse of seals’. See *Acropolis* 21/2/1929

⁶²⁰ Proceedings 7/5/1927, Archive of the Political Asia Minor Center, ELIA

⁶²¹ *Rizospastes* 19/1/1929

them easy to manipulate by playing one against the other⁶²². So, while ‘pursuing the interests’ of the refugees, “one president would hate the other, a refugee would be denouncing the opposing association”⁶²³.

The government was well aware of the social implications of exclusion from the power networks that clientism facilitated. In November 1929 the President of the Government sent a memo to all Ministries and Public Authorities under their jurisdiction that was entitled “Towards regaining the public’s trust in public authorities”. It mentioned that “it would indeed be a great achievement, and the notion of the State as a representative of the whole of society would be established in the public’s consciousness, if the perception, that unfortunately has deeply infiltrated all social classes, that only through the mediation of powerful patrons it is possible for even the smallest case to be dealt with, was to disappear.”⁶²⁴ However, not much action was taken in practice by the government towards the fulfillment of such a goal.

It may be argued that this was probably because short-term political effects and benefits took precedence over the longer term social ones. It was a well established fact throughout the interwar period that the Venizelists managed to secure themselves a position of power through the patronage of the refugee populations. An article in *Proia* in 1935 suggested that the Venizelists deliberately cultivated the notion among the refugees that if their political opponents were to ever rise in power they would ‘unleash hell’ upon them, “taking away their houses, their farms, their settlements.” The article is clear on the intentions behind the maintenance of the refugee/native dichotomy on behalf of the Venizelists: “they wish for the refugees to remain a separate factor, in order to exploit [the position of being] supposedly their patron, against their supposedly enemies.”⁶²⁵

Further proof of the utilization, endorsement and support for the clientist network as a model for channeling demands and power by the Liberals can be found in the correspondence of Venizelos himself. Accordingly, refugees as well as natives would often write letters to Venizelos, confirming their allegiance to the Liberal party in general and to him in particular. These letters would often include ‘examples’ of their activities in support of the party, as well as names of people who could confirm the background of the sender.⁶²⁶ Interestingly, the role of the patron was also played by the Church; hence the Archbishop was often asked to intervene with the Minister responsible a specific

⁶²² Such in the case of Pamvourliotiki versus POADA. See *Rizospastis* 25/4/1929

⁶²³ *Patriis* 25/2/1929

⁶²⁴ ‘Towards regaining the public’s trust in public authorities’ (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/105)

⁶²⁵ *Proia* 23/1/1935

⁶²⁶ See for example Letter of M I Polites to Venizelos 17/8/1932, in Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/93

case in order to conduct a clientist exchange. That would refer to either employment in public services or entry into university, even in cases when admittedly the candidate “did not have the necessary qualifications.”⁶²⁷

However, Royalists were not able to utilize these networks of power among the refugees for a long time. Indeed, it was only in 1933 when a Populist Political Club was finally established in Kokkinia “working non-stop, for the service of the various needs of the settlement.”⁶²⁸

Liberals versus Populists and Refugees versus Natives. The incorporation of refugees through a national-political dichotomy.

Why were refugees overwhelmingly Venizelist? There is no doubt that there was a well established wide-spread belief that the Crown was responsible for the Asia Minor Disaster and “all evils in the land”. But even more interesting perhaps is the respect, if not admiration, towards the Liberal leader Venizelos, even by people who would not necessarily identify themselves as Venizelists.⁶²⁹ However, the reasons behind the more or less solid refugee support of the refugee population, which throughout the 1920s would be more than 90%, was more than the impact of Venizelos’ ‘great persona’.

First of all, refugees were able to pinpoint the process of their salvation in a single individual, General Plastiras, a Venizelist who took the initiative to lead the refugee population to safety following the Asia Minor disaster. Hence “many considered that they owed their lives...to Plastiras and Venizelos” while at the same time “they were unaware of what happened behind the backs of the Greek element in Turkey the same way that the Greeks who lived in the homeland were.”⁶³⁰ In addition, refugees sought in Venizelos, the ‘right person for the job’ of repatriation “despite the temporary measure of exchange of populations decided by the Treaty of Lausanne.”⁶³¹

⁶²⁷ See letters dated 4/8/1932 and 1/8/1931 in Archive of Archbishop Chrysanthos, Sub-file 4.1, ELIA

⁶²⁸ *Acropolis* 5/5/1933

⁶²⁹ After all Venizelos “was respected by the Allies and managed to get us [i.e. Greek frontiers] to Asia Minor” See Testimony of Tsavoures Strates, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶³⁰ Interview, Cassette: ‘verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934’. Similar observation can be found in Cassette ‘Experiences/ Memories’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶³¹ *Mikrasiatiki* 5/8/1923

What is sometimes also ignored is that refugees were, to differing extents, politically conscious individuals, with beliefs which overwhelmingly republican and liberal. Hence, in that respect, they would indeed identify politically with an anti-royalist block. “Republicanism for the refugees”, was according to refugee MP M Kyrkos “connected to the disaster and to their fatherlands and to the graves of their fathers and to everything most valuable and holy that a man could have.”⁶³² In 1932 the local Piraeus newspaper *Neoi Kairoi* pointed to what it called the “unholy exploitation of Democracy as a symbol of the Liberals, in the same way that their opponents used Royalism as the flag of their camp, and brought about disaster destroying themselves.”⁶³³ By 1936, candidates that belonged to the Liberal camp would urge voters in Kokkinia not to vote for the Communists on the grounds that “their vote would go wasted, and afterwards there would be a dictatorship.”⁶³⁴

Of course, added to this bloc mentality were the attitudes of the ‘other side’, the Populists, whose anti-refugee sentiment would often reach the point of racism and hysteria. Indicative of such attitudes were several articles published throughout the interwar period by Anti-Venizelists calling for the cleansing of the capital from the “refugee herd”, and propagating separation between the “pure-blooded Greeks” and “Turk-seeds”.⁶³⁵ Refugees’ identification with the Venizelist camp meant the continuation of an already existing political schism, which was now reinforced with a new element, ethnicity. According to *Kathimerine*, the native [hence Royalist according to the paper] electorate, would be forced from the sense of ‘injustice’ into becoming “a block of ‘revolutionaries’, who will bring back the King and kick out or eliminate the refugees!”⁶³⁶ Attacks against the refugee population were not restricted to verbal ones, but often became physical. Violent clashes between refugees and natives were reported almost from their very first settlement.⁶³⁷

As the refugee association POADA mentioned in its paper, such feelings emerged among the native population because the latter were “poisoned with convincing evidence...that their misery is caused by the refugee parasites and that the recently submitted sums from the exchanged properties to the beneficiaries by the National Bank were distributed by the Democratic Block for buying off

⁶³² ‘Towards the solution of the refugee drama: the real state of the refugee issue’, 1932 p15 in Archive of M.K. Kyrkos, ASKI

⁶³³ *Neoi Kairoi* 19/9/1932

⁶³⁴ *Rizospastes* 25/1/1936. In another issue of *Rizospastes* it would be suggested that supporters of the Liberals would deliberately spread rumors of a forthcoming military coup in order to influence the voting outcome. See *Rizospastes* 27/1/1936

⁶³⁵ See articles in *Kathimerine* 16/7/1928 and 19/7/1928 respectively

⁶³⁶ Quoted in *Rizospastes* 29/1/1928

⁶³⁷ Proceedings of the Executive Board of the Political Asia Minor Center 11/11/1924 (Archive of the Political Asia Minor Center, ELIA)

refugee votes” and practically ‘stealing’ the elections from the rivals.⁶³⁸ Indeed, the ‘Association of Native Piraeus’ Residents’ made it clear in an announcement in 1933 that they considered that the worsening of the crisis and unemployment in the area was due to “Piraeus having been occupied by various individuals completely foreign to the place.”⁶³⁹

A letter to Venizelos from a refugee party activist regarding the Liberal Party’s work for refugees ahead of the forthcoming elections sets forward what can perhaps be regarded as a more or less widespread refugee view of the opposition (i.e. the Royalist camp) and its campaign: on the one hand holding “fat promises in favor of the refugees” and on the other, getting ready “to throw them back to the sea, if they were to be favored by the people and come into power.”⁶⁴⁰

Violent episodes between natives and refugees were recorded throughout the interwar period. A 1933 report by the Ministry of Interior noted the use of ‘terrorist methods’ by natives against refugees, further fueled by the rhetoric of Populist politicians who would “encourage natives to annihilate the refugees.”⁶⁴¹ Even as late as 1936 natives were called upon to create ‘defense’ associations against the refugees!⁶⁴² Such attitudes would be also encouraged on the other side by Venizelist refugee officials, as reported by a local newspaper in Kokkinia, which attributed misfortunes to *palαιοelladites* [those from ‘old Greece’, i.e. natives].⁶⁴³

On the other hand, the apparent electoral predominance of the Liberals among the refugees was not solely the product of individual choice. For example, there were several allegations of misconduct during the 1923 elections, the first elections whereby the refugees were to exercise their voting rights. According to reports published in *Rizospastes*, the garrisons that were present outside electoral booths in Piraeus “forced every voter to enclose in the envelope a Venizelist ticket”, whereas the refugees were literally “driven to Liberal Party electoral centers where they were provided with the necessary remittance paper [*συγχωροχάρτι*, i.e. the Venizelist ticket] on the advice that ‘anything else they may be given would be of...Metaxas’.” Furthermore, refugees were segregated outside electoral booths, “perhaps [for the Liberals] to exhibit their majority.” Those, whose ticket was not properly sealed in the envelope provided, were handed another already sealed,

⁶³⁸ *POADA* 8/1/1926

⁶³⁹ *Acropolis* 2/8/1933

⁶⁴⁰ Report with no date or sender’s details referring to the work of Liberals in favor of the refugees (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/135)

⁶⁴¹ As a result, 2 refugees were reported to have lost their lives. Report of the Ministry of Interior / Head of the Police to the Private Office of the Prime Minister 23/2/1933, in Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/113

⁶⁴² *Acropolis* 6/2/1936

⁶⁴³ *Anamorfosis* 12/1/1936

whereas “in many places there would be even an additional check on... the content of the envelope.” The instances of reported electoral misconduct were so many that *Rizospastes* would call them an ‘electoral farce’.⁶⁴⁴

The Communist Party was aware of the consequences of the schism, which polarized the refugee and the native populations in a dichotomy of ethnicity rather than class. *Rizospastes* stressed in 1926: “Greece is not divided into natives and refugees. Greece is divided into rich and poor, people who live without working and those who work day and night not being able to earn themselves a living.”⁶⁴⁵ However, there was no serious movement from the Liberals towards the Communists; at least not before the 1930s, when a slow but steady leak began to break the refugee element away from the Liberal Party towards other, anti-Venizelist, democratic parties. This process was linked, according to the refugee MP M Kyrkos, to a progressive loss of faith in the capabilities of Venizelos to deal with the issues with which refugees were concerned.⁶⁴⁶

Elections and Refugees

It is important at this point to elaborate on the issue of elections in regards to the refugees, an issue briefly touched upon earlier in this chapter. Important factors include gerrymandering and manipulation of the vote through rigging, harassment of activists or other means. In addition to the settlement of refugees in electoral districts in order to achieve a positive outcome for the Venizelist camp, gerrymandering was designed in order to “minimize the possibility of refugee majorities”, thus hindering political independence of refugees and incorporating them into the existing two-party system to the advantage of the Venizelists.⁶⁴⁷

When the Populists came in power in the 1930s, they attempted to reverse the effects of Venizelist gerrymandering to their own advantage. Hence, on the forthcoming separation of refugee settlements into self-governing municipalities, a policy carried forward by the Populists, Venizelos

⁶⁴⁴ See *Rizospastes* 16/12/1923, 17/12/1923. See also *Foni tou Ergatou* 17/12/1923. K D Fountoulas written on how he was driven to the electoral booth, although under-aged, because he was mistaken for a refugee (See *Rizospastes* 17/12/1923)

⁶⁴⁵ “So, when the time of elections come, everyone will have to choose among the wealthy refugee who cooperates with the wealthy native, and the poor refugee whose comrade would be the poor native worker or farmer.” *Rizospastes* 7/9/1926

⁶⁴⁶ See ‘Towards the solution of the refugee drama: the real state of the refugee issue’, 1932 pp14-15 in Archive of M K Kyrkos, ASKI

⁶⁴⁷ See Hirschon R B (1976) p35. Also noted in Legg K R (1969) p210 and Pentzopoulos D (1962) p187

argued that “it is obvious that the separation of the settlements, being carried forward at the eve of local elections, is being subject to solely party reasons.” Indeed, as Kafandares, the leader of the Progressives stated: “if there was ever a suitable opportunity for the refugees to be emancipated from the political parenthood of the Liberals, this is the one.”⁶⁴⁸

Other means of controlling the voting outcome involved electoral rigging. In the elections of 1934 in Kokkinia, invalid Liberal Party ballots were found and confiscated in four different voting stations.⁶⁴⁹ In 1933 there was a trial at the electoral court of Piraeus on electoral misconduct, according to which some 7,939 voters were alleged to have voted illegally. Among the evidence put forward supporting claims of electoral rigging there was a telegram of a Liberal city councilor Asproulakes to Venizelos himself, where it was mentioned that “thanks to the 800 new voting booklets, Kokkinia would overwhelmingly vote for Venizelos.”⁶⁵⁰ Similar allegations were made in parliament by the successor of Venizelos as leader of the Liberals, Sofoules who argued that some 28,000 fake voting booklets were issued by the Populists between 1934 and 1936 in the electoral districts of Piraeus and Athens alone. Finally, the cleansing of the electoral lists in Athens, Piraeus and Salonica was decided by law in January 1936. This took place after the subsequent elections.⁶⁵¹ The most glaring example of electoral rigging was the 1935 referendum on the re-introduction of the Monarchy, when Kokkinia, until then considered a Venizelist -hence republican- stronghold, nevertheless ‘voted’ overwhelmingly in favor of the King.⁶⁵²

Another means of voting manipulation came to surface during a court case put forward by newspaper publishers. This involved the financing during the pre-election period of the newspapers concerned by the Liberals Club, with the object of reporting positive comments about Venizelos, which would be distributed free of charge to the refugees. However, the Club did not fulfill its agreement, paying just half the money promised, and as a result the paper publishers brought them

⁶⁴⁸ *Acropolis* 7/5/1933

⁶⁴⁹ According to *Rizospastes* “in N. Kokkinia the Venizelist Daskalakis circulated 6,000 vote ballots including names from the electoral voting ballots of EMEA, from which he erased a comrade and put his name in its place.” See *Rizospastes* 12/2/1934

⁶⁵⁰ *Acropolis* 10/5/1933

⁶⁵¹ *Acropolis* 24/1/1936. In view that Metaxas’ dictatorship would materialize only six months afterwards, it is doubtful whether the cleansing process of the electoral lists ever took place.

⁶⁵² Tsavoures Strates stated that 39,000 people voted in favor of the King, and just 250 in favor of the Republic. In total some 40,000 took part in the elections: a number far exceeding past numbers of electoral participation. See *Testimony of Tsavoures Strates, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE.*

to court.⁶⁵³ To the above factors should of course be added the interventions of the authorities in electoral campaigns. Indeed, electoral campaigns were closely watched by the authorities. Even electoral advertising had to acquire approval from the police before it was allowed to circulate. Workers distributing electoral material for the Communist Party were often harassed by the police, physically abused, or indeed arrested and held in custody.⁶⁵⁴

Relations between refugees and public authorities, state employees and the RSC officials

A report of Michalakopoulos to Venizelos 1929 stated that “during my tour it was brought to my attention that the clashes among local, especially lower, administrative organs and citizens occur on a daily basis, causing the dissatisfaction of the latter”, causing “hostility towards the authorities as well as the state.” According to the report “residents complain that they are over-oppressed by lower administrative organs... We should not be forgetful of the constantly arising conflicts among the RSC organs or among natives and refugees.”⁶⁵⁵ In many cases, such conflicts would arise from the ever-widening gap between promises made from higher officials to refugees ‘to deal with their case’ and the inability (objective or not) of the middle or lower administrative strata to fulfill them.⁶⁵⁶

What were the reasons behind such attitudes?

First of all were the RSC officials’ attitudes towards the refugees. The debate that took place during an RSC conference concerning the collection of debts is indicative of the way they perceived and dealt with the refugee issue. Mr. Eddy, the Chairman of the RSC suggested that there was “an organized campaign in all quarters to resist any attempt to collect debts from the urban refugees”, adding that he did not agree with the claim put forward by refugees that the “house prices were in excess of their real cost.” Papadatos, the Under-Secretary of State, tried to reason with Mr. Eddy saying that “it is not that the refugees do not want to pay, they really want to pay, but the year 1928 had been so fruitful of misfortunes, in the epidemic of the dengue, etc., that the people really cannot pay. He said that even among other classes outside the refugees this same difficulty is experienced in collecting money...”

⁶⁵³ *Rizospastes* 25/5/1933

⁶⁵⁴ See Act 177, Meeting 27th, 24/6/1935, in Archives of the Municipality of Kokkinia (Nikaia), *Rizospastes* 28/3/1933 and 3/4/1934

⁶⁵⁵ Report of A Michalakopoulos to Venizelos, 1929 (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/106)

⁶⁵⁶ See for example Proceedings of the Political Asia Minor Center 17/10/1929, Archive of the Political Asia Minor Center, ELIA

But Mr. Eddy pointed out “the representatives of the refugees were all men of substance – shopkeepers and professional men, well able to pay their debts...”. The debate clearly showed a fundamental lack of understanding of the situation ‘on the ground’ by the higher officials of the RSC, whose picture was limited to the few, and relatively well-off, ‘representatives’ of the refugees with whom they had to deal. The final remark of Prime Minister Venizelos on the subject is also interesting: “The Prime Minister agreed with Mr. Eddy that the refugees must pay... He desired however that we should not take forcible measures until the elections were finished.”⁶⁵⁷ It came as no surprise therefore that refugees grew to see the RSC with suspicion, if not indeed as exploiters: “Morgenthau, that great banker, the robber of Greece”, stressed a refugee, referring to the former chairman of the RSC!⁶⁵⁸

To what extent Mr. Eddy’s claim that non-payment of debts was a part of an “organized campaign” has any truth is difficult to answer. Overall such manifestations of resistance appeared spontaneous. However, it is clear that the Communist Party not only supported, but also encouraged such activities. So, for example, in the instance of several residents of Bosphorus St in N Kokkinia who not only refused to pay, but also declared that they recognized no debts to the RSC, the Communist Party through its organ *Rizospastes* urged other refugees to take their actions as an example, a first step towards escaping from what is referred to in the newspaper as voting ‘crowd’ mentality.⁶⁵⁹

However, it was the usual practice for those in authority to blame the communists for almost all ills of society. Another example of such attitudes could be found in an interview that was published in a local Piraeus paper by Papastratos, an MP who was involved in the tobacco industry in Piraeus. Asked by an interviewer whether the ‘labor consciousness’ of the Greek worker could be deemed ‘satisfactory’, Papastratos answered: “[satisfactory] enough. However, it would have been even more satisfactory, if it was not for the disease of communism. Unfortunately the Greek worker has fallen victim of a group, instruments of the 3rd International. Those instruments of Moscow,

⁶⁵⁷ Confidential: ‘Proceedings of the Conference held at the Petit Palais, on the morning of the 16th of February 1929’, Present: Venizelos, President of the Council, Papadatos, Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Ch B Eddy, Chairman of the RSC, H Simpson, Vice-Chairman of the RSC, and Lambros and Rallis, members of the RSC. (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/68)

⁶⁵⁸ Interview, Cassette: ‘verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934’, Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁵⁹ Letter by Tassos 4/3/1929, published in *Rizospastes* 7/3/1929

possessing a great deal of money have managed to corrupt a great part of the laboring world and make them more interested in the theories of Lenin than their own job.”⁶⁶⁰

However, putting the blame on the communists did not help the authorities, whether industrialists, the state or the RSC, from escaping accusations of misconduct concerning the process of refugee settlement during which some individuals became richer and the vast majority of refugees were left devastated and impoverished. The Union for ‘Housing Defense’ reported on state housing and housing built by the dissolved RSC: “However, this noble and humanitarian cause was abused by various cunning people, to the point where many of them managed to appropriate more than one house which, through a series of anomalous dealings, they transfer on reward to other beneficiaries, earning in this way unheard of profits out of other peoples’ misery.”⁶⁶¹ Similarly, a later article in *Acropolis* pointed out that “There are today some bigwig businessmen, known to have made their fortunes from the contraction of refugee housing, as there are civil servants that are weighted by serious suspicions, that not due to mere irresponsibility, but also due to matters of self interest and material benefits and exchanges they gave those important works to morally suspicious individuals.”⁶⁶²

In any case, what certainly did not improve the image of the authorities in the consciousness of refugees was their unwillingness to prosecute those individuals. Accordingly, the Public Works Bureau noted that “in order to avoid any misunderstanding, our report as well as all our other activities, by no means aim against any persons, nor attribute responsibilities, because they do not aim in proving any wrong or hazardous doings...”⁶⁶³ It was not until 1929 when the Minister for Welfare reluctantly ordered an investigation into the “criminal deficiencies of the newly built houses.”⁶⁶⁴

But even at the level of local politics, the majority of refugees often found themselves alienated by the policies of those in power. It is perhaps indicative of the spending priorities of the Municipality of N Kokkinia, that the capital allocated by the budget for administration costs was more than double the money spent for Health and Care and Social Welfare put together. It is also worth noting that just 2.3% of the local authorities’ income from direct taxes came from what was classified as

⁶⁶⁰ *Neoi Kairoi* 10/11/1932

⁶⁶¹ *Acropolis* 25/5/1931

⁶⁶² *Acropolis* 4/12/1933

⁶⁶³ Report of the Public Works Bureau (Ministry of Transport) to the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Precaution, 11/10/1928 (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/132)

⁶⁶⁴ Report of A Michalakopoulos to Venizelos, 1929 (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/106)

taxes on “profits of commercial and industrial enterprises.” The main bulk of tax-income came from indirect taxes that involved mainly consumer goods.⁶⁶⁵ The maintenance of a relatively large administration raises further questions regarding the use of the public sector for political purposes, especially if one takes into account that the criteria for employment in the public sector included that the candidate had not been sentenced by the Idionymon Law.⁶⁶⁶ Further scandal concerned a trial of Amiradakes vs. Koraes, the mayor of Kokkinia. The proceedings revealed that the latter had acquired refugee compensation twice. That did not improve the image of authorities among refugees.⁶⁶⁷

Of course refugees were not always apathetic when they felt exploited by the authorities. On the contrary there were plenty of cases where refugees in Kokkinia reacted collectively to injustices imposed on them by people in authority, especially during the 1930s. An example would be when the mayor of Kokkinia, Koraes auctioned the water that was provided free by Ulen Company, resulting in a charge that was unbearable for the residents of Kokkinia, who already lived under harsh conditions. What followed was a form of popular uprising against Koraes’ measures uniting professional, worker and cultural associations, sparking what was later to evolve into a “popular unity” in Kokkinia.⁶⁶⁸

Community politics and ideology

Various social factors contributed to the development of the refugee psychology, including their personal experiences and history. When interviewed, Kokkinia refugees from Asia Minor argued that two main characteristics of their people were dignity and pride [*φιλότιμο*], on the one hand, and a strong sense of solidarity, on the other. The experience of forced dislocation and what followed was a crucial binding element: “Through the known tragedy of the flight from Turkish soil, the

⁶⁶⁵ Resolution of the Municipal Council of N Kokkinia, no27, 11th Meeting, 25th and 27th of June 1934, Archives of the Municipality of Kokkinia (Nikaia). Same picture can be found in the 1935-1936 budget.

⁶⁶⁶ Resolution of the Municipal Council of N Kokkinia, no92, 19th Meeting, 6th and 7th of February 1935, Archives of the Municipality of Kokkinia (Nikaia)

⁶⁶⁷ *Rizospastes* 4/10/1934

⁶⁶⁸ Interview, Cassette ‘4th of August, etc.’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

settlement in this hostile environment, and disappointment, every one was...looking back to the lost lands where they lost their households, and relatively comfortable life –compared to Greece.”⁶⁶⁹

In Kokkinia, as in other refugee settlements, neighborhoods were formed by settlers according to place of origin. Achieving some degree of homogeneity (although by no means always) contributed to a network of personal ties and sense of mutual help that pre-existed in many cases the Asia Minor Disaster. Homogeneity was preserved by restricting marriages within the boundaries of the given community.⁶⁷⁰ Regional identification was very strong. Hence refugees of common origin would usually address themselves as ‘compatriots’ or ‘patriots’, as opposed to others who would be referred to as ‘foreigners’ [αλλομερίτες].⁶⁷¹ As the 1926 report of the RSC noted: “The icons, holy books, objects of the sacristy and ritual vessels which piety or superstition succeeded in saving in the hurry of departure, assume particular importance.” These became symbols of the lost homelands but also represented the will of the community to survive, overcoming the hardships of the present, just as they overcame the hardships of the past.⁶⁷² They can also be seen as symbols of continuity, marking the re-birth of past communities. The sense of continuity was further reinforced by names of roads, squares and other public places referring to locations that were abandoned in Asia Minor and elsewhere, or to lost family members.⁶⁷³

On the cultural differences dividing refugees from locals, one refugee in Kokkinia observed: “If someone worked as an employee somewhere in Athens or Piraeus, especially if it was a woman, according to the mentality of the time, they would avoid saying to others that they’d be living in Kokkinia. [That is] because the very word Kokkinia was synonymous to that of a crook, a ripper, a loafer, an immoral person...The joy and hospitality they [the refugees] would show for another person they [the natives] would misinterpret it in a bad way...” The refugees seem to have been over-expressive of their emotions in various manifestations; an attitude that seems to have often

⁶⁶⁹ Interview, Cassette ‘Experiences/ Memories’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁷⁰ Interview, Cassette: ‘verbal traditions, life reports etc., before 1934’, Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁷¹ See Microfilm SE35: Today’s Settlement of Piraeus and Suburbs, in Archive of the Center for Asia Minor Studies

⁶⁷² See Greek Refugee Settlement Commission (1926) p24 and Interview, Cassette: ‘verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁷³ See Microfilm SE35: Today’s Settlement of Piraeus and Suburbs, in Archive of the Center for Asia Minor Studies

scandalized the native Greeks.⁶⁷⁴ Women refugees were seen by the natives as of 'low morals' due to their "participation in industry", as well as "their freedom of mobility" in public places.⁶⁷⁵ On the other hand, refugees perceived the way of life of the native working people as being inward-looking, relatively isolated and rather distrustful. According to another interviewee, the distrust of natives against refugees was further reinforced if not actively promoted by various party-bosses.⁶⁷⁶

Internal social cohesion was an issue addressed on many occasions. Refugee leaders often called for a "solid internal harmony and unity to be in place", whereas through various festivities and public speeches they would remind their less-fortunate compatriots that they all shared a common fate; that they were all, rich as well as poor refugees, bonded by the common experience of Catastrophe and dislocation.⁶⁷⁷

The Communist Party constantly tried to break through this intra-class bond of regionalism and common experience, trying to establish in refugee working class consciousness that a rich and a poor refugee did not really 'sail in the same boat'. Its organ *Rizospastes* would often point to examples where poor refugees were ill-treated by their 'protectors', praising examples of solidarity among poor workers and calling for others to follow their example.⁶⁷⁸ The Party also had to face a wide-spread apathy and passivity that was a dominating feature among refugees' attitudes, for at least the first part of the interwar period. According to a refugee member of the Piraeus city council, the refugees accepted their situation "with the temporary ease of their pain through the injection of narcotic morphine that is their hope. Great was the refugee pain. Even greater was their tolerance."⁶⁷⁹

The Communist Party became increasingly successful, especially in the 1930s, in utilizing those features of intense social life and solidarity bonds to its advantage. Social festivities had a strong communal character, and frequently acquired a political character as well. It was not by accident that several of these festivities were later banned by the 4th of August regime "in order to avoid

⁶⁷⁴ Interview, Cassette: 'verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934', in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁷⁵ Interview, Cassette: 'Kokkinia, composition' in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁷⁶ Refers to the Royalists. Interview, Cassette: 'Kokkinia, composition' in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁷⁷ See *Mikrasiatiki* 5/7/1923 and *Acropolis* 15/5/1929

⁶⁷⁸ For examples reported in Kokkinia see *Rizospastes* 20/7/1929, 26/8/1929, 15/10/1929

⁶⁷⁹ *Anagenisis* 13/11/1932

trouble”.⁶⁸⁰ Despite their financial hardship, refugees in Kokkinia regularly exhibited their working-class solidarity by contributing to the fund-raising by the Workers’ Relief. As an activist recalls: “we’d be going freely to the cafés with Workers’ Relief coupons asking for contributions, and everyone would give, there’d be no one who would say ‘I won’t give you’...even inside the cafés we would not hide...people knew then the fight that was given by the working class, the exile...”⁶⁸¹

In its battle to win over the ‘hearts and minds’ of refugees, the Party had to face an intense anti-communist campaign that was channeled through various means into the communities. The only means of information available at that time was the newspaper. S Tsavoures, a refugee in Kokkinia, would describe the picture of communism portrayed by the press: “millions of dead in the Soviet Union...forced labor camps everywhere...it was all over the newspapers.”⁶⁸² Furthermore, if one went through the press of the time they would most likely get the impression that there was a well-planned communist conspiracy in the settlements, and the rest of the country to undermine the state.⁶⁸³

There was plenty of anti-communist agitation through the columns of the local press in Kokkinia. An article published in *Anamorfosis* entitled “A disease – social theories and their devastating effect” warned of the “dangerous spread of those utopian ideas”, as well as of the consequences that the “ideas of equality and justice” and “extreme socialization”, would have on “the present society.”⁶⁸⁴ As communist activity became progressively apparent in all areas of the settlements’ life, anti-communism also increased, especially from the Liberals, who saw their electoral base threatened.⁶⁸⁵ In any case, by the early 1930s the language of ‘class’, and ‘class war’ was progressively becoming part of every-day vocabulary. As a local Kokkinia newspaper noted in 1932, class war had gone beyond the notion of being a ‘sociological fairy-tale’, had skipped the limits of academic research, and had acquired a “clear form and was taken down in the streets of the cities of hunger and misery, wearing the mask of strikes.”⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁰ Interview, Cassette ‘Ways and conditions of life’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE.

⁶⁸¹ Interview, in Cassette ‘Kokkinia-History’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE.

⁶⁸² Testimony of Tsavoures Strates, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE.

⁶⁸³ See for example *Acropolis* 31/6/1929

⁶⁸⁴ *Anamorfosis* 17/11/1935, see also 6/10/1935

⁶⁸⁵ See ‘anti-communist crusade’ of Liberal mayor of Kokkinia through the columns *Patris*, reported in *Rizospastis* 25/6/1936

⁶⁸⁶ *Anagenisis* 11/12/1932

The church also played an important role in promoting an anti-communist ideology. As one refugee communist recalls: "the priests played their part in deceiving people through their Sunday sermons...maintaining as much as they could obscurantism, and especially passivity and anticommunism."⁶⁸⁷ A communist was portrayed as an individual who aimed at "destroying the family, destroying the motherland, destroying everything if they could."⁶⁸⁸ Anti-communism was promoted within the various refugee associations, which were concerned "to put an end to communist tendencies." Accordingly, circulars were published "opposing the activities of communist propaganda" and warning the refugees not to "fall victims to the Turks' collaborators."⁶⁸⁹ Communist efforts to counteract these obstacles amongst refugee workers in refugee communities will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Mavrogordatos' claim that refugee radicalism was due to the lack of "small property, family ties, clientism, and unbroken traditions" appears somewhat problematic.⁶⁹⁰ Although small property might have been absent, the other three elements that Mavrogordatos claims that the refugees lacked seem, upon further investigation, to have been there. Extended family ties were very important. Kinship networks of solidarity and self-help were maintained and reinforced in refugee settlements throughout the interwar period. Adding to the fact that extended families generally settled in the same neighborhood, a great deal of time was spent seeking lost family members and those who were initially scattered soon found themselves in their original communities.

We have also seen that due to various circumstances community ideology and politics was relatively strong. Crucially, this ideology and politics helped to maintain a sense of continuity. A link with the past proved a key element in coping with the harsh living conditions of the present and in achieving social cohesion. Hence, the role of tradition and its various manifestations were extended and reinforced.

⁶⁸⁷ Interview, Cassette 'Experiences/ Memories', in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁸⁸ Testimony of K Kehagias, Cassette 'before the 4th of August' in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁶⁸⁹ See for example, Proceedings of the Political Asia Minor Center, 5/7/1924, 30/8/1924, 6/2/1925

⁶⁹⁰ Mavrogordatos G (1989) p145

As far as clientism is concerned, we have seen that clientage networks sprung up almost as soon as the refugees arrived on the Greek coast. Clientism among refugees derived largely from the need for individuals who would operate as mediums between the authorities and the refugees. This initially had to do with the distribution of aid to the newly arrived refugees but it was soon extended to other areas of social, political and economic activity. We have also touched upon the political clientism exercised by the Liberal Party and its implications in the electoral expression and political organization of the refugees. Certainly, Clogg's claim that refugees "were largely lacking the mutual trust and hierarchical authority necessary for cooperation and collective action"⁶⁹¹ is problematic. There was both mutual trust manifested in strong community bonds and hierarchical authority manifested in the various refugee associations. The problem lay with the refugee associations, whose manipulation and dependence on dominant politics (mainly of the Liberal Party) prevented the development of any serious independent political activity.

Mazower's claim that urban refugee radicalism could be explained in terms of living conditions and political neglect is also problematic. Firstly, harsh living conditions do not automatically constitute a basis for radicalism. On the contrary, they may lead to quite an opposite result: passivity. This was certainly initially the case with the urban refugees, whose preoccupation for securing the means of survival and in whose fears of future security kept them away from radical or trade union politics. We shall elaborate further on the relation between urban refugees, the organized labor movement and communism in the following chapter.

The next chapter will explore labor activity and trade unionism in great detail. It will examine the various means of incorporation of the labor movement in Kokkinia and the methods by which the Communist Party overcame them and gained influence in trade unions and among the refugee population more broadly. It will elaborate on communist activity among refugees, outlining the obstacles faced by the Party and pointing to the factors that led to the rise of communism in Kokkinia in the 1930s.

⁶⁹¹ Clogg K R (1969) p115

Chapter 7: Working class communism in interwar Greece – The case of the refugees in Kokkinia, Piraeus. Part II

Introduction

Various views are put forward in the literature concerning the attachment of refugees and of communism. Koumandaraki suggests that “it was refugee workers, not surprisingly, who contributed most to labor radicalism in Greece during the interwar years, and it was they who most readily supported the Communist Party.”⁶⁹² Hirschon takes the argument even further suggesting that “localities such as Kokkinia became known as Communist strongholds”⁶⁹³ By contrast, Leontidou argues that “factionalism in the GSEE and Comintern directives pursued by the KKE could hardly mobilize the urban popular strata in the interwar period.” Dritsa also suggests that there was no real KKE tactic towards refugees until 1936.⁶⁹⁴ This chapter will examine such claims by looking into the developing relation between refugees, the labor movement and the Communist Party.

Industrial development in the Piraeus district

Unemployment rates remained high throughout the interwar period. The 1928 census found, some 22.28% of workers previously employed in industry and transport were without a job in the Piraeus district.⁶⁹⁵ Labor mobility was also quite high: as mentioned in the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission report in 1926, the urban refugee sometimes had “to change his trade six times in a year”, making it “difficult to find a general solution for the labor problem among urban settlers.”⁶⁹⁶ An important characteristic of the refugee labor force was the unusually large participation of women, since most families were deprived of their male members who had been lost at the war front or had emigrated in search for employment.

⁶⁹² Koumandaraki A (1995) p102

⁶⁹³ Hirschon R C (1988) p47

⁶⁹⁴ Leontidou E (1981) p163 and Dritsa M (1989) p60

⁶⁹⁵ That figure is slightly higher than the national average equivalent of 21,13%, and considerably higher than the rate of unemployment in the commerce and service sectors which amounted to just 7,99% for the same period. See Leontidou E L (1981) p85

⁶⁹⁶ Greek Settlement Commission (1926) p176

Table 32: Refugee Population by sex and age (1926)⁶⁹⁷

Settlement	Inhabitants under 16		Inhabitants over 16	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Byron	1,478	1,580	2,392	4,479
Kaisariani	1,977	1,938	2,367	4,268
Ionia	3,031	3,039	4,030	6,360
Kokkinia	5,685	5,292	7,240	11,068
Total (June 1926)	12,171	11,849	16,029	26,175

According to the above sample of four large refugee settlements, only 24.2% were males over the age of 16, who at the time were considered the economically active part of the population. This striking inequality among the adult population meant that women and children were introduced to the labor process on an unprecedented scale to provide additional financial support for the family budget. It also meant increasing numbers of unskilled labor competing for a limited number of jobs. Under-aged laborers learning a skill as apprentices were often mistreated, and on many occasions had to pay for their training. Krommudas, who was an apprentice himself at the time, recalls: "if you did not like it you could take a hike and go. They would find someone else."⁶⁹⁸

The working conditions, combined with the imbalance that characterized the adult population and its effects, can be seen as presenting three important inter-woven characteristics that may have had a significant impact on the construction of the social psychology of the urban refugee. Problems of subsistence, in combination with job insecurity and the need for the cooperation and contribution of all members of the family to overcome those problems, undoubtedly contributed to the refugees' perceptions of self and community.

Another important characteristic of the occupational geography of refugee settlements was the high percentage of manual laborers, which in Kokkinia reached 52% of the total. Women themselves were also overwhelmingly employed in industry at a rate that exceeded 71%.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁷ Greek Settlement Commission (1926) p176

⁶⁹⁸ Krommudas K (1986) pp25-26

⁶⁹⁹ GSYE *Apografi ton katastimaton kai ton biomixanikon epixeiriseon anergithisa ton Septembrio tou 1930, 1934*

Table 33: Division of labor for selected refugee settlements (1926)⁷⁰⁰

Settlement	Miscellaneous Occupations	Workmen	Total	Number of Families
Byron	2,687	501	3,188	2,258
Kaisariani	2,253	1,605	3,858	2,489
Ionia	3,568	2,448	6,016	3,793
Kokkinia	4,679	5,198	9,877	7,153
Total	13,187	9,752	22,939	15,693

Which industries employed the refugee workforce? According to the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission, by 1926 there were some 36 industrial establishments located in the refugee settlements of Athens and Piraeus, the overwhelming majority of which 27, were carpet factories. There were also “4 weaving shops, a factory for dyeing and chemical products, a chocolate manufactory, a nail factory and ceramic works”, and an additional rubber goods factory was “in course of construction.”⁷⁰¹ In addition, one must take into account some “500 looms installed in private houses.”⁷⁰² The latter greatly contributed to the formation and development of an informal household economy that mainly involved female labor. The development of a household economy seems to an extent to have been planned in advance by the RSC itself, which reported in 1926, that “many houses were designed as such, in order to be suitable for... carpet manufacturing.”⁷⁰³ In any case many houses would soon turn into “real shops, even factories.”⁷⁰⁴ This type of economy, however, was mostly of a supplementary character (i.e. to other forms of employment), since in most cases “they did not secure the necessary resources for living.”⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁰ Greek Settlement Commission (1926) p177. The report explains the categorization of occupations as follows: the first column exhibits “the number of inhabitants engaged in an occupation in the same quarters”, whereas the second one exhibits “the workmen, that is to say, persons without a specified occupation, laborers, manual workers etc.”

⁷⁰¹ Greek Settlement Commission (1926) p187

⁷⁰² Greek Settlement Commission (1926) p187

⁷⁰³ League of Nations (1926) p136

⁷⁰⁴ Report of the Public Works Bureau, Ministry of Transport to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Precaution, 11/10/1928 (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/132)

⁷⁰⁵ League of Nations (1926) p132

The politics of labor incorporation and emancipation

According to an announcement by the Piraeus Labor Center in 1923, labor activity had been paralyzed and the Center had almost reached the point of dissolution over the previous two years. Its break from the General Confederation of Labor (because the latter had been passed under the control of the Communists) had resulted in the disaffiliation of many unions, creating a feeling of distrust and disappointment among workers. The Center was deprived of the means to publish even a single proclamation. However, many trade unions were slowly coming back to the Center, or considering doing so.⁷⁰⁶ Hence, at the time when refugee populations were being settled, forming a new urban proletariat, the existing organized labor movement was unable to integrate the new proletariat. It was too busy picking up its own bits and pieces.

An announcement of the General Confederation of Labor stated that “the refugee workers, become, not to their knowledge, the pretext for breaking workers’ strikes causing misery to their fellow workers...workers’ unions must, not for one moment, allow the refugees to play that role [i.e. that of labor reserve, a means for the employers to combat strikes] that is harmful not only to other workers, but also to themselves.”⁷⁰⁷

Nevertheless, by the late 1920s the first seeds of communism among urban working class refugees seemed to be well in place. Through the columns of *Rizospastes* a communist refugee named K Afgitas tried to convince his fellow refugee workers of the need to participate in the forthcoming Labor Congresses and in trade union processes. He attributed the refugees’ lack of interest in unionization to the ‘disease of fatalism’, as well as social and religious prejudices, the personality cult of Venizelos, and of course the desperate situation in which refugees found themselves upon their arrival, when survival and immediate needs took precedence over unionization. Accordingly, refugees stood “foreign to the labor struggles, and in many cases they became even persecutors and enemies of it!”⁷⁰⁸ Calls by the Communist Party to the refugees on the “need to organize” themselves in their unions seem to have fallen on deaf ears.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁶ Announcement of the Piraeus Labor Center to all workers’ unions of Piraeus, published in *Rizospastes* 19/7/1923

⁷⁰⁷ *Rizospastes* 11/9/1923

⁷⁰⁸ *Rizospastes* 7/3/1928

⁷⁰⁹ “You need to take an interest to yourselves first. You need to organize yourselves...You are many, whereas your exploiters are few.” (*Rizospastes*, 19/10/1924)

The author of the article admitted that refugee labor was used to bring down wages and break strikes. Refugees were encouraged by various *prosfygopateres* to form their own separate labor organizations (as in the cases of the National Tobacco Workers' Unions and the Salonica Rail-workers) thus dividing the labor movement. However, the article ended on an optimistic tone, reporting that in the last couple of years "the refugees, being proletarians by their nature and position, under the pressure of reality had entered labor unions in mass numbers and have fought in the front line [προτωστάτησαν] on many occasions as it was their duty to do so... The bourgeoisie hits the entire working class, without making distinctions between locals and refugees..."⁷¹⁰

During the 1928 take-over of the Confederation of Labor, four communist-led trade unions in Piraeus had their voting strength reduced in the Congress: the Shoe-makers, the Bakery workers, the Carpet workers, and the construction workers.⁷¹¹ By 1929 the trade union strength of the Communist Party as reflected by the unions which participated in the Unitary Congress was as follows:

Table 34: Organizations from Piraeus that took part in the Unitary Congress⁷¹²

Organizations' Name	No of Delegates	Organizations' Name	No of Delegates
Unitary Labor Center of Piraeus	3	Dockers 'Pontos'	1
Unorganized Cotton Workers	3	Café Employees	2
Motorists Union	3	Sewing Workers	5
Unorganized Carpet Workers	1	Shoe Makers	3
Mechanists Union	1	Bakery Workers	3

It is important to note the participation of settlement committees in the union of male and female sewing workers of Piraeus, as well as of the unorganized workers employed in the carpet industry (representatives from nine factories took part).⁷¹³ The sewing and carpet industries constituted the main employers of refugee labor for most of the inter-war period. In total some fifteen labor unions were affiliated to the Unitary Labor Center of Piraeus as it was first established in 1929.⁷¹⁴ It is also

⁷¹⁰ *Rizospastes* 7/3/1928

⁷¹¹ *Rizospastes* 11/5/1928

⁷¹² *Rizospastes* 4/2/1929. Total of delegates representing unions: 237. Total number of delegates representing unorganized workers and minorities in unions: 52

⁷¹³ *Rizospastes* 3/2/1929

⁷¹⁴ *Rizospastes* 14/4/1929

interesting to note the increasing coverage by *Rizospastes* of the sewing and carpet industries: from the late 1920s onwards, there would be several reports on the ground about the working conditions in those industries.

A series of reports on the carpet industry reveal a great deal of information about the working conditions and employers' practices. In Kokkinia there were two main carpet enterprises that were set up following the settlement: 'Eastern Carpet' and 'Oriental Carpet', with factories employing 300-500 workers each. There were however, smaller enterprises with a workforce varying from 20 to 200. Working hours ranged from 9-9.5 hours to 15 hours for women, and pay was based, not on a daily wage system, but on a piece-work basis. As for labor protection laws, as one worker reported: "as in every other industry, they do not exist." It was quite often the case that mothers and daughters worked alongside each other in the same factory.⁷¹⁵ Unionization of the female workforce was forbidden, as well as any discussion concerning the creation of a union. 'Favored' workers were positioned in order to watch for any trade union activity. Hence a 1927 attempt to form a union failed. However the effort was repeated with more success in 1929.

Workers' interviews in *Rizospastes* provide useful information on the working environment. For example, one interviewee stated that in order to keep the workforce divided "the enterprises also play the card of ethnicity. Hence they push the Greeks against the Armenians and the Armenians against the Greeks. In order to achieve that they use the following trick. To supervise the Greek workers they employ an Armenian favorite of theirs, and to supervise the Armenians, a Greek instrument of theirs."⁷¹⁶ Kinship links were also used to control female labor. Hence, it was quite usual for employers to baptize the children of some of the workers in order to have them on their side during industrial disputes, or to achieve social cohesion within the factory.⁷¹⁷

Three months after these reports appeared in *Rizospastes*, a strike broke out in the Piraeus carpet industry (Kokkinia, Tambouria and Drapetsona). I. Thoides, the secretary of the Unitary Federation, observed the development of the strike in Kokkinia. His account of events and tactics is informative on communist activity in refugee labor struggles. Initially five factory committees were set up through the initiative and encouragement of communist party members who were active in those

⁷¹⁵ *Rizospastes* mentions: "The whole family, from the youngest to the oldest of its members are employed in the factories, especially the minors, reaching the point of carrying their children to work, along with their beds in order to keep them by their side, so that they won't have to get up from the spinning machines...."
Rizospastes 1/7/1929

⁷¹⁶ See special report of *Rizospastes* in the Carpet Industry, in *Rizospastes* 21/3/1929, 22/3/1929 and 24/3/1929

⁷¹⁷ *Rizospastes* 25/5/1931

factories. Under their guidance, the strike quickly spread in the course of two days to some twenty factories -almost all of Kokkinia's factories.

The report states, however, that when the members of the Unitary Federation (i.e. communist trade unionists) took an active role in the strike mobilization, instead of trying to support the committees they suppressed this initiative, losing "a huge driving force, something that cost us a heavy deal, because afterwards we were not able to, on the one hand, gather the female workers to the cause, and on the other, we condemned them into a level of apathy one might say, that is for them to look upon us as bosses, shaking their head to everything we might have been saying..." The marginalization of those committees deprived them of every link with the great majority of the striking masses. Accordingly, the Kokkinia meetings, were initially rather successful. Afterwards, however, as the strike spread, the Unitary Federation was unable to mobilize even those they had in the very beginning. Nevertheless, the strike was successful: it prevented wage-cuts and instead achieved increases from 2.80 to 3.10 Dr for every thousand knots.⁷¹⁸ Finally, another element highlighted by this experience, was the utilization of militant workers coming from 'more experienced' branches of industry to the aid of the strike.⁷¹⁹

The 'Action Report' of the Piraeus District Organization reported on the Carpet industry in 1928: "The carpet workers' association was under the influence of the reactionary forces. Through systematic work of our people it [this influence] was neutralized and [the association] passed over to the hands of the [class] conscious workers." However, the report noted that the presence of the reactionary forces in the carpet industry "remains strong."⁷²⁰

Communist influence in other unions where large numbers of refugees were employed was uneven. The Port Customs' Union was a mass organization influenced by radical forces, where the only opposition to the Communist Party came from "the refugees who were influenced by leftist elements." There was no CP fraction among the Cotton workers, whose union was passive and excluded the female workers who comprised the majority of the workforce. There was special concern that "the attention of the party cells be focused in the cotton factories." The Sewing workers were split three ways. A few workers belonged to the union of Speras (former member of the CP), another union was mentioned to be under the control of 'the Piraeus secret police' and had another

⁷¹⁸ *Rizospastes* 2/7/1929

⁷¹⁹ In this case, from the shoe-maker unions. See *Rizospastes* 12/7/1929

⁷²⁰ Action Report of the Piraeus District Organization (January to March 1928), p8, File10, Archive of KKE

200-300 members, and the union influenced by the CP had about 2,000 members. It was reported to be doing rather well, especially in confronting attempts by the authorities to dissolve their union.⁷²¹

There are two further interesting elements in this report. The first concerned what was referred to as 'employer terrorism': "Comrades who are discovered by the employers are thrown out of work, other employers are informed, and hence finding a job for our members is becoming a real problem. This creates panic among workers and approaching them becomes increasingly difficult." Accordingly, party activity was disrupted as entire factory cells were dissolved again and again through the firing of communist members. The second concerned the level of unionization: some 48% of the workers in Piraeus were said to be unionized. However, just 1% was said to be taking active part in the 'class struggle.'⁷²²

Finally, two further elements should be mentioned regarding trade union activity and communism. Firstly, a significant number of refugee workers were not organized politically in the ranks of the Communist Party, but were nonetheless militant, some more consistently than others.⁷²³ Second, a frequent 'route' to communism, would be through apprenticeship, when young apprentices were acquainted with the ideology and practice of communism through their training. Such phenomena were quite usual among shoe-makers for example, whose union remained under radical influence for most of the inter-war period.⁷²⁴

Alongside those labor activities coexisted various means of incorporation utilized by state authorities, labor leaders and refugee associations in order to keep communism away from the workplace, and trade union activity under control. The employers took advantage of the 'schism' that was developing between the natives and the refugees and adopted a strategy of 'divide and rule' in the workplace.⁷²⁵ Accordingly they used surplus refugee labor to get rid of more militant and experienced workers in the organized labor force, replacing the latter with much cheaper and much more subservient workers. This was further reinforced by the fact that "class consciousness was not

⁷²¹ Action Report of the Piraeus District Organization (January to March 1928), pp8-9, File10, Archive of KKE

⁷²² Action Report of the Piraeus District Organization (January to March 1928), p10, File10, Archive of KKE

⁷²³ Interview, Cassette 'Various occasions before World War II', in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷²⁴ Testimony of Klearchos Triantafillides from Antabazar of Asia Minor, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷²⁵ Exact phrase, used in Interview, Cassette: 'verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934', Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

developed among the Asia Minor element in such a degree, in order to be able to provide support to the agents of struggle.”⁷²⁶

Refugee associations portrayed communism as an anti-refugee political force. The refugee association Asia Minor Center, for example, responded to the call of *Rizospastes* for cooperation among native and refugee workers by issuing a counter-brochure in which they depicted “communism as the reason behind the Smyrna massacres...as well as collaborators of Kemal”.⁷²⁷

On the other hand, reformist labor leaders exercised their control over members through employment as a tool of incorporation. A memo to the Minister of National Economy underlined the situation that existed in many labor unions in Piraeus. It referred particularly to the practices of the unions’ leaderships, who, according to the memo, “expel those who rise [against them], place in profitable jobs those that they favor, and in the process they do everything they can in their self interest, whatever keeping themselves in power requires.” The memo concluded that government control, through its Labor Bureau branch in Piraeus, was almost non-existent, unable to intervene in the practices mentioned above, or to protect workers “against the many wrong-doings of their employers.”⁷²⁸

On the other hand, labor leaders were reluctant to mobilize against their ‘employer-patrons’. A letter of the secretary general of the Dockers’ Union of Piraeus is indicative of labor leaders’ attitudes on how far workers’ demands challenged employers, as well as of worker-employer relations: “We of course did not demand for our poor table to be replaced with the rich one of the ship-owners or the big businessmen. We demand that the little black bread, that is also mournfully harmonized with the totality of our misery, not to be taken away from us...Our aims are limited to the logical boundary of not being deprived of our bread...And is this people worthy of always being sacrificed?...A good Governor is the one who does not separate his children into favorites and disowned, but the one that considers them all as his children and divides fairly his goods to them so that no complaints arise...”⁷²⁹ It comes therefore as no surprise that in many occasions, refugee

⁷²⁶ Interview, Cassette: ‘verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934’, Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷²⁷ *Rizospastes* 10/4/1925

⁷²⁸ Memo of the Director of Commercial Navy to the Office of the Minister of National Economy, 9/3/1929 (Archive of E Venizelos 173/68)

⁷²⁹ *Acropolis* 8/5/1929

workers who attempted to set up a union in their work place or to lead and participate in strike activities would lose their jobs.⁷³⁰

Considering the obstacles facing trade unionism, it is no surprise that the first priority set by the Communist Party in Piraeus in the mid-1920s was reviving the trade unions, "for workers who are affiliated to them to realize that they are indeed necessary goals to the advancement of their interests."⁷³¹ They also placed priority on the organization of non-unionized workers, as they viewed that "this passive section of the proletariat...can only objectively serve as the basis for reactionism."⁷³² Towards those means they would mobilize factory committees as well as neighborhood committees as a means of agitation. Accordingly, over the following years, a series of trade unions were formed or re-organized in the Oil industry, the barbering association and the Bed Manufacturers' union. New party cells were formed in industries that employed a large number of refugees, such as in the tobacco and cotton industries.⁷³³

Nevertheless, by the end of 1927 the Party counted only some 21 cells (16 in enterprises and another 5 in petty-enterprises), numbering 179 workers. The Party's report stressed that "despite the fact that Piraeus constitutes the largest proletarian center of the country, the Party organization found itself unable, not only to transform Piraeus to a fort of proletarian struggle in Greece...but even to achieve even the slightest progress." The blame was attributed, according to the report, to the 'false line' followed by the Piraeus Organization itself "while in the hands of the Liquidarists" (i.e. the opposition).⁷³⁴

What became progressively apparent in the 1930s was the degree of incorporation of 'reformist' trade unions into the State or local authorities. In the case of the former, two main points can be raised from police reports of trade union activity. First, meetings of the General Confederation of Labor were supervised by the security police, who in turn completed detailed reports on their intentions. This strengthens the argument about the incorporation of the main-stream labor movement. Second, there is important information on the attitude of the General Confederation

⁷³⁰ Such as in the case of G Nikolaides, later candidate for Mayor in Kokkinia for the Communist Party, see Biographical Note of G Nikolaides, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE. Also See Testimony of Sklanounis Dimitres (ibid)

⁷³¹ 'The immediate duties of the Organization on the labor issue' p5, in File3, Archives of KKE

⁷³² 'The immediate duties of the Organization on the labor issue' p7, in File3, Archives of KKE

⁷³³ 'Report on the activities of the Local Committee' of Piraeus, January-April 1927, File6, Archives of KKE

⁷³⁴ 'Report on the organizational development of the party from the party's plenary session to-date', July 1927, File8, Archives of KKE

towards strikes, as well as its communist rivals. A 1931 police report on the GSEE mentioned the possibility that the Confederation could call for a strike, “not so much out of sympathy and solidarity with the civil servants [who were on strike], but because...of the need to hold on to its side the conservative worker elements” and prevent them from being diverted “towards communist and archeiomarxist organizations...”⁷³⁵ Local authorities also played a part in the incorporation of trade unions. Indeed, the municipality of Kokkinia would often finance the housing of ‘friendly’ labor unions, sponsor their participation in National Labor Conferences, or simply provide them with financial assistance.⁷³⁶

On the other hand, communist activity in labor unions stepped up during the 1930s. Propaganda material was used to inform workers on developments in the trade union movement. Its distribution often involved groups of workers who would position themselves at particular road junctions leading to the great Cotton factories. Then, as workers came out of the factories they would approach them individually, starting conversations on current issues and arguing in favor of involvement in trade union activity. There was very little public transport and workers would go to work on foot over large distances, making street agitation a real possibility.⁷³⁷

Of course this process was not always calm and peaceful. As one Communist Party member recalls: “Thousands would go down to the factories and we would go along with them selling *Rizospastes*. Security would chase us, catch us, beat us up, make us go through Jesus’ torments [πάθη], and people would set us free out of sympathy towards us...[because] we understood the working man, the oppressed and that was what people liked about us, because it was not only for one or two days, but for 3-4 years that this was going on. Every day, every day...”⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ See ‘Classified- Urgent letter/report of the Special Security Bureau of Athens to the Headquarters of the Police, Special Security Department, 23/2/1931, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/108. For police reports in Piraeus see ‘Urgent-Classified report of the special security branch of City Police to the Police Headquarters in Piraeus, 25/2/1931, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/108

⁷³⁶ See Proceedings of the Municipal Council of N Kokkinia, 16th Meeting, 28/12/1934, Archives of the Municipality of Kokkinia (Nikaia), See also Proceedings of the 57th (30/10/1935) and 65th (4/2/1936) Meetings (ibid)

⁷³⁷ Interview, Cassette ‘Various incidents before World War II’ and also ‘Before the 4th of August-Testimony of Kotes Kechagias’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE.

⁷³⁸ Interview, Cassette ‘Before the 4th of August-Testimony of Kotes Kechagias’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

Throughout the 1930s, Communism spread through social networks, channeled through members of their immediate social circle such as friends and family.⁷³⁹ Communist trade unionists were very keen in taking communist-controlled unions into solidarity strikes when another branch of industry was involved in strike action (this included both sections of the same industry or a different industry). They also established strike 'fund-raising' activities, assisting strikers financially and legally through Workers' Relief and by providing moral support and sent over trade unionists to provide organizational and legal support.⁷⁴⁰

The Unitary Labor Center of Piraeus progressively showed more interest in local issues. Hence, when a flood once again affected the residents of Kokkinia, it was quick to circulate brochures calling refugees to demand food rations, clothing, decent housing and coal. This effort reportedly met with success.⁷⁴¹ Workers viewed *Rizospastes* with sympathy, because it was the only paper that reported on their strikes and working conditions.⁷⁴²

Strike activity was also stepped up. In the summer of 1933 there was a 27 day-long strike at the Cotton factory 'Retsina' in Kokkinia, one of the longest strikes in Kokkinia in the interwar period. Strike-breakers driven into the factories under police escort were attacked by strikers, and violent clashes followed. Arrested strikers were freed by the intervention of crowds who ran to their assistance. Those arrested would be legally and financially supported by Workers' Relief. The strike ended in success, achieving a 10% wage increase and a promise by state officials to end terrorism in factories and enforce the eight-hour day.⁷⁴³

Communists successfully utilized the opportunity of strikes to present themselves as champions of workers' rights. During a strike in Kokkinia, a number of strikers was arrested by the police for clashing with strike-breakers, Nikolaides, a Communist Party mayoral candidate for Kokkinia, headed a committee that intervened and had them released. Such actions earned communists a great deal of respect among workers who may not have been communist, but who nevertheless had a very strong working class identity and solidarity.⁷⁴⁴

⁷³⁹ Interview, Cassette 'Testimony of Klearchos Triantafillides' in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁴⁰ Interview, Cassette 'Testimony of Klearchos Triantafillides' in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE. For Workers Relief activities see for example *Rizospastes* 15/7/1933, 18/7/1933, 13/8/1935 etc.

⁷⁴¹ *Rizospastes* 4/12/1933 and 5/12/1933

⁷⁴² *Rizospastes* 24/5/1931

⁷⁴³ *Rizospastes* 15/7/1933 and 18/7/1933

⁷⁴⁴ The interviewee mentioned that the crowd that was waiting outside the precinct were overjoyed watching those arrested being freed. Interview, Cassette 'Before the 4th of August-Testimony of Kotes

Soon, working in particular industries, such as the Tobacco industry, was considered by many as the first step before joining the party.⁷⁴⁵ In 1935-1936, more and more unions adopted the 'Popular Front' policy; 'reformist' unions joined the communist unions to form a united body.⁷⁴⁶ Just two months before the rise of the Metaxas dictatorship, the popular anti-fascist front was beginning to gather strength.

It is important to note that there was a great deal of competition among the Communist Party and other left-wing parties (namely the Archeiomarxists, i.e. the Trotskyists) for influence in the trade union movement. Indeed, there were several cases in which trade unions in Piraeus changed hands between the Communists to the Archeiomarxists and vice versa. A good example is the Bakery Union of Piraeus whose leadership changed three times in the course of just six months in 1932.⁷⁴⁷ *Rizospastes* reported that the Bakery Union in Kokkinia remained in the hands of the Archeiomarxists: "In Kokkinia there is a clique of Archeio-reactionary bastards that had established for some time now a splitting [διασπαστικό] union of Bakery workers. At the head of this break-away move were the Archeio-fascists Tzitzopoulos and Mosxopoulou, those excellent 'Bolsheviks Leninists' who have signed a declaration and submitted it to the security police and their union claiming that they are not communists but simple trade unionists."⁷⁴⁸

Opposition to the Communist Party withered away, however, during the mid-1930s. The Archeiomarxists' position regarding the trade union movement in Piraeus was that the 'Stalinist' Unitary Labor Center and its affiliated trade unions should unite with the reformist Piraeus Labor Center. At a meeting of representatives of all parties in December 1933 the Archeiomarxists' proposal was rejected both by the Communist Party representatives and the trade unionists of the rival 'Trotskyite' group, the 'Liquidarists' who aligned themselves with the Communist-led Unitary Labor Center.⁷⁴⁹

However, the main opposition to the Communist Party in the trade unions came from the social democrat, pro-Venizelist sections of the organized labor movement. In Piraeus, the social-democratic and pro-Venizelist influences in the organized labor movement had strong roots and

Kechagias', in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁴⁵ Interview with Nikandros Kepesis (17/1/2003)

⁷⁴⁶ Such in the case of the Tobacco workers, See *Rizospastes* 22/5/1936

⁷⁴⁷ It was taken over by the Archeiomarxists in May and passed on back to the Communists in December of the same year. See *Pali ton Takseon* 24/5/1932 and 3/12/1932

⁷⁴⁸ *Rizospastes* 4/10/1933

⁷⁴⁹ *Pali ton Takseon* 19/12/1933

preceded historically the formation of the Greek Communist Party. Many of their leading figures, such as Sideres and Dimitratos, played an active role in the formation of both the General Confederation of Greek Labor and the Communist Party itself, and acquired high posts (Dimitratos, for example, was Secretary of SEKE, 1918-1919). Those who adhered to SEKE's first social-democratic leadership found themselves outside Party ranks by 1924, following its switch toward the politics of the Comintern. However, they continued to exercise significant influence in the trade union movement in Piraeus for several years. The hegemony of the social democratic tendency in the Piraeus labor movement remained strong until the very end of the interwar period.

The peak of trade union activity and communist involvement only came about a few weeks before it was all terminated with Metaxas' Dictatorship. It has been argued that the events during the May Day demonstrations in Salonica were a wake up call for Greece's laboring classes. That was certainly true for the workers of Kokkinia. Eye witnesses recall spontaneous demonstrations breaking out in Kokkinia, which were met with force by the authorities. A week later a general strike was called in Athens and Piraeus, and Kokkinia achieved one of the largest rallies in the area (if not the largest), amounting to thousands and forcing the police to barricade themselves inside their precinct. The army forces that were called upon to re-establish order were reported to have united with the strikers and demonstrators.⁷⁵⁰

But already a few days before the events in Salonica, there was evidence of growing working-class solidarity in Kokkinia led by Communists and communist trade unionists. In a meeting called by the communist-led Tobacco Union to put forward their demands and give information about the ongoing national strike of their branch of industry, more than 12 Kokkinia Unions took part along with representatives from the Unitary Labor Center and the Popular Front (KKE).⁷⁵¹

Only a few weeks before Metaxas took over power the strike movement spread all over Piraeus, with Tobacco workers, shoe-makers, sewing workers, miners and all sections of the All-Workers Center striking in solidarity. The workers' participation in the strike in the Piraeus District reached almost 100%. The Communist party managed to give a two-fold character to these mobilizations

⁷⁵⁰ Interview, Cassette '4th of August, etc.' in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE. *Rizospastes* reported that it was the biggest mobilization of people in the district ever, amounting to some 20,000. See *Rizospastes* 11/5/1936

⁷⁵¹ The meeting also raised a great sum of money to help the tobacco workers live through the strike. See *Rizospastes* 7/5/1936 and 8/5/1936

involving working class solidarity, on the one hand, and anti-fascist solidarity on the other. For the first time, at Communist Party rallies in Kokkinia the participants numbered thousands.⁷⁵²

Refugees and communism

Elefantis holds that, by 1924, as soon as “the committees for refugee settlement were on the job”, and “peasants at their newly acquired farms a great opportunity was lost” for the Communist Party.⁷⁵³ In other words, the bourgeois order in Greece stood safe behind the relative stabilization provided by the refugee settlement. Did the Communist Party lose a great opportunity to turn the refugees into a revolutionary force upon their arrival, or was this opportunity never there in the first place? A very important element that is often overlooked is that “in those years, people, to a great extent –and we say this with certainty- were ignorant of the existence of the Communist Party of Greece and the labor struggles that had taken place, especially in Piraeus.”⁷⁵⁴ Hence, as one worker asked, “to what extent could [the Communist Party] being a small party, still in its birth then, influence things by mobilizing great masses of male and female workers?”⁷⁵⁵

What actions were taken by the Communist Party in regards to the refugees who were just beginning to settle? The Communist Party realized quite early the need for refugees to organize themselves in a manner facilitating their participation in the class struggle, independent of any clientage networks that “hold them prisoners of the bourgeois parties.”⁷⁵⁶ However, although the importance of the refugee element as a factor in the class struggles of the country has been pointed out, there seems to have been a great deal of confusion in defining what exactly their role would be. Nevertheless, the refugees were seen as the determining force in the ultimate outcome of political events that were taking place. From an economic point of view, the refugees were rendered a particularly ‘revolutionary factor’, although their political allegiance to Venizelos was not overlooked. In December 1924 the Communist Party, through a circular of the Executive Committee to all the Party branches stressed the need to set up a Central Refugee Committee as well as local

⁷⁵² *Rizospastes* 26/6/1936

⁷⁵³ Elefantis A G (1999) p123

⁷⁵⁴ Interview, Cassette: ‘verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁵⁵ Interview, Cassette: ‘verbal traditions, life reports etc, before 1934’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁵⁶ ‘Report of the Executive Committee from 1st of September to 15th of November 1925’ p10, in File1, Archive of KKE

committees that would collect information on the economic, political and professional situation among the refugee population. These would include, reports, reviewing refugee non-communist press and brochures.⁷⁵⁷

The course of action that was set forward regarding refugee party cells involved, firstly, 'enlightening' the refugee masses on the segregation between refugees and natives that was promoted by the politics of bourgeois parties and putting forward the slogan of a united front among natives and refugees. Secondly, the party underlined the need to 'neutralize' the control of the bourgeois parties as it was manifested through the clientage networks.⁷⁵⁸ The Party believed that recent developments left it "facing in a more direct way the problem of a more specific politics on the refugee issue, while they have rendered it imperative to depart from a narrow propagandist work to more wide-spread action."⁷⁵⁹ However, it was soon pointed out that there was a growing gap between theoretical work on the refugee issue at the level of the executive committee and actual work at a grass-roots level. This situation led to a vicious circle "because the theoretical elaboration and understanding of the refugee issue was impossible to carry forward since the Communist Party had not established a connection with the refugee masses, but only attempted from outside to point out and express their needs."⁷⁶⁰

Towards the end of 1925 and beginning of 1926, Nikolaides along with some other refugee supporters of the Communist Party, took the initiative in forming the Refugee Democratic Union in Kokkinia. This association progressively managed to achieve a growing presence in local politics and cultural activities, becoming a key factor behind the growth of the left movement in Kokkinia. Nikolaides was put forward by the Piraeus Party Branch as the candidate for the local elections. Despite being in prison he managed to receive some 830 votes.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁷ 'Circular of the EC to all Party branches' 17/12/1924, in File2, Archives of KKE

⁷⁵⁸ 'Theses on the Refugee Issue', 1925, pp1-3, in File1, Archive of KKE

⁷⁵⁹ 'Action Report of the Central Committee to the Extraordinary Congress of KKE, 1925', p10, File 1, in Archive of KKE

⁷⁶⁰ In 'Letter by the Secretary of the Cell of the Military Prison of Parapigmaton' 22/6/1925, p31, File 1, In Archive of KKE

⁷⁶¹ Biographical Note of Georgios Nikolaides, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE. A brief history of Nikolaides: He was born in Asia Minor but migrated to France in search for employment. While in France, influenced by the international events (October Revolution etc) he became progressively involved in working class struggles. In 1923 he became a member of the French Communist Party. His trade union activities resulted to his eventual deportation, so he came back to Kokkinia where his refugee parents had settled. He was executed in 1943 by the Occupation authorities as reprisals for guerilla activities. (ibid)

At the end of 1926, the Piraeus Branch set out to form a 'skeleton of settlement committees' in order to mediate and become a link between the CP and the refugee masses. Eleven settlement committees were set up, calling for meetings in the settlements and arguing for the need of 'revolutionary struggle', the importance of the movement as well as ways of pursuing the immediate demands of the refugees. The committees in Castella and Kokkinia were reported to have done particularly well. An especially successful practice included setting up café-committees (i.e. discussion groups in cafes), which helped to "spread the influence of the Party all over the settlement".⁷⁶²

The Communist Party was particularly successful with refugees from Armenia. Taking advantage of their "sympathies towards Soviet Russia", the CP managed to recruit several Armenian refugees and set up an Armenian Bureau. By 1928 Communist Party influence among Armenian refugees was estimated at 85-90%!⁷⁶³ The strength of the Communist Party in the Piraeus District in 1928 was as follows:

Table 35: CP Membership in Piraeus (1927-1928)⁷⁶⁴

Period	Factory Cells	Petty-Enterprises Cells	Street Cells	Total Cells	Number Of Workers	Others	Total Membership
July 1927	16	1	2	19	144	13	157
December 1927	16	5	-	21	179	17	196
March 1928	18	-	9	27	250	25	275
November 1928	15	-	8	23	170	10	180

When questioned about how the people in Kokkinia at the time perceived communists, the answers given were somewhat conflicting. One respondent claimed that people saw Communists as 'trouble makers', but a second one disagreed, arguing that "people who had truly democratic beliefs looked up to him [the communist] with great sympathy, and tried to help as much as possible,

⁷⁶² 'Report on the activities of the Local Committee' of Piraeus, January-April 1927, File6, Archives of KKE

⁷⁶³ Action Report of the Piraeus District Organization (January to March 1928), p13, File10, Archive of KKE

⁷⁶⁴ 'Statistical Data for the Period 1927-1928', File 11, in Archive of KKE

because that was the purpose of human beings”.⁷⁶⁵ Both statements correspond to the realities of the time, as no single view could be taken as generally defining refugee opinion on the communists. In any case, views were in flux throughout the period concerned.

The Communist Party attempted to combat the passivity that dominated refugee associations. Its representatives in the various refugee meetings and congresses would point out that “only intensive mobilization, rallies, demonstrations and decisive struggle” would enable them to succeed so that “Venizelos’ government accept their demands.”⁷⁶⁶ The Party also managed to mobilize sympathizers, a reserve of activists who are often overlooked. One refugee, who did not join the party until the beginning of World War II, mentioned in his interview that “many of us, such as myself... were not organized [as a party member]. However, I never stopped helping out, constantly keeping in my mind that my place was with them.”⁷⁶⁷

Women were also active within the ranks of the Communist Party in Kokkinia, especially in the tobacco, carpet and sewing industries where the female workforce became familiar with communist activities and beliefs. However, the mobilization of women was difficult. In addition to the stigma of being a communist, women had to deal particularly with the prevailing stereotypes regarding their place in home and society, away from politics and union activity.⁷⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the Party’s membership and influence did not match its ‘expectations’. Indeed, the Party seems to have been well aware of its own weaknesses: *Rizospastes* reported in 1929 that “the fact that Piraeus today constitutes the nest of reactionary forces is due, to a great extent, to the inabilities and weaknesses of the Left Block.”⁷⁶⁹ These weaknesses were due to internal party disputes as much as to external factors such as incorporation and state intervention.

The Party Branch in Piraeus experienced more inner-party conflict than any other. In 1924, just as the waves of refugees were settling in the area, the Party was busy dealing with a faction that was formed within its ranks called ‘Communist Union’, which also published its own paper. In 1927, the leadership of the Piraeus District Organization and the Youth aligned themselves on the side of the

⁷⁶⁵ Interview, Cassette ‘Various occasions before World War II’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁶⁶ Contribution of the representative of All-Refugee Union of N Kokkinia in a meeting of 27 refugee associations of Athens and Piraeus, in *Rizospastes* 7/4/1929

⁷⁶⁷ Interview, Cassette ‘Various occasions before World War II’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁶⁸ See Interview, Cassette ‘Various occasions before World War II’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁶⁹ *Rizospastes* 5/6/1929

Opposition (or ‘Liquidarists’ as they were known in Party literature). A Party report of the internal situation mentioned that “the Piraeus Organization, had, more than any other party branch, been shocked by internal crisis.”⁷⁷⁰ Some 4/5 of the District Committee was reported to be on the side of the Opposition. According to *Spartakos*, the journal of the Opposition, the Youth leadership in Piraeus was replaced through the “hiring of a dictatorial committee”, while membership was changed by expelling older members on the one hand, and “recruiting every kid they could find” on the other.⁷⁷¹

The deterioration of talks between the two ‘parties’ into a contest of ‘fake’ versus ‘true’ Leninists and ‘agents of the secret police’ versus ‘exemplary Bolsheviks’ did not help to improve the Party in the eye of the masses.⁷⁷² Members of the Opposition continued to ‘operate’ within party ranks for some time after the expulsion of their leadership, since they were encouraged by the latter to “follow the party line [so that they remain in the party] and present themselves to the masses championing the party line so that they gain their sympathy and hence conquer party posts.”⁷⁷³ Those inner-party disputes kept the Party in Piraeus busy settling its own affairs for most of the 1920s.

It was not until the 1930s that the party expanded among refugees in general and in Kokkinia in particular. Communism in Kokkinia became progressively attractive to the younger generation of refugees, who, especially during the social upheavals of the mid 1930s, were keen to participate in popular mobilizations. Issues that frequently came up during interviews had to do with radical activism, such as freeing militant workers from prison, and overturning cars that had been used to break strikes by transporting workers from other districts. Such events, described with noticeable enthusiasm, attracted young people to more militant doctrines, progressively breaking them away from the passivity that was more common among the elders in the community.⁷⁷⁴ One refugee noted: “We were then young, and as young people we were most of all extremists...”⁷⁷⁵ University students were also widely utilized by the Party for ideological and educational purposes. Indeed, in the

⁷⁷⁰ ‘Report on the internal situation and the responsibilities of the Piraeus Organization’, 1927, p1, File 6, Archive of KKE

⁷⁷¹ *Spartakos*, Special Edition, November 1927, File 4, Archive of KKE

⁷⁷² See ‘Decision of the Piraeus District Committee on today’s Party crisis’ 29th of September 1927, File 6, in Archive of KKE. Note that majority of the District Committee were on the side of the Opposition when that report was written.

⁷⁷³ Proceedings of the Opposition Meeting on 9/3/1928, in File 8, Archive of KKE

⁷⁷⁴ Interview, Cassette ‘Various incidents before World War II’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁷⁵ Interview, in Cassette ‘Before the 4th of August’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

1930s, ideological work among the refugees was stepped up, through the organization of *achtif*, a form of ideological class, which was carried forward by university students in the settlements of Kokkinia, Drapetsona, Tampouria and others.⁷⁷⁶

A popular route to communism among young people was the various sports clubs. The communist party had realized early the significance of working class and popular sports, and used this to its advantage. Several party and youth cells sprang up among the numerous athletic associations of Kokkinia in the mid-1930s.⁷⁷⁷ Before or after matches, a speaker would often address those present and leaflets would be distributed; it needs to be mentioned at this point, however, that not all people understood 'what this was all about'. Nevertheless, 'Red Sports' progressively became a part of settlement social life. In 1932 the Armenian Federation of Labor Sport celebrated five years of existence in Kokkinia, involving a range of festivities, such as football matches among various workers' football teams from across the settlement, speeches, parades and singing. Hundreds of workers were reported to have participated in the festivities. Extensive sport coverage was found in the columns of the Party press as well as in the party youth's paper *Neolaia*.⁷⁷⁸ Also successful were the occasional field trips organized by the Unitary Labor Center, combining leisure and propaganda.⁷⁷⁹

Communists often made themselves known by loud demonstrations. As *Acropolis* mentioned in 1931 in Kokkinia, "during the peak of the market at the settlement around 20 communists have gathered shouting in favor of the Soviets and against the existing regime [in Greece]. Drawn by their shouting, many workers gathered around them in curiosity, until the communists encouraged them to head all together towards the settlement's bakery and acquire through force the bread that the government have refused to provide to the unemployed." The gathering was violently dissolved by the authorities, whereas, the ones who 'started the trouble' were arrested on the grounds of the Idionymon. An unemployed committee published a complaint announcement which was also sent in Parliament condemning the authorities for their attitude and demanding the freeing of the ones in custody "who as they claim did no crime".⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁶ Testimony of Kokkinares Nikos, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁷⁷ Testimony of Kotes Kechagias, in Cassette 'Before the 4th of August', in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁷⁸ *Neolaia* 1/4/1932

⁷⁷⁹ Activities would range from political discussions to theatre performances. See *Rizospastes* 30/5/1933

⁷⁸⁰ *Acropolis* 9/6/1931

Trials were used by the communists as a popular platform to present their ideas. Communists earned a great deal of respect as a result of their attitude in the courts. Having been arrested for trade union activity, they would often be seen as a true representative of workers' interests, facing the authorities and risking victimization by the state: "they'd be admired for their self-sacrifice", was a typical view. One refugee recalled an exchange of words between the judge and the accused that had been imprinted in his memory "ever since". To a question by the judge 'what do you aim for?' the accused answered: "Mr. President, [we aim] to turn this table that lies before you around". "He meant the system," added the refugee.⁷⁸¹

The progressive establishment of the image of a communist as a champion of workers' rights, was reflected in the columns of a by no means communist-friendly paper, which nevertheless reported in 1936 on the arrest of Manoleas, the communist MP for Piraeus: "We have to admit that 'comrade' Manoleas is one of the most sympathetic characters of the red block... In Piraeus he is so popular, that people of totally opposite political beliefs, big owners and big businessmen would accompany him. It impresses how he, until yesterday an insignificant Ship worker, is either at one time a candidate for mayor, or an MP. It is true that the number of votes he received in the last elections would be envied by many 'big' bourgeois MPs. And in Piraeus, if one gets angry because of some misfortune created by the state of some usury he yells, between being serious and not: -I'll get you. I'll vote for Manoleas at the next election. Legendary therefore is Manoleas to the people of Piraeus."⁷⁸²

Party meetings would often take place in a convenient café. This was often a safer place to hold meetings than the local union offices, which were frequently watched by the authorities. The semi-legal status of the Communist Party made the operations and communications of local branches difficult. A party member from Kokkinia recalls: "you could say that at the time we acted like conspirators. You could not mention who you were or where you were from..." The self-protection measures taken by each cell were indeed quite tight.⁷⁸³ Sometimes gossip would prove the communists' worst enemy.⁷⁸⁴ Safe houses were difficult to find, and in some cases party members would have to travel a great distance to find a safe place to carry forward the cell's business. The

⁷⁸¹ Testimony of Kotes Kechagias, in Cassette 'Before the 4th of August', in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁸² *Acropolis* 8/6/1936

⁷⁸³ Interview, in Cassette 'Kokkinia-History', in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁷⁸⁴ The party would seriously warn members of the disastrous effects of gossip in the security of party cells, in *Deltion*, no 4, May 1932 p6

few safe houses that did exist were utilized for ‘business use’, but also constituted “a little oasis in the harsh conditions of semi-illegality and illegality that we lived through,” where party members would find the chance of resting and socializing in a ‘friendly-comradely atmosphere’.⁷⁸⁵

In many cases, the first contact with Soviet Communism took place through soviet culture, especially Soviet literature and cinema. Information on the Soviet Union, although scarce, was available through the party press and brochures. But for most people, even for party members, communism remained mostly ‘something of the imagination’ throughout the interwar period.⁷⁸⁶ It is no surprise, therefore, that before becoming full Party members, individuals would usually have to go through a ‘trial-period’ that could last up to two to three months in some cases.

Refusal to pay rent for refugee houses was actively encouraged by the Communist Party, which participated in the formation of ‘struggle committees’ that coordinated such efforts in the settlements. *Rizospastes* often reported on such activities, as well as related subjects, such as evictions due to debt problems.⁷⁸⁷ An article by G. Nikolaides, candidate for mayor of Kokkinia for the KKE, noted that the supporters of the United Front of Workers and Peasants organized the All-Refugee Union, and through its housing block committees, managed to cancel several house evictions. They also looked after orphans, secured help for ill families, supported widows and, with the ‘red MP comrade’ Manoleas in charge, fought with the Minister for a watering system in Kokkinia.⁷⁸⁸

The internationalist character of the Communist Party sometimes came into conflict with the nationalism that was encouraged among the refugees as the explanation of their misery. Accordingly, *Rizospastes* stressed in 1930: “The exploiters of refugee issues [προσφυγοκάπηλοι] mobilize themselves demanding compensations from the Turks. Poor refugees must not demand any compensation from the working masses of Turkey. They do not live any better than the working masses of Greece. The working refugee masses must demand from the Venizelos Government a full compensation for the entirety of the property left behind in Turkey, and the canceling of all their debts to the RSC, the State, and the Banks etc.”⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁸⁵ Interview with Nikandros Kepeses (17/1/2003) and Biographical Note no 2985 of Takes Chioureas, in File ‘Biographical notes of militants 2900-2997’, in KMIEA

⁷⁸⁶ Interview with Nikandros Kepeses (17/1/2003)

⁷⁸⁷ *Rizospastes* 18/4/1930, 10/8/1930

⁷⁸⁸ *Rizospastes* 9/2/1934

⁷⁸⁹ *Rizospastes* 15/6/1930

The publication of local factory papers by the party cells in settlements was actively encouraged. Hence, a number of factory papers appeared from time to time, reporting on factory issues, trade union activities in other branches of industry as well as the life in refugee settlements. Their publication, however, was not always consistent due to persecution or inability of party cells to divert much needed resources, when other areas of activity could seem more pressing.⁷⁹⁰ Party and youth cells in Kokkinia tried to raise the circulation of *Rizospastes* through paper-selling competitions. This tactic had some effect since it resulted in a rise in the papers' circulation up to 70-100% or even more in some cases.⁷⁹¹

Table 36: Results of cell-competition in paper selling (1/9-20/10 1933)⁷⁹²

Town	Athens	Mitiline	Salonica	Piraeus	Patra	Katerine	Xanthe
Increase in paper sales	600	60	400	150	60	50	60
% of the plan	75	50	80	40	50	100	50
% increase/previous circulation	30	50	65	30	70	130	80

The paper selling team of Kokkinia did very well, placing it among the second best-selling teams. By 1934, almost a third of the papers sold in Piraeus, were sold in Kokkinia, reflecting the party's growing influence in the settlement.⁷⁹³ Similar conclusions can be drawn from the following table referring to local statistics for 1936:

Table 37: Results of cell-competition in paper selling in Piraeus (May 1936)⁷⁹⁴

Organization	1 st of May	3 rd of May	Organization	1 st of May	3 rd of May
Tobacco W	200	n.a.	Drapetsona	130	118
Kokkinia	491	460	Kaminia	126	n.a.
Tambouria	250	165	Ship-workers	180	60
Kremmudarou	236	217	Total	1,613	1,090

⁷⁹⁰ See for example *Ergatis Lipasmaton* [Fertilizer Worker], organ of the communist cell 25/3/1930

⁷⁹¹ See *Neolaia* 18/11/1932, *Rizospastes* 9/4/1933

⁷⁹² See *Rizospastes* 29/10/1933

⁷⁹³ *Rizospastes* 3/1/1934

⁷⁹⁴ *Rizospastes* 7/5/1936

By 1934, the Kokkinia communists had grown in strength sufficiently to form an *Achtida*. Following a raid on the *Rizospastes* offices by the fascist organization 'Triaina' (National Socialists), the Kokkinia branch stepped up the party's anti-fascist campaign, recruiting new members, forming new cells and organizing fund raising events.⁷⁹⁵ An Anti-Fascist Democratic Coalition of the Kokkinia Youth was soon formed. This included a wide range of youth organizations from the settlement, such as political, athletic, cultural and factory organizations. In September 1935 a meeting of the Coalition was held, and 72 delegates from Kokkinia's Youth Clubs decided to organize anti-fascist democratic groups in every neighborhood block in the settlement.⁷⁹⁶ The parties responded to an invitation by the Communist Party to form an anti-fascist coalition that "they were in agreement in principle" but were reluctant to commit any further.⁷⁹⁷ At the same time, a local communist newspaper was published despite difficulties -the post office refused to distribute the paper.⁷⁹⁸

Progressively the Party and its influence grew. The number of activists reported in pre-election campaigns rose considerably in 1935 amounting to hundreds rather than tens as in the past.⁷⁹⁹ In August 1936 the Piraeus District Organization paper reported on the events that had been taking place over the past couple of months. The apparent left turn of the working class and the successes of the 'Left Block' within the trade union movement were attributed to the fact that workers had been increasingly seeking "more radical solutions to their issues". For the Piraeus Organization, their eventual position at the head of the working class struggle in Piraeus was inevitable since the path of radicalism and militancy that the workers had been taking was a path that "could not be followed by the likes of Kalomoires [i.e. the reformist trade union leaders], but only by us."⁸⁰⁰

The rise in the strength of the communist party in Piraeus and the settlements in the 1930s was also partly facilitated by developments that took place in regards to inner and extra party disputes. In 1931 the Piraeus District Committee voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Call of the Communist International (37 votes in favor and just one against), which criticized the previous CP leadership and effectively replaced it. Following these developments, the Piraeus District Committee began a

⁷⁹⁵ See *Rizospastes* 19/11/1934 and 20/11/1934

⁷⁹⁶ *Rizospastes* 1/9/1935

⁷⁹⁷ *Rizospastes* 25/1/1936

⁷⁹⁸ *Rizospastes* 17/12/1934

⁷⁹⁹ *Rizospastes* 2/6/1935

⁸⁰⁰ *Proletarios*, August 1936

campaign to implement and incorporate the Comintern proposals into the local politics in Piraeus.⁸⁰¹ This effectively marked the end of inner-party disputes and the beginning of a period of internal calm among the ranks of the Communist Party allowing it to focus on external issues.

What were the relations of the Communist Party and the main Trotskyite Party KOMLEA throughout the 1930s? One communist refugee described the Trotskyites as always doing the opposite that the Party did: “so if, for example, we were to decide to go on a strike, they’d say no, we should not have it there, and if we do, it is not the way we should do it...”.⁸⁰² But the distinctions between the Communist Party and the Archeiomarxists were not always clear to the refugees. Characteristic is the case of a refugee in Kokkinia, who was first approached by the Archeiomarxists. He was a member of the shoe-makers Union, where there were regular confrontations among the two groups. He described his first contact with the Archeiomarxists as such: “there was a meeting held and they took me with them without knowing [what it was about]. All I knew was that they were communists of some sort let’s say.” He soon broke away from them because he disagreed with their tactic of ‘first education and then action’ and joined the communist party where it was held that ‘we educate ourselves during the struggle’. When it came to commenting about other Trotskyite groups, his answer was perhaps indicative of a general attitude at the time amongst communist party members: “We did not know what a Liquidarist was supposed to be... all of them, liquidarists, Trotskyites [i.e. Archeiomarxists] we thought them as a bunch, since they were against us so to speak.”⁸⁰³

Yet, until the beginning of the 1930s, Communists and Archeiomarxists in Kokkinia would often invite each other to participate in meetings on matters such as participation in anti-fascist conferences or the Workers’ Relief.⁸⁰⁴ In the 1932 elections, KOMLEA (Archeiomarxists) decided not to go down independently but to join the electoral campaign on the side of the Communist Party.⁸⁰⁵

The tactics that the Archeiomarxists utilized to promote their agenda in CP meetings included going to rallies and assemblies organized by the Party and asking for the floor in order to address

⁸⁰¹ *Rizospastes* 7/12/1931

⁸⁰² Interview, Cassette ‘Various incidents before World War II’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁸⁰³ Interview, Cassette ‘Kokkinia, History- testimonies of various incidents before the war in Kokkinia’, in Audio Archive of PEAEA Kokkinias as well as Kokkinia Communist Party Branch, Archive of KKE

⁸⁰⁴ See *Pali ton Takseon* 30/7/1930 and 9/8/1932

⁸⁰⁵ *Pali ton Takseon* 27/8/1932

those present. They would then shout slogans such as ‘hurray for Trotsky’, and ‘hurray for the left opposition’. These interventions were typically followed by clashes between the various groups.⁸⁰⁶

By 1933 Trotskyites in Piraeus would admit that “undoubtedly, during the recent past and especially today the Piraeus Organization is not in a very good situation... What one can observe in the Piraeus Organization is a dangerous sectarianism that has occupied it, in the districts as well as in the professional area.” Typical characteristics included a lack of continuity in action and consequently in obligations, and weakness in the process of assimilation of new members. Indeed, as the report noted “many months have passed and no one has actually joined our lines...”⁸⁰⁷

Although ‘internal opposition’ was progressively weakened throughout the 1930s, external pressures coming from state repression as well as extreme right-wing groups remained at high levels. Public Party gatherings and rallies, were watched by the authorities who conducted random body searches or harassed individuals, inquiring the purpose of their presence at the particular event.⁸⁰⁸ Refugees who were suspected of communist sympathies or activities would face serious obstacles in dealing with the authorities or in applying for welfare and housing.⁸⁰⁹

There were several reports in *Rizospastes* about house searches in Kokkinia by secret police [χαφιέδες]. Individuals found in possession of any sort of communist propaganda material, such as brochures or papers, were physically or psychologically harassed, rounded up and driven to the nearest police headquarters for questioning. There were instances whereby the police would offer a shop owner who was found in possession of such material the choice of either losing his shop or signing up to be an informer on communist activity in the settlement. In another instance, a refugee paper seller was threatened with deportation! This attitude towards refugees who were party members or sympathizers brought a sense of solidarity among a wider number of refugees who began to view them with sympathy.⁸¹⁰

The excessive use of force by the authorities was often criticized by the non-communist press. So, for example *Acropolis* would write in 18/6/1929 how “a minor clash between strikers and strike-breakers, became the pretext for the police and the army to carry forward an entire organized attack

⁸⁰⁶ See for example the pre-election rally of KKE in Piraeus, in *Pali ton Takseon* 16/8/1932

⁸⁰⁷ *Pali ton Takseon* 26/8/1933

⁸⁰⁸ See Biographical Note, no354 (Georgios Doukakes) in File ‘Biographies of Militants’ 301-500, Archive of the KMIEA. The particular event mentioned was the celebration of the May Day in 1934.

⁸⁰⁹ Such as in the case of a refugee widow, Eugenia Gourles whose application for housing was declined by the representative of the Ministry of Welfare on the grounds that “she is a communist and her sons are Bolsheviks.” (*Rizospastes* 11/6/1930)

⁸¹⁰ See *Rizospastes* 22/8/1933, 4/10/1933, 17/9/1934, 2/6/1936

against the settlement, keeping the spirits of the residents tense because many policemen did not hesitate even to enter houses holding guns, as if it were a real battle.”⁸¹¹

Suppression of course was not directed exclusively against Communist Party members and sympathizers. It was also aimed at trade-unionists and progressives as well as groups that opposed the KKE politically, such as the Trotskyites. In the latter case, an open call was made by the Piraeus District Committee (of KOMLEA) to their CP counterparts in 1933 to set up a united front against state ‘terrorism’.⁸¹²

Through the early 1930s there was also a systemization of EEE (National Union Hellas) activities in Piraeus: A circular publicized the establishment of a Greek youth organization called ‘National Regiment of Greek Alkimon’, and “called for its members to report at the snitch precinct of surveillance of EEE of any ‘illegal activities’ of communists, civil servants, etc”. Such groups were also organized in Kokkinia.⁸¹³

An example of the ever-increasing confrontations between Communists and Nationalists was the gathering of EEE members at the Variete Theatre of Kokkinia in April 1933 (around 25 uniformed youth with the EEE flag). “However”, as *Rizospastes* noted “the proletarians of Piraeus [in their hundreds according to *Rizospastes*] expressed beyond doubt, that they would not allow the establishment of fascist organizations in their borough.” There followed gun fire and clashes among demonstrators, the police that were guarding the building, and members of EEE. Following the clashes there were raids of houses and the arrests of seven people, members of KKE.⁸¹⁴ In total 17 people were arrested and sentenced to 47 years of prison and exile. The Party took the opportunity to call for the establishment of anti-fascist Unions of action everywhere.⁸¹⁵ These developments took place just after the rise of Nazism in Germany.

Nevertheless, the Party made significant head-aways in the 1930s among the refugee populations in general and in Kokkinia in particular. This success can be seen in the Party’s electoral results. Indeed, in Kokkinia the Party’s share of the vote increased from 1.5% in 1926 and an all-time low of 0.7% in 1928 to 6.8% in 1932 and an interwar period high of 11.2% in 1934. As the table below

⁸¹¹ *Acropolis* 18/6/1929. The article refers to the neighboring settlement of Drapetsona; a mainly industrial zone, where many refugees from Kokkinia worked.

⁸¹² The offer was declined. See *Pali ton Takseon*, 2/9/1933

⁸¹³ Cited in *Rizospastes* 13/3/1933. See also Decision of the 5th District Assembly of the communist organization of Piraeus, published in *Rizospastes* 5/4/1933

⁸¹⁴ *Rizospastes* 10/4/1933

⁸¹⁵ *Rizospastes* 12/4/1933

shows, by 1936 the Communist Party constituted the main political opposition force to the Liberals in Kokkinia.

Table 38: Elections in Kokkinia (1936)⁸¹⁶

Party	No of Votes	Party	No of Votes
Liberals	4,436	Kanellopoulos	78
Popular Front (KKE)	568	Archeiomarxists	21
Kondyles	303		
Populists	129	Total	5,695

According to *Rizospastes* the communist vote almost tripled in Kokkinia local elections in the period between 1931 and 1935.⁸¹⁷ Apart from being the result of communist activities in the community as well in work places, there are some additional reasons for this rise in the communist vote. By the early 1930s the communist party began to organize the electoral struggle in Kokkinia more effectively. It set up an electoral committee and formed tiny nuclei in neighborhoods that were responsible for gathering financial support and circulating electoral material. It was often the case that a triad would set up a higher plan for itself to fulfill and then call the others into what they called ‘socialist competition.’ This method of ‘incentive’ would prove quite popular among party cells and spread into other party activities, such as paper selling, producing positive results.⁸¹⁸ Thus the Party succeeded to some extent in identifying itself as a genuine champion of workers’ rights. It also managed to introduce the language of class to a larger audience. A local Liberal-friendly newspaper in Piraeus pointed out the danger of having only “one class party among other personalized parties”, especially in view of ‘bankrupted’ politicians who would once again in view of the forthcoming elections “be in a hurry, with their usual excitement, to present themselves as supporters and champions of any sort worker-friendly, or peasant-friendly ideology.”⁸¹⁹

⁸¹⁶ *Anamorfosis* 2/2/1936. For more election results see Appendices 16 and 17.

⁸¹⁷ See *Rizospastes* 12/6/1935

⁸¹⁸ *Rizospastes* 30/5/1933

⁸¹⁹ *Neoi Kairoi* 4/7/1931

Conclusion

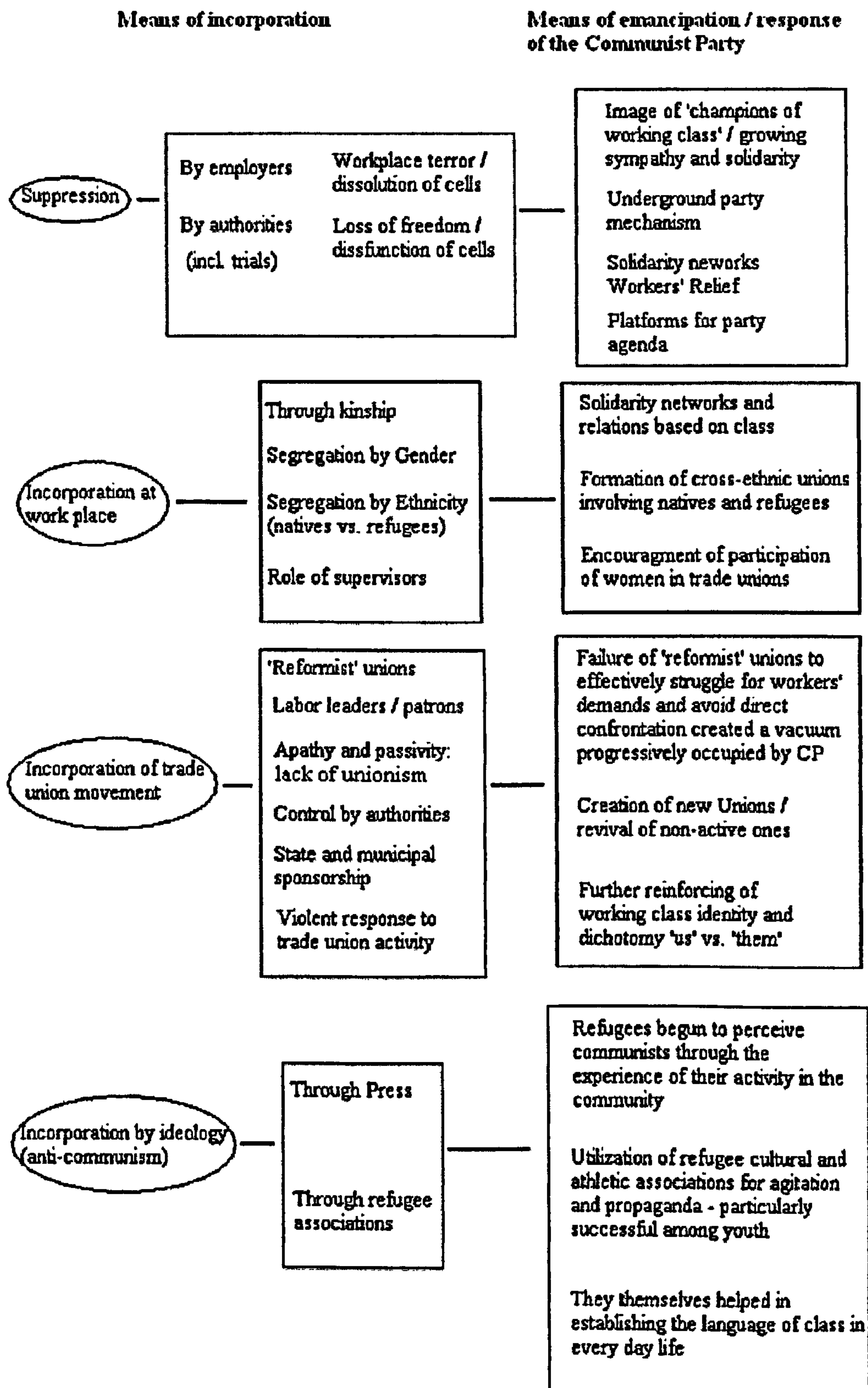
In the last two chapters we have outlined a series of interwoven factors of incorporation and emancipation. A schematic representation of the means of incorporation in juxtaposition to the methods of emancipation used by the communist party is seen in the diagram in the following page.

In regards to the process of settlement and living conditions, economic devastation and the sudden loss of status led initially to fatalism and apathy, not radicalism. During the early years of settlement, in particular, refugees were pre-occupied with the requirements of day-to-day survival, where political participation and choice beyond what refugees saw as necessary for survival was a luxury. Constant movement and relocation in search of employment or of lost family members combined with a conviction that their refugee condition was only temporary and the hope of eventually returning back to their home country, prevented refugees from becoming politically active. It was not until mobility rates slowed considerably and the hope of returning was shattered by the Greco-Turkish Treaty of 1930 that refugees started becoming more involved in the labor and social struggles of their new home-country.

The very pattern and process of settlement sowed the seeds of doubt and suspicion towards the authorities that would eventually grow into dissent. Patterns of accommodation helped to reinforce community spirit and networks of solidarity. Private life was a rare phenomenon in such close quarters. In addition to their common experience, the way their environment was built led to the formation of a community ideology where the community interest took precedence over an individual one. Issues of rent payment and debt became the initial elements that led to an ideological dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'. A growing sense of injustice contributed to a deepening of that dichotomy into 'poor' and 'rich', arguably a form of proto- working class consciousness.

We have seen that settlement itself was a means of incorporation, to the extent that the segregation of refugees made it easy to manipulate them politically and to keep them, initially at least, away from labor struggles. Gerrymandering gave Venizelos an advantage in the electoral struggles throughout the interwar period. We have also seen that there was a clear political intent behind the pattern of settlement to suppress radicalism in general and communism in particular.

Schema 3: Means of incorporation versus means of emancipation and responses of the Communist Party



In regards to channels of political participation and power, refugee associations and the so-called 'refugee-fathers' (the new refugee 'elite') attempted to mediate between refugees and state authorities and the RSC. However, the inability or lack of will to become an effective pressure group may have prevented them from becoming an independent political force in Greek politics. In the long run this worked to their disadvantage. That is because the vacuum they left in terms of leading struggles in the community and workplace was picked up by the Communist Party. Furthermore, personal rivalries made refugee associations easy to manipulate by the state and even more ineffective in championing refugee demands. The role of clientism and its effectiveness is often emphasized; however, as we have seen it was relatively limited in scope. Most refugees had no access to the 'benefits' of clientist networks.

In regards to the native-refugee dichotomy and the incorporation of refugees into the existing national schism between Venizelists and Populists, a series of objective and subjective factors were highlighted. The Crown was indeed credited, in the minds of the vast majority of refugees, with responsibility for the Asia Minor catastrophe, and the Venizelists, on the other hand with their salvation. To this should be also added the genuinely Republican- democratic ideological background that most refugees shared. This 'block' political mentality was further reinforced throughout the interwar period by a widespread belief that they were threatened by a possible Populist government; a belief that was enhanced by the various verbal and physical attacks they suffered from Royalist supporters. The schism was also fueled by the Venizelists themselves, who, of course, had a political advantage in keeping it as it was. After the 1930 Treaty signed by the Liberal Party, however, there seems to be a gradual drift from the Venizelist camp due to disappointment with Venizelos for his handling of refugee affairs abroad, as well as the Liberal Party's adoption of more conservative politics. Accordingly, refugees increasingly started seeking more 'radical' solutions.

In terms of the electoral process, we have noted the importance of gerrymandering, as well as the manipulation of the refugee vote through rigging and the harassment of candidates and activists of the opposition parties. We then examined the relations among refugees and those with authority, such as state officials and the RSC. We have seen the first stages of turning from passive acceptance of events into active defiance, often regardless of party affiliation or ideology. Such confrontations contributed towards forging, what one refugee described as a 'popular unity' in Kokkinia. Finally we pointed to certain key characteristics of community politics and ideology. Mutual ties and solidarity

networks worked both in favor of and against the rise of radical ideologies and doctrines in the settlement. Particular importance was given to the sense of continuity that was forged through various means: collective memory looked to the past with nostalgia, promoting patient endurance of the ills of the present, with little care for the future. All these elements enhanced cross-class social cohesion. This was reinforced by anti-communism in the press and in refugee associations.

Solidarity bonds, of course, also worked against social cohesion. When fellow workers or people of one's own neighborhood were dealt with unjustly by the authorities, this had a wider collective impact in the community. Accordingly, solidarity bonds began to develop along class lines and not just ethnic lines as was originally the case. Anti-communist propaganda, moreover, conflicted with everyday experience: refugees were increasingly more inclined to see communists as they appeared in their everyday life in the community and workplace, rather through the columns of the press.

The growth (or not) of communism among the refugee working class also had to do with the ability of the Communist Party itself to function in the settlements. State persecution of communists and internal strife undoubtedly played a negative role in this regard. Continuous Party crises and competition from other left-wing groups posed serious obstacles for the Piraeus Organization, which made no significant headway until the beginning of the 1930s. Local Party branches in the refugee settlements did have some degree of autonomy from what went on centrally due to lack of communication, especially when the Party was illegal and its members had to work underground. Nevertheless, many of the former 'social-democratic' leaders of SEKE (and later KKE) were active trade unionists in Piraeus, with significant influence in the working class of that area. Hence, the aftershocks of internal disputes were especially felt in the regional Party branches. Splits in the Party often meant the subsequent disaffiliation of several trade unions, further weakening the Party's influence in the labor movement. The same applies in the case of the 'Opposition' of Pouliopoulos which, as we have seen, had more than half its national strength in Piraeus.

Nevertheless, the inability of the 'reformist' trade union leadership to go beyond the acceptable limits of legal action set by the authorities and to undertake militant steps in pushing forward worker's demands and the decline of other left organizations left KKE as the sole political force able and willing to lead the struggle. The Popular Front policy proved successful because it allowed for trade unionists as well as ordinary working class persons who were not communists (and who up to then could have been characterized as 'social-fascists' by the Party) to approach the KKE and join its efforts against an increasingly authoritarian state.

Chapter 8: Working class communism in interwar Greece –The case of the Tobacco Workers in Kavala

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the processes that led to tobacco workers' militancy and adherence to the communist left. These processes were not as straightforward as it is often implied in the existing literature. Mazower argues that "tobacco workers formed one of the most militant sections of the Greek labor force", which constituted in the interwar period "one of the most loyal blocks of support for the Communist Party"⁸²⁰. The reasons offered in the literature for tobacco workers' radicalism could be summarized as a) lack of ties with land, b) the working environment and the unusually high ratio of workers to employer ("a staggering 272,8 to 1" according to Mavrogordatos), and c) housing and living conditions.⁸²¹ However, the explanatory model of lack of land ties + big factories +working and living conditions = working class radicalism is unacceptably mechanistic.

The chapter begins by discussing the characteristics of the tobacco industry in Kavala, including its emergence and development, the unique process of tobacco processing and its consequences on employment and labor conditions. The chapter then examines the progress of the labor movement in the 1920s and 1930s. In the first part, dealing with the 1920s, the chapter touches upon the unique characteristics of the tobacco workers' movement which managed to achieve early victories concerning union rights and labor conditions. It examines the influx of refugees and their successful incorporation into the existing labor movement. Special importance is given to the attempts of authorities to split the labor movement. The chapter examines how the opposing labor camps developed and how they confronted each other in the first big strike in 1928.

The chapter then examines the changes in the industry in the period 1927-1933, the reason behind its decline and the effects on the living conditions of the local population. It touches upon the development of the labor movement before the establishment of the Metaxas' dictatorship, the great strike that took place in 1933 that led to the signing of the Kavala Protocol, the eventual decline of the conservative unions and prevalence of their communist counterparts, as well as the achievement of labor unity in 1935-1936.

⁸²⁰ Mazower M (1991) p126

⁸²¹ Mavrogordatos G (1983) p145 and Mazower M (1991) p126

Finally, the chapter discusses the development of communism in Kavala. Special emphasis is given to the successful adaptation of the Communist Party into the social life of the city as well to the alternative 'cultures' that it promoted. It then examines the effects of oppression on the Communist Party, the different manifestations of anti-communism, trials of communists and their impact on the public. Finally, it elaborates on the crucial electoral battle of 1934, which resulted in the election of a communist mayor (the first one in Greece) and its aftermath.

The tobacco industry and conditions of work

The city of Kavala became the most important industrial center for the processing of tobacco, not so much because it was located near the tobacco cultivating regions, but because of its suitable climate conditions and its natural harbor located at the center of Macedonia.⁸²² The first tobacco cultivation in the Macedonia district dated back to the 1750s, and the first tobacco processing to the 1850s. Several tobacco companies were established by the end of the nineteenth century, exporting tobacco to Russia, Britain, Germany, Egypt, Turkey, Austria, Italy and elsewhere. After 1884 the first foreign tobacco companies began to establish themselves in Kavala, such as the Austro-Hungarian Herzoc Co (1889), the British N Mayer & Co (1893), and several US Tobacco Companies such as the American Tobacco Company, Glenn, Garry, and Alston. By 1897 there were more than twenty companies in the district.⁸²³

Tobacco workers were divided in 3 main categories according to their part in the relatively complex procedure of tobacco processing. The first were the *Dektsides*, who put together the packs of tobacco leaves. The second were *Pastaltzides*, who were responsible for the particular arrangement of tobacco leaves, according to the instructions given by the *Dektsides*. Thirdly, were the *Stivadoroi*, responsible for the tobacco exiting the factory for commercial use and for maintenance etc.⁸²⁴

The tobacco process industry in Kavala exhibited the following characteristics. First of all, a large section of the laborers employed in the tobacco industry in Kavala came from the surrounding areas, as well as other places. According to a 1928 census, the composition of the labor force according to place of origin was as follows:

⁸²² *Kirix* 7/12/1926

⁸²³ *Deltion Kapnou*, May 1935, no 9, pp14-18 and Mantzares A I (1927) pp14

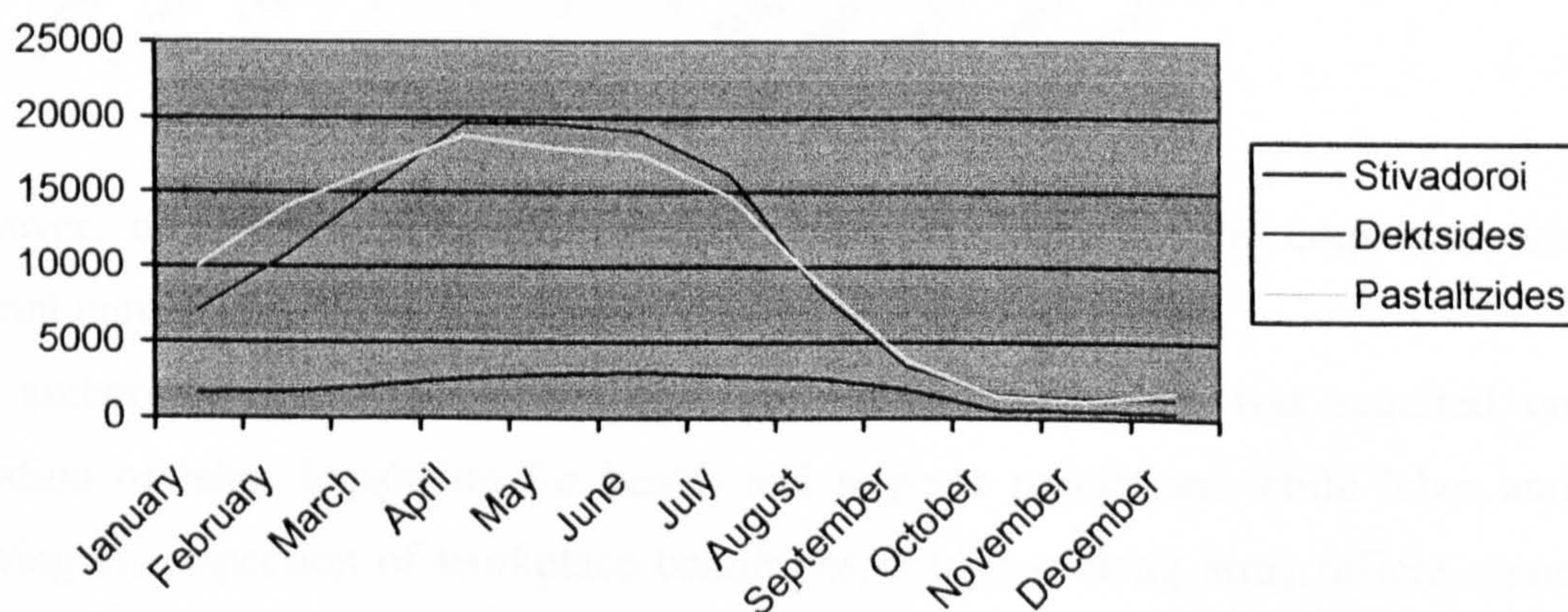
⁸²⁴ Bureau for the Protection of Tobacco (n.a) p124-125, Issue no 642, Municipal Museum in Kavala

Table 39: composition of the labor force according to place of origin (1928)⁸²⁵

Origin	Men	Women	Total	As %
Thasos	2,305	2,227	5,309	34.46
Refugees	1,447	967	2,412	15.66
Near by villages	577	158	745	4.74
Native Kavala	4,529	3,192	7,721	50.12
Total	8,858	6,544	15,402	100.00

The tobacco-related occupations had a unique characteristic compared to most other working class occupations in Greece at the time: due to natural and technical reasons the processing of tobacco was not continuous throughout the year, but was interrupted during the warmest and coldest months. During those months an estimated 70% of tobacco workers were unemployed. To compensate for this loss of income, wages were some 20-30% higher than the average income nationwide, and an insurance system was established. Many tobacco workers gained additional income by working in the countryside in the collection of tobacco, or in other petty occupations.⁸²⁶ This led to a “confusion of professions” where more or less everyone was “partly a tobacco worker.”⁸²⁷ According to the statistics published by the Tobacco Workers’ Insurance Fund (TAK) the average changes in tobacco workers’ income throughout the year (1929) was as follows:

Graph 4: TAK statistics for average wages (1929)⁸²⁸



⁸²⁵ Census of the Tobacco Commerce Association (1928), cited in *Kirix* 15/3/1930

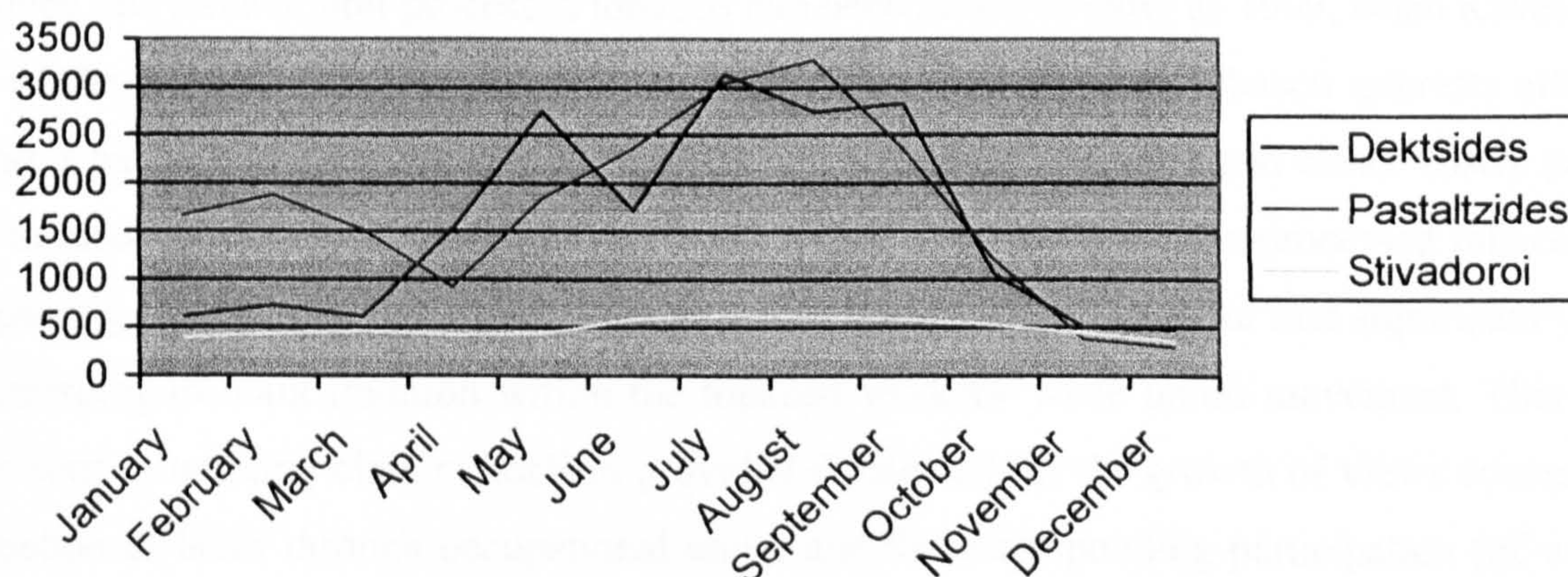
⁸²⁶ Mantzares A I (1927) pp8-9, Interview no 13 of Georgiades Christodoulos, , in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸²⁷ Bureau for the Protection of Tobacco (n.a) p9, Issue no 642, Municipal Museum in Kavala

⁸²⁸ Cited in *Rizospastes* 3/6/1930

TAK was established in 1925, under the pressure from tobacco workers. It drew its resources from 6% withheld from the wage of workers, and another 6% from the employers. It was initially established to provide unemployment benefits to its members, but in the process it expanded its benefits span to include health treatment, pensions, disability, as well as childbirth and funeral assistance. However, according to *Rizospastes*, “it was soon corrupted by arbitrary actions”, and “the executive was passed into the control of the employers...”. Accordingly, “although during the first year it distributed unemployment benefits worth some 29 million, in the 3rd year, the sum was just 18 million, and so on...”⁸²⁹ Nevertheless, TAK offered a variety of services. In 1936 it paid for the health treatment of some 974 tobacco workers, whereas another 180 were treated for tuberculosis in special sanatoria. By 1936 TAK covered directly some 4922 and indirectly an additional 8294 workers.⁸³⁰ The benefits given by TAK throughout the year varied:

Graph 5: Benefits given by TAK (1934)



However, unemployment benefits were not always issued by the employers thereby causing industrial unrest.⁸³¹

The authorities were well aware that more effective control was required concerning the application of labor legislation for health and hygiene regulations, child labor and other areas. Following an inspection of workplace conditions, a high ranking army officer reported a lack of adequate ventilation (windows and doors were kept closed to keep the climate dry for the tobacco),

⁸²⁹ *Rizospastes* 6/6/1930

⁸³⁰ See Assessment Report for TAK, 1936, pp15-34, in Private Collection ID75/ Issue number 5516, Municipal Museum of Tobacco

⁸³¹ Interview no 2 of Ch Antikoulakes, in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

of toilet facilities, electricity, of water supplies, and even of the basic measures of protection for the effects of tobacco processing. The report also noted that some 10% of the total labor force was under-aged (twelve to sixteen years old), and in some cases children entered the occupation from as early as nine years old. The report described those shortcomings as consequences of “unjustified profiteering.” Nevertheless he went on to add that “the tobacco worker should never forget that all other labor classes, with no exception, are in much worse fate than they are.”⁸³²

The Labor Movement in the 1920s

“The tobacco worker constitutes one of the most solid, active and determined among the working classes. For the betterment of their conditions of work and economic condition they went through fierce struggles that dated back to the Turkish occupation.”⁸³³

Indeed, the issue of non-processed tobacco had been raised as early as 1909, when Kavala was still part of the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, American and Egyptian tobacco interests attempted to export tobacco without having to go through the customary rigorous and rather costly processing. The tobacco workers mobilized and managed to halt any export of non-processed tobacco through the passing of a Special Bill by the Turkish authorities (1909). It was the first significant victory for an emerging militant tradition within the tobacco workers’ trade union movement. This relatively early start in working class radicalism provided fertile soil for the growth of views concerning “the protection of labor through occupational unity, and the corresponding participation [of workers] in the distribution of wealth” and led to the “unionization of the tobacco workers’ sector that was faster and better than any other.”⁸³⁴ After the autumn of 1917 those beliefs became linked with the aspirations of the October Revolution.

In 1919 the issue of non-processed tobacco was brought up again by the Greek government on the grounds that any restrictions to tobacco exports were damaging for the economy. Despite the government decision however, the tobacco workers, through various means, including strikes,

⁸³² Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, pp24-25, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸³³ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p23, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸³⁴ Mantzares A I (1927) p6, in Private Collection of I S Erifillides, Tobacco Section, Municipal Museum of Kavala

mobilizations, raids or even sabotage, managed to seriously obstruct the export of non-processed tobacco for another three years, until 1922. Workers even stormed the boats that carried unprocessed tobacco and throw it overboard. In 1922 the government gave in to the demands of the tobacco workers and through bill no 2869 it prohibited any export of non-processed tobacco. However, such actions were not without casualties. During militant action like the one described above, in 1924 there were three casualties among the strikers from police fire.⁸³⁵

The Greek state annexation of Kavala in 1913 found both tobacco workers and industrialists organized in their respective associations. The communist-led trade union 'Eudemonia' was officially recognized by the Greek authorities in 1921, and its union banner read 'workers of all lands unite'. Another important element that should be mentioned was the multi-ethnic character of the union's composition: the executive council consisted of six Christians, four Muslims and one Jew, corresponding to the actual composition of its membership. The union's reading room also included books in both Greek and Turkish.⁸³⁶ In December 1921 the interests of the tobacco factory owners found expression in the newly formed Macedonia and Thrace Tobacco Businessmen Association formed in Kavala.

However, before we elaborate further on the development of the labor movement in Kavala in the 1920s, it is necessary to refer to the influx of refugees that took place in 1922-1923. They were mainly employed in the tobacco industry; in 1930 they constituted 19,3% of men and women employed in tobacco-related professions.⁸³⁷ Many of the refugees were reported to have been former-tobacco workers in their native land, hence they were familiar with the work and had no serious problems in finding employment.⁸³⁸ Contrary to their compatriots in most other parts of Greece, refugees that settled in Kavala did not form separate labor unions but were successfully incorporated quite early into the existing labor movement, and took an active part in the labor struggles from the very beginning. The few refugee associations that were established rapidly declined. Only one remained effective. This was largely influenced by the Communist Party.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁵ Interview no 2 of Ch Antikoulakes, in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸³⁶ Statute of 'Eudemonia', in Private Collection 41/ 6974 and Ministry of Exterior, File 1.14 / 1.119, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸³⁷ Census of the Tobacco Commerce Association (1928), cited in *Kirix* 15/3/1930

⁸³⁸ Mantzares A I (1927) pp22, Interview of Sahinides Averkios, , in Oral Testimonies by those from Pontos, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸³⁹ See Ministry of Exterior, File 1.16/ 1.1222, in Municipal Museum of Kavala, Report of the Kavala Organization to the Politburo, 17/5/1929, p4, File 10, Archive of KKE

The Kavala labor movement, reflecting the multi-ethnic composition of the city itself, consisted of unions that included all ethnic sections of society (at the time Greeks, Turks and Jews).⁸⁴⁰ In other words, the local society and labor movement was familiar with ethnic diversity and tolerant towards the 'other': "there were no natives in Kavala. They were all foreign..."⁸⁴¹ A refugee from Asia Minor who settled in Kavala noted that the native populations in the north were advanced compared to those in southern Greece, who were more "backward, more conservative." As proof of this openmindedness the interviewee mentioned the fact that women were much more confident in Kavala, getting actively involved in addressing various social problems. He also pointed to their mass participation in the industry; in many other places this was still considered taboo.⁸⁴² The locals welcomed refugees and helped them to become familiar with the tobacco process and to enter employment. It was a period when there was a relative lack of workers in Kavala, hence the surplus labor was quickly absorbed in the existing industries.⁸⁴³

However, the living conditions of refugees were not much different from those experienced in other settlements across Greece. A 1926 report to the Ministry of Interior described the developments regarding the refugee populations in Kavala as "tragic", with an immediate need for housing. Refugee settlements were not much different to the other ones nationwide, housing several families in each house –an interviewee mentioned as many as four or five.⁸⁴⁴

Equipped with this background, we will now deal with the key characteristics of the labor movement. In the early 1920s the labor movement in the Tobacco Industry won an unprecedented status in comparison to its counterparts in all other branches of Greek industry. Unions were able to promote relative job security for their members by imposing a system of tobacco processing that required more workers (in order to increase employment) as well as guaranteeing a greater say in determining the wages. And perhaps even more importantly they imposed upon the employers a system of hiring workers whereby factory owners themselves had little say. On the contrary, the

⁸⁴⁰ See Ministry of Exterior, File 1.14/ 1.1119, in Municipal Museum of Kavala, and Statute of 'Eudemonia', in Private Collection ID41/ Issue Number 6974, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸⁴¹ Interview no18 of Mayrides Georgios, , in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸⁴² Interview of Kostantinos Vlitos, in Oral Testimonies by those from Pontos, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸⁴³ Interview no17 of Manafes Giorgos, , in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸⁴⁴ Resolutions of the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Congress, p7, File 173/105, Archive of E Venizelos. Interview no 22 of Petmezas Konstantinos, , in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

process of acquiring new recruits was conducted by the union leadership itself. This measure gave unprecedented power to the tobacco worker unions, “in a manner by which the management of labor at the warehouses has escaped the hands of commerce-men and fallen into the hands of the trade union executives and their representatives.”⁸⁴⁵

Unions would appoint or elect ‘chief-workers’ who would work as their representatives on the factory floor. Throughout the 1920s the majority of factories had communists as the union leadership, and hence “at that time there was absolutely no communist worker that was left unemployed.” In addition, the ‘political cleansing’ of factories from the communist elements was effectively prevented on many occasions.⁸⁴⁶

Accordingly, the union statutes themselves stated their commitment to fight against any condition of employment that would involve an individual agreement undermining the existing one that required union approval. Unions also took care of the ‘education’ of their members, through lectures on labor as well as social issues “so that they [the members] become conscious of their class and its struggles.” The union also promoted the establishment of popular theatres, evening schools, and social activities such as arts, music and sport.⁸⁴⁷

Unions were protective of their members, and solidarity among workers was high. A tobacco worker recalls, for example, that when a number of workers in the warehouse failed to meet the production quota set by the owner and were threatened with loss of employment, the other workers would intervene. They would go to the owner and tell him that any loss incurred by the particular worker they would compensate for by extra work: “we will meet the production quota. But you won’t lay off our colleague. Because he is our comrade and a family man. We shall work more, we will intensify our labor and meet the production quota.” Sometimes they would even threaten with a mass walk out from work (in their hundreds), in the event that the employer did not hire those they wanted.⁸⁴⁸

The dynamic of the communist-led trade unionism was obvious: according to a report of KOE published in *Rizospastes* in 1923, the ‘Yellow’ Unions’ strength was limited to just 500 in Kavala,

⁸⁴⁵ Mantzares A I (1927) pp19-21

⁸⁴⁶ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p18, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸⁴⁷ Statute of the All-Labor Center of Kavala, 1933, p1, in Private Collection of N Tsoumbakes, Tobacco Section of the Kavala Tobacco Museum

⁸⁴⁸ Interview no 2 of Ch Antikoulakes, in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

200 in Salonica, 30 in Drama and another 15 in Serres.⁸⁴⁹ This development alarmed the authorities, which took advantage of the Pagkalos Dictatorship in 1925 to set up a framework for the de-communization of the Kavala trade union movement. A 1928 report by the head of 4th Army Core to the General Staff Headquarters at the Ministry of the Army, on what it called ‘the Tobacco situation’, revealed that the process of splitting the movement of the tobacco workers (and thus diminishing the influence of the communists over non-communist tobacco workers) had been promoted by the authorities since 1925.

The report mentioned a series of welfare measures as a means of combating the social roots of radical trade unionism, such as the establishment of an insurance system (unique to the tobacco workers in the interwar period). It particularly noted that the state felt that the rise of communism among the tobacco workers was due to “the complete lack of welfare politics on behalf of the state,” and it aimed to strengthen the conservative unions.⁸⁵⁰ Overall Pagkalos’ dictatorship had a devastating effect on the radical labor movement. The latter’s decline was heralded as the product of workers’ ‘maturity’ by the local press, which celebrated that “following the early enthusiasm which was aroused among the uncultivated souls by the tempting promises of a communist paradise, came harsh reality sweeping all illusions and pointing another way to working class prosperity which cannot be brought about by the charms of communist utopia...The working class masses are returning to the right path.”⁸⁵¹

The split within the labor movement began to be effective in 1927. In an attempt to safeguard conservative unions from the influence of the communist-led KOE, the leaders of the former decided to proceed to the formation of a separate Federation of Tobacco Workers, which ironically they named ‘Unitary Tobacco Workers’ Federation’, or EKO. This break away produced a reaction at a grass-root level, as many union members, although conservatives, did not view positively what was essentially a split in their industry’s trade union strength. Union meetings where motions to affiliate to the new conservative Federation were discussed, often ended in havoc. The Union ‘Anagennisis’ published the following announcement regarding the situation: “Members of our Union, monopolizing as it seems, nationalism, started spreading word that the Executive is communist-friendly and acts in an extremist way. And that is so, because the Executive was reluctant to send

⁸⁴⁹ *Rizospastes* 30/7/1923

⁸⁵⁰ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p1, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸⁵¹ *Kirix* 27/3/1926

straight away a delegate to the founding congress of the conservative Tobacco Workers' Federation and because it has tried to bring about the general unification of tobacco workers."⁸⁵²

Nevertheless, the so called Unitary Congress took place in March 1927, accompanied by extensive and enthusiastic coverage by the local conservative press. Views among the delegates on the need to create a separate Tobacco Federation varied. A few raised concerns, however, they were dismissed as being 'communist-friendly'. But perhaps even more interesting is the adoption by the Congress of "the principle of class struggle", and the statement that the conservative Federation would indeed cooperate with its communist-led counterpart "if that would serve the interests of the tobacco workers."⁸⁵³ Next to the principle of class struggle, nevertheless, coexisted the belief in the role of the state as a patron of the working class whose moral duty is to implement "humanitarian legislation and politics" to the benefit of the latter.⁸⁵⁴ In any case, what is indicative of the influence of communist unionism and politics is the need by the conservative unions to partially adopt some of its principles, for example its language of class. It constitutes a significant piece of evidence on the growing hegemony of the communist-led trade unionism in Kavala and its associated discourse, assumptions and view of the world.

One of the first effects of the division of the unionized workers into conservatives and communists, was the practice attempted and exercised by a number of factory owners of hiring only workers who were holders of conservative union membership cards. Employers had a preference for recruiting a labor force through conservative unions, which promoted through their statutes "worker discipline within the warehouse" as well as good behavior "towards the chief-worker and the warehouse Manager."⁸⁵⁵ However, although this measure worked partially in encouraging workers, especially long-term unemployed, to join conservative unions, it was nevertheless met with fierce resistance by communist-led unions whose strong presence in various factories prevented the measure from having any devastating effect in these strongholds.⁸⁵⁶ The tactic was also utilized as a means of breaking strikes, by partially re-opening the warehouses for work accepting only holders of

⁸⁵² *Kirix* 8/2/1927 and 9/2/1927

⁸⁵³ *Kirix* 6/3/1927, 8/3/1927 and 10/3/1927

⁸⁵⁴ *Kirix* 15/3/1927

⁸⁵⁵ Statute of the Union 'Agapi', Private Collection 79/ Entry Issue 9257, Municipal Museum of Tobacco, Kavala

⁸⁵⁶ *Kirix* 29/9/1927

conservative union membership cards. Of course there was sometimes a reaction, which in many cases was violent, and conservative workers had to be escorted to the warehouses by the police.⁸⁵⁷

Yellow unions took advantage of a Tobacco Industrialists lockout in May 1927 in order to approach members of communist-led unions and offer membership, thereby securing their access to work. This tactic worked to the advantage of the conservatives, and the ‘leak’ towards their union was estimated to some 15% of the total of unionized workers. Workers who switched sides and were provided with employment were at the same time warned by the conservative union leaders “to be productive in their labor” because suspicion of subversive behavior would be to their disadvantage.⁸⁵⁸

Following the broader exclusion of the communist-led unions from the official labor movement, preparations began in 1928-1929 to form a left alternative to the state-incorporated Confederation of Labor. The preparations for the Unitary Congress (EGSEE) were reported to have been rather successful, with more than 3,500 tobacco workers taking part in electing some 20 delegates. This left communist union leaders satisfied: “the majority of the Left Block is immense”. The Kavala organizations represented at the Congress were as follows:

Table 40: Organizations from Kavalla that took part in the Unitary Congress⁸⁵⁹

Name of organization	No of delegates	Name of organization	No of delegates
KOE	4	Leather Workers Union	1
Kavalla Labor Center	2	BEO (Construction Ws)	2
KEK	8	Bakery workers	1

The strength of the tobacco workers within the new trade union body was demonstrated in the composition of its newly elected Executive Committee: 7 out of its 25 members were tobacco workers. Interestingly, one of them was a member of the opposition group ‘Liquidarists’, while another was a female tobacco worker, a rare phenomenon for labor executives.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁷ Report of the Kavala Organization to the Politburo of the CC, 17/5/1927, pp6-7, File10, Archive of KKE

⁸⁵⁸ *Kirix* 27/5/1927

⁸⁵⁹ *Rizospastes* 1/2/1929 and 4/2/1929

⁸⁶⁰ *Rizospastes* 9/2/1929

The split of the tobacco workers' movement into two major camps resulted in fierce competition between them, which paradoxically often resulted in common struggles, since neither of the two wanted to be seen as backward in 'championing' workers' rights and representing their demands. Accordingly, when the 'Yellow' Unions were informed that the 'Red' Unions were considering going on strike for pay rises that exceeded inflation, they were quick to adopt the demand and issue it first despite the fact that "they did not believe at all in the success [of the campaign] considering the pay rise as unfeasible."⁸⁶¹ However, there was an important difference in the manner that each trade union 'camp' carried forward the struggle, which in the long run proved to be the decisive element as to which of the two would prevail as the sole 'champion' of tobacco workers' demands. One utilized "militant" means, whereas the other limited itself to "legal" means, the scope of which became increasingly narrowed through the interwar period.⁸⁶²

The 1928 strike for a pay rise is a good example. In March, representatives of the conservative unions met with the local authorities and Tobacco commerce-men in order to present them with the demands of workers for pay rises. Instead, they received an offer to provide conservative workers with a special 'favorable work ticket', which they "accepted straight away." However, the communist unions were already preparing for a strike. Such was the dynamic of pre-strike activities that "the communists have managed to drag the temporary executive of the conservative Tobacco Workers of Kavala to a close cooperation and laid down the foundations for a strike in the tobacco industry."⁸⁶³ It was only through the last minute intervention of the executive of the Confederation that the common strike was not realized, and conservative unions pulled out. This move was heavily criticized by the communists who publicly condemned the conservatives as collaborators with the State and Capital and traitors to the workers struggle.

The pressure for calling a strike mounted at the grass-root level. Conservative union leaders made a last attempt by the end of May to resolve the pay dispute through talks with the industrialists. These however, failed once again to produce any results. The failure of talks and the attitude of the conservative leadership towards the popular cross-party demand for a strike "led to the unification of communists and non-communists, and ultimately resulted in a movement from below towards a

⁸⁶¹ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p2, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸⁶² Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p2, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸⁶³ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p3, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

strike.” The struggle rapidly acquired a political character as well, strengthened by the presence of labor and political leaders from both sides who arrived in Kavala in order to reinforce the profile of each camp. Nevertheless, although theoretically divided (at the top level at least), the two opposing unions cooperated closely at the grass root level: the struggle committees “although officially not cooperating, were communicating closely,” and “common groups prevented strike-breakers from working.”⁸⁶⁴

The army report on the strike noted: “I have to admit that the leaders of the conservatives begged for even a symbolic pay-rise so that they would achieve a heavy strike against the communist camp. They did not succeed, however, due to the Tobacco Commerce-men’s unwillingness to give any concessions. They then tried to address the local authority for help, so that their unions could manage to fulfill some of their demands, independently of the outcome of the tobacco workers’ struggle, and could show that the conservative unions at least managed to have some success. However, they failed once more.” In an almost apologetic manner, the conservative leaders claimed that “the strike was called by the communists, and they were forced to follow.”⁸⁶⁵

An additional important element included in the report was the role of the conservative unions as keepers of order against any law-breaking by the communists. In this matter they were praised in the report as being even more effective in keeping the order than the authorities themselves, and “for their attitude in this the State as well as Society owe them perhaps a great deal.”⁸⁶⁶ However, that was not enough for certain conservative elements within those unions who had serious objections to the call for a strike by their leaders. In July they broke away from their union forming a new union called ‘Workers’ Salvation’ comprised, according to their own sources, by some 200 former members of Proodos, the main conservative Tobacco Workers union.

The strike came to an end in late June. Its outcome was a success for the workers. But this was a devastating outcome for the conservative unions, which were now struggling to minimize membership decline and leakage towards the communists. The outcome of the strike “even if it was inevitable, constituted a triumph for the communists and a strong blow against the conservatives.” The latter, in a last desperate attempt to “purify themselves in the eyes of the masses” began to “seek

⁸⁶⁴ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p4-5, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸⁶⁵ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p5, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸⁶⁶ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p7, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

legal prosecution and exile” by adopting “revolutionary tactics”!⁸⁶⁷ Even the conservative-friendly press was left puzzled by this u-turn in the conservative union tactics. It reported in particular on June 17th: “Whatever happened to those gentlemen, the leaders who in the name of their conservatism always sought special favoritism and care by the State and society? You will find them at the front line of those complaining today. Instead of providing, as they have the fundamental obligation to do so, the tone of moderation and calmness in regards to channeling the just demands of workers, keeping in contact with the legal authorities and acting as mediums of discussions for the normal solution of the situation, they have suddenly chosen a different role.”⁸⁶⁸

Finally, the Army report ended by stressing that “if the conservative block does not receive the full moral support by the State and Society, the communists will acquire the influence over the tobacco workers that they enjoyed up to 1926.”⁸⁶⁹ In a desperate attempt to halt what was perceived as a revival of communism within trade unionism in Kavala, the city’s Security Council decided to sentence the entire union leadership of KEK to exile on the grounds that the latest strike mobilizations did not reflect genuine workers’ concerns, but were the artificial product of a handful of communist trouble makers.⁸⁷⁰

Significant aspects of the 1928 strike can be emphasized: firstly, was the difference in the dynamics of the mobilization of each trade union camp. Accordingly the conservative unions were reported to have issued three or four brochures 5,000 copies each, whereas their communist rivals issued more than 35, also about 5,000 copies each, which they circulated through special distribution teams. Even the Commander of the 4th Army Core was surprised by the “discipline and allegiance that characterized the communists. Proof of this can be found in the frequency of militant actions, the circulation of brochures and the superhuman effort that they exhibited in order for the strike to acquire their favorite form of struggle, which they call ‘street struggle’.”⁸⁷¹

Secondly, the tobacco workers’ unions managed to convince the professional classes that the latter’s interests depended on the outcome of their struggle; hence they secured their support. Indeed, on the 22nd of July 1928, while the strike was in its 12th day, the communist-led tobacco workers’

⁸⁶⁷ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p17-18, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸⁶⁸ *Kirix* 17/6/1928

⁸⁶⁹ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p20, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

⁸⁷⁰ *Rizospastes* 11/11/1928

⁸⁷¹ Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p8 and p17, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87

union sent an open letter to the Federation of Shop keepers of Kavala asking them to take sides, stressing that their “interests are closely linked to the interest of the working class and hence those of the tobacco workers.” The Federation replied positively, demanding that the government meet the demands of the strikers and, eventually, joining the strike themselves. It was not the first time that the professionals have gone on solidarity strike. They had done so in 1926, stressing that workers’ issues such as unemployment were not solely an issue of their own, but one that concerns the whole of Kavala: “a matter of life or death for this city.”⁸⁷² Accordingly, community interests were increasingly identified with the interests of the tobacco workers.⁸⁷³

It should be noted at this point that the strike in Kavala attracted support from other occupations in other cities nationwide, which was manifested in various acts of solidarity. For example, the Piraeus Dockers went on solidarity strike, refusing to unload any ship that docked to the port of Piraeus. Their example was soon followed by all other Dockers’ unions nationwide.⁸⁷⁴

Another significant element was the strike’s durability. The strikers held on with noticeable persistence until July the 7th. On the 6th of July just 114 chief-workers were at work out of 13,000 male and female tobacco workers. Only on Saturday the 7th of July, a month after the strike was called, “hunger and deprivation shook a large section of workers.” But even that Saturday only some 1,500 went back to work, many of whom returned to strike after a while. Interestingly it was not entirely unusual for a number of the strikers to return to work for some days –a week even- and then go back on strike. In Kavalla, however, from the first day to the last the strike breakers did not exceed 100 and their number did not fluctuate much.⁸⁷⁵

Finally, the 1928 tobacco workers’ strike revealed even further the limitations concerning the tactics and language available to the conservative unions. These became increasingly apparent during the course of events and were further reinforced the following year. When the leader of the main conservative tobacco workers’ union declared himself to be in solidarity with the ongoing mobilization of the tobacco workers in Thasos, the reaction by the right wing press and the authorities was overwhelming. Accordingly, in late October 1929 he was forced to clarify his position in an open letter addressed to the Minister for Thrace published in a local paper, admitting that he “may have been a bit too demanding”, and that “this was by no means an attack on you or

⁸⁷² Protocol no99, 22/6/1928, published in *Rizospastes* 26/6/1928. See also *Rizospastes* 30/6/1928 and 5/7/1928 and *Kirix* 10/12/1926

⁸⁷³ A situation similar to the one experienced in ‘Little Moscows’, see Macintyre S (1980)

⁸⁷⁴ *Rizospastes* 6/7/1928 and 7/7/1928

⁸⁷⁵ *Rizospastes* 2/8/1928

your position, but a mere expression of my deepest sorrow concerning the unjustly treated struggle of the Thasos tobacco workers.”⁸⁷⁶ The limits to conservative union leaders’ militancy were increasingly becoming obvious.

Behind the scenes there unfolded another interesting sequence of events between the local Party branch and the Politburo. A series of letters between the two dated after the strike reveal that there was a degree of tension and disagreement regarding the strike. The Politburo had ordered all Party branches to prepare a nation-wide strike in May, in line with the adopted strategy of a ‘general political strike’. However, although the communist-led tobacco workers’ union in Kavala prepared the ground and had already openly called for and set a date for the strike, the Politburo sent a message just the day before to halt the strike because all other Party sections nationwide were behind schedule. The local Party branch refused to comply and went on with the strike, finding itself afterwards accused of “insubordination”. To this charge, the Kavala branch replied in a letter to the Politburo dated 19th of June 1928, that halting the strike at that moment would mean “the bankruptcy of our side in the eyes of the workers” since it would appear as an “abandonment of struggle”. Furthermore, the letter stressed, “workers are neither soldiers nor pawns on a chess board in order to push them backwards and forwards whenever we wish.”

The local Party trade unionists, drawing from their past experience (the strike of 1923 was one example) argued that calling off the strike the night before would cause widespread disappointment among workers and distrust of the communist party union leadership that had argued for the strike weeks in advance. More importantly, conservative unions would capitalize from such a move by the communists and present themselves as the only champions of the working class. Accordingly, when faced with the dilemma of following Party orders and responsibility towards their fellow workers and union members, communist union officials in Kavalla chose the latter. Somewhat surprisingly, no disciplinary action was taken by the Politburo, which explained the mishandling of the preparations for a nation-wide strike as due to the disrupting impact of state oppression on the coordinating and communication abilities of the Party.⁸⁷⁷ This is a characteristic example of the relative autonomy of action enjoyed by local party organizations, due in part to problematic communication with the Politburo in Athens. Extensive state persecution throughout the interwar

⁸⁷⁶ *Kirix* 24/10/1929

⁸⁷⁷ Letter of Kostas Nouros (on behalf of the Kavala communist organization) to the Politburo, 19/6/1928 and Letter of the Politburo to the District Committee of Kavala, 27/6/1928, File8, Communist Party Archives

period meant that communications of local branches with the center were often disrupted, leaving the former with more flexibility to focus on local labor issues and adapt the Party line to accommodate them. That was largely the case throughout the interwar period in Kavala. The changes that took place in 1931 in the national Party might have decreased this degree of flexibility, nevertheless it remained a dominant feature of Kavala communism until the very end in 1936.

A report by Michalakopoulos in 1929 on the situation in Macedonia and Thrace referred to the political balance of forces among workers: “A fierce and continuous struggle is taking place among the conscious fanatical communist section of the workers in Northern Greece –the number of conscious communists is small- and the conservative worker element –which compared to the conscious communists is larger- in competing with each other in order to draw to their side the largest section of neither communist nor conservative workers, but those who are reluctant to join either side, the undecided let’s say, who are easily drawn by one or the other side to give it the upper hand...”⁸⁷⁸ Although the number of ‘conscious communists’ might have indeed been small, this does not represent the actual strength of communist trade unionism, as it ignores a large number of activists and sympathizers, who always constituted the majority of the party’s human resources. Nevertheless, what is important in this report is the crucial role of the vast majority of tobacco workers who were labeled ‘undecided’, and who rightly were viewed as the ‘deciding element’ in determining the balance of forces since they constituted the majority of workers overall.

Nevertheless, according to a report of the Local Committee of the Kavala Organization of KKE to the Politburo, the Labor Center consisted by the late 1920s of fifteen unions whose membership strength was as follows:

Table 41: Union membership of the unions affiliated to the Kavala Labor Center⁸⁷⁹

Union	Membership	Union	Membership
KEK (Tobacco)	9,200	Other Unions with less than 100 members (10)	537
Construction	550		
Shoe Makers	300	Total Membership	10,997
Maritime Workers	180	Unions non affiliated to the Labor Center (4)	337
Bakery Workers	120		

⁸⁷⁸ Report of A Michalakopoulos, 1929 ‘On the needs of Macedonia and Thrace’, p17, Archive of E Venizelos, 173/106

⁸⁷⁹ Report of the of the Local Committee of the Kavala Organization of KKE to the Politburo, 17/5/1929, p3, File10, Archive of KKE

The tobacco crisis: parameters and consequences

Between 1927 and 1933 tobacco exports witnessed a significant decline. It needs to be stressed that the export of tobacco varied a great deal as it was heavily dependent on foreign markets and the fluctuations in the international economy. Accordingly the production and export of tobacco was not at all steady. In the years 1922 to 1932 it was as follows:

Table 42: Production and export of tobacco in 1922-1932⁸⁸⁰

Year	Production in Tons	Export in Tons	Export value of tobacco /whole value of export %
1922	25,790	36,671	58.7
1923	57,769	21,362	38.6
1924	50,297	41,691	51.6
1925	60,826	41,165	33.8
1926	61,380	54,695	56.9
1927	63,216	53,565	57.0
1928	58,736	49,095	51.0
1929	78,738	50,055	56.5
1930	65,869	49,044	56.0
1931	42,924	43,195	53.0
1932	27,250	36,620	64.8

The crisis of 1927-1932 was solely attributed by a report of the Supreme Economic Council to the international economic crisis, and the import and exchange restrictions imposed by various states.⁸⁸¹ The main importers of Greek tobacco (considered a luxury good) were the United States and

⁸⁸⁰ Letter of the vice-president of the Supreme Economic Council to the President of the Ministerial Council, 20/1/1933, p20, File 173/75, in Archive of E Venizelos

⁸⁸¹ Letter of the vice-president of the Supreme Economic Council to the President of the Ministerial Council, 20/1/1933, p20, File 173/75, in Archive of E Venizelos

Germany, which were both severely affected by the 1929 US financial crisis.⁸⁸² However, the decline of tobacco exports was also partly attributed to government taxation (which was as high as 19.2%), and the relatively high labor costs, that resulted from wages that were above and working hours below the national average. Accordingly, the cost of tobacco processing in Greece was estimated at 20-45 drs per *oka* (1280 grams), whereas at the same time the equivalent costs in rival countries was 15-19 in Turkey, and 11-28 in Bulgaria.⁸⁸³

By the end of the 1920s, however, the city of Kavala was facing an additional problem: that of overpopulation. The ‘city-volcano’, as it has been characterized by the press, contained an estimated 2 to 3 times more population than it could sustain. The arrival of the refugees and hasty planning and chaotic overbuilding by the RSC meant that “no piece of land was left construction-free.”⁸⁸⁴ The Prefect of Kavala, in a letter to the Prime Minister in March 1932 mentioned the problem of imbalance between the size of the population and the ability of the area to support it, asked for urgent measures to be taken.⁸⁸⁵ The situation deteriorated when the petty-tobacco producers in the surrounding countryside became indebted to various financial institutions (mainly the Agricultural Bank), leading to the “proletarianization of the peasantry that cultivated tobacco,” and forcing them to swell even further the city of Kavala in search of income.⁸⁸⁶

All of the above contributed to a growing crisis in Kavala. The city’s economic life was sustained almost exclusively from the tobacco industry, which resulted in a situation whereby the city’s future “was totally dependent on tobacco processing and the tobacco workers’ wages.” Accordingly, when the income of tobacco workers was halved in the period 1927-1931 there were serious problems facing all other occupations in Kavala due to the underconsumption of goods and the inability of tobacco workers to pay their growing debts. Significantly, it was usual practice for tobacco workers to buy goods (mainly bread) on credit for the period they were unemployed and pay back when they

⁸⁸² Mantzares A I (1927) pp37-38. Although, the extent to which the 1929 US financial crisis is related to the economic slump in the capitalist world is a debated issue, this section focuses on the effects rather than the causes of the crisis.

⁸⁸³ The statistics refer to the *Basma* variety. Similar differences were experienced in other varieties. See *Kirix* 9/5/1929

⁸⁸⁴ *Acropolis* 10/6/1931

⁸⁸⁵ Letter of the Prefect of Kavala to Venizelos, 26/3/1932, File 173/111, in Archive of E Venizelos

⁸⁸⁶ Bureau for the Protection of Tobacco (n.a) p58, Issue no 642, Municipal Museum in Kavala

went back to work. When work became scarce and wages fell, this system of credit proved catastrophic.⁸⁸⁷

Table 43: The decline of employment and wages (1927-1933)⁸⁸⁸

Year	Men	Women	Daily Wages		Value (drs)
			Men	Women	
1927	8,925	5,307	1,316,973	689,710	146,547,970
1928	8,300	4,773	1,492,394	751,370	170,886,832
1929	8,103	4,512	1,142,676	581,062	134,258,018
1930	7,394	4,258	?	?	116,217,400
1931	7,012	3,752	513,965	629,876	92,745,863
1932	6,664	4,326	727,069	567,659	70,817,976
1933	5,124	4,037	483,855	368,189	46,263,972

Accordingly the average daily wage for the period 1927-1931 dropped from 105 Drs for men, 40 for women, to 73.40 for men and 31.20 for women in 1932, and 67.30 for men and 30.84 for women in 1933. The average wage, however, rose steadily from 1933 onwards.⁸⁸⁹

Poverty and debt were common features, even among the petty-shop owners. *Rizospastes* often publicized the frequent bankruptcies and evictions suffered by this section of the population, suggesting that their interests lay with the working class “under the flag of the communist party”. An estimated 25% of houses in Kavala were “under threat by the greedy claws of the National Bank” by 1934.⁸⁹⁰ *Acropolis* reported on the situation in Kavala in the early 1930s: “The road for these poor people, this mass consisting of hard working, wage-earning people...is a long and lonely one that leads to only one place: prison! The public collector, the police officer, also unfortunate victims of daily struggle, await them in every corner.” The profiteering role of various Banks was heavily

⁸⁸⁷ *Tachydromos* 27/3/1932. Proceedings of the Industrial Board of Greece, 1933, p21, in ABE 6, General Archives of the State, Kavala. Interview no 18 of Maurides Georgios, in Verbal Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸⁸⁸ *Rizospastes* 22/4/1934

⁸⁸⁹ From an all time high of 30,000 in 1928 it dropped to just 9,000 in 1933, to rise up again to 20,000 in 1936. In *Eleutheros Kirix* 27/4/1936

⁸⁹⁰ *Rizospastes* 2/2/1929 and 24/4/1934. See also Resolution 6/11/1927 of refugee and native home and shop lenders, in File 91, in Historical and Literature Archive of Kavala

criticized even by the Industrial Board of Greece.⁸⁹¹ In December 1931 a system of popular rationing was introduced to help alleviate hunger. During the 27 days following its establishment it gave away some 76,268 rations, mainly consisting of bread.⁸⁹²

The Labor Movement in the 1930s

By the early 1930s the image of Yellow Unions that crystallized in the perception of a great number of tobacco workers was one that was put forward in an interview of a non-communist tobacco worker from the interwar period: “the yellow unions were collaborators of the employers. And they [the employers] said to the unions: go to the warehouses and dissolve the strike. And they did come, and we knew who they were, that they were collaborating with the employers, receiving money from them, aiming to break the struggles of the tobacco workers...Traitors of the labor movement.”⁸⁹³

In another interview, a conservative worker and trade unionist talked about how the conservatives took over his union, which was under the influence of the left. However, “the security police came after them [the left trade unionists], and finally managed to catch them and send them to exile, leaving the union in chaos.” And he continued: “that is when I decided to intervene, and since I did not belong to the left, I went to the security police and asked for their protection... [in the past] the employers paid us whatever they wanted and whenever they wanted. When the pact was made [with the police] we were paid regularly and in full...”⁸⁹⁴ This involvement of the authorities in the process of employment and in union activities was criticized even by the local press. Hence, *Tachydromos* reported in April 1934 that “the tobacco worker masses, our whole society is in unrest due to the arbitrary, unheard of, unbelievable actions of the Security Branch, which forbids tobacco companies from employing workers without its previous approval.”⁸⁹⁵ This was a total change from the 1920s when unions controlled hiring.

⁸⁹¹ *Acropolis* 10/6/1931. Proceedings of the Industrial Board of Greece, 1933, p29, in ABE 6, General Archives of the State, Kavala

⁸⁹² *Kirix* 18/1/1932

⁸⁹³ Interview no13 of Christodoulos Georgiadis, in Oral Traditions of the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸⁹⁴ Interview no18 of Georgios Maurides, in Oral Traditions of the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁸⁹⁵ *Tachydromos* 1/4/1933

There were cases reported in the press, whereby the chief of police himself would visit tobacco warehouses, dismiss suspected communist workers and replace them with “his own people.” According to the same article, a list of suspected communist sympathizers included some 1000 tobacco workers whose employment future was uncertain. Of course the victims of such practice were not exclusively communist, but also workers with simply radical or democratic beliefs, drawing discontent from an ever-widening spectrum of society.⁸⁹⁶

Increasingly, workers who belonged to Yellow Unions would reject or ignore the decisions made by their union leaders. Accordingly, the April 1932 ‘strike’ called by the reformist union ‘Proodos’ was characterized by the following paradox: on the one hand, the Union’s Chairman announced participation in the strike; and on the other, the vast majority of workers-members of the union were at work.⁸⁹⁷

The corruption and mishandling of union financial resources by the reformist trade unions eventually caused reactions even amongst the ‘friendly press’. Accordingly *Tachydromos* reported in 1933 concerning “the management of the 50,000 Drs that were sent by the GSEE in order to be distributed to the impoverished workers of all branches of industry affiliated to the All-Labor Center [reformist]...” However, “The Tobacco Workers’ Union ‘Proodos’ supposedly represented by Mr. Chatzides presented some 380 members who were unemployed and in need of a benefit, at a time when union membership was no more than 260 in 1931 and 62 in 1932, out of whom not all were paying membership fees, not excluding the members of the executive itself.”⁸⁹⁸ Another local newspaper went further, calling the All-Labor Center a “private Company, which may have claimed to represent part of the working class, managing funds, but in reality it was not recognized by anyone. Its financial support by the local council as well as the GSEE was illegal”!⁸⁹⁹

This resentment towards the role and ethos demonstrated by the ‘official’ representatives of the Greek labor movement increased further during the visit of the Confederation’s Secretary into Kavala in May 1933. *Tachydromos* went as far as referring to the GSEE’s Secretary as one of those “leaches of workers’ sweat, claiming to be their representative, while the only thing that they truly represent is just lifeless seals of dead trade unions.” On the situation regarding the local branch of the official trade union movement, namely the All-Workers Kavala Center, the paper suggested that

⁸⁹⁶ *Proina Nea* 31/1/1934

⁸⁹⁷ *Tachydromos* 21/4/1932

⁸⁹⁸ *Tachydromos* 26/1/1933

⁸⁹⁹ *Proina Nea* 3/12/1933

in reality it does not exist but in name only, and through administering the immense financial resources provided to it by the local as well as central authorities.⁹⁰⁰

Moreover, a statement made by the leader of the conservative union Proodos in January 1935 calling for the prevention of what he called “foreign workers”, i.e. tobacco workers who came from the surrounding countryside in order to find employment in the tobacco industry, certainly did not strengthen the appeal of conservative trade unionism to what was essentially a large proportion of potentially unionized workers.⁹⁰¹

At the same time, the radicalization of the Kavala labor movement was reaching its peak for the interwar period. The sacking of tobacco workers at the Glen Factory in late July 1933 triggered a solidarity strike in four other tobacco factories. They were soon joined by the shop keepers’ association. The next day all the other tobacco companies declared a lock-out, while the professionals called for a general strike. The tobacco workers of Salonica also declared a 24-hour solidarity strike. Demonstrations and strike activity spread throughout Greece, in Piraeus as well as all major tobacco industry cities.⁹⁰²

During the strike “the entire city was mobilized day and night.” The workers locked themselves inside the warehouses and the authorities patrolled the streets aiming to starve them out. Brothers, sisters, wives and children of the striking workers invented all sorts of means to supply them with food and drink. Workers’ Relief organized fund-raising and a food collection for the strikers. A young tobacco worker at the time recalled: “We made a committee out of 3-4 persons which had to supply the Petrides warehouse with food ... We found a way: I ran and had the guard chasing me, while someone [from the warehouse] dropped a rope [to tie the supplies].”⁹⁰³

The strike quickly spread to all branches of industry. On the 26th of July it came to an end, resulting in a victory for the strikers. Among the demands that they won were a) entry of tobacco workers in Togka-type tobacco processing on a 65 drs minimum wage, b) a daily wage that corresponded to the rising cost of living, c) an 8-hour working day, d) equal pay for equal work for women, e) government support to the Tobacco Workers’ Insurance Fund (TAK), f) unemployment benefits (50 drs for male workers, and 25 for female during the whole of the unemployment period), g) full medical and hospital care (paid by the employers and the State), and h) a lifting of the restrictions imposed on the

⁹⁰⁰ *Tachydromos* 11/5/1933 and 28/11/1933

⁹⁰¹ *Proina Nea* 18/1/1935

⁹⁰² *Rizospastes* 24/7/1933 and 25/7/1933

⁹⁰³ Interview no 2 of Ch Antikoulakes, in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

functions of the communist-led trade unions and Labor Center. *Rizospastes* triumphantly declared that “the enormous importance of the victory of Kavalla constitutes an example of the immense power of the working class.”⁹⁰⁴ The issue of *Rizospastes* for 4th of August, quoting from evaluation reports of the Unitary GSEE, also talked about a victory for the united front from below policy.⁹⁰⁵

The authorities were obliged to call in an official statement for negotiations with KEK -a recognition of great importance considering that KEK had been ‘dissolved’ -officially at least- by the authorities just a month earlier, and its Executive had been sent on a 30-month exile to the island of Anti-Paxos.⁹⁰⁶ The resulting contract, known as the Kavalla Protocol was, however, not respected by the authorities, and a widespread wave of persecutions and exiles followed: in the following weeks all those who were thought to be responsible for the strike were either arrested or went underground. Some 2,500 people gathered to greet the eight tobacco workers who were transported for exile to the Metagon Prison of Piraeus.⁹⁰⁷

The recent events and the major successes of the communist-led trade unions alarmed the authorities. In a confidential letter from the Kavalla Public Prosecutor to the Judge of Appeal of Thrace this anxiety was evident: “It should not be considered an over-exaggerated view of Kavalla, relatively to the present status of communism, that this city, if it weren’t a section of the Greek State and if it were not for the reaction of State authority, would present in feeling and social appearance the phenomenon of a city with as strong a communist presence as any city in Russia...” The letter continued with reference to the events of March 1933 that resulted, according to the writer, “in an unprecedented unbelievable situation whereby the official state and the government’s representative minister and General Governor of Thrace, felt the need to co-sign a protocol, referring to an unbalanced agreement with the representative of the strikers, who was a member of the recently dissolved communist union on 7th of July 1933, ‘Amuna’.” The writer made special reference to the effective measures taken in Italy and Germany, which resulted “in the cleansing of society.” He furthermore suggested “the ongoing postponement of elections indefinitely” in fear of a communist take over of the local authority or to remove the “right to elect and be elected” from members and sympathizers of the communist party.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁴ *Rizospastes* 26/7/1933- 2/8/1933 and *Proina Nea* 5/9/1933

⁹⁰⁵ *Rizospastes* 4/8/1933. Note the language of the Third Period used.

⁹⁰⁶ *Rizospastes* 7/8/1933

⁹⁰⁷ *Rizospastes* 7/8/1933 and 27/8/1933. See also Interview no 2 of Ch Antikoulakes, in Verbal Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁹⁰⁸ *Rizospastes* 9/11/1933, *Proina Nea* 16/11/1933, 17/11/1933, 18/11/1933 and 19/11/1933

However, the fact that the government and the authorities did not respect their end of the bargain raised concerns and created growing dissatisfaction that went far beyond the limits of the pro-communist block. St Nikolaides, the Venizelist MP for Kavala, for example, publicly condemned the government's attitude, talking about the "humiliation of the State which backed down on its signature."⁹⁰⁹

The 1933 strike's success drew useful conclusions regarding the effectiveness of mobilizing sections of the population that were previously widely used as strike-breakers, namely the unemployed. In 1934 KOE passed a resolution announcing: 1) the immediate organization of unemployed neighborhood committees, 2) the listing of all unemployed tobacco workers from those groups, 3) the election of 'struggle' committees from neighborhood meetings, and 5) a call for talks among the various unemployed committees in order to elect a CC of unemployed tobacco workers. The next day *Rizospastes* published the "Resolution of the EC of the EGSEE on unemployment, the condition and demands of the unemployed and the responsibilities of the Unitary trade unions". This stated: "As our experience had proved, the contribution of the unemployed movement to the general revolutionary-emancipation struggle of the working class is great and important. The unemployed constitute a first-class revolutionary factor. Their mobilization alongside the employed workers, especially in those occupations where unemployment is high (tobacco workers etc), constitute a necessary pre-condition for the success of the workers. The unemployed workers on almost no occasion failed to do their revolutionary duty towards the striking colleagues. They not only refused to become strike-breakers and closed their ears shut to the demagogic lectures of the fascists but also took active part in the struggles. The all-peoples revolt in Kavalla would have been impossible without the participation of the unemployed in it."⁹¹⁰

The next two years before the establishment of Metaxas' dictatorship witnessed an effort to unite the labor movement into a common front of struggle. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a united front between communist and conservative-led unions had been achieved in practice at a grass-root level on many occasions throughout the interwar period. Even when the conservative unions broke away from the communist controlled federation in order to achieve independence of action and political orientation, most strikes were carried forward with some degree of cooperation (despite the occasional polemical rhetoric). The demand for the re-unification of the tobacco workers labor

⁹⁰⁹ *Kirix* 12/9/1933

⁹¹⁰ *Rizospastes* 3/11/1934 and 4/11/1934

movement, although always strong, began to be realized once more from 1932 onwards, when the conservative unions invited the representatives of the United Front (KKE) to take a leading role in their joint struggle.⁹¹¹

The united front was formally realized at the beginning of 1936 (following the Seventh Comintern Congress) under the slogan “for bread, jobs and against fascism.”⁹¹² This effort was widely applauded by the local press which began reporting regularly about the electoral victories, struggles and mobilizations of communists throughout Europe, and especially France and Spain. When the Communist and Liberal Parties reached an agreement on a common front against the increasingly oppressive character of the Metaxas government, the vast majority of the local press greeted it with enthusiasm. Now, instead of demanding the suppression of communism, as they did a few years ago, the press opposed any arrest or harassment of Popular Front electoral candidates or activists, praising them for their “heroic self-sacrifice”.⁹¹³ When a common union named ‘Anexartisia’ was formed by communist and reformist unions, some 6257 tobacco workers were reported to have taken part in electing its new executive: an all-time high in trade union involvement.⁹¹⁴

The Unitary All-Tobacco Workers’ Congress brought together all sections of the communist-led KOE, the vast majority of the reformist unions (seven in total) and some nine unions that identified themselves as independent. Only the conservative Unitary Federation, representing a relatively small number of affiliated unions did not participate. The unity of the working class employed in the tobacco industry was heralded by the local bourgeois press with enthusiasm, even quoting Karl Marx’s words: “workers of all lands unite.”⁹¹⁵

At the same time, the May Day events in Salonica were unfolding,⁹¹⁶ leading to anger among the working-class and democratic people across the country. These events had a great impact on the Kavala labor movement. Among the eight tobacco workers that were shot dead by the police in Salonica one was from Kavala. The whole city was in mourning, and some 30,000-35,000 people

⁹¹¹ *Kirix* 16/11/1932

⁹¹² *Rizospastes* 8/2/1936 and *Tachydromos* 31/3/1936

⁹¹³ See for example *Proina Nea* 21/7/1936, 6/6/1936 and 21/7/1936

⁹¹⁴ *Proina Nea* 26/7/1936

⁹¹⁵ *Proina Nea* 24/4/1936

⁹¹⁶ Those events began to unfold by a mobilization of the tobacco workers of Salonica who were soon joined in an 11 day long strike by all other sections of the working class. Their demands were economic (increase in wages) as well as political (against Metaxas). The strikers literally took over the city. The authorities responded swiftly by sending army and naval forces to put down the strike. Following their intervention, there were 9 workers dead.

attended the funeral, which acquired clear political features.⁹¹⁷ The local press talked about the “fascist government”, the “exploiter capitalists”, the “worker-slaves that create the wealth through their surplus value” and called for the “end to exploitation of man by man”.⁹¹⁸

Following the establishment of the Metaxas Regime in August 1936, the “total re-organization of the Tobacco Workers along nationalist lines” went ahead, involving elements of the conservative trade unions and the authorities.⁹¹⁹ This was soon after the Court of First Instance had ruled the dissolution of the communist-led union Aneksartisia.⁹²⁰

Oppression as a means of incorporation of the labor movement

Persecution and its effects on trade unionism was a regular major issue throughout the interwar period. At the February 1929 meeting of KOE, points raised included removing police presence from factories, dealing with what was referred to as “employer terrorism” through lock-outs and blackmails, as well as ways to confront ethnic “terrorism” against tobacco workers of Turkish background.⁹²¹

In many cases, strike mobilizations and the reaction by the authorities resulted in Kavala resembling a “battlefield”, with road blocks, machine guns being placed on city corners, charges by the cavalry, several shots fired, the use of water guns etc.⁹²² These clashes often resulted in casualties, but no officer was ever prosecuted, and the press was quick to blame the demonstrators themselves, stressing that if they sought confrontations it would be “a logical outcome that a few heads would be broken in the process.” The human cost of this ‘process’ was estimated as follows for the interwar period: more than ten workers dead and 104 wounded.⁹²³

It was a usual practice during strike activity for the authorities to mobilize the Army in order to assist the police forces in keeping order or suppressing mini-revolts. This practice, however, was not always successful. During the 1928 strike, for example, the 9th Army Regiment, which was stationed

⁹¹⁷ Interview no17 of Giorgos Manafes, in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁹¹⁸ *Proina Nea* 6/5/1936, Special Edition of *Tachydromos* and *Proina Nea*

⁹¹⁹ See Letter by the Unitary Federation of Tobacco Workers of Greece (Kavala) to K Kuriakides, 22/8/1936, File 28, Historical and Literature Archive of Kavala

⁹²⁰ *Proina Nea* 14/7/1936

⁹²¹ *Rizospastes* 10/2/1929

⁹²² *Kirix* 13/6/1928

⁹²³ *Kirix* 13/6/1928 and 14/6/1928. The casualties occurred during strikes in September 1924, December 1924, June 1928, May 1930, October 1932, July 1933, July 1936. See KE tou KKE (1986)

in the neighboring city of Drama, was called upon assist the local authorities in dealing with the strikers. The soldiers realized the purpose of their mobilization on reaching the outskirts of Kavala. They abandoned their weapons and entered the city unarmed. That was because the conscripts who were stationed in the wider area were largely sons of tobacco workers themselves, and all sections of KOE, the communist-led Federation of Tobacco Workers were obliged to contribute a sum of 50 drs from their monthly membership in aid of the young tobacco workers who had to temporarily leave their jobs in order to do their military service.⁹²⁴ Indeed, the communist-led KOE pushed forward with great persistence at sessions of TAK a regulation that would allow army recruits to receive unemployment benefits for the amount of time that were out of work in order to fulfill their military obligations.⁹²⁵

In a similar case in March 1934, the authorities in Kavala were forced to replace two regiments that were sent over from neighboring Pravi, and which once again refused to take part in putting down the strike, along with two other regiments from another city.⁹²⁶ As a tobacco worker mentioned in his interview: “the regiment consisted mainly of tobacco workers, and if they were not tobacco workers themselves, they’d have a brother, father or mother that would have been a tobacco worker. How would it be possible [for them to shoot at the demonstrators].”⁹²⁷ This attitude of the conscripts was also encouraged by the communist youth cells that operated in the Army.⁹²⁸

Police reports, such as the confidential letter sent by the Chief of Police (Special Security Branch) to the Ministry of Interior in 1929, reveal that rallies and meetings organized by the communist-led unions were shadowed by the police. That was justified on the grounds that union activities “had a communist character...and in most cases aimed at disturbing the peace.” On similar grounds, union material such as brochures were confiscated and activists were persecuted and sent to court.⁹²⁹ By 1930, all unions in Kavala that were either communist or suspected communist, including the Labor Center and even Workers’ Relief, were officially dissolved by court order. Communist-led unions were unable to call for public meetings or to raise membership funds. However, according to another

⁹²⁴ *Rizospastes* 21/5/1930

⁹²⁵ The measure was also expanded to include tobacco workers that lost their income due to imprisonment of exile. See *Rizospastes* 2/10/1928 and 16/10/1928

⁹²⁶ *Rizospastes* 4/3/1934

⁹²⁷ Interview no17 of Giorgos Manafes, in Oral Traditions of the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁹²⁸ Brochure of OKNE, District Organization for East Macedonia and Thrace (1928), File 173/87, Archive of E Venizelos

⁹²⁹ Confidential letter of the Chief of Police, Special Security Branch to the Ministry of Interior, 18/12/1929, in Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/106

police report for the year 1930, union membership fees were still being collected as the vast majority of workers continued to pay 5 drs towards their union financial obligations (even if officially this did not exist), as well as another 2 drs towards Workers' Relief.⁹³⁰

Open party agitation in tobacco warehouses was risky, although, admittedly the very fact that such activity could take place was an achievement for communist-led trade unionism in Kavala. When such an event occurred at Petrides' factory in October 1932 organized by the Communist Youth, some 600 female tobacco workers and 50 secondary school students took part. The main speaker, however, was arrested the next day, allegedly pointed out by a conservative tobacco worker who had also attended the meeting.⁹³¹ Harassing party and youth activists at the work place was not always an easy job. When on the 11th of August 1930 a group of policemen attempted to arrest a team of paper sellers who were just coming out from a warehouse, they prompted a vigorous reaction by the employees who intervened and freed those in custody.⁹³² In any case, due to the rise in what was referred to as 'employer terrorism', the District Committee cautioned Party cells in factories not to over-expose themselves: it was suggested, for example, that propaganda material and agitation (in cases where oppression at the work place was intense) should be carried forward not by the members that work there, but by members from other factories.⁹³³

A tobacco worker mentioned that employers would point to the 'trouble-makers' in the factory and the police would have them arrested: "they would gather our colleagues and physically abuse them...other [would be sentenced to] 5 years in prison, another 6 years, another in exile... That was how it used to be. And we lost many good people in those days." The Security Committees (which did not constitute a formal judicial body) would often substitute for Courts and pass sentences themselves. Many of those sentenced would manage, one way or another, to escape and continue to work for the party or the trade union underground.⁹³⁴

Special interest lies in the changes of attitude over time of the local bourgeois press in Kavala, as communists gradually became seen as the legitimate defendents of the community. In the early and mid-1920s, local newspapers wrote several columns asking for more measures to be taken by the

⁹³⁰ Report of the Chief of Police to the Ministry of Interior 'On the Activities of Communism in Salonica for the year 1930', p2, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/107

⁹³¹ *Neolaia* 28/10/1932

⁹³² *Rizospastes* 14/8/1930

⁹³³ District Committee of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace to all party cells, March 1927, File 5, in Archive of KKE

⁹³⁴ Interview of Ch Antikoulakes, in Oral Traditions of the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

state and the authorities against communism, and dismissed any calls against persecution of the labor movement as essentially ‘communist claims’. By the early 1930s, there were doubts in relation to the effectiveness of those measures. Hence, commenting on the recent growth in the communist vote in Kavala in October 1930, a local newspaper wrote: “it is proven therefore and beyond doubt that the harsh and oppressive measures, instead of eliminating it has reinforced communism!” By the mid-1930s, those doubts would be transformed into clear opposition, asking for the dissolution of the Security Committee and an end to its operations. The owner of *Proina Nea* wrote against this security body that “apart from communists it has been persecuting any citizen that may have opposed, one way or another, the choices of the governmental regime.”⁹³⁵

Those who were sent into exile were organized in survival groups, forming communal funds and sharing resources with the less fortunate of the group. Only four months before the establishment of the Metaxas’ regime, and with a growing demand for amnesty for political prisoners (also supported by the Liberal Party), there would still be some thirteen local unionist and communist leaders from Kavala in exile on the island of Folegandros, and another six on Sykinos. Among the latter was also the president of the Commerce Board of Kavala, by no means a communist, who nevertheless had declared himself in solidarity with the tobacco workers’ strike.⁹³⁶ The Liberal Party, although having pushed forward the *Idionymon* Bill in 1929, began to experience the consequences of this legislative impact on its own union leaders and supporters by their political opponents who were now no longer in opposition. In 1936, as part of their endorsement of the Popular Front policy they campaigned alongside the Communist Party for a General Amnesty.⁹³⁷

Communism in Kavala

As we have seen so far, communist-led trade unionism was a dominant element in the development of the labor movement in Kavala. Equally significant was a communist presence and involvement in the local society. The Communist Party and the Communist Youth established social rituals and events, parallel to national or religious holidays that forged a unique –for Greece– emerging working-class tradition. That involved, for example, the International Day of Youth, the anniversary of the October Revolution (when red flags would appear all over the city), the

⁹³⁵ *Kirix* 8/7/1928, 21/10/1932, *Proina Nea* 30/5/1934

⁹³⁶ See letters by exiles and Folegandros and Sykinos, published in *Proina Nea* 1/4/1936 and 19/4/1936

⁹³⁷ *Proina Nea* 15/5/1936

anniversary of Lenin's death, the 'Tobacco Workers' Week' and of course May Day.⁹³⁸ At the same time communists would 'boycott' national holidays: during the celebrations of Independence Day for example the "Kavala high school students refused to cheer at the nationalist speeches."⁹³⁹

The communists also took over popular traditional holidays, such as the carnival. A letter by a member of the Archeiomarxists (Trotskyists) mentioned with contempt that the "Stalinists" instead of fulfilling their "communist duty" and rejecting those social manifestations such as the carnival that "were born out of the capitalist system", they embraced them. "Here the Stalinists (and specifically the Communist Youth) have officially organized a carnival festival in which many young people took part [and which] brought the world upside down until the early hours of the morning."⁹⁴⁰ What is important in this report of course is not whether the carnival constituted a petty-bourgeois holiday or not, but the ability of the local Communist party to adopt popular holidays of the working class, incorporate the new symbols to the old ones and turn them to its advantage.

These was further reinforced by a network of cultural and athletic associations with a wide range of activities. The clubs affiliated to the Labor Sport Association of Kavala included: 1) Kavalla Labor Star (*Εργατικός Αστήρ*) with its sections (football, amateur football, music, boxing), 2) All-Thasos Sport (*Πανθασιακό Σπόρ*) with its sections a) Theologou, 2 sections: football, professional and amateur, b) Limenaria, 2 sections: football, professional and amateur, 3) Labor Star Praviou, with its sections: football, professional and amateur, music, boxing, and 4) Labor Hope of Kavalla.⁹⁴¹ This network quickly spread in all neighborhoods and settlements and alarmed the authorities, which saw them –not without reason- as mediums of communist propaganda.⁹⁴² Its appeal went far beyond communist workers or communist sympathizers; the network was embraced by wider strata of the local society. Characteristic were the favorable articles published by one of the most anti-communist papers *Kirix*, which nevertheless publicized and encouraged their activities.⁹⁴³

This ongoing process of forging a distinct working class identity was actively promoted by the Communist Party, sometimes utilizing somewhat crude examples of that distinction between 'us'

⁹³⁸ *Rizospastes* 11/9/1928, 16/11/1933, *Kirix* 1/2/1927 and 3/5/1927, Work Program of the District Committee of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace of KKE to all cells (August-October), p2, File 5, Archive of KKE

⁹³⁹ *Neolaia* 7/4/1933

⁹⁴⁰ *Pali ton Takseon* 3/3/1933

⁹⁴¹ *Rizospastes* 2/12/1928

⁹⁴² Report of the Chief of Police to the Ministry of Interior (1930), p8, File 173/107 Archive of E Venizelos

⁹⁴³ See for example *Kirix* 22/5/1928 and 8/7/1928

and 'them' in order to prove a point. For example, *Rizospastes* reported in 1929: "The day before yesterday we went to the prison on behalf of the Kavalla Workers Relief to give some provisions to our imprisoned comrades from Pravi. Our comrade said that the day before a number of honorable ladies of the bourgeoisie had come to visit them offering to the prisoners fruit and sweets. They also went to our prisoners while they were having a class and offered them sweets. But our comrades sent them back to where they came from and did not accept their vicious charity. This must be kept in mind to all workers who should not forget to aid our comrades who only from us do they expect bread and freedom."⁹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Party and the Youth were seen as having a respectable ethos. A young tobacco worker at the time mentioned in his interview that his "involvement with the social struggles" prevented him from "ending up a drug-addict, a drifter, a robber."⁹⁴⁵ A common element in Communist self-image.

The Communist Party in Kavala also exhibited a special interest in getting women involved in trade union and Party activities. It encouraged the presence of women in executive organs, the formation of women's committees in the factories, the strengthening of women's educational clubs under the supervision of the Labor Center, and insisted in a mixed-gendered composition of unions.⁹⁴⁶

Especially important to the growth and momentum of the radical labor movement throughout the interwar period in Kavala was the vast pool of non-organized, party sympathizers who had supported the activities of the Communist Party, suffered suppression because of their political orientation, but never actually joined the Party. A tobacco worker who was involved in the radical labor movement following persistent questioning by the interviewer on the question whether his sister was also a member or not of the Communist Party, finally answered: "Look...then it was not about being a member or not. Whoever wanted to take part did so on their own will, if they wished they followed, and when they did not wish to do so they did not make that choice."⁹⁴⁷

A rare reference by an active communist party member of the period in relation to inner-party discussions and the ability to express and exchange ideas is illuminating. The question addressed by the interviewer was as follows: "Mr. Stylides, was there tough guidance by the Party? Did they limit

⁹⁴⁴ *Rizospastes* 6/1/1929

⁹⁴⁵ Interview no24 of Stylides Dimitrios in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

⁹⁴⁶ Work Program (January-March) of the District Committee of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace of KKE, p5, File5, in Archive of KKE

⁹⁴⁷ Interview no 2 of Ch Antikoulakes, and Interview no24 of Stylides Dimitrios in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala

you in expressing your opinions freely?” The interviewee answered: “Not at all. On the contrary, they were expecting us to have an opinion...It was not as tough or dogmatic as that system of Stalin...I’d swear to you that they never said to me once don’t believe or do not go to church.”⁹⁴⁸

By 1930, the local Party branch in Kavala reported to the Politburo that the party fractions among the tobacco workers were facing technical difficulties “due to the large size of their membership.”⁹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, membership among tobacco workers fluctuated significantly due to the seasonal character of the occupation affecting some 2/3 of the total party strength creating problems of consistency in party work and functions of cells⁹⁵⁰. Some quantitative and qualitative elements were evident in the few surviving reports of the membership of the Kavala Branch. In the period between 1927 and 1928 the total membership of the Communist Party in Kavala amounted to a minimum of 84 and a maximum of 108 members. The composition was overwhelmingly working class: in December 1927 some 106 out of 108 were factory workers, of whom more than 2/3 were employed in the tobacco industry.⁹⁵¹

Nevertheless, the Communist Party was also reported to have made a significant head-away in the surrounding countryside by the early 1930s. According to a police report this ‘communist infiltration’ in the villages in the wider Kavala area was carried forward mainly by teachers; this in combination with the ever increasing cost of living had led to a growth in their “tendency for anarchy.”⁹⁵² The spread of communism in the countryside was quite important for its influence in the labor movement in Kavala, since a large proportion of the seasonal laborers that worked in tobacco for half the year came from neighboring villages.

In addition, during the early 1930s the Communist Party’s influence in the neighborhood associations grew to the degree that they became a target for the authorities. In April 1934 the Prefect of Kavala ordered all the Associations’ records to be examined on suspicion that “they have been involved in activities irrelevant to their stated aims.” The associations whose role was significantly upgraded in early 1934 during the short period of the communist local authority

⁹⁴⁸ Interview no24 of Stylides Dimitrios in Oral Testimonies from the Kavala Prefecture, Municipal Museum of Kavala Committee of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, 24/2/1931, File 15, Archive of KKE

⁹⁴⁹ Report of the District Committee of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace to the Politburo, 1930, p4, File 10, Archive of KKE

⁹⁵⁰ Report of the Kavala Organization to the Politburo, 17/5/1929, p1, File10, in Archive of KKE

⁹⁵¹ Statistics for the District of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (1927-1928), File 11, and Report of the Kavala Branch to the Politburo, 6/10/1928, p1, File 10 Archive of KKE

⁹⁵² Letter of the Prefect of Kavala to the Political Office of the Prime Minister 26/3/1932, File 173/111, and Report of the Police, Kavala 9/7/1928, File 173/87 in Archive of E Venizelos

administration in channeling the demands of the lower strata were seen as recruitment pools for the Communist Party.⁹⁵³

We need to note at this point that, contrary to other Party Organizations (such as Piraeus for instance), the Kavala organization did not face any serious threats from inner or intra-party disputes. Accordingly, the inner-party situation was discussed in party cells in Kavala throughout the month of June 1927. The vast majority of cells asked for the expulsion of the ‘oppositions’ leaders.⁹⁵⁴ The Liquidarists in Kavala coexisted with their former comrades within the communist-led KEK. In the 1929 election for its executive committee they received 232 votes out of a total of 2325. The Left Block (KKE) received almost 90% or 2018 votes.⁹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the District Committee of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace sided itself overwhelmingly in favor of the intervention made by the Communist International in 1931.⁹⁵⁶

As far as the Archeiomarxists were concerned, the verbal confrontation between them and the Communist Party went on for most of the second half of the interwar period. Accordingly, the Archeiomarxists characterized members of the Communist Party as agents of the secret police. On the other hand, it became a usual practice during the 1930s for *Rizospastes* to publish letters from former Archeiomarxists that denounced their old party and declared their support for KKE.⁹⁵⁷ The anti-communist party attitude of the Archeiomarxists reached levels of obsession, denouncing every move that the ‘Stalinists’ made as traitorous and reformist. The Kavala Protocol, for example was viewed by the Archeiomarxists as follows: “They exploited a movement that broke out spontaneously and channeled it in a reformist path. For the communists, in this case, the Stalinists have been traitors.”⁹⁵⁸

However, the Archeiomarxists never posed a real threat to the hegemony of the communist party among the tobacco workers in Kavala. In the 1936 election, they received just 71 votes, while the communist party secured some 5,621.⁹⁵⁹ The main reason for their short-lived presence in Kavala, apart from the clear dominance of the communist party, was their extremist views on political action. For example, they denounced the attempts by the communist-led unions to coordinate the

⁹⁵³ *Proina Nea* 21/4/1934

⁹⁵⁴ Ahtida of Kavala to the Politburo, 11/7/1927 and 13/7/1927, File 5, in archive of KKE

⁹⁵⁵ *Rizospastes* 6/4/1929

⁹⁵⁶ Decision of the District Bureau of the Organization for Eastern Macedonia and Thrace of KKE, 24/2/1931, p1, File15, Archive of KKE

⁹⁵⁷ *Pali ton Takseon* 16/8/1932 *Rizospastes* 30/6/1936

⁹⁵⁸ *Pali ton Takseon* 19/8/1933

⁹⁵⁹ *Acropolis* 28/1/1936

strike effort with the reformist unions, they depreciated any labor victory that was won by the communist-led unions in an attempt to undermine them, and they ultimately failed to establish any strong connections with the community.⁹⁶⁰

Naturally, the Communist Party suffered from the oppression experienced by the broader labor movement. In 1927 the District Committee of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace pointed out the possible consequences of the absence of an underground mechanism and of the technical means that would aid the Party in dealing with state oppression. The executive organs of the Party were facing serious obstructions to their function: the Kavala organization was deprived even of its 3rd substitute secretary, all were in hiding from the authorities or had been sent in exile. Holding meetings in union offices was becoming unthinkable. Communist-led unions responded by organizing violent attacks against the police who were always present around the union buildings. Despite the cost of several injuries, the Party reported that this tactic helped to “regain workers’ confidence in the Communist Party” and contributed in “raising their moral.”⁹⁶¹

In order to find safe haven from the frequent raids by the police in houses that were suspected for being utilized for communist meetings, the Kavala Party organization occasionally transferred its meetings into the countryside. Such a meeting was discovered, for example, by the army conducting sweeps of the area on 12th of June of 1928. It involved the heads of all party and youth cells. Rifle shots and even grenades were used by the army in an attempt to prevent them from escaping causing the injury of one female tobacco worker. In the end three of those that attended that meeting were arrested and sent to exile the next day.⁹⁶² The impact of suppression would be countered more effectively by the end of the 1920s, creating worker groups of self-defense.⁹⁶³

The use of the so-called ‘communist danger’ as an excuse for oppressive measures was condemned by part of the local press. *Tachydromos* wrote in 1932: “There was no communist danger up to August 1928. You created it in order to utilize it as a bogey man for the people and to excuse the violence and terrorism upon which you have established yourselves.”⁹⁶⁴

⁹⁶⁰ *Pali ton Takseon* 11/11/1933

⁹⁶¹ Report of the District Committee of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace to the Politburo, 7/11/1927, pp1-2, File 5, Archive of KKE

⁹⁶² Report by Fessopoulos G, 4th Army Core to the Ministry of the Army, General Staff Headquarters, Kavala, 31/7/1928, p1, Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/87, *Tachydromos* 22-23/2/1932

⁹⁶³ Report of the Kavala Organization to the Politburo, 17/5/1929, p2, File10, and Decision on the Organization of Antifascist Unions of self-defense, File 16, in Archive of KKE

⁹⁶⁴ *Tachydromos* 8/5/1932

Although the state did not ban communism or the communist press, with the passing of the *Idionymon* Law it did ban its content, preventing *Rizospastes* from circulating, on the grounds that its content was “outrageous”. During the 1930s the transportation and distribution of *Rizospastes* would be carried forward through underground means. However, secret police who had infiltrated the ranks of the local party manage to obstruct its circulation once again in 1933. The infiltrator was discovered and the distribution of *Rizospastes* was soon back on track.⁹⁶⁵

Trials of communists were viewed by the Communist Party in the same way as rallies and public meetings: a platform to promote the positions of the Party and uplift it in the eyes of the workers. Accordingly, thousands of workers were reportedly mobilized for such events.⁹⁶⁶ The same amount of public attention was raised when the sentenced union or party activists were sent into exile. In his biographical note, a student at the time mentioned: “even primary school children would gather at the rail tracks and yell to those sent in exile: you may go away, but we grow [to take your place].”⁹⁶⁷

One of the most ‘famous’ trials in Kavala was the one that took place in April and May 1932. Following a statement by the Kavala Prosecutor that there was widespread communist propaganda taking place in the city’s high school, some 23 students and another 12 citizens were put on trial under the *Idionymon* Law. Relatives of students who were arrested and allegedly physically abused by the authorities accused them of trying to “communistify everything.” The trial attracted a great deal of interest from the public which attended the trial in large numbers. The local press talked about a city “that was deeply moved.” The accused were defended by lawyers of the Workers’ Relief who came over from Athens as well as other neighboring cities. One of them mentioned characteristically in his closing speech: “The organization’s journal that is free to circulate nation wide is banned here. The same goes for *Rizospastes*. It seems that the lower executive organs here preceded legislative power. The result: the frequent trials in breach of the *Idionymon* Law. But the more you hit iron, the more it becomes steel.”⁹⁶⁸

When the trial was over and sentences were passed *Tachydromos* wrote: “This trial, which attracted the interest of public opinion for two days in a row, proved that when the belief of citizens in their liberties is shattered they turn to ways of wining back this most precious right of theirs.” It

⁹⁶⁵ *Kirix* 1/10/1929, Report on the situation of the underground mechanism of the Communist Organization in Kavala, September 1933, File 18, Archive of KKE

⁹⁶⁶ Report of the District Committee for Eastern Macedonia and Thrace on May Day, p1, 5/5/1930, File 14, Archive of KKE

⁹⁶⁷ Biographical Note of B Megkisoglou, in File ‘Forms of Militants’, M-O, in Archive of the Center for the Study of the History of National Resistance (KMIEA)

⁹⁶⁸ *Tachydromos* 28/4/1932, 29/4/1932, 18/5/1932, 19/5/1932

also talked about a “dictatorial” and “bankrupt” government, which literally ridiculed itself by accusing and sentencing a number of what were no more than high school students for “conspiring to overthrow the social regime”.⁹⁶⁹

It is also important at this point to outline certain aspects of anti-communism, as an ideology and practice that was advocated by various agents, such as the church and the press. In that respect especially significant is the role that the Church acquired throughout the interwar period in Kavala. That role manifested itself in various ways. Church involvement in politics was apparent, for example, through its particular support for a candidate. For example, in a letter to the Head of the Church, General Pagkalos (later dictator) asked for his support for the Venizelist Candidate.⁹⁷⁰ But perhaps more importantly, the Church was utilized by the State and the Authorities “to keep an eye for any anti-patriotic movement, any propaganda activity” as well as “any communist propaganda”, and generally anything that they may have considered to be a ‘threat’ and report it back to the authorities.⁹⁷¹ The relationship between the Church and the Military grew stronger during the interwar period, and the former received assistance in various ways from the latter in order to carry forward its work as an informer on all subversive activity, national (i.e. activities of ethnic minorities) or political (mainly communist activities).⁹⁷² It is indicative perhaps, that the newly formed General State Security agency utilized military, police and administration authorities as well as the Church.⁹⁷³

The authorities also utilized the Church as an ‘educational’ means to combat communism. General Pagkalos, President of the ‘Republic’ in 1926 took the initiative in forming a ‘National Union of Social Reforming’ drawing the clergy as well as intellectuals in the ‘moral’ battle against communist propaganda, through the press, public lectures etc. In 1934 there would be an additional effort through the establishment of the ‘Company of Hellenism’ with identical aims and objectives.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁶⁹ *Tachydromos* 20/5/1932, 21/5/1932, *Kirix* 19/5/1932

⁹⁷⁰ Telegram of General Pagkalos to the Honorable Mitropolite of Pravi, Kavala, 13/12/1923, in Archive of the Holy Mitropolis Eleutheropoleos 1909-1957, ABE 72/EKKL 1.01, File 50, General Archives of the State in Kavala

⁹⁷¹ Document 22, Archive of the Holy Mitropolis Eleutheropoleos 1909-1957, ABE 72/EKKL 1.01, File 50, General Archives of the State in Kavala

⁹⁷² See Headquarters of the General Security of the State to all Mitropolites of Macedonia, 15/4/1926. Archive of the Holy Mitropolis Eleutheropoleos 1909-1957, ABE 72/EKKL 1.01, File 50, General Archives of the State in Kavala

⁹⁷³ Archive of the Holy Mitropolis Eleutheropoleos 1909-1957, ABE 72/EKKL 1.01, File 52, General Archives of the State in Kavala

⁹⁷⁴ Archive of the Holy Mitropolis Eleutheropoleos 1909-1957, ABE 72/EKKL 1.01, File 52, General Archives of the State in Kavala

Several references to such efforts can be found at the archive of the Bishop of the Kavala Prefecture, which since the early 1920s had been increasingly a focus for the State's actions against such subversive activities.

At the same time, and throughout the period concerned, extensive anti-communist articles appeared in the local press throughout the interwar period. These stressed the anti-religion aspect of communist ideology, utilizing populist language and examples. Communism was portrayed as the religion of 'Anti-Christ', with its own holy icons ("the worker-slave that breaks his chains"), its own martyrs, its own priests (i.e. the communist party), and its own god, i.e. Lenin. Communists were portrayed as burning holy icons in order to make wood "and bake their coffee"⁹⁷⁵ Communist women were labeled as immoral and examples were cited whereby one communist married his daughter, teenage girls enjoyed free love, and women were used communally.⁹⁷⁶

They portrayed communism as a product of naivety and immaturity, appealing mainly to the "inexperienced ages, that tend to revolt and rather altruistic and enthusiastic." The appeal of communist ideology to young people did not go unnoticed. An election report mentioned "I shall never forget the preaching of the communist youth outside the electoral booths...Four young communists turning the world upside down, and next to them some thirty delegates from other parties just stared at them, giving you the impression that they were left admiring the attitude of those comrades... Their influence among the youth of the bourgeois class is colossal."⁹⁷⁷

They attributed any sort of disaster or misfortune to a communist conspiracy. On the occasion of a fire that broke out in the city center in 1931, local newspaper *Kirix* wrote that "it was clearly an act committed by the Communists, who aimed to take advantage of the existing misery and social insecurity, and via this arson, to create a climate of anarchy in our working class town."⁹⁷⁸ There were frequent references to the 'communist finger', 'agents of Moscow', to conspiracies that aimed at armed insurrections, and they even pointed to articles in the foreign press that claimed that the communists were aiming to create a new world war.⁹⁷⁹

In addition they argued against the mixture of politics and trade unionism as harmful to the latter. The progress of the working class would come about as a product of "class cooperation and not class

⁹⁷⁵ *Kirix* 6/1/1931, *Kirix* 1/2/1927 *Kirix* 7/12/1926

⁹⁷⁶ *Proia* 1928, File 43/2, Historical and Literature Archive of Kavala, *Kirix* 7/12/1926

⁹⁷⁷ *Kirix* 23/4/1930 and 19/5/1933

⁹⁷⁸ *Kirix* 24/5/1931

⁹⁷⁹ *Kirix* 27/7/1929 and 28/7/1929

struggle.”⁹⁸⁰ And of course communists were presented as anti-Greek, either through undermining the peace and social cohesion of the nation or campaigning for the autonomy of Macedonia and trying to break up the Greek State.⁹⁸¹

Finally, Anti-communism also manifested itself in organized rallies, which however did not have much success. Nevertheless, a number of ultra-right, nationalist organizations were formed, such as the ‘Anti-communist Association’ in 1929 and the Tobacco Worker branch of EEE (National Union Hellas) in 1932.⁹⁸²

It should be mentioned, however, that at the same time, a number of communist-friendly articles began to appear in the non-communist press, especially towards the mid-thirties. For example, *Tachydromos* published a series of articles in 1932 on the success of the 5-year plan in the Soviet Union entitled “Russia and the future of the world- the humanitarian and social ideals”, whereas *Proina Nea* stressed that “in a epoch when the entire world is going through a period of backwardness, the Soviet Union is experiencing progress.”⁹⁸³ In many cases what was not achieved directly through politics was realized indirectly through Soviet art. There were positive articles on Soviet cinema, such as Eisenstein’s’ classic ‘Battleship Potemkin.’ Soviet films were frequently shown in cinemas in Kavala; there were reprints of passages from the works of Maxim Gorky.⁹⁸⁴

Nevertheless, despite oppression and anti-communism the upward path of the Communist Party was not halted, and by 1934 it was seriously threatening to win a majority in the local elections and take over the city council. Pre-election campaigns in Kavala were not much different than any other place in the country, accompanied by frequent harassment, arrests and convictions of communist party activists. *Tachydromos* reported, for example, that during the 1932 pre-election period the police arrested 8 persons from within the electoral kiosk on the grounds that “they were possessing communist brochures.” This was by no means an isolated incident.⁹⁸⁵

Nevertheless, the 1934 local elections were the most polarized in Kavala, since both Liberal and Populist parties, fearing the election of a communist mayor, decided to back a single candidate: “This danger united two politically opposite worlds, because only this unity could save us from the

⁹⁸⁰ *Kirix* 27/5/1926 and 13/1/1927

⁹⁸¹ *Kirix* 7/12/1926

⁹⁸² *Rizospastes* 3/3/1925, *Kirix* 1/10/1929 and 17/11/1932

⁹⁸³ *Tachydromos* 30/6/1932 and 1/7/1932, *Proina Nea* 1/11/1933

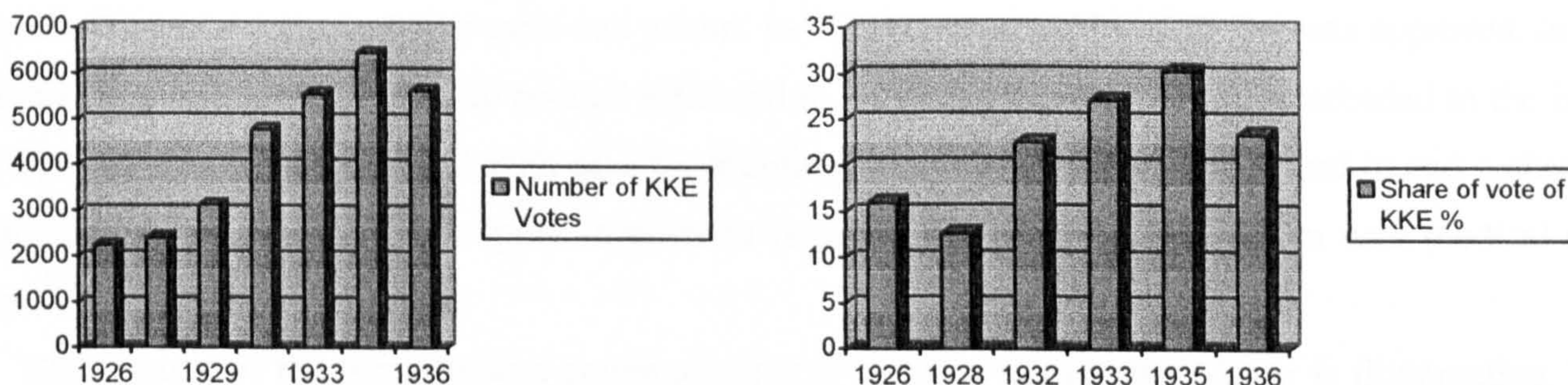
⁹⁸⁴ *Kirix* 24/9/1927 and 26/6/1929

⁹⁸⁵ *Tachydromos* 22/9/1932, *Kirix* 21/4/1929

hazard of Kavala of the noble and democratic ideals becoming ruled by anarchy and bolshevism”⁹⁸⁶. The ‘bourgeois’ local press called for the voters to choose between the “bourgeois and communist candidate”, whereas the communist press was asking them to make a choice between them and the “parasites, the commerce men along with all the bourgeois parties and their lackeys.”⁹⁸⁷

The attempt of *Rizospastes* to present this electoral battle as one between the workers and the capitalists was reinforced by the actual social composition of the two opposing candidate lists. Accordingly, the electoral ticket of coalition of the ‘National Parties’ consisted of 28 persons, out of whom four were Tobacco Factory owners, another four were large businessmen, two were land owners, and none was of working class background. In contrast, the electoral ticket of the United Front (KKE) consisted in the vast majority of tobacco workers, with three of them serving in exile.⁹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the Communist Party candidate won the elections receiving more than 50% of the vote, reaching its highest electoral turnout in the city in the period concerned:

Graph 6: Electoral results in the Kavala Prefecture for Parliament and Congress (1926-1936)⁹⁸⁹



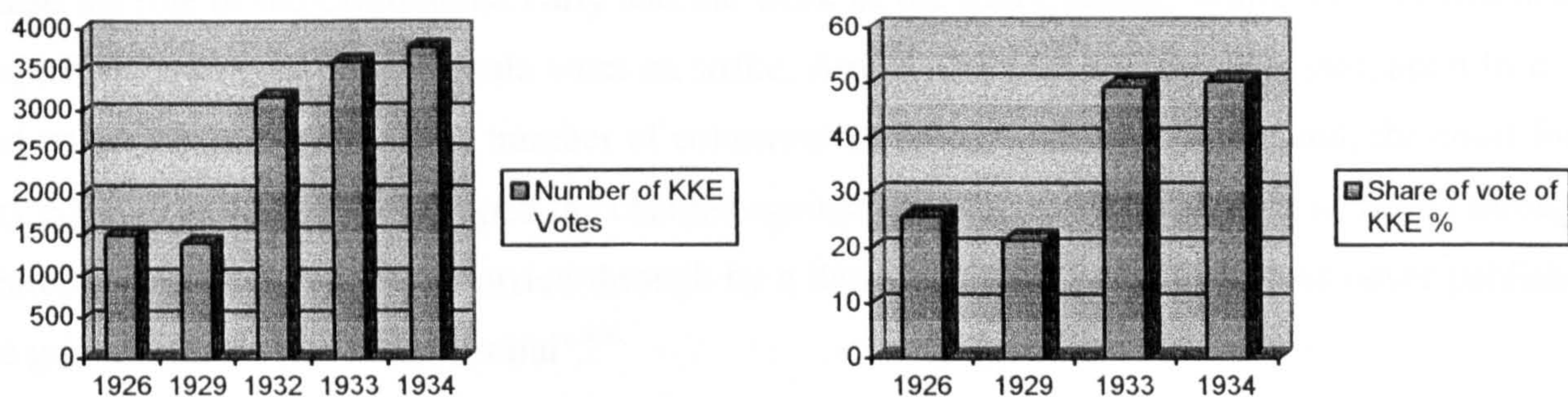
⁹⁸⁶ *Proina Nea* 27/1/1934 and *Tachydromos* 21/5/1933

⁹⁸⁷ *Proina Nea* 8/2/1934 and *Rizospastes* 25/1/1934

⁹⁸⁸ *Proina Nea* 1/2/1934

⁹⁸⁹ Cited in *Acropolis*, *Proina Nea*, *Kirix*, and *Rizospastes*

Graph 7: Electoral results for the local elections in the city of Kavala (1926-1934)⁹⁹⁰



The first session of the ‘red council’ of Kavalla was open to the public and was attended by workers whose turnout was overwhelming. The reporter of the local paper *Tachydromos* noted: “we did not realize when the majority councilors had arrived. Due to their workers’ appearance it was not possible to determine who they were. It was only when they actually took their seats that we realized who they were.”⁹⁹¹ The proposal to issue a 200,000 Drs sum for poverty and unemployment benefits (in addition to the initial sum of 100,000 already issued) was not initially accepted by two votes. The communist majority in the council had already been reduced to a minority through the arrest of 2 red councilors who were sent into exile and prison. In the end a sum of 150,000 Drs was approved. In the following days the Kavalla city council affiliated to the Anti-fascist Congress, proceeded to the issue of an order to introduce free health care for individuals who were not able to afford it, and embarked on setting up a register of the poor in order to issue the benefit, or provide them with medical care etc.⁹⁹²

The interest of the formerly anti-communist press in the newly elected Mayor is illuminating. The reporter of *Kirix* wrote his impression of the Mayor: “I have to admit once more that the first time I met him he seemed to be a rather common man. However, when I talked to him for a second and third time...I was persuaded that he is worth 100 of his predecessors in relation to his education and perception.”⁹⁹³

In the following weeks the authorities proceeded to undermine the red city council, harassing a number of councilors, arresting others, or having them expelled from their work in the factories.⁹⁹⁴ Less than two months after his election in office, the Mayor Partsalides and the red councilors were

⁹⁹⁰ Cited in *Kirix*, *Tachydromos*, and *Rizospastes*

⁹⁹¹ *Tachydromos* 6/4/1934

⁹⁹² *Rizospastes* 7/4/1934, 13/4/1934, 19/4/1934, 20/4/1934

⁹⁹³ *Kirix* 12/3/1934

⁹⁹⁴ *Rizospastes* 20/4/1934, 4/6/1934

put on trial for the violation of the *Idionymon* Law. The Mayor utilized the court floor in order to praise the role of the Communist Party and the work of the Red Council. While the trial was held, the majority of trade unions in Kavala went on strike. Among the prosecution witnesses, apart from army and police officers were also a number of conservative union leaders.⁹⁹⁵ In the end, the court found 5 city councilors guilty, but dropped the charges against the Mayor. What was not achieved through the justice system, however, was carried through by a decision of the Prefect that was never published on the grounds that it was 'confidential'.⁹⁹⁶

The communist mayor of Kavalla was ultimately 'temporarily' relieved of his duties for a three month-period. On the 26th of July the communist mayor of the neighboring tobacco worker city of Serres was also relieved of his duties. *Rizospastes* reviewed the mayors' work while in office: repairs in roads and sewage system in working class neighborhoods, increases in the wages of construction workers and engineers, more than doubling the number of children eating from the student ration program (part of which came out of the salaries paid to the mayor and the secretary general of the city council), organization of children's country side camping areas/activities. In addition, according to *Tachydromos* the Red Council established the pay for apprentices in various occupations and upgraded significantly the role of the neighborhood committees in terms of their say on various issues such as medical care and the distribution of benefits.⁹⁹⁷ The Red Mayor himself, in a symbolic gesture, deposited his mayoral salary towards the welfare expenses of the city council and joined the food rationing program along with his fellow tobacco workers.⁹⁹⁸

On the 1st of September the authorities announced that the mayor of Kavalla was to be exiled. On the 5th of the same month there was a general strike in Kavalla that reached almost 100%. That same day the decision to exile the mayor was cancelled. Finally on the 9th the mayor was secretly exiled to Gaudos Island, where he joined the 'survival collective' - he reported the island to be "a true grave".⁹⁹⁹ Further arrests of communist city councilors under the *Idionymon* Law took place, and the head of the Venizelist ticket was eventually appointed Mayor by the authorities. The majority of the red councilors who were arrested were kept in prison through the Metaxas' dictatorship. Four of them

⁹⁹⁵ *Proina Nea* 25/4/1934

⁹⁹⁶ *Tachydromos* 26/4/1934 and 15/6/1934, also *Proina Nea* 11/4/1934

⁹⁹⁷ *Tachydromos* 3/4/1934 and *Rizospastes* 20/4/1934

⁹⁹⁸ Vyzikas I (1994) p88

⁹⁹⁹ *Rizospastes* 16/6/1934, 27/6/1934 and 1/10/1934

were handed over to the Axis occupiers and were eventually executed in 1944 in reprisal for guerrilla activity.¹⁰⁰⁰

Conclusion

The first important element we touched upon in this chapter was that of the character of the industry itself. Tobacco processing was rather complex and required mostly skilled labor. This gave workers the potential to control the labor market. The insecurity that derived from the industry's seasonal character meant trends of unemployment contributed towards stronger labor unity and early struggles, which secured them unprecedented wages and benefits. So, by the time that the Confederation of Labor and Socialist Labor Party were established, the Kavala trade union movement had already developed a heritage of radicalism and labor militancy. It had won union rights, including the regulation of employment and protection of their members, which further reinforced the role of unions.

The multinational character of the labor movement in Kavala, in combination with a prosperous growing industry, meant that the refugee influx, which was widely used as reserve labor in all other places nationwide, was quickly incorporated into the existing movement. Ethnic cleavages did not exist as in other places, and political differentiation and control was not achieved over the refugees as a separate block, either electorally or politically. The participation of women in the labor process as well in trade union activity was also important in preventing further gender cleavages within the ranks of the labor force.

Even political cleavages were not as straight forward as in other places. First of all, Kavala was not split into two opposing political camps, a local manifestation of the schism between Venizelists and Populists, but into three. From as early as 1926, the Communists presented a serious political force, receiving as much as a quarter of the vote inside the city of Kavala. The membership of the labor movement, up to the mid 1920s, although not having a communist majority, was largely led by the communists who controlled the Tobacco Workers' Federation from the very beginning. We have seen that the authorities, in collaboration with the army and sections of the conservative workers' unions, attempted through a series of means and interventions to dispatch non-communist unions

¹⁰⁰⁰ Pegios G (1984) p87

and create a separate Federation. This took place within the framework of a nationwide process to re-incorporate the labor movement, which began in 1925 and was achieved in 1927-8.

The 1928 strike was characterized by both competition and cooperation between the two opposing labor camps. However, the dynamic and influence of the communist-led unions, as opposed to the relatively passive character and the policy of scuttle partly imposed on the conservative-led unions by their commitment to keep within (or hesitation to break out of) the framework of legality, became obvious even to the Military that was closely watching the progress of the strike. The limitations deriving from their unwillingness or inability to pursue militant action were becoming ever more apparent to workers, especially those not affiliated to a particular ideological camp. This worked to the advantage of the communist unions, which did not hesitate to expose the conservatives' weaknesses in public.

The growing involvement of the military and the authorities with the labor movement created serious obstacles to the normal functions of the communist unions. Conservative unions were granted protection, whereas communist unions were either outlawed, or had their executive members prosecuted, put in prison or sent into exile. The communists attempted to combat the growing feeling of defeatism that begun to seriously affect workers by creating physical confrontations with the authorities. This tactic, despite the fact that it led to several injuries, was reported as successful since it contributed significantly to uplifting the spirit of communist-friendly workers.

We then examined various aspects of the 1927-1933 tobacco crisis. We pointed out the reasons that were put forward to explain the crisis, namely the vulnerability of an industry based on exports to fluctuating international demand and the relatively high costs of production. It is important to note that the tobacco crisis was not solely due to the 1929 crisis that contributed to the decline of the tobacco exports, but had started some two years before. The consequences of the crisis on employment and loss of income was tremendous. All efforts by the state to deal with the problem, either through the introduction of a rationing system or a program of voluntary exodus and agricultural settlement, had little results.

Growing problems produced the 1933 strike that was led by the illegal communist-led tobacco workers' union. The success of the strike was immense. The official representatives of the state were forced to sign a protocol with the leadership of a union that officially did not exist, effectively recognizing it as representative of the workers. This precipitated a reaction by the Kavala Public Prosecutor who demanded a series of oppressive measures. Union leaders were arrested and exiled,

causing even further unrest among the city's laboring population. By now, even representatives of bourgeois parties and press were publicly stating their dissatisfaction and outrage about the way the state was handling the labor issue in Kavala. When the reunification of the labor movement was finally achieved in 1935-1936, there were very few left in the city who did not welcome this particular course of events.

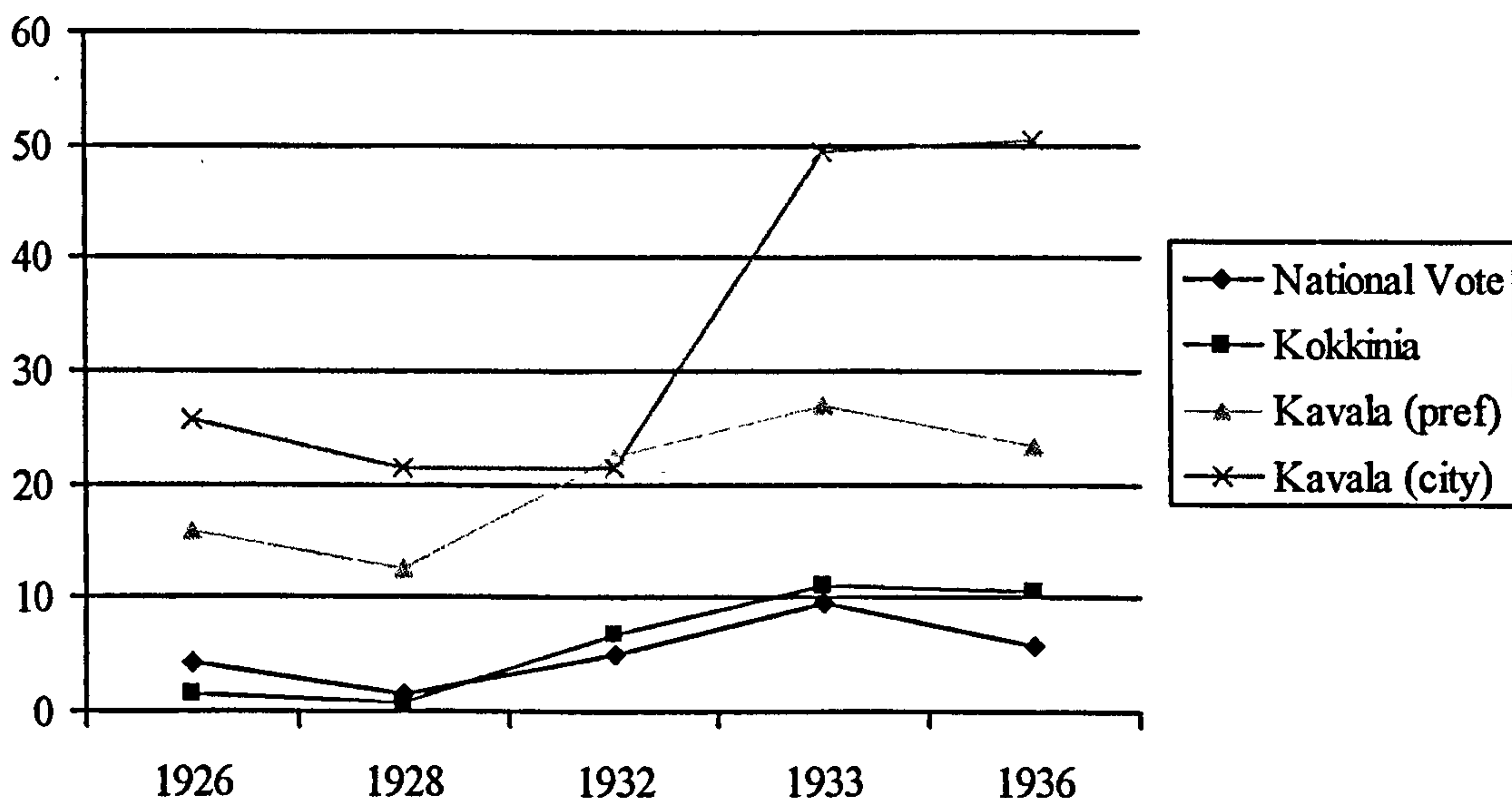
Finally, we explored the development of communism in Kavala. We began by examining the various ways through which the Communist Party had successfully incorporated local labor and social traditions, either adopting them or altering them to fit a new and emerging radical working-class tradition. We also examined the various methods of incorporation that were utilized by the authorities and other social agencies, through oppression and anti-communist propaganda. Those tactics had some effects in disrupting the normal functions of Party cells, but the Party managed to partially adapt by setting up an underground mechanism. Over time, anti-communist propaganda was shown to be less effective than the active example of communist politics and behavior at the work place. Eventually, even the press began to be sympathetic to communist activists, asking for an end to state oppression. Extensive use of force by the authorities, which extended far beyond the narrow scope of communist trade unionists and party activists into wider sections of the local society, alienated many politically apathetic or even conservative workers. They increasingly began to see in the communists' anti-fascist rhetoric and anti-authority activity a force of progress.

Communism in Kavala reached its electoral peak in 1934, when the communist candidate was elected in office against a common candidate of 'bourgeois' parties, receiving more than 50% of the vote. The 'red' city council managed to push forward certain welfare reforms but was seriously undermined by the authorities, who in the end put several councilors on trial on the basis of the *Idionymon*. The 'red' majority in the council was, accordingly diminished. However, by that time, pro-communist feeling in Kavala was well established, reaching people of all occupations and of varied ideological beliefs.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter will reflect on the case studies and illuminate broader issues raised in the Thesis. We have examined two working class communities, Kokkinia and Kavala and we have attempted to identify the factors that favored or inhibited the growth of communist politics in the interwar period. Accordingly, we have assessed a number of arguments presented in the existing Communist Party-related literature regarding the growth of radicalism. Those included widely held and accepted suppositions about living and working conditions, the existence of a landless proletariat and the size of factories. Based on those criteria, one could easily come to the conclusion that both Kokkinia and Kavala provided case-studies favorable to the growth of communist politics. After all, Kokkinia comprised a labor force that presented an unprecedented high proportion of manual laborers by Greek standards. Kavala, on the other hand was one of the main industrial centers of northern Greece with an unusually high ratio of workers per employer. Yet, communism in those two localities, however favorable the conditions, did not have the same impact or growth in the course of the interwar period.

Graph 8: A comparative development of the electoral strength of KKE in % (1926-1936)
National Elections for Parliament



By the end of the period, communism in Kokkinia scored almost double the national average in number of votes (10.7% compared to 5.8%). Moreover, at the same time, the communist vote in

Kavala was as much as four times higher at a Prefecture level (23.5%) and 9-10 times higher in the city of Kavala itself (50.4%). Since all the prerequisites of working class radicalism mentioned above were present in both cases, why the striking difference in communist support?

Despite the important role played by the working class in both Kokkinia and Kavala, the two cases were characterized by important differences. One factor that varied in the two case studies was that of 'ethnic' cleavages. The refugees in Kokkinia constituted a labor force that was viewed as 'foreign' or even 'hostile' by native workers. From the very beginning, various factors were in place to reinforce the segregation of refugees. Their settlement in distinct satellite communities meant that the initial opportunity to integrate them in the existing native communities was lost. Geographical segregation contributed to an emerging 'ghetto' mentality among the refugees that was further enhanced by cultural differences and mentalities. To the inward-looking attitude of refugees was added the hostility of natives (mainly supporters of the Populists), which often translated into violent confrontations with numerous casualties.

These cleavages were widely exploited by the employers, who sought to manipulate the differences between the various ethnic groups in order to prevent united action by the work force on the factory floor. Separate trade unions emerged based on ethnic lines, further hindering common action by the organized labor movement. In addition, refugees were used, initially at least, as a reserve labor force that admittedly caused a decline in wages and a worsening of working conditions. Overcoming those cleavages proved an important obstacle both for the organized labor movement as well as the Communist Party.

Contrary to the experience of the working class in Kokkinia/Piraeus, the workers of Kavala had a tradition of multiculturalism and were familiar with living, working and fighting alongside ethnic 'others' in labor struggles. When the refugees arrived in Kavala at the beginning of the 1920s, the local trade union movement already had more than three decades of experience in transcending ethnic and religious differences and working together in common cross-ethnic unions. Accordingly, the refugees' integration into the existing labor movement was a much smoother and straight forward process than was the case of the Kokkinia workers in Piraeus. Refugees in Kavala were quickly absorbed in the tobacco industry and joined the existing unions. The few ethnic-based unions that were established rapidly withered away and by the end of the 1920s the only refugee association that remained was controlled by the Communist Party.

Of course, there was an additional factor that contributed to the more effective integration of the refugees in Kavala than in Kokkinia, which should not be underestimated. When the refugees arrived in Kavala, the local tobacco industry was going through a boom and the influx of an extra labor force was absorbed without any serious side effects in wages or labor conditions. In Piraeus, however, the case was different. Although a number of new industries quickly emerged in order to provide employment, the influx of refugees was just too great to be absorbed by them.

Another differentiating element in the labor tradition that shaped the development of radical politics in the two case studies was the local context. In Piraeus, the social-democratic and pro-Venizelist influences in the organized labor movement had strong roots and preceded historically the formation of the Greek Communist Party. Many of the leading figures of the ideological currents mentioned above (i.e. social-democratic and pro-Venizelist) played an active role in the formation of both the General Confederation of Greek Labor and of the Communist Party itself. In the case of the latter they adhered to SEKE's first social-democratic leadership, and although most of them found themselves outside Party ranks by 1924 they continued to exercise significant influence in the trade union movement in Piraeus for several years.

The existence of strong patronage relations and links between union leaders and state or ruling party officials reinforced the tendency that dominated many sections of the working class in Piraeus to seek compromise rather than confrontation with the authorities as a means of achieving their goals. The situation did not change until the very end of the period concerned (1935-1936), when it became increasingly apparent to more and more workers that the tactics of their leaders had had little result, and they began to look for more militant or radical solutions to their issues.

In Kavala by contrast, the organized labor movement was well known for its militancy and its radical politics even before the formation of the Communist Party. The successful adaptation of local communist politics to the past labor tradition in Kavala meant that the hegemony of communist-led unions was well established from early on. Reformist and conservative unions kept operating within the framework of the communist-controlled Tobacco Workers' Federation (KOE) until state intervention in 1927 encouraged them to form a separate Federation. This process however was not without strong opposition from within non-communist unions, and for a long period of time non-communists cooperated closely together with communists in strikes and other labor mobilizations. The hegemony of the communist-led trade unions was re-confirmed after the

1933 strike, when the state officials were forced to come to terms with the communists, although officially their union no longer existed having already been dissolved by the courts.

In general, the factors of political incorporation that applied in Kokkinia were more numerous and complex than in Kavala. In Kokkinia, the dichotomy between exploiters and exploited was blurred by the existence of specific channels that allowed refugees partial political participation and power depending on the clientage ties. This was achieved through the formation of refugee associations and an emerging elite of the so-called refugee fathers that worked to mediate popular and individual demands to the state, the authorities and the Refugee Settlement Commission. These agents of refugee representation kept close links with the Liberal Party throughout the interwar period, and many of them were placed from early on in key posts of power, in financial institutions, the Parliament or Senate and various governmental posts.

In addition, the refugees were successfully incorporated into the politics of the National Schism on the side of the Venizelists. Many refugees of course genuinely supported Venizelos' Liberal Party due to personal liking or strong republican beliefs. Nevertheless, various factors contributed into the forging of a 'block' mentality among the refugees that made it difficult for alternative radical politics to infiltrate the 'Venizelist forts,' as the refugee settlements were known. Such factors included a widespread belief that refugees were threatened by the eventuality of a future Populist government. This belief was enhanced by widespread verbal and physical attacks by Populist supporters, press and officials. It was perhaps the only obvious alternative for the refugees to seek patronage and protection behind the Venizelist Party, to which they had attributed their salvation once before in 1922.

In contrast, in Kavala the division between exploiters and exploited was much clearer. Whereas in Kokkinia, in many cases the employer of the refugee workforce was one of their compatriots to whom they may also have had kinship ties, in Kavala the employer was typically a wealthy local or foreign capitalist to whom they had no attachment of any sort apart from their employer-employee relationship. Moreover, Kavala did not experience the political cleavages manifest in the National Schism in the same way as in other parts of Greece, including Piraeus. In Kavala, three political forces dominated and competed with each other on the political scene rather than two. The Communist Party was a noticeable political adversary and challenger to the two main parties, mastering from the early and mid-1920s almost one quarter of the city's electoral preferences. Political patronage was also much weaker in Kavala. Although the city was considered as a

Venizelist stronghold, the first Club of the Liberal Party was formed as late as 1934!¹⁰⁰¹ Hence, there was organizational space for the Communist Party for almost the entire interwar period.

Another difference between Kokkinia and Kavala was the extent and impact of internal strife in the Communist Party in each locality. We have seen that the Piraeus Party organization suffered repeatedly from inner party disputes, causing disappointment, bitterness and disillusionment among many of its members and creating serious obstacles to the fulfillment of its goals. This was partly due to the labor traditions discussed above and the influence exercised by a number of ex-party members in local unions and labor centers. Piraeus also presented the largest concentration of supporters for the 'Opposition' that was formed in 1927 (i.e. the 'Liquidarists'). When they broke from the party they took a number of trade unions with them in which they held executive positions (we should not forget that the majority of the 'Opposition' were high ranking members in the Piraeus Organization and well known trade unionists). The other rival group, the Archeiomarxists also had some influence in Piraeus, although this rapidly disintegrated in the early 1930s.

By contrast, the Kavala Party organization was relatively free of internal strife. The few members who adhered to the politics of the 'Opposition' were quickly marginalized or expelled from party ranks, in what was a much smoother process. These individuals, however, did not form separate unions, as in Piraeus, but continued to operate as trade unionists in the communist-led Tobacco Federation (KOE). In many fields of activity, Communist Party members and members of the 'Opposition' worked alongside each other for most of the interwar period. The Archeiomarxist organization was almost non-existent and apart from issuing occasional condemnations of 'Stalinist' politics, it never posed any real threat to the hegemony of the Communist Party in Kavala.

Important differences between the two case studies can also be traced in the nature of community politics. In Kokkinia, community politics was largely orientated towards reproducing social and cultural elements of the past and creating a sense of continuity based on popular memory. They developed mainly around ethnic lines and places of origin rather than class. Social and solidarity bonds among refugees based on their identity as workers, and not primarily as refugees, began to develop from the 1930s, when it became clear that there was no possibility of ever returning back to their homes. As a result, they increasingly started thinking of themselves as members of the social class to which they had belonged since 1923-1924.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Eleutheros Kirix* 5/3/1934

In Kavala, the role of the trade unions in the social life and community politics of the city had strong roots. It dominated spheres of social activity such as leisure, sports and even education. This was largely due to the fact that there was a single dominant industry, that of tobacco processing, and inevitably, perhaps, all aspects of life in Kavala depended heavily on what went on in the tobacco warehouses. Also, due to the nature of the industry, which involved widespread chronic unemployment and job insecurity, strong self-help and occupational solidarity networks emerged. These were manifested in formal support, such as unemployment and welfare benefits, as well as informal financial support to young tobacco workers who did their military service, and to trade unionists who were imprisoned or exiled. It may be argued that Kavala presented the first example in Greece of what can be characterized as a working class culture.

An additional element that can be drawn from the graph presenting the development of electoral support in the two localities is that they both witnessed significant growth in the early 1930s. This rise in the communist vote also coincided with a general increase in communist support nationwide. However, the reasons behind this development were primarily specific to each locality concerned. Accordingly, in Kokkinia it had primarily to do with the signing of the 1930 Greco-Turkish Treaty between Venizelos and Kemal and its impact upon the refugees. This put an end to any hopes of refugees returning back to their homelands and accelerated their integration into the local political and labor movement. It also meant their partial disappointment with the Liberal Party and Venizelos himself whose status as patron of the refugees and ability to champion their demands was increasingly questioned. It was only following this episode when political support began to shift slowly but steadily from the Liberals towards the Communists.

In Kavala, however, the decisive factor behind the growth of communist support had little to do with these developments. Rather, it came down to two principal factors. The first was the impact of the decline in tobacco exports, which began to seriously affect employment and wages from as early as 1927. The crisis was further deepened by the 1929 international crisis. It was not until 1933 that the industry began to show signs of improvement. This deterioration was accompanied by widespread mobilizations of tobacco workers, most notably in 1928 and 1933, which exposed the inability of conservative unions to pursue militant action and ultimately elevated the communist-led trade unions into the hegemonic force in the city's labor movement. The 1931 intervention of the Comintern had little or no impact in either of the localities' communist movements. Apart from the

issuing of an overwhelming declaration of support, very little changed on the ground in terms of day-to-day communist activity in the community and the workplace.

The variables between the two cases that have been discussed above should not allow us to lose sight of their common features. One common feature that was evident in both localities was suppression and its effects. In Kokkinia and Kavala, state persecution caused serious disruptions in the short and long term functions of the Party. The state placed obstacles on the Party's electoral campaigns and obstructed the circulation of the Party paper, occasionally banning it. Individual members were frequently harassed, leading Party figures were imprisoned or exiled, and police presence was constant outside unions or rallies. However, state suppression in the long run produced the opposite effects than those intended.

Firstly, communists were members of the community themselves and solidarity bonds extended to include them as well. Their constant harassment by the authorities did not leave their neighbors or fellow workers apathetic. Increasingly, the victimization of communists by the authorities to an extent elevated them in the consciousness of their fellow workers as champions of workers' issues. The authorities themselves contributed to this outcome, first, by equating almost any sort of worker protest with communist activity. Workers who went on strike or pursued militant action were automatically branded communists. Hence, they contributed by identifying communism in popular consciousness with a broader working class radicalism. Fiery speeches in the court floor and militant actions such as the freeing of fellow workers who were arrested also played a part in this development.

Second, the state used indiscriminate violence against ever widening sections of society, democratic individuals, even supporters of the ruling party. The impact of this was recorded in the local press in both Kokkinia and Kavala. Although until the mid-1930s this reproduced the image of communists as trouble-makers and conspirators, it began to appear more sympathetic towards party activists under persecution and to adhere to the Communist Party's call for an anti-fascist, anti-authoritarian Popular Front of all democratic forces. The same newspapers, which in the 1920s had called for more measures to be taken against the communists, in the 1930s appealed for a halt to state violence against communists and their release from prison and return from exile. This marked a shift, not total, but nevertheless noticeable, in the popular image of the communist as a bearer of progress.

Another common feature evident in the growth of communism in the two localities was the basis and reasons for communist support. Individuals who adhered to communist politics typically did not do so because they subscribed to the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism. Ideological work in the party was to say the least limited, with lessons in Marxism carried forward usually by university students or secondary school teachers, who did not necessarily have extensive knowledge of the subject but who could at least read and write. It may be argued that Soviet culture, through literature and cinematography had a greater impact on a wider audience than the occasional ideological analyses in the Party press. Nevertheless, individuals adhered to communist politics because of communists' attitudes in the workplace and in the community.

Communists further cultivated attitudes that were founded on a sense of working class values. These portrayed the workers as honest, hard-working and moral individuals who fought against the injustices imposed on them by the authorities, the state and the employer, who were in turn seen as immoral because they sought to profit from the misery of workers. Communist candidates for Parliament or the local council were not much different from the average worker. They were of working class background themselves, suffering the same fate of hardship. This was in marked contrast to the candidates of other political forces. And nowhere was this more obvious than in Kavala during the 1934 mayoral elections, when the Communist Party ticket was comprised mainly of tobacco workers, whereas the united bourgeois party ticket included tobacco factory owners. These images of communists contributed significantly to counteract the negative images put forward by anticommunist forces, as it appeared in the Press or other means. This constituted what we may call a classic 'class' confrontation over community identity, value and priorities that was rather exceptional for Greek standards.

In addition, there are a number of issues that concern the Communist Party itself. The importance of Party sympathizers who were activists or 'party-influenced,' in the growth of communism in the community and workplace was vital. Largely ignored by the literature, they constituted a reserve of sympathetic activists who in many cases carried forward the bulk of party work. Hence, any attempt to explain the growth of the communist party solely based on a measurement of its membership is bound to be misleading. The Greek Communist Party during the interwar period may indeed appear as a "sect" if one fails to measure the actual extent of its influence. This can be realized only by moving away from a somewhat sterile reproduction of official party statistics, and towards a closer look at how communist influence was translated on the ground, at a community, neighborhood level.

The two case studies further expanded on claims put forward in the chapters that dealt with the Communist Party, concerning the view of a direct line between the leadership and Party members at grass root level. We have seen that local party organizations were characterized by a certain degree of autonomy of action. This was due in part to objective factors, i.e. the lack of effective lines of communication caused by widespread persecution and periods of illegality that meant that on occasion the Party view was transmitted to its destination too late, or even sometimes not at all. There were, however, subjective factors, such in the case of the Kavala organization refusing to comply with the Politburo's plan for the 1928 strike. In that case, the balance of sense of obligation and local economic and social factors weighed in favor of the local labor struggle rather than the party line. This of course was less obvious in Kokkinia, a district of Piraeus that geographically was much closer to the center of decision-making and hence felt the effects of party policy more intensively than other places. But even in the case of the refugees in Kokkinia, the party line had to be adapted many times in order to make sense to refugees, to address their needs and worries.

Developments in the Soviet Union and the international movement had little impact on local communist politics. Lack of information and the precedence of more pressing local issues left little room for the average communist party member or sympathizer to elaborate on the international situation and to be affected in any way. The Third Period language of 'social fascism' may have been adopted but that did not mean a huge departure from the previous characterization used by the Communist Party to label the social democrats as 'social-*chafiedes*' [collaborators of the police – which, as we have seen, was not always far from the truth]. In the case of Kavala, we have even seen that despite the use of harsh rhetoric, communists and reformists did collaborate at a grass root level in strikes and other labor mobilizations. This was not the case in Piraeus, where the rivalry between communists and social democrats was deeply rooted and dated back to the very formation of the GSEE and KKE. Even the adoption of the Macedonian Question policy had little effect in the localities examined. In Kokkinia it was never an issue as it had nothing to do with the refugee problems. And in Kavala, located in the very center of the Macedonia districts, the Communist Party, just a year and a half after the adaptation of the slogan in late 1924, had an impressive electoral performance, receiving more than a quarter of the votes in the 1926 national elections.

Finally, in relation to assumptions widely held in the existing literature regarding the growth of communism in interwar Greece, some conclusions can be drawn. The equation factory + worker + living and working conditions + lack of ties with the land = communism appears problematic. As far

as the claim that lack of ties with land was a prerequisite for radicalism is concerned, the Kavala tobacco workers pose the best case for counterargument. As we have seen, a large number of tobacco workers in Kavala not only came from the countryside in search for employment, but returned to do agricultural work each year during the period when tobacco processing ceased. In this case not only did tobacco workers of peasant background not become agents of conservatism, they also contributed greatly to the export of communism to the countryside.

Harsh living conditions may have contributed to an extent to the rise of communism in Kavala, however, in Kokkinia the results were quite the opposite. In Kokkinia, disaster and the sudden loss of status and proletarianization that were brought about by the refugee situation did not produce tendencies towards radicalism (as expected by the authorities at the time) but apathy. The existence of a large concentration of workers also did not automatically produce a background for communist growth. As we have seen this depended also on a series of interwoven factors, such as ethnic and political cleavages and various responses developed locally by the party in order to deal with them, in some cases more successfully than others. So, when 'classic' factors for the radicalization of the masses, such as poor living and working conditions, did not bring about the 'expected' results, local Communists began to seek other ways to achieve this. By the mid-1930s, some ten years after the arrival of the refugees in Kokkinia, the Communist Party had partially managed to achieve this aim.

By examining a variety of interviews and testimonies made by Communist Party members, activists and trade unionists, we have also managed to put forward a series of additional 'routes to communism'. These had to do with what we may call 'subjective' reasons rather than 'objective' ones, such as poverty or class. They had to do with the personal experience of communist politics as they manifested themselves at the work place or community. The self-sacrifice of communists, their continuous persecution by what was progressively seen as an unjust oppressive state, their identification with progress by ever increasing sections of society, became catalytic factors for the attraction and recruitment of new members. It is important to note the weight of the above values that communists appear to represent, because they largely came to replace the vacuum left by the lack of Marxist-Leninist education, as a form of radical working class ideology or ethos.

To conclude, this doctoral study aimed to underline the importance of examining the development of communist politics at a grass-root, community level, as opposed to an overview of developments based entirely at the Party leadership level or at the level of the international communist movement. The examination of the interplay between formal party politics and what communists did in the

community has constituted a valuable analytical tool in dealing with the growth of Communist Party politics among the working class. It encourages the researcher to depart from an interpretation of communist growth solely based on objective conditions, such as the growth of industry or a decline in living conditions and wages. The focus is rather on process as that evolved through the interaction of various factors of labor incorporation and emancipation.

This interaction is not one-sided. Although the state is capable of drawing from a variety of resources, such as legislation, clientism and active oppression, the communists and the organized labor movement they operate in also have the capacity, in various degrees, to adapt and respond to them. Within that context, there are cases when communists manage to forge new sets of identity and values that become increasingly hegemonic at the community level, as the Kavala case demonstrates. Or, indeed, communists may create enclaves of radicalism, which although not yet hegemonic, serve as an influential platform for the promotion of communist politics and ideas, as signaled in the case of Kokkinia.

International and national Communist politics provide a backdrop against which local labor struggles and local Communist initiatives take place. But on their own, they are not sufficient to explain local dynamics, notably the divergent experiences of Communists in different localities. This comparative analysis of two local experiences has shown that local social structure, in which ethnic patterns are a crucial factor, combined with local political traditions, are critical in explaining the varied experiences of Communist activists operating in different milieus.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Indices of Industrial Growth Rates (1928=100)¹⁰⁰²

Year	Gross Output (1930 prices)	Gross Output (1930 prices-ex. Electricity)	Net Output (ex. Electricity)
1921	n.a.	62.1	60.4
1922	n.a.	65.5	64
1923	n.a.	64.6	66
1924	n.a.	75.9	83.4
1925	83.6	84.5	89.7
1926	81.9	83.4	86.1
1927	92.5	92.1	92.8
1928	100	100	100
1929	104.3	102.9	102.1
1930	109.5	103.2	104.4
1931	112.1	103.3	105.4
1932	107.8	97.7	100.6
1933	120.6	111	112
1934	138.5	128.1	133.5
1935	139.3	127.1	131.6
1936	149.6	134.9	138.9

Appendix 2: New Industrial Firms Established (1921-1929)¹⁰⁰³

Year	No. of New Firms	Horsepower
1921	56	1,821
1922	46	371
1923	41	1,217
1924	107	2,518
1925	132	4,624
1926	124	3,145
1927	214	6,105
1928	192	6,540
1929	62	3,215

¹⁰⁰² Sources: *Oikonomiki Epetiris* 1939, *Elliniki Biomixania* 1931

¹⁰⁰³ Source: *Oikonomiki Epetiris* 1937

Appendix 3:¹⁰⁰⁴ Anti-Hero images of the two representatives of the 'National Schism'

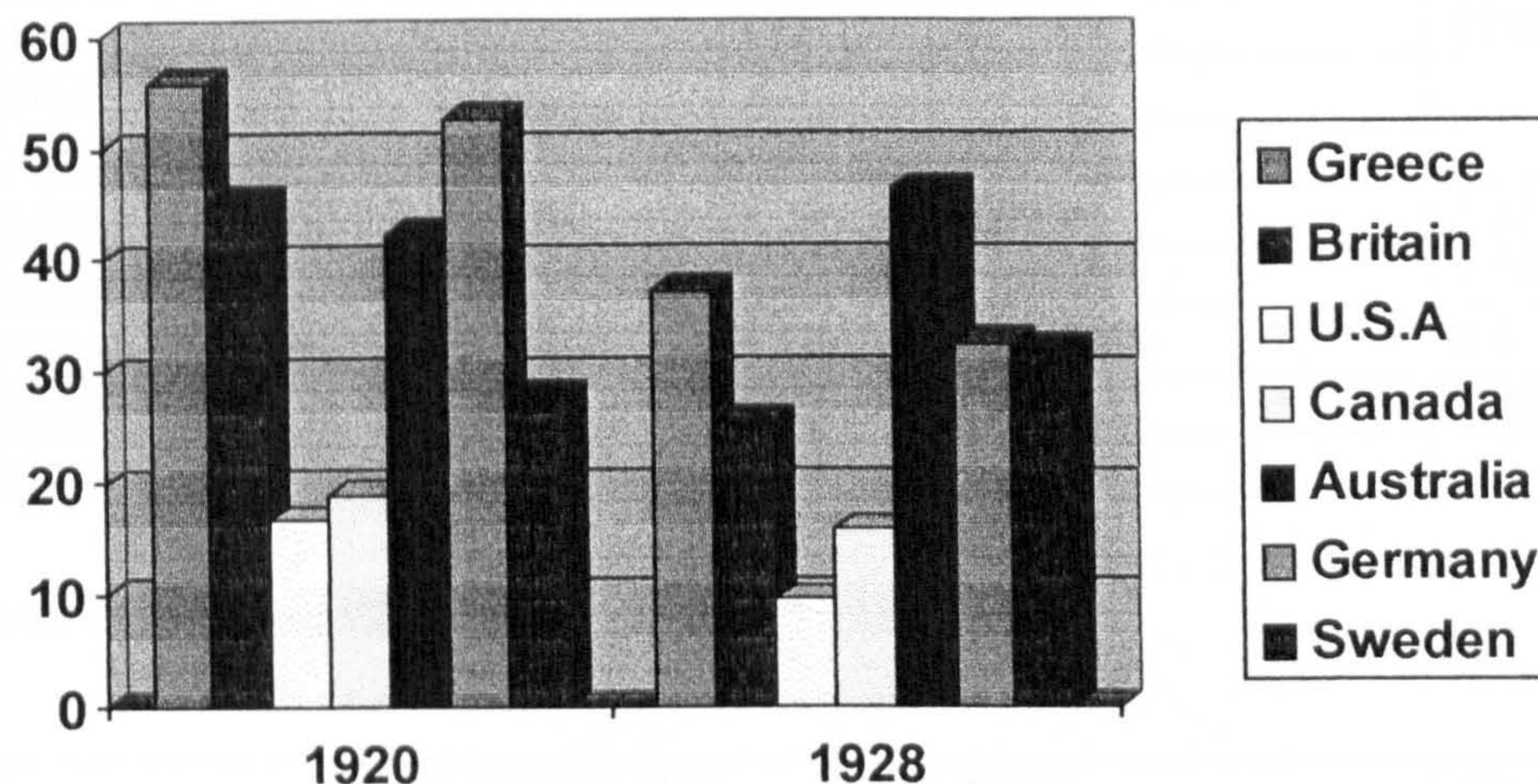
On the left: To some a 'hero, a savior, a prophet, a Father of the Nation' ...to some a dangerous figure to whom the entrustment of the country's fortune would be a fatal mistake. The particular picture illustrates the Royalist view-point of Venizelos's insistence of allying with the forces of Entente (the name written on the horse's back), which they considered a 'betting on the wrong horse'.

On the Right: To some a God-sent King, a sweet Father, and living image of the Nation. This picture, however, illustrates the King as seen from the eyes of an anti-royalist: performing dangerous acrobatics concerning the issue of Greece's attitude towards World War I.



¹⁰⁰⁴ Source: *Istorika*, 12/12/2000, pp32 &33

Appendix 4: Comparative trade union density in 7 countries for the years 1920 and 1928¹⁰⁰⁵



Appendix 5: Electoral Strength of the KKE (1926-1936)¹⁰⁰⁶

Date	No of Votes	% of Votes	MPs Elected	Electoral System
November 7, 1926	41,982	4.38	10	Proportional
August 19, 1928	14,325	1.41	-	Non-proportional
September 26, 1928	58,223	4.97	10	Proportional
March 5, 1933	52,958	4.64	-	Non-proportional
June 9, 1935	98,699	9.59	-	Non-proportional
January 26, 1936	73,411	5.76	15	Proportional

¹⁰⁰⁵ Sources for Greece: *Geniki Statistiki Ypiresia tis Ellados* for the years 1920 and 1928; Jecchinis Ch (1984), Benaroya A (1975), KKE (1974a), KKE (1974b). Note that numbers of unionization may vary from account to account. That is because unionization levels were calculated according to estimates of the data published by various 'official' sources of the labor movement (GSEE, KKE, etc), while attempting to take under consideration the number of double-registering (i.e. union members who have been counted twice because they belonged to their union as well as their town local Labor Center), and the fact that some estimates may have been 'over-stated' for propaganda purposes. The amount of unionization for Greece in 1928 is estimated in relation to the number of wage earners (and not industrial workers alone). For the other countries see Bain G S & Price R (1980)

¹⁰⁰⁶ Source: Statistiki ton Bouleutikon Eklogon 1928, 1933, 1936

Appendix 6: Electoral Strength of the KKE in Selected Areas (in %) ¹⁰⁰⁷

Area	1926	1936	Area	1926	1936
Evros	16.01	7.22	Kozani	-	6.59
Kavala	14.90	23.83	Kilkis	-	8.88
Larisa	14.86	17.70	Athens	3.73	7.31
Rodopi	10.82	9.70	Piraeus	3.79	6.49
Lesvos	5.37	14.20	Messinia	0.4	2.69
Serres	3.65	11.77	Ioannina	2.86	5.43
Salonica	10.82	9.7			

Appendix 7: *Rizospastes* Circulation 1928-1936 ¹⁰⁰⁸

Year	Circulation	Year	Circulation
1928-9	4,250	1933 (December)	7,000
1930	1,666	1936	10,000
1933 (January)	2,600	Average Circulation of Special Issues ¹⁰⁰⁹	20,000-25,000

Appendix 8: Membership of OKNE (Organization of the Communist Youth of Greece) ¹⁰¹⁰

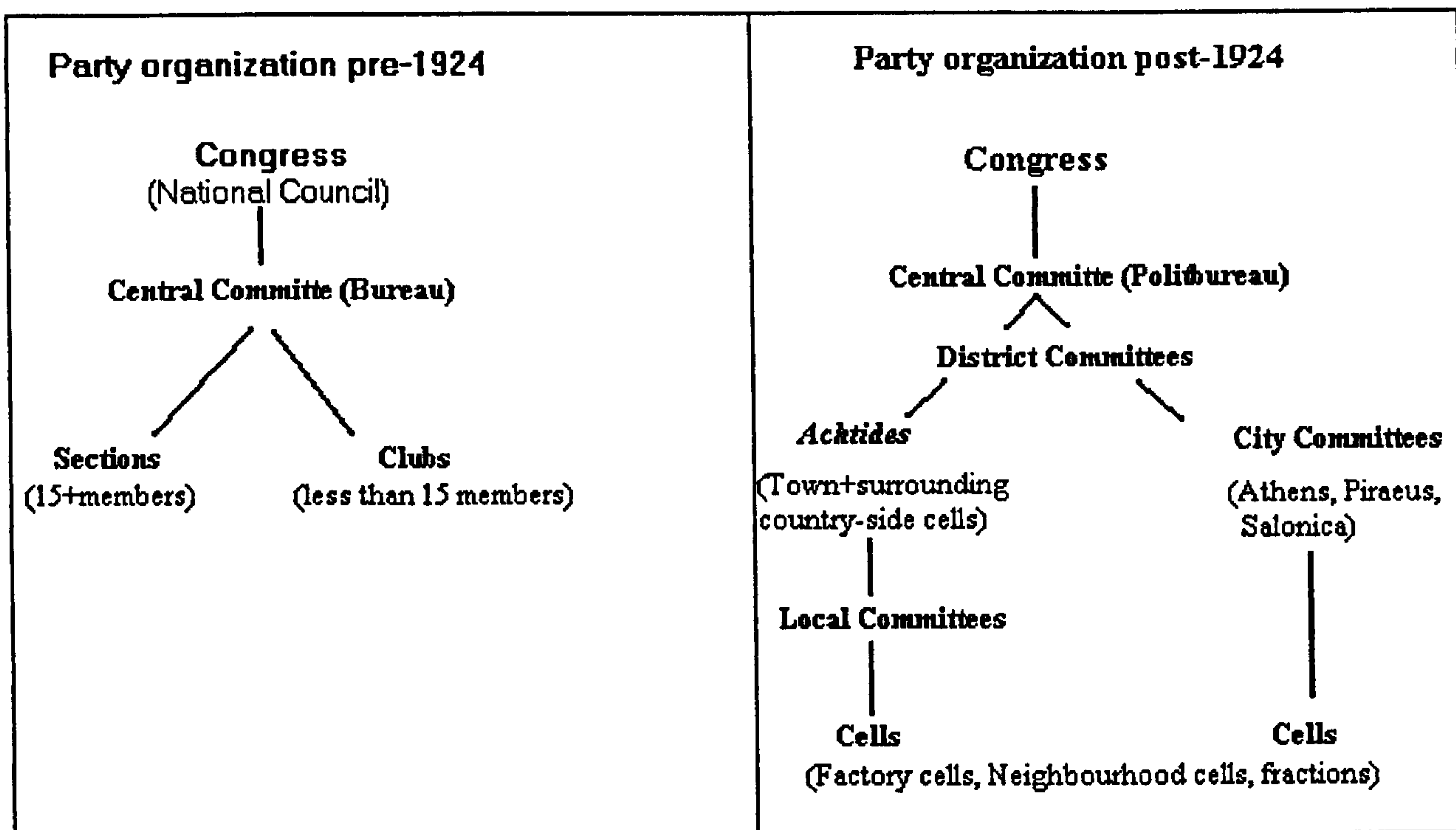
Year	Membership	Year	Membership	Year	Membership
1918	600	1924	700	1927	700
1922	300	1925	600	1928	1,886
1923	400	1926	300	1932	1,500
				1936	15,000

¹⁰⁰⁷ Source: Elefantis A G (1976), p336

¹⁰⁰⁸ Sources: Moskof K (1987) p466 & Elefantis A G (1999) p333

¹⁰⁰⁹ Such as, for example, the May Day, New Year, and October Revolution Anniversary Issues

¹⁰¹⁰ Source: Moskof K (1987) p473



¹⁰¹¹ The schema is derived from: *Rizospastes*, 18/5/1919; 11, 12, 13/4/1927

Appendix 10 : Index of Congresses and Administrative Organs of KKE¹⁰¹²

**Founding Congress of SEKE
(17-23 November 1918)**

Central Committee: N Dimitratos, A Arvanites, D Ligdopoulos, S Kokkinos, M Sideres
Auditing Committee: S Komiotis, Benaroya A, G Pispinis
Party Secretary: N Dimitratos

<u>1st National Council of SEKE</u> (18-23 May 1919)	Central Committee: P Dimitratos, S Kokkinos, A Arvanites, A Tsalavoutas Auditing Committee: A Benaroya, G Pispinis, F Petrouska Party Secretary: P Dimitratos
<u>2nd Congress of SEKE</u> (5-12 April 1920)	Central Committee: N Dimitratos, G Doulas, G Kordatos, M Sideres, P Dimitratos (deputy members: D Ligdopoulos, N Damigos) Auditing Committee: A Benaroya, A Arvanites, S Komiotis, G Lagoudakes Party Secretary: G Kordatos
<u>1st SEKE Conference</u> (22 February 1922)	Central Committee: G Georgiades, G Petsopoulos, A Sideres, G Kordatos, G Papanikolaou, G Lagoudakes, M Sideres Party Secretary: G Kordatos
<u>1st Extraordinary Congress of SEKE</u> (20 October 1922)	Central Committee: G Lagoudakes, G Kordatos, Th Maggos, N Sargologos, D Diamogiannis Auditing Committee: A Benaroya, E Staurides, M Giatsopoulos National Council: M Oikonomou, L Chatzistaourou, D Adamides, G Georgiades, Z Ventoura Party Secretary: N Sargologos
<u>Electoral Congress</u> (24 October 1923)	Central Committee: S Maximos, Th Apostolides, E Staurides, Ch Tzallas Auditing Committee: M Giatsopoulos, L Chatzistaourou National Council: T Moufides, N Sargologos, D Adamides, G Siantos, F Tzoulati Party Secretary: Th Apostolides
<u>3rd Extraordinary Congress of KKE</u> (26 November-3 December 1924)	Central Committee: Th Apostolides, S Maximos, P Pouliopoulos, N Euaggelopoulos, N Nikolaides, K Sklavos, S Defferes Party Secretary: P Pouliopoulos
<u>4th Congress of KKE</u> (10-15 December 1928)	Central Committee: A Chaitas, G Siantos, K Theos, A Christodoulides, D Piliotes, K Eutichiades, K Karagiannes, D Paparrigas, V Asikes, G Kolozof, G Ioannides, I Tsatsakos, G Fragkopoulos, Stamelakos Politbureau: A Chaitas, K Eutichiades, G Siantos, K Theos, D Piliotes, D Paparrigas, G Karagiannes Party Secretary: A Chaitas
<u>Intervention of the Comintern</u> (November 1931)	Politbureau: N Zachariades, G Ioannides, S Sklavainas, G Michailides, V Nefeloudes, G Konstandinides, L Striggos
<u>5th Congress of KKE</u> (March 1934)	Central Committee: S Anastasiades, V Ververes, N Zachariades, G Zeugos, G Ioannides, G Michaelides, V Nefeloudes, M Porfirogenes, P Rousos, G Siantos, M Sinakos, G Skafidas, S Sklavainas, L Striggos, M Tirimos

¹⁰¹² KKE (1974a); KKE (1974b); KKE (1975a); KKE (1975b)

	<p>Politbureau: N Zachariades, V Nefeloudes, S Sklavainas, G Michaelides, G Ioannides, D Partsalides (Deputies: G Siantos, M Sinakos)</p> <p>Party Secretary: N Zachariades</p>
<p>6th Congress of KKE (December 1935)</p>	<p>Central Committee: S Anastasiades, V Ververes, P Damaskopoulos, N Zachariades, G Zeugos, G Ioannides, P Karagkitses-Simos, D Matheses, G Michailides, M Michelides, S Moschos, V Nefeloudes, D Partsalides, N Ploumpides, M Porfirogenes, P Rousos, G Siantos, M Sinakos, D Sitokonstantinou, G Skafidas, S Sklavenas, Ch Chatzivasiliou</p> <p>Politbureau: N Zachariades, V Nefeloudes, S Sklavainas, G Michailides, G Siantos, G Ioannides, D Partsalides</p> <p>Party Secretary: N Zachariades</p>

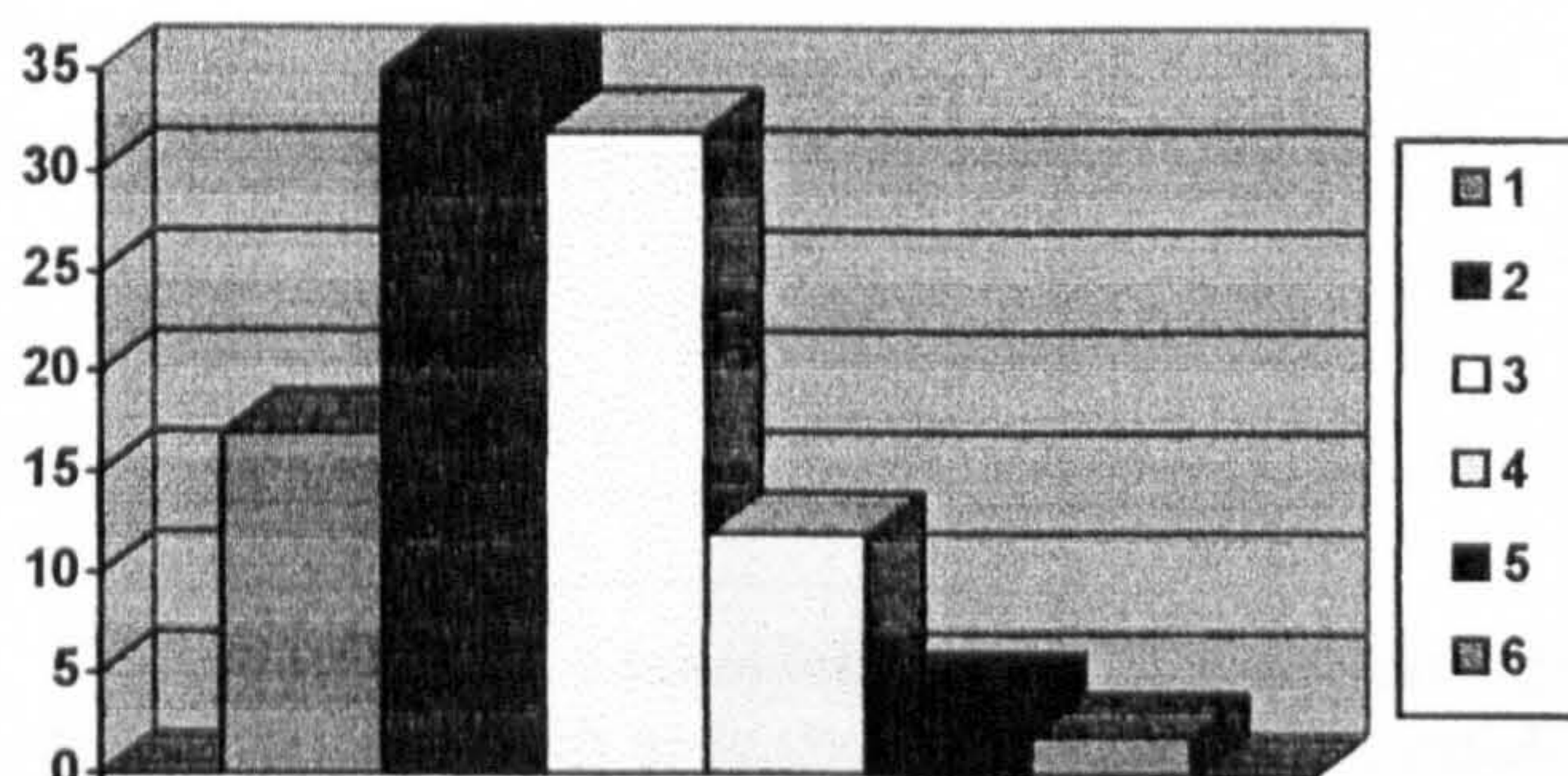
Appendix 11: Chronological Development of the Left Opposition and other organizations outside the Communist Party in Interwar Greece. ¹⁰¹³	
1918	The foundation of SEKE (Socialist Labour Party of Greece)
1920	The fraction of SEKE that was orientated towards the 3 rd International (Ligdopoulos, Tzoulati, Pilotis) establish the group 'Communist Union' (<i>Kommounistiki Enosis</i>) Their journal 'Communism' (<i>Kommounismos</i>) is published
October 1 st	Second Congress of SEKE – The Balkan Communist Federation is established.
1921 September	The 'Communist Union' is dissolved. The first nucleus that will later on constitute the base of the establishment of <i>Arxeion</i> is formed within the ranks of SEKE (by Tzoulati, Sarantides, Dedouses, and others)
1922 August	The aftermath of the Asia Minor Catastrophe – The Federation of 'Old Soldiers' is founded. Its journal 'Old Soldier' is published.
1923 May 1 st	The 'Archival-Marxist' (<i>Arxeion</i>) organization is established Another group, formed by the expelled from the Party Seitaniades, publishes the journal 'To the Masses' (<i>Pros tis Mazes</i>) The 'Communist Union of Greece' (<i>Kommounistiki Enosis Ellados</i>) is established (split from SEKE). Its founding members constituted E Papanastasiou, S Arvanitakes, A Papachristou, N Alexakis. The weekly paper 'Communist Platform' (<i>Kommounistikon Vima</i>) is published.
1924 (November – December)	The 'Communist Union of Greece' is dissolved. Its grass-root members re-join SEKE. The leaders of the Union remain outside.
1926	Pouliopoulos resigns from Party Secretary The fraction of <i>Arxeion</i> named 'Third Situation' (<i>Triti Katastasi</i>) is created by K Ginivosis, Maras, Papagiannes, L Mproumas, Kazares and others.
1927	Maximos, Chainoglou and Sklavos resign from KKE's Politbureau during the Party's 3 rd Regular Congress.
June 15 th	Pouliopoulos and Giatsopoulos publish the <i>Letter towards the members of KKE</i> . They establish the organization 'New Beginning' (<i>Neo Ksekinima</i>)

¹⁰¹³ Sources: Syriggas Nikos Archive, ELIA

1928	<p>The journal <i>Spartakos</i> is published (from the 5th issue onwards it becomes the 'organ of the Opposition to KKE').</p> <p>The 'wide' Plenum of the CC of KKE decides the expulsion of the <i>Liquidarists</i> and the <i>Centrists</i> from the Party.</p> <p>In the 4th Party Congress Maximos, Sklavos, Chainoglou, Chatzistaourou, Papanikolaou, Nikolaides and Polichronakes are expelled from the Party.</p>
1929 November	<p>The 'fractionist struggle without principles' take place in KKE.</p> <p>A new fractionist group develops in <i>Arxeion</i>, consisting of Soulis, Vrixoropoulos, Michos and others.</p>
1930 (28/9-2/10) October 28 th December 6 th December 21 st	<p>1st National Congress of <i>Arxeion</i>, with 'selective' participation of representatives from across the country (45 in total). Suggestions for the drawing up of a constitution. The proceedings attended representatives of the International Left Opposition (Molinier and Mill), who also come in contact with the <i>Spartakos</i> group.</p> <p>The fortnightly newspaper 'Class Struggle' (<i>Pali ton Takseon</i>) is published as the organ of the 'Communist Organization of Bolsheviks -Leninists (Archical-Marxists), Left Opposition' (<i>Kommounistiki Organosi Mpolsevikon -Leniniston (Arxeiomarxistwn) Aristeri Antipoliteusi</i>) -abbreviation: KOMLEA.</p> <p><i>Open letter to the members of the Spartakos Group</i> is published in 'Class Struggle' aiming to the unification of the two groups.</p> <p>KOMLEA participates in the local elections of Salonica. The groups 'Spartakos' and 'Fractionists' supported the KKE candidate. The results were: KKE (2,614), KOMLEA (384)</p>
1931 May 10 th June August October 21 st	<p>1st National Convention of the 'Communist Unitary Group-Left Opposition' (<i>Kommounistiki Enotiki Omada-Aristeri Antipoliteusi</i>). KEO considers itself opposition of the KKE within the framework of the International Left Opposition (established by Soulas, Raptis, Skopelites, Sklavounos, Mpezantakos etc)</p> <p><i>Deltion</i> is published as the monthly journal of KEO</p> <p><i>Daylos</i> ('Torch') is published as a weekly journal of KOMLEA</p> <p><i>Open Letter to the Left Opposition in Greece</i> by the Bureau of the International Left Opposition calling all parties of the Left Opposition in Greece to unite (or be incorporated to KOMLEA)</p>
1932 February March June 26 th 29/8-1/9 September	<p>2nd National Convention of KEO. It decided the unification of the group with <i>Spartakos</i>. The disagreeing minority established the 'Leninist Opposition to KKE' (<i>Leninistiki Antipoliteusi tou KKE</i>) or LAKKE (Raptis, Soulas, the Stinas group, etc)</p> <p>1st National Congress of KOMLEA. It elects a Politbureau (P Giotopoulos, P Kavvidas, G Theothoratos, P Adronis, H Besilas, G Vitsores, A Sakkos) and a CC (A Papadopoulos, L Karliaftes, V Deutereos, T Kapetanakis, Th Tzanavaras, M Kapetanakes, P Giotopoulos, P Kavvidas, G Theothoratos, P Adronis, H Besilas, G Vitsores, A Sakkos). Party Secretary is elected D Giotopoulos.</p> <p>The 'Communist Flag' (<i>H Simea tou Kommounismou</i>) is published by LAKKE</p> <p>1st National Convention of <i>Spartakos</i></p> <p>Stinas is expelled from KKE (he would join KOMLEA on 1/9/1933)</p>
1933 September 28 th	<p>Asimides is expelled from KKE and forms a extra-party group with Kanstandinides and Pakos</p> <p>The Bureau of the International Left Opposition announces that 'comrade Witte</p>

November	[Giotopoulos] had violated the Bolshevik principles' 2 nd National Convention of the Opposition of KKE (<i>Spartakos</i>)
1934 March	KOMLEA splits. One part, with Vitsores is recognized as the official national section of the International Communist Union. It initially publishes the 'Archival-Marxist' (<i>Arxeiomarxisti</i>) and later on the 'Bolshevik' (<i>Bolshevikos</i>). The other part, with Giotopoulos continues to publish the 'Class Struggle' paper.
July	2 nd National Congress of the KOMLEA-Greek Section of the International Communist Union. (abbreviated: ETKDE)
August 22nd	Unifying Convention amongst the groups <i>Spartakos</i> and 'Leninist Union' (<i>Leninistiki Enosi</i>), former LAKKE. The groups achieved unification (with also a section of the group 'New International') and established the 'Organization of Communists Internationalists of Greece' (<i>Organosi Kommouniston Diethniston Ellados</i>) –abbreviated: OKDE.
October 15th	The newspaper 'Pioneer Worker' (<i>Ergatiki Protoporia</i>) was published by OKDE
1935 February	1 st Convention of the 'Organization of Bolsheviks-Leninists' (ETKDE). The newly elected Bureau consisted of G Vitsores, A Stinas and K Anastasiades.
November	The Organization of Marxists-Leninists of Greece is renamed to 'Communist International Union of Greece' (<i>Kommounistiki Diethnistiki Enosi Elladas</i>)-abbreviated: KDEE. It stops the publication of 'Bolshevik' and begins the publication of 'New Epoch' (<i>Nea Epochi</i>)
1936 January	The 'Marxist Platform' (<i>Marxistiko Vima</i>) is published by the group 'Left Fraction of KKE' (<i>Aristeri Parataksi tou KKE</i>)
January 26th	KDEE publishes the newspaper 'Workers' Front' (<i>Ergatiko Metopo</i>) In the parliamentary elections OKDE and KDEE run together under the name 'Communist Internationalist Front' (<i>Kommounistiko Diethnistiko Metopo</i>). They receive 126 votes in Athens and 239 in Salonica.
May	KDEE splits. S Stinas, G Vitsores and the majority of the CC expel the minority (A Sakkos, K Anastasiades, Ch Anastasiades, D Vourtsoukes, V Varikas, F Anastasiades, G Voules, L Karliaftes and G Theodaratos) which establish the 'New Way' group (<i>Neos Dromos</i>)

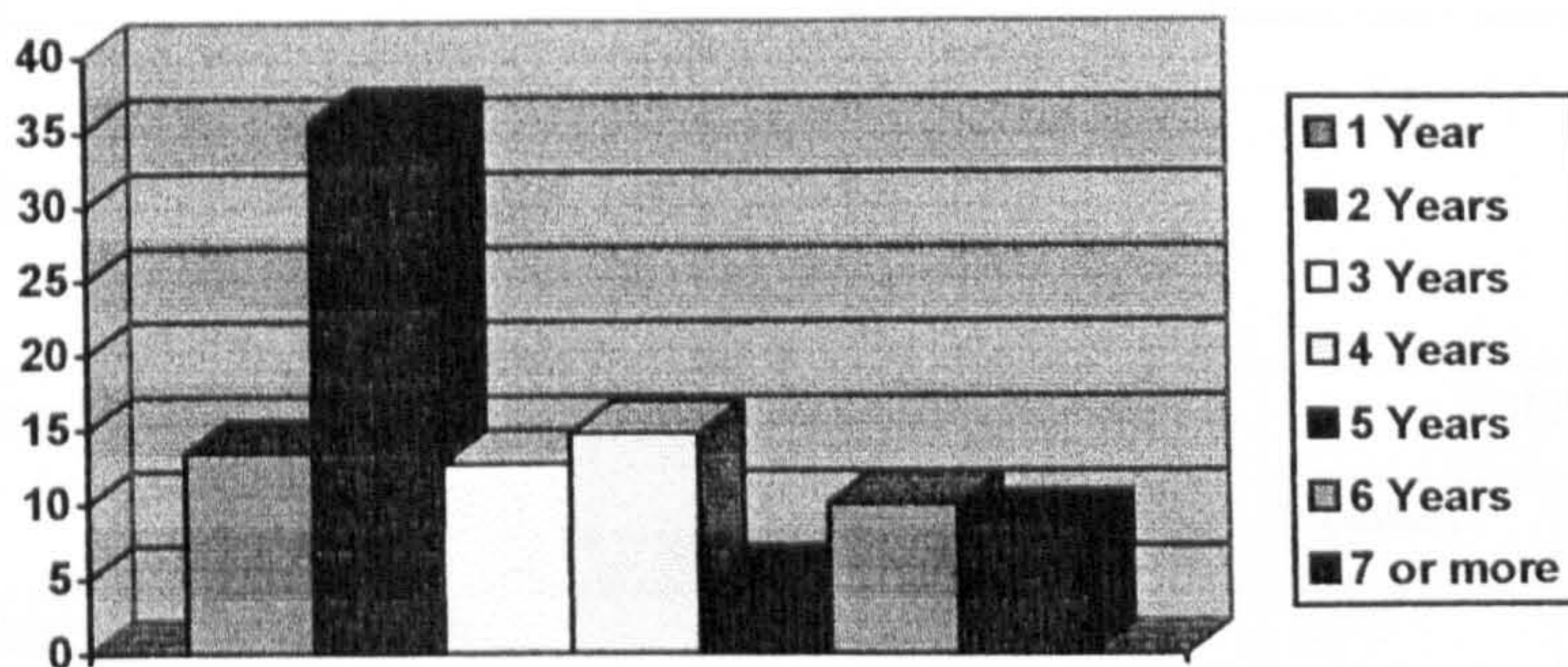
Appendix 12: Membership in extra-KKE organizations during the inter-war period (1918-1936)¹⁰¹⁴



¹⁰¹⁴ Sources: cards with biographical data, Parts1 and 2, in Syriggas Nikos Archive, File1, ELIA

The sample was based on the examination of 102 biographical notes of members (or former members) of organizations/parties that existed outside the Communist Party. The chart is indicative to the extension of membership floating in the time-frame concerned: Only 17 individuals actually remained members of a single organization, whereas another 35 had been members of two. On the contrary, some 50 individuals (out of 102), nearly half the sample, had joined at least three different organizations (out of which 32 had joined three, 12 had joined four, four had joined five, and two had joined six!).¹⁰¹⁵

Appendix 13: Average years of membership in extra-KKE organizations in the inter-war period (1918-1936)¹⁰¹⁶



Therefore we see that 49% of the average stay in an organization was no more than 2 years. Another 32% of the sample had an average membership duration of 3-5 years, whereas the respective percentage for a membership duration more than 6 years was just 19%.

¹⁰¹⁵ It should also be taken into account that several individuals were, in the course of the inter-war period, either expelled (such as in the case of Dervos D, expelled in 1933 from Spartakos, or Kaukalas G –1934- from OKDE), or they voluntarily quit politics, ending their political involvement all together (such as in the case of Sapounas S –1930).

¹⁰¹⁶ Sources: cards with biographical data, Parts1 and 2, in Syriggas Nikos Archive, File1, ELIA

Appendix 14: Temporary settlements of Piraeus (wooden)¹⁰¹⁷

Settlement	Houses	Rooms	Total Rooms	Number of persons housed	
				Families	Persons
Lipasmata	20	150	150	170	605
Anastaseos	30	Various	500	510	1,990
Tampouria	134	32	2,010	2,060	9,300
P Kokkinia	131	-	614	614	2,500
Tzitzifies	-	-	297	300	1,250
Total		3,571		3,654	15,645

Appendix 15: Semi-permanent settlements¹⁰¹⁸

Settlement	Construction	Houses	Houses	Total		No of persons housed	
		(1)	(2)	Houses	Rooms	Families	Persons
N Kokkinia	Wooden	275	2	550	-	760	4,500
Drapetsona	Cement	20	14	280	280	280	1,230

Appendix 16: Voting patterns in selected refugee areas (1926-1936)¹⁰¹⁹

Area/Election	1926			1928			1932			1933			1936		
	L	P	C	L	P	C	L	P	C	L	P	C	L	P	C
Byron	93	2.6	1.6	97.4	2	0.7	83.9	8.8	6.1	73.2	15.8	10.5	76.9	14.1	7.9
Kaisariani	95.2	1.5	1.5	98.5	1.2	0.3	88	5.4	5.5	79	8.5	12	83	8.5	7.6
Nea Ionia	93.7	1.8	1.9	98.1	1.2	0.5	86.3	6.8	6.1	76	11.3	12.4	83.6	9.7	6.2
Nea Kokkinia	94.8	1.7	1.5	98	1.1	0.7	86.7	4.7	6.8	74.4	14.3	11.2	79.5	8.3	10.7
Capital	53.8	41.8	3.8	63.7	33.3	2.2	54.5	38.2	6.5	46.1	44.3	9	48.4	40.9	7.5
Total (nationwide)	46.6	41.7	4.4	63.5	33	2.4	52.7	35.4	5	45.1	45.9	6.1	44.3	47.8	5.9

¹⁰¹⁷ Report of the Ministry of Hygiene, Welfare and Precaution (Engineer Athanasiades) 14/10/1928, (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/132)

¹⁰¹⁸ Report of the Ministry of Hygiene, Welfare and Precaution (Engineer Athanasiades) 14/10/1928, (Archive of E Venizelos, File 173/132)

¹⁰¹⁹ Cited in Maurogenes Papagelopoulos (1999) p122

Appendix 17: Elections 16/1/1936 in Kokkinia¹⁰²⁰

Station	Total	Liberals	Radicals	Populists	Democratic Alert	Kanello- poulos	Kondyles	Metaxas	KKE
1 st	733	589	33	12	22	12	-	-	64
2 nd	733	589	-	12	22	12	33	-	64
3 rd	724	530	50	18	20	22	-	3	77
4 th	726	555	39	10	17	7	-	3	87
5 th	586	466	21	13	9	5	-	3	63
6 th	584	453	20	24	12	4	-	3	67
8 th	272	184	30	9	10	8	-	2	21
9 th	272	184	-	-	10	3	30	3	21
19 th	726	555	-	10	17	11	39	3	87

¹⁰²⁰ *Acropolis 27/1/1936*

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Archive of the Old Parliament

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Historical and Literature Archive of Kavala

General State Archives (Kavala)

Archive of the Diocese

Private Collection of I S Erifillides

Private Collection of N Tsoumpakes

ASKI: Modern Social History Archive (*Archio Sygchronis Koinonikis Istorias*)

CPGA: Communist Party of Greece Archives

ELIA: Greek Literature and Historical Archive (*Elliniko Logotexniko kai Istoriko Archio*)

Greek Parliament Archives (*Archion tis Voulis*)

PRO: Public Record Office

Newspapers and Journals

Acropolis

Anagennisis

Anamorfosis

Antifasistas

Archeion Marxismou

Chronos

Cotton Supply Register

Deltion

Deltion Kapnou

Democratia

Efimeris tis Sizitisewn tis Voulis

Eleftheron Vima

Eleftheros Kirix

Ergasia

Ergatika Dikaia

Ergatikos Agon

Ergatis Lipasmaton

Estia

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Patris
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Paratiritis
Peitharhia
POADA
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