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Stan Draenos, Andreas Papandreou: The Making of a Greek Democrat and Political Maverick

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Stan Draenos,
ANDREAS PAPANDREOU:
THE MAKING OF A GREEK DEMOCRAT AND POLITICAL MAVERICK,
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A genuine historiographical attempt to define the nature of Andreas Papandreou's policies in the 1980s and 1990s and evaluate its legacy remains to be undertaken; in fact, it has not even started. However, his earlier involvement in Greek politics is an affair being closely examined. Stan Draenos' recent biography of Papandreou adds considerably to this literature, as it approaches the issue from Papandreou's personal perspective.

The son of a self-made politician, Andreas Papandreou migrated to the United States early in his life and returned to Greece as an established academic in the early 1960s. Although his first undertaking in Greece was academic – the foundation of an Economic Research Centre at the invitation of the conservative government under Constantinos Karamanlis – he was eventually attracted to politics. In February 1964, he was elected deputy for Achaia, the traditional regional base of his father, Georgios Papandreou, the leader of the Centre Union (CU). It was a broad constellation that inherited mainly the Venizelist and republican tradition of the interwar years, along with left of centre currents oscillating since the 1950s between centrist formations and the communist-led United Democratic Left. The February 1964 election was marked by the landslide majority of the CU, which promised to eliminate authoritarian practices associated with the Civil War, to initiate a policy of redistribution in favour of the lower classes and steer a more independent course on foreign affairs while retaining Greece's NATO membership.

The feasibility of this reformist policy would be put to test very soon, as the CU government was to confront the negative attitude of power centres and institutions identified with the post-Civil War regime. The crown strove to retain what it wrongly considered as its exclusive control over the armed forces. The conservative National Radical Union, realizing its low electoral prospects, hoped to return to government through a constitutionally dubious effort of forming a coalition with a number of CU parliamentarians who were concerned over the government's liberalizing policies and the issue of the prime minister's succession. Groups in the army had a vested interest in the exclusion of centrist officers from the upper echelons of the military hierarchy. Last, but not least, the Americans, though not opposed in principle to a non-conservative government, were watching closely Georgios Papandreou's domestic and foreign record, lest it undermine the

tenets of Greece's Atlanticist and anti-communist orientation.

It is in this context that Stan Draenos, having undertaken thorough archival research, unveils his well-organized and elegant narrative and decodes Andreas Papandreou's transformation from an American-educated liberal economist to a full-fledged Greek politician with radical and nationalist leanings. Although his entry into politics was conventional, as he was elected deputy under his father's wing, the build-up of his political image and power base was unconventional. His political views were relayed to public opinion through carefully staged moves. The Cyprus Question became the platform of articulation of a policy of independence and non-compliance to American wishes. Cyprus was an issue of enormous emotional value to the Greek public. The Zurich settlement of 1959, which terminated the anti-colonial struggle of the Greek-Cypriots, had been perceived by both mainland Greeks and Greek-Cypriots as a NATO-dictated compromise in favour of Turkish interests. In August 1964 the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios III, who followed a policy of non-alliance and cooperated tactically with the Soviet Union, rejected a US plan that provided for the annexation of a great part of the island by Greece in exchange for a base for Turkey on Cypriot soil. Georgios Papandreou had lined up with Nicosia not without equivocation, as he felt that the Acheson Plan was something really close to his cherished union ("enosis" in Greek) of Cyprus with the "national centre". His policy of rejection of the plan was, as a matter of fact, formulated under the realization that Athens was not able to impose its will on the archbishop and the Greek-Cypriots despite the deployment of Greek military units on the island. Andreas' approach was rather different. He not only accepted Makarios' authority as undisputed, but he also articulated Greece's opposition to the plan as an indication of Greece's independence, which reversed a foreign policy of compliance to NATO followed since the 1940s.

The CU government's eventual clash with the crown over the issue of control of the armed forces in July 1965 sharpened Andreas Papandreou's ideas and discourse. It also served as the element that crystallized his radical platform and perfected his political machine, a network not necessarily identical with the CU's pre-existing ones. He elaborated his scheme of the Establishment, a combination of the crown, the conservative opposition, elements of the army and the bureaucracy, the economic oligarchy and the Americans, which sought to impede the advance of emerging people's forces towards development, greater equality and independence. His discourse was accompanied by a relentless mass mobilization, which despite his rhetoric was not revolutionary in character, as his pre-junta analysis was not Marxist. It might even be suggested that it was a politically successful formula conducive to a country that, as a result of urbanization and continuous growth since the mid-1950s, was composed of many lower-middle-class citizens and farmers who wished to enjoy tolerable

living standards; whereas, despite the influx of foreign investment in the 1960s, Greece retained a low level of industrialization and thus a small working class.

Until the final months of 1966 Papandreou was not out of step with his father, despite their obvious differences of substance and emphasis. Their divergence occurred as a result of the quest for a political settlement. Draenos, with an eye for detail, looks scrupulously into the process of disengagement, which was neither completed nor fully reversed but overtaken by the coup: in December 1966 Georgios Papandreou agreed with the king and the leader of the conservatives, Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, that a caretaker government would undertake to conduct elections after five months. The elder Papandreou accepted a system of proportional representation that might preclude a CU parliamentary majority in an effort to allay the crown's fears. Georgios Papandreou's strategy seemed to Andreas dangerous and an unwarranted compromise. He publicly denounced the accord, followed by at least one-third of CU deputies. In a manner that manifested his personal magnetism, he was compelled to back down after his father's threat that he would be expelled from the party, but his image as an uncompromising leader was not tarnished. His public differentiation had proved to be a sufficient reminder of his platform, and he was able to resume mass mobilization, which clearly annoyed the crown and the conservatives. This led to their decision to overthrow the caretaker government and appoint a conservative one to conduct the election of May 1967 and possibly implement not clearly defined "emergency" measures in case of a CU landslide. The agonizing indecision of the king, the conservatives and the generals was terminated by the ruthless seizure of power by a group of colonels who were involved in the Army General Staff's planning.

Andreas Papandreou's public discourse in the final months before the April 1967 coup was indeed threatening to his opponents, an indication of the polarization and the vicious circle that had been the dominant feature in Greek politics from 1965 to 1967. Still, it should be kept in the historian's and the general reader's mind that Papandreou was operating under the threat of prosecution over the ASPIDA affair, a contingency that was kept purposefully open by his conservative opponents in order to put pressure on the dynamic leader of the revamped centre-left. Thus, whilst Papandreou's rhetoric and strategy of mass mobilization should not be dismissed easily as factors in the polarization that marked the period before the coup, his opponents, the crown, the army and the conservatives, should be burdened with the institutional and political turmoil they helped to create, as they were not really prepared to accept the essence of the democratic game, the alternation of power. Moreover, taking into account the role the United States had played in the post-Civil War political system and the prestige and connections the Americans retained with the Greek élite, they share a part of the responsibility in not preventing the king and the conservatives from the fateful course

they adopted. Although according to available evidence the United States did not instigate the coup, the Americans were not neutral observers, since they had interests and strongly held opinions on Greek political developments. This is a point vindicated by Draenos' research. Washington shared Greek fears with regard to Papandreou's intentions towards the Atlantic alliance, and the US national security apparatus was apprehensive of a possible Greek drift to neutralism. American policy-makers were influenced by an analysis that held the view that modernization in the developing world generated demands and mass mobilization and was thus accompanied by political polarization and institutional strains. In this context, Samuel Huntington argued, democracy would not necessarily be the political outcome of modernity. In this mindset, the Johnson administration preferred a course of accommodating the junta. With hindsight, the experience of socialist victory and rule after 1981 proved these fears groundless. This is a story that Draenos and others might follow in future.

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