

## **Europeanism or Atlanticism? Perceptions of the “West” by Greek intellectuals in the early Cold war period.**

**Antigoni-Despoina Poimenidou**

The end of the Second World war marked, the emergence of a world that was trying to balance on a radically new basis. On a political level, the polycentric balance of power system was replaced by a bipolar one with the USA and USSR as its main pillars, which were to play a leading role in the post-war era.

Under these circumstances, Greece was called to redefine its place internationally and choose a side on the emerging Cold War map. In one of the first manifestations of competition in Cold War terms, Greece, with the Percentages Agreement between Churchill and Stalin (1944), joined the British zone of influence. However, in no case was peace secured, resulting in a civil war. This made Greece's turn to the Americans inevitable. The strategic choice of the West, was a fundamental principle of all Greek governments and, more generally, of all political forces except the communist Left. The Greek politicians looked forward to the country's organic integration into the wider defense planning of its western allies, which occurred with the accession of Greece as a NATO full member in 1952, garnering the approval of almost the entire Greek Parliament. However, the priority given to the USA, based on financial aid and defense protection from the mid-1950s, would partially shift to Europe towards which Greece was traditionally orientated. The perspective of the European vision that was being formed at the same time also played a major role. The establishment of the European Economic Community presented the practical choice for closer cooperation. The Association with the EEC in 1961 was a crucial choice for strengthening Greece's position in the West.

But what was the point of view of Greek intellectuals?

Similarly, to the political scene, the Greek intellectuals were also fragmented into various groups, the most basic ideological division existing between the intellectuals of the Left and the so-called "bourgeois". The “bourgeois” group was far from being homogenous, as within it we find representatives who are politically integrated from the Centre to the wider Right, these intellectuals represent in their entirety a common

request: a much-needed change that required the modernization of the country following the norms and values of the West. In this presentation I will focus on the three personalities that represent the core of the group: Yorgos Theotokas, Panagiotis Kanellopoulos and Konstantinos Tsatsos. Their education – French in Theotokas’ case and German in Kanellopoulos and Tsatsos’ – was reflected in their thinking, resulting in identifying themselves as both European and Greek citizens since the interwar period. Tsatsos called himself “corresponding member of the European Community” whereas Kanellopoulos views himself a representative of the spirit that characterizes the western world. The Cold war and the new international conditions caused them to advocate the belonging to the West, the term now having been adapted to the new ideological and political data.

The Cold War was perceived as a conflict between two, as Theotokas mentions, diametrically opposed, worlds, extending to all aspects of social, political, economic and intellectual life. Tsatsos, on the other hand, believed that, despite the complexity of the international relations of his time and the political, economic and military factors that undoubtedly played an important role, the Cold War was, at its core, an ideological war. The legitimizing basis of East and West, that is, the communist theory and the Western liberal tradition, were the key to the group's Western orientation. Starting from the philosophical view of the freedom of the individual as the supreme goal of human existence, Tsatsos strongly opposed Marxist theory and its practical manifestation, communist regimes. He believed that the ontological foundations of this worldview were fundamentally different from those of Western civilization. On the other hand, he considered that the western world, despite its problems, was an advanced stage of historical development and the most suitable ground for the gradual progress towards justice and freedom. This political and moral freedom was for Kanellopoulos the hallmark of the western world.

But what were the specifics of their Western orientation? Could we argue that they favored a European-centric orientation over an Atlantic-centric one?

First of all, they had all expressed their favor over supranational forms. True to his political beliefs, Theotokas envisioned a globalized society, as according to his philosophical thinking, humanity was advancing into ever-wider unions at all levels. Similar traces can be found in Tsatsos’ philosophical thought according to which the

historical reality had marked the creation and maintenance of large political and economic formations that pushed in this direction.

They all viewed the United States as an integral part of the Western tradition that expressed the humanitarian values on which the historical course of the West was based: freedom, equality, social justice and equal opportunities, critical thinking and a commitment to the moral and spiritual value of the individual. Yorgos Theotokas had always been a supporter of the United States. The New Deal was considered by him as the model for overcoming the global crisis. In the mid-1950s not only did he consider the United States as an integral part of the Western culture, but also as the most progressive. Considering the nation-state form obsolete, he projected the US federal model as the form of organization that could best meet the challenges of the time. The other two intellectuals also believed that the Western world had to rally around the United States, which, at least in the first years of Cold war, was the only one capable of defending the Western interests on a political, military and economic level.

However, their approach to the United States had always been coming from a European point of view. That means that they believed in close relations with the USA but always within limits and conditions. The fact that Europe depended heavily on the Americans to ensure its existence, and that the United States, on their part, supported Europe from collapsing financially and morally, proved the inequality between the two parties.

Having addressed the question of the future of Europe already during the Second world war, they strongly believed that European unification was a historical necessity. Tsatsos, more specifically, believed that the ideal would be to start from a loose form of confederation that would later evolve into a federation. He proposed a full cooperation with the USA, in order to form a stable force, which could face the danger from the East, while Europe, united, would be a decisive factor in international relations. The creation of the EEC at this historic moment, although it was far from these intellectuals' vision for full European integration, remained an important and substantial step towards that direction.

From their perspective, though, the background of European unification was not economics or politics but the common cultural contributions of its members. In that

sense, the European political community would not by-pass the individual states, but would give them a fuller chance of survival and development. The elements that made up the common European spirit were the ancient Greek thought, the Roman law and the Christian teaching that gave the European value system a special character. Consequently, Greece, a key part of the European culture, could not be left out of the European venture.

On a different note, another factor that increases the importance of these intellectuals lies on the fact that they did not simply influence the Greek public debates, but also had a crucial role in shaping Greece's foreign and European policy. Kanellopoulos, active in politics since 1935 and former member of the wartime government-in-exile, was minister of National Defense in 1952-, and two-times Vice Prime minister - from 1954 to 1956 and from 1959 to 1963. Tsatsos, on the other hand, took over the portfolio of the Ministry of Education in 1949, was Minister for the Prime Minister's office in the Karamanlis governments between 1956 and 1961. Theotokas was politically orientated to the Centre and close to Yorgos Papandreou. He was the author of the ideological declaration of the Democratic Socialist Party that was founded in the 1940s. He was two times Director of the National Theater – from 1945 to 1946 and from 1952 to 1953, and was personally invited by Karamanlis to become the first President of the newly founded State Theater of Northern Greece in 1961.

Their identity as both intellectuals and public political figures allowed them to enlarge the strictly political agenda and promote their point of views and practical efforts concerning Greece and the West to people from different backgrounds on various occasions. For example, in 1952, Tsatsos visited ten American universities under the auspices of the Fulbright Foundation, while in 1959, he had the opportunity to cooperate closely with the French minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux, another important European intellectual and politician. Theotokas, on the other hand, in his capacity both as intellectual and director of the National Theatre, also traveled to the United States from August 1952 to early February 1953, after an invitation from the State Department, allowing him to give lectures and interviews on the situation and the role of intellectuals in Greece. Both published extremely important books on the US political system – Theotokas viewing it as a model for a future, federal united Europe.

Moreover, Tsatsos was the closest associate of Karamanlis, the prime minister who achieved Greece's association with the EEC in 1961 and its accession in 1979, when Tsatsos was serving as President of the Republic. Kanellopoulos held an equally important position within the government, being the Vice Prime minister, in the year 1961 that saw the peak of both options for Greece. In April, the Prime Minister, Konstantinos Karamanlis, visited the USA, whereas in July, Kanellopoulos was the one who signed the Association Agreement with the EEC.

On this point, we should also recognize the importance of Theotokas' numerous public interventions. Firstly, after his return from the USA, he wrote articles with his impressions, and his political thought on the American political system, that despite the criticism he received, inaugurated a public dialogue. The second case took place between 1958 and 1961, with his support to the Association with the EEC. The public dialogue with other leading intellectuals of the Centre but also the reactions, this dialogue provoked, set the framework around which the perceptions of the country's political and intellectual leadership were formed, significantly strengthening the efforts of Karamanlis governments to achieve the Association, as the support of important personalities of the Centre gave this policy a broader social character, thus ensuring its success.

In conclusion, it is safe to argue that their perception of the West was not one-dimensional. On one hand, the presence of the United States within the western world was viewed as mandatory and its role very important. They fully supported the alliance between Greeks and Americans. They were ardent admirers of the American federal and political system which was viewed as a model for Europe. On the other, they perceived a united Europe as a necessity for the future, and therefore supported Greece's role within the European family. From this perspective, Atlanticism and Europeanism were regarded as complementary, not antagonistic notions; participation in the Western alliance, relations with the USA and the full integration in the emerging Western European organizations were, according to these intellectuals, the key-elements for the country's future.