

Varieties of anti-communism: American Cultural Diplomacy and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Greece, 1950-1967



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**ANTI-COMMUNISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY:
AN INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Objectives, Assumptions and Context



- Aim: To reconstruct the *distinct, but overlapping, strategies and conceptualizations of anticommunism formulated in Greece from the post civil war period to the 1967 military coup; to highlight the transatlantic interactions that defined anti-communism in Greece.*
- The national context of anti-communism: After the final defeat of the pro-communist guerillas in 1949, anticommunism was incorporated in the official ideology of the post-civil war state → the so-called ideology of 'national-mindedness': a version of post-war anti-communist ideology with transnational features common to the United States and Western Europe. Contradictions: tension between the values of freedom and democracy for one and the value of security for another.
- The enemy construction was based both on ideological and national terms which allowed for the perception of communists both as internal and as external enemies, alongside with a set of institutional and legal practices that allowed for discrimination against citizens (imprisonment, exile, exclusion from the civil service, etc.) based on their political beliefs.
- The anticommunist campaign was implemented both through institutional and parastate channels, while legislation, intelligence mechanisms and public safety were reformed based on the US pattern of the 'national security state'.

Objectives, Assumptions and Context



The national context of anti-communism:

- The country's reconstruction, institutional reorganization and economic development in the post-war years was interwoven with anticommunism as a 'social practice' due to the principal role played by specific agents such as the army, the monarchy, the Church and the American Aid Mission.
- Post-civil war anticommunism was to a great extent orchestrated by and mediated through the Greek state; its ideological and economic resources as well as its civil order and intelligence mechanisms were decisive in the shaping of anticommunism.
 - Consequently, the space for the development of liberal anticommunism from below was extremely limited. National-mindedness as a prevailing ideology proved unable to incorporate effectively claims for political, social and cultural modernization.
- In addition to national factors, anti-communism in Greece was influenced decisively by international factors. As a result of the formulation of the Truman Doctrine (1947) and of the Marshall Plan, the Greek Civil War and the country's reconstruction endeavours were framed as symbols of the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism and as a 'test case' both for American hegemony of the Free World and for the ideology of modernization.
- US cultural diplomacy functioned as the ideological and cultural supplement to the Marshall Plan

Anti-Communism and US Cultural Diplomacy in Greece



Objectives for US cultural diplomacy in Greece: a) to restrain the popularity of communist ideology, b) to challenge the positive image of the USSR, c) to enhance the development of pro-Atlantic and pro-American attitudes, d) to mitigate Greek nationalistic and anti-American trends, e) to promote the goal of economic and social modernization in relation to American patterns of development and consumption.

- The geopolitical and ideological context (geographical proximity to the communist bloc countries, relative appeal of communism and leftist ideology during the Second World War and the post-war years) was decisive in the perception of Cold War Greece as a contested ground.
- Inherent **incompatibility** between the anticommunist agenda and the agenda of modernization. Example: The selection process of representatives of Greek elites by American cultural diplomacy: the criterion of anticommunist commitment prevailed over social and cultural modernization.
- Moreover, association between the initiatives of American cultural diplomacy and the Greek post-civil war establishment influenced negatively the American image among segments of Greek society, thus preventing the identification of progressive social strata and of the intelligentsia with Americanism.
- US cultural diplomacy failed to identify social demands for democratization, social mobility and modernization as such and misinterpreted them as overlapping with pro-communism
- Contradictory projects sponsored by US cultural diplomacy: e.g. the 1957 special exchange project for 'Leading Greek Librarians' vs. the 1959 selection of police officer Evangelos Karabetsos for a foreign leader grant and the modernisation project of the Greek aiming to enhance its capacity to confront communists or suspected communists.

Anti-Communism and US Cultural Diplomacy in Greece



- The 1958 national election as a milestone:
 - The leftist party EDA [United Democratic Left] became the major opposition party gaining 25% of the vote.
 - US concerns on the appeal of communism in Greece. The President's Committee on Information Activities Abroad ('Sprague Committee') December 1960: challenged the assumption that economic growth and the rise in living standards would suffice to defeat communism in the free world. It suggested the strengthening of anti-communist campaigns abroad with new propaganda programs.
 - The 1959 US Educational Exchange report: 10 years after the end of the Civil War, Greece remains 'extremely vulnerable' to communist political, economic, and cultural pressures. Goal: the creation of a transatlantic identity among the Greek people; to 'foster and strengthen the conviction that Greece's interests, aspirations and dreams as a people and as a nation lie solidly within the framework of NATO and her other western alliances' and to 'contribute to the development in Greece of a broader and more effective spirit of unity, hopefulness, courage and determination within the community of free nations'. Also: to construct the 'moral and psychological attitudes' necessary in order to combat the spread and the appeal of communism in Greece.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom in Greece and its relationship to US Cultural Diplomacy



CCF Identity

- Founded in Berlin in 1950 with the initiative of prominent intellectuals such as Arthur Koestler, Melvin J. Lasky, George Orwell, Sidney Hook, etc.
- A significant contribution to Western Cold War ideology, as well as to the means by which the Cultural Cold War was fought.
- Its presence in Greece was weak: inability, to form an official committee in Athens **and** absence of an original intellectual production in Greek.
- CCF in Greece was represented by the unofficial and behind the scenes activities of Manolis Korakas, a socialist and fierce anti-communist.
- Memory politics in post-war Greece as an interpretive key: difficulty for establishing an encounter between the anti-fascist camp and the non-communist left. The vital role of the Communist-led resistance movement during the Occupation (1941–1944) led to an official silencing of the Resistance in the post-civil war years. A post-war consensus based on the myth of Resistance as a unifying element failed to materialize in the Greek case.
- Unofficial collaboration between the CCF and US cultural diplomacy in Greece. Networking and overlapping networks of influence

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- The CCF perspective on Greek post-civil war politics.
- Interpretation of the 1958 elections:
 - Greek disillusionment with the West (and more importantly with the US and Britain, on the Cyprus question), the prevailing quest for détente in the cold war rivalry, and the development of an anti-royalist trend that also led to the discrediting of the old political personnel.
 - The CCF estimated that Greek political and intellectual elites had become rather autonomous with regard to US foreign policy.
 - Criticism to US cultural diplomacy arguing that it had failed to approach Greek intellectuals in an appropriate manner and to spur their interest in the American way of life.
 - The CCF oriented itself to avoiding any affiliation with US sponsored cultural diplomacy.

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- Greek politics and CCF strategy.
- Early 1960s: Ideological and political developments posed new challenges for the shadowy presence of the CCF in Greece.
- The political crisis that had emerged in Greece since the disputed 1961 elections 1961 triggered a bitter conflict within the anticommunist camp, between the Right and the Centre: constitutional, anti-royalist implications.
- The CCF failed to grasp that for their desired target audience, the centrist-leaning liberal intellectuals, the main front was internal and involved the following: i) monarchy and its contempt for its constitutional limitations, ii) the post-civil war power structure built on an alliance between the monarchy, the army and the American Embassy, as a rather autonomous player in Greek politics.
- Eventually, the political and social reaction to the democratic impasse reunited, to an extent, the electoral base of the Centre and the Left that had split in the civil war.
- Militant anti-communism was not a priority for centrist liberals.

Concluding Remarks



- Overview of US cultural diplomacy in Greece: difficulty in maintaining balance between the goals of modernization and anti-communism. Inconsistencies in policy implementation and an obvious tension between a progressive and a reactionary policy agenda.
- US cultural diplomacy was keen to interpret the goal of diminishing the appeal of communism in Greece primarily as a propaganda problem while the social factors that nurtured the appeal of leftist ideology in post-war Greece were rather neglected.
- Anti-communist bias in the identification of target elites and potential leader groups.
- US cultural diplomacy failed to disassociate American image from the weaknesses of the Greek 'sickly' post-civil war democracy.
- Unofficial but incomplete collaboration between US cultural diplomacy and the CCF in Greece.
- The CCF had a rather limited role in post-civil war Greece in relation to US cultural diplomacy. Incompatibility of the means employed by these two actors aiming to promote different varieties of anticommunism. US cultural diplomacy was unable to promote the cause of liberal anticommunism with consistency.