

D. George Kousoulas, Modern Greece: Profile of a Nation (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974) 300pp + xvi.

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D. George Kousoulas is Professor of Government at Howard University and author of books, pamphlets and articles dealing with contemporary Greece, the Greek Communist party, the politics and government of the country and other general works. He has also been a political advisor to the Papadopoulos government who has consistently explained and rationalized the existence of dictatorship in Greece ~~and~~ Congressional hearings, television debates and newspaper articles.

His book, contrary to his claim, is not in my opinion an attempt to present "a fairly impartial ... history of modern Greece." Rather it is a competent apologia of the authoritarian forces of that country. In the 300 readable pages of his book, Mr. Kousoulas seeks to point up the major trends in the tortuous history of the Greek people. He discerns cyclical trends between periods of absolutism on one hand and periods of political bickering and instability on the other.

Kousoulas' philosophy of good government is to strike the golden balance between "effective government" on one hand and "democratic freedoms" on the other. With the exception of gifted and effective leaders such as King George I, Charilaos Trikoupi, Eleftherios Venizelos, Ioannis Metaxas and Constantinos Karamanlis, the author finds the "normal" political condition in Greece as one of corruption, demagoguery, petty and unrealistic chauvinism and small-time opportunism.

Above the confusion and din of these political controversies the Greek military is portrayed as a "sensitive receiver of public sentiment in Greece", and dictatorial periods are seen as interludes of stability in a country that has not learned to govern itself according to British or American models (implicitly assumed to be the prototypes of modern and civilized political behavior).

Kousoulas seems to have an aversion for multi-party (proportional representation) type politics and assumes that two party systems or dictatorships provide the "strong government" necessary for economic development and long-range planning. He does not offer, however, any convincing evidence correlating economic growth and social satisfaction with one kind of polity or another.

As is often the case with apologias for authoritarianism the responsibility for the coups is placed on the victims rather than on the perpetrators of the coups. Kousoulas does not seem to realize that most

democratic systems are quite fragile and vulnerable when faced by a determined group of Putchists which takes control of the nerve centers of power.

If there is <sup>a</sup> coup, our author reasons then democracy must have failed or been self-destroyed. This is an unfortunate distortion, especially in the case of the 1967 coup, which clearly came to prevent the outcome of elections and generally to stifle a trend toward participatory democracy both within the parties and among the masses.

Both the Metaxas (1936-41) and the Papadopoulos (1967-73) dictatorships are treated with kid-gloves, and they are portrayed as popular and populist regimes -- contrary to the overwhelming amount of evidence that points to the contrary.

The problems of historical interpretation in this volume are many. Let me end with just a few examples:

The Papadopoulos constitution of 1968 is paraded as "modern and democratic" despite contrary findings of legal experts of the Council of Europe; Papadopoulos is credited with wise and socially redistributive economic policies contrary to a record that has favored the privileged (domestic and foreign) at the relative expense of workers and farmers; the "communist danger" is greatly exaggerated and advanced as the main justification for the authoritarian deviation of 1967; a uniquely unpopular Papadopoulos regime is portrayed as a welcome respite for "many" crisis-weary Greeks; human rights violations including torture are virtually ignored; the 1967 coup is presented as a spontaneous take-over by some concerned colonels, when in fact Papadopoulos and company had been conspiring at least since 1957 for the take-over; the U.S. involvement in (and decisive support for) the dictatorships is carefully underplayed; and -- finally -- the vital subject of Greek-Army conspiratorial politics from 1943 to the present is not discussed or explained.

A book which views the parties to the 1946-49 Greek Civil War as "Greeks" vs. "Communists" cannot be considered fair or impartial by any standards. The greatest utility, therefore, of Professor Kousoulas' historical survey is for the student who seeks to identify the attitudes and perceptions of Greek conservatives of the authoritarian orientation.

I would end by suggesting a slight amendment to the otherwise admirably suited subtitle of this book. "Profile of Nation ... As viewed from the Far Right".