

TWO GREEK WRITERS

- P.N. VANEZIS

- V.I. KAPERAROS

AND TWO NEW BOOKS

Both the above authors are English manque - i.e. they are in the stream of English culture but not of it. They combine the seemingly contradictory (in fact intellectually, harmonious) qualities of passion and detachment.

Involved but not uncritical.

Both have studied in England and have their homes here. But are married to British girls - Dr. Vanezis to a Londoner of Greek parenthood, Mr. Kapernaros to a Scottish girl. Both are bilingual, equally fluent in Greek and English.

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Dr. Vanezis was born in Cyprus. For the past eight years he has been the Cultural Attaché of the Cyprus High Commission in London. "Makarios - Faith and Power" published by Aberald-Schuman Ltd., and retailing at £2.00, is his first book. Two others are on the stocks, one ready for launching.

"Makarios - Faith and Power" is a brilliant first. It is warmly introduced by the British public by that literary good-causes-addict, James Cameron. Mr. Cameron is a sincere believer in Anglo-Greek friendship - it would be surprising for a man of his humanity, if indeed this were not so - which he feels will endure whatever the temporary or continuing follies of the politicians. Dr. Vanezis's book, by examining issues dispassionately, by revealing fact and historical reality from underneath the tangle of contentious casuistry and misconceptions, makes its own contribution to this end.

Dr. Vanezis's central theme is Makarios guiding the destinies of his people. He does not go beyond the areas of his brief. He does not delve into Makarios the man, the prelate, the politician. We get no insights into the workings of the Archbishop's mind, into the psychological mechanics of his driving daemon, into his loyalties, beliefs and political "faith". Important as these may be, they are not touched upon in this book which is basically a study and not a biography. We get instead Makarios, not compartmentalised but whole, as the expression and embodiment of Cypriot history. Here we see both the man

and the forces which fashioned him.

With bold brush-strokes Dr. Vanezis gives a clear picture of the historical background of present day Cyprus and the role, structure and religious content of its ancient Church. The Church of Cyprus is one of the oldest in Christendom. Its functionaries have, on the whole, always been part of the people. The priests are appointed by the communities (parishes) and in the villages they virtually are chosen from among the members of the village community. Church funds are administered by the parishoners. Church structure is not something alien or imposed from above or from outside - it is part of the people's society. The Bishops, including the Archbishop, are elective. They are voted to office. The Church of Cyprus thus rests on grass-roots democracy. In addition, it has been a "fighting" Church. Throughout the centuries of alien oppression, it provided a national shield and became the defender of and spokesman for the people. Hence its present national role which the Archbishop, as head of the church-Synod, whether he is active as a politician or not, unquestionably personifies.

Dr. Vanezis examines these developments. He traces the history of the Church down to our times and then through the EOKA armed struggle for Enosis under the leadership of General Grivas, But within the overall national leadership of Makarios, to the independence of the island and the subsequent revolt of the Turkish minority which has made Cyprus for the last seven years a charge of the United Nations. All these issues are faced squarely, ^{they are} and coolly examined. Dr. Vanezis does not plead lack of historical perspective to avoid examining current problems. Neither does he take cover behind his official identity to stifle criticism where he feels that criticism is necessary. The result is a book - a veritable tour de force - which represents a significant addition to the bibliography of Cyprus, which argues cogently and fairly the Cypriot case before the bar of public opinion, having as ^{its} ~~the~~ principal exhibit the impressive, bearded, dignified figure of the President of Cyprus.

Undoubtedly the Cyprus problem is entering once again upon an acute phase. Anxieties are surfacing with insistent clamour. The Turkish position is becoming more intransigent and party divisions among the Greeks are widening dangerously. What next? That is the instinctive question on everybody's lips. Dr. Vanezis does not (cannot) supply an answer though tentatively he suggests one. But all well-wishers of Cyprus and everybody who is interested in the Cyprus question will find this book stimulating, informative and immensely useful.

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From Vanezis and Cyprus to Kapernaros and Mani.

Mr. Vrasidas Kapernaros is a scientist who has progressed through art (films and the B.B.C.) to the City of London!

He was born in Alexandria (during the first half of this century Alexandria was a polyglot city with a number of thriving foreign communities of which the Greek was the most numerous and not the least important) of Greek parents who came from Mani. Predictably, Mr. Kapernaros makes his writing debut with a book about the people of Mani - title "Oi Maniates".

Thirteen years ago, Mr. Patrick Leigh Fermor published a book on Mani. It was an instant success. Author, people, the morphology of the land and its fecund history combined to paint a picture of this mountainous peninsula of Southern Peloponnese - the centre finger of land stretching south of ancient Laconia to the jugged promontory of Cape Matapan where the Homeric "Entrance to Hades" is situated - which has remained memorable. Since then, many people have discovered Mani and the miroloyia of its women.

Few, however, have dealt with the Maniates as such - i.e. the people of Mani, their history, their habits, their fierce code of honour, their unstainable pride (or else!) their ~~gauger-like~~ geiger-like sensitivity to anything smacking of danger, personal affront or attack on one's self-respect, their courage, their elemental love of freedom which permits of no truck with alien domination of whatever form, their volcanic passions. Mr. Kapernaros deals with all these with scholarly attention to detail, based on wide reading and personal contact, with

scrupulous regard for the truth and also with love. His narrative is shot through with illuminating flashes of understanding which help to lift the book above the level of study and make it a work of art. Detail is never allowed to obscure the general impression.

To a Greek, of course, Mani is one of the places hallowed by Greek history. It was never completely conquered. It remained a bastion of freedom. Repeated Turkish efforts failed to subdue ^{we} its indomitable inhabitants - men and women, for women also fought. The first successful attack against the Turkish position during the Greek Revolution was launched from Mani by the Maniates. The stony, sun-baked area has provided inspiration and example to all the Greeks. The author guides us with expert knowledge through these developments and spreads before us the living reality of contemporary Mani, still picturesque, still replete with ferocious human (man and woman) pride.

Mr. Kapernaros's book is written in Greek. There would not have been a place for it here were it not for the fact that the ^{author} is preparing a fuller version in English. It will be published, I understand, in the near future. If the Greek text is anything to go by, I am certain that an improved and enlarged English edition will prove a work of total fascination.

DOROS ALASTOS

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The Books:

1. Dr. P.N. VANEZIS: Magarios: Faith and Power. Abelard-Schuman Ltd.
8 King St. London, W.C.2. Price £2.00
2. V.N. KAPERAROS: Oi Maniates (in Greek). Distributors: Agora,
66 Inverness Mews, London, W.2. Price £1.60.