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Nationalism, Natural Gas, Bi-communal Struggles: Positions on the Federation (Brochure)

Historical note

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Content

Nationalism, Natural Gas, Bi-communal Struggles: Positions on the Federation

As an anti-fascist collective we believe that the history of fascism in Cyprus is intertwined with the history of nationalisms and bicommunal conflicts. The genealogy of both fascism and the hegemony of the nationalist right on the island is traced through the rise of irredentist nationalisms in the 1950s, the murders of leftists from their community and members of the other community by EOKA and TMT, the paramilitary gangs of 1963 and 1967, the coup of 1974 and the final realization of the dream of Turkish nationalism. The political ancestors of fascism in Cyprus are none other than its national heroes, none other than those responsible for the conflicts, the division and repression of the working class, the present political cesspool in which the island finds itself. The struggle against fascism is therefore necessarily a struggle against nationalism and all the consequences it has caused.

The struggle against fascism in Cyprus can only be a struggle for a federal island. We consider the passage to a federal Cyprus a necessary step in the struggle against the political hegemony of nationalism and the division of the working class on the island. We are aware of the problems inherent in both the negotiations of the political leaders and the framework of the “solution from above”. But we do not see this passage as a “solution” - a solution would require the elimination of a problem, the successful outcome of a cause. On the contrary, we perceive the “solution” as a passage, as a means to fight the problem together with the Turkish Cypriots, as the beginning of our own cause. This passage is necessary from an anti-fascist, anti-nationalist, class and ecological point of view. As long as there is a Cyprus Problem, nationalism will be rampant in the political discourse and thinking of the indigenous population. The recent vote in favour of commemorating the 1950 Enosis “referendum” by the parties of the “centre” and on the initiative of the neo-Nazis (with the convenient abstention of DISY) demonstrates the urgency of the demolition of the ethnocentric worldview that wants to be covered by the arms of the “motherlands”.

As long as the Cyprus Problem exists, education will continue to be the teaching of ethnic hatred, irredentist nationalism, the teaching of “I do not forget”, of which the ultimate goal is national purity

on the island by any means. As long as there is a Cyprus Problem, militarism will remain the political expression of the true desire of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot nationalism: the state of readiness for war at any moment. The barrels will continue to block our marches, the borders will continue to block our struggles, the watch posts will continue to take our best years. As long as there is a Cyprus Problem we will not experience class struggles beyond the nation.

We recognise that the process for the resolution of the Cyprus Problem is driven by geopolitical and economic interests. The natural gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean make, for a section of capital, a possible solution to the Cyprus Problem an attractive option in terms of exploiting the deposits. The transport of natural gas from Israel to Turkey with the prospect of supplying areas in Europe, as has already been proposed, necessarily passes through the Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which favours a federal Cyprus. It should be noted here that Israel, in addition to its recent policy of rapprochement with Turkey, maintains its alliance with the Cypriot and Greek states. Also, the cost of transporting Cyprus' EEZ deposits through Greece makes the project unaffordable, making transport through Turkey a much more realistic and economically attractive option.

It is therefore a fact that for a part of Cypriot, Turkish and Greek capital, the solution of the Cyprus Problem is an economic and geopolitical pursuit. Furthermore, a possible solution would be a stabilising factor for the West in the troubled Eastern Mediterranean, while it would reduce both Russia's strategic influence and Europe's dependence on Russian energy reserves, through the aforementioned Israel-Cyprus-Turkey-Greece cooperation for the transport of natural gas to Europe. Let us not forget that under any eventual plan, the British bases remain on the island, albeit to a lesser extent, which makes the solution legitimate for the British and their allied forces who use the bases for raids on Eastern Mediterranean countries. The solution is also legitimate for a part of the GC and TC capital for a multitude of reasons, such as the opening of the Turkish/European market respectively.

On the other hand, we recognize both that the geopolitical interests of the powers concerned can be settled in ways beyond the federalization of Cyprus, and that another significant part of capital and the ruling class from all parties involved is against a possible solution. The Greek-Turkish geopolitical disputes over the sovereignty of the Aegean, which have been expressed for some time now as a tawdry repetition in Imia, make it obvious not only that the Cyprus Problem is not the only issue on the agenda of the relationship between the two countries, but also that no one can guarantee that geopolitical developments will unfold peacefully on the island. It is obvious that the "motherlands" are not fundamentally interested in peaceful coexistence, nor in partition. What they are interested in is the best possible preservation and promotion of their geopolitical and economic interests – this can mean anything from supporting a possible federalisation plan for Cyprus, formal partition with trade agreements allowing the exploitation of the EEZs, to the launching of new war plans.

At the same time, as mentioned above, there are also parts of local capital and the ruling class that oppose any possible federalisation. Entire political careers have been built on the struggle to ensure the non-resolution of the Cyprus Problem – north and south of the Green Line. Those voices that will suffer a heavy defeat are of course the ones that are heard loudest on the rejectionist front that dominates public discourse. The same, of course, is true of business voices that see themselves as having more to lose than to gain the day after a solution to the Cyprus Problem.

The basic argument of the discourse produced both by these voices of the bourgeoisie, which have much to lose politically and/or economically, and by a significant part of the left (local and not only) is that Bizonal Bicommunal Federation (BBF) is racist because it divides the population on the basis of ethnic origin. The argument is both ridiculous and dangerous. It is ridiculous because BBF is historically introduced as a result of ethnic hatred and violence, not as a promoter of them. That is,

BBF is necessary precisely because nationalist ideology gave birth to nations and caused the events of 1958, 1963, 1967 and 1974. The consequence of these events is the need to ensure the autonomy of each community. On the other hand, however, the racist BBF argument is also dangerous because it is adopted and promoted by the factions that express the most nationalist/racist discourse towards both Turkish Cypriots and other population groups on the island (LGBTQ+ people, migrants, etc.). In other words, there is a reversal of reality. While the unitary state is the institutional framework that allowed the oppression of an ethnic group (and phenomena like Sampson, Makarios, Grivas, etc.), it is presented as the most just because it supposedly does not discriminate against individuals based on their ethnicity.[1] But what it actually entails is the legitimization and institutionalization of oppression based on the ethnic origin of individuals.

The well-known slogan “one man, one vote”, the motto of the Greek Cypriot anti-federalist campaign, basically hides the authoritarianism that can arise from the principle of majority rule. Federalist thought understands that ensuring the autonomy of particular social groups is necessary because the majority principle can potentially permanently negate their political power and systematically exclude them. Whereby, the majority is neither always right nor entitled to act as it pleases without taking into account minorities or ethnic/religious minority groups, especially in the context of shaping public opinion[2] and of generating hysteria.[3] This slogan also fails to acknowledge the fact that in addition to individual rights there are also collective rights.

No one can guarantee that an upcoming federation-based agreement will solve all problems, nor are we under any such illusions. But we are not, as we have said, talking about the outcome, but about the beginning of our own cause. The Cyprus Problem is the result of the historical hegemony of nationalisms and its resolution will mean a break with this reality, without, of course, necessarily implying that it will be overcome. In any case, our position is that it is time for the indigenous people of this island to see their present and their future independently of the interests of the Greek and Turkish states. The reunification of Cyprus is necessary so that we can finally cut the umbilical cords with the so-called motherlands and overcome the nationalist ideologies imposed by them. There is no anti-fascist struggle on the island that is not inter-communal and there is no inter-communalism without an anti-national, federal consciousness. Its development is also a necessity to ensure that ethnic conflicts and nationalist outbursts are avoided. Beyond any agreement at the level of political leaders, it is necessary to build this federal consciousness, which involves an understanding of the historical evolution of the Cyprus Problem and of the ethnic conflicts in conjunction with the desire to transcend sterile national identities and to be able to see Cyprus not as a homogeneous nation-state but as it is, a place of many communities.

To return to our original position: the transition to a federal Cyprus is a necessity as it may provide a more fertile ground for fighting nationalism and militarism on the island, for changing ethnocentric education and for undoing the geographical division, through which we will be in a position to claim a total change in the ecological treatment of the island. From Akamas to Karpas, we will be called upon to fight for the protection of the last environmental lungs left on the island. In any case, this passage will be a break with the status quo. Through this break, we hope that issues that have been overshadowed all these years by the existence of the “Cyprus Problem” will finally be able to emerge: issues such as workers’ demands, ecology, the commons, gender issues, etc. Our struggles can finally become truly bicommunal, not separated by borders and armies, in the hope that the class dimension can replace the national one – that we, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot workers, will fight for our own common interests.

antifa λευκοşa

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[1] By this very logic, applied to other issues, some consider feminism as sexist because it discriminates between men and women or the Black Lives Matter movement as racist because it focuses only on black people.

[2] Chomsky, Noam (1998). Propaganda and Control of the Public Mind. USA: AK Press.

[3] Panayiotou, Andreas (2011) The media and the attempts to manipulate public opinion after the Mari explosion. http://koinonioloyika.blogspot.com.cy/2011/09/blog-post.html

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