80 Years on the Right's Tail: AKEL according to Andreas Ziartides (Online Article)

Historical Note

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Content

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“The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.” - Marx and Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party

“[T]he Social-Democrat’s ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forthbefore all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.” - Lenin, What Is to be Done

“”[T]he final goal of socialism constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social-Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labour movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle against this order, for the suppression of this order.“ – Luxemburg, Reform or Revolution

This text is a peculiar critical approach to AKEL as a political force in Cyprus, based on Andreas Ziartides' autobiography *Without Fear and Passion* (1995).[1] It is a selective book review which aims to highlight that the main characteristic of AKEL, since its foundation in 1941, is that it is the tail of the Cypriot nationalist right. Contrary to the popular narrative that AKEL was a communist party that eroded and decayed over time betraying its history, I argue that AKEL was from its inception a bourgeois party whose main concern was to be accepted by the nationalist right rather than to lead a class struggle on the island.

Of course, the fact that the text is based on a single source and the author's experience of the AKEL in the present, is a disadvantage. On the other hand, however, the testimony of Andreas Ziartides is of particular weight since Ziartides was one of the founders and leaders of AKEL for 50 years, as well as the leader of the trade union movement of PEO from its foundation until 1990. It also stands out for the fact that it was written after Ziartides' expulsion from AKEL, which allows him to speak more freely and critically about the party. Finally, many of the facts that Ziartides recounts about the activities of PEO and AKEL are documented and cannot be disputed. So, yes, more study of AKEL's history is needed to support the conclusion of the text, but I believe that Ziartides' testimony is important evidence in favour of the text's conclusion. If anything, the text tells us what AKEL was if we believe one of its leaders, Andreas Ziartides.

The thread that runs through Ziartides' autobiography *Without Fear and Passion* is the cowardice of AKEL and its acting as a tail in the face of the Cypriot nationalist right. This characteristic of AKEL is evident in almost all the chapters of the book, forming their connecting link and ultimately showing that in its essence AKEL was a bourgeois party of the right. The autobiography does not deal at all with left communist ideology and has not a single reference to the Marxist goal of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. This is indicative of the fact that the policy of AKEL and PEO did not follow any communist ideology nor did it have a revolutionary objective. The paper briefly reviews the various important milestones in AKEL's history to highlight AKEL's acting as a tail of the right and its tragic consequences.

1. The opportunist nationalism of AKEL

As Ziartides tells us, AKEL was founded in 1941 by members of the Communist Party of Cyprus (CPC) and progressive bourgeois of the time. (16-7) There was already a small trade union movement from the 1930s, which, according to Ziartides, was then composed of 3-4 thousand people. (18) This was a tense period as the trade union movement wavered around the demand of the nationalist right for union with Greece [enosis]. As Ziartides tells us, within the working class “there were two tendencies with regard to the national problem and in particular with regard to the enosis demand which was then being cultivated among the masses of the people. The Communists viewed the demand for enosis in a negative way. They were influenced by the old slogan of the Communists of Cyprus, the pre-1931 Communists. The second tendency was the nationalist tendency, which was influenced by bourgeois nationalist propaganda, and I would say that this tendency was supported at that time by the great majority of the workers.” (17-8) Although in the small trade union movement of the time the pro-enosis nationalist workers were not a majority, they were the great majority in the working class of Cyprus as a whole.

The first major issue on which AKEL was called upon to take a stand was therefore the national one. Before the founding of AKEL, the CPC was against the demand of Enosis: for example, it did not participate in the fundraising in solidarity with Greece after the torpedoing of the warship 'Elli' by the Italians in 1940. According to Ziartides, this policy was sectarian and wrong in that it removed the majority of nationalist workers from the trade union movement. (18-9) With its emergence, AKEL abandoned the anti-enosis attitude of the CPC and adopted the demand of enosis: “With its emergence, the legal one, AKEL succeeded in reducing the suspicion that existed in the people against the Communists. By adopting the policy of the national restoration of Cyprus, we as Communists finally abandoned our refusal of Enosis because we explained that national restoration is nothing else than Enosis and this helped the trade union movement to become a mass movement.” (23)

As can be seen from Ziartides' words, AKEL's main concern at that time was to avoid “the stigma of being anti-national”, in order to become a mass party. There was the notion of reducing the suspicion

that existed in the world about communists. So, for mainly opportunist reasons, AKEL adopted the nationalist demand of enosis. (46) Instead of attempting to elevate the nationalist consciousness of the working class into a class anti-capitalist consciousness, AKEL bowed to the existing consciousness in order to win supporters. This choice goes against the very basics of the Marxist ideology that AKEL was supposedly espousing at the time. As Lenin points out, the working class alone can only acquire a workers', trade unionist consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it must fight the employers for its own immediate daily interests and demand workers' legislation from the government. The task of a socialist/communist party is to raise the consciousness of the proletariat to a class consciousness, i.e., a consciousness of the necessity of overcoming capitalism. For this, according to Lenin, “we must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness.”[2]

AKEL's pro-enosis nationalism is clear in the 1940s. In 1944 Sir Cosmo Parkinson visited Cyprus in order to negotiate with representatives of the Cypriot people the future of Cyprus after the Second World War. AKEL was strong at the time, controlling two municipalities and the rising trade union movement, so it could take the lead in the talks. According to Ziartides, however, AKEL was the most fanatical supporter of the position that there should be no contact with Sir Kosmos: “AKEL organised mass militant demonstrations at the time under the slogan 'Down with Sir Cosmo', 'Long live national restoration and the Union [Enosis] of Cyprus with Greece'. (57) In 1947, AKEL changed its stance and dared to participate in the Diaskeptiki, the only political force in the country to do so. As Ziartides testifies, the right wing waged a fierce struggle against Diaskeptiki, “charged with anti-AKEL and anti-leftist propaganda, […] charged with epithets against the participants, as traitors, as people who undermine the basic desire of the Cypriot people for Enosis.” (59) AKEL could not withstand this demagogic attack by the right and withdrew from the Conference: “The weight of this demagogy and the attack we suffered resulted in our yielding.” (60) The need for acceptance by the nationalist right and the nationalist working class proved stronger than any ideological, theoretical and strategic positions of the party on the national question.

Ziartides regretted in retrospect the uncompromising pro-enosis stance of AKEL towards both Sir Cosmos and during the Diaskeptiki, as it undermined the relations between the two communities in Cyprus.(65) It is important to note, however, that he regretted it for tactical, rather than ideological anti-nationalist reasons. Until his death, Ziartides considered the goal of enosis to be a correct position on the part of AKEL; the mistake for him was that AKEL and the Greek Cypriot side in general misjudged and underestimated the reactions of the Turkish factor in Cyprus and ignored the existence of the Turkish Cypriots on the island. (217-9) He believes that AKEL and the Greek Cypriot side should have been more pragmatic and focused on demands for political and democratic rights that would gradually lead to self-government and eventually to Enosis. (218) The only mistake was AKEL's maximalism: “We made the mistake of insisting on the maximum of our demand, which was enosis, and closed our eyes to the possibilities that existed for democratic developments in our country.” And: “We continued to push for enosis and found ourselves in the position of being powerless to control the spontaneity of the popular masses, whose spontaneity we cultivated.” (218)

Another negative result of AKEL's pro-enosis stance was the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriots from the Greek Cypriot trade unions and the creation of new Turkish Cypriot trade unions. Initially, PEO's trade unions were Cypriot and bi-communal, not Greek Cypriot, with the participation of many Turkish Cypriot workers. (49) The first Turkish Cypriot unions appeared in 1942 and their emergence, as Ziartides points out, coincided with the organisation of AKEL and the rise of the enosis frenzy on the island. This frenzy increased the suspicion between the two communities and many Turkish Cypriot members of PEO disagreed with the demand of enosis and left, leading to the creation of Turkish Cypriot unions. (50) According to Ziartides, the split of the trade union movement along national lines

was a regrettable but inevitable development since PGC[ΠΣΕ]-PEO supported the demand for enosis: “The trade union movement of PEO faced the following dilemma: To follow a path of indifference and abstention from the National Political Struggle in order not to displease the Turkish Cypriot workers and lose them from its membership, or not. I believe that we could not, could not be allowed to stay away from the National Political Struggle.” (52)

In other words, AKEL and PEO considered the demand of Enosis and its acceptance by the nationalist right more important than not splitting the working class of Cyprus along ethnic lines. While Marx stressed in the Communist Manifesto that “working men have no country” and that the task of communists in “the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, [is to] point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality”, AKEL did the exact opposite: it put the national demand of the Greek Cypriot working class for enosis above the common class interests of the multi-communal Cypriot proletariat. Ziartides also mentions other nationalist mistakes of AKEL, such as the inequality in its treatment of Turkish Cypriot workers. Most trade union constitutions and leaflets were written only in Greek, and most discussions were also held in Greek, with no meaningful participation of Turkish Cypriot workers. AKEL took some measures and improved this situation with the creation of the Turkish office of PEO, but eventually, in 1958, PEO instructed the remaining Turkish Cypriot workers in its ranks to transfer to the Turkish Cypriot trade unions as they were beginning to be murdered by Turkish Cypriot nationalists. The game was long lost.

AKEL's nationalism continued after the independence of Cyprus in 1960. AKEL rejected the Zurich-London agreements because of its pro-enosis stance, which it held despite the fact that Greece had been a member state of imperialist NATO since 1952. AKEL then supported Makarios and began to move away from the idea of Enosis, but this change was again for opportunistic reasons: as Ziartides says, “AKEL realised after the [1960] elections that Makarios was the man supported by the vast majority of the people. Two-thirds of the people and that it was a mistake to oppose him in a sterile way. So it took the position that we would support Makarios where we agreed with him and criticize him where we disagreed with his policies.” (94-5) In other words, AKEL's criterion for its critical support for Makarios was that he was popular with the people. Ziartides praises Makarios at several points in his autobiography, avoiding talking about the latter's paramilitary organizations and claiming that he was not an authoritarian despite much historical evidence to the contrary. (92) Nor is there any critical reference to the events of '63 that led to the ghettoisation of the Turkish Cypriots, which AKEL, together with the rest of the right, called a 'Turkish mutiny'.

During the Greek Junta period, while EDEK was organising demonstrations against it, “AKEL was 'careful' not to push Makarios into any confrontation with the Junta”, fearing a possible conflict, which eventually came. (79-80) As Ziartides says tellingly, “it is typical of our fears and reservations about clashing with the Junta that the party leadership of the OMONOIA Association gave its consent for the Association, through Aslanides, to accept a financial grant from the Junta and to have the photo of the Junta officer displayed in the central hall of the Association.” (80) After Makarios' death, AKEL supported and twice elected the adamant nationalist and opponent of rapprochement Spyros Kyprianou to the presidency of the country. According to Ziartides, “as far as the Cyprus problem was concerned, AKEL's views at the time did not differ much from those of Spyros Kyprianou” (111). Although AKEL understood the need for compromise in order to achieve the rapprochement of the two communities and the reunification of the island, it supported Kyprianou out of anti-DISY sentiment. (171) As for the more recent history, it is well known: AKEL cowardly rejected the Annan plan, as the Christofias government it did not dare to make much progress in the talks, and in 2022 it has as its presidential candidate the Anastasiades government negotiator who led the BBF talks to a definitive wreck. AKEL's responsibilities for the ethnic division of Cyprus are many and great.

2. Interclass unionism and ‘progressive’ Cypriot employers

AKEL's opportunism and acting as a tail behind the right characterises not only its attitude to the national question, but also its trade union practice. As we have seen, AKEL adopted the demand of enosis in order to gain more traction with the nationalist working class of Cyprus and be accepted by the Right and the ethnarchy. Ziartides in his book constantly blames the so-called “sectarianism” as one of the most serious problems of the trade union movement in Cyprus. (17) As is evident from his words, sectarianism for him meant not accepting to compromise and go along with the bourgeoisie. By way of illustration, he says that AKEL gradually matured in the 1940s and became more conciliatory because of the beneficial influence of the party's petty bourgeois and bourgeois fellow travellers (58). He constantly stresses the need for understanding and cooperation with the right-wing trade unions, which was not the case at first but which he says was eventually achieved: “Today there is SEK as the right-wing trade union organisation, there is PEO as the left-wing trade union organisation in close relations with AKEL, there are the independent trade unions, PASYDY, the educational trade unions, POAS, ETYK, there is DEOK. And all these tendencies, with their differences on economic and social problems, work closely together.” (56)

Ziartides' perspective -and by extension PEO's perspective, which he led- of trade unionism is that it is a collective effort of workers and employers to improve the living standards and working conditions of the people, regardless of ideology. There is no mention in the book of efforts to cultivate revolutionary consciousness and radicalise workers. On the contrary, there are constant references to the need for there to be no political gap between the right and the left, to the need for conciliation and compromise with the employers before the possibility of a strike is put on the table, to the need for realism and pragmatism in demands, while there is a whole sub-chapter on the supposed progressive role of the Cypriot employers! (131) According to Ziartides, an important factor in turning the movement into a mass movement and in the success of the trade union movement in Cyprus was “the progressiveness of the Cypriot employers”. He credits the employer class with having abandoned its hostile attitude towards trade unionism in the 1950s and 1960s and followed a policy of consultation and cooperation, even going so far as to speak positively about the establishment of the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB) and claiming that “we have in Cyprus a pro-progressive class of employers”. (132) With the exception of the Cyprus problem, Cyprus in the 1960s is presented as a paradise on earth for the working class: employers understood the demands of the workers and agreed to negotiate collectively with them, the Minister of Labour, Tassos Papadopoulos, pursued a progressive social policy, and many labour laws were enacted. The culmination of this idyllic condition according to Ziartides was the fact that the employers accepted the Social Security institutions to be run by the trade union movement. (134-5)

It is important here to consider why employers in Cyprus could appear progressive in the eyes of Ziartides and other AKELites. According to Ziartides, Cypriot employers were genuinely more progressive than those in other countries for two reasons: 1) because a significant proportion of them were former workers, and 2) because in Cyprus there was not the sharp confrontation between left and right that existed in other countries such as Greece: “There was no stock of bitterness within Cypriot society between employers and workers, a stock of hatred born out of bloody incidents and struggles. These two factors are what made it possible to have a progressive employer class in Cyprus, which with its attitude contributed to the successes of the workers.” (133) In other words, the lack of class struggle in Cyprus and the inability and cowardice of AKEL to take on the nationalist right are presented by Ziartides as factors that helped the development and success of the trade union movement in Cyprus.

In my opinion, the reason why the employers and Makarios accepted to discuss and cooperate with

AKEL and PEO was none other than the fact that they did not perceive AKEL as a threat to their interests. Both Makarios and the employers correctly understood that AKEL was not a threat to them. Ziartides considers it great that Makarios abandoned his initial anti-communist stance despite the Cold War climate of the time, and credits this shift by Makarios to AKEL's correct attitude towards him, (94, 99) but this attitude was nothing but support for a reactionary, nationalistic and authoritarian ethnarchy. Why should Makarios oppose AKEL if it supported him? The same applies to the employers. Ziartides says proudly that “the employers trusted the trade union movement” (135) and that his own moderation towards the employers secured him “a prestige, an esteem in the employer world” (214), but since when does a communist pride himself on being trusted and esteemed by employers and right-wingers? No real communist would have such pride, since being trusted by the bourgeoisie means that they do not consider you a danger to their interests.

AKEL managed to become a mass party and win some progressive reforms for the workers by abandoning any class struggle and following a logic of national unity. According to Ziartides, “it is indicative that elections were held in Cyprus after Independence without any tension or clashes between the rival classes”, which demonstrates the lack of class struggle in Cyprus. The mild political climate also led to a mild climate in labour relations, and vice versa, the mild labour climate led to a mild political climate. (137-8) But such class peace is anathema to any true Communist. According to Rosa Luxemburg, the importance and goal of communist trade unionism is not the short-term improvement of the living standards of the workers, but to teach the proletariat “of the impossibility of accomplishing a fundamental social change through such activity and arrives at the understanding that the conquest of power is unavoidable.”[3] In other words, the aim of the communist trade union struggle is to sharpen the confrontation between the two classes and to show the proletariat that it is not enough to have trade unionism within capitalism, but that the political revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is also needed. This revolutionary overthrow as an ultimate goal “the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social-Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labour movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle against this order, for the suppression of this order.” [4] AKEL was and is nothing more than a patchwork to save capitalism.

2. AKEL's Trade-unionism[5]

Unlike Luxemburg, Lenin and Marx himself, who constantly repeated that the economic struggle of the proletariat must lead to a political struggle for the overthrow of capitalism, Ziartides' PEO regarded the political struggle as secondary. As he says: ”[The] trade union movement should be primarily interested in the economic and social problems of the workers and secondarily, as a partner of the Party, in the political problems of the country.” (34) Ziartides believed in the relative independence of trade unions from the communist party, in this case the independence of PEO from AKEL. He fought for this independence in the 1940s, when the trade union movement was still controlled by party factions, and achieved this independence in 1951 (27). From then on, AKEL's relationship with the PGC-PEO was as follows: AKEL determined its workers' policy, conveyed it to the party manager of PGC-PEO (who until 1990 was Ziartides), and he tried to persuade the union members to accept the party line, without telling them that this was the party line and without any imposition. (27)

According to Ziartides, the existence of party factions in the unions was a problem because it made it clear that the trade unions were communist, which alienated non-communist workers and played a role in the creation of right-wing trade unions: “This system, this mistake, is the main cause of the split in the trade union movement into the old and new unions. It was obvious that the Communist Party was involved and dominated the trade union movement, which was not accepted by the non-

partisans, by the nationalists, so to speak.” (26-7) As AKEL's main concern was becoming a mass party ammong the working class and its acceptance by the right, AKEL eventually dismantled its factions, but this had the effect of weakening AKEL's influence in the movement. In the case of Cyprus this is not particularly relevant as AKEL was nothing more than a bourgeois party that did not aim at waging class struggle to overthrow capitalism, but for a communist party it would be a big mistake, as the aim of the communists is to lead the trade union movement to push it in a radical, revolutionary direction.

Let us examine the Marxist conception of the relationship between the communist party and the trade unions. For Lenin, the economic struggle of the working class is just one part of the overall struggle for socialist emancipation. On its own, it has limited possibilities; it can only temporarily achieve better conditions for the sale of the workers' labour power. In itself it is not a socialist struggle: right-wing bourgeois trade unions can equally fight for the improvement of the working conditions of workers under capitalism. “Social-Democracy[6] leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich. Social-Democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organised political force. Hence, it follows that not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but that they must not allow the organisation of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. .”[7] The Socialist struggle is a struggle against the capitalist class as a whole, and against the State as an organised political force. This requires the cultivation of political consciousness among the workers, the political education of the working class by socialists.

In her famous work 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions' Luxemburg expresses the same view as Lenin. She considers it destructive to separate trade union practice from socialist revolutionary theory, as such a separation would make the trade unions bourgeois.[8] She advocates the “complete unity of the trade union and the social democratic movements” as “absolutely necessary for the coming mass struggles in Germany,”[9] which is also true of other capitalist countries, and points out that “trade unions, like all fighting organisations of the proletariat, cannot permanently maintain themselves in any other way than by struggle.”[10] Continuing her polemic against the revisionists and drawing on the Communist Manifesto, Luxemburg argued strongly for the necessity of the political leadership of the party over the trade unions. This is because what separates socialist from bourgeois ideology and practice is the political goal of overcoming capitalism. The trade union struggle represents merely a stage in the development of the class struggle, the stage of the immediate, everyday interests of the proletariat. Communists instead represent the interests of the entire proletarian movement worldwide, i.e. the dominant class interest, i.e. the overcoming of capital. The communist party must therefore lead the trade unions: “The trade unions represent only the group interests and only one stage of development of the labour movement. Social democracy represents the working class and the cause of its liberation as a whole. The relation of the trade unions to social democracy is therefore [that of] a part of the whole.”[11] The trade unions represent the social democratic movement and the socialist movement as a whole.

Let us now see the perspective of the PEO leadership on the issue, as expressed by Ziartides: “The trade union movement has as its main objective the improvement of the working conditions and the living conditions of the workers. Since this is its purpose, its greatest activity, most of its activity time must be devoted to achieving this purpose, i.e. improving working conditions, living conditions and the standard of living of the workers. That is what happened with us. But we have never abandoned our duty to get involved and participate in political struggles. Of course, this involvement, this participation was to a degree much lower than the degree of our activity in the economic and social

problems of the workers.” (31) Ziartides, and by extension PEO, considered the struggle for the immediate interests of the workers under capitalism far more important than the political struggle to overcome capitalism. While recognising the importance of participation in political struggles, as we have seen above, in practice AKEL was the tail of the political leadership of the ethnarchy and the right. Therefore, we can conclude that PEO was and is a bourgeois trade union like the others, and was rightly accused in the 1940s and 1950s of trade-unionism. Ziartides believes that “this term of trade-unionism is an invention of the Communists of any given era, who wanted to attack and slander… the trade union movement that was not under their leadership.” (32) But as we have seen, if the trade union movement is not under the leadership of the communists, it is bourgeoisified, so the accusation is correct and it is not a slander.

The following quote from Mass Strike encapsulates very well the source of Ziartides' conservative view of trade-unionism, and the problems this view creates: “The specialisation of professional activity as trade-union leaders, as well as the naturally restricted horizon which is bound up with disconnected economic struggles in a peaceful period, leads only too easily, amongst trade-union officials, to bureaucratism and a certain narrowness of outlook. Both, however, express themselves in a whole series of tendencies which may be fateful in the highest degree for the future of the trade-union movement. There is first of all the overvaluation of the organisation, which from a means has gradually been changed into an end in itself, a precious thing, to which the interests of the struggles should be subordinated. From this also comes that openly admitted need for peace which shrinks from great risks and presumed dangers to the stability of the trade- unions, and further, the overvaluation of the trade-union method of struggle itself, its prospects and its successes. The trade-union leaders, constantly absorbed in the economic guerrilla war whose plausible task it is to make the workers place the highest value on the smallest economic achievement, every increase in wages and shortening of the working day, gradually lose the power of seeing the larger connections and of taking a survey of the whole position.”(65-66)

The main problem of trade-unionism and economism is that it bureaucratises the trade union movement and leads to the preservation of the organisation of the movement as an end in itself. Bureaucracy leads to an overestimation of worker-trade union organization, its fetishization as a form of struggle. Bureaucrats tend to make the maintenance and development of their organizations an end in itself. This condition leads to cowardice and hesitation at crucial moments, as the inevitable risks of the class struggle are subordinated to the need to preserve the existing gains of the unions. The big picture is thus forgotten, the ultimate revolutionary goal is sacrificed on the altar of even the smallest daily economic achievements. However, these achievements are only temporary as the bourgeoisie strives to neutralise them. The proletariat needs to transcend capitalism if it is to secure these gains: without a fighting proletariat, the bourgeoisie is slowly taking them back. This is what happened in Cyprus with the economic crisis[12], and the rudimentary trade union movement was unable to react. This helplessness is the fruit of AKEL's lack of tradition of class struggle and cultivation of class consciousness in Cyprus. Finally, the bureaucratisation of the trade unions and the party has the also negative effect of leading workers to get used to passively accepting orders from special officials and workers' initiative atrophies.

4. Acting as a tail, or the failure of AKEL to take the lead on the Cypriot political scene

The above assertion that the logical consequence of trade-unionism is cowardice and hesitation at crucial moments is proven by the overall history of AKEL. AKEL has over time been unprepared and incapable of taking the lead in the political life of the country, something that Ziartides himself admits. As he very tellingly says: “this feeling of self-preservation, this feeling of being 'careful' not to provoke measures of repression of the Movement, distinguished our Party, I would say, at every

critical moment.” (81) I dare say that this defensive self-preservation and caution in the face of the Right is the main characteristic of AKEL as a political party, the main element of its identity.

There are many examples of AKEL's weakness and unpreparedness at crucial moments in Cyprus' history. First of all, there was the aforementioned withdrawal from the Diaskeptiki Conference due to pressure from the Right. In 1955, AKEL was caught unprepared by the start of the EOKA struggle, and 'quite unjustifiably' according to Ziartides, as Ezecias Papaioannou had received information in 1954 that an armed struggle was being prepared. (74) In the coup, AKEL 'was left completely unprepared and completely unsuspecting,' with the Party's Epawachung being more concerned with monitoring possible dissident members than with political developments in the country (84): 'Essentially the Party's leadership was paralysed'. (87) Nor did AKEL ever put its hand on the fire on the Cyprus issue, culminating in the NO to the Annan Plan.

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