This translation was created for the purposes of archiving and does not originate from the original creator of the text.

On Elections & Abstention (Part 2) (Online Article)

Historical Note

This online article was published on the website 'The Justice Project' in February 2021.

It was later republished on the website of the group 1917.

Content

ON ELECTIONS & ABSENTION (PART 2)

February 22, 2021

Read the first part of the article here.

The ideological uniformity of the political establishment is not the only thing that prevents citizens from determining their future through elections. Beyond that, there is the obstacle that goes by the name of “the state”. The modern state -the so-called executive- is not simply the parties or individuals elected by civil society to govern. There is also a permanent state apparatus made up of bureaucrats, the military, and the police, who remain in place regardless of elections.

This state mechanism has strict limits on how it can be used, and it greatly restricts the government's policy choices. It is not a neutral tool that the elected government of the day can use according to whatever ideology it has. Instead, it is the so-called “deep state”, which, in collaboration with the capitalist elite and the media (and the church in the case of Cyprus), largely determines the policy of any government.

The deep state does not serve the interests of citizens. As it is a group of institutions with a stable staff, it is sufficient to create its own long-term policy aimed at perpetuating its power and satisfying its various individual interests. Apart from its own narrow interests, it also serves the interests of the bourgeoisie with which it is intertwined. We saw the deep state in action recently in the US when it sabotaged the Trump administration, largely preventing it from pursuing the policies it promised. This is why Trump kept changing government personnel in an attempt to find people to work with him. We also felt the deep state in Cyprus during the Christofias administration, when it sabotaged education reform and set very tight limits on the government's economic policies.

For small countries like Cyprus, another obstacle to the democratic self-determination of citizens

through elections are bureaucratic mechanisms from abroad, such as the European Union, as well as big capital and imperialist states in general. For example, the European Union blackmailed the Syriza government and forced it to follow its own memorandum policy, nullifying the electoral verdict of the Greek citizens against the memoranda.

The governments of Christofias and of Syriza clearly show the limits of modern bourgeois governance. It is impossible for a bourgeois government to go against the deep state and the bourgeoisie, no matter how much it wants to and no matter how much its ideology and political goals are not in line with it. In other words, it is impossible to have a radical left government in the modern bourgeois context. Representative democracy is unfortunately not very representative; it only represents the bourgeoisie and the deep state. The result of this situation is that we have the uniform political establishment I mentioned above, with various bourgeois parties competing to see which one best represents the bourgeoisie and the deep state, and which one best fools the citizens by gaining their tolerance for the existing order.

*

Given the lack of real choices in the election, is there any reason to vote? The answer is no, unless we have a direct interest that makes one part of the establishment preferable to the rest. Elections do not give us the right to decide the future of our country. The future is predetermined. Whether we vote or not, it doesn't change anything. Neither voting nor abstaining will change anything in Cyprus in 2021. The aforementioned calls to vote do not understand our inability as citizens to influence the social reality in which we live. It is an illusion that the main political act at our disposal is voting. Its only effect is to provide the appearance of democratic legitimacy to the existing political establishment.

Therefore, the accomplices of this establishment are not those who do not go to vote, but those who create illusions about the democratic significance of elections. Choosing every few years which part of the political establishment will govern you is not democracy. Of course, we can in the upcoming elections vote for the lesser of two evils based on the petty differences between the various candidates - as long as we are under no illusions that this is how we have self-determination and determine our future.

Nevertheless, there are cases where there are substantive electoral choices, and our vote therefore has significance. For us socialists/communists, this applies when there is a socialist party that represents the working class rather than the bourgeoisie and its deep state. Such a party certainly cannot manage the bourgeois state as it wants, for the reasons I have given. It knows this, and therefore does not aim to become a government. Instead, it sees elections as another tool it can use for propaganda purposes to promote its ideas.

Specifically, the socialist party participates in elections and aims to have a parliamentary presence in order to promote its political views and ideology to as wide an audience as possible, taking advantage of the publicity given to electoral candidates and MPs. Election campaigns provide an opportunity for socialists to address the working people, enlightening them about their class interests as well as the class character of the state. It is a means of political education and education. The participation of socialists in parliament allows them to show the workers the limited possibilities of parliamentary democracy for reform, demonstrating the necessity for the total overthrow of the bourgeois state and capitalism and the creation of a truly free society where the citizens are in control.

But the action of a socialist party is not limited to the parliamentary field, but is concentrated in the field of civil society. The task of the left today is not to focus on voting for another bourgeois government in place of the Anastasiades government, but to organise the possibility for political

action in the field of civil society, away from the field of the state and bourgeois politics. The left needs to channel the indignation of the working people and their will for change towards the creation of their own organisations (unions, party, etc.), far from electoral illusions. Organising in the field of civil society takes time, but it is a necessary condition for the existence of a socialist party that will ultimately give meaning to elections.

It is of the utmost importance today to show the world that elections are not the way to social change, let alone the only way. Those who tell us that voting is the only way to influence society are being reactionary, as they cultivate electoral illusions in people and fail to recognise the real potential for social change. The only effect of these illusions will be to create frustration and cynicism in people, making them sceptical of the possibility of any social change.

Unfortunately, social change cannot come immediately. It requires long-term preparation. Therefore, it is criminal to give people false hope that there can be immediate change through elections.

Phedias Christodoulides

Needs Turkish Translation, Online Articles, The Justice Project (Website), Decade 2020-2029, 2021, Undefined Location

From:
https://movementsarchive.org/ - **Κυπριακό Κινηματικό Αρχείο**
Cyprus Movements Archive
Kıbrıs Sosyal Hareket Arşivi

Permanent link:
https://movementsarchive.org/doku.php?id=en:digital:justice:apoxi2

Last update: **2025/07/15 13:46**