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The main enemy is "our" bourgeoisie - again on social patriotism, from Workers' Democracy (dialogue)

In the previous and in this issue of “Within the Walls”, the magazine hosted in two parts, an article by Ch. Eliades, with the subtitle “a response to the editorial group of Workers' Democracy”. The reply concerns our article that was in a previous issue, which he considered a response to his own article in the March issue. He even notes that with that article we “entered” the dialogue around the “national issue” ourselves.

But apart from the fact that we have not now entered the “dialogue”, neither our previous article in “Within the Walls” nor this one are answers to Ch. Eliades and others who have similar political views. And they could not be, because to do so requires much more space than it would be possible for “Within the Walls” to allocate to us. We've been doing this for some time with a series of our articles in the newspaper "Workers' Democracy" that we published in 79-80, and in recent years with our articles in the Greek magazine “Mami” and in the “Ergatiki Alilegkii” newspaper of the Greek revolutionary organization OSE. In February '88 our book "THE CYPRUS PROBLEM and the Internationalist Tasks of Greek Cypriot Revolutionaries" was published.

That is why in our first article we referred to this book for a critique of all Greek Cypriot social patriots. We even explained that we would limit ourselves, as the subtitle said, only to “a few remarks on the occasion of Ch. Eliades” to show some contradictions of social patriotism. Such contradictions, like that of Ch. Eliades who claims that ““never has one barbarism ever undone or overthrown another previous barbarism” while at the same time calling for the removal of the settlers, without seeing that only with a comparable barbarism to that of '74 can this be done.

So Ch. Eliades' claim that we have wronged him because we did not present his politics in full is not valid. We did not say that we would do so. And there would have been no reason to revisit his writings if in his last article he had not directly inverted a very important position of ours.

Ch. Eliades devotes a part of his article to showing our “contradiction” when we denounce those who call for the expulsion of settlers as nationalists while on the other hand we accept that “as a matter of principle we agree with the removal of settlers” but we are concerned that “we will encounter difficult problems even on the issue of the departure of the last settler”. He even tries to “encourage” us by writing that: “No one claimed that this [the expulsion of all settlers] would be easy, nor is the road to democracy and socialism paved with rose petals.”

But Ch. Eliades did not want to notice that the one who “in principle agrees with the removal of the settlers” is DISY, and that the whole of that report was taken from the newspaper “Alitheia” to which we referred. Nor did he notice that right next to the statement “for reasons of principle we consider the above position to be correct”, i.e. “the withdrawal of the last settler”, there was in brackets our own ironic comment saying [“well, of course”].

If Ch. Eliades had read our article more carefully, or had he bothered to take a look at the contents of

the book to which we referred, he would have seen that not only are we not “in principle” in favour of the expulsion of the settlers, but that our position is completely opposite to the one he attributes to us. Here is what we say about the settlers in the relevant chapter:

“They are here and they should be welcomed by the workers and not only them, but also anyone else, from wherever else they happen to come from. It is a matter of principle for the internationalists. The right in Europe is emboldened by racism against foreign workers. Cypriots in Thatcher's England face the same thing, and the trade union movement there has supported them.”

against the “our own” bourgeoisie

We also explain in the book why we consider the struggle for domination between the bourgeois classes in Cyprus as reactionary on both sides. As unjust, reactionary and exapnsionsit aims the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot bourgeoisie have, the Greek and Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie have equally unjust and reactionary aims. Whether one bourgeoisie dominates Cyprus or the other, the result will be the national oppression of the other ethnic group. That is why the task of the left is not to support the privileges of any nation and to subordinate themselves to reactionary aspirations, especially of 'their' bourgeoisie.

This is the basis on which we base our policy. Anyone who does not also see “our” bourgeoisie as aggressively expansionist and imperialist, does not do so because he sees “their” nation as better than the others.

This is exactly what social patriots can neither see nor want to see. Instead, when they are uncomfortable in the face of references to Lenin's policies they prefer to state, as Ch. Eliades does, that “we are giving Lenin a hard time”, and like “father Stalin” used to do. Of course, it would have been good if he had taken the trouble to prove this claim.

What characterises the policy of all social patriots who invoke Lenin is that they completely ignore (want to ignore!) some of the most basic points of Lenin's policy on national conflicts, i.e. they “forget” Lenin's insistence that the specific tasks of socialists are **different according to the nation to which they belong**. And that the main task of revolutionaries is to fight against their “own” bourgeoisie that has oppressed or oppresses or seeks to re-oppress other nationalities, and against its attempt to impose its rule on others:

“Internationalism is recommended in the break with your own social chauvinists… and with your own imperialist government… in your decision to accept the greatest national sacrifices… if this is beneficial to the development of the international workers' revolution.” (1)

Because Ch. Eliades does not want to understand this attitude, he wonders with much frustration and even more naivety if we would also describe as social patriots the Turkish revolutionaries who are fighting against “their” bourgeoisie to support the withdrawal of the Turkish army from Cyprus and the right of the Cypriots to live in a state. But… of course not. These are real socialists and internationalists. Social patriots are only all those **Greek Cypriot or Greek** leftists who fight so fervently for the withdrawal of the Turkish army and against partition, matters that are tasks specifically for Turkish and Turkish Cypriot revolutionaries.

Social patriots also do not want to know that Lenin believed that the duty of supporting the **right** of self-determination of oppressed nationalities lies **specifically with the revolutionaries of the nation that oppressed or oppresses or seeks to oppress** such nationalities, and they do not want to know what this position means. This can be seen from the fury with which Ch. Eliades

denounces that we consider that the very “secession-creation of the “TRNC” is politically correct, and even in accordance with the Leninist conception of things”.

We are not arguing that the creation of the TRNC is “politically correct” or “politically incorrect”, nor that it “had to be done that way”. That is not the issue for us. We are only arguing that we, as **Greek Cypriot** revolutionaries, precisely because we are Greek Cypriots and not Turkish Cypriots or Turks, should resist the attempt of **“our”** ruling class to prevent Turkish Cypriots from having their own state. **Only** this. And it is very different from what Ch. Eliades attributes to us, having fallen victim to a not at all original foolishness. Are we going to 'abuse' Lenin again?

“When you accuse the supporters of the freedom of self-determination, that is, the freedom of separation, of encouraging separatist tendencies, you are doing exactly the same nonsense and the same hypocrisy as if you accused the supporters of the freedom of divorce of encouraging the break-up of family ties.”(2)

where have the leftist social patriots come from?

For decades AKEL has been talking (and not only talking) about an alliance of the labour movement with the patriotic bourgeoisie that would help the alleged “national liberation struggle” of the Greek Cypriots. A nice slogan under which the equally unjust and expansionist national desires, aspirations and wishes of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, as well as their nationalist phobias - the “horror” of the “Turkification of the whole of Cyprus” - are hidden, which does not, however, recognise the Turkish Cypriots' right to feel a corresponding horror and phobia either for the “Grecification” or for the “Greek-Cypriotization” of Cyprus.

The defeat in '74 of the Greek Cypriot (and Greek) ruling class disappointed many left-wing petty bourgeois patriots. With petty bourgeois impatience they “punished” it and continue to “punish” it in their minds by describing it as “incompetent”, and now look forward to the working class to do the “national liberation” work of “our” “incompetent” bourgeois class. If the twists and turns of history show that not only is the Greek Cypriot working class not willing to do this, but also that the Greek Cypriot and Greek bourgeoisie are regaining lost ground and their own expansionism has some chance of defeating Turkish expansionism, then we will see most “left-wing” social patriots shed their socialist facade and appear clearly for what they really are - pure patriots.

This little article, of course, cannot serve as an answer to Ch. Eliades's aphorisms and “self-evident” truths, nor to the tradition of social patriotism. In the last decades the vast majority of the politicized people in southern Cyprus, if they are not right-wing nationalists, are left-wing patriots, either of AKEL or dissidents “from the left” like Ch. Eliades. It is difficult for those who dare to challenge such deeply rooted beliefs. To criticize all of them, to begin (yes, to begin only!) to bring back to light an old but very effectively distorted, “forgotten” politics buried by all, requires a fairly long analysis, such as the one we have done and is published mainly in our book. There we show both what Lenin's attitude was and how the social patriotic “Leninists” distort it. Of course, it would be an abuse of the hospitality of “Within Walls” to ask that it be republished in serial form, but if it is all right, we are happy to make it available for the reading audience of “Within Walls”.●

Editorial Group "Workers' Democracy"

Notes:

1) Collected Works of Lenin volume 37 p. 108

2) Lenin “Questions of National Policy” p. 15

Needs Turkish Translation, Within the Walls (Issue 34), Workers' Democracy (Group), Decade 1980-1989, 1988, Nicosia (south), Nicosia, Cyprus Problem

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