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THE "SELF-EVIDENT TRUTHS" OF SOCIAL PATRIOTISM (dialogue)

THE GREEK CYPRIOT FAR LEFT

[Written by the group 'Workers' Democracy'.]

On the occasion of an article by Ch. Eliades in the March 1988 issue of “Within the Walls” we wrote an article entitled "Another Greek Cypriot Social Patriot". That is, yet another one who speaks in the name of socialism, but in practice is just a patriot. Since then, a reply was written by Ch. Eliades in two issues of the magazine, and a final article by Ch. Eliades, again in two issues.

Our purpose was never to enter into a discussion specifically with Ch. Eliades, but to take the opportunity through his articles to show the contradictions and the real essence of politics, not of Ch. Eliades, but of social patriotism. A policy that is not his “privilege” alone, but that of the traditional left as well as the majority of the rest of the left in south Cyprus.

The last few months have shown that the confrontation between us and them in our first article in “Within the Walls” (as well as in the rest of our writings) is not theoretical at all. In the circumstances that have arisen in the last year, the relationship between the position of each person in this political dispute and the attitude he or she holds in practice towards political events that cannot be ignored, has become clear.

In recent months there has been a general rise of militant nationalism, which was the reaction of the most extreme rejectionists to Davos, to the victory of the “compromising” Vassiliou, and to the resumption of intercommunal dialogue.

We saw this strengthening of nationalism take shape with the various “anti-occupation” marches, the “walk home” marches, with the “militancy” of the students on the anniversary of the declaration of the TRNC, and with the racist events on the occasion of the marriage of of Alexia Chronia with a Turkish settler.

On the other hand, however, during the same period, some movement of support appeared for the conscientious objector against conscription Y. Parpas, who went to jail for two months because he declared that he did not want to participate in the National Guard exercises to fight the Turkish Cypriots, but wanted to fight for a sincere rapprochement. In the same period, the mobilization against the vote for the “Emergency Contribution for Defence” appeared, with an open rally-picketing event in Eleftheria Square, and with an organized campaign in workplaces, distributing leaflets and collecting signatures.

In short, a polarisation within the Greek Cypriot society began to strengthen. At one “pole”, at one end, are the militant rejectionists. Mostly petty bourgeois chauvinists who are reorganizing and trying

to revive some sort of EOKA, perhaps to create an EOKA C, which would prevent an agreed solution that would likely “sell out” their nationalist aspirations.

The other “pole”, the other extreme, is a tiny minority mobilising openly for the first time in workplaces. A minority that can become the fertile ground for the creation of a mass internationalist workers' movement.

This polarisation is the characteristic of this period that makes it not only more necessary, but also gives more possibilities for internationalist intervention. That is why it puts much greater tasks on those who speak in the name of socialism, the working class and internationalism.

But the attitude that most of those on the far left took in this period of increased possibilities and tasks, shows that we were right when we gave in our first article about Ch. Eliades the title “Another Greek Cypriot Social Patriot”. Indeed, if nationalism is the characteristic of the right, this time it appeared that the common characteristic of both the traditional and the extra-parliamentary left in southern Cypurus is social patriotism.

The Central Committee of the supposedly “compromising” and “rapprochement-supporting” AKEL unashamedly issued a statement “demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Alexia Chronia”. All the others showed that, despite their willingness to appear as a revolutionary left, their attitude towards the Greek Cypriot bourgeois army is not revolutionary at all. At best, they could not take a clear position towards it, and they hardly dared to touch the concrete issues raised by its existence. While we appealed to all the organizations or organized states of the extreme left to cooperate, both in the case of Parpas and in the case of the “emergency contribution for defence”, the only ones who seemed willing to contribute to the creation of an anti-militarist internationalist front were, from those who see themselves as Marxists, only us. The others were the anarchists of the "Initiative against social racism".

The attitude of the left towards the most basic foundation of bourgeois rule, the bourgeois army, is not a detail. And the characteristic of all of them, from Ch. Eliades, the leftists who are rallying around the magazine "Within the Walls", to the "Left Wing of EDEK", is the attempt to avoid the issue, to avoid taking a specific position. The “Left Wing of EDEK” decided, for reasons only they can know, to write some slogans only after the Parliament passed the “emergency contribution for defence”.

WE “DISTORT LENIN” WITHOUT “ANALYSING THE PARTICULAR”

The attitude of all these towards our critique, since February '88 when we published our book "THE CYPRUS PROBLEM and the Internationalist Tasks of Greek Cypriot Revolutionaries", has several similarities. Either they say it verbally, so that they don't have to justify it, or they write, like Ch. Eliades, that:

“Workers' Democracy prefers to falsify these concepts through a generalizing, eclectic and anti-dialectical view of things. Comfortable with throwing quotes from Lenin, they think they have secured their 'internationalist' identity by 'economizing' on the need for analysis of the particular and settling for an unhistorical and flattening generalization.”

But just because Eliades puts it in writing doesn't mean he is more honest or more responsible than the others. He has his own “trick” too. Thinking that he is covering himself behind the fact that he is “responding” to articles we wrote in “Within the Walls”, he pretends that they show our overall position, by magically vanishing all our other political writings. In this way he can claim that we are “economizing on the need to analyze the particular” and “settling for an unhistorical and flattening

generalization".

He pretends to ignore the book and even the magazine, to which we refer in both of our articles for an "analysis of the particular". "Analysis of the particular"? What do they all think we're doing in 300 or more pages of the book? Are we writing the story of our lives?

We went to the trouble of writing a long book not because we are professional writers or historians or masochists, but because we knew that the various Eliades that abound in southern Cyprus would try to use such arguments to counter an internationalist politics and critique which would show that they are just that... social patriots.

The historical "analysis of the particular" in this book takes up the whole first part of the book, over 140 pages, i.e. without the "economising", of which Ch. Eliades and others accuse us of. There we do nothing but try to prove "concretely", i.e. through references from historical studies, newspapers etc., through the facts, what the "particular" situation in Cyprus was and is. To show that until '74 the Greek Cypriots were clearly the dominant ethnic group that was ethnically oppressing, according to all the criteria of ethnic oppression, the Turkish Cypriots. To show that after '74 it is still promoting a policy just as aggressive as the one it was promoting when it was clearly in charge. To show that the Greek-Turkish conflict in Cyprus is reactionary on both (and all four) sides. And thus to be able to draw conclusions about the (different) attitude that the revolutionaries on each side should have, especially the attitude that we as Greek Cypriot revolutionaries should have.

We could not, of course, do the same in a few pages of a magazine, even if we could ask a hosting magazine to devote most of their space to us. That is why we mainly referred to our previous writings, and not to "quote our publishing history" as Ch. Eliades attempts to accuse us of.

And he thinks the trick he's found is so effective that he keeps repeating it in his article:

"Workers' Democracy is comfortable with throwing quotes from Lenin...with short quotes, completely disconnected from the rest of the body of the argument of the text taken, disconnected from the specific political and historical context, or from the specific object of the reference."

However, apart from the 140 pages of our book dealing specifically with the Cypriot reality, we devote more than 30 pages to a presentation of the Bolshevik and Leninist tradition on national issues and war. There we have put not "short" but instead tediously long "quotes", and even with reference to the "rest of the body" of Lenin's writings.

If Eliades or anyone else wants to criticize us for not doing an analysis of the particular, for "throwing" and distorting "short" quotes, then he has the basic obligation to take into account the rest of our texts, which are not short at all. Disagreeing with our positions is one thing, but criticizing "short" and "decontextualised" quotes is simply an attempt to avoid giving a substantive response to the content of our politics by lying.

But, where and how did he prove, even just with the quotes we used in our articles in "Within the Walls", that we have a "generalizing, eclectic and anti-dialectical view of things" and that we are distorting Lenin? Nowhere, he just repeats it using the "loudest" adjectives, (even likening us to "Father Stalin"), to "scare" anyone who, despite all the circulated "wisdom" and Greek Cypriot patriotic "self-evident truths", wonders if we are right. This forces us this time to write a longer article than the previous ones.

Ch. Eliades himself is a very good example of what he accuses us of. Let's look at his "dialectical

historical analysis" and how "particular" and appropriate the examples he uses are. Examples that are worth looking at because most of them are used by others.

THE 'ANALYSIS OF THE PARTICULAR' OF CH. ELIADES

"analysis of the particular" 1: are we in the era of national wars and progressive capitalism?

"As for Marx and Engels, better to leave them alone. The scoundrels once dared to write in favour of Germany's territorial integrity."

That's what Ch. Eliades wrote in his article. "Once" they did indeed support it. But many years have passed since then, and many changes have taken place, not only in Germany, but all over the world, including in Greece and Cyprus. The territorial integrity of Germany was absolutely tied to the need to pass from feudal fragmentation to a centralised bourgeois state in which capitalism, and with it its 'gravedigger', the working class, could develop. Ch. Eliades, citing this example from Marx, speaks as if there were in Cyprus (and in Greece, which is a fraternal ally of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie) problems similar to those of Germany in the era of progressive capitalism, of the transition from feudalism to capitalism and bourgeois democracy. If we are not in a similar situation, then the reference to the specific position of Marx and Engels and its application to today's Cyprus does not fit. We will "abuse" Lenin again:

"Comparing the "continuation of the politics" of combating feudalism and absolutism—the politics of the bourgeoisie in its struggle for liberty—with the "continuation of the politics" of a decrepit, i.e., imperialist, bourgeoisie...means comparing chalk and cheese". (English Collected Works, volume 21, pages 220-221, "The Collapse of the Second International")

analysis of the particular 2: Cyprus is a "(semi)colonial country"

In fact, in order to get out of this contradiction, Ch. Eliades (and all other social patriots) replace the struggle between capitalism and feudalism with the struggle between colonialism, imperialism and national-liberationist bourgeois-democratic movements. Eliades writes:

*"The term '*historical incompetence*' does not refer to the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie alone, but to the bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries in general"*

That is, Cyprus of 1960-88 is considered a semi-colonial country of the "third world", a victim of imperialism. In reality, however, it is not a victim of imperialism, but imperialistic itself, even an aggressor. Paraskevaides, one of the largest construction companies in the world, and the other smaller Greek Cypriot companies that undertake projects in Arab countries, alongside the skilled and well-paid Greek Cypriot technicians, administrative staff, supervisors, etc., use a number of Pakistani, Indian and other "underdeveloped" people with the worst conditions and wages. If this is not imperialist behaviour, then what is it? KEMA, which we were informed by Haravgi after the elections that it is the largest centre of its kind in the Mediterranean, is yet another proof of how "historic" the "semi-colonial" character of Cyprus is, and how "incompetent" in the "national" sense its bourgeois are.

And Eliades and the others do not want to see that today's imperialism is a global system, a chain of more or less capitalistically developed countries which all take part in the exploitation of the global working class and the peoples of a number of underdeveloped countries. A chain which, alongside its large links, has small but equally imperialist links. Two such links, tied to each other, are Greece and

southern Cyprus, which are in no way inferior to their counterparts in Turkey and northern Cyprus.

The old “poor” Greece now has branches of its National Bank in other countries, one of which is the racist Union of South Africa, to which it sells arms. Thus it participates in the occupation and oppression of the black population. The Greek state-owned war industry (EBO) has recently become famous with the Greek Irangate, i.e. the sale of arms to both Iran and Iraq during the war. (1)

Another attractive notion for some leftists is that “Cyprus” is a victim not only of global imperialism and its “proxy” of Turkey but even of Greek imperialism. This has nothing to do with reality. When Greek and Greek Cypriot bourgeois agree that “Cyprus” is the “outpost” of Hellenism, they mean it. The Cyprus problem is also part of the imperialist Greek-Turkish conflict.

But this is not a conflict over the sharing of colonies between two imperialist powers unrelated to the local population. In this Greek-Turkish conflict, “Cyprus” (i.e. its ruling classes, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot bourgeoisie) is not only not the victim but is complicit. It is characteristic that the terms Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are post-war, they appeared after '74, (and have their own propaganda purpose for the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie, they want to support the position that “Turkey attacked an independent UN member state” etc.) Until '74 they all referred only to “Turks of Cyprus” and “Greeks of Cyprus”. Neither the “greeks of Cyprus” felt oppressed by Greece, nor the “turks of Cyprus” felt oppressed by Turkey. Otherwise they would not have used these names for themselves. So the belated “Greek Cypriot” and “Turkish Cypriot” bourgeoisie were neither “dependent” nor “incapable” of resisting some “foreign” imperialist bourgeoisie. On the contrary, they saw and still see themselves as parts of the Greek and Turkish nations and, despite their occasional oppositions and even tendencies towards “autonomy”, they linked their fate to their respective “metropolises”. All the other classes of Cypriot society had the same attitude with them. The characteristic complaint of the Greek Cypriots is not the 'external' encroachments by Greece, but that Greece 'left them alone', 'betrayed' them.

Ch. Eliades, considering Cyprus as a “semi-colonial” country, insists that the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie is “incapable” of “realizing and completing both the right of self-determination of the Cypriot people as well as national independence” and the “national liberation aim”.

“Right of self-determination of the Cypriot people”? “National independence”? “National liberation aim”? These are fairy tales for small children, for “nationally” disillusioned petty bourgeois nationalists and social patriots. All that ended many years ago, almost three decades ago. The only problem of this small but imperialist “family”, of the “mother” Greek bourgeoisie and of the “Greek Cypriot daughter”, is that, at least for the time being, they have lost a piece of territory in their competition with their counterpart Turkish “family”, with imperialist Turkey.

This is inevitable in inter-imperialist conflicts. Someone wins, someone loses... But to describe the results of the Greek defeat in the last round as problems of national independence etc. is just embellishing one side of a very dirty conflict. Germany lost territory and experienced unprecedented destruction and misery in both WWI and WWII, but that does not negate the imperialist nature of its participation in both imperialist wars. Even Greece in 1922 experienced the greatest defeat in its modern history with thousands of dead, missing persons, population movements and over a million refugees. But this in no way detracts from the imperialist and unjust nature of its attack on Turkey, which was (and many years had passed since then) making its bourgeois-democratic revolution and fighting the battle against feudalism and imperialism.

Thus the refugees created by the conflict in Cyprus are also one of the barbaric (to use a word so beloved of Eliades, which he prefers to use only for the actions of the Turkish bourgeoisie) results of a

barbaric bourgeois war. But a barbaric, reactionary, imperialist one, **on both sides.**

To be continued in the next issue.

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