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RESIST LINGUISTIC FASCISM

(11 positions on the right to speak)

1.

No language is either superior or inferior, neither ours nor foreign. Language is a tool for communication, with an open passport for free movement.

2.

The attempt to impose one single, pure version of a language lies at the heart of the modern system of censorship. It draws its authoritarianism from theology's belief in one and only one God, and relies on the mechanisms of the state to impose a form of authority that trains people, from primary school all the way to the mass media, in silence and submission.

3.

Purity is the central myth of every form of authority. In seeking a nonexistent purity, human beings are led to repress desire and inhibit communication. Pure speech/pure language is the sacred object of the modern religion of the nation-state. It is a sacred object into which the subjects of nation-states are initiated, and which they internalize as their own particular personal policeman of the superego. The wrong word, the wrong language, just like the wrong desire and the wrong thought, are the Others. The evil spirit that insists on thinking and speaking — on eating the apple of the language/knowledge of good and evil. It is this spirit of negation, non-submission, and revolt that celebrates mixtures, which the national purifiers of place names, names, sounds want to eradicate. Nazism was the most genuine expression of this purity that turns beings into objects of hierarchical evaluation and words into symbols of civilization or barbarism.

4.

The Cypriot linguistic form is the lived audio-semiotic experience of the majority of the inhabitants of Cyprus. The only period in which Cypriot came under direct repression was in the 20th century, at the hands of the linguistic forms of the Greek and Turkish states. The cultural imperialism of these two states was aimed not simply at political and economic domination, but also at the semiotic erasure of the native Cypriots — at their total submission to the mechanisms of authority that they extended across Cyprus. If, during the Latin period, the dominant cultural conflict revolved around religion, in the Modern era the dominant confrontation revolved around language.

The natives will exist as long as there are people who articulate the jai like Pavlos Liasides.

5.

If all languages are mixtures, Cypriot is a model. And it will continue to exist only as an extreme (and

therefore revealing) example of mixture — of creolization. As a border phenomenon. Like the native Cypriots.

6.

The war waged by the nationally pure against English (another extreme example of mixture, which has established itself as the global language of communication) can only be seen as anti-imperialism through a reversal of meanings. It stems, as the man who identified with and offered himself as a slave to this nonexistent purity himself admits, from the need to suppress Cypriot — to cut off the sources from which it draws for its borderland mixtures.

7.

In anthologies of Cypriot literature of the Modern era, “dialectal discourse” is treated as a small, negligible chapter. When the works through which modern Cypriots grew up are treated as a parenthesis, while the experiments of the middle-class intellectuals are regarded as the expression of Cypriot discourse, then we do not have art critics but colonial censors. When the small stories of the humble and the native, of the proletarians and the horkatoi [peasants], complete their Great march and launch an attack on the metropolises of the Grand Narratives of nations, of the bourgeoisie, and of the Mandarins, then Germasoitis, Palaisis, and Azinos will be recognized as our hidden modernity. Only then will we be able to understand the roots of Tefkros Anthias, the Alexandrian gaze of Th. Pierides, the painful letter of C. Montis, and the existential search of D. Loizos in New York. As echoes of Yiallourou.

8.

The attempt to Hellenize or Turkify Cypriot toponyms is a historical process with deep roots. The fact that the fanaticism and barbarity expressed by the Ministry of Education and the Toponyms Committee still shock even Greek intellectuals is characteristic of the way local nationalism has become autonomous from the states and societies that gave birth to it. Cypriot authority structures adopted these two nationalisms (Greek and Turkish) precisely because they could not control the natives. And if the local agents persist in seemingly outdated practices, it is not because they have become detached from developments. It is because, before abandoning the system of authority they established as custodians, they must find a new master. So they look toward Brussels and the UN. The fascism of the Latinised alphabet may violate the human rights of natives even to sign their own names, but it is legitimized by the sacred distant authority of the UN, which supposedly safeguards human rights. The Latinised alphabet is a Cypriot construct that was sent to the UN and is now presented as a UN directive that must be implemented. That the Toponyms Committee lies is only natural. Authority has always relied on the reversal of meanings and reality.

9.

The Latinised alphabet is an attempt to record an archaizing orthography using Latin characters, with a phonetic alphabet that excludes Cypriot sounds. Thus, CH becomes X, precisely so that these letters cannot be used to represent Cypriot sounds. There you have the revelation, then. Latsia should be written LACHA in Latin characters. But CH (as ts), like J (tz), are absent from the state’s Latinised alphabet. They claim this is to expel the Turkish sounds. Ethnic cleansing. But also to subjugate the natives. Just as in the army. The Latinised alphabet presupposes absolute submission to the absurdity of authority. Khirokitia will become Choirokoitia, Mesa Yitonia will become Mesa Geitonia… and the streets will fill with absurd signs: Victoras Ougko (Victor Hugo). Does the donkey fly? Is it possible for the Latinised alphabet to be absurd?

The war against the English spelling of place names stems from the fact that English spelling preserves the Cypriot sounds. The English Latin script is phonetic.

The Latinised alphabet is a serious project for those who want to use katharevousa. In this sense, insisting on the use of phonetic Latin characters (Khirokitia, Mesa Yitonia, Ayios Tyhonas) is an act of historical resistance. An effort to establish the right of everyone to write their name as they choose. Because that (the imposition, through state authority, of how each person is to write their own name) is the declared objective of the Mandarins of the Latinised alphabet. The uniformity of slaves. Slaves who do not even have the right to write their own name as they themselves wish.

10.

The struggle begun by Vasilis Michaelides when he put on his baggy trousers [vraka] again and wrote his Cypriot masterpieces, the struggle continued by Germasoitis with the text of linguistic resistance in the 1940s, the refusal of Cypriots to renounce their language in the 1960s, and the resistance in Anafotia, Athienou, Lakatamia, Latsia, and Aglantzia in the 1980s and 1990s mark the underground sources, the points of reference, of the Cypriot renaissance of the future — when the natives will claim their own democracy in their own space-time. When the electronic mass media will become instruments of communication rather than mechanisms of authority's propaganda.

11.

Resistance is not a duty, just as revolution is no longer a duty. It is a matter of dignity, of life, of joy. Slaves remain silent, they demand censorship, free people create. And freedom, like Creation, presupposes multiplicity.

“The present, thinking it is eating the earth,

eats the earth,

but always it is the one that is being eaten,

and the one that is consumed.”

or

as the 11th thesis of Karl also stated:

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world.

The point is to change it.”

With speech and praxis.

Needs Turkish Translation, Thkianema - Issue 20, Decade 1900-1999, 1995, Limassol, Cypriot dialect

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