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the forbidden love



In 1992, Cypriot society achieved another historic compromise. After Mr Modinos' constant appeals to the Council of Europe about the law criminalising male homosexuality (they forgot about women, as always) in Cyprus, the one and only Cypriot state came to the following formulation: The law will not change but will not be enforced. Thus both the Europeans and the local sensitivities of the male nation are satisfied. The pain of the heterosexuals was evident. The archbishop and the refugee associations surrounding him (free Bellapais and so on) made it clear in no uncertain terms that legalising homosexuality would undermine the national fighting spirit. An angry heterosexual called into a radio show to exclaim with obvious desperation in his voice - “but the faggots, man…for everything else, okay… but this?” We ain't playing. And yet the striking thing about Mr. Modinos' lawsuit was the relative tolerance with which he is now being treated by the majority of the media and the public. Certainly the courage of the man is touching. He is one of those still few cases of individuals in Cypriot society who dare to stand up against the hollow moralizing of the majority, or at least those who speak for the majority. And indeed after a few years there is an obvious increase in tolerance in society. After all, his argument was and is ruthless for a society that is supposedly sensitive to issues of democracy and human rights: “I'm gay and I can't change - so what's going to happen?” Emphasis on the biological root of homosexuality at this stage may be necessary. If it is a matter of choice or of psychology, then someone can say that the homosexual must change - while biology is conclusive.

The sad thing, however, was the absence of strong support for Modinos, not only from homosexuals but also from heterosexuals. Ultimately, the repression of homosexuality is the culmination of a process of mutilating eroticism in moulded sexual contexts.This is not the place for an extensive analysis of sexual repression, but it does not take much intelligence to realize that the enclosure of the sexual act in the insertion of the penis into the vagina is an authoritarian ideology to support the

patriarchal unloving family. **The struggle of homosexuals in its symbolic dimension is also a struggle for the expansion of the erotic possibilities of humans.** But more practically - it is unacceptable to sit around and shout about civil rights when we don't have the courage to support our acquaintance who is still struggling to accept his or her homosexuality.

Anyway, with these and other thoughts in mind, in the spring of '92 a committee of homosexuals and heterosexuals was formed in Limassol to abolish the legislation. Patriotism had also overtaken us - “Enough with Europeans imposing laws on us. Let us change the law ourselves”. Eventually the committee, after an initial campaign of collecting signatures and sending letters to the presidencial palace and to the parliament, was split and subverted due to (well, what else?) the national problem.There was a rupture between Greeks and Cypriots (actually the Greeks left) after the "Horis Plesia" TV programme in April and so it was back to the Archbishop setting national policy on how the world makes love.

On the other hand, a reluctance of the homosexuals themselves to become active was also evident. In any case, a relatively peculiar situation had been created even before the government's decision. In Limassol, in a Cypriot context, one can say that there is a gay subculture with bars, pickup spots, hangout spaces etc. It is a subculture that enjoys a relative tolerance - relative because as long as homosexuality is not an accepted thing the average homosexual will be a victim of either exploitation or violence by the police. More fundamentally, however, as P.I., who was a founding member of the committee, observes in the following article, the central problem is the formation and acceptance of a homosexual identity as something 'normal'.

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22 April 1992: The European Court of Justice ruled that Cypriot legislation on homosexuality is outside the framework of the European Convention on Human Rights. Mr Modinos was vindicated. And now?

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