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FOR A BICOMMUNAL MOVEMENT OF RAPPROCHEMENT AND AUTONOMY

(or because Rapprochement is at heart an erotic one, which in these times means revolutionary desire)

THE HISTORY OF CYPRUS is inextricably linked to its geographical position as the crossroads of three continents and corresponding cultures. Politically and militarily, this meant that the island was an essential “gendarmier station” or “transit centre” for the empires or rulers who occasionally imposed their power in the region. This almost continuous conquest -dependence of the island on foreign powers- has left a deep tradition of subservience to foreigners and an inability, so far, for Cypriots to perceive themselves as masters of their land, as autonomous individuals in an autonomous society. On the other hand, the constant intersection of cultures and influences has created the infrastructure of a future where Cyprus could function as a cultural centre - a bridge between the cultures that surround it. This is the historical dilemma before us at this moment: A Cyprus united with a sense of autonomy and its historical potential or a Cyprus divided - an extension of foreign dependencies.

The present de facto partition is the result of the two communal national liberation movements (Enosis and Taksim) which express the logic of subordination in its most extreme form. In these movements, the freedom of the island, of the Cypriots, was seen as impossible in itself - a logic that pushed people to look for “co-ethnic” great protectors in the states of Greece and Turkey.

The roots of rapprochement, on the contrary, lie in the street, in the independence movement up to 74, in the popular events of 74-77 and in the neighbourhood - the tradition of cultural pluralism that characterised the island until the middle of this century. In these contexts, the rapprochers may present the traditional symbiosis of Greeks and Turks as proof of the feasibility of their politics, but at its heart their demand has all the subversiveness of the new against the old world. For rapprochement is a demand in a postmodern society that has already had 30 years of independence, however brief, on its back and which is by definition the information centre of the Middle East. And this is a new game. The old symbiosis, the old class unity of the great strikes of 1948, or the uprisings of the last century, has been defeated precisely because it did not develop its own autonomous discourse and action, because it allowed Misiailidis kai Kavazoglou to be murdered, because it revived the massacres that ran through our history from 58 to 74.

The old symbiosis could not resist the nationalism and the cultural polarisation and homogenisation promoted in the states that the Zurich “dictated agreement” almost inevitably gave birth to.

The past must be seen in its proper dimensions, not to be repeated, but to be overcome.

Nationalism as an ideology of homogenisation, of projecting threatening “Others” and of identifying the population with the state, was the main lever of separation. The internalised ideology of power was introduced through the educational systems from Greece and Turkey and reinforced the Cypriots' sense of insecurity about themselves by identifying them as a barbaric incomplete part of the national whole - Greek or Turkish. It also framed the internal conflicts within the mythological conflict of Hellenism and Turkism.

We have been, therefore, the field of release of the nationalist imaginaries of the “national centres”. That is why it is important to understand that rising cypro-centric nationalism leads nowhere. Yes it will support a single independent state, but nationalism is a reaction of insecurity, a reflection of a fear of the other. It will create a new majority of votes or cultural groups that will again oppress some minorities. And as much as Cypriots are historically justified in being outraged with those social groups whose cultural identity is extremely Greek or Turkish, it is nevertheless the plurality of heterogeneous minorities that paves the way to cultural pluralism, tolerance, and rapprochement - not the creation of a new national majority. Rapprochement presupposes the existence of “Others” as a temptation for the closed ethnic group. Only in this way can society be dynamic and Cypriots can reappropriate their heterogeneous cultural influences.

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