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WE ARE HAVING A PARTY HERE

THE FAREWELL SMILE OF CHRYSALIS

The farewell party that took place on the evening of Saturday 19th of January and the handing over of the keys to the owner did not only mean the final closure of Chrysalis but also the closing of a rather long cycle, a cycle that started four and a half years ago when a friend rented that space with the ambition to turn it into a coffee shop-bookstore.

Chrysalis is closed and each of us who spent a few nights and days there, some of us a few others many nights and days, is left with experiences and memories -good or bad or both- that will leave and come back, more intense, every time we pass by Christodoulou Sozou and see the drawings on the wall -if a bulldozer or a painter's brush doesn't make them disappear forever- as living proof that some people have passed by that place, who in their attempt to live in the ridiculousness of modern eros-island [ερώνησος] have made mistakes and follies, perhaps, but these do not take away the charm and sweetness of any creation and any -why not- comradeship.

But what was Chrysalis? At first glance it was a coffee shop. Perhaps different from the common coffee shops, but it was a coffee shop. That's what the liquor license states after all. To some others it was just a hangout spot. Somewhere where they'd stop by every now and then to have a beer and have a little chat with some people...

For others it was a place where every night various miserable guys gathered to kill time...

But how much less miserable are the various bars of the eros-island? Maybe life is elsewhere after all. But what life? Maybe life is still nowhere.

For the cops, it was just the anarchists' tekke and a good place to sell machismo from a safe place until they eventually got their asses handed to them...

For the neighbours, an unbearable summer nuisance that kept them from sleeping. Something like mosquitoes...

There's some truth to all this. Sure. But... apart from that, we believe Chrysalis was the most important alternative effort that was, perhaps, ever made in the eros-island. It was first and foremost its collectivist mode of operation, even if some people were carrying the burden while others did little more than talking. It was what we believe was absolute democracy in making every decision concerning its operation and even its closure.

But apart from these, there is also the fact, the most important one for sure, that Chrysalis was a political space with an intense political-alternative activity. There is a great deal that happened in that space and a great deal that started there.

The initiative against social racism and the motorcycle march, the participation in the support of conscientious objector Yiannis Parpas, the event against armaments and the defence tax, this

magazine that always came out in connection with Chrysalis, a bunch of posters and leaflets, there was also the mobilization against the beatings by the Mobile Immediate Action Unit (MMAD) and now most recently the mobilization against the demolition of old houses as well as the RIALTO cinema. Finally, there was the recent event against the Gulf War, the ongoing war of the walls and the articulation of an alternative discourse and the expression of a comprehensive anti-nationalist view and perspective.

It was finally an attempt for some -an attempt that failed- to have more human relations. And in the end, Saturday night was touching... the friendships that passed by over those four years, the flyers and photos of the events on the walls gave a sense of a story beyond personal experience...

But Chrysalis was also a crossroads of dreams and rejections... Some were sustaining dreams of returning to Cyprus from abroad and others were preparing or experiencing an escape to a world and a life that was elsewhere.

All this is not -and we would not want it to be- self-congratulatory, nor is it an overestimation of what has happened over the years. There has certainly been misery and passivity to a fairly large extent, there have certainly been quarrels and disorganisation, which are, after all, characteristic of these spaces.

Finally, we should say that all of this is an attempt to record, through a desirable and likely dialogue around Chrysalis and its function, whether it has ultimately offered anything in the end. And precisely because it is part of the history of the alternative-antiauthoritarian milieu in Cyprus, an appreciation of this experience and contribution may also be useful for what will be done by us, without us or even after us.

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