

How Can Cyprus be Free? (Article)

Historical Note

This article was written by a member of the [Cypriot Worker](#) group and was published in February 1979 in issue 22 of the American newspaper 'Socialist Worker'.

Content

How can Cyprus be free?

Dear Comrades,

The views and feelings expressed by the Cyprus Solidarity Committee of Boston in their letter (SW #19) are admirable and of course, no socialist would disagree with them. The letter, however, lacked substance: what can revolutionaries, especially in Cyprus, do? What sort of perspectives do we hold?

The CSC of Boston emphasize, quite correctly, the role played by the US, the CIA and NATO in the course of events in Cyprus. While it is important to do this, especially for a Western audience, this approach tends to attribute all evils to external factors and ignores what is most important, i.e. the class struggle in Cyprus.

Much as we deplore and disapprove of it, we have to face the fact that Cyprus is now, for all practical purposes partitioned. This of course serves the interests of Western capital (divide and rule) but it also serves the interests of both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot ruling classes. Nationalism and chauvinism are propaganda weapons used consciously on a massive scale by both these classes against the working class.

Once workers are convinced that there is a "common enemy" across the border, that worker and boss are "on the same boat", that "'national unity'" comes before better wages and conditions, then the capitalists have it made. The best example of this is the Industrial Relations Act signed by the Greek Cypriot unions, which practically bans unofficial strikes and freezes wages. The signing of the act was accompanied by intense "bosses and workers united against the national enemy" propaganda. Profits have since rocketed. Wages have stagnated.

A divided working class is a capitalist's dream. The fight must clearly be for working class unity. It is, however, easy to yell for a "humane and democratic Cyprus." This ignores another serious problem. We have to recognize from the beginning that prior to 1974, the Turkish Cypriots were an oppressed minority, economically and otherwise they were the underdogs.

We also have to recognize that right wing and fascist groups on both sides succeeded, in the period leading up to 1974, in making the two communities scared and suspicious of each other. When a village is terrorized by fascists a peasant does not think "'fascists'", he thinks "'Turks'" (or "Greeks"). These two facts, unfortunate as they are, were the reason why Turkish Cypriots initially welcomed the invading Turkish armies as 'liberators'.

The major consequence of these facts is this: While they now by and large resent the presence of the

Turkish army, Turkish Cypriots will not agree to any solution which constitutes a return to pre-1974 conditions. It will thus take more than words and good will to unite the two communities once again.

If we agree that a divided working class can never win, then what is needed in Cyprus is clearly a revolutionary working class party which unites in its ranks Greeks and Turkish Cypriot workers. The Communist Party of Cyprus (AKEL) does not fulfil this role, as to a very great extent it gives in to the nationalism of the Greek Cypriot ruling class. (In this connection it must also be mentioned that AKEL's implicit support up until recently for fusion with Greece, and its reluctance to work seriously among Turkish Cypriots much facilitated the work of those aiming to divide the island. This is also why AKEL could not aim to be a party of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, even if it intended to.)

A united working class party will not be built overnight, no simply by propaganda. Unity must be achieved in action. Unity that reestablishes trust between the two communities, that proves to workers on both sides their common interests. Only when, for example, Greek Cypriot workers go on strike in solidarity with their fellow workers in the north will Turkish Cypriot workers believe in and fight for unity. This calls for a revolutionary party organized on both sides, showing, in action, that a united working class is the only way forward.

As Cypriot socialists, our first priority must be the creation of such a party.

Fraternally yours,

Ali Saffet

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SWP of Britain

[Needs Turkish Translation](#), [Other Material](#), [Cypriot Worker \(Group\)](#), [Decade 1970-1979](#), [1979](#), [Nicosia](#), [Cyprus Problem](#)

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