5 positions on the reunification process

or For the right to live in Cyprus without the Cyprus problem

Falies, Libertarian Network In The City

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1. The Cyprus problem may be an issue of and for the bourgeoisie, but it spills over onto the entire Cypriot society. Therefore, it also concerns the libertarian[1] / radical community. It is the historical outcome of the clash of the two nationalisms on the island as they were shaped during the colonial era, and of the imperialist interventions that instigated and shaped it. EOKA and TMT, and their evolution, were in fact two sides of the same coin; that of ethnic segregation and the dialectic of intolerance. The partitionist status quo which was imposed through the military interventions

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[1] We use the term "libertarian" here as that was developed by the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists (communismo libertario), denoting non hierarchy and non centralization in organisation and not as it is currently used by American right wing and neo-liberal groups denoting full fledged free market capitalism. Freedom for us is a positive and not a negative term. We aim to construct freedom through the creation of alternative institutions, not be left with freedom after the regulatory role of the state is abolished.

of both the Greek and Turkish states between 1963 and 1974 constitutes above all a consolidation of the irrationality of ethnic conflict on the island, and the entrapment of Cypriot history in ethnic antagonism. At the same time, it functions as a means of submission of our society to the authoritarian nationalist imperative on both sides of the green line, and as a permanent source of potential threat for a wider military conflict. We believe that solving the Cyprus problem and reunifying the country is a dire need and an immediate priority.

2. As a libertarian / radical group we are opposed to the concept of the state, the border, the boundaries and carving up of the geographic and social space by imposed structures. As far as the state-formation to be implemented, the form of the solution concerns us to the degree that this affects the processes and mobilizations of the movement in the two communities. Under this light, a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation will allow the reunification of the geographic and social space. Those who oppose reunification question the adequacy, the functionality and even the justness of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, as it was agreed in 1977-1979 and reconfirmed in 2006-2008. The usual response of reunification arguments, whether leftist/socialist or liberal, is that federation is a necessary evil, the price to pay for peace, or the only realistic solution under the circumstances. However, the anti-authoritarian community had already pointed out since 1993 that "federation is not and should not be a solution of necessity, but the ideal solution" (Τραίνο, Βαγόνι 10ο, Γιατί ακόμα και αν δεν υπήρχε ομοσπονδία θα έπρεπε να την εφεύρουμε – Even if there was no federation we should have invented it)[2]. We still stand by this position today. Bi-communality and bi-zonality reflect the historical clash of the nationalized identities of the two ethnic communities, while creat-

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[2] Similar positions were expressed even before, in the 1980s but it was in the conjuncture of 1993 that the question also of the form of the solution was articulated so clearly.

ing the framework to overcome it. This is because on one hand it doesn't ignore the constructed ethnic identities, allowing for their preservation while at the same time creating a federal Cypriot political space that is not exclusively defined by either of the two uni-dimensional nationalisms. Because it creates the conditions for both the autonomy of the two communities and their common activity. Because it constitutes the framework within which Greek-centered, Turkish-centered and those with no regard for the nation may coexist. The Greek-Cypriot anti-federal discourse today uses «leftist» arguments against «communalism» which will allegedly «divide» the new unified state, reaching the point of calling bi-communality and bi-zonality «racism». We believe that racism is the status quo of the (Greek-)Cypriot Republic and the TRNC[3]. The supposedly non-national form of a unitary state is deeply national and based on the current demographic power of the g/c community. The depoliticization of ethnicity is not going to come by decree (especially a unilateral one of the g/c!) and it definitely cannot be achieved in the current conditions of political and military conflict. A possible abolition of bi-communality and bi-zonality in a solution plan will lead, with mathematical certainty, to the marginalization of the t/c population, pushing it to either exclusion or assimilation. Therefore, the so called progressive position of depoliticizing the historically constructed ethnicities hides specific and deeply nationalist political implications. In any case, given the overwhelming rejection of a non-federal state by the t/c community (and de facto ethnicised and majoritarian if the logic «one person one vote» is implemented) it is impossible to reach a peace agreement. Ob-

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[3] The racist stance of the Republic of Cyprus (that is supposedly a bi-communal partnership state) towards its t/c citizens today doe not allow much room for a potential equal integration of the t/c community in a unitary and majoritarian Greek Cypriot political system without constitutional guarantees for the numerically smaller t/c community. On the other hand the separatist entity of the TRNC is characterized by less hypocrisy. It is racist not just in practice, but also in theory.

structing a solution and prolonging the conflict is at the end of the day the basis on which both rhetorics of the g/c anti-federation movement meet – the Greek-centric (with Hellenism as the point of reference, under which Cyprus is supposedly subsumed) and the Greek Cypriot-centric (with the g/c controlled Republic of Cyprus as the point of reference). Their so called anti-occupation rhetoric (in reality only the t/c can resist to occupation)[4] not only serves but also perpetuates the outcome of occupation: the partitionist status quo.

3. In the context of the effort to invent another, different «leftist» discourse, the more benign (and more hypocritical) anti-federation trend, the Republic of Cyprus enthusiasts[5], articulate their arguments on the basis of «human rights». Initially this rhetoric appears idealistic and formalistic, simply separated from political reality. A more careful analysis of the essence of this reasoning however, clearly highlights its bourgeois and conservative character, which is historically outdated and in this particular case nationalistically oriented.

a) The notion of human rights as a political framework, although inspired by modern revolutions, became – in the 1940s – a kind of bourgeois-liberal ideological response to the vision of proletarian socialism. For its time, especially after the end of

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[4] Occupation is essentially experienced by the t/c, that live under the highly militarized regime of TRNC experiencing in parallel their exclusion (despite some minor benefits) from the Republic of Cyprus, while it is being legitimized and reproduced by the two nationalisms. Hence only if the t/c refuse the utility of Turkish occupation, we will be able to abolish it and this presupposes the defeat of both nationalisms. Opposing occupation from the g/c side (especially with the anti-Turkish rhetoric that de facto accompanies it) brings the opposite outcome – it boosts t/c nationalism and exacerbates the ethnic conflict, strengthening in the last analysis both occupation and its outcome – the partitionist status quo.

[5] This mutation of of g/c nationalism has its roots in the burial of enosis in 1974, but was developed essentially during this decade and especially after 2004, when the national-minded loved suddenly the Republic of Cyprus and even raise its flag.

against the two nationalisms, forming a third keystone that is anti-hegemonic. We maintain our differences with liberal and leftist allies in the struggle for reunification. However, since for us the solution of the Cyprus problem is a means, not an end, we don't focus on the structure of the new state, but instead on the dynamic of the historical transition. We are interested in the potential for the movement that this conjuncture will create, and the rupture with the existing. Hence, on that night after the successful referenda, we will not go to the two presidential houses to celebrate solution with fireworks – we will rush to the checkpoints in order to take down piece by piece the barbed wire of the green line.

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WWII (and while proletarian socialism was under the shadow of the Stalinist distortion) it was progressive, as it recognized a series of universal human needs, while being crucial for the global consecration of the notion of «citizen» over the imperial notion of «subject». Nonetheless, focusing on the individual and indirectly accepting the political framework of the nation-state set limits to the radicalism of this perspective from its inception. Limits which became obvious during the struggles of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, when the imperatives of cultural and political autonomy of communities arose within and beyond the nation-state, in the post-colonial era. The feminist and anti-racist movements brought forward the issue of protecting collective»minority» rights and oppressed social groups, the youth claimed sexual freedom and respect to diversity, indigenous populations and the environmental movement asserted autonomy, respect towards nature and protection of the environment – as limits to the positions of «majorities» which expressed an internalized form of authority and tendencies of imposition. In today's context the notion of «human rights», as it accrues from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, is not enough to inspire a movement of radical questioning[6]. Such a perception is both historically outdated and politically vague as it fails to express the multiplicity of rights, individual and collective/communal, to recognize the reality of multiculturalism as it has been created by expanding migratory waves, to prevent the tyranny of the majority or/and the reigning social group, to respect diversity and at the same time defend the acquired rights of past social struggles.

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[6] The central contribution of this perspective – the individual vote was clearly progress in comparison with the time of the rule of the property owning elders, however simple voting can neither free nor be used as a defense against nationalist, racist, sexist etc positions that might easily gain circumstantial electoral victories or majorities.

b) In the case of Cyprus, and particularly the g/c side (since t/c anti-federalists are at least honest enough to openly support division and partition) the anti-federal rhetoric sanctifies two specific rights that it considers superior to all others. According to the g/c anti-federalists, these two rights -the right to property and the right to return/residency- are inalienable and cannot be relativised by compensations, exchanges or quotas. The basic and immediate goal of this ideology is the retardation of a solution and the preservation of partition. By examining the implications of this ideology, one can easily deduce that behind the verbal use of «progressiveness» lies a clearly nationalistic reasoning; its target being to create a new g/c majority in population and land ownership in the north, thus negating the autonomy (and sense of security) of the t/c community as ensured in the notion of bi-zonality. This is why the «human rights» enthusiasts add the tail «of the legal residents of Cyprus» thereby excluding all long term immigrants from Turkey and their descendants, as well as t/c who have not received a Republic of Cyprus citizenship. The right to a home and integration of long term immigrants (from Turkey and other countries) and their descendants born in Cyprus, do not exist for anti-federalists[7]. It is notably ironic that «leftists» talk about the «sanctity» of property at the same time when the bourgeois state itself, which is based on property, accepts the relativity of this right against public interest – of peace, protecting vulnerable population groups, creating infrastructure, or even redistributing wealth. Anti-federal rhetoric, behind the curtain of protecting g/c refugee rights, concerns and enunciates the vital interests of big g/c land owners, private and ecclesiastic.

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[7] We recognize however that because of the small size of the t/c community and in order to prevent further demographic change in the north, there need to be placed (at least for the immediate future) some restrictions in the future migration waves from Turkey and in the naturalization of Turkish permanent residents of Cyprus in the t/c constituent state so that the political and cultural autonomy of the t/c community is protected.

4. A solution to the Cyprus problem is not merely a political act of the elite that will be canonized in an agreement or a constitution. It is a process affecting society as a whole, a historical passage to a new era. Reunification is also a release of politics from the hegemony of nationalism and militarism (the basis of patriarchy) and an annulment of national censorship and historical alienation. Of course, we don't believe in the illusion that reunification will solve social problems or bring forth a libertarian civilization. Social liberation and communism was, is, and will be, a matter of local and global struggle. What will change with a solution and reunification is the framework and conditions of that struggle in Cyprus. With the Cyprus problem out of the picture, a true reform of the education system becomes possible; one which will place education on a proper foundation that is more democratic, more secular, without nationalist stereotypes and intolerant ideals (which create little soldiers for both state formations). This is a precondition in the path towards a libertarian school. We will be able to legitimately question the political and economic authority of the church. Abolition of the military service will put an end to another irrational waste of time and energy for the the youth. Demilitarization will push the nightmare of a military conflict away and political cooperation of the two communities in the framework of reunification will allow them to jointly demand the removal of the British military bases. At a societal level, the reunification of the working class (which was separated on an ethnic basis long after the bourgeoisie) will create the conditions for a joint island-wide front against capital, while bi-communal cooperation of Cypriot workers will develop a culture of tolerance and cooperation with immigrants working on the island.

5. The movement of rapprochement, as it was popularized and spread in the 1990s, and even more so after the opening of passages in 2003, constitutes important progress for Cypriot society. We actively participate in this bi-communal movement as we consider that it is the expression of a wider social dynamic for peace,